

The Papacy Connection

By
Jim Sayles

A tale of intrigue and deception beginning with Martin Luther's spiritually courageous stand against the Roman Catholic practice of indulgences (requiring people to buy forgiveness from the church) and the papacy's claim to be the sole representative of Christ in the earth, and an illustration of how Satan, through the religious Jezebel spirit, planted seeds of deception through that original conflict that are still bearing poisoned fruit in the church today.

In 1517 Martin Luther, a German priest, pinned his "Ninety-Five Theses," criticizing the Roman Catholic practice of indulgences, to the Archbishop's door. Martin Luther's intention was to influence the church to make changes, not to revolt from the Roman Catholic Church. But when Pope Leo X issued a papal decree condemning Luther's teachings and Charles V, the holy Roman emperor, ordered Luther to recant, Luther refused and was excommunicated by the pope.

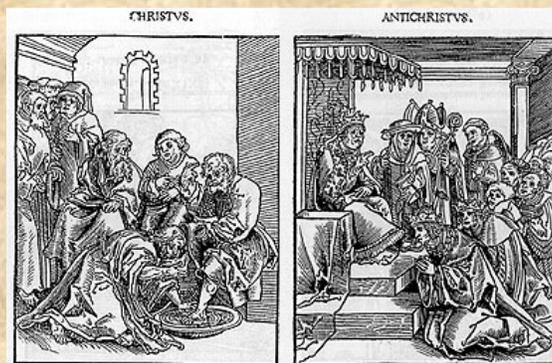
Excommunication by the Catholic church is, according to Catholic doctrine, the loss of one's salvation, and, other than burning at the stake for heresy, it is the highest degree of punishment that the church could levy against a man at that time.

Luther's response was to start what we now refer to as the Protestant Reformation, dividing the church between the Roman Catholic Church and those who protested Roman Catholic rule and doctrine.

The invention of the printing press aided Luther, who was joined by John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli, as the Protestant Reformation spread rapidly throughout Europe.

Luther translated the New Testament into German, and he taught that the individual believer should receive the truth of God through scripture, rather than the papacy being the sole interpreter of scripture.

Luther also commissioned a series of woodcuts, published as a booklet, depicting the papacy as "Antichrist" and the Roman Catholic Church as "the whore of Babylon."



Luther's claims formed what is now known as the Historicist view of apocalyptic prophecy with the "Antichrist" being the Roman Catholic papacy ruling both the religious and the secular world for 1260 years, which naturally included Pope Leo X and his successors.

Pope Paul III, the third Pope after Leo X, became known as the "Counter Reformation Pope," and in response to the massive exodus from the Roman Catholic Church and the widespread Reformation identification of the papacy as the "Antichrist" and the Roman Catholic Church as the "whore of Babylon," Pope Paul III, a strong supporter of the Jesuits, separately commissioned two men, Luis De Alcanzar, a Jesuit priest and theologian, and Francisco Ribera, a Jesuit priest and theologian at the University of Salamanca to publish works on biblical prophecy that would contradict the damaging Reformation claims.

Luis De Alcanzar published a work establishing the Preterist view that the entirety of apocalyptic scriptures were fulfilled by the sacking of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., and this view identified Nero as the literal Antichrist.

Thus, if one adopted this view, the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church, could not possibly be identified as the Antichrist and the whore of Babylon.

Preterism, invented by Alcazar, persists to this day, and, like all false doctrine, it has morphed into various versions in response to exegetical criticism, with the most popular version being "Partial Preterism," which claims that all apocryphal prophecy has been fulfilled except for the second coming of Christ and His millennial reign.

Separately, Francisco Ribera published an exhaustive exegete of the Revelation of Jesus Christ in which he claimed that the first three chapters applied to the historic church under the rule of pagan (pre-Christian era) Rome, and the rest of Revelation applied to a future three and a half year period, immediately prior to the second coming of Christ, thus also eliminating the possibility that the Pope was Antichrist and the Roman Catholic Church the whore of Babylon.

In Ribera's version the apostasy was described as a falling away from the Catholic Church and the Pope because of the Reformation propaganda which stated that "the papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist."

Thus, between the two radically opposing views, Preterism and the Futurist view that ultimately became known as Dispensationalism, the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church were exonerated, and in Ribera's work, the Protestant Reformation was identified as the "apostasy."

The story and the deceptions do not end here, though.

Another Jesuit priest, Manuel Lacunza, was commissioned by the papacy to expand on Ribera's document, but under the pseudonym of Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra, a supposed converted Jewish rabbi. Thus giving external credence to the earlier works of Ribera.

Lacunza's works were discovered by Edward Irving in 1827, an effective, well known evangelist, and translated into English. And it was Lacunza's heretical works, translated by Irving, that influenced John Nelson Darby, one of the founding fathers of the elitist Plymouth Brethren, as Darby's dispensational theology and a pre-tribulation resurrection-"rapture" theory took shape.

Dr. Ice of Dallas Theological Seminary, the seedbed of modern dispensational doctrine, claims that Irving's translation of Lacunza's writings only added to and complimented Darby's theological conclusions, but it was at the Powerscourt Prophecy Conference in 1832, five years after Irving's translation of Lacunza's works were published, that Darby revealed his pre-trib "rapture" theory, and by that time he was strongly influenced by Irving's writings.

Another Plymouth Brethren member and contemporary of Darby's, Cyrus Scofield, then published his "Scofield Reference Bible," which could have been more aptly named, "The Dispensational Bible," followed by another dispensational advocate, Charles Ryrie, and his "Ryrie Study Bible," both of which have been widely used by evangelical seminary students who have naturally assumed the dispensational viewpoint.

Sir Robert Anderson, a Scotland Yard detective and theologian, formed the third member of this founding Triad of Dispensationalism when he published "The Coming Prince," interpreting Daniel 9:24-27 as indicating that the Antichrist would sign a seven year treaty with Israel and many nations immediately after the removal of the church in a secret "rapture."

It should be noted that an examination of the writings of the early church fathers prior to the Protestant Reformation all reveal that they expected the church to be persecuted by the Antichrist in the end times, not in some historic period prior to the end times. (See "**Warning From Voices of the Past**")

Dispensationalism was widely adopted by fundamentalist preachers in the early twentieth century, because the concept of a secret "rapture" of the church preached well, and the popular "Scofield Reference Bible" and "Ryrie Study Bible" supported that doctrine in their reference notes.

Dispensationalism has been supported and promoted more recently by Dr. John Walvoord, former president of Dallas Theological Seminary, and J. Dwight Pentecost, Professor Emeritus at Dallas Theological Seminary, and a longtime member of the Plymouth Brethren (founded by John N. Darby), both of whom espoused dispensational theology in its entirety, including a pre-tribulation "rapture" theory. Dr. Walvoord's numerous books on eschatology from the dispensational viewpoint have heavily influenced the modern adoption of the many variations and distinctives of Dispensationalism among protestants, (the morphings and mutations of that theory induced by external criticism), and both his and J. Dwight Pentecost's books on theology and eschatology are still being used to train seminary students at Dallas Theological Seminary and others.

Hal Lindsey's book, "Late, Great Planet Earth," further popularized Dispensational theology, and Lindsey predicted the specific date of the rapture based on his faulty, non-revelatory interpretation of the Lord's allegorical statement, "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also when you see all these things..." (all the signs of the times the Lord had identified)... "you know that he is near."

Lindsey then presumed, inaccurately, that the "lesson" of the fig tree was related to Israel's return to national statehood on May 14, 1948, and that a generation was forty years. Therefore, the rapture would take place on May 14, 1988.

Chuck Smith made a similar prediction in 1981, and the members of his Costa Mesa Calvary Chapel gathered for one final service on New Year's eve 1981. But at the stroke of midnight, they all went home, and many left Calvary Chapel permanently.

NASA engineer, Edgar Whisenant, then published a book titled, "88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Occur on September 21, 1988."

In Whisenant's book-selling promotional tour he liked to make the statement that if his prediction was not true he should be stoned as a false prophet, but he never submitted himself to that stoning, and, after re-calculating a couple of times, he faded from the scene.

TBN promoted all of these predictions and held regular "Rapture-Ready" sessions, and, as these predictions failed one after another, TBN finally stopped holding "Rapture-Ready" sessions.

Yet, we have gracefully forgotten this non-revelatory foolishness, which, in Old Testament times would have been identified as "false prophecy."

15 million gullible Christians bought Lindsey's book, and Lindsey still has a "prophecy" show on TBN. Chuck Smith, who never apologized for his false prophesying, still has a huge Calvary Chapel ministry, and just when it seemed the idiocy was losing its impetus, Tim LaHaye published the "Left Behind" series that has turned into a multi-million dollar industry for Tim and his co-author, rejuvenating the pre-trib "rapture" theory among Christians unfamiliar with the corrupt history of this doctrine.

But the one who has gained the most from these false doctrines of Historicism, Preterism, and, particularly, Dispensationalism, is Satan, the father of lies and true author of those doctrines, and he has had a big, belly laugh as his deceptions during the 16th century struggle between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformation have continued to bear much poisoned fruit just as he planned, ultimately rendering the modern church vulnerable to the escalating increase of even greater deception in these last days.

Pray then for a move and anointing of the Spirit of truth in these days, and pray that you will be included among the "wise virgins" who will respond to the Lord's commands to reject false doctrine, false practices, and false interpretations of scripture, and will,

instead, repent and respond only to His voice as the latter rains begin to fall. (See [“REVELATION: The Lord’s Letter to the End Times Church.”](#))

Other Articles on Biblical Prophecy by Jim Sayles

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