

FUTURISM'S INCREDIBLE JOURNEY:

The Change of the Times and its Implications for Seventh-day Adventist Apocalyptic Interpretation

*A Paper prepared by Stephen P. Bohr
Senior Pastor Fresno Central Church*

A Spectacular Scenario

“By means of a secret rapture, millions of Christians will suddenly vanish. Snatched up to heaven to meet Christ in the clouds, they will not have to face the trials that are to come upon the earth. This disappearing act ushers in the seven-year tribulation. For the first three-and-one-half years human conditions gradually deteriorate. Meanwhile, political and military power shifts to a European confederacy led by the Antichrist. This strong man miraculously survives a head wound and gains unprecedented power. At a point of crisis he orchestrates a seven-year peace treaty in the Middle East. However, the Antichrist, who bears Satan’s mark—666—then demonstrates his true nature. About midway through the tribulation he and his assistant, the false prophet, terrorize the world and compel everyone to bear the mark 666 on their hands or forehead.

“At this point the Antichrist moves to Jerusalem from Rome, where he has been ruling. In the rebuilt temple of Jerusalem he blasphemes God, breaks the peace pact, and persecutes Israel. All chaos breaks out—looting, arson, famines, pollution, plagues, drug abuse, occultism, demon possession, economic dislocations, and lawlessness are rampant. Natural disasters abound: earthquakes destroy the land, the weather becomes bizarre, and stars fall from the sky.

“Then, as history draws to a close, a great battle takes place. Armies from the North, the Far East, and Arab nations meet on the mountain of Megiddo in Israel. The bloody battle of Armageddon rages for about a year, killing millions of people. Jesus Christ now appears, destroying what is left of the armies and throwing the Antichrist and the false prophet into the lake of fire. The long-awaited millennium—the thousand-year utopia—now begins. From Jerusalem, Jesus and his saints will rule the world.

“But this is not the end. After the thousand years of peace, Satan is released from the bottomless pit. Organizing the army for the final battle, he challenges God for one last time. Fire comes down from heaven, destroying these satanic forces, and the devil is cast into the lake of fire. The dead are now resurrected for the last judgment. The individuals whose names are not found in the book of life are cast into hell forever. God now creates a new heaven and a new earth. Peace and joy will now reign forever.”¹

The scenario described above does not come from some fictional novel. It is the fundamental prophetic belief system of millions of Americans who claim to believe in Bible inerrancy. Though it appears bizarre, it is proclaimed as gospel truth by thousands of Protestant ministers and Bible teachers. Where does this sensational prophetic scenario come from? Has it always been believed by the Christian Church? Is this really what the final conflict will look like or is Protestantism setting itself up for an overmastering delusion?

The Changing of the Times

The central verse in our study will be Daniel 7:25: “And he shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High, and shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law: Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.”²It is the central thesis of this paper that Daniel 7:25 predicted over two thousand five hundred years ago the rise of the particular futuristic hermeneutic which characterizes the above scenario. As Seventh-day Adventists, we have dedicated a great deal of space to the little horn’s attempted change in the law. But the same amount of space has not been dedicated to explain what is meant by the attempted change in the times. Those who have taken the time to discuss the change in the times have assumed that Daniel 7:25 is speaking about a change in the law with respect to time. In this paper we will pursue a different avenue. We will discuss how the change in God’s prophetic times has led dispensationalists to wrongly divide the Word of Truth and to offer private interpretations which hide the great truths of the sure Word of Prophecy.

The objectives of this study are sevenfold:

- .Provide an extensive biblical analysis of the word “times” as it is employed in prophetic contexts in order to determine if it bears any particular relationship to our present study.
- Examine the prophetic hermeneutic which was used by the Protestant Reformers from the twelfth till the middle of the eighteenth centuries.
- Point out how the Roman Catholic counter-reformation shifted the prophetic hermeneutic of the Reformers from *historicism* to *futurism*.
- Document how Roman Catholicism’s futurist prophetic hermeneutic invaded Protestantism.
- Demonstrate the devastating implications of a futurist prophetic hermeneutic to Seventh-day Adventist eschatology.
- Provide a few examples of evangelical Protestant predictions which have failed to materialize.
- Supply a selected bibliography of works which have proved useful in my research.

It is hoped that this study will prove useful to the many Seventh-day Adventist pastors and members in North America, who, like me, regularly struggle with souls who are confused on how to “rightly divide the word of truth.”

The Biblical Meaning of the “Times”

We will begin by quoting a portion of Daniel 2:21 which is directly related to our present study. In this verse, Daniel is describing the sovereignty of God over world events in space and time: “And He [God] changes the times [*iddan*] and the seasons [*zeman*]; He removes kings, and raises up kings.” Notice that God’s power to change the times and the seasons is directly followed by the statement that God can also enthrone and dethrone kings. In this verse, the Chaldee words, *iddan* and *zeman* appear to be used interchangeably. The words are really very close to being synonymous.

Now let us turn to Daniel 7:25 and examine the portion of the verse which is directly related to our present study: “He [the little horn] shall intends to change times. . . . [iddan].” One can easily see the relationship between Daniel 2:21 and 7:25. In the first text we are told that God **actually** changes the times and the seasons. In the second text we are told that the little horn **intends** to change the times. In other words, by claiming the power to change the times, the little horn is actually claiming the power and prerogatives which belong to God alone.

Let’s take a look at how *iddan* is used in other passages of Daniel. In Daniel 4 Nebuchadnezzar is told that seven times [iddan] will pass over him (4:16, 23, 25, 32) before he regains his reasoning powers. This is a prophetic prediction which was eventually fulfilled when God deposed the king from his throne for seven years and then restored him to it. While Nebuchadnezzar was boasting about the greatness of his kingdom and planning for years of prosperity, God overturned and changed his plans.

A comparison of Daniel 2:8 and 2:16 shows that the word *iddan* and the word *zeman* are frequently used synonymously. In the first text, Nebuchadnezzar complains to the wise men because they are trying to buy time [iddan]. In the second text, Daniel asks the king for time [zeman] to interpret the dream.

In Daniel 3:15 the king warns the three Hebrew worthies that they should bow and worship the image at the time [iddan] they hear the instruments. Hebrew lexicons indicate that the words *iddan* and *zeman* refer to an appointed or set time for an event to occur.

A very interesting use of *iddan* is found in Daniel 7:12 where we are told: “As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season [zeman] things are particularly noteworthy:

- It is God who prolonged the lives of these beasts.
- This is a prophetic prediction which will be fulfilled according to the calendar which God has established.

Now let’s examine a few references in the book of Daniel where the word *zeman* is used. Daniel 6:10, 13 refers to appointed times [zeman] for Daniel to pray. Daniel 2:9 informs us that there was a set time [zeman] for the wise men of Babylon to be killed. Interestingly, we find in Esther 9:31 that specific times [zeman] were set for the celebration of the feast of Purim. Once again, the emphasis is on a set or appointed time for an event to occur.

Before moving on, we must examine an important Hebrew word in Daniel 12:7 (“it shall be for a time [moawdaw], times [moawdaw] and a half”) which is parallel to the Chaldee word [iddan] in Daniel 7:25. The Hebrew word *moawdaw* bears the basic meaning of “appointed season, appointed time, appointed place.”³ In Daniel 12:7 it is used to describe a predicted prophetic event which will occur at the precise moment when God has determined it.

What, then, is the meaning of the word “times”? The context of Daniel 2:21 supplies the answer. Let’s go back in our minds to Daniel 2. We all remember the story. God gave the king a dream and when he woke up he couldn’t remember it. So the wise men of Babylon were called in, but they were unable to

tell the king the dream or its meaning. Finally, through Daniel, God reminded the king of his dream and provided the interpretation.

Even before Daniel described the dream and its meaning, the king was informed: “You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven. He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all.” (Daniel 2:37-38)

God then proceeded to tell Nebuchadnezzar how history would unfold. Babylon would be succeeded by Medo-Persia, Medo-Persia would be followed by Greece, Greece would be supplanted by Rome and Rome would be divided into ten kingdoms. Finally, God would set up His everlasting and indestructible kingdom. In short, God was telling Nebuchadnezzar: “Human history is under my control. I enthrone rulers and I depose them. I am able to predict precisely how historical events will unfold, and history will develop precisely as I have determined.” This is what Daniel meant when he said that God “changes the times and the seasons, removes kings and sets up kings.” It is God who both **reveals** and **determines** the calendar of prophetic events!!

In Daniel 3 we discover that Nebuchadnezzar was unhappy with God’s prophetic scenario, so he built an image just like the one he had seen in his dream only it was made of gold from head to foot. Many have totally missed the main point of Nebuchadnezzar’s rebellious act. The central issue was not worship or even obedience. The critical issue was, Who is in control of human history? Will history unfold as God has announced or will it develop in harmony with the king’s scenario? The king was saying, in effect: “Daniel’s God has said that history will be composed of several kingdoms but I say that my kingdom will last forever and woe to the person who dares question my perspective!!

In short, Nebuchadnezzar thought he could change the times and seasons which God had already determined and announced. Don’t miss the point: **Nebuchadnezzar wanted to change God’s calendar of prophetic events!!**

But the story does not end here. There were three young men who refused to accept the king’s **changed** prophetic calendar. We all know how the story ends. According to Daniel 3:28 the three young men were delivered because God **changed** the king’s plans: “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent his Angel, and delivered his servants who trusted in Him, and have frustrated [**changed** in the King James] the king’s word. . .“ In the end, not only was Nebuchadnezzar unable to change God’s prophetic scenario, but God actually interrupted and changed the king’s plans!

We find a similar story in Daniel 6. According to verses 6 and 13 Daniel kept the appointed time of prayer and as a result it appeared like the king’s unchangeable decree would result in the prophet’s death (6:8, 15, 17). Instead, God delivered Daniel by overturning the king’s decree.

We must now move on to the New Testament. There is a remarkable harmony between the two Testaments when it comes to the meaning of the word “times” in prophetic contexts. We will begin with Acts 1:7. But first a little context. In verse 6 the disciples asked Jesus: “Lord, will You at this time, restore the kingdom to Israel?” The disciples asked a prophetic question. They wanted to know if God’s prophetic calendar for Israel would be fulfilled at that very time or sometime in the future.

Notice the answer Jesus gave: “It is not for you to know times [*kronos*] or the seasons [*kairos*], which the Father has put in his own authority.” It is noteworthy that the Greek words *kronos* and *kairos* are coupled together in this verse and are frequently employed synonymously throughout the New Testament. In this particular verse the times and seasons are said to be under God’s control and they will be fulfilled in harmony with His prophetic calendar. In other words, Jesus is saying to his disciples: “Prophetic events [times and seasons] are under the control of my Father. He has determined if and when the kingdom will be restored to Israel”.

The apostle Paul employs a very similar expression in I Thessalonians 5:1: “But concerning the times [*kairos*] and the seasons [*kairos*], brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.” Here the apostle uses the word *kairos* twice. In the succeeding context he goes on to speak about future events, particularly the close of probation and the second coming of Jesus. Once again, the expression “times and seasons” refers to God’s calendar of prophetic events.

Arndt and Gingrich’s Greek Lexicon explains that *kairos* can mean “definite, fixed time, determined or allotted time.”⁴ The same Lexicon explains that *kairos* is “one of the chief eschatological terms.”⁵ Very frequently both *kairos* and *kronos* are used to depict future events on God’s prophetic calendar. We will now look at several examples:

- **Matthew 16:1-3.** Here Jesus chided the Pharisees and Sadducees because they were not able to forecast the weather. He told them that they could not discern “the signs of the times.” The word “times” is here used by Jesus to denote future events.
- **Luke 1:20.** The angel Gabriel told Zacharias that he would be dumb “because you do not believe my words which shall be fulfilled in their season [*kairos*].” Gabriel himself explained that his words would be fulfilled when the things he spoke of “shall be performed.” Once again the word “season” refers to a previously determined prophetic event which was announced before it occurred.
- **Matthew 26:18.** Jesus stated, “My time [*kairos*] is at hand”. What He means is that it was necessary for Him to die at the precise time which had been determined in God’s prophetic calendar.
- **Luke 21:24.** in this text Jesus stated that Jerusalem would be trodden under foot “until the times [*kairos*] of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Once again, we have a prophetic period which is described by the word “times”.
- **Revelation 11:18** refers to “the time [*kairos*] of the dead, that they should be judged.” Some Adventist scholars believe that this text is describing the beginning of the judgment of the righteous dead in 1844. Others believe it refers to the beginning of the judgment of the wicked dead during the millennium. For our present purposes, it makes no difference. The point is that there was an appointed time which God placed on His prophetic calendar to begin the judgment of the dead. Once again, the word “time” in this text refers to a future event which God has announced before it took place.

- **Mark 1:15.** At the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus said: “The time [*kairos*] is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel.” The time Jesus spoke of here was the conclusion of the 69th week of Daniel’s 70-week prophecy. Once again, the word “time” refers to an event which God has previously incorporated into His prophetic calendar.
- **I Timothy 6:15.** In speaking about the Second Coming of Jesus, the apostle Paul states: “Which He will manifest in His own time [*kronos*] He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. . .“ Once again, a future event in God’s prophetic calendar is described with the word “time.”
- **Acts 17:26, 30, 31** uses the words *kairos* and *kronos* interchangeably. Speaking about humanity, verse 26 states that God has “determined their pre-appointed times [*kairos*].” Once again there is a clear reference to prophetic events which have been previously established. In verse 30 Paul affirmed that God winked at “these times [*kronos*] of ignorance” and in verse 31 he assures us that God has “appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom he has ordained. . .“ Once again the word “times” is used in the context of God’s prophetic calendar of events.
- In **I Timothy 4:1** the apostle tells us that “in the latter times [*kronos*] some will depart from the faith. . . .” The latter times here would be parallel to “the time of the end” in the book of Daniel.
- **Revelation 12:14** (which is clearly parallel to Daniel 7:25) explains that the woman would flee to the wilderness for “a time [*kairos*], and times [*kairoi*] and half a time [*kairos*]” Once again, prophetic events on God’s calendar are described with the word “times.”
- **Revelation 10:6.** In this text, Jesus Christ announces that “there should be time [*kronos*] no longer [King James translation].” The time referred to in this verse cannot mean the end of human history for at least two reasons:
 - 1) This announcement is made during the period of the sixth trumpet. Jesus does not come to take his kingdom until the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15-19).
 - 2) After the announcement was made that “time will be no longer,” John was instructed to prophesy again (Revelation 10:11). How could he do this if the world had come to an end? The end of “time” referred to here is not the end of the world, but rather, the end of the prophetic time periods. Once again, the word “time” is employed to describe the events on God’s prophetic calendar.

Before we conclude this examination of the Biblical meaning of the “times,” it would be well to make just a few remarks about the use of the word “times” in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament). We will limit our remarks to Daniel 7:25. Significantly, all four uses of the word “times” in this verse are translated with the word *kairos*, thus creating a direct linguistic link between Revelation 12:14 and Daniel 7:25.

On the basis of our study we can now reach the following conclusions: The “times” constitute God’s prophetic calendar which He has previously appointed and announced. These events are under His control and will ultimately be fulfilled in the time and way which He has previously established.

This must mean that the little horn would attempt to change God’s prophetic calendar in some way. That is to say, it would present a counterfeit scenario of prophetic events. In this sense, it would attempt to do precisely what Nebuchadnezzar had once tried to do in Daniel 3, that is, rewrite the prophetic scenario which God had previously appointed and revealed. The final fulfillment of the story of Daniel 3 is found in Revelation 13:11-18. At the end of this study we will make a few remarks about this apocalyptic passage.

The Protestant Reformers and the Change in the Times

The Protestant reformers held the almost unanimous view that the Papacy was the predicted Antichrist of Bible prophecy. They shared several theological concepts:

- The fourth beast of Daniel 7 is a symbol of the Roman Empire.
- The “restrainer” in II Thessalonians 2 is also the Roman Empire.
- The Antichrist is not an individual, but rather a succession of popes who, taken together, constitute an apostate religious system.
- The time periods in symbolic prophecy are to be understood figuratively, not literally.
- The “temple” in which the Antichrist sits is not the literal Jerusalem temple but rather the Christian Church.
- The word “Antichrist” does not denote a blasphemous individual who openly denies and defies God but rather one who opposes Christ by posing as the Vicar of Christ.
- Though not unanimous, most Protestant reformers believed that the little horn of Daniel 7 represents the Roman Catholic papal system.
- The Protestant Reformers frequently remarked that the “Man of Sin,” the “little horn,” “the beast,” “the abomination of desolation,” and “the harlot” all represented the Roman Catholic papacy.

When we think of the Protestant Reformation, expressions such as *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone), *sola fide* (faith alone) and *sola gratia* (grace alone) come to mind. However, all these “*solas*” grew out of a realization that the Roman Catholic system was the predicted Antichrist of Bible prophecy.

You see, the Protestant Reformers knew for certain that in the prophetic flow of time, the lion (Babylon), the bear (Persia), the leopard (Greece), and the dragon (Rome) had already ruled the world. They also knew that Rome had been divided into ten kingdoms when the barbarians carved up the empire. They knew all too well that the predicted Antichrist was to arise among these ten kingdoms of

Western Europe. They saw clearly and distinctly that they were living in the time period of the little horn. The historicist hermeneutical method made it quite simple. A correct understanding of Bible prophecy gave them the unmistakable mandate to unmask this system which had usurped the prerogatives of Christ and adulterated the truth of God!!

Let's take a look at the writings of several of these Reformers in order to ascertain their understanding of the Antichrist. Much of this material is taken from Leroy Edwin Froom's monumental work, The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers. As is well known, Froom spent decades preparing this four volume work where he traces the interpretation of Bible prophecy from apostolic times till the middle of the twentieth century. Froom traveled extensively throughout Europe, examining original sources and carefully documenting his research. Even today, Froom's work is considered the authority in its field. Therefore, instead of "reinventing the wheel" of the history of prophetic interpretation, we will quote extensively from Froom.

- **John Wycliffe (1324-1384)**. In chapter 2 of his book *De Papa*, Wycliffe affirms that "the pope is antichrist here in earth." In Wycliffe's day two rival popes were vying for the throne and, according to Wycliffe, they were both "two halves of Antichrist, making up the perfect Man of Sin between them."⁶

Speaking about the papacy, Wycliffe asked: "Why is it necessary in unbelief to look for another Antichrist? In the seventh chapter of Daniel, Antichrist is forcefully described by a horn arising in the time of the fourth kingdom. . . .wearing out the saints of the most high."⁷ Wycliffe also wrote the book, The Mirror of Antichrist, where he repeatedly refers to the pope as the Antichrist.

- **John of Oldcastle (1360-1417)**. John, who was also known as Lord Cobham, was knight of Herefordshire and a prominent follower of Wycliffe. He unequivocally stated:

"But as touching the Pope and his Spirituality, I owe them neither suit nor service, for so much as I know him by the Scriptures to be the great Antichrist, the Son of Perdition, the open Adversary of God, and the Abomination standing in the holy place."⁸

- **Matthias of Janow (died in 1394)**. Matthias came to be known as the Bohemian Wycliffe. He received his doctorate from the University of Paris and in 1381 became the canon in the Cathedral of Prague. His writings paved the way for the Hussite movement. Janow based his conclusions about the Antichrist on II Thessalonians 2, Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 and 17. Here is one of his statements:

"The Antichrist has already come. He is neither Jew, pagan Saracean nor worldly tyrant, but the 'man who opposes Christian truth and the Christian life by way of deception;—he is, and will be, the most wicked Christian, falsely styling himself by that name, assuming the highest station in the church, and possessing the highest consideration, arrogating dominion over all ecclesiastics and laymen;' one who, by the working of Satan, assumes to himself power and wealth and honor, and makes the church, with its goods and sacraments, subservient to his own carnal ends."⁹

Janow seemed to anticipate the work of the Jesuit Ribera, who three centuries later would relegate the coming Antichrist to the distant future:

“Lest—says he—the abomination of desolation,’ (Matt. 24:15) should be plainly manifest to men, he has invented the fiction of another abomination still to come, that the church, plunged still deeper in error may pay homage to the fearful abomination which is present, while she pictures to herself another which is still in the future.”¹⁰

- **John Huss (1369-1415).** In the Bohemian language the name “Huss” means “goose”. Huss finished his studies at the University of Prague where he later lectured. He was ordained a priest in 1400 and was martyred for his faith in 1415. Notice the following statements by Huss:

“I beseech you in Christ Jesus, with all your fellow-members of the University, to be prepared for a battle; for the reconnoitres of Antichrist have already begun, and the fight will soon follow. The Goose also must needs flap his wings against the wings of Behemoth, and against his tail, which always conceals the abomination of the beast Antichrist. . . *The Lord shall destroy the head and the tail*—that is, the Pope and his prophets, masters, doctors, priests, who under the false pretext of sanctity conceal the abomination of the beast. Pray, what greater abomination can there be than a harlot who should parade herself and offer herself publicly? Yes, there is the still greater abomination of the beast sitting in a place of honor and offering himself for worship to all corners, as though he were God: ready to sell whatever a man may wish to buy in matters spiritual. Yea, he sells what he doth not possess. Woe be to me, then, if I shall not preach, weep and write against such an abomination.”¹¹

In a letter written to ‘the faithful Bohemians,’ Huss affirms:

“Surely now the wickedness, iniquity, and baseness of Antichrist has been revealed in the Pope and his associates in the Council: Now the faithful servants of God can understand the meaning of the Saviour’s words, *When ye shall see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet. . . he that readeth let him understand.* Verily ‘a great abomination’ is pride, avarice, and simony: ‘in a place apart’—that is, dignity which lacks modesty, love, and other virtues; and this is what we clearly mark in those who win office and dignity. Would that I were allowed to point out their wickedness, in order that the faithful servants of God might beware of them! Gladly would I do so; but I am trusting that God will raise up others after me, braver men than there are to-day, who shall better reveal the wickedness of Antichrist and lay down their lives for the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will grant eternal joy both to you and to me. Amen. I write this letter in prison, on the day of John the Baptist, as I lie bound in chains, remembering that St. John also was beheaded in prison for the sake of God’s truth.”¹²

- **William Tyndale (1484-1536).** Tyndale, who was educated at Oxford and Cambridge was the first to translate the New Testament from Greek to English. He was despised by the Roman Catholic Church. Notice the following two quotations from his pen:

“The pope’s forbidding matrimony, and to eat of meats created of God for man’s use, which is devilish doctrine by Paul’s prophecy. . . .are tokens good enough that he is the right antichrist, and his doctrine sprung of the devil.”¹³

“The apostles were clear-eyed, and espied antichrist at once, and put him to flight, and weeded out his doctrine quickly. But when charity waxed cold, and the preachers began to seek themselves, and to admit glory and honor of riches, then antichrist disguised himself after the fashion of a true apostle, and preached ‘Christ wilily, bringing in now this tradition, and now that, to darken the doctrine of Christ; and set up innumerable ceremonies, and sacraments, and imagery, giving them significations at the first; but at the last, the significations laid apart, preached the work as an holy deed, to justify and to put away sin, and to save the soul, that men should put their trust in works, and in whatsoever was unto his glory and profit; and under the name of Christ ministered Christ out of all together and became head of the congregation himself.

“The bishop of Rome made a law of his own, to rule his church by, and put Christ out of the way. All the bishops swear unto the bishop of Rome, and all curates unto the bishops; but all forswear Christ and his doctrine.

“But seeing John took a sign of the last day, that he saw antichrist begin, how nigh ought we think that it is, which, after eight hundred years reigning in prosperity, see it decay again, and his falsehood to be disclosed, and him to be slain with the spirit of the mouth of Christ.”¹⁴

- **Martin Luther (1483-1546).** The life of Luther is well known so we will concern ourselves only with his comments about the identity of the Antichrist. We will begin with a letter which he wrote to Spalatin on February 24, 1520:

“I am practically cornered, and can hardly doubt any more, that the Pope is really the Antichrist, whom the world expects according to a general belief, because everything so exactly corresponds to the way of his life, action, words, and commandments.”¹⁵

When Luther wrote his book, To the German Nobility, his friends, fearing for his safety, asked him to suppress it. To this request Luther replied: “We here are of the conviction that the Papacy is the seat of the true Antichrist. . . . personally I declare that I owe to the Pope no other obedience than that to Antichrist.”¹⁶

Two months after Luther made this statement, his book, On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church [notice that he is referring to the papacy as Babylon], was published. In it, Luther spoke of the papacy as “nothing else than the kingdom of Babylon and of very Antichrist. . . . For who is the man of sin and the son of perdition, but he who by his teaching and his ordinances increases the sin and perdition of souls in the church; while he yet sits in the church as if he were God? All these conditions have now for many ages been fulfilled by the papal tyranny.”¹⁷

In 1540, Luther wrote: “Oh, Christ, my Lord, look down upon us and bring upon us thy day of judgment, and destroy the brood of Satan in Rome. There sits the Man, of whom the apostle Paul wrote (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4) that will oppose and exalt himself above God and exalts his own commandments above the commandments of God.”¹⁸

Concerning the Man of Sin, Luther affirmed that the Antichrist “sitteth not in a stable of fiends, or in a swine-sty, or in a company of infidels, but in the highest and holiest place of all, namely, in the temple of God. . . .Is not this to sit in the temple of God, to profess himself to be the Ruler

in the whole church? What is the temple of God? Is it stones and wood? Did not Paul say, “The temple of God is holy, which temple you are?” To sit—what is it but to reign, to teach, and to judge? Who from the beginning of the church has dared to call himself master of the whole church but the Pope alone? None of the saints, none of the heretics ever uttered so horrible a word of pride.”¹⁹

- **John Purvey (1354-1428)**, who was a close associate of John Wycliffe, published a commentary on the Apocalypse in 1390 based on Wycliffe’s sermons. Over one hundred years later, a copy of this book came into the hands of Martin Luther who was so impressed by it that he reprinted it in Wittenberg in 1528 describing it as “a Commentary on the Apocalypse Written 100 Years Ago.” Purvey’s *Commentarius in Apocalypsin* [Commentary on the Apocalypse] was prefaced by this impressive statement by Martin Luther:

“This preface, noble reader, you may understand was written by us for this reason—that we might make known to the world that we are not the first who interpret the Papacy as the kingdom of Antichrist. For many years prior to us, so many and so great men (whose number is large, and their memory eternal) have attempted this so clearly and openly, and that with great spirit and force, that [those] who were driven by the fury of the papal tyranny into the farthest boundaries of the earth, and suffering the most atrocious tortures, nevertheless bravely and faithfully persisted in the confession of the truth. Although we in this age are far more learned and free than they, yet we ought to be ashamed that they, held in great barbarity and captivity, were so much braver and bolder than we in spirit and fortitude.

“For as this author was, for his age (as I think), among the first who sought learning and holiness most ardently, yet hindered by the defectiveness of the time and the reign of darkness could neither speak these things so purely nor think so clearly as in this our age we speak and think, yet he rightly and truly pronounces the Pope Antichrist, (as he is). . . .a witness, indeed, foreordained by God to confirm our doctrine.”²⁰

- **Nicolaus von Amsdorf (1483-1565)** was a friend and ardent colleague of Martin Luther. Notice his words on the identity of Antichrist:

“He will be revealed and come to naught before the last day, so that every man shall comprehend and recognize that the pope is the real, true Antichrist and not the vicar of Christ. . . .Therefore those who consider the pope and his bishops as Christian shepherds and bishops are deeply in error, but even more are those who believe the Turk is the Antichrist. Because the Turk rules outside of the church and does not sit in the holy place, nor does he seek to bear the name of Christ but is an open antagonist of Christ and His church. This does not need to be revealed, but it is clear and evident because he persecutes Christians openly and not as the pope does, secretly under the form of godliness.”²¹

- **Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560)**. Melanchthon was Luther’s closest collaborator though of a calmer spirit. His concept of the Antichrist is unmistakable:

“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. . . .Likewise in II Thes. 2, Paul clearly says that the man of sin will rule in the church exalting himself above the worship of God, etc. . . . But it is certain that the popes do rule in the church, and under the title of the church in defending idols. . . .

“Wherefore I affirm that no heresy hath risen, nor indeed shall be, with which these descriptions of Paul can more truly and certainly accord and agree than with this pontifical kingdom. . . .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. . . .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.”²²

- **Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531)** spearheaded the Swiss reformation from Zurich. Zwingli remarks about the Papacy:

“. . . I know that in it works the might and power of the Devil, that is, of the Antichrist. Yet I cannot approve their [the Anabaptists] proclaiming the Word of God solely because of their hatred against the Pope. I desire much more that the love of God would be their motive in resisting **Antichrist**, and to lessen the burdens of their neighbors.

“If we would live Christlike, everybody would fall away from Popedom, because they would recognize that nothing else than deceitful pomp stands behind it. [In this spirit] everything undertaken toward its fall will succeed. And I request that we break the might of the Papacy not by the power of hate, but by the power of love to God and to our neighbor. The Papacy has to be abolished or it conceals itself until it suppresses again the gospel. But by no means can it be more thoroughly routed than by the Word of God (2 Thess. 2), because as soon as the world receives this [the Word of God] in the right way, it will turn away from the pope without compulsion.”²³

- **John Calvin (1509-1564)** was the great leader of the Reformation in Geneva. We will include two statements from his pen:

“I deny that See [the papacy] to be Apostolical, wherein nought is seen but a shocking apostasy—I deny him to be the Vicar of Christ, who, in furiously persecuting the gospel, demonstrates by his conduct that he is Antichrist—I deny him to be the successor of Peter, who is doing his uttermost to demolish every edifice that Peter built—and I deny him to be the head of the Church, who by his tyranny lacerates and dismembers the Church, after dissevering her from Christ, her true and only Head.”²⁴

In Calvin’s theological masterpiece, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he wrote: “Some persons think us too severe and censorious when we call the Roman pontiff Antichrist. But those who are of this opinion do not consider that they bring the same charge of presumption against Paul himself, after whom we speak and whose language we adopt. . . I shall briefly show that [Paul’s words in 2 Thessalonians 2] are not capable of any other interpretation than that which applies them to the Papacy.”²⁵

- **John Knox (1505-1572)** was a great leader of the Reformation in Scotland. He too believed that the papacy was the predicted Antichrist of Daniel. Notice his own words:

“First, then, not only are all the impious traditions and ceremonies of the papists taken away, but also that tyranny which the pope himself has for so many ages exercised over the church, is altogether abolished; and it is provided that all persons shall in the future acknowledge him to be the very antichrist, and son of perdition, of whom Paul speaks. . . . The mass is abolished, as being an accursed abomination and a diabolical profanation of the Lord’s Supper; and it is forbidden to all persons in the whole kingdom of Scotland either to celebrate or hear it.”²⁶

- **William Fulke (1538-1589)** was an English Puritan who clearly understood the identity and work of the Antichrist:

“The see being found, it is easy to find the person by St. Paul’s description; and this note especially, that excludeth the *heathen* tyrants, ‘He shall sit in the temple of God’: which when we see to be fulfilled in the Pope although none of the eldest Fathers could see it, because it was performed after their death, we nothing doubt to say and affirm still, that the Pope is that ‘Man of Sin,’ and ‘Son of Perdition,’ the adversary that lifteth up himself ‘above all that is called God’; and shall be destroyed by the spirit of the Lord’s mouth, and by the glory of His coming.”²⁷

- **Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575)** was Zwingli’s intimate friend and succeeded him as chief pastor of the Zurich Cathedral in 1531. Notice his clear and forthright comment on the identity of the Antichrist:

“By the little horn many understand the kingdom of Mohammed, of the Saraceans 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.”²⁸

- **Nicholas Ridley (1500-1555)**. In his farewell speech before being martyred, Ridley (dated October 16, 1555), left no doubt about his understanding of the Antichrist. For him, the papacy had “set up another religion, hath exercised another power, and hath taken upon it to order and rule the church of Christ by other strange laws, canons, and rules.”²⁹

Ridley then uttered the following strong words: “The see is the Seat of Satan; and the bishop of the same, that maintaineth the abominations thereof, is antichrist himself indeed. And for the same causes this see at this day is the same which St. John calleth in his Revelation Babylon, or the whore of Babylon, and spiritually Sodoma and Egyptus, the mother of fornications and of the abominations upon the earth.”³⁰

- **John Hooper (1495-1555)** was Bishop of Gloucester from 1551-1554. He was martyred for his faith. He spoke strong words about the identity of the Antichrist:

“If godly Moses and his brother Aaron never acclaimed this title [to be God’s vicar and lieutenant] in the earth, doubtless it is a foul and detestable arrogancy that these ungodly bishops of Rome attribute unto themselves to be the heads of Christ’s church. . . .

“Because God hath given this light unto my countrymen, which be all persuaded (or else God sent 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, are 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.”³¹

“Of that wicked and pestilent see and chair in Rome, which is indeed the very whore of Babylon that St. John describeth in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, sitting upon a seven-headed beast, which John himself interpreteth to be seven hills and the children in the grammar-school do know that Rome is called *civitas septem montium*, the city of seven hills.”³²

- **Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556)** was for a time archbishop of Canterbury. In several statements he identifies the papacy as the Antichrist:

“And as for the pope, I refuse him as Christ’s enemy and antichrist, with all his false doctrine.”³³

“After all these sprung up the pope, that triple-crowned monster, and great antichrist, which took upon him authority, not only over the clergy but also climbed above kings and emperors, deposing them at his pleasure, and settled himself in the temple of God, that is, in the consciences of men, extolling himself above God, dispensing with good laws, and giving men leave to break them, and to regard more his decrees than the everlasting commandments of God.”³⁴

“He hath brought in gods of his own framing, and invented a new religion, full of gain and lucre, quite contrary to the doctrine of the Holy Scripture, only for the maintaining of his kingdom, displacing Christ from his glory, and holding his people in a miserable servitude of blindness, to the loss of a great number of souls, which God at the latter day shall exact at his hand: boasting many times in his canons and decrees, that he can dispense *contra Petrum, contra Paulum, contra vetus et novum Testamentum*; that he, *plenitudine potestatis, tantum potest quantum Deus*: that is, ‘Against Peter, against Paul, against the old and new Testament; and of the fullness of power may do as much as God.’ O Lord, who ever heard such blasphemy? If there be any man that can advance himself above him, let him be judged antichrist.”³⁵

After quoting several passages from Daniel and Revelation, Cranmer states: “Whereof it followeth Rome to be the seat of Antichrist, and the Pope to be very Antichrist himself. I could prove the same by many other scriptures, old writers, and strong reasons.”³⁶

- **John Bradford (1510-1555)** was chaplain to bishop Ridley and a popular writer and preacher. He uttered the following words when he was about to be burned at the stake: “Wherefore I now am condemned and shall be burned as an heretic. For, because I will not grant the antichrist of

Rome to be Christ's vicar-general and supreme head of his church here and every where upon earth, by God's ordinance."³⁷

Notice Bradford's remarkably strong words to a fellow laborer: "This bearer hath told me, that your desire is to have something sent to you concerning the usurped authority of the supremacy of the bishop of Rome, which is undoubtedly that great Antichrist, of whom the apostles do so much admonish us; that you may have as well something the more to stay you on, as also wherewith to answer the adversaries, because you may perchance therein be something opposed. To satisfy this your desire I will briefly go about, and so that I will, by God's grace, fully set forth the same, to enarm you to withstand the assaults of the papists herein, if you mark well and read over again that which I now write."³⁸

- **John Jewel (1522-1571)** was bishop of Salisbury and one of the great intellectuals of the English Reformation. In 1562 he published his monumental work, *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae*. This work, translated into many languages, was a statement of the position of the Church of England against Roman Catholicism. Jewel lists Roman Catholicism's misconceptions about the Antichrist (that he would be a Jew from the tribe of Dan, that he would be born in Babylonia or Syria, or that he would be Mohammed, or Nero), and then points out that all of these concepts are merely smoke screens to hide the identity of the true Antichrist:

"These tales have been craftily devised to beguile our eyes, that, whilst we think upon these guesses, and so occupy ourselves in beholding a shadow or probable conjecture of antichrist, he which is antichrist indeed may unawares deceive us."³⁹

Jewel then goes to Scripture to unmask the pretender:

"This whole matter is also expressed in the seventh of Daniel: 'The fourth beast was fearful and terrible and very strong: it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue under his feet; and it was unlike to the beasts that were before it; for it had ten horns.' 'And, behold, there came up among them another little horn. . . . which had eyes like a man and a mouth speaking presumptuous things.'

"This beast is the empire of Rome, the greatest empire that ever was. It was divided into ten, or into sundry kingdoms; as I shewed you, and as we see this day. The little horn is antichrist. The empire shall be divided and weakened: then antichrist shall come. 'He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall consume the saints of the Most High, and think that he may change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand.' Wherein he sheweth not only the pride and presumption of antichrist, but that he shall also prevail for a time. Such a one there hath been, and yet is. He blasphemeth God, murdereth the saints, hath changed times and laws, the laws of God and the laws of nature. He is antichrist."⁴⁰

Jewel employed the historicist method to reach his conclusions. This allowed Jewel to see that the Antichrist was not some past or future individual but rather a present system. In fact, Fromm quotes Jewel to the effect that the Antichrist would arise in Rome, the city of seven hills.⁴¹

- **John Napier (1550-1617)** was lord of Merchiston. He was a distinguished mathematician who invented logarithms and was also an ardent defender of the Protestant cause. In 1593 Napier completed his *Plaine Discovery of the Whole Revelation of Saint John*. This was the first significant Scottish work on the interpretation of Scripture, particularly the prophecies. He identified Rome as the whore of Revelation: “. . . *the whoore, who in the Revelation is stiled spirituall Babylon, is not reallie Babylon, but the verie present Citie of Rome.*”⁴²

In proposition 26 of his work, Napier is even more explicit: “*The Pope is that only Antichrist, prophecied of, in particular.*”⁴³ Napier then expands upon what he means [in old english]:

“There is one particular Apostalik kingdome, who is the chief and principall of all Antichrists, and is that great Antichrist, whom *Paul* calles the *man of sinne, and the sonne of perdition, adversary to God, and an extoller of himself above all that is called God*, with divers other epithets contened. . . . Leaving therefore all other smaller Antichrists, this great Antichrist and chiefe heade of all Antichrists, is he whome here we have to trie out, whom (for remooving of all doubts) wee say cannot be the *Mahomet, neither any Turk, lewe, or Ethnick.*”⁴⁴

- **John Wesley (1703-1791)**. Wesley, the great founder of Methodism, states concerning the papacy: “He is in an emphatical sense, the Man of Sin, as he increases all manner of sin above measure. And he is, too, properly stiled the Son of Perdition, as he has caused the death of numberless multitudes, both of his opposers and followers. . . .”⁴⁵
- **Isaac Newton (1642-1727)**. Many are unaware that Isaac Newton was not only a renowned scientist but also a faithful expositor of Bible prophecy. His view of the Antichrist is crystal clear:

“But it [the little horn] was a kingdom of a different kind from the other ten kingdoms. . . . By its eyes it was a Seer; and by its mouth speaking great things and changing times and laws, it was a Prophet as well as a King. And such a Seer, a Prophet and a King, is the Church of Rome. A Seer. . . . is a Bishop in the literal sense of the word; and this church claims the universal Bishopric. With his mouth he gives laws to kings and nations as an Oracle; and pretends to Infallibility, and that his dictates are binding to the whole world; which is to be a Prophet in the highest degree.”⁴⁶

Let’s take a look at how some of the great leaders of Protestantism in the New World understood the identity of the Antichrist. We will begin with Samuel Lee.

- **Samuel Lee (1625-1691)** was a learned minister from New Bristol, Rhode Island. He affirmed:

“It is agreed among all maintainers of the Evangelical Church that the Roman Pontiff is Antichrist.”⁴⁷
- **Roger Williams (1603-1683)**, who lived in the early Colonial period, was a staunch defender of civil and religious freedom. He had to flee the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the dead of winter because he believed in the strict separation of church and state. In fact, the “wall” metaphor can

be traced back to Roger Williams long before it was used by Thomas Jefferson. Notice his view of the Antichrist:

“Antichrist (by the helpe of Civill Powers) hath his prisons, to keep Christ Jesus and his members fast: such prisons may well be called Bishops prisons, the Popes, the Devils prisons: These inquisition houses have ever been more terrible then the Magistrates.”⁴⁸

- **Cotton Mather (1663-1728)** in his book, Fall of Babylon, remarks:

“Is the Pope of Rome to be looked upon as The Antichrist, whose coming and reigning was foretold in the ancient oracles? The oracles of God foretold the rising of an *Antichrist* in the Christian church; and in the Pope of Rome, *all* the characteristics of that Antichrist are so marvelously answered that if any who read the Scriptures do not see it, there is a marvelous blindness upon them.”⁴⁹

- **Samuel Cooper (1725-1783)** wrote:

“If Antichrist is not to be found in the chair of St. Peter, he is nowhere to be found.”⁵⁰

In closing, let us take a look at several great confessions of faith which identify the Papacy as the Antichrist:

- The **Presbyterian** confession of faith:

“There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ, nor can the pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition that exalteth himself in the church against Christ and all that is called God.”⁵¹

- A homily of the **Church of England** or Anglican Church: “He ought therefore rather be called Antichrist, and the successor of the Scribes and Pharisees, than Christ’s vicar or St. Peter’s successor.”⁵²

- **Lutheran** confession of faith:

“The Pope is the very Antichrist, who exalteth himself above, and opposeth himself against Christ, because he will not permit Christians to be saved without his power, which, nevertheless, is nothing, and is neither ordained nor commanded by God.”⁵³

- The **Irish Articles of Religion** of 1615:

“The Bishop of Rome is so far from being the supreme head of the universal Church of Christ, that his works and doctrines do plainly discover him to be that man of sin, foretold in the holy Scriptures, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and abolish with the brightness of His coming.”⁵⁴

- “Since the Bishop of Rome has erected a monarchy in Christendom, claiming for himself dominion over all churches and pastors, exalting himself to be called God, wishing to be adored, boasting to have all power in heaven and upon earth, to dispose of all ecclesiastical matters, to decide upon articles of faith, to authorize and interpret at his pleasure the Scriptures, to make a traffic of souls, to disregard vows and oaths, to appoint new divine services; and in respect to the civil government, to trample underfoot the lawful authority of magistrates, by taking away, giving, and exchanging kingdoms, we believe and maintain that it is the very Antichrist and the son of perdition, predicted in the Word of God under the emblem of a harlot clothed in scarlet, seated upon the seven hills of the great city, which has dominion over the kings of the earth; and we expect that the Lord will consume it with the spirit of his mouth, and finally destroy it with the brightness of his coming, as he has promised and has already begun to do.”⁵⁵

Froom Summarizes the Historical Evidence

It is clear that from the 14th till the 18th centuries, the incriminating finger of Bible prophecy was squarely pointed at the Bishop of Rome as the predicted Antichrist of Scripture. After presenting an impressive mass of evidence from the original sources, Froom concludes:

“In Germany, Switzerland, France, Denmark, Sweden, England, and Scotland there had been simultaneous and impressive declarations by voice and pen that the Papacy was the specified Antichrist of prophecy. The symbols of Daniel, Paul, and John were applied with tremendous effect. Hundreds of books and tracts impressed their contention upon the consciousness of Europe. Indeed, it gained so great a hold upon the minds of men that Rome, in alarm, saw that she must successfully counteract this identification of Antichrist with the Papacy, or lose the battle.”⁵⁶

Bear in mind that those who pointed the finger at the Papacy as the great Antichrist were highly educated. Most were experts in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Many reached their own conclusions independently of others. Their works were saturated with quotations from Daniel 7 (the little horn), Revelation 13 (the beast), Revelation 17 (the harlot), II Thessalonians 2 (the Man of Sin), and Matthew 24 (the Abomination of Desolation). Their testimony was unanimous and covered the entire European Continent.

Roman Catholicism’s Plan to Overthrow the Protestant Hermeneutic

The Papacy knew it could triumph only by turning away the incriminating finger of Bible prophecy. But, how could it do this when the evidence was so compelling? The Papacy realized that in order to succeed, it must change the hermeneutical method Protestants had used to interpret prophecy. Only by overturning the hermeneutical method of *historicism* could the Papacy deflect the accusing finger!! And the Papacy laid out a carefully devised plan to do just this!!

In 1545 the Roman Catholic Church called a church council which was held at the Italian city of Trent. It was the avowed purpose of this council to arrest the growing Protestant Reformation. The Council lasted until 1563 (the longest council in the history of the Roman Catholic Church). No major decisions were reached with respect to Bible prophecy but the Papacy did categorically reaffirm the dogmas of the Church and pronounced an anathema upon anyone who taught otherwise. The Council of Trent also set the tone for what was to come.

Just eleven years before this Council (in 1534), St. Ignatius of Loyola founded the Society of Jesus (also known as the Jesuits). Besides providing the papacy with a formidable secret police force, the Jesuits also trained an elite of theological scholars whose avowed purpose was to overthrow Protestantism. In fact, in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, there is a statue of Loyola trampling Protestants underfoot!!

Loyola's Jesuit Order soon spawned two able scholars whose views would at last arrest and reverse the Protestant Reformation. To this tragic story we must now turn.

Though this paper deals primarily with the challenge of *futurism*, it might be well to make a few remarks also about *preterism*.

Preterism: Luis de Alcazar Shifts the Meaning of Fulfilled Prophecy to the Past

The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus (born in the year 37 A. D.), believed that the little horn of Daniel 8 (and perhaps also the little horn of Daniel 7, though we are not sure) was Antiochus Epiphanes, a Seleucid ruler who governed from 174 till 163 B. C. In this, Josephus shared the view of the LXX (I Maccabees 1:10) and many other Jewish scholars of his day.

In the second century A. D., an enemy of Christianity named Porphyry, corresponded with the early church father Tertullian and tried to persuade him that Josephus' view was correct. Needless to say, Porphyry was unsuccessful. But in the late 16th century the view which Tertullian had rejected became the accepted teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Luis de Alcazar, Jesuit from Seville, Spain, picked up on the idea of Josephus and the LXX. From 1569 onward Alcazar worked to counteract the Protestant view of the prophecies. He wrote a 900-page commentary on the book of Revelation titled: *Vestigatio Arcani Sensus in Apocalypsi* [An Investigation of the Hidden Sense of the Apocalypse]. The book was published posthumously in 1614.

In this volume, Alcazar affirmed that Daniel and Revelation were fulfilled in the distant past. His system of prophetic interpretation came to be known as *preterism*. Alcazar believed that the entire book of Revelation was fulfilled in the first six centuries of the Christian era and that Nero was the predicted Antichrist.

By relegating the fulfillment of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation to the distant past, Alcazar argued that they could not apply to the Papacy in the 16th century. If Alcazar's view was correct, then the Protestant view was gravely wrong. Alcazar's alternative method of prophetic interpretation removed the incriminating finger from the papacy and pointed it at Antiochus and Nero!!

Tragically, many Protestants soon embraced Alcazar's unorthodox hermeneutic. It was first adopted in 1644 by Hugo Grotius of Holland in his *Annotationes*. Many other Protestant scholars followed suit. Noteworthy is the German rationalist J. G. Eichhorn (1752-1827) who audaciously republished Alcazar's book.⁵⁷

The preterist method was attractive to the German rationalists because it seemed to eliminate the predictive element from the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.⁵⁸ Remarkably, *preterism* was first

introduced into the United States by Moses Stuart in 1842. The timing is noteworthy. While William Miller and his colleagues were proclaiming a message based on the historicist hermeneutical method, Satan was working to introduce the rival method of *preterism*.

Preterism is still the prophetic method of choice in the Roman Catholic Church as can be seen in the *New American Bible* translation of Daniel 7:25: “He shall speak against the Most High and oppress the holy ones of the Most High, thinking to change the **feast days** and the law.” Notice how the “times” are interpreted as “feast days.” But the use of the preterist method is by no means restricted to the Roman Catholic Church. It is also the favorite menu of liberal Protestant scholars who employ the historical-critical method in order to do away with the supernatural predictive element of prophecy. We will now provide several contemporary examples of the preterist method.

- A footnote in the Roman Catholic Jerusalem Bible explains the meaning of the beasts of Daniel seven. The lion is a symbol for Babylon and the bear represents the Medes. The leopard represents the Persians and the dragon symbolizes the empire of Alexander and his successors. The ten horns are the kings of the Seleucid dynasty and the little horn represents “Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163) who came to power only after getting rid of several rival claimants.”⁵⁹
- Regarding the activities of the little horn, the same Jerusalem Bible states: “The Hellenizing policy of Antiochus Epiphanes included a ban on the observance of the sabbath and feast days.” And regarding the three and one half times, the statement is made: “Three and a half years, the approximate duration of the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes; but this period of time, also expressed as forty-two months, stands for ‘a temporary time of persecution with a limit set by God’s providence.’”⁶⁰
- The Jerome Bible Commentary (Roman Catholic), referring to the three horns which were uprooted by the little horn, states the following: “This translation is based on the interpretation supposing that three of Antiochus IV Epiphanes’ predecessors died violent deaths so that he could succeed to the throne.”⁶¹

With reference to the beast of Revelation 13 who was given a deadly wound and whose wound was healed, the same commentary states: “This passage may be a reference to some definite event, such as the murder of Caesar and the healing of the empire under Augustus, the legend of *Nero redivivus*, or any of several imperial misadventures.”⁶²

- The Revised Standard Version has the following footnote of explanation on the little horn of Daniel 7: “Those who interpret the fourth kingdom as Greece identify the ‘little horn’ with Antiochus Epiphanes, the Seleucid ruler who sought to suppress Jewish worship. Those who identify the fourth kingdom with Rome, interpret the ‘little horn’ as a reference to a future antichrist [more on this view a little later].”⁶³ Significantly, this commentary only presents two possible views, the preterist and the futurist. The historicist view has faded as an option.
- The prestigious Interpreter’s Bible Commentary likewise interprets both the little horn of Daniel 7 and the one in Daniel 8 as symbols of Antiochus Epiphanes. Speaking of Daniel 7:8 this Commentary states: “The little horn here, as in Daniel 8:9, is Antiochus Epiphanes.”⁶⁴

Regarding the beast of Revelation 13 this same commentary informs us that, “Not only is the beast symbolic of the emperors, but in a special way it is associated with Nero. . . .⁶⁵ Regarding the deadly wound and its healing we are told: “As for the head with a mortal wound which had been healed, this is evidently an allusion to the myth that Nero, who had died of a wound in his throat, would return to life to plague the empire and as the Antichrist to persecute the Christians.”⁶⁶

- One final example will suffice. The Broadman Bible Commentary explains about the little horn of Daniel 7:

“He shall speak words against the Most High. . . . This has reference to the attempt on the part of Antiochus Epiphanes to establish himself as powerful as any god. He had nothing but contempt for the God of Israel. . . . **wear out [the saints]. . . .** This reference is to the terrible persecutions perpetrated by Antiochus Epiphanes on the Jews in Jerusalem. . . . **The times** which Antiochus Epiphanes commanded to change were the designated religious practices. . . **The law** brings to mind the Torah or Mosaic law. . . .Antiochus Epiphanes sought to change practically every expression of Jewish religious practice. . Antiochus Epiphanes forbade burnt offerings and sacrifices, Sabbaths and feasts, circumcision and dietary laws. . . . **A time, two times, and half a time** is vague. The attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to annihilate the religion of the Jews spanned around three and a half years.”⁶⁷

If the above interpretations are true, then the Papacy has nothing to do whatsoever with the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation!! Then the Protestants who risked their lives from the 13th through the 17th centuries preached in vain!! It is clear that this method absolves the Roman Catholic Church of its guilt and shifts it to Antiochus and Nero.

The preterist hermeneutic involves a change of God’s times because it creates its own prophetic scenario and attempts to change our understanding about the manner in which prophecy was and will be fulfilled (remember what Nebuchadnezzar attempted to do in Daniel 3?). And liberal Protestants, by adopting the preterist method from Roman Catholicism, have become the False Prophet for Roman Catholicism. That is to say, by adopting and proclaiming the prophetic views of the Papacy liberal Protestants have made, hermeneutically speaking, an image of the beast and to the beast.

Is this perhaps the reason why liberal Protestantism has become practically indistinguishable from Roman Catholicism in its theology and worship style? Could this be the reason why liberal Protestants are reaching across the abyss to clasp the hand of Catholicism? Having cast aside the compass of a proper prophetic hermeneutic, liberal Protestants cannot but wander in a maze of uncertainty and confusion.

Futurism: Ribera Assigns the Meaning of Fulfilled Prophecy to the Future

But we must now turn to the other Jesuit scholar: Francisco Ribera (1537-1591), from Salamanca, Spain. Ribera was a brilliant student who specialized in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. He received a doctorate in theology from the University of Salamanca and joined the Jesuit Order in 1570 when he was just 33 years old.

Before we analyze Ribera's methods of prophetic interpretation we must underline that the Early Church fathers (not the New Testament writers!!) had certain futuristic elements in their eschatology. They almost unanimously believed that the "restrainer" of II Thessalonians 2 was the Roman Empire. They also believed that as soon as the Empire fell apart, a literal evil individual would arise to rule the world for three and a half literal years.⁶⁸

In all fairness to these Church Fathers, we must remember two things:

- The early church fathers did not expect the history of the world to last another 2000 years. They believed that the coming of Christ was in the foreseeable future
- Prophecy is usually not understood in its fullness until the times of fulfillment. Jesus Himself explained to the disciples: "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe." (John 14:29).

The Gospels reveal that the disciples misunderstood and misapplied Bible prophecy before the resurrection. But when these prophecies were fulfilled, their hearts burned within them as Jesus opened unto them the Scriptures (Luke 24:32). History proves, beyond any doubt that the meaning of the prophecies becomes clearer as the time of fulfillment draws near (II Peter 1:19).

The Early Church Fathers lived in the time of the fourth beast (Rome). The Empire had not yet crumbled into ten kingdoms. The little horn had not yet arisen. The best they could do was guess about the identity of the Antichrist.

But the Protestant Reformers did not need to guess. They had the benefit of looking back at over one thousand years of church history. They saw, with their own eyes, what the early church fathers did not. By the time of the Reformation, the Roman Empire had crumbled into ten kingdoms and an evil spiritual empire (Papal Rome) had risen among these kingdoms to rule over them. Thus, the Reformers had the benefit of historical hindsight to help them identify the little horn, the Man of Sin, the Beast, the Harlot and the Abomination of Desolation.

Now, back to Ribera. This Jesuit scholar capitalized on the incomplete views of the early church fathers. In 1590 he published a 500-page commentary on the Apocalypse where he expounded upon the prophecies of Revelation using the literalistic hermeneutic of *futurism*.

The main tenets of Ribera's eschatology are "ascribed to a **literal** three and a half years reign of an infidel Antichrist, who would bitterly oppose and blaspheme the saints just before the second advent. He taught that Antichrist would be a **single individual**, who would rebuild the **temple** in Jerusalem, abolish the Christian religion, deny Christ, be received by the Jews, pretend to be God, and conquer the world—and all in this brief space of three and one-half years!"⁶⁹

Ribera was a brilliant researcher and writer but not an outstanding lecturer. Furthermore, his life was cut short when he died at the early age of 54. Ribera's views therefore needed a shrewd and articulate champion to carry his message beyond the realm of *academia*. The champion was found and his name was Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621).

Robert Bellarmine Continues the Roman Catholic Onslaught

Bellarmino was an Italian Cardinal and also one of the ablest Jesuit apologists. He was a powerful speaker and lectured to large audiences. Bellarmine picked up where Ribera left off. In fact, Bellarmine made it his life mission to spread the literalistic hermeneutic of *futurism* with unabated passion.

“He insisted that the prophecies concerning Antichrist in Daniel, Paul, and John, had no application to the papal power. This formed the third part of his *Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae Fidei Adversus Huius Temporis Haereticos* [Polemic Lectures Concerning the Disputed Points of Christian Belief Against the Heretics of this Time], published between 1581 and 1593. This was the most detailed apology of the Catholic faith ever produced, and became the arsenal for all future defenders and expositors. It called forth a host of counter-writings from Protestant leaders, who considered him their greatest adversary.”⁷⁰

Though the basics of Bellarmine’s prophetic views were identical to Ribera’s, he fine-tuned and amplified many of the details. And he crusaded in favor of the literalistic futurist view and against the Protestants with an evangelistic zeal worthy of admiration!

Bellarmino was an expert at turning the Reformers against themselves. For example, he wondered why Luther, who taught that his views were based on Scripture alone, doubted that the book of Revelation belonged in the Bible canon. By way of contrast, Bellarmine came across as the defender of the book of Revelation as part of the New Testament canon.

Bellarmino also took painstaking efforts to document the fact that the Reformers could not even agree among themselves as to when the prophetic periods began and ended. For example, some Protestants dated the beginning of the dominion of the Antichrist from the fall of Rome (400 A. D.). Others dated it to 600 A. D., when Pope Gregory the Great took the papal throne, and still others dated it to somewhere between 200 and 773, 1,000, or even 1,200. Bellarmine contended that if the Reformers could not agree on the time period of Antichrist’s dominion, neither could they be trusted to identify who he was.

Bellarmino also made painstaking efforts to document that the Early Church Fathers (not the New Testament writers!!) believed that the Antichrist would be an individual who would rule for a literal three and a half year period. In this way he tried to prove that his view was the original belief of the early church. He also documented that each of the Reformers interpreted the symbols of Daniel and differently. In this way he worked to undermine their views regarding the identity of the Antichrist.

In chapter five of his work, Bellarmine employed a key argument which would later be picked up by Protestants. There, Bellarmine rewrote history, saying that the Roman Empire had never been divided according to the specifications of the prophecy of Daniel 7 and therefore, Antichrist could not have come yet. According to Bellarmine, the complete desolation of the Roman Empire must come before the advent of the Antichrist, and this desolation had not yet taken place. Later on we will see that a host of Protestant writers picked up this argument and “ran with it.”

The essence of Bellarmine’s argument is that the Papacy cannot be the Antichrist for three reasons:

- The Antichrist prophecies call for an individual but the papacy is a system.

- The time periods must be literal but the papacy has existed for centuries.
- Antichrist will sit in the Jerusalem Temple, but the popes are ruling in Rome.

“For all Catholics think thus that the 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.”⁷¹

“Antichrist will not reign except for **three years and a half**. But the Pope has now reigned spiritually in the church more than 1500 years; nor can anyone 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 the Antichrist has not yet come”⁷²

“The Pope is not antichrist since indeed **his throne is not in Jerusalem**, nor in the temple of Solomon; surely it is credible that from the year 600, no Roman pontiff has ever been in Jerusalem.”⁷³

Thus it is clear that Bellarmine applied a stringent literalistic hermeneutic in his exposition of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. As we shall see later, this literalistic hermeneutic has been picked up by conservative Protestants and taken to ridiculous extremes. But now we must get back to our story about futurism’s “incredible journey.”

Protestantism Imbibes the Futurist Hermeneutic from Roman Catholicism

For about 200 years after Ribera and Bellarmine, Protestantism remained true to its prophetic principles. In fact, the great Protestant expositors of Bible prophecy defended the historicist method during this period, tooth and nail. But then there was a shift, slow at first but then with a vengeance!! In the early 19th century some Protestant expositors began to make overtures to Rome. This can be seen most clearly in the Oxford Tractarian Movement of the Anglican Church in England. Froom describes this Romeward movement:

“But now, in the nineteenth century in Britain, the Futurist concept was again revived, by Samuel Maitland, James Todd, William Burgh, John Darby of the Plymouth Brethren, and the renowned John Henry Newman.”⁷⁴

It all started with Samuel Maitland who in 1826 published a series of pamphlets entitled, *Enquiries*. Froom states that “In these Maitland had militantly assailed the whole Protestant application to the Roman Papacy of the symbols of the little horn, Daniel’s fourth beast, the Apocalyptic Beast, and Babylon—holding that a personal and avowedly infidel antichrist was meant, and asserting that the prophetic days of its dominance were simply literal days.”⁷⁵

Maitland’s views were shared by James Todd (1805-1869) and William Burgh (1800-1866) [both were clergymen of the Church of England]. These views would eventually form the foundation for John Henry Newman’s return to Rome.

Notice the following statements from the pen of William Burgh: “First that ‘THE MAN OF SIN’ is not popery appears from the necessity that this chapter be understood of an *individual*, and not of a power or office vested in numbers or held by succession.”⁷⁶

“I would say that an *individual* is intended—one person *whose pretensions live and die with himself*. . . . [don’t forget these words which will later be picked up almost verbatim by Dave Hunt].⁷⁷

“Secondly, *the nature* of these same acts and pretensions prove that the ‘man of sin’ is not the Pope.”⁷⁸

James H. Todd was likewise categorical in his denial that the papacy was the Antichrist. His lectures for 1838 were later published under the title, *Discourses on the Prophecies Relating to Antichrist in the Writings of Daniel and St. Paul*. Notably, the book was dedicated to Samuel Maitland.

The basic tenets of Todd’s concept were:

- Antichrist is an **individual** who will appear at the end of the world just before the Second Coming of Christ.
- The evil deeds of the Antichrist have to do with the Jews rather than the Gentiles. In fact, the Antichrist will sit in a rebuilt **Jerusalem Temple**.
- Antichrist will rule for a period of 1260 **literal** days.
- The fourth kingdom of Daniel 7 was **not the Roman Empire** and therefore the ten horns were not fulfilled in the Roman Empire. The fourth kingdom will be established upon the earth at some future period.⁷⁹

Todd went so far as to say that “Romanism [is] not properly an apostasy from the faith.” He further stated that “. . . the errors of Romanism do not amount to Apostasy.” Even more astounding is his declaration that “The Church of Rome [is] a true Christian Church.”⁸⁰

Prominent Protestants in the Church of England were now employing the futuristic and literalistic hermeneutic they had acquired from the Society of Jesus!! No wonder they could no longer detect the papacy as the predicted Antichrist of Bible prophecy!

The concepts of Todd and Burgh were foundational to what came to be known as the Oxford Tractarian Movement. To make a long story short, this movement in the Church of England lasted from 1833-1845. [Don’t let these dates pass you by. During this identical time frame on the other side of the Atlantic, the Millerite Movement was going full steam ahead].

During this period a series of ninety *Tracts for the Times* was prepared with the express purpose of “deprotestantizing” the Church of England. The principal writers were Newman, Pusey, Keble, Froude and Williams. These men seized upon the writings of Maitland, Burgh and Todd to exonerate the papacy from the stigma of being called the Antichrist. Protestants were openly encouraged to return to the Roman Catholic communion and to accept the Bishop of Rome as the legitimate leader of the Christian world.

The movement toward Rome was driven by the literalistic prophetic principles of *futurism*. If the Papacy was not the predicted Antichrist of prophecy, then there was no reason for Protestants not to reunite with Rome.

Thus the counterfeit hermeneutic of literalistic futurism resulted in an ecumenical spirit [as will happen at the end as well]. The historicist hermeneutic had given Protestantism its impetus and the courage to separate from Rome. But *futurism* now stalled the progress of Protestantism and led it to seek a reunion with Rome.

The climax of the Oxford movement came when John Henry Newman (1801-1890) defected from the Church of England and joined the Roman Catholic Church. Newman had been one of the prime supporters of this movement. In fact, he personally composed twenty nine of the ninety tracts. Though he had previously spoken harsh words against the papacy, in 1843 he “published a retraction of all the hard sayings he had formerly said against Rome. In 1845 he was received into the Roman communion, leaving Oxford for Rome where, in 1846, he was ordained a priest and later given a Doctor of Divinity degree by the pope. In 1847 he returned to England, where he continued to reside. In 1854 Newman was called to Dublin as rector of the newly established Catholic University, and in 1879 he was given the cardinal’s hat.”⁸¹

Before we continue futurism’s “incredible journey” into Protestantism, we need to pause and take a look at the work of another Jesuit priest, Manuel de Lacunza y Diaz (1731-1801). David Pio Gullon has done a comprehensive study of the Lacunza’s eschatology as found in his monumental work, La Venida del Mesias en Gloria y Magestad (The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty) At this juncture we will review some of Gullon’s conclusions about Lacunza’s work.⁸²

Lacunza was a Jesuit at heart and an avid student of prophecy so it can hardly be doubted that he was acquainted with the writings of Ribera. In fact, like Ribera, he was an avowed futurist and loyal Roman Catholic. Lacunza’s futuristic eschatology included the following:

- The fulfillment of **Revelation 4-22** is still future.
- The three and one half times of Antichrist’s dominion are **literal**.
- The 144,000 will be **literal** Jews.
- **Literal** Israel will be re-gathered and converted during the great tribulation which will take place immediately before the Second Coming. God will then **literally** fulfill all his covenant promises to the **literal** nation of Israel.
- The millennium will be a period of peace **on earth** where people will live in their mortal bodies.
- During the millennium the **literal** sacrificial system will be reestablished in the **literal** Jerusalem Temple.

It is obvious that contemporary Protestant expositors of Bible prophecy have borrowed extensively

from Lacunza. It is a sobering fact that many of the views on prophecy which are presently being taught by conservative Protestants have been borrowed from a Roman Catholic Jesuit priest!!

Lacunza, however, departed from the run of the mill futurists of his day by saying that:

- The coming of Christ will precede the millennium (Ribera and others were Amillennialists)
- The final Antichrist will not be a single individual but an apostate system which will arise at the end of the age. In Lacunza's own words:

“If we expect to see accomplished in one man all that is said of the beast, with all that is announced to us in so many other parts of Scripture; it is much to be feared, that, all which is written will take place, and such an Antichrist not appearing, we shall be looking for him when he is already in the house. Likewise it is to be feared, that this idea which we have formed of Antichrist may prove the chief cause of the very carelessness in which men shall be found when the day of the Lord arrives.”⁸³

To make a long story short, Lacunza's work found its way to England around the same time as Burgh, Todd, Maitland, and Newman were expounding their futuristic views. And in a rather strange and unexpected twist of historical providence, his work was translated into English by Edward Irving. In fact, Irving's translation of Lacunza's work was first published in 1833, the very year the Oxford Tractarian movement got under way.⁸⁴

We see, then, that Protestantism in Great Britain was bombarded with literalistic futurism from both sides of the Atlantic. On the one side (in Europe) there was Ribera and on the other (in Chile) there was Lacunza. But there is more. Let's now take a look at another movement in Great Britain which was destined to derail the Protestant prophetic hermeneutic.

The Role of the Plymouth Brethren

In 1825 a small group of men, dissatisfied with the spiritual condition of the Protestant church in Ireland, met in Dublin to spiritually strengthen one another. Soon other groups were formed in Ireland and also in England. The most famous of these was in Plymouth.

This group came to be known as the Plymouth Brethren. Among the notables in these fellowships were Edward Irving, Dr. S. P. Tregelles and John Nelson Darby (who joined in 1827). At some point during this time, according to Tregelles, Edward Irving [yes, the same Edward Irving who translated Lacunza's work!!] heard some mysterious utterances in an unknown tongue telling him that there was going to be a secret rapture of the church before the visible coming of Jesus.

Though some Dispensationalist historians question the testimony of Tregelles, one fact is absolutely clear: The idea of a pre-tribulation rapture first intruded into Protestant eschatology around this time. As we shall see, this new doctrine paved the way to radically dichotomize Israel and the church. It also opened the door to the concept that the events of Revelation 4-19 apply exclusively to literal Israel on earth while the church is in heaven.

This was a new development in futurism's incredible journey. Despite Hal Lindsey's recent unsuccessful attempt to prove otherwise,⁸⁵ futurists will generally admit that this idea was alien to the Christian church until the early 19th century. Dr. S. P. Tregelles, who, as we have noted, for some time belonged to the Plymouth Brethren but later abandoned them, describes Irving's experience:

"I am not aware that there was any 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 whether anyone ever asserted such a thing or not, it was from that supposed revelation that the modern doctrine and the modern phraseology arose. It came not from Holy Scripture, but from that which falsely pretended to be the Spirit of God."⁸⁶

From 1830 onward, a series of conferences were held at Powerscourt Castle in Ireland. We know that Edward Irving, John Nelson Darby and other key leaders of the Plymouth Brethren attended these meetings. We also know that literalistic futurism became the prophetic methodology of choice and the idea of the secret rapture became firmly entrenched. The views established at these conferences soon spread like grassfire and penetrated other denominations.

The Role of John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby merits special attention. Born in Ireland in 1800, Darby was a brilliant law student at Westminster Trinity College. Though he was physically challenged, intellectually he was a genius. Cardinal Newman's brother, who was Darby's good friend, described his physical traits:

". . . a most remarkable man, who rapidly gained an immense sway over me. His bodily presence was indeed 'weak.' A fallen cheek, a blood-shot eye, crippled limbs resting on crutches, a seldom shaven beard, a shabby suit of clothes, and a generally neglected person, drew at first pity, with wonder to see such a figure in a drawing room."⁸⁷

Darby soon broke with the Church of England and embraced literalistic futurism with unabated passion.⁸⁸ One reason why Darby could not discern the papacy as the predicted Antichrist was because of his total disdain for history. He once remarked:

"I do not want history to tell me Nineveh or Babylon is ruined or Jerusalem in the hands of the Gentiles. I do not admit history to be, in any sense, necessary to the understanding of prophecy"⁸⁹

To Darby belongs the dubious honor of radically dichotomizing Israel and the Church. So says Hal Lindsey to whom Darby's mantle has been bequeathed in modern times:

"I believe that God's purpose for Israel and His purpose for the Church are so distinct and mutually exclusive that they cannot both be in force on earth at the same time, especially during the seven-year tribulation. . . . If this is so, then the Church must be removed before God can deal specifically again with Israel as defined in Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27)"⁹⁰

The newly discovered rapture theory set the stage for Darby to take literalism to new heights. He reasoned that if the Church Universal had been removed from planet earth and God was once again dealing exclusively with literal Israel, then several inevitable conclusions must follow. First of all, the

temple where the Antichrist sits must be the literal Jerusalem Temple and the Antichrist must be a literal person. The 1260 days of Antichrist's rule must also be literal and the enemies of Israel must come from the literal north, south and east. This literalistic hermeneutic borrowed from Ribera, Bellarmine, Lacunza, Newman, Burgh, Todd and others was to become the litmus test of prophetic orthodoxy in contemporary conservative Protestantism.

The great tragedy in all of this, as we shall see, is the failure of futurists to distinguish between a **literal** interpretation of the Bible and a **literalistic** interpretation of the prophecies.⁹¹

The historicist method requires a knowledge of history. It provides chronological reference points from which to determine precisely where one is in the historical flow of prophetic events. In Daniel 7 for example, Babylon is immediately succeeded by Persia, Persia is immediately succeeded by Greece and Greece is immediately followed by Rome. When Rome fell it was divided into ten kingdoms and then among those ten kingdoms the little horn arose.

But in futurism, a knowledge of history beyond the Roman Empire is considered unnecessary. You see, *futurism* creates a gap or parenthesis of over fifteen hundred years between the “death” of the old Roman Empire and the future emergence of a revived Roman Empire over which the Antichrist will rule. Because the prophetic flow of Daniel 7 was interrupted at the fourth beast and the ten horns and little horn never emerged, we are now in a “holding pattern” or in a type of “prophetic suspended animation” which will come to an end with the rapture of the Church. Since no event between the death of the Roman Empire and today was foreseen in the prophecy of Daniel 7, there is no need to study history.

The Role of Cyrus Ingerson Scofield

Between 1859 and 1874, Darby made six trips to the United States where he was warmly welcomed and his views were eagerly accepted.⁹² It was in this way that *futurism* was imported to the New World.

Darby's lectures and writings would have been forgotten, however, had it not been for Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843-1921). Scofield was converted in 1879 and though he had no theological training, was ordained a Congregationalist minister three years later. In 1882 Scofield became pastor of a Congregationalist church in Dallas. About this time, Darby's books were gathering dust in the few libraries where they could be found. But when Scofield discovered them he came up with the idea of incorporating Darby's futuristic ideas into a series of footnotes and cross-references in the King James Bible. Thus in 1909, the famous Scofield Reference Bible was born.⁹³ In time, Scofield's notes came to be revered as much as the Bible itself. Even today, this is the Bible of choice among Protestants who have a futurist outlook of Bible prophecy.

Richard Kyle, who was brought up in a Plymouth Brethren church and who once was a firm believer in the futurist scenario of prophecy remarks:

“Scofield's enduring legacy rests on his *Reference Bible*—published in 1909, expanded in 1917, and revised in 1967. Sales of this Bible total about 10 million. The Scofield Bible immediately became the standard of dispensationalism, and for ninety years has been the major vehicle for distributing dispensational ideas.”⁹⁴

In 1888 Scofield published Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth, a classic which is still in print. He also began a monthly publication called *The Believer*. Scofield also taught for some time at Moody's school and participated in Bible conferences. By 1902 he devoted himself full time to writing and speaking tours.⁹⁵

The reverence which futurists have for the Scofield Reference Bible can be illustrated by an experience I had several years ago when I was teaching a Revelation Seminar in Mt. Holy, New Jersey. A very well groomed young couple came on opening night, excited about the prospect of studying the book of Revelation. At the registration table they refused the Seminar Bible preferring to use their own--the Scofield Reference Bible. As the seminar progressed, I observed that every text I read and each comment I made was compared with this Bible. Finally, when we got to the lesson on the seven seals, they were totally blown away by the historicist perspective. When I visited this lovely couple in their home they told me they quit attending the seminar because my comments in class were not in agreement with their Bible!

The Literal Method Versus the Method of Literalism

Dispensationalists laud the literal method of interpreting the Bible and they often claim that the great Protestant reformers were on their side. Lindsey, for example, states:

“The Reformation, more than anything else, was caused by an embracing of the literal, grammatical, and historical method of interpretation and a discarding of the allegorical method.”⁹⁶

Lindsey even quotes Luther and Tyndale as supporters of the literal view.⁹⁷ We would not argue that the Reformers employed what has become known as the historical-grammatical method of interpretation. However, often times what a writer doesn't tell you is just as important as what he does.

What Lindsey fails to tell his readers is that the Protestant reformers unanimously employed the literal [not literalistic] approach to identify the papacy as the Antichrist, the Temple of God as the Church, the Abomination of Desolation as the Mass, the restrainer as the Roman Empire and the three and a half times as prophetic years. In his book, Vanished Into Thin Air, Lindsey doesn't even make a passing remark about the views which the Reformers held on Bible prophecy. He leaves the impression that if the Reformers were alive today, they would employ his literalistic hermeneutic which is as far from the truth as the east is from the west!

Lindsey treats Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) in the same way. At the head of chapter 4 of Vanished Into Thin Air, Lindsey quotes Newton in bold print: “About the Time of the End, a body of men will be raised up who will turn their attention to the prophecies, and insist on their literal interpretation in the midst of much clamor and opposition.”⁹⁸ Lindsey would have us think that Newton supported the hermeneutics of literalism. But did he? Again, the problem with Lindsey is in what he doesn't tell you.

It is a matter of record that Newton employed the hermeneutics of *historicism*. He taught that the papacy is the Antichrist, that the Temple of God is the Church and that the 1260 days are symbolic of years. This hardly fits with Lindsey's eschatology. To claim for your side those who are really on the opposing side is a serious matter.

But Lindsey has an answer for those who are critical of his selective silence. He affirms that “one of the most important results of the Reformation was the recovery of the literal method of interpretation. **It took about two centuries before this method was applied to the field of Bible prophecy.** It wasn’t until the 18th century that we find evidence of a systematic study of Bible prophecy using the literal interpretation.”⁹⁹ Lindsey goes on to explain that early in the 19th century many Bible conferences and camp meetings were held in England, Scotland and Ireland where the study of Bible prophecy was featured. Lindsey then remarks that the “man best known for popularizing prophecy at that time was John Darby.”¹⁰⁰

In short, what Lindsey is saying is that the Reformers recovered the proper method of studying the Bible but the method was not applied in a systematic way to the study of Bible prophecy until the 18th and 19th centuries. But is this true? The historical records, as clearly as the light of the noonday sun, prove otherwise! Lindsey is simply flat wrong when he affirms that the literal [really, literalistic in Lindsey’s mind] method was not applied to the systematic study of prophecy until the 18th and 19th centuries. The facts clearly prove otherwise!

As we have previously indicated, the literalistic method was applied in a systematic way by the Roman Catholic counter-reformation in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. It was not the Reformers who employed Lindsey’s literalistic hermeneutic (literal Israel, literal temple, literal individual, literal three and a half years) but rather Ribera, Bellarmine, and other declared enemies of Protestantism. It is almost beyond belief that Lindsey would side with the Jesuits and then turn right around and claim that the Protestant Reformers were on his side!!

Scholars Measure in on the Origins of Preterism and Futurism

Before we speak about the baleful influence which *futurism* has had upon contemporary Protestantism, it would be well to quote various scholars who have traced the origins of *preterism* and *futurism* to Alcazar and Ribera. We will begin with George Eldon Ladd:

“It would probably come as a shock to many modern futurists to be told that the first scholar in relatively modern times who returned to the patristic futuristic interpretation was a Spanish Jesuit named Ribera. In 1590 Ribera published a commentary on the Revelation as a counter-interpretation to the prevailing view among Protestants which identified the Papacy with the Antichrist. Ribera applied all of Revelation but the earliest chapters to the end time rather than to the history of the Church. Antichrist would be a single evil person who would be received by the Jews and would rebuild Jerusalem, abolish Christianity, deny Christ, persecute the Church and rule the world for three and a half years.”¹⁰¹

Joseph Tanner feels the same way:

“So great a hold did the conviction that the Papacy was the Antichrist gain upon the minds of men, that Rome at last saw she must bestir herself, and try, by putting forth other systems of interpretation, to counteract the identification of the Papacy with the Antichrist. Accordingly, towards the close of the century of the Reformation two of her most learned doctors set themselves to the task, each endeavoring 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 endeavored 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.”¹⁰²

Dean Henry Alford in the “Prolegomena” of his *Greek Testament*, says the following about the origins of *futurism*: “The founder of this system in modern times. . . . appears to have been the Jesuit Ribera, about A. D. 1580”¹⁰³

Regarding the origins of *preterism* Alford says: “The Preterist view found no favour, and was hardly so much as thought of, in the times of primitive Christianity. . . . The view is said to have been first promulgated in anything like completeness by the Jesuit Alcasar in 1614”¹⁰⁴

Even the Roman Catholic, G. S. Hitchcock, states: “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 Alcasar in 1614, explains the Revelation by the Fall of Jerusalem, or by the fall of Pagan Rome in 410 A. D.”¹⁰⁵

Richard Kyle concurs: “Among the Jesuits who insisted that the Antichrist was still to come, the approach of the Spaniard Franciscus Ribeira had significant implications for future millennial thought. Both Catholics and Protestants who identified the Antichrist as a contemporary pope or leader generally took a historicist interpretation of John’s Revelation. Ribeira reintroduced a somewhat literal futuristic approach to the Apocalypse of John. In doing so he concluded that the Antichrist was a future renegade Jew.”¹⁰⁶

Well has Tanner remarked: “It is a matter for deep regret that those who hold and advocate the futurist system at the present day, Protestants as they are for the most part, are thus really playing into the hands of Rome, and helping to screen the Papacy from detection as the Antichrist. It has been well said that ‘Futurism tends to obliterate the brand put by the Holy Spirit upon Popery.’ More especially is this to be deplored at a time when the Papal Antichrist seems to be making an expiring effort to regain his former hold on men’s minds”¹⁰⁷

What about conservative Protestantism today? The fact is that they have not only swallowed these futuristic views hook, line and sinker, but they have swallowed the fishing pole and fisherman as well!! In fact, they have taken the literalistic hermeneutic of *futurism* so far that it borders on the ridiculous. Evangelicals, Baptists, Pentecostals and other born-again Christians have proliferated *futurism* around the globe. This phenomenal growth has been due to five main factors:

- The influence of the Scotfield Reference Bible. This annotated Bible provides a futuristic and literalistic interpretation of the little horn of Daniel 7 and the beast of Revelation 13 seeing them as symbols of a future individual world dictator who will rule the for three and a half literal years from a rebuilt Jerusalem temple. On the other hand, this same Bible contains a touch of *preterism* because it interprets the little horn of Daniel 8 as a symbol of Antiochus Epiphanes.¹⁰⁸

- The proliferation of television evangelists who teach prophecy from a futurist perspective. One notable example is Jack Van Impe who shows a shameless admiration for Pope John Paul II by repeatedly stating on his television program: “What a man!” Oh incredible blindness!
- The publication of a plethora of both fiction and “non-fiction” books. The prophecy sections in Christian book stores are saturated with books containing a futuristic perspective. For example, Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins have written a series of Christian thrillers which explore the last days. The titles tell it all:
 - ✓ Left Behind: A Novel of Earth’s Last Days
 - ✓ Tribulation Force: The Continuing Drama of Those Left Behind
 - ✓ Nicolae: The Rise of Antichrist
 - ✓ Soul Harvest: The World Takes Sides
 - ✓ Appollyon: The Destroyer is Unleashed
 - ✓ Assassins: Assignment: Jerusalem, Target: Antichrist

As of this writing, the series contains 14 volumes and has sold over 10 million copies and has been on the *New York Times* best seller list for months!! Jenkins explained the purpose of the series:

“The purpose was to encourage the church and to persuade unbelievers. We have found that people are reading the Bible again because of it and many have become believers”¹⁰⁹ The question is: Believers in what? Are people reaching wrong conclusions about prophecy by reading the Bible through the futurist eyeglasses of these novels?

Even more amazing is Tim LaHaye’s comment: “I’m hearing from church pastors all over the world [as of this writing, the series has been published in 14 languages] and they’re telling me that the books are the best evangelistic tools they’ve ever seen. It’s gratifying to see so much interest in this story because, of any of the major world religions, Christianity has the most exciting story to tell about the future.”¹¹⁰

Here LaHaye lauds the world-wide evangelistic thrust of *futurism* through the message of these books. In this way, *futurism* is being exported to every nation, kindred, tongue and people!!

- The proliferation of popular thriller movies such as The Omega Code, Left Behind and Armageddon.
- Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and Dallas Theological Seminary have prepared an unnumbered host of pastors, Bible teachers and scholars to carry the methodology of *futurism* to every corner of the earth. Through these and other educational institutions the message of *futurism* is passed on to millions of church members who then share it with their neighbors and friends!

The number of proponents of the futuristic scenario is legion. Among the main prognosticators are:

Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, Jerry Jenkins, Grant Jeffrey, John Walvoord, John Hagee, Benny Hinn, Jack Van Impe, Jack LeLonde, Dave Hunt, David Jeremiah, Zola Levitt, Arno Froese, Pat Robertson, Randall Price, Dwight Pentecost, Jerry Falwell and *ad infinitum*. I have literally perused dozens of evangelical books in preparation for this project and though there are slight variations in details, there is a remarkable agreement on the foundational hermeneutical principles. They all apply a rigid literalism: Israel is literal, the temple is literal, the 1260 days are literal, the Antichrist is a literal person, the enemies of Israel will come from the literal north and the literal south, etc.

These recent proponents of futurism have outdone by far their forebears. As an example, we will refer to Grant Jeffrey's book The Signature of God: The Handwriting of God. Jeffrey claims to have cracked the secret code of Bible prophecy by employing the Hebrew numbering system. He claims to have found, among other things, the following specific predictions in this cryptic code: The death of Princess Di, the plague of AIDS, the assassination of Franz Joseph I of Austria, the peace process of Israel and the PLO, the assassination of Yitzak Rabbin, the Gulf War (including the specific names of America, George Bush, General Schwartzkopf, Scud-B Missile and Russia). He also claims to have found predictions of the Oklahoma City bombing including the specific names of Timothy McVeigh and Oklahoma. Amazingly, he even claims to have found "day 19, and 9th hour" the precise day and hour of the explosion!

Apart from the fact that the Bible is not concerned with trivialities such as this, I find it amazing that Jeffrey thinks he is able to find all these hidden, cryptic, secret, veiled, subliminal messages but at the same time has not been able to figure out something as clear and simple as, which is the right day of the week to go to church!!

Dave Hunt presents an interesting case. He has written two scathing books denouncing the Roman Catholic papacy as the harlot of Revelation 17.¹¹¹ Hunt makes the following astounding statement:

"Some suggest that the Vatican will move to Babylon in Iraq when it is rebuilt. But why should it? The Vatican has been fulfilling John's vision from its location in Rome for the past 15 centuries. Moreover, we have shown the connection to ancient Babylon which the Vatican has maintained down through history in the paganized Christianity it has promulgated. As for ancient Babylon itself, it wasn't even in existence during the past 2300 years 'to reign over the kings of the earth.' Babylon lay in ruins while pagan Rome and later **Catholic Rome, the new Babylon**, was indeed reigning over kings."¹¹²

And even more pointedly, Hunt says: "God is foretelling His final judgment upon a great evil which began at the Tower of Babel and which has only grown as politics, religion, and science have become more sophisticated--until finally the **whole world** is united in the pursuit of Satan's ancient lie. This is the Babylon, revived and headquartered in **Rome**, that will be destroyed, never to be inhabited again."¹¹³

In a similar vein, Hal Lindsey quotes Revelation 17:18 and then says: "When the apostle John wrote this, the great city reigning over the kings of the earth was Rome. So Rome is clearly labeled '*mystery Babylon*' by the prophetic symbol of Revelation."¹¹⁴

So much for consistent literalism! What hermeneutic allows Hunt to see in literal Babylon a symbol of a worldwide apostate Christian Roman Catholic system and yet to not see in literal Jerusalem a symbol of God's faithful worldwide Christian church? Literal Babylon is the great enemy of literal Israel in the Old

Testament. Why, then, is Israel to be understood literally in the end-time while Babylon is to be understood as a symbol for Rome?

Hunt has castigated Protestants for betraying the Reformation when they signed the joint declaration: Evangelicals and Catholics Together. And yet he uses the prophetic principles of Roman Catholicism and tramples on the principles which were employed by the Reformers at the risk of their lives. What an unexplainable blindness!! For Hunt, Daniel seven's little horn is a **literal** person who in the future will rule three and a half **literal** years during the Tribulation. He believes this horn will oppress the **literal** Jews from a rebuilt **literal** Jerusalem Temple.

Regarding Daniel 2, Hunt comments: "He [Daniel] explained that Nebuchadnezzar, represented by the head of gold, was the ruler of the first *world empire*. The three other parts of the image, made of silver, brass, and iron, foreshadowed three more *world empires* that would follow Babylon as its successors. In a later vision Daniel would be given the name of the second world empire, MedoPersia, and details concerning the third kingdom which clearly identified it as the Grecian empire. The fourth world empire, of course, would be Rome. That much is history"¹¹⁵ Up till this point, Hunt sounds like a dyed in the wool historicist. But wait, there is more!

Referring to the ten toes, Hunt then affirms: "Obviously, what the toes represent has not yet come to pass. God's kingdom was not established 'in the days of these [ten] kings.'¹¹⁶ What he says next is simply astounding: "Furthermore, the Antichrist never appeared to take the reins of the ancient Roman Empire."¹¹⁷

What Hunt has done is sever the feet from the legs. He has created a gap of over 1500 years between the legs [the Roman Empire] and the toes [the divisions of the Roman Empire]. Why is he not able to see that Rome was divided by the barbarian invasions and that, shortly thereafter, the papacy arose to govern in what had previously been the Roman Empire? The fact is that the literalistic hermeneutic of futurism has blinded Hunt and led him to shield the papacy from her baleful work during the Middle Ages. The gap he has left between the legs and the toes is the hiding place for the REAL ANTICHRIST!! Hunt's blindness is even more amazing when we consider his description of what the Antichrist will be like:

"While the Greek prefix 'anti' generally means 'against' or 'opposed to,' it can also mean 'in the place of' or 'a substitute for.' The Antichrist will embody both meanings. He will oppose Christ while pretending to *be* Christ. . . . Instead of a frontal assault against Christianity, the evil one will pervert the church from within by posing as its founder. He will cunningly misrepresent Christ while pretending to *be* Christ. . . . And right here is where the plot thickens. If the Antichrist will indeed pretend to be the Christ, then his followers must be 'Christians!'"¹¹⁸

Hunt's description fits perfectly with the claims of the popes of the Roman Catholic Church, but he cannot see this because he is reading prophecy through futurist eyeglasses. Inexcusably, Hunt states:

"The **Reformers** and their **creeds** were **unanimous** in identifying each pope as the Antichrist. Scripture, however, does not support that claim. The Antichrist is a *unique* individual **without predecessors or successors**."¹¹⁹

Thus, Hunt places himself on the side of Ribera, Newman., and Lacunza while he betrays the Reformation. He is saying that Ribera was right and Luther was wrong! How can he complain about an apostasy in Protestantism and then turn right around and employ the prophetic methods of apostate Protestantism? No wonder Protestant leaders signed the ecumenical document, Evangelicals and Catholics Together. No wonder Lutheran and Catholic theologians have signed a Joint Declaration on Righteousness by Faith!

Through *preterism*, Satan has laid hold of the liberal wing of Protestantism. Through *futurism* he has laid hold of the conservative wing. Although these two systems appear to be opposites, they really have several striking similarities and they both meet in the abyss of satanic deception.

In both systems, Antichrist is understood to be a literal blasphemous **individual**. Both see this individual as a desecrator of the **literal** Jewish Temple for three and a half **literal** years. The only difference is that for *preterism* this person **was** Antiochus Epiphanes while for *futurism* it **will be** an individual who has not yet appeared.

But the most striking similarity is that both systems derived their hermeneutical methodology from Jesuit theologians and both systems shield the papacy from being detected as the great Antichrist of Scripture!! By shifting the fulfillment of prophecy backwards or forwards, these prophetic systems have attempted to change God's prophetic times.

Serious Implications of Futurism for SDA Apocalyptic Interpretation

Now we must ask some very serious questions: Why did Protestantism first adopt *futurism* from Ribera and Bellarmine in Great Britain? Why not in Germany or France or any other European country? And why in the decade of the 1830's? Why did Lacunza's writings find their way to England rather than to some other European country? Why was Lacunza's book translated into English by one of the Plymouth Brethren in 1833? In fact, why did the Plymouth Brethren even arise at this particular time and place?

The answers to these questions are not hard to find. The greatest number of immigrants to the United States in the 1830's and 1840's were from Great Britain. There could be no better way for Satan to transplant futurism to the United States than from Great Britain. It is easy to see now, why this entire apostasy from *historicism* to *futurism* took place in England in the 1830's. Satan desired to transplant *futurism* from England to the New World!! Even at this early stage, he was laying the groundwork for the United States to become the champion of *futurism* and to make an image to the beast!!

Remarkably, on the other side of the Atlantic and during the same decade of the 1830's, William Miller and his co-workers were expounding the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation using a historicist hermeneutic.¹²⁰ The battle lines were being drawn. At the same time that Satan was preparing to import *futurism* from England into United States God was empowering the Millerites to explain the prophecies from a historicist perspective.

Which of these systems was destined to win on the American continent? On the surface, it would appear that *futurism* has gained the upper hand. But we are reminded that in the end, God's historicist perspective will prevail because He is in control of "the times." No matter how successful apostate

Protestantism may appear to be in its attempt to spread its prophetic scenario, all will come crashing down because God is the arbiter of history, and prophecy will fulfill as He has established.

Seventh-day Adventists have taught that Protestantism will make an image of and to Roman Catholicism by joining church and state and by enforcing Sunday as the day of worship. But there is more. By employing the preterist and futurist prophetic principles of the Roman Catholic Church, Protestants have made a “hermeneutical” image to the beast. Furthermore, they have become the False Prophet because they proclaim the prophetic message they obtained from the beast.

There is a close relationship between Daniel 7:25, Revelation 12:17, Revelation 13:11-18 and Revelation 14:6-12. In Daniel 7:25 the little horn thought it could change two things: the times and the law. God’s response to this was to raise up the remnant church (after the 1260 years) to restore that which the little horn attempted to change. That is, God raised up a remnant with a true prophet in their midst to explain and restore the true meaning of the times; and He raised up a people who keep the commandments of God, including the one which the little horn claims to have changed (Revelation 12:17; 19:10; 22:8, 9).

But the beast will not take this restoration hands down. It will react in the end-time by imposing the mark of the beast (the change in the **law**) and by raising up the false prophet (the change in the **times**).

But God will speak the last word. The three angels’ messages will be proclaimed to every nation, kindred, tongue and people (Revelation 14:6). They will call the world to keep the Sabbath, and resist the mark of the beast (Revelation 14:9-12). They will also call the world to refuse the false prophetic message of the beast and his false prophet. For more on this, see Stephen P. Bohr’s charts at the end of this paper, “*The Change in the Times and the Law*” and, “*A Comparison of Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 13:5-7.*”

Seventh-day Adventists are *historicism’s* last stand. Though there is a handful of individual Bible students here and there who have espoused the historicist method in the 20th century¹²¹ generally speaking, historicists are an endangered species.¹²² And the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the only corporate body in the world which still upholds the historicist hermeneutical method.

After 1844 the entire Protestant world abandoned *historicism* as the proper method to interpret prophecy. Consequently, Protestantism has fallen into a labyrinth of error because it has no governing principle to properly interpret prophecy. Because they lack a proper prophetic hermeneutic, Protestant expositors have resorted to guess work, speculation, prognostication and soothsaying. As one reads the prophetic literature of futurism’s champions one can’t help but be amazed at the plethora of contradictory opinions which they offer.

William Miller employed *historicism* as the method to reach his message. But when the hopes and aspirations of Miller and his followers failed to materialize as expected, Millerism died and historicism as a method was abandoned by virtually all Protestant expositors. Regarding this, Richard Kyle has said:

“Despite its visibility the Millerite movement had little influence on subsequent end-time thinking. It did, however, have three long-term effects: (1) Millerism spawned the Seventh-day Adventist Church; (2) it **discredited historicist premillennialism, causing it to fade out almost entirely after 1844**; and (3) the Millerite fiasco demonstrated the perils of setting definite dates for Christ’s return.”¹²³

When *historicism* quickly faded after 1844, Kyle explains that another system was waiting in the wings to take its place:

“**The Great Disappointment of 1844 had decimated historicist premillennialism**, but a futurist premillennialism called dispensationalism soon arrived on the scene.”¹²⁴

In the book, The Great Tribulation: Past or Future, Thomas Ice [futurist] and Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. [preterist] engage in a debate over whether Matthew 24 should be understood from a preterist or a futurist perspective. Both of these scholars claim to be conservative, born again Christians. Ice makes the following candid admission:

“Historicism, once the dominant view of Protestants from the Reformation until the middle of the last century [please note that 1844 is almost at the midpoint of the 19th century], appears to exert little attraction as a system of prophetic interpretation to conservative Christians (outside of Seventh-day Adventist circles). . . **Within evangelicalism during the last one hundred fifty years**, futurism has grown to **dominate and overcome historicism**.”¹²⁵

Satan knows that in order to destroy the **message and mission** of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, he must first destroy its **method**. The claim of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be the Remnant is based on *historicism* as the method of interpreting Bible Prophecy. We have employed the historicist method to identify the papacy as the Antichrist. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. We have also employed the historicist method to prove that the Remnant Church would arise shortly after 1798 with a prophet in its midst (Revelation 12:17). Our explanation of the 2300 days, the bittersweet book of Revelation 10, the seals, the trumpets, the beasts, the three angels’ messages, the role of the United States, etc., is based on *historicism* as a method.

Satan’s success against the Seventh-day Adventist Church can be far greater if he zeroes in on the **method** of Adventism rather than on the **message** of Adventism. You see, when the method is destroyed, the message goes with it!! That is to say, the message is based on the method. Another way to put it is that hermeneutics will determine the message. The method of the Protestant Reformers became the catalyst for their message. In fact, if it had not been for the method, there would have been no message.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church finds itself at hermeneutical crossroads. Some theologians within the church are even now questioning the soundness of the historicist hermeneutical methodology. Others are proposing futurist interpretations to passages which the Seventh-day Adventist Church has traditionally understood in a historicist manner. Is it any wonder that many of these same theologians are committed to political correctness when it comes to identifying the little horn, the sea beast and the earth beast with lamblike horns? Is it any surprise that some of these scholars are even encouraging the Seventh-day Adventist Church to build bridges of understanding with Rome?

At this juncture we cannot overestimate the critical importance of the book, The Great Controversy by Ellen G. White. Satan hates this book because in it Ellen White employs the historicist method to convey God’s final message. The book is an explanation of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation from a historicist perspective.

Ellen White begins with the destruction of Jerusalem, continues with the persecutions of Pagan Rome and the entrance of error into the church in the days of Constantine. She then makes reference to the period of papal supremacy, the French Revolution, the deadly wound, the Millerite message, the healing of papal Rome's deadly wound, the role of apostate Protestantism, the final crisis, the close of probation, the time of trouble, the second coming, the millennium and the new earth.

A careful comparison of the book The Great Controversy with the book of Revelation shows, beyond any doubt, that The Great Controversy is an interpretation and explanation of the book of Revelation from a historicist perspective. That which Revelation presents in symbolic language is expressed in matter of fact, literal language by Ellen White. God's end-time prophet reveals what a true literal interpretation is: It is not taking symbols literally but rather taking literally the meaning which they convey. For example, she explains in plain, everyday language that wine is false doctrine, the beast is the papacy, the image is apostate Protestantism, the mark of the beast is Sunday, the Seal of God is the Sabbath, the standing up of Michael is the close of probation and the two witnesses are the Old and New Testaments. We could continue the list but it is not necessary. The point has been made.

Ellen White is thus the true prophet who speaks for God while the false prophet of Revelation speaks for the beast. The issues in the final conflict run far deeper than Sabbath versus Sunday. At the center of the end-time controversy are two rival systems of prophetic interpretation. One denies that the papacy changed the law and the other affirms it.

Protestantism has not only imbibed the **wrong day** of worship from the papacy but it has also borrowed the **wrong way** of interpreting prophecy. She is an image of the beast and the spokesperson for her mother from whom she received the change in the times and the law. The change in the times and the change in the law are intimately related. When the Papacy succeeded in getting Protestants to abandon *historicism* as a method, it also succeeded in hiding the Roman Catholic system as the Antichrist. And because Protestants no longer saw the papacy as the predicted Antichrist, they could not discern the role of the papacy in the change of the Sabbath. To put it crassly, if the little horn does not symbolize the papacy, then the papacy did not change the law.

The change in the times, then, hides the culprit who changed the law!! No wonder Protestants are blind to the central issues in the final conflict. No wonder they are oblivious to the fact that the controversy will be between Sabbath observance as a sign of God's authority and the observance of Sunday as a sign of the papacy's authority!!

It is no coincidence that Satan attempted to kill both John the Revelator before he wrote his book and Ellen White before she wrote hers. The Seventh-day Adventist Church stands alone in the world as the bulwark of the historicist method. Only this church can detect and unveil the Antichrist of Scripture because this church alone has preserved the proper prophetic hermeneutic.

A final quote from Joseph Mede: “. . . the Jews expected Christ to come when he did come, and yet knew him not when he was come, because they fancied the manner and quality of his coming like some temporal monarch with armed power to subdue the earth before him. So the Christians, God's second Israel, looked [expected that] the coming of Antichrist should be at that time when he came indeed, and yet they knew him not when he was come; because they had fancied his coming as of some barbarous

tyrant who should with armed power not only persecute and destroy the church of Christ, but almost the world; that is, they looked for such an Antichrist as the Jews looked for a Christ.”¹²⁶

The False Prophet’s Erroneous Prognostications

It seems like every time a nasty international ruler arises to power, the pens of evangelicals go wild. At the turn of the century, many thought that Mussolini might be the predicted Antichrist. Then there was Adolph Hitler. More recent candidates¹²⁷ have been the Ayatollah Khomeini and Saddam Hussein. I even heard once that Henry Kissinger might be the predicted “bad guy.” The fact is that every time there is turmoil in the Middle East, or the price of oil increases drastically, a plethora of evangelical books appear to assure us that the rapture is “even at the door” and the tribulation just around the corner.

An encyclopedia could be written on all the false prophetic predictions of evangelicals in the last one hundred years. Lamentably, this is what happens when “newspaper hermeneutics” are applied to the study of Bible prophecy. Samuele Bacchiocchi, in his excellent book Hal Lindsey’s Prophetic Jigsaw Puzzle, has documented five of Lindsey’s prognostications which failed to materialize. The most serious of these is his prediction in 1970 that Christ would return by 1988!! He even went so far as to predict that the seven year tribulation would last from 1981 to 1988. And what about all the books which were written on the final war between Soviet communism and western capitalism? The Soviet Union no longer even exists!! As time goes by, evangelicals have had to revise, amend and change their views on prophecy. And yet when they are proven wrong, they turn right around and make another prediction!!

When the Gulf War began in 1991, some evangelicals believed that Saddam Hussein might be the promised “bad guy”. I have in my possession, for example, a book by Charles H. Dyer, Professor of Bible exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary. It was published in 1991 and bears the title:

The Rise of Babylon. On the back cover we find a medallion with the profiles of Nebuchadnezzar and Saddam Hussein beside which are the following words: “SADDAM HUSSEIN and the ancient world conqueror Nebuchadnezzar. Not only do they look alike [by the way, who knows what Nebuchadnezzar looked like?], but their mission is the same--to control the world. And the symbol of this world dominion is an ancient city. . . . BABYLON: Prelude to Armageddon?”

Are we really to believe that Saddam Hussein is the predicted Antichrist? Dyer seems to hint in that direction. I wonder what he would say today? How many times must evangelicals be wrong before they learn their lesson? Is it just possible that they might cry out “wolf, wolf!” one time too many and thus totally turn people off to the study of Bible prophecy? Or worse yet, be caught unawares when the wolf comes in an unexpected way and at an unexpected time?

¹ Richard Kyle, The Last Days are Here Again: A History of the End Times (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), p. 101.

² All Scripture references are from the New King James Version.

³ See Genesis 1:14; Habakkuk 2:3; Daniel 8:19; Leviticus 23:2, 4; Deuteronomy 31:10; Psalm 104:19; Judges 20:38.

⁴ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 394-395.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 395.

⁶ Leroy Edwin Froom. The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), volume 2, pp. 52, 49.

⁷ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 55.

-
- ⁸ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 88.
- ⁹ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 40.
- ¹⁰ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 40.
- ¹¹ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 117.
- ¹² Froom, PFF, volume 2, pp. 118-119.
- ¹³ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 357.
- ¹⁴ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 357.
- ¹⁵ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 255.
- ¹⁶ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 256.
- ¹⁷ Martin Luther, First Principles, pp. 196, 197.
- ¹⁸ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 281.
- ¹⁹ Martin Luther, The Works of Martin Luther, volume 2, p. 385.
- ²⁰ Froom, PFF, volume 2, pp. 94-95.
- ²¹ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 305.
- ²² Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 288.
- ²³ Froom, PFF, volume 2, pp. 334-335.
- ²⁴ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 436.
- ²⁵ Quoted in Ralph Woodrow, Great Prophecies of the Bible, p. 161.
- ²⁶ John Knox, The Zurich Letters, p. 199.
- ²⁷ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 423.
- ²⁸ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 344.
- ²⁹ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 368.
- ³⁰ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 368.
- ³¹ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 382.
- ³² Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 383.
- ³³ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 391.
- ³⁴ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 392.
- ³⁵ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 394.
- ³⁶ Thomas Cranmer, Works, volume 1, pp. 62, 63.
- ³⁷ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 378.
- ³⁸ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 379.
- ³⁹ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 407.
- ⁴⁰ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 410.
- ⁴¹ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 410.
- ⁴² Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 459.
- ⁴³ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 461.
- ⁴⁴ Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 461.
- ⁴⁵ Quoted in Albert Close, Antichrist and His Ten Kingdoms (London: Thynne and Company, 1917), p. 110.
- ⁴⁶ Sir Isaac Newton, Observations Upon the Prophecies (London: 1831 edition), p. 75.
- ⁴⁷ Samuel Lee, The Cutting Off of Antichrist, p. 1.
- ⁴⁸ Froom, PFF, volume 1, p. 51.
- ⁴⁹ Froom, PFF, volume 3, p. 113.
- ⁵⁰ Samuel Cooper, A Discourse on the Man of Sin, p. 12.
- ⁵¹ The Westminster Confession of Faith, Section 6, chapter 25.
- ⁵² “Homilies,” part 3, Homily of Obedience, (Cambridge: Corrie, 1850), p. 114.
- ⁵³ The Smalcald Articles.
- ⁵⁴ Article 80 of the Irish Articles of Religion of 1615. Quoted in Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 553.
- ⁵⁵ Article 31 of the Confession of Faith adopted in 1603 in the Synod held at Gap, under the leadership of Henry IV of France.
- ⁵⁶ Froom, PFF, volume 2, pp. 484-485.
- ⁵⁷ See Froom, PFF, volume 2, p. 510 for other Protestant scholars who followed suit.
- ⁵⁸ “The majority of the liberal scholars regard Daniel as basically historical in nature. They date Daniel to the second century B. C., believing that it was predated four centuries to make it seem more reliable. They claim that the book contains historical inaccuracies and a lateness of language that better fits the second century. The author, whose name is unknown, addressed known historical events—the wars of the Hellenistic rulers and Antiochus Epiphanes’ persecutions—as if they were in the

future. In this way the authority of the prophetic passages was enhanced.” (Richard Kyle, The Last Days Are Here Again, p. 30.

⁵⁹ Jerusalem Bible, footnote commentary on Daniel 7:8-9.

⁶⁰ Jerusalem Bible, footnote commentary on Daniel 7:25.

⁶¹ The Jerome Bible Commentary [Roman Catholic], comments on Daniel 7, p. 456.

⁶² The Jerome Bible Commentary [Roman Catholic], comments on Revelation 13, p. 484.

⁶³ The Revised Standard Version, comments on Daniel 7, p. 1307.

⁶⁴ The Interpreter’s Bible Commentary, volume 6, p. 456.

⁶⁵ The Interpreter’s Bible Commentary, volume 12, p. 461.

⁶⁶ The Interpreter’s Bible Commentary, volume 12, p. 461.

⁶⁷ The Broadman Bible Commentary, “Daniel,” pp. 427-428.

⁶⁸ See George Eldon Ladd, The Blessed Hope, pp. 28-31 where Ladd presents the views of several early fathers including Lactantius and Hippolytus.

⁶⁹ Froom, PFE, volume 2, pp. 489-490.

⁷⁰ Froom, PFE, volume 2, p. 495.

⁷¹ Quoted in Froom, PFE, volume 2, p. 500.

⁷² Quoted in Froom, PFE, volume 2, p. 502.

⁷³ Quoted in Froom, PFE, volume 2, p. 502.

⁷⁴ Froom, PFE, volume 3, p. 656.

⁷⁵ Froom, PFE, volume 3, p. 657.

⁷⁶ William Burgh, Lectures on the Second Advent [second edition], p. 63.

⁷⁷ William Burgh, Lectures on the Second Advent [second edition], pp. 64, 65.

⁷⁸ William Burgh, Lectures on the Second Advent [second edition], p. 65.

⁷⁹ Froom, PFE, volume 3, p. 661.

⁸⁰ James H. Todd, Discourses on the Prophecies Relating to Antichrist in the Writings of Daniel and St. Paul, pp. xv, 259-267, 320-321, 322-323.

⁸¹ Froom, PFE, volume 3, pp. 666-667.

⁸² David Pio Gullon, “*Lacunza’s Impact on Prophetic Studies and Modern Futurism*,” Journal of the Adventist Theological Society 9/1-2 (1998), pp. 71-95.

⁸³ Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra [pseudonym], The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty (Dublin: Wm. Curry Jun., & Co., 1833), pp. 10-11.

⁸⁴ See Duncan McDougall, The Rapture of the Saints (Blackwood, New Jersey: O. F. P. M. Publishers, 1970), p. 30.

⁸⁵ Hal Lindsey has recently challenged the late intrusion of the pre-tribulation rapture idea into the Christian mainstream (Hal Lindsey, Vanished Into Thin Air (Beverly Hills, California: Western Front, Ltd., 1999). He insists that the pre-tribulation rapture has been the historic blessed hope of the church since apostolic times. And who are his star witnesses? Any of the early Ante-Nicene Fathers? No. Any Post-Nicene Fathers? Again, no. Any of the great Medieval theologians such as Thomas Aquinas? No. Any of the great Protestant Reformers such as Luther, Calvin and Zwingli? No. Any of the great Protestant Confessions of Faith? No. Any of the great Protestant commentators such as Matthew Henry, Albert Barnes or Adam Clarke? No. Any of the Roman Catholic futurist counter-reformers such as Ribera, Bellarmine or Lacunza? No. Any of the futurist expositors who belonged to the Oxford Tractarian Movement such as Maitland, Burgh, Todd or Newman? Agan no!

Who, then, is left to support Lindsey’s view? He presents two star witnesses. The first is a document supposedly discovered in 1997 by futurist theologian Grant Jeffrey. This document, known as Pseudo-Ephraem, is attributed to Ephraem of Nisibis (306-373) who was one of the great figures in the history of the Syrian church. Lindsey admits that some of the works attributed to Ephraem are of “doubtful authenticity” (p. 112) and that “it is not necessarily true that it [Pseudo-Ephraem] was authored by Ephraem of Nisibis” (p. 113). Lindsey goes on to recognize that “it could have been authored as late as the eighth century” (p. 113).

On the basis of this one pseudo-document Lindsey concludes that the Early Church taught a pre-tribulation rapture. In his own words: “the church *already* believed that the Antichrist would not appear on the world’s stage until *after* the church has been evacuated” (p. 113).

That Lindsey would even dare use this document as evidence for a pre-tribulation rapture in the Early Church is astonishing and stretches credulity to the breaking point! Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that Pseudo-Ephraem did teach a pre-tribulation rapture. Does one voice prove that this was the historic hope of the whole church at that time? Not anymore than a

solo proves the existence of a choir!! And does this even prove that this one voice was correct?

If Pseudo-Ephraem was so influential, then why wasn't it picked up on by anyone until the time of Darby and Irving? The fact is that **no one** either before or after this document ever taught a pre-tribulation rapture of the church until the early 19th

century. It is surprising indeed that if, as Lindsey believes, the apostle Paul clearly taught a pre-tribulation rapture as the blessed hope of the Church, that hope could not be found for 19 centuries!!

But it is not at all clear that Pseudo-Ephraem even teaches a pre-tribulation rapture. Let's quote from section 2 of the document: "For all the saints and elect of God are gathered [gathered to where, H. L.] **prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world**" (p. 115, emphasis Lindsey's).

The statement does not say that the saints will be "taken to heaven" or "snatched away" or "evacuated." In fact, Pseudo-Ephraem never even quotes any of the choice Bible passages which are used by pre-tribulationists such as I Thessalonians 4:13-17. The expression "taken to the Lord" could very well mean [in the light of the erroneous anthropology of the day] that they would be allowed to die and go to heaven at the very moment of death. In effect, section 10 of the document points to the time, after the tribulation, when Jesus will declare: "Arise, o sleeping ones, arise, meet Christ, because his [Antichrist's] hour of judgment has come" (p. 122). This statement strongly suggests that the author of Pseudo-Ephraem believed that the resurrection of the righteous would be at the glorious second coming and that the Antichrist would be judged at the same time.

In the light of this analysis, Lindsey's inserted question, [gathered to where, H. L.] must be answered, we are not absolutely certain, or, that's what I would like to know! Thus Lindsey's first line of evidence in favor of an early belief in the rapture is based on a document whose **date is uncertain**, whose **author is unknown**, and whose **message does clearly prove his point!** Maybe his second star witness will fare better.

Lindsey's second exhibit for an early belief in a pre-tribulation rapture is in a statement from Baptist pastor Morgan Edwards (1722-1788). Even though Lindsey does not provide the source, he assures us that Edwards taught "a form of pre-tribulationism" (p. 133). But by Lindsey's own admission, Edwards taught that the rapture would "**be about three years and a half before the Millennium**" (p. 133, bold is Lindsey's).

On several counts, Lindsey assumes more than the statement allows. First of all, the statement does not say that the church will be taken to heaven three and a half years before the glorious coming of Jesus. Edwards could very well mean that the glorious appearing of Jesus will take place three and a half years before the millennium begins. There is no indication in the statement that there will be two comings of Jesus. It seems, rather, that Edwards tacks on three and a half years to the beginning of the Millennium to allow for the righteous to participate in a work of judgment. It is notable that Edwards does not mention the tribulation or the reign of Antichrist! He doesn't even tell us where he gets the three and a half year figure. Furthermore, he doesn't even hint that **only** the church will disappear and that literal Israel and unbelievers will be left behind.

Once again, Lindsey has employed ambiguous testimony to try and prove his point. At best for Lindsey's view, Edwards taught a mid-tribulation rapture, a view which Lindsey vigorously rejects in his book. At worst for Lindsey's view, Edwards was not teaching a mid-tribulation rapture at all! So for Lindsey to say on the basis of Edwards' remarks that "as early as 1788, the Rapture was an **established doctrine**" (p. 134, emphasis mine) is an obvious stretch. Does the dubious voice of one man prove that a doctrine is **established**? If that is so, then Arianism is correct because one man taught it! Even if Edwards did teach a pre-tribulation rapture (which he did not clearly do), what proves that his view was the orthodox teaching of the entire Christian Church for 17 centuries?

Therefore, in the light of the evidence, it is safe to say that the idea of a pre-tribulation rapture first intruded upon mainline Protestantism in the early 19th century.

⁸⁶ S. P. Tregelles, The Hope of Christ's Second Coming, first published in 1864, and now available at Ambassadors for Christ, Los Angeles, California. This remark by Tregelles is interesting indeed. Most dispensationalists deny that this was the source of the rapture theory. But is Tregelles' story so hard to believe? It is well known that many of the early believers in the rapture theory had charismatic leanings including Margaret McDonald, John Nelson Darby and Edward Irving. Furthermore, Hal Lindsey, who proudly thanks God for the work of John Nelson Darby, tells us that when he was preparing his book,

Vanished Into Thin Air, “There were times. . . that I experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in such power that I went into an **ecstatic state**” (p. 51, emphasis mine). Evidently, Irving in the 19th century and Lindsey in the 20th had similar experiences!

⁸⁷ Quoted in McDougall, The Rapture of the Saints, p. 45.

⁸⁸ Says Richard Kyle about Darby’ *futurism*: “Darby’s system was not original. Futurism began with the sixteenth-century Catholics” (Richard Kyle, The Last Days Are Here Again, p. 74).

⁸⁹ Quoted in Oswald T. Allis, Prophecy and the Church (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1977), p. 26.

⁹⁰ Hal Lindsey, Vanished Into Thin Air, pp. 179-180. Lindsey’s insistence that Revelation 1-3 applies to the Church Age while Revelation 4-18 applies to literal Israel after the rapture encounters serious difficulties. Let’s see why. Lindsey makes the following comment about the seven churches of Revelation: “I believe that these seven churches were selected and arranged by our omniscient Lord because they had problems and characteristics that would prophesy seven stages of history through which **the Church Universal** would pass” (Vanished Into Thin Air, p. 276, emphasis mine). This must mean that the history of the seven churches [the seven stages of the Church Universal] must come to an end at the moment the church is snatched away to heaven. However, this view creates insurmountable problems.

First of all, in Revelation 16:15 we find a warning which Jesus gives at the very climax of the tribulation period. This warning is an echo of a message Jesus had previously given to the Laodicean Church (Revelation 3:18). There, Laodicea was admonished to buy “white **raiment** you may be clothed, and that the **shame** of your **nakedness** not appear.” The critical question is this: Why would Christ have counseled the Laodicean Church to buy white raiment “that the shame of her nakedness be not revealed” during the period of the sixth plague at the climax of the tribulation if Laodicea had already gone to heaven at the rapture before the tribulation began?

As we have already shown, Lindsey would have us believe that Revelation 1-3 applies to the Church Age and Revelation 4-18 is referring to the literal Jews during the last seven years of earth’s history. The main reason he provides for this dichotomy is that the word “church” is not used even once in Revelation 4-19. This is true but we must ask, How does Lindsey handle the Jewish language which is applied to the church in Revelation 1-3?

Take Balaam as an example. He is mentioned in the period of the third church. In Lindsey’s view, the third church must represent one of the earlier stages in the history of the Church Universal. Yet, why is Jewish terminology applied to one of the earlier stages of church history? Another case is Jezebel. She is mentioned in connection with the fourth church, Thyatira. In Lindsey’s schema, this church must represent the period of papal dominion. But again we must ask, why does John employ Jewish language to describe a period within the history of the Church Universal?

Incidentally, if Lindsey were to be consistent in his literalism he would have to say that Jezebel was literally alive during the fourth stage of the Church Age. Yet I am sure he would not allow for this. What hermeneutical gymnastics permit Lindsey to say that Jezebel is not the literal queen *redivivus* but the two witnesses are literally Elijah and Moses?

⁹¹ Lindsey states: “All who interpret the Bible in a literal sense believe in the fact of the Rapture and that it is distinct from the Second Coming of Christ” (Vanished Into Thin Air, p. 38). With all due respect, I take exception to Lindsey’s sweeping statement. Seventh-day Adventists believe in a literal interpretation of the Biblical language unless the style of literature or the context clearly indicate otherwise. This is a time honored principle of Protestantism. Apocalyptic language must be interpreted symbolically by its very nature; it cannot be approached in the same manner, for example, as the historical narratives of Scripture. Lindsey claims that Jesus and the apostles applied the Historical-Grammatical method, and they did. But Lindsey does not provide even one example of Jesus or the apostles taking symbolic language literally (see, Hal Lindsey, Vanished Into Thin Air, p. 101).

Even Lindsay must be willing to admit that prophetic symbols cannot consistently be understood in a literal manner or else Jesus would be a woolly four-legged creature, Satan would be a seven-headed monster and the faithful church would be a woman standing on the moon! It is obvious that although symbols cannot be taken literally, what the symbols stand for is always literally true! A close examination of dispensationalism proves that its proponents are consistently inconsistent in the application of their own principle.

⁹² George Eldon Ladd, The Blessed Hope, p. 43.

⁹³ Evangelical theologian James Barr has said that the Scotfield Reference Bible is “perhaps the most important single document in all fundamentalist literature” (Quoted in Richard Kyle, The Last Days Are Here Again, p. 106).

⁹⁴ Richard Kyle, The Last Days Are Here Again, p. 106.

- ⁹⁵ Richard Kyle, The Last Days Are Here Again, p. 106.
- ⁹⁶ Hal Lindsey, Vanished Into Thin Air, p. 72.
- ⁹⁷ Hal Lindsey, Vanished Into Thin Air, pp. 77-78.
- ⁹⁸ Hal Lindsey, Vanished Into Thin Air, p. 69.
- ⁹⁹ Hal Lindsey, Vanished Into Thin Air, p. 105. Bold is mine.
- ¹⁰⁰ Hal Lindsey, Vanished Into Thin Air, p. 105.
- ¹⁰¹ George Eldon Ladd, The Blessed Hope (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 37.
- ¹⁰² Joseph Tanner, Daniel and the Revelation (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), pp. 16, 17.
- ¹⁰³ Henry Alford, The New Testament for English Readers, volume 2, part 2, p. 351.
- ¹⁰⁴ Henry Alford, The New Testament for English Readers, volume 2, pp. 348, 349.
- ¹⁰⁵ G. S. Hitchcock, The Beasts and the Little Horn, p. 7.
- ¹⁰⁶ Richard Kyle, The Last Days Are Here Again, p. 62.
- ¹⁰⁷ Joseph Tanner, Daniel and the Revelation (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), p. 17.
- ¹⁰⁸ See the footnotes in the Scofield Reference Bible, pp. 909, 910.
- ¹⁰⁹ The Costco Connection, “Arts and Entertainment,” March 2000, p. 49.
- ¹¹⁰ The Costco Connection, “Arts and Entertainment,” March 2000, p. 49.
- ¹¹¹ The books are Global Peace and A Woman Rides the Beast.
- ¹¹² Dave Hunt, A Woman Rides the Beast, p. 84, bold is mine.
- ¹¹³ Dave Hunt, Global Peace, pp. 72-73, bold is mine.
- ¹¹⁴ Hal Lindsey, Vanished Into Thin Air, p. 272.
- ¹¹⁵ Dave Hunt, Global Peace, p. 68.
- ¹¹⁶ Dave Hunt, Global Peace, p. 69.
- ¹¹⁷ Dave Hunt, Global Peace, p. 69.
- ¹¹⁸ Dave Hunt, Global Peace, p. 7-8.
- ¹¹⁹ Dave Hunt, Global Peace, p. 47, bold is mine.
- ¹²⁰ “Miller set forth a number of principles for understanding biblical prophecy. But his thinking rested on two basic approaches to Scripture. (1) He embraced a historicist interpretation of the Book of Revelation—the prophecies of the Apocalypse relate to various periods in history. This approach to premillennialism tended to lock the interpreter into a specific prophetic timetable. (2) Whenever possible, Miller interpreted Scripture literally. Figures, parables, and numbers were exceptions: they have a symbolic meaning. Employing these two approaches, Miller looked for the fulfillment of prophecy in both historical events and future developments” (Richard Kyle, The Last Days Are Here Again, p. 88-89).
- ¹²¹ Ralph Woodrow is a notable example. For others, see George Eldon Ladd, The Blessed Hope, pp. 46-60.
- ¹²² The truth of this statement can be clearly discerned in Hal Lindsey’s recent book, Vanished Into Thin Air as well as in other contemporary futurist literature. In Lindsey’s book he takes issue with Amillennialists, Postmillennialists, Dominionists and Pre-wrath advocates but does not so much as give the historicist perspective a passing glance. This total neglect of the historicist method proves that *historicism* is an obsolete and non-influential hermeneutical tool in contemporary prophetic studies. For this reason, Lindsey can remark: “I have found that almost all men who consistently proclaim a prophetic message in evangelism are Pre-tribulationists” (Vanished Into Thin Air, p. 48). Seventh-day Adventists, for over 150 years, have ardently proclaimed an evangelistic message based on the Bible prophecies and yet their views are totally ignored in Lindsey’s book. Truly, historicists are an “endangered species.”
- ¹²³ Richard Kyle, The Last Days Are Here Again, p. 91.
- ¹²⁴ Richard Kyle, The Last Days Are Here Again, p. 102. Kyle furthermore states: “The last half of the nineteenth century witnessed two significant shifts in respect to end-time thinking. The dominant postmillennialism gave way to premillennialism. And within premillennialism, **futuristic dispensationalism supplanted the old historicist version**. These two important changes have largely shaped the apocalyptic outlook of evangelical Protestantism—a subculture which has become the dominant eschatological voice in modern America” (pp. 101-102, bold is mine).
- ¹²⁵ Thomas Ice and Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. The Great Tribulation: Past or Future? (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999), p. 6, bold is mine.
- ¹²⁶ Quoted in Charles H. H. Wright, Daniel and His Prophecies, “Introduction,” (London: Williams and Norgate, 1906), p. xvi.
- ¹²⁷ Richard Kyle (The Last Days Are Here Again, p. 119) points out that Lindsey has backtracked and become more tentative on some of his earlier predictions. “In Planet Earth—2000 A. D. he [Lindsey] reminds his readers that he had conditioned his earlier forecast with several ifs and maybes. He also points out that ‘all these things’ in Matthew 24:34 could be the return of Israel in 1948 or the 1967 Six-Day War. Moreover, he redefines the biblical generation as ‘somewhere between 40 and 100 years.’”

A Selected Bibliography

- Allis, Oswald T. Prophecy and the Church (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1977).
- Allen, Clifton J. The Broadman Bible Commentary. 12 volumes (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1973).
- Bacchiocchi, Samuele. Hal Lindsey's Prophetic Jigsaw Puzzle (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Biblical Perspectives, 1985).
- Blodgett, Ralph. RAPTURE: Is it Real? (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1975).
- Brown, Raymond E., Fitzmeyes, Joseph A., Murphy, Ronald E., editors. The Jerome Bible Commentary (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968).
- Buttrick, George Arthur. The Interpreter's Bible Commentary. 12 volumes (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1992).
- Cox, William E. Biblican Studies in Final Things (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1975).
- Cox, William E. An Examination of Dispensationalism (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1974).
- Crews, Joe. What the Bible Says About the Secret Rapture (Frederick, Maryland: Amazing Facts Publications, no date).
- De Caro, Louis. Israel Today: Fulfillment of Prophecy? (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1974).
- Dyer, Charles H. The Rise of Babylon (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1991).
- Froom, Leroy Edwin. The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers. 4 volumes (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1946).
- Harper Study Bible: The Revised Standard Version (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1965).
- Hendriksen, William. Israel in Prophecy (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1968).
- Hunt, Dave. Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest Publishers, 1990).
- Hunt, Dave. A Woman Rides the Beast (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1994).
- Ice, Thomas and Gentry, Kenneth L. The Great Tribulation: Past or Future? (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel, 1999).
- James, Edgar C. Armageddon and the New World Order (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991).
- The Jerusalem Bible: Readers Edition (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1968).
- John, Varner J. The Secret Rapture and the Antichrist (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1944).
- Kubo, Sakae. The Open Rapture (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1978).
- Ladd, George Eldon. The Blessed Hope (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972).
- LaRondelle, Hans K. The Israel of God in Prophecy (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1983).
- McDougall, Duncan. The Rapture of the Saints (Blackwood, New Jersey: O. F. P. M. Publishers, 1970).

-
- The New American Bible (Camden, New Jersey: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1970).
- Ryrie, Charles Caldwell. Dispensationalism Today (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965).
- Schurch, Maylan. The Rapture: A Big Secret? (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1997).
- Scofield, Cyrus I. The Scofield Reference Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).
- Strand, Kenneth A. Interpreting the Book of Revelation (Naples, Florida: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1979).
- Walvoord, John F. Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1990).
- Walvoord, John F. Prophecy: 14 Essential Keys to Understanding the Final Drama (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993).
- Walvoord, John F. The Rapture Question (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1976).
- Woodrow, Ralph Edward. The Secret Rapture Is it Scriptural? (Riverside, California: Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, Inc., 1989).
- Woodrow, Ralph Edward. Great Prophecies of the Bible: The Second Coming of Christ, Matthew Twenty-four, the Seventy Weeks, the Antichrist (Riverside, California: Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, Inc., 1989).
- Woolsey, Raymond H. The Secret Rapture (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1975).