

DIALOGUE WITH DISPENSATIONALISM:

Hal Lindsey's Dispensational Eschatology and
its Implications for an Articulation of
Christian Hope in a Nuclear Age

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Religious Studies, McGill University,
Montreal, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Systematic Theology.

by Christopher Levan, B.A., M.Div., M.A.,

Kingston, 1990

Abstract

This dissertation explores the question of hope in the nuclear age by examining a movement within the North American Christian tradition known as dispensationalism. It concentrates specifically on one author, Hal Lindsey, whose books on the "end-times" are the basis for much of the current Christian apocalyptic thinking on this continent. There are two fundamental questions: (1) What does Lindsey's dispensational interpretation of God and Divine providence do to his understanding of hope?; (2) Does Lindsey's interpretation of the hope contribute anything to an articulation of hope in the nuclear age? In response to the first question, it is determined that Lindsey's Theology is governed by a providentialism which controls both his doctrine of God and his understanding of hope. History is controlled by a providential plan to which everything, even God, is bound. This plan ends with the destruction of the planet. Thus, hope, in Lindsey's terms, can only emerge after the destruction of the present order. In answer to the second question, it is explained that while Lindsey's apocalypticism gives faith a strong motivation and the sense of a limit to human pride, it undermines human responsibility for the planet and diminishes the ethical dimension of the gospel's call to discipleship.

Abstrait

Cette thèse est une exploration de la question de l'espérance dans le contexte nucléaire. Elle analyse un mouvement de la tradition chrétienne d'Amérique du Nord appelé "dispensationalism." Plus précisément, la thèse examine les travaux de Hal Lindsey, un auteur connu du mouvement apocalyptique. Il y a deux questions fondamentales dans cette recherche. Premièrement, quelle est la relation entre la théologie de Lindsey (sa doctrine de Dieu et de la providence) et son interprétation de l'espérance? Deuxièmement, y a-t-il des idées de Lindsey utiles à une proclamation de l'espérance dans le contexte nucléaire? La présente thèse affirme que la théologie de Lindsey est orientée par un "providentialisme" qui contrôle ses autres doctrines. L'histoire est contrôlée par un programme divin inchangeable. Le programme se termine avec la destruction de la terre. Donc, pour Lindsey, l'espérance provient de la destruction. Tout en acceptant quelques idées de Lindsey, comme l'aspect impératif de la foi et la critique de la fierté humaine, la thèse conclut que sa théologie se démet de toute responsabilité à l'égard de la planète et appauvrit la dimension éthique de l'évangile.

Preface:

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The concepts underlying and motivating this dissertation came out of a dream. During the research for a lecture on the short term effects of a nuclear explosion I uncovered the fact that the area of total destruction produced by the explosion of a one-megaton atomic bomb was one and a half miles. Some days later, during a bout of fitful sleeping I was given the premonition that just such a bomb was to explode in five minutes over Grace Anglican Church, a building around the corner from my house. The dramatic action consisted in attempting to get the family a safe distance away from this disaster and the plot was complicated by a tension that mounted to a nightmarish frenzy as children refused to get dressed, bicycles developed flat tires and the author furiously attempted to determine the safe distance from the epicenter by converting miles into kilometers and multiplying by the average speed of a bike. Was there enough time to travel one and a half miles away from the church in five minutes? Would bicycles be more exposed than cars when the thermal pulse engulfed the city? What about food? Images of flight, destruction, and anguished children began to swirl in a whirl-wind of agitation and distress. Unfortunately, like the present nuclear context, this vision had no decisive conclusion--only uncertainty and doubt. The family was off on the road heading away from the city and I awoke wondering if we made it to safety.

Quite apart from what it may say about the feasibility of bicycles as the means for emergency evacuations or the nuisance of metric conversion, this dream concretized the two intuitions which have served to inspire the present study. In the first place, the bomb is aimed at the church, at 'Grace' church. Is this not an appropriate image for Christian theology to explore in the nuclear age? Like the targeting point for the Nagasaki bomb, which was a Christian cathedral, the nuclear device in the dream was aimed at the very structure of grace. If a nuclear conflagration ever occurs would not divine grace be one of the primary victims? In that war, literally the one to end all wars and every other activity, human folly will truncate the possibility of forgiving. Therefore it could be asked if the restorative power of grace might die with the annihilation of the human species. What does this imply about the power and providence of God? Can human beings intervene between Divine will and the created order? It was through these musings that the idea began to emerge that Christian Theology, the task of discerning the Divine presence in creation, is somehow threatened or challenged by the very existence and potential of nuclear technology. Dorothee Sölle's book, The Arms Race Kills Even Without War,¹ confirmed this intuition. Further reflection led to Christological questions. What is the meaning of the cross

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in the nuclear context? Does the image of this dream--the cross planted as the target, as the 'ground zero' of a nuclear explosion--evoke new visions for Christology and soteriology?

A second insight of the dream evolves from the realization that it is human nature to flee from disaster. Given the above Christological considerations, could it be that the present, nuclear-induced anxiety is, in reality, a retreat away from the cross--a desertion from the very point where, though it is besieged, grace is most salvific? The possible relationship between an abandonment of the cross and the threat of Hiroshima became a striking and guiding hypothesis in further reading.

Examining the history of Christianity in North America it became evident that many religious writers, scholars and theologians have tried to avoid or ignore the menace of a nuclear holocaust. One such author is the dispensationalist Hal Lindsey whose apocalypticism is now quite popular. Does his eschatological vision foster political and social escapism? Through his description of "the Rapture" is he fashioning a popular spiritual haven in which believers could hide from the present perplexing context? Such questions are deserving of a careful response.

These two general themes, the cross hidden in a mushroom cloud and the flight away from that cross, have shaped the following research concerning the nurturing of hope in a nuclear context.

All time which is spent on research of this kind is energy not used elsewhere. The first people who need to be recognized as those who have aided in this work are therefore the ones who have relinquished time with their father, son, brother, lover, husband, friend in order to allow him to work. For their patience and understanding I am always thankful.

It is also important to acknowledge the gift of insight and experience which was offered by students and colleagues at Queen's Theological College and the Faculty of Religious Studies of McGill University. Without the encouragement of fellow travelers the road would have been long and steep. Steadfast support and constant commitment have been the gifts of two special friends, Don Matheson and Ray Drennan. It is hoped that their trust and sympathy have not been overly taxed during this time. Moreover, the writing skill of the author has been immensely augmented by the careful proofreading and reflection of the author's father, Victor Levan, by Lyn Yeo, a secretarial assistant, by Mark Parent, a fellow student and Dorothy Schweder, a trusted editor.

A final and heart-felt word of appreciation must be expressed to the author's thesis advisor Professor Douglas John Hall. More than anything else, Professor Hall's encouragement and challenging critique of the present work have been of immense assistance. Far beyond this research, Professor Hall, his family, and especially Rhoda have been inspiring friends through many trials and joys, and compassionate supporters over the years of our acquaintance. It is difficult to thank one's mentor. Words of gratitude seem trite and somehow less than adequate. Perhaps it is sufficient to state that this person changed one's life and that such a gift is invaluable.

There are two preliminary notes to be made regarding the following work. For the reader who has not encountered Hal Lindsey's writing there are several appendices included with this research which are intended to give both an overview of his books and a brief synopsis of his eschatological vision. Since the writing of this thesis Lindsey has produced another book entitled: The Road to Holocaust.² It does not figure in the arguments of this dissertation. A second point is about the spelling of the word theology. Systematic theology is quite appropriately divided into five disciplines, Theology, Christology, Anthropology, Ecclesiology and Eschatology. There is, of course, some confusion created in these terms since the entire science is known as 'theology' and one of

the specific disciplines has the same name. To be clear, in what follows when theology is spelt with a capital 'T' it refers to the specific discipline involving the examination of the doctrine of God. Otherwise the word will refer to the broader study of faith.

Christopher Levan
Kingston, Nov. 15, 1990

Notes:

¹ Dorothee Sölle, The Arms Race Kills even Without War, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982). The thesis of Solle's work is that the very preparation of nuclear weapons requires a deadening of the human spirit.

² Hal Lindsey, The Road to Holocaust, (New York: Bantam Books, 1989).

To: Robert, Rebecca and Matthew . . .
three reasons for hope in a nuclear age

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Introduction: A Dialogue with Dispensationalism

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In view of the dangerous potential of doom boom theology there is an urgent need for genuine dialogue between religious traditions that have scarcely been on speaking terms.

Robert Jewett¹

I.1 Motivation for this Dissertation:

Juan Luis Segundo argues that liberating theology begins with "profound and enriching questions and suspicions about our real situation."² In this respect Segundo is affirming that the challenge and task of theology begins with the assertion that the world is not as God intended it should be. This is a judgment which is not confined solely to liberation theologians who are troubled by the social and political injustice inherent in a global economic structure which oppresses the poor. American premillennial dispensationalists have a similar orientation in their theological system, the primary doctrine of which proclaims that a moral and spiritual chaos is festering within the created order because of the continual human failure to keep God's covenants. According to recent dispensational authors, this lamentable state of affairs is reaching its prophetic climax in the present age, a time foretold in the Bible when human civilization will be destroyed in preparation for the establishment of a Messianic Kingdom.

On a superficial level, dispensationalists and liberationists appear to hold analogous positions concerning the disorder of this world

and inasmuch as they both critique and condemn North American liberal optimism they may have some apparent similarities. For instance, they both share a suspicion of the identification of divine providence with 'modern' boasts of technological progress. Moreover, each of these movements operates out of a grass roots theological pedagogy³ which mistrusts intellectual elitism and posits a wisdom 'of the people.' More significantly, running through liberationist and dispensational thinking is an apocalyptic sense of the radical urgency of time and an eager expectation of the Reign of God.

Though these few apparent similarities are suggestive of an affinity between the social analysis of the far right and the far left which might prove interesting to explore, liberation theology and dispensational thought are, in reality, largely incompatible. An examination which delves more deeply into their respective eschatological presuppositions indicates that there is very little common ground between a Juan Luis Segundo or Ernesto Cardenal and Hal Lindsey or Jerry Falwell. Liberation eschatology begins with a critique of capitalist imperialism to illustrate that North American Christianity is ideologized by and acculturated to the economic interests of empire. In this light, liberation and hope are possible only to the extent that that empire's power is broken. Therefore, liberation theology is antithetical to a doctrine of hope which focuses beyond this world. In

contrast, dispensationalism, imbued with a supramundane eschatology, looks to the re-establishment of a militant free-enterprise system as the interim strategy for a "pure" people who, while facing the aggressive advance of atheistic communism, hope for a better world after the present one is destroyed. Liberation theologians articulate a hope whose parable is the oppression of the chosen people enslaved in Egypt, captives expecting deliverance from injustice. Dispensationalists formulate a hope whose primary story is the exile of the righteous people in Babylon, lamenting their state as the undefiled people obliged to live like aliens among the impure and sinful, longing for a pristine existence elsewhere. Liberation eschatology expects to transform the world. Dispensational hope is bent upon leaving it. In a time of dialogue between the powerful and the powerless liberation theology speaks for the powerless, who seek to establish a reign of justice on earth. Dispensational theology clearly answers for the powerful who, though portraying themselves as powerless, would participate vicariously in one final cataclysmic act of divine power rather than restore the fallen creation. As I will show later, these two anti-liberal movements, though sharing the same apocalyptic urgency, operate out of profoundly different Theologies and consequently they hold distinct, and incompatible, doctrines of eschatological hope.

In the context of the theological dialogue between

powerful and powerless, north and south, rich and poor, this dissertation proposes to undertake a sub-dialogue between American dispensationalism, with its somewhat peculiar eschatology, and 'mainline' Protestantism,⁴ which has largely devalued its eschatology. In one respect the dialogue may augment the self-awareness of the still affluent and privileged North American Protestant Church in its encounter with powerless, marginalized Christians in its own midst and in the developing world. In another respect this study may uncover insights helpful in rethinking this continent's Protestant eschatology, which has been largely informed by liberal optimism. Finally, dispensational eschatology makes certain hope-filled claims regarding the imminence and meaning of a nuclear war which merit careful and sincere investigation. Hence, such a dialogue may respond to the challenge of formulating an authentic hope for the nuclear context.

I.2. Narrowing the Focus of this Research: -----

The central and often the most arduous task of writing a dissertation is that of narrowing the focus of a chosen topic. Every work of this kind requires a concise guiding thesis, and the author began the reading and research with a rather undeveloped yet compelling hypothesis regarding the scarcity of real hope in an age caught by the anxiety of meaninglessness (Tillich). It was assumed that there was and is a relationship between the difficulty of confessing belief and hope in a God of history and the threat leveled

at the continuance of that history by nuclear war.

Unlike past human conflicts, nuclear war embodies the potential of human extinction. Many scientists and medical professionals who have undertaken extensive studies in the field of the effects of nuclear explosions and ionizing radiation, maintain that it is now possible to contemplate a humanly orchestrated nuclear end to life on this planet.⁵ Thus, as has never been the case before, believers must ask themselves about the trustworthiness of traditional formulations of hope. Can a Christian have hope in a Supreme Being and in that One's providential activity in human history if the continuance of a human community is put in jeopardy by the possibility of a nuclear conflagration? One popular writer, Jonathan Schell, gathered together the results of scientific studies and the religious, existential questions of human life and produced what has become the classical expression of human anxiety over a self-inflicted annihilation of the species. In The Fate of the Earth he captures the uncertainty around a human future and the threat that this constitutes for any concept of purposeful living.

At just what point the species crossed, or will have crossed the boundary between merely having the technical knowledge to destroy itself and actually having the arsenals at hand, ready to be used at any second, is not precisely knowable. But it is clear that at present, with some twenty thousand megatons of nuclear explosive power in existence, and with more being added every day, we have entered into the zone of uncertainty, which is to say the zone of risk of extinction. But the mere

risk of extinction has a significance that is categorically different from and immeasurably greater than, that of any other risk, . . . Up to now every risk has been contained within the frame of life; extinction would shatter that frame. It represents not the defeat of some purpose but an abyss in which all human purposes would be drowned for all time.⁶

Is Schell not amplifying Tillich's designation of this age, intimating that the anxiety of our time, while it is certainly one of meaninglessness, might more precisely be understood as purposelessness, in which the lack of direction in human history undermines any sense of meaning? To frame the question differently, could not the anxiety of this culture be that of a "futurelessness" (Lifton) such that the uncertainty of the future makes irrelevant a quest for meaning? Does the Western world suffer from a "timelessness" (Metz) inasmuch as the dubious continuance of time renders irrelevant all meaning within time? Clearly the preliminary hypothesis raised more questions than answers.

A turning point in the formulation of a clear and manageable thesis came through reading an article written by John C. Bennett entitled "Divine Persuasion and Divine Judgement." The great ethicist concisely formulates a challenging affirmation. Contemplating the possibility of human extinction brought about by nuclear war, he laments that

a self-inflicted early end of the human adventure would be an unbelievable tragedy. It would be the defeat of God's own purposes.⁷

Here is truly a radical assertion: the possibility that the

purposes of the God of the Bible, known as the Almighty and the All Powerful, could be defeated. Can a Christian theology recommend faith in a Creator whose plans can be frustrated by the creatures? Is Bennett suggesting that God's providence could be thwarted by the destruction of a world-wide nuclear conflict?

With Schell's profound and disturbing analysis as the critical material, Bennett's statement became the catalyst, opening up several avenues of research into the Theological, Christological, or Eschatological dimensions of faith in the nuclear age. Though these dimensions cannot ultimately be separated, it was the Theological implication of Bennett's thought which was the most commanding and which became the locus of further reflection. Raising a profound question around the doctrine of God, he focuses specifically on what has been a largely ignored, but seemingly serious contradiction in Christian Theology. Is the conventional Christian profession of God as an "all-powerful" Deity any longer credible, given the destructive potential of nuclear weaponry?⁸

While inquiring into possible responses to this Theological predicament, it became evident that one Christian tradition on this continent had no trouble with the apparent conflict between Divine power and a "self-inflicted early end to the human adventure." Quite the contrary, Christian dispensationalism reasons that a nuclear war, one which would destroy the present world, is

precisely God's intention. According to dispensational writers, there is no incongruity, but rather a direct correlation between Divine providence and a nuclear end to human history. In fact, dispensational eschatology incorporates and eventually depends upon the violent destruction of the present world order as the means for interpreting hope for believers.

The dispensational expectation of ever increasing catastrophes terminating in the imminent and final end to human history predates nuclear technology. In the North American sphere it was proclaimed in 1878 by W.E. Blackstone who, in his work Jesus is Coming, outlined a dark eschatological picture of the increasing decay of human society.

The great mass of humanity are engulfed in the maelstrom of sin which is sweeping its millions down to graves of destruction.⁹

Even after the passage of one hundred years the apocalyptic message has not altered substantially. Another famous dispensationalist, Hal Lindsey, points to a similar decline of the world, claiming in his best-seller, The Late Great Planet Earth, that

In spite of the oratory and books that have been aimed at steering man away from another world conflict, all-out war continues to be an ever-impending possibility. . . . Why is it that man keeps playing on the precipice of complete destruction?¹⁰

If there is any shift within dispensational thought at all, it is in the extent to which nuclear technology affords the

older, pre-Hiroshima ideas a pertinence and precision that had formerly been lacking. There is no longer any doubt. The impending chaos of a global, nuclear war, far from being a contradiction of Divine omnipotence, is, according to Lindsey, confirmation of God's providential action in human affairs, foretold by the Saviour himself.

Jesus predicted that man would not learn from the past nor heed the warnings of the future; man would ultimately plunge the whole world into a war so vast, so utterly destructive, that only the personal return of Jesus Christ himself to stop it would prevent the total annihilation of all life.¹¹

Affirming that this earth is the "late" planet, Lindsey's dispensationalism develops an eschatological hope on the fundamental assumption that God's providence for this world involves the destruction of most life on this globe through a nuclear conflagration. Lindsey's dispensational eschatology and its relation to his doctrines of providence and God became the starting point for developing, via negativa, a dissertation which addresses the challenge of articulating an appropriate interpretation of Christian hope in a nuclear age.

Through reflection on Lindsey's writings two fundamental questions for this dissertation became evident. The first is historical and interpretive. What is the basis of Lindsey's dispensational interpretation of the doctrines of providence and God, and how does this understanding interact with his eschatology? The second question is reflective and creative. Does Lindsey's dispensational

eschatology have any insights which would lead to an adequate articulation of hope in a nuclear age?

I.3 A Brief Definition of Dispensationalism: -----

In view of the relative obscurity which has surrounded dispensationalism, some introductory remarks on its historical and theological significance are necessary in order to substantiate the validity of this research. A more extensive explanation of the nature of dispensationalism will be offered in the first two chapters.

Dispensationalism, applying an apocalyptic hermeneutic, is basically a systemization of biblical prophecy into a theoretical framework which purports to have proven that, in the not too distant future, after the ascension of the true believers into heaven and the personal return of Jesus Christ, God will bring about the one thousand year kingdom promised in Revelation. Arguing that Jesus will come before the kingdom is established, dispensationalism employs a pre-millennial understanding of eschatology which stands in contrast to two other varieties of Christian millennialism, i.e., postmillennialism and amillennialism. While often employed synonymously, premillennialism and dispensationalism are not coterminous, there being other forms of premillennialism distinct from the dispensational type. In chapter one the millennial vocabulary will be outlined in greater depth.

No research into dispensationalism can be separated from a discussion of the American fundamentalist movement since the former was and is a militant belief system giving some determination and direction to the latter. The exact connection between the two, though quite significant for those within the conservative Christian community, is not always evident to those outside the circle, given the relative ignorance which has surrounded dispensational ideas. Beginning at the famous Niagara Bible Conferences of the 1880's and 90's and continuing at a series of Prophetic Conferences held up until the mid- 1920's,¹² dispensational concepts grew in popularity and were consistently integrated into the larger conservative, anti-modernist, anti-liberal religious reaction of that time. Since these conferences were one important source from which the desire to 'get back to the fundamental doctrines' grew, it has been suggested that 'fundamentalism' was partly motivated and determined by millennialism of both the premillennial and dispensational kinds. This is the conclusion of Ernest Sandeen's book on American fundamentalism in which he alleges that it was "millennialism which gave life and shape to the fundamentalist movement."¹³ George Marsden elaborates on and qualifies Sandeen's allegations, proposing that dispensationalism functioned not only as a source of reactionary determination, but also as a theological test or screen for orthodox thinking within the fundamentalist movement.¹⁴ The first chapter of this dissertation will

further explain the interaction between fundamentalism and dispensationalism. In spite of a common heritage, it should be noted from the beginning that not all fundamentalists would claim to be dispensationalists, even though it is possible to assume the reverse, i.e., that all dispensationalists are fundamentalists.

As is the case with fundamentalism, dispensationalism is imbued with a stridently disapproving criticism of "modern" or liberal Protestantism; much of its outrage over modernism stems from its nineteenth century moralism and a Baconian philosophy of common sense realism. Faithful to its roots in the revivalist and holiness movements, dispensationalism has an anti-elitist, anti-intellectual bias and a tendency to ignore the inner contradictions of its own theological doctrines in favour of the simple message of conversion and one-dimensional pronouncements about salvation. As a means of achieving this simplicity, the dispensationalist and fundamentalist believers give assent to several 'fundamental truths': the inerrancy of scripture, the virgin birth, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, the belief in miracles and the premillennial return of Christ. In summary, as a system of thought which is closely allied to fundamentalism, dispensationalism operates within a rational framework which insists on intellectual assent to precisely formulated statements of religious truth,¹⁵ interprets the human condition with the antithetical spirit

of American revivalism, is informed by a primitivism that both praises and pines for a golden age of American innocence and purity, clings to a pietism which emphasizes the salvation of the individual and contends that the 'true' church is a community of believers 'separated out' from other corrupt expressions of Christian faith.

The ecclesiastical history of dispensationalism is similar to that of fundamentalism. It did not produce a distinct church denomination but evolved into a set of beliefs which vied, at first, for dominance within many traditional American denominations and, subsequent to the fundamentalist controversy, found their home in non-denominational Christian movements and organizations such as Bible colleges, missionary societies and evangelistic ministries. Most often dispensationalism acted as a radical teaching whose predominance in the overall fundamentalist movement depended on the perceived level of the social strife in society and the apprehension in Christian communities.

Historically Lindsey's ideas are neither new nor without precedent. Dispensationalism came to America through the work of the Plymouth Brethren and their leader John Nelson Darby.¹⁶ Though the denomination was not very successful in implanting itself on this continent, its dispensational ideas became quite popular. For instance, in 1878 W.E. Blackstone wrote the volume

quoted above, Jesus is Coming, which, rivaling Lindsey's phenomenal literary success a century later, sold one million copies. It was translated into many languages (including Hebrew) and was eventually reprinted and distributed by the Moody Bible Institute.

Taking its name from Darby's theory about successive and distinct divine administrations or 'dispensations' of human history which are reportedly revealed in the biblical record, dispensationalism was a child of the mid-nineteenth century British millennialist spirit and its concomitant quest for righteousness. Darby, a disillusioned Anglican priest, left the state church, in his estimation a hopelessly corrupt body, and, having joined the Plymouth Brethren Church, rose to prominence as the chief proponent of that 'separate' communion and its spiritual purity. Dispensationalism became the means by which Darby could claim and maintain a state of righteousness for himself and his fledgling church. In the name of that denomination he travelled often to continental Europe and North America and, while his efforts on behalf of the growth of Brethren congregations proved unproductive, the determined spirit of his message was popular, especially at the turn of the century among Northern Presbyterians and Baptists. However, this widespread acceptance of dispensational ideas was due, not to Darby's missionary zeal, but rather to efforts of the great evangelist Dwight L. Moody and those who moved within the orbit of his

evangelistic enterprises.

Dispensationalism, in its classical form, was articulated by I.C. Scofield in the reference notes of The Scofield Reference Bible which he published first in 1909. Sandeen maintains that the Scofield Bible is

perhaps the most influential single publication in millenarian and fundamentalist historiography. The Scofield Reference Bible combined an attractive format of typography, paragraphing, notes and cross references with the theology of Darbyite dispensationalism. The book has thus been subtly but powerfully influential in spreading those views among hundreds of thousands who have regularly read that Bible and who often have been unaware of the distinction between the ancient text and the Scofield interpretation.¹⁷

Using inerrancy as his basic hermeneutical principle, and building upon the Darbyite principles, Scofield outlined, according to his own biblical exegesis, seven 'dispensations' or ages of human history. He affirmed that in every dispensation God establishes a new covenant with human beings, who subsequently prove to be faithless to it. Throughout all the seven distinguishable dispensations, fickle human behaviour and the Creator's ensuing punishment mark the transition from one dispensation to the next.

In divining the meaning of biblical prophecy, Darby and Scofield make a clear distinction between God's plans for the people of Israel and God's plan for the Church. It is understood that this present dispensation, called

interchangeably "the dispensation of the church" or the "dispensation of grace," is characterized by grace since the Church exists as a "great parenthesis" of grace between God's judgment of the chosen people of Israel and the fulfillment of this 'final' reckoning (i.e., the destruction of the world order) and the establishment of the Kingdom. The 'true Church' will escape God's punishing anger because it will be taken up into heaven before the final battle of Armageddon.

Perhaps its most distinctive and certainly its most popular doctrine, this collective ascension, known as "the Rapture," has also been a divisive concept occasioning several disputes with respect to its exact timing. Some members of the Plymouth Brethren believed that the Rapture would occur during or at the end of the final days of destruction known as the "Great Tribulation." This is referred to as the mid- or post-tribulationist position because it places the time of the Rapture at a point during or after the period of tribulation. Eventually the pre-tribulationists, who held that the Rapture would take place before the Great Tribulation of God's wrath, gained predominance in the American movement. Nevertheless, the debate still rages as indicated by the focus of Lindsey's book, The Rapture, which devotes several chapters to proving the veracity of the "pre-trib" position. Scofield was a pre-tribulationist and the popularity of this interpretation of the Rapture is due, in part, to his

reference Bible notes which support a pre-tribulationist reading.

I.4 Justification for this Research:

While dispensational eschatology as exemplified in Hal Lindsey's writings has enjoyed a wide popular appeal, it may appear to be a peculiar topic of doctoral research, and therefore three broad justifications for the validity of a theological analysis of this movement are offered below. The first has to do with historical accuracy while the second is an ecclesiastical consideration. The final and the most compelling reason for concentrating on Hal Lindsey's eschatology is both theological and ethical in nature. It is this last concern which focuses the argument of the entire dissertation. While the first two points, the historic and ecclesiastical, exercise less influence on the central thesis of this study, they are sufficiently important to warrant some elucidation. Subsequent to that explanation the third and central justification of this research will be outlined.

I.4.1. The Changing Understanding of American Fundamentalism and Dispensationalism:

In recent decades mainstream, liberal Christians have harboured a vague, often unspoken prejudice against 'right wing' expressions of Christian faith on this continent. This bias, held by both lay people and theologians of traditional Protestant denominations, is due in part to the mixed media coverage given to the conservative spectrum

of religious movements and ideas. Hence, North American fundamentalists and dispensationalists have been the brunt of journalists' scornful criticisms. The famous Scopes 'monkey' trial of 1925 is a case in point and could be considered as a watershed after which modernity formed a caricature of conservative religious convictions, a stigma that has persisted ever since.¹⁸ During the trial of John Scopes, a school teacher from Dayton, Tennessee who dared to impart the theory of evolution to his students, the prosecuting attorney and symbolic representative of fundamentalism, William Jennings Bryan, was portrayed by the journalists as a kindly rural ignoramus.¹⁹ Even while winning the legal dispute, he and his fundamentalist world view lost the trial of public opinion²⁰ and were seen to be pathetic relics of reactionary thinking. Newspapers played havoc with the earnestness of Bryan's religious convictions, calling them "obscurantist,"²¹ nothing but a set of out-dated, or rurally-based moral ideals combined with backward unscientific biblicism.

Journalistic scorn of dispensationalism and other doomsday preaching has not been restricted to that trial of 1925. Recent examples of newspaper accounts reflect a pejorative and scoffing attitude toward any type of apocalypticism. Predictions of Christ's imminent return on a specific date and his subsequent failure to arrive provide good newspaper copy. The Sioux City Journal of May 7, 1980 published a story entitled: "Apocalyptic

Miscalculations." It reported that "due to analytical difficulties, the end of the world has been rescheduled for today according to one religious sect. The world was supposed to have ended last week, according to their leader Charles Gaines...but it didn't."²² In a similar vein the Chicago Sun-Times printed in April 1981 an account of some Christian believers who took Hal Lindsey literally, using the mocking headline: "Believers Standing by for Ascent into Heaven."²³ Poking fun at premillennialists has proven such good sport that even Charles Schultz wrote a doomsday script for a 1980 "Peanuts" comic strip.

In the decade of the 1980's the superficial and humorous attitude of the press towards dispensationalism and fundamentalism has changed substantially. Fundamentalist ideas may still appear to be out of step with the times, but the sheer size of fundamentalist organizations and T.V. programs cannot be ignored by the media. 'Right wing' Christians are no longer an inconsequential 'fringe' group and in a culture that exalts size, these movements command attention simply because of their growing memberships and large financial resources. The journalistic commentators may believe that Oral Roberts is a "charlatan"²⁴ but he still makes the nightly news. Similarly, the fascination with and shock over the Tammy and Jim Bakker scandal illustrates the extent to which fundamentalist enterprises have achieved a

level of prominence in the arena of public opinion. Time Magazine, in its August 3, 1987 cover story, dealt with the problems surrounding the two evangelists and their T. V. program "The PTL Club," treating it as an important national news event. Fundamentalists may have their scandals and inconsistencies but they have also become attractive and important news events. A Time Magazine article (February 16, 1986) entitled "Power, Glory and Politics" is another clear illustration that fundamentalists and dispensationalists are receiving wider media attention. The article in question is a thoroughly serious attempt to analyze the new "televangelist" phenomenon, and while it concludes with a mild rejection of the mixture of television and Christian evangelism,²⁵ the very fact that it was the feature story of such a prominent weekly magazine is indicative of a growing willingness on the part of the press (and perhaps of the culture) to accept it as a significant, legitimate (perhaps even authoritative) voice within American society.

The half-mocking, half-respectful treatment of dispensationalists and fundamentalists by the media, is perhaps indicative of the contradictions in the reigning modern spirit which exults in size and in cynicism at the same time. On one hand, people respect the sheer enormity of fundamentalist endeavours. On the other hand, the relativistic and instrumentalist mind-set of this society

breeds skepticism about these 'old-fashioned' ideas. Though they may be popular, the reigning cynical pragmatism suggests that they are irrelevant in the technological world of the late twentieth century. The secular culture asks: Weren't all of those backward fundamentalist concepts left behind at Dayton with William Jennings Bryan? Why are their organizations so popular, increasing in numbers while more traditional denominations are dwindling?²⁶

Both the media and liberal Christian denominations (if they are still operating with a Christendom model of ecclesiology) find it difficult to argue against numbers. Underneath their scorn for fundamentalism and dispensationalism there lies an unspoken envy of their popularity and a faint ambition to imitate their successful style of evangelism. Despite these sentiments (or perhaps because of them), the predominant attitude of traditional Protestant denominations towards fundamentalism is frustration and dismay about its rising significance to the general public.

Since the turn of the century, mainstream Protestant denominations have adapted themselves to the growing urban reality and turned their backs on fundamentalism with its antiquated, semi-rural ideals.²⁷ Following the Scopes trial there was good reason for traditional Protestant denominations to believe they had

triumphed over the fundamentalist influences of past eras. Most of the major denominations experienced an increase in membership in the years leading up to and immediately after the Second World War.²⁸ Such a surge in apparent social acceptance and status led to a smug self-assurance which fostered the assumption among liberals that the fundamentalists were and always would be a small group of religious malcontents, a declining movement destined to fade into oblivion. Popular novels and church histories written after 1925 reinforced this consensus.²⁹

It is because of this naive reading of the fundamentalist movement that there is a high degree of frustration and curiosity among the mainline denominations at the rise of "televangelists" like Jerry Falwell, Jimmy Swaggart, Jimmy and Tammy Bakker, and Pat Robertson. Questions arise in church meetings and at training conferences: How do 'they' do it? When did 'they' come to be so large and influential? How did 'these' people build such strong followings out of a lost and forgotten movement? Are there that many people who actually believe in 'those' old ideas?

The same questions arise with respect to Hal Lindsey's dispensationalist writings. How did his work gain such popularity beginning in 1970? The last truly popular and overtly dispensationalist crusader was Blackstone. (While the evangelists Billy Sunday, Charles Fuller and Billy Graham all held dispensational views, their warm message of

tolerant belief dominated the harsher strand of Darby's ideas and muted the dispensational stridency.) What happened to dispensationalism between 1925 and 1970? Why did it acquire such prominence under Lindsey's efforts?

There are two possible answers to these questions. The first is philosophical and the second historical.

The philosophical explanation arises from the acknowledgment that fundamentalism has gained popularity because the North American culture is caught in a crisis of authority and meaning. Paul Tillich,³⁰ George Grant,³¹ and Christopher Lasch³² among many others, recognize that people in the industrialized society have lost a sense of moral and spiritual order. The scientific, instrumentalist world view, which held out so much promise at the turn of the century, has been unable to bring about the structured and meaningful world it promised. Lasch speaks of a general crisis in confidence.

Defeat in Viet Nam, economic stagnation, and impending exhaustion of natural resources have produced a mood of pessimism in higher circles which spreads throughout the rest of society as people lose faith in their leaders. The same crisis of confidence grips other capitalist countries as well.³³

Successive political scandals have badly damaged the assumptions of truth and honesty which supported the political and cultural order. Even the promise of unlimited consumption has lost its capacity to render life integrated and purposeful, according to Robert Bellah.

The very consumptive goods that television so insistently puts before us, integrate us by providing symbols of our version of the good life. But a strange sort of integration it is, for the world into which we are integrated is defined only by the spasmodic transition between striving and relaxing and is without qualitative distinctions of time and space, good and evil, meaning and meaninglessness.³⁴

Discouraged by mounting urban violence and alienated by the growing specialization of labour, many people have turned to fundamentalism for simple (i.e., authoritative) answers. One sociologist, Louis Gasper, points to this source of fundamentalism's popularity. He introduces his classic work, The Fundamentalist Movement 1930-1956, by stating that

various attempts have been made to explain the reasons for the present resurgence of conservative theological belief in America. The consensus is that current international tensions, coupled with the inability of world political leaders to find a satisfactory solution for world problems short of war, is largely responsible for the revival of religion of the more pessimistic sort.³⁵

An exemplar of this search for order in the midst of growing confusion, Hal Lindsey introduces his first work, The Late Great Planet Earth, with the explanation that people are suffering in a world which seems to be becoming more chaotic, that they need "answers to the larger problems of the world."³⁶ His book is an attempt to offer these answers. It cannot be denied that Lindsey's popularity is linked to his ability to name and give some answer to this North American quest for authoritative order and meaning. In any dialogue with dispensational thought

theological research would do well to take careful note of Lindsey's dispensationalism, since its recent popularity may be due to the fact that it has responded to the deep-seated pain and anger of the "diminishing expectations" (Christopher Lasch) which rankle the North American soul.

A second, historical answer to the question is that the movement did not die or decrease in popularity, as it has been assumed. Rather, while it disappeared from the purview of certain segments of society, it spent its time and energy in the 1930's and 1940's building radio ministries, Bible colleges, mission fields and local evangelistic campaigns. Statistics indicate that in those periods during which the fundamentalists were presumed to have been declining they mounted greater missionary efforts than all of the mainline churches combined.³⁷ So, fundamentalism and dispensationalism did not disappear after the Scopes trial. Their lasting importance had simply been prematurely discounted.

This assumption led to a basic ignorance of these movements and eventually to a pejorative bias in some North American theological circles. For instance, Sydney Ahlstrom, in his work A Religious History of the American People, manifests a slanted picture of fundamentalism as a gathering of religiously uneducated or uninformed people. He states that it found "its adherents chiefly among the disinherited and the uneducated."³⁸ It was assumed that no serious theological

enterprise could be supportive of or tolerate dispensational ideas. Similarly, the very rare reviews of Hal Lindsey's books also exude what might be called a liberal self-righteous, intellectual bias against dispensationalism.³⁹

There seems to be a consensus that dispensational groups are unthinking sects of little religious importance, and therefore their ideas merit little serious analysis. While a few serious historians and biblical scholars⁴⁰ have recently investigated the role of dispensationalism within the fundamentalist movement, few Christian thinkers have sought to understand the theology of this movement. There are therefore relatively few scholars who are in a position to dispel what has been a historical misreading of fundamentalism and dispensationalism. Such an absence of critical data results in an inability to make a concise response to dispensational eschatology. More theological reflection needs to be undertaken if the real historical and theological significance of dispensationalism is to be appreciated. This research endeavors to be one small part in the ongoing elaboration of that work.

I.4.2. The Growing Influence of Fundamentalism and Dispensationalism

A second justification for this present research is related to the seemingly influential position of dispensational thinking vis-à-vis the Christian Church and the political world of the United States. In contrast to

the superficial and sometimes mocking critique offered by journalists and accepted by the public and mainline Protestant denominations, there have been and are some writers and theologians who argue that fundamentalism and dispensationalism merit serious attention because of their increasing ecclesiastical prominence and political influence.

Ecclesiastically, there has been a significant shift in the status of dispensationalism in recent decades. In terms of its social standing, it has moved from the obscure margins of religious life in America toward the respected centre. Even a cursory reading of the recent literature on fundamentalism and dispensationalism indicates not only that they are religious movements with deep historical roots, but that they have produced both organizations and ideas of profound current cultural importance. It is no longer possible to pretend that these expressions of the Christian faith are a 'lunatic fringe' of North American Christianity. Through the historical research of Ernest Sandeen (quoted above), George Marsden,⁴¹ Timothy Weber,⁴² Douglas Frank⁴³ and others,⁴⁴ we now comprehend that, far from being a rag-tag band of right-wing fanatics, these movements are closer to the 'heartbeat' of American religious life than are many traditional Protestant expressions of belief. Fundamentalism is replacing the traditional churches as the representative mentality and spirit of the American way of life. The fundamentalist and

dispensationalist movements are growing, becoming a well organized and burgeoning religious phenomenon with considerable influence.

This influence is indicated by the size of the media empire of the movements in question. In a 1985 Nielson rating survey, it was indicated that one televangelist who is a dispensationalist, Pat Robertson, reached sixteen million, three hundred thousand American households each day, while Jimmy Swaggart, another believer in Scofield's eschatological reading of the Bible, addressed nine million, three hundred thousand households weekly.⁴⁵ Relative to the aggregate estimate of all Christian believers in the country, this viewership is quite substantial. According to recent statistics⁴⁶ there are approximately forty-six million active Christians in the United States. Even without factoring in the number of people per household, simple arithmetic shows that Robertson addresses an audience roughly equal to a third of the active Christian community while Swaggart talks to a viewing public a fifth of the size of the entire Christian church of America. Such data can hardly be ignored when one asks the question regarding the influence of fundamentalist Christianity on North American culture.

Financial support is another indicator of the strength and influence of fundamentalism. In 1985 Falwell's receipts were one hundred million dollars. Oral Roberts, who can actively campaign for and receive eight and one half

million dollars because (as he explained to his television viewers) if he doesn't get it God will "call him home," had annual receipts of one hundred and twenty million dollars for the same period.⁴⁷ In comparison, the total receipts for all purposes of the top twenty-nine Canadian Christian denominations for the same period were seven hundred and forty-nine million dollars. Again with a little mathematics it can be conjectured that Falwell and Roberts alone received donations totaling just under one-third of the total money raised in all major Christian churches in Canada. This is a considerable income, and if fund-raising success is any indication of approval, fundamentalism seems to exercise a considerable religious influence on this continent.

Growing publicity and financial strength are two indications of an ecclesiastical shift in which fundamentalism and other conservative expressions of Christian faith are moving from the margins into the dominant position among North American Christian organizations. It is difficult to gauge public perceptions of influence, but the figures given above make it possible to question the traditional 'majority' status imputed to mainline Protestant denominations. This century could be witnessing an exchange of roles in which the mainstream Protestant denominations become considered as the sects, aberrations of what it means to be a Christian, while the fundamentalists appropriate the outward signs of being

the established Church and the normative expression of Christian faith. Gabriel Fackre, in his research on fundamentalism, underlines this possible shift in the religious status and political influence of the Christian fundamentalists. According to his analysis, this movement is riding

a mainstreaming tendency . . . which has moved it from the fringes of American society to the centre of the action though not the centre of the spectrum. When the President of the United States places a call to Jerry Falwell in response to his criticism of a Supreme Court nomination, it is obvious that things have changed from the days when radio preacher Carl McIntire's volleys broadcast over more than 500 radio stations were largely ignored by the powers that be.⁴⁸

As Fackre and others⁴⁹ suggest, fundamentalism and dispensationalism, commensurate with their rise in religious stature, are presently exercising a greater political influence than in the past. The fact that Pat Robertson could even contemplate, let alone wage a plausible challenge for the Republican nomination for the Presidency in 1988 illustrates the improving political reputation of fundamentalists.⁵⁰ Even though the Bakker scandal and the Jimmy Swaggart "mistake" have hurt the credibility of the fundamentalist cause, they have not substantially changed the credibility of the religious right, its political aspirations and favoured candidates.

In addition to these factors, some of the mounting influence of fundamentalism is due to a seeming intensification of interest in apocalyptic and/or

dispensational themes. End-time thinking may not be on the front stage in American Christian life but it acts as a backdrop to the central action. Movie-goers explore end-of-time themes in such famous productions as Star Wars, Brazil, The Mosquito Coast. In another vein, on Jimmy Swaggart's recent T.V. program "America You're Too Young to Die," the studio was ringed with panels depicting the seven dispensations which are the basis of dispensational eschatology. The mushrooming importance of apocalyptic or eschatological themes is confirmed by Timothy Weber in his classical study of the roots of dispensationalism.

Whatever the future holds for American evangelical religion, one of its most noticeable elements is the interest in, even obsession with biblical prophecy. Once considered the preoccupation of relatively few fanatics, eschatology . . . has come close to reaching cult status in American society, . . .51

The popularity of Lindsey's writings may have played a part in the increasing interest in apocalypticism. Weber links the rise in popularity of eschatology directly to Hal Lindsey's first book. He points out that end-time thinking has grown past a narrow sectarian interest and

the bursting of these former bounds is due, in large part, to Hal Lindsey's Late Great Planet Earth. . . . The book is noteworthy because it has been able to reach many people who are outside of those groups traditionally receptive to its message.52

As stated earlier, Hal Lindsey' success as a writer has been phenomenal. He was declared the best selling non-fiction writer of the 1970's by the New York Times. The

1980's: Countdown to Armageddon, was the best selling religious book of the year in which it was published, rising to become one of the top fifteen best-selling books of 1980 according to the New York Times Book Review.

One indication that Lindsey's form of apocalypticism is reaching a wide audience is illustrated by the fact that even the past President of the United States was given, for a time, to using Lindsey's Armageddon-like images in his speeches and interviews.⁵³ For instance, in October 1983 Reagan expressed some apocalyptic anxieties to the American Israeli Public Affairs officer when he musingly suggested:

You know I turn back to your ancient prophets in the Old Testament and the signs foretelling Armageddon and I find myself wondering if we're the generation that is going to see that come about. I don't know if you've noted any of these prophecies lately but believe me they certainly describe the times we're going through.⁵⁴

In a book studying the interaction between dispensational thinking and American politics, Grace Halsell writes a chapter entitled "Reagan: Arming for Armageddon." In this text she makes the point that Reagan was very interested in Lindsey's eschatological ideas, and to support this suggestion she quotes an article written by Andrew Lang of the Washington-based Christic Institute in which Lang asserts that

if Reagan was not a dispensationalist in the years of his presidency, he was earlier on. Remarks made by Reagan in the 1970's and revealed for the first time in 1985, prove that

Reagan was a dispensationalist,--a believer in the ideology of Armageddon.⁵⁵

Halsell goes on to claim that Reagan "read many popular books on the subject of Armageddon, among them Lindsey's The Late Great Planet Earth, which was repeatedly discussed"⁵⁶ between Reagan and his friends. One finds an interesting contrast in the two past Presidents and their reading habits with respect to Christian theologians. This may indicate the growing interest in end-time ideas. If Jimmy Carter can be photographed with a copy of Reinhold Niebuhr's Nature and Destiny of Man, is it not interesting, perhaps symbolic, that Reagan is reading Hal Lindsey? The reading habits of Presidents can hardly be used as a conclusive indicator of the collective American psyche but it is more than a curious coincidence.

Another author who has researched the influence of apocalypticism, Paul Hanson,⁵⁷ along with Halsell, Fackre and Weber conjectures that the apocalyptic mood is growing in popularity. He also refers to a major political figure and claims that

those viewing the world through darkened glasses are not limited to a few fanatics selling their property and ascending a hill to await the second coming. . . . a former secretary of the interior, James Watt, has expressed his belief that the world may not have many years left.⁵⁸

It is obviously impossible and misleading to build a theory of the growing influence of Lindsey or dispensational eschatology on presidential reading habits or

by citing a quote from one highly placed administrative official. Nevertheless, it is possible to observe that these apocalyptic ideas are deemed politically safe if not advantageous, as was not the case in the past few decades. The political elite, while not giving credence to the entire dispensational system, can find in it a spiritual ally which both condones conservative measures and reinforces the political legitimacy of those who wield power. Furthermore, the fact that prominent Americans are familiar with the concepts of dispensationalism does indicate that the ideas enjoy a wide audience, if not also some level of acceptance.

The increased interest in apocalyptic themes is not necessarily a faddish crave for wild fantasies, nor can their popularity be explained simply on the basis of political opportunism. The fascination with end-time themes may harbour grave yearnings which any serious Christian eschatology must address. Hanson points to the increased sympathy for apocalyptic thinking, and particularly Lindsey's version of the final days of planet earth, and maintains that this age is subject to an apocalyptic anxiety which stems from the alienation of modern, technological life styles. This feeling, coupled with the economic crisis and the threat of nuclear war have, as Hanson puts it, eroded

systems of values and structures of life
as fast as ocean waves washing away sand
castles. . . . for many today the change

wrought by science has taken on a
Frankenstein mask.⁵⁹

Hence, no articulation of Christian hope can ignore this pervasive, if vague, "sense of ending" and Hanson challenges traditional Protestant theology to examine the emotional and spiritual malaise implicit in apocalyptic thinking like Lindsey's. He claims that theologians and churches simply cannot dismiss the experience of those who are so hurt by our world as to long for its final ending.⁶⁰

Certainly the deep apocalyptic yearnings to which Lindsey speaks merit more than a simplistic theological rejection or sociological caricature. Figuratively speaking, it could be stated that, in the post-Hiroshima age, mainline Protestant theology has abandoned the book of Revelation to the fundamentalists and it is time for a serious re-interpretation of this 'final' book, whose themes correspond to the finality implicit within nuclear weaponry. It is no longer appropriate nor wise to reject John's vision as Luther did, stating that "a Revelation should be revealing."⁶¹ Therefore the challenge to mainline Protestantism is to reaffirm and rejuvenate its reliance upon the biblical record and develop a meaningful eschatology which, while treating the pain of this society with utmost seriousness, does not fall into a dispensational fatalism induced by the nuclear threat. This will not be a simple undertaking since dispensationalism--albeit a dramatic and extreme example--is part of a long and

appealing apocalyptic tradition which desires to leave the earth behind. Moreover, the past century of liberal theological influence in this context has left the mainline tradition particularly unprepared to develop a viable eschatology which is not simply a pious version of cultural optimism. Nevertheless, the similarities between Lindsey's Armageddon scenarios and those written into the programming of strategic nuclear weapons make such a theological task essential.

I.4.3. The Need to understand Dispensationalism in the Nuclear Age

If the allure of dispensational 'end-game' concepts could play a role in the context of a nuclear age in which the slightest errors in diplomacy or military strategy could be disastrous, then surely Lindsey's eschatological visions merit the utmost attention. The fate of the earth is not simply an ecological conundrum or a political riddle which ecologists and politicians must solve. It is also a deeply theological responsibility. In this respect and in a small way this dissertation is an answer to the speech made by General Douglas MacArthur, who stated at the signing of the surrender of Japan that the major problem facing the human race in the nuclear age was 'theological' and 'spiritual' in nature. On that occasion, just a few days after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he said:

We have had our last chance. If we do not now devise some greater and more equitable system

Armageddon will be at our door. The problem is basically theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our matchless advance in science. . . . It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.⁶²

While dispensationalism is not new, nor unique to Lindsey's writing, it is noteworthy not only because of its wide influence and its religious significance, but also because of its eschatological perspective and the particular ethical implications stemming from its apocalyptic vision. If humanity can no longer risk a great war, then every religious system which might acquiesce in the face of such a conflict deserves a thorough analysis.

Traditionally the dispensational dream of the Rapture has given the movement a world-disparaging flavour. Consequently, criticism of dispensationalism on the grounds of its anti-world attitude is older than the nuclear age, and before explaining the challenge of Lindsey's writings for this precise time in human history it may be helpful to review some pre-Hiroshima criticism of dispensational eschatology.

Just after the turn of the century liberal theologians attacked dispensational thinking because of what they perceived to be its anti-world eschatology. Those who waited for the second coming were accused of diverting believers from the real task of transforming the social order. The apocalyptic spirit of dispensational theories was viewed by some liberals and social gospellers as

a defeatist and pessimistic determinism which would blunt the edge of Christian moral action. Walter Rauschenbusch, in his book Christianity and the Social Crisis, called these end-time theories "historical pessimism . . . a dead weight against any effort to mobilize the moral forces of Christianity to share in the modern social movement."⁶³

A similar criticism came out of Chicago during the first World War. Shirley Jackson Case, Professor of Church History, labeled premillennial dispensationalism as defeatist and even potentially traitorous. In 1918 he wrote:

Under ordinary circumstances one might excusably pass over premillennialism as a wild and relatively harmless fancy. But in the present time of testing it would be almost traitorous negligence to ignore the detrimental character of the premillennial propaganda. By proclaiming that wars cannot be eliminated until Christ returns and that in the meantime the world must grow constantly worse, this type of teaching strikes at the very root of our present national endeavour to bring about a new day for humanity.⁶⁴

It was, perhaps, because of the optimism implicit within the theology of Case and Rauschenbusch that they perceived clearly the inherent and antithetical pessimism of dispensationalism. Rather than fostering any attempts to reform society, dispensational eschatology, they argued, reinforced a fatalism or apathy in times of crisis.

In recent years, with the increase in concern over

war and social chaos, these old criticisms of dispensationalism have gained new strength. Even though many of the detractors of Lindsey's ideas are no longer liberal optimists like Rauschenbusch and Case, critics of dispensationalism still have the same concerns about the social and political ramifications of its eschatology. For instance, Robert Jewett, labeling Lindsey's ideas as "doom boom" theology, suggests that

the theology of the doom-boom is making a decisive contribution to the drift toward a self-imposed Armageddon that has manifested itself since 1980.⁶⁵

Douglas Hall concurs with Jewett and places Lindsey's eschatological thinking in a longer tradition of world despisers, stating:

Hal Lindsey is not unique. He is, in some ways, a contemporary amanuensis of the long line of world-despising apocalypticism, simplified for the T.V. generation and invested with an aura of "the scientific" on account of the convenient contemporary potential for world smashing introduced by nuclear warfare. . . . He is talking about the end of the planet Earth. He is talking about nuclear holocaust. And he's excited.⁶⁶

These criticisms are offered by members of the academy who, contrary to the all too common detachment or indifference of academia, regard Lindsey's apocalyptic ideas as a serious subject of theological inquiry. They recognize that the ethical ramifications of dispensational thought cannot be dismissed lightly in the context of a nuclear arms race. When the eschatological concepts of W.E. Blackstone

and I.C.Scofield, offered to a pre-Hiroshima world, are reiterated in a post-Hiroshima time, they take on new and disturbing implications. It is one thing to argue that the world is coming to an end, and it is quite another to be able to identify the actual means for terminating human history. While the first dispensationalists could not imagine the means by which the final destruction, promised in their reading of biblical prophecy, would occur, Lindsey can cite the prophecy of Revelation 8:8-9, construing it as the "first century description of a twentieth century hydrogen bomb."⁶⁷ Consequently, the ideas of a pre-technological nineteenth century anti-modernism may have devastating results in the post-Hiroshima age. While it may be exaggerating the case to argue that dispensational eschatology will persuade political leaders to abandon the world to nuclear war, Jewett makes a more subtle observation that its inherent escapism blunts political will and may lead to diplomatic adventurism. In this respect

the political art of calculating dangers, avoiding conflicts, and seeking the lesser evil in complex situations is paralyzed by apocalyptic theology of the doom boom type. Careful study of the motivations of our adversaries is unnecessary because they are controlled by Satan whose aims are already manifest. Rash invasions and military interventions undertaken by our governments are to be applauded . . . Adverse consequences do not have to be taken into account because the countdown to Armageddon is already underway in the terminal generation.⁶⁸

Thus, in a time of international crisis, given the accuracy and speed of present weapons systems, dispensationalism

might be enough of a spiritual restraint on reflective intervention that the world could plunge itself into a humanly-realized fulfillment of Lindsey's fiery expectations. None of the dispensational writers encourage the actual instigation of nuclear war, but without constant vigilance, part of which must surely be the spiritual stamina to remain faithful to life on this planet, "a divinely inaugurated day of reckoning could easily be pre-empted by human folly or computer glitches if present trends continue."⁶⁹

The seriousness of dispensational eschatological thinking and its influence in the nuclear context should not result in hasty, unthinking or uninformed rejection of writers like Lindsey. Surely there is much to be learned in a careful analysis of his system of ideas, his popularity and the structure of his eschatology. Thus, Jewett urges that

in view of the dangerous potential of doom boom theology, there is an urgent need for genuine dialogue between religious traditions that have scarcely been on speaking terms.⁷⁰

Central to such a dialogue will be the question of Christian hope, its essence and the source of its inspiration. It is the underlying assumption of this research that the Christian community falls heir, not simply to buildings, but also to spiritual insights which have been bequeathed as treasures deserving of careful stewardship. If nothing else, surely it can be argued that the community of faith is charged with the task of preserving the reality of hope in a

healthy and dynamic state and such a preservative task is not accomplished through closed dogmatic assertions of truth. Rather, a more fruitful exercise would be a dedicated dialogue between two traditions each of which, in answer to the suggestion of 1 Peter 3:15, must be prepared "to give reason for the hope that is within."

I.5.American Providentialism: -----

As was mentioned above, the present investigation into Lindsey's depiction of hope began with his doctrine of providence. From this starting point it quite naturally proceeds to an exploration of his image of God and then finally to the eschatology which flows from the former two doctrines. Given the centrality of the notion of providence to this research, a brief summary of what is termed his "providentialism" will introduce the chief arguments to be followed in the analysis of his writings.

Providence, an ever present if not paradigmatic theme in the history of white religious experience in America, is essentially an assumption of chosenness. On this continent at least, it is a belief that God is not only implicated in human history but that the Divine has a specific purpose for the American people and for individuals within that nation. They are set aside for a sacred destiny. It was believed that God's providence brought the lost of Europe to a new land, commissioning them to a foreordained purpose, i.e., to build a 'great' and powerful witness to the rest of the

world. Operative within broad and decidedly vague concepts such as manifest destiny, providence has been invoked as justification for any number of actions within the religious and political arenas. It has been used, among other notions, as a rationalization in the slaughter of native people and the subjugation of the natural resources, in international intervention and in repression of domestic social unrest. In a simplistic fashion, major events were construed to be part of God's design and purpose. While current political scandals and debacles have undermined the largely unspoken faith in providence, the American assumption of Divine providential care leading the people to their special destiny has never really disappeared in the social and spiritual mind-set of the nation. For instance, it was recently re-affirmed by the past President who, during the 1980 presidential campaign, reiterated a common sentiment: "I believe the American people have the greatest capacity for great deeds of any people on earth. . . . I believe in their greatness and I believe this country has a destiny."⁷¹

Martin Marty, a scholar specializing in American church history, underlines the importance of the doctrine of providence in the American religious tradition and delineates two basic forms which have been active in that tradition.⁷² Though his assessment may be overly simple, it does offer some broad generalizations from which to understand dispensationalism. He suggests that the

two basic types of Christian belief within American history are the optimistic 'transforming' type and the pessimistic 'rescuing' variety. The transformers see God's providence, the unique chosenness of the nation, as an active and transcendent force within American history. This providence co-operates with the people's moral determination in order to bring about the establishment of the Kingdom of God. In theological terms these optimists are called postmillennialists. In contrast, the rescuers look upon providence as the plan by which the Eternal will rescue the true believers out of the ruined world. A righteous remnant of American Christians are chosen as the agents of God's providential salvation and in the interim between the present time and the day of judgment they are charged with the responsibility of evangelizing, therefore rescuing, the "pagans" of the earth. This is, of course, the premillennialist position.

These interpretations of the doctrine of providence are called 'providentialism' because they function not simply as specific theological doctrines, but more as guiding presuppositions or foundational paradigms upon which other ideas are constructed. Marty concludes that the optimistic and the pessimistic providentialisms grow side by side in the American religious scene. It might further be speculated that they are, in reality, two dimensions of the same phenomenon since each employs an historical positivivism, equating an overly-obvious or superficial

reading of current events with Divine, providential action. Depending on the historical context, one or the other of these forms of providentialism gains prominence. The optimistic, or postmillennial, providentialism is most evident in the times of buoyant economies and relative peace while the pessimistic or premillennialism providentialism increases its following in times of war, social crisis or economic distress.⁷³

Quite obviously, dispensationalism is a radical form of the rescuing type of providentialism. A careful analysis of Lindsey's writing confirms this assumption and reveals seven themes around which his understanding of providence revolves.

1. The concept of Divine providence is an indispensable dimension of Lindsey's dispensational theories, acting as the force which is intrinsic to the unfolding of God's plan for human history.

2. Divine providence is the power-filled manipulation of large and small events for the benefit of the true believers.

3. Providence operates according to a predetermined Divine plan which never changes and which is explained in the biblical record. With regard to its determined character, Lindsey understands providence to be a static rather than a dynamic force. The veracity of this providential plan is assured through the fulfillment of what Lindsey identifies as biblical promises. In his

thinking, the fulfillment of biblical promises implies a direct correspondence to actual historical events. In this respect his interpretation of providence is imbued with a positivistic philosophy. For Lindsey, God's providence is experienced largely as an historical force as opposed to an ontologically significant reality/concept.

4. The central goal of this providential plan is the evangelism of the world in preparation for Christ's return and this objective is the responsibility of the church and of the people of Israel, though at different times.

5. Inherent in the providential plan is the reasoning that the destruction of the earth must occur before any lasting redemption can take place.

6. Any individual can choose to be part of this providential plan.

7. In the interim between the present age and the last days, a strong America works towards furthering the goal of God's providential plan while the rise of internationalism, communism and other religions hinders this plan.

These seven themes do not, in themselves, lead naturally to dispensational eschatology. While Lindsey's ideas have an obvious anti-world bias, an other-worldly spiritualism and an assumption of chosenness, his providentialism requires the power, the unflinching purpose of an Almighty deity to imbue the system with authority,

assurance and determination. Furthermore, it is his "high" doctrine of God, the image of the judging King, which gives his providential attitude its profoundly pessimistic colouring. As will be illustrated in Chapter Four, when his providential assumption is combined with the "high" doctrine of God, Lindsey's deterministic and Manichean eschatology results.

Lindsey's significance for Christian theology and as a religious writer is in his orchestration of the quintessential tension between human voluntarism and Divine determinism. While he posits the freedom of human will, the momentum of what he determines to be God's providential plan curtails any possibility of free choice. Eventually Lindsey's providentialism eliminates any freedom of the Divine, subjugating even God to the deterministic power of providence. It will be suggested that, in the final analysis, Lindsey's apocalyptic reading of the gospel results in the reification of God and the devaluation of human existence and life on this planet. Thus, it will be concluded that Lindsey's is a reductio ad absurdum of a theology which explicitly accentuates the glory of God and implicitly denigrates human experience.

Arising from an analysis of Lindsey's providentialism are many concerns for mainline Protestant theology to contemplate, not the least of which is his contribution to the Jewish-Christian dialogue.⁷⁴ But the predominant

challenge of Lindsey's writing for North American Christian theology is an eschatological one. If dispensational premillennialism leads to a determinism which obviates the Divine prerogative and denies the reality of human freedom the question arises: can a Post-Hiroshima Christian theology support an eschatology which addresses both the predicament of human despair and the reality of divine hope? Can millennialism of any kind provide a strong enough basis for real hope in the nuclear age and yet not eliminate the inherent tension of the divine-human encounter? While such an eschatology is possible, especially if certain traditional Theological terms, particularly the image of the sovereign, omnipotent God are reconstructed so as to accentuate the "co-operative" and "co-responsive" nature of the divine-human dialogue,⁷⁵ this research concludes that the reconstructive impulse may be premature. Before claiming a distinct discontinuity, further dialogue with dispensationalism reveals insights which might be considered valuable as any re-orientation of eschatology is attempted. Dispensationalism reflects an apocalyptic urgency and a refutation of a linear interpretation of history which are useful correctives to amillennial or postmillennial thinking. In a negative sense, the triumphalism and doceticism of Lindsey's Theology, while being an exaggeration, illustrate the need for a re-appropriation of an authentic, Christologically-based memory of God. It is concluded that any articulation of hope in a nuclear context

must begin with a revitalization of that "dangerous memory" (Metz) of God's freedom and pathos.

I.6 The Structure of the Dissertation:

This research divides itself into five chapters. Chapter One delineates the uniqueness of dispensationalism by illustrating its convergence with and divergence from other religious movements on this continent. Chapter Two interprets dispensationalism as an ideologized, anti-modernist movement with specific appeal to certain religious groups and social classes in the North American context. The third chapter is an elaboration of how Lindsey's doctrines of providence and God conspire to form his eschatology. Concluding that providentialism is the paradigm upon which he constructs his foundational arguments, including his doctrine of God, Chapter Four illustrates how these two doctrines contribute to the deterministic and Manichean 'logic' and 'configuration' of Lindsey's eschatology. Chapter Five contains the author's conclusions regarding the insights gleaned from an analysis of Lindsey's eschatology. The final chapter of this dissertation extends the dialogue with dispensationalism, indicating that while dispensationalism has a definite sense of urgency, it has lost the memory of a free God whose pathos will not allow for the destruction of creation.

Chapter One: Definitions and Distinctions within the
===== Religious Right of American Protestantism

. . . there is something which . . . distinguishes Evangelicalism and that is that Evangelicalism is an orthodoxy. Orthodoxy implicitly and explicitly claims to embody ultimate and final truth. In this case truth does not unfold but has already been revealed. . . . To frame this in sociological terms, orthodoxies are unique because of the special significance bestowed upon special boundaries which constitute the tradition. These boundaries are regarded as timeless. They are not supposed to change. Thus the duty of the faithful is to ensure that the boundaries remain intact -pure and undefiled. The claim of the orthodox then, is that they alone are the keepers of the tradition; they alone are the protectors of the true faith. Their stake in keeping the tradition sound and unqualified is high because their very identity and purpose as religious people (both collectively and individually) are bound to that mission. To stray from this task is to lose faith and to lose the hope of salvation. For the orthodox, the symbolic boundaries mean everything.

James Davison Hunter¹

1.1. Introduction

Within many religious traditions there is a conservative element which is usually characterized by a resistance to social, political, economic and theological change. People of this persuasion wish to conserve or reaffirm certain 'traditional' worship practices, faith statements, political structures or social practices which they believe embody the unchanging, 'eternal' truths of the faith. While it is evident that Hal Lindsey's thought falls somewhere within this constituency, a more qualified awareness of his precise place among the religious

conservatives of this continent will assist in an analysis of his doctrine of providence and its resultant eschatology.

The Introduction intimated that the breadth and importance of this conservative element within the Christian faith tradition in the North American context is shifting, acquiring a majority status. It was further indicated that even though many Christians are finding their spiritual home in denominations and organizations of the religious right,² there is some confusion regarding this broad spectrum of religious movements and beliefs. In particular, perplexity can be noted among liberal, Protestant Christians who, given their lack of knowledge about the religious right, impute to it a thorough-going homogeneity. Relying on terms such as 'biblicist,' 'literalist,' 'evangelical,' 'fundamentalist,' or 'pentecostalist' they have endeavoured to use singular labels to refer to every church or sect perceived as being right of centre. In the course of conversation these designations are mistakenly combined or interchangeably applied to the same phenomena.³ So it is that some adherents of traditional Protestantism may look upon the right as an indistinguishable group of people who all believe, think and act in the same way. While such a perception may be reassuring, and while the various distinctions made below may appear to be based on "theological minutiae,"⁴ nevertheless it is misleading to discount the marked differences among conservative Christians. More

precision is required if one is to avoid both unwarranted prejudicial criticism and theological misapprehension of the religious right and its organizations. (See Appendix Seven for a graphic illustration of the relationships described below.)

In order to avoid these perceptual errors and also in the expectation that this delineation of terms will situate Lindsey's dispensationalism in its proper religious context, this chapter is devoted to defining and distinguishing the various boundaries which transect the religious right. To that end this portion of the research examines conservative evangelicalism and distinguishes it from Lindsey's dispensationalism. Then a survey of the basic tenets of pentecostalism will illustrate how that position is sympathetic to, yet distinct from, dispensational thought. Once these two segments of the religious right are differentiated, it will be established that dispensationalism occupies a place within "fundamentalism." They share a common doctrinal base in what has come to be known as the "five fundamentals" and in reference to two of these principles, biblical inerrancy and premillennialism, the similarities and differences of these two movements will be illustrated. Finally the three aspects of dispensational thought which distinguish it from other forms of fundamentalism will be outlined.

1.2. Convergence and Divergence within the Religious Right

Before making some distinctions it should be noted that there are good reasons to speak about the religious right as a body of Christian believers which holds to some convergent perceptions about the world and about faith. A continuity of beliefs runs throughout the Christian right based on jointly held theological and social presuppositions: an aspiration to moral purity⁵ achieved through renunciation;⁶ a strong emphasis on the freedom of the individual, an unassailable loyalty to what is conceived to be the "traditional" family;⁷ a general commitment to the biblical foundations and formulations of faith; a robust patriotism of the conservative variety;⁸ a nostalgic longing to return to or re-establish a past when the country was ruled by "Christian" ideals; a mistrust of communism⁹ closely linked to a sometimes vague confidence in free-enterprise capitalism and above all a fervent spirit committed to local and global evangelism.¹⁰ These common denominators can be identified in spite of the variant historical and doctrinal origins of the churches or movements of the right, and may be the result, as James Barr indicates, of a common respect for the Bible¹¹ or of a shared heritage in American revivalism, as George Marsden suggests.¹²

Apart from a certain doctrinal convergence, the right can legitimately be described as a single religious group

inasmuch as its various segments share a common ecclesiastical experience. That is to say the theoretical distinctions outlined in this chapter are blurred or become inconsequential when believers gather for worship, study, evangelism or service. To the uninitiated or even to the seasoned veteran there may appear to be no difference between a dispensationally informed worship service and a pentecostal one, each displaying a disregard for liturgical form in favour of evangelistic appeals.¹³ Sermons by the conservative evangelical preacher and the fundamentalist pastor may sound the same. Therefore it should be noted that some of the doctrinal or political distinctions made below may become obscure in practice.¹⁴

Despite the common spiritual, social and political interests, this larger movement can and should be perceived as consisting of many sub-movements. There is convergence and general doctrinal accord but there is also a good deal of divergence and theological acrimony within the religious right. At certain times these sub-movements share similar strategies with respect to a social issue or they form coalitions based on a generally accepted doctrine or belief which is perceived to be under attack. The conservative alliance to defend biblical creationism culminating in the Scopes trial is, perhaps, the most historically notorious example of this co-operation within the religious right while the current debate over Christian prayers in public schools and sex education are two more,

albeit less publicized, common causes. However, in spite of these instances of a united front, the religious right has had a history of antagonism and segmentation resulting from its dynamism and lack of authoritative denominational structure and control. In spite of its free-enterprise spirit, in which theological notions are appropriated or discarded according to popular appeal,¹⁵ the lack of clear denominational boundaries has meant that certain fundamental ideas, and fidelity to them, serve as the symbolic and real distinctions within the religious right, separating the righteous from the unrighteous. Division, then, over seemingly inconsequential theological differences is endemic to the movement which uses doctrine to establish the boundaries of orthodoxy.¹⁶ Thus, the search for spiritual purity which marks the right necessitates narrow definitions of true belief and succinct pronouncements governing proper life-styles. It is for these reasons that Harvey Cox concludes that the religious right is, by its very nature, prone to division and mutual condemnation.¹⁷ In reality, the right sometimes spends more energy denouncing another segment of the same general orientation than evangelizing or condemning the common foes: liberalism, secular humanism and communism.¹⁸ This tendency to seek doctrinal purity within its own ranks is evidenced in two of Lindsey's books, The Rapture and Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth. Each is written as a corrective to "confusions" which he senses have crept into the beliefs of his followers¹⁹ and could be construed

as examples of the right arguing with itself, setting the boundaries of purity and orthodox thinking.

1.3. The Divergence Between Dispensationalism and Conservative Evangelicalism

Before making any distinctions between dispensationalism and conservative evangelicalism, it is necessary to appreciate the variety of beliefs which are grouped under the title of conservative evangelicalism. Gabriel Fackre has divided them into several sub-groupings: Old Evangelicals, New Evangelicals, Justice and Peace Evangelicals and Charismatic Evangelicals. It seems appropriate to quote his work verbatim since he offers a typology that gives enough clarity for the purposes of this research.

Old Evangelicals: Here are found the born-again Christians who stress the conversion experience and holiness of life and seek to nourish these in the revival tradition and in congregations of fervent piety. But they do not put a premium on separatist activity or biblicist polemics, nor do they establish strong political allegiances or feature apocalypticism.

New Evangelicals: With at least a thirty-year history in the United States, roughly corresponding to the life of the magazine Christianity Today, these evangelicals insist on the ethical and political relevance of faith as articulated by broad guidelines, stress intellectual viability of a born again faith and orthodox theology and seek to work out their point of view with, as well as alongside of, traditional denominations.

Justice and Peace Evangelicals: Of more recent vintage in the United States, this group is also represented by newly founded periodicals, The Other Side and

Sojourners. These born-again Christians express their faith in more radical political and ethical idiom. Whether from Anabaptist or high Calvinist perspective they call into question what they see as the accommodation of today's culture and churches to affluence, militarism and unjust social and economic structures. Many of them seek to embody their faith in an alternative style of life through intentional Christian communities.

Charismatic Evangelicals: Often apolitical (but not necessarily so, especially in the Third World) members of this experiential group within evangelical piety reach out for highly visible signs of the Spirit, primarily the gifts of tongue-speaking (glossolalia), healing, and intensity of prayer, song and communal life.²⁰

Even while Fackre's categories are helpful, they also may over-simplify the conservative evangelical phenomenon. Given the dynamism of faith, believers may circulate throughout these larger segments, endorsing dimensions of each. Moreover, as they are often adherents of existing denominations, conservative evangelicals loosely group themselves into the above, larger segments according to their allegiance to various extra-denominational evangelical projects or organizations.

From this broad spectrum of conservative evangelical Christians a national organization, called The National Association of Evangelicals, was founded in 1942. This body tried to steer a middle course between the mainline Protestant denominations which had established The Federal Council of Churches and the more stridently fundamentalist organization of The American Council of Christian Churches. While the story is complex, the

formation of The National Association of Evangelicals illustrated the belief among certain conservative evangelical crusaders, teachers and preachers that the preservation of fundamental doctrines was still possible even while co-operating in Christian ecumenism. Even though separation was a favoured posture of strict fundamentalists,²¹ the less radical Christians on the right wanted more flexibility, retaining the possibility of making a personal or a collective choice to work and/or associate with the traditional Protestant denominations.

There are many aspects of what should be loosely termed conservative evangelical theology and practice which are in convergence/divergence with respect to dispensationalism. Since, for some conservative evangelicals, dispensational notions once acted as the boundary between right and wrong belief, this is not surprising.²² Probably the most striking contrast would be recognized between writers like Lindsey and what Fackre identifies as the 'justice and peace evangelicals.' However, this left wing segment within conservative evangelicalism is a unique religious expression unto itself, and thus the three themes outlined below will make clear the basic difference between dispensationalism and the larger and more normative expression of conservative evangelical thought.

1.3.1. The Revivalist Appeal to Conversion

Even though conservative evangelicalism is a large

category which encompasses a wide variety of believers with many denominational affiliations, it is possible to assert that in general terms a conservative evangelical is someone who takes religious direction from the 'born again' or conversion experience believed to signify the entrance into the true faith.²³ Wrapped in emotional and spiritual ecstasy, this event of accepting Jesus 'as Saviour and Lord' is the quintessential expression of what it means to be a Christian believer. Often the experience is characterized by a renewed dedication to share the good news of Christ's Lordship with others and to participate in regular spiritual devotions. In fact, the central task of evangelism is the key to understanding the conservative faith. The 'born again' orientation of conservative evangelicalism was the cornerstone of much 19th century Protestant revivalism. In that epoch it was called 'soul winning' or 'cleansing.' Douglas Frank, in his recent work on how American conservative evangelicals of the nineteenth century moved into the twentieth century, argues:

Sure marks of the revival were certain emotional exhibits on the part of the conscience-stricken and a new dedication to upright behaviour and energetic personal evangelism on the part of the newly converted. . . . It [revivalism] was responsible for much of the shape of evangelical religious experience by the middle of the century.²⁴

Dispensationalism does not deny the necessity of such a conversion experience with its concomitant obligation to evangelize the world. On the contrary, as will become

evident in Chapter Two, it is also a religious movement whose roots grow out of American revivalism. In this respect there is a considerable convergence between conservative evangelicalism and dispensationalism. Consequently in most of Lindsey's writings there are periodic calls for the reader to accept Jesus and to be made new.²⁵ Most typically these appeals for conversion follow immediately upon Lindsey's delineation of the horrors of the 'Great Tribulation' towards which the world is relentlessly moving.

If there is convergence of perspectives on the issue of conversion and evangelism, there is also a divergence between dispensationalism and conservative evangelicalism because the dispensational call to convert is not without a specific goal and attendant doctrines. Whereas the goal of a "traditional" conversion is to bring the sinner back to God so that he or she would find eternal salvation after death, conversion for the dispensationalist has a more immediate objective going beyond the simple matter of embracing the new life in Jesus. This goal is to gain the assurance that one is a member of the chosen few who will enjoy the Rapture, the physical ascension into the clouds before the Tribulation. Hence, unlike, for instance, the calls for conversion uttered by Billy Graham, the dispensationalist is also enjoined to "come apart" and be separate since only those who forsake the defilement of corrupted Christianity will be "Raptured." The precise hope

I for the Raptured is to avoid death since, according to Lindsey's reading of First Thessalonians 4:17, those who rise up to meet Jesus will not die. Conversion or the born again experience becomes, then, the religious act which secures inclusion in this select remnant of true and pure Christians who escape death. Given that the Rapture might happen at any moment, the failure to embrace Jesus "right this instant" could be an eternal mistake as Lindsey boldly proclaims in the conclusion to A Prophetic Walk through the Holy Land.

If you haven't received his pardon, invite him to come into your life and forgive your sins and give you a new heart with new desires. Don't put it off...you may be playing Russian roulette with eternity.²⁶

Thus, the dispensational incentive to convert is more vital and immediate, obviously having a greater urgency than that of conservative evangelicalism which only points to the uncertainty of death as a reason to accept Jesus. (For this reason, it should not be surprising to note that all the major American evangelists since Billy Sunday endorsed dispensational ideas at one time, or throughout their entire careers.) In addition, the attendant doctrines which are implied within a dispensational understanding of conversion indicate, to a much greater extent than conservative evangelicalism, that the dispensational convert is initiated into a total theological world view. To be a 'true' Christian, by Lindsey's standards, is not solely a spiritual act. One must give intellectual assent to the dispensational interpretation of history, its prophetic

exegesis of biblical pronouncements and its analysis of how present political and social events situate themselves in accordance with scriptural predictions. Therefore, though Lindsey is fairly traditional in his evangelical appeals, it is clear that the urgency of the Rapture doctrine and the rigidity of dispensational principles distinguish its evangelism from that of the conservative evangelicals.

1.3.2. Biblicism vs. Inerrancy

While it may appear to outsiders that the religious right uses the Bible in a consistent fashion, this is not an entirely accurate assumption. Conservative evangelicalism is 'biblicist,' while dispensationalism is more radical, relying upon the hermeneutic of inerrancy. Biblicism is a general posture of piety which regards the Bible as the source of all truth and the cornerstone of righteous living. For biblicists "all problems of truth, life and theology" are "to be solved by the use and exegesis of the Bible."²⁷ While dispensationalists do use the Bible in this fashion, they would argue that it is much more. To the apocalyptically minded, not only is it "the greatest source book of current events in the world,"²⁸ but also a text to be trusted unfailingly as a precise account of God's intentions for human history. It contains the exact words of God,²⁹ and even though the canon of scripture is the product of many individuals it is wholly complete and without error. This argument, known as the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, is propounded by Lindsey in the

following manner:

without giving up their own individuality, personality or personal experiences God's complete Revelation to man was inerrantly written.³⁰

Inerrancy, the key aspect of modern fundamentalism which dispensationalism shares, is a quite different hermeneutical principle from the biblicism of conservative evangelicalism. Essentially, it is a more rigid doctrine based on a static interpretation of truth. Conservative evangelicals treat the Bible with a great deal of respect but they do not generally consider it to be inerrant.

1.3.3. The Ecumenical Spirit of Conservative Evangelicalism:

One of the unequivocal divergences between conservative evangelicals and dispensationalists is the former's willingness to work with other more liberal denominations. Barr points out that the more orthodox variety of conservative evangelicalism

aspires to hold itself close to the traditional positions of the mainstream churches, considering that these traditional positions would have remained totally satisfactory if they had not been spoiled by deviation into modern theology.³¹

In contrast to this semi-ecumenical spirit, dispensationalists discriminate clearly between the small minority Church and the majority of people who profess to be Christians.³² They assert that the 'true believers' or the pure Church will evade death, and receive

immortality through the Rapture³³ while the unbelievers will suffer during the Tribulation. To use ecclesiological terms, the dispensationalists believe that the visible and invisible church are identical. Consequently, the gathered church is the true communion of saints which must consequently keep itself as a community separate from the defiled and the unrighteous. Given this narrow definition, there is little inclination or incentive for dispensationalists to become ecumenical. In fact, Lindsey notes that some ecumenical movements, rather than being tokens of growing religious maturity, are the signs of the coming destruction.³⁴ It is perhaps most accurate to conclude that conservative evangelicalism and dispensationalism are on the same ecclesiastical continuum, with dispensationalism defending, at the far right pole, the concept of separation towards which conservative evangelicalism senses an affinity. But, as is the case with any such spectrum, what appear to the onlooker as slight differences, are significant obstacles to co-operation for the insiders. This is certainly indicative of the split between dispensationalists and conservative evangelicals. There is convergence, but the divergences of belief are usually insurmountable. Lindsey gives voice to this anti-ecumenical attitude. Association with the other denominations is impossible because they are

captured by those who completely reject the historic truths of the Bible and deny doctrines which, according to Christ Himself are crucial to believe in order to be a Christian.³⁵

While the conservative evangelical movement is a large segment of the religious right, there is another identifiable group with which dispensationalism differs, i.e., pentecostalism. As was the case with conservative evangelicals, there are elements of Lindsey's thought which converge and diverge with the tenets of pentecostalism.

1.4. Divergence between Dispensationalism and Pentecostalism:

There has been a tendency within liberal theological circles to attach the word "pentecostal" to any movement which has a vague conservative flavour. This is clearly a simplistic appraisal. Pentecostalism is a well-defined religious movement with distinctive, doctrinal beliefs.

Primarily, pentecostalism is divergent from both the conservative evangelicals and from adherents of dispensational ideas because of its predominant belief in the gifts of the Spirit and specifically the gift of speaking in tongues. Technically known as 'glossolalia,' the practice of speaking in tongues is understood by pentecostalists as the normative sign of Christian faith and is a cornerstone of their belief system.³⁶ Considered to be the initial sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, glossolalia is mentioned by the author of the Acts of the Apostles in an account of the first Pentecost when, after the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the disciples

began speaking many languages to an assembled crowd. It is from the first Pentecost event that the movement takes its inspiration, and thus, as one historian explains, "the term Pentecostal Movement or Pentecostal Revival implies that the first Pentecost shall be repeated in the life of all Christians."³⁷ Though speaking in tongues is not necessary for salvation, according to most pentecostals it is understood to be the distinguishing mark of the serious dedicated believer. A pentecostal publication, The Blessed Trinity Society pamphlet entitled Why Tongues, Why Divisions?, explains how pentecostals regard glossolalia:

If we only wish to perform the barest minimum essential for life everlasting then once we have repented of our sins and accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, we may live and obtain life eternal. But how much more there is for the serious Christian. How much more rewarding is the life of commitment and service a dedicated Child of God may participate in . . . For surely the unknown tongue is the initial, audible evidence of the infilling of the Holy Spirit.³⁸

There is some debate in the pentecostal movement about the actual process which leads up to the gift of tongues. Some leaders believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place soon after conversion while others argue that there is an intermediary step of sanctification between the conversion experience and the gift of tongues. Though this difference may seem slight it has led to the splintering of the pentecostal movement and the formation of several pentecostal churches.³⁹

Whatever the exact process and ensuing theological rationale, the actual experience of speaking in tongues is an ecstatic expression of praise and thanksgiving to God. As one pentecostal believer explains her gift of tongues, it appears to be not only a strikingly emotional act, but almost a physical necessity.

I was so dried up and so hungry. How I have been looking forward for months to this year's camp meeting so that I could be filled again. Well last night it came and Oh! how the glory poured down on me. I surely feel like a new person today. I spoke in other tongues for hours and words can't express how wonderful it was. Heaven really came down and flooded my heart to overflowing. Praise the Lord for His wonderful goodness to me.⁴⁰

1.4.1 Convergence in the Common Historical Roots of Dispensationalism and Pentecostalism

There are historical dimensions to the convergence/divergence between pentecostalism and dispensationalism as an examination of their origins illustrates. Dispensationalism and pentecostalism both gained membership and impetus because of the rapidly changing social environment of the late nineteenth century. In that epoch, urbanization and industrialization adversely affected traditional rural communities. The pragmatic, pioneering individualism of ordinary people was shocked and alienated by the faceless, mass society of the modern metropolis. A sensation of uprootedness proved to be fertile ground in which many zealous religious groups, such as pentecostalists and

dispensationalists, would spawn.⁴¹ As the old ways and traditions declined in the wake of dehumanizing technology and urban life-styles, some people sought security in simple, fervent and emotionally gripping religious practice. Whereas in the rural setting climate and geography set the limits of one's existence, in the city the faithful built a sense of community and a feeling of belonging through the establishment of a vital, all-encompassing, religious communion. Douglas Frank, who has made a study of the American Evangelical tradition from 1850 to 1920, maintains that the rise of the modern era was "a traumatic time for American evangelicals,"⁴² when dispensationalism and pentecostalism both grew in strength of numbers because of the decline in a common sense of trust and security brought about by urban industrialized life.

1.4.2. Dispensationalism's Divergence from Pentecostalism

Even though both dispensationalism and pentecostalism were reactions to the urban, industrial world emerging at the turn of the century, and even though some pentecostals may accept dispensational ideas, these two movements represent two diverging, perhaps opposing, responses to modern, urban alienation. While each promotes a fundamentalist or, what might be termed "totalist" reaction to modernism, pentecostalism is an emotional response⁴³ while dispensationalism, as will be explained below, is an intellectual one. The pentecostalist insistence upon ecstatic utterance as a sign of God's gracious presence is

unsettling for the dispensationalist, whose heritage is founded on adherence to the intellectual tradition of Presbyterianism. On account of its roots in the holiness movement, pentecostalism seeks refuge from the impersonal and secular world in the hope and assurance of a changed and improved spirit-filled life perfected in the present time. Such a perspective appears short-sighted or even self-serving to the dispensationalist who, in contrast, while desiring perfection through daily devotion to Jesus Christ, nevertheless draws real hope from the growing decay of the world and an expectation of a better life after its destruction. It is important, therefore, to be aware of the distinctions which separate the two movements.

While some pentecostals are dispensationalists and even though the only denominational institution officially to endorse dispensational ideas is a pentecostal one, not all dispensational leaders would embrace pentecostalism; the former harbour suspicions about the latter's emotive spiritualism and its lack of ardor for the second coming of Christ. Lindsey expresses these suspicions, cautioning believers to exercise vigilance against the satanic forces of the spiritual world. In his book, Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth, a text which is primarily oriented against Christian spiritualism, he warns that in the last days Satan will be "permitted to counterfeit the miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁴ Moreover, any time "you submit yourself to the spiritual realm, turn off

your mind and cease to be discerning, you are opening yourself up to possible demon possession."⁴⁵ Further on in the same text Lindsey not only condemns spiritual dabbling, he levels a vigorous criticism directly at the practice of speaking in tongues. Although he does not deny that such a gift of the Spirit is possible, he points out that it is not available to anyone who wants it. Citing Paul's description of the many gifts of the spirit, Lindsey contends that God decides who shall receive which gift. Individual believers cannot command the gift they desire. "All cannot speak in tongues any more than all could be apostles, prophets, evangelists or teachers."⁴⁶ In an even greater note of warning he declares that

Mr. Deception himself has sneaked in along with this new charismatic revival. We can count upon the devil to be consistent. . . . And perhaps no spiritual gift is more susceptible to Satanic counterfeit and confusion than the gift of tongues.⁴⁷

Lindsey reinforces his attack on glossolalia and charismatic spiritualism by offering his own personal testimony as an argument against the recognition of 'tongues' as the normative or primary sign of the serious believer. Even though he is a committed disciple and obviously a great evangelist, he denies any need for glossolalia, affirming: "I have never spoken in tongues, nor do I honestly see any scriptural evidence that I should seek it."⁴⁸

Summarizing his opposition to speaking in tongues,

Lindsey concedes that, while some may be given this gift, nevertheless, the controversy aroused through the pre-eminence accorded this one gift is having disastrous consequences as it splits the body of Christ into two unyielding factions. He enjoins both sides of the argument to recognize the cost of this polarization.

The charismatic movement has placed an unbalanced emphasis on the importance of tongues. They have drawn unscriptural conclusions about a genuine and bona fide spiritual gift. The more the Christian world has criticized their movement, the greater the claims they have made for tongues. The more they have sought to validate their emphasis with biblically insupportable claims, the more conservative biblical scholars and Christians have resisted them. With polarization like this who do you think is the winner? You guessed it! Satan. He goads both sides on in their causes and then stands back and laughs while they battle each other instead of him.⁴⁹

There are several sources for Lindsey's critique of the pentecostal emphasis on the gift of tongues. On a purely psychological level, the unbridled emotionalism of glossolalia disturbs the sobering, firmly rational foundations of dispensational thinking. (One example of this doctrinal rigidity of dispensationalism is The Niagara Creed. See Appendix Four.) Doctrinally, the pentecostal focus on the spirit undermines the dispensational interpretation of biblical prophecies.⁵⁰ Even though Lindsey is willing to admit that some people may receive this gift, his dispensational exegesis makes him

suspicious of all out-pourings of the Spirit. According to the unique way in which the dispensational thinkers "divide"⁵¹ the scriptures, such exceptional spiritual events along with the great healing miracles were prophesied to have ended with the apostolic age. Furthermore, by introducing the possibility of spiritual inspiration outside the biblical record, pentecostalism disrupts the end-time dispensational countdown which is based upon the resolute belief that all pertinent revelations are found in the Bible. Perhaps most importantly, Lindsey opposes the practice of speaking in tongues because he perceives it to be a waste of precious spiritual energy, energy which should be focused on the coming Rapture. For the true believer, this dispensation of grace is a time of earnest waiting and not an opportunity to practice spiritualism. Pentecostalism and the wider charismatic movement, disregarding the careful scriptural categories of the dispensational system, misdirect religious zeal, diverting spiritual excitement away from the search through the Bible for signs of the imminent Rapture.

1.5 Dispensationalism and Fundamentalism: -----

Thus far it has been illustrated that dispensationalism has some convergence with pentecostalism and conservative evangelicalism as well as some differences. It now seems appropriate to explore the extent to which dispensationalism is similar to and yet distinct from another prominent segment of the religious right known as the fundamentalist

movement. In a technical sense, dispensationalism is one relatively small variation of American fundamentalism. But its size should not detract from its importance since, as several authors have indicated, dispensationalism gave a significant and determined rigidity⁵² to the broader fundamentalist movement. The specific interaction between dispensationalism and fundamentalism will be examined through the delineation of two basic doctrines, inerrancy and premillennialism, which make both fundamentalism and dispensationalism unique in the religious right. Prior to this comparison a brief definition of fundamentalism will serve to situate these movements in an historical context.

1.5.1 Fundamentalism: A Brief Definition

In the generic sense, fundamentalism appears to be, above all, a psychological attitude. As such it could be possible to be fundamentalistic with respect to politics, medicine or any other social endeavour. By definition religious fundamentalism is the urge to find and grasp 'eternal' truth through an adherence to perceived fundamental doctrines or principles. It differs from regular conservatism, not so much in its choice of specific, eternal and foundational principles, as in its unyielding determination to confer a transcendent ultimacy on these principles and its unwillingness to enter into any serious questioning of its own position. Thus, for a Christian fundamentalist, doubt, far from being a helpful

tool of intellectual or spiritual reflection, is shunned as an instrument of the devil, something to be suppressed at all costs. The self-assurance and undialectical flavour of religious fundamentalism, particularly attractive to the pragmatism of North American Christians, combines a demanding devotional life with simple rules, discourages debilitating anxiety and offers, in return for spiritual obedience, a sense of enduring righteousness.

North American Christian Fundamentalism began as a recognizable religious movement in the first decade of this century. It never coalesced into a denomination but, as a series of beliefs and as a psycho-spiritual attitude, has inspired many organizations, Bible colleges, religious programs and a whole variety of missionary endeavours which have spread around the world. The term "fundamentalism" was first applied to a specific theological perspective associated with a series of twelve volumes of religious articles entitled The Fundamentals. Appearing between 1910 and 1915, The Fundamentals were meant to be a great "Testimony to the Truth"⁵³ which would present and re-establish the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith which, to some Christians, appeared to be eroded by modern ideas. Though not an 'official' manifesto, these texts inspired many evangelists and lay people who were reacting against Christian liberalism and yearning for a return to the firm foundation of faith. Eventually, through these writings and religious assemblies, those believers who

strove to bolster 'true' Christian doctrine and reverse the decline of the church specified that there were five "fundamental" doctrines to which all believers must give assent. They are: 1) the inerrancy of scripture, 2) the virgin birth of Christ, 3) the substitutionary theory of atonement, 4) the bodily resurrection of Christ and 5) the premillennial return of Christ. It has been incorrectly assumed that the five fundamentals were formulated at the famous Niagara Bible conferences. Though the essence of these five doctrines is contained in the Niagara creed (See Appendix Four) written for that annual Bible meeting, the specific dogmas which have become known as the fundamentals were actually an altered version of the "essential doctrines" produced by the Northern Presbyterian Assembly of 1910.⁵⁴ The early connection between fundamentalism and Presbyterianism is indicative of the respectability which this anti-modernist, anti-secular sentiment once enjoyed. No matter what its historic origins, fundamentalism has subsequently been defined as any religious movement, organization or group of believers which gives assent to these five principles. Apart from these five general doctrines, there is no central confession of faith or organizational structure which gives shape to American Christian fundamentalism. It is a fluid association of Christians, held together by the perceived importance of its message and mission, prone to divisions and relying upon public opinion to resolve its disputes.⁵⁵

Essentially, dispensationalism and fundamentalism were and are one and the same movement, the former being a more radical version of the latter. Hence, dispensationalism plays the role in fundamentalist circles, as any extreme position does, of being a bastion of "real" faith towards which a large majority is sympathetic but in which only a small minority is really involved. An examination of two pivotal doctrines will illustrate the extent to which fundamentalism and dispensationalism are intertwined: the inerrancy of scripture, and the premillennial return of Christ. Since these are theological positions upon which fundamentalism and dispensationalism agree, the following sub-sections will speak of both movements interchangeably unless a distinction is necessary.

1.5.2 Dispensationalism and Fundamentalism and The Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy:

The principal theory separating dispensationalism and fundamentalism from other groups and organizations of the religious right is the belief in biblical inerrancy. James Barr, in his text entitled Fundamentalism, which may be too polemical, makes an important point about fundamentalist hermeneutics, maintaining that the doctrine of biblical inerrancy has been misinterpreted by liberal theologians as biblicism or literalism. This subsection will summarize this insight into the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, illustrating that there are clear distinctions between a biblicist, a literalist and an inerrant reading

of the Bible.

Biblicism is not a hermeneutical theory so much as a religious attitude. As was noted above, it is the use of the Bible as a guide book for the answers to all of life's questions, whether they be political, social, personal, or collective. Thus, as an attitude toward scriptural authority, biblicism could describe the presupposition and practice of a wide spectrum of believers. It is, therefore, not necessarily in conflict with inerrancy, the latter being a specific hermeneutical theory while the former is the resultant religious practice. Literalism, in contrast, is definitely a specific hermeneutic, operating on the hypothesis that the Bible's words are literally true. No explanation of the text is necessary and if the literal reading of the scriptures does not make sense it is because the human mind is 'fallen' and in this state is unable to interpret the biblical passage properly. While fundamentalists and dispensationalists favour a literalist hermeneutic, they do not operate solely on the basis of such an approach. Rather they base their reading of scripture on another, more complex, hermeneutical principle which argues not only

that the Bible must be taken literally but that it must be so interpreted as to avoid any admission that it contains any kind of error.⁵⁶

Not simply applied to theological issues, the theory of inerrancy contends that the Bible is free from every possible error, be it geographical, historical,

political or economic. Furthermore, it affirms that there are no contradictions within the Bible itself since one passage of scripture will never prove another to be false. In order to achieve a flawless reading of scripture the literal meaning of certain passages is discarded in favour of allegorical interpretations which avoid any perceived discrepancies. Inerrancy, then, while in sympathy with literalism, is substantially different from it.

Lindsey's dispensational reading of the Bible is very close to this description of inerrancy. For instance, in his book, The Late Great Planet Earth, he explains that the claims of the Bible are without error because they have a clear basis in historical fact⁵⁷ and that when the prophets of the Bible spoke the 'word from the Lord' "they could not allow themselves errors in judgement or mistakes in the smallest detail."⁵⁸ In a later work on biblical promises, entitled The Promise, Lindsey repeats the claim that the Bible contains no errors, stating that "what is unique to the Bible is that it has been 100 percent accurate in every prophecy fulfilled to date."⁵⁹

Motivating and sustaining the hermeneutic of inerrancy is a particular understanding of truth. The veracity of a text is based upon its correspondence with what actually happens and therefore perceived experience is the scale by which biblical inerrancy is measured.⁶⁰ The veracity of scripture, founded on a correlation between biblical passages and actual events, is pervasive throughout

all of Lindsey's writings.⁶¹ Following this line of reasoning, the biblical prophecies are true because they point to actual historical realities. The "Gog" of Ezekiel 38:15-16 is referring to the U.S.S.R.,⁶² and the text which speaks of the "kings of the East" (Revelation 16:12) is an allusion to the rulers of Mainland China.⁶³ Under Lindsey's hermeneutical interpretation the "ten horned beast" of Daniel 7:24 is prophesied to be the European Economic Community.⁶⁴ Obviously the hermeneutic of inerrancy, in which truth is defined by its correspondence to an empirical event, subordinates the biblical record to the reader's subjective perspective and the historical and political distortions of his or her particular context. Given such a definition, the conception of truth which lies behind the doctrine of inerrancy is very close to what Tillich calls "positivism."⁶⁵ Truth is reduced to what happens or more specifically, in Lindsey's case, to what he comprehends as occurring given his apocalyptic sensibilities. Thus, one might call his understanding of truth an "apocalyptic positivism."

Fundamentalists enlist the Bible as a defence of their doctrine of inerrancy. Quoting II Timothy 3:16 or II Peter 1:20, they argue that the Holy Scriptures confess themselves to be the inerrant word of God. Furthermore, according to some fundamentalists and dispensationalists, not only the Bible but Jesus himself believed in the inerrancy of scripture, and if the Saviour believed in it,

can the modern believer argue against inerrancy? Lindsey employs this tautological reasoning in his book, The Terminal Generation when he proclaims:

[If] Jesus, the apostles and the Bible itself claim accuracy extending to the words, who has the right to ignore or reject this basic proposition?⁶⁶

Thus, using an argument that has more affinity with evangelical preaching than theological reflection, Lindsey invokes the authority of a reader's faith in Jesus as support for a dispensational hermeneutical principle. In essence he implies that to doubt inerrancy is to doubt Jesus, enlisting the authority of belief as a means of reinforcing his reading of scripture and to forestall any criticism of his point of view. This circular reasoning is also evident in the dispensational rationale for its doctrines of God and eschatology.

Given the precarious nature of a tautological defence of biblical truth, it is possible to understand why fundamentalists need to protect their position against even the slightest presumption of biblical error.⁶⁷ To doubt the Bible or find the most trifling error in the text is to doubt Jesus or the salvation he offers. Such an aversion to doubt, along with an understanding of truth in which "empirical actuality has precedence over veracity as significance"⁶⁸ suggests that meaningful ecumenical dialogue between liberals and fundamentalists is most perplexing, since each communion is operating out of distinct and often

opposing principles of theological discourse.

Barr speculates that fundamentalists employ two exegetical techniques in their hermeneutic of inerrancy, both of which aid in the interpretation of passages that do not concur with an accepted understanding of historical reality. The first technique, called the "gap theory," assumes that "what is written in the biblical text can be stretched out to cover almost limitless additional periods of time or other additional events."⁶⁹ This stretching of time allows the Bible to be without error while incorporating certain recently accepted facts. For instance, in his notes on Genesis 1:1, C.I. Scofield explains that

the word 'day' covers the entire work of creation. . . . The use of evening and morning may be held to limit 'day'. . . but the frequent parabolic use of natural phenomenon may warrant the conclusion that it simply means that each creative day was a period of time marked off by a beginning and ending.⁷⁰

This rendering makes allowance for the theory of a geological progression of the earth through many ages and, therefore, frees the Bible of error. Barr claims that another example of the gap theory is the way in which the genealogical discrepancies in the list of Moses' ancestors are explained away.⁷¹ In Lindsey's writing the "gap theory" is not often apparent except in his interpretation of the word "generation"⁷² and in his use of Daniel 9:24-27. Like Scofield, Lindsey interprets the seventy weeks as being "weeks of years"⁷³ which the former

argues is "an important sabbatical time-measure in the Jewish calendar."⁷⁴

A second exegetical technique exploited by some fundamentalists and dispensationalists is the theory of the autograph, which proposes that any inconsistency within the biblical record is due to the copying efforts of scribes. The original writings, 'the autograph', were without error. While this may be a technique used by some fundamentalists, it is not invoked by Lindsey in his biblical interpretations. On the contrary, in The Terminal Generation, Lindsey goes out of his way to explain that the Bible as it now exists, even though it was written by human hands, is complete and without error. Not only did Jesus believe in the inerrancy of the exact words of scripture⁷⁵ but, according to Lindsey, "we have more manuscript evidence to establish the veracity of every chapter of the New Testament than we have evidence that Aristotle or Julius Caesar ever lived."⁷⁶ He says the same about the diligent and therefore absolutely correct copying of the Old Testament.⁷⁷ The scribes did not make mistakes since their efforts were guided by God.

Both of these techniques substantiate the hermeneutic of inerrancy. But the work of the biblical exegete is not finished once she or he has employed these techniques. There is now, as Barr explains, the very important task of

imposing harmony upon the biblical text.

The inerrancy of the Bible means that its statements correspond to sequences of actual events, or to relations between actual existing realities and that they correspond very closely, if not perfectly. It follows that, just as any single biblical passage corresponds to relations or events in external reality, where there are two or more passages which refer to the same events or realities, these passages must correspond with one another. If this is not so, then one or both of them will be "wrong" and the whole fabric of inerrancy will be destroyed. The harmonizing of biblical passages which appear to refer to the same realities but to say something different about them is thus one of the most essential elements in conservative evangelical interpretation.⁷⁸

An example of fundamentalist harmonization is evident in The New Bible Commentary's explanation of the temple cleansing. The problem is that the synoptic gospels place the cleansing of the temple at the end of Jesus' ministry, and John has it at the beginning. While other exegetical methods might credit this discrepancy to a divergence in the oral tradition predating the synoptic writings, the fundamentalist cannot allow such a blatant contradiction to remain. The conclusion of the commentary illustrates the need to find harmony between biblical texts stating that "by far the most satisfactory solution is that Jesus cleansed the temple twice."⁷⁹

There is a sense in which this principle of harmonization is not merely an exegetical exercise but also the foundational principle of dispensational exegesis. The complete harmony of the Bible is the

assumption which supports and inspires the theory of seven dispensations, an effort to bring an historical and theological harmony to what appear to be disjointed passages throughout the Bible. Moreover, the theory of scriptural harmony also functions in the dispensational reading of the New Testament and in the way in which it reconciles the continuing existence of the people of Israel and the establishment of the church.⁸⁰

In general, dispensationalists use harmonization to substantiate their theories, treating the Bible as a difficult puzzle, which, if understood correctly, will fall together into a complete and consistent whole. In this respect, Lindsey marvels at the harmony of concepts and prophecies found in a book written by so many people.

The Bible was written by about forty different authors from various times, cultures and backgrounds over a period of approximately sixteen hundred years. . . . The marvel is that what they wrote all fits together into a cohesive and homogeneous whole to form one book.⁸¹

Since the Bible is a book characterized by absolute, internal integrity, it is possible for dispensationalists to believe that widely separate texts refer to the exact same idea or circumstance. For instance, the divergent passages of Matthew 24:40-44, I Thessalonians 4:17, Titus 2:13-15, John 14:1-3 and I Corinthians 15:52 are considered by Lindsey to be referring to the same historical event, i.e., the Rapture of the 'true church.'

Furthermore, the careful guidance of the Holy Spirit has ensured that the identical connotation of certain words and phrases found in separate books of the Bible is not disturbed by disparity in the times of writing. Using this reasoning Lindsey illustrates the significance of the book of Revelation as the culmination of biblical harmony.

I believe we need to see that the Book of Revelation is the 'Grand Central Station' of the whole Bible. Nearly every symbol in it is used somewhere else in the Bible, but finds its ultimate fulfillment and explanation in this final prophetic book of the Bible.⁸²

Scofield captures the dispensational belief in the harmony of scriptures in the introduction to his translation of the Bible. He states that "the Bible is one book. . . . these writers, some forty-four in number, writing through twenty centuries, have produced a perfect harmony of doctrine in progressive unfolding."⁸³ It will become evident below that without this notion of the harmonious Bible, the concepts of dispensationalism would not have integrity.

Harmonization is thus an important exegetical tool, a foundational principle, but not the goal of dispensational biblical research. Neither Darby, Scofield, Blackstone nor Lindsey contrived their theories because they wanted to harmonize biblical discrepancies. On the contrary, their real intention was to make sense of biblical prophecy and fit it into the pattern which demonstrates the progressive, providential presence in the world. Hence,

the principle of God's plan for a final judgment and the establishment of a great Kingdom is primary while harmonization is a secondary technique which allows for this plan to be delineated from scripture.

In summary, while inerrancy has exegetical importance and is the basis upon which a dispensational reading of the Bible is possible, it is equally important as a boundary of orthodoxy. It served as the test of the 'true' believer in a world where denominational structures, which could have set such limits, were non-existent. Given the centrality of scripture within the reformed tradition, it is not surprising that struggles, animosities and schisms within the fundamentalist world centred on the primacy of biblical inerrancy.⁸⁴

1.5.3 Dispensationalism, Fundamentalism and Premillennialism

Inerrancy is one mark of fundamentalism and dispensationalism which distinguishes their adherents from those other groups in the religious right. A second significant distinction is premillennialism. Since millennialism of one type or another has had strong influence in American religious life, the broad concept of millennialism will be explained as the first step in illustrating how dispensational premillennialism is distinctive.

Any serious investigation of the Christian scriptures will uncover the theme of the "Kingdom." Sometimes it is

called the Kingdom of God (Mat. 6:33, Luke 12:31, Mark 1:15), sometimes Matthew refers to the Kingdom of Heaven, (Mat. 3:2, 4:17, 10:7 etc.) and often it is spoken of as "thy Kingdom" (Mat. 6:10, Luke 11:2) or "his Kingdom" (Luke 11:18, Mat. 12:26). The Kingdom motif is not peripheral to the Christian faith, a fact which is made manifest by the longing for the Kingdom articulated in the first petition of the Lord's prayer. Thus, whenever Christian believers have attempted to express their reason for hope, the concept of a perfect and glorious Kingdom has arisen, fashioned from the Hebraic tradition surrounding the day of the Lord. Millennialism, envisioning the Kingdom of one thousand years during which time the peace of God would reign, is thus an old tradition which stretches back well before the discovery of this continent. It was the author of the book of Revelation who gave shape and substance to a vision of the one thousand year Kingdom. In fact, it is only in the last book of the Bible that one finds a biblical reference to any millennial reign of God (Rev. 20:4-6). Inherent in the concept of the millennial Kingdom are the ideas that Christ will return again to earth, establishing a great Kingdom, that he will institute the process leading to the final judgement in which the saved will receive eternal life and the lost will be destroyed, and that God will defeat Satan once and for all. Essentially, millennialism posits that there is purpose and direction in human history, i.e., the reign of Christ, and that God will move events to bring about this Kingdom in which

war and suffering, pain and death will be wiped away.
(Rev. 21:4)

Historically, the Christian religious tradition in America has heavily favoured and perhaps depended upon millennialism. In her article dealing with the dominant American religions, Catherine Albanese points out that "millennialism" is the characteristic which best describes the religion which "lives at the centre"⁸⁵ of American society. The spirit of millennialism was certainly the spark that fired the determination and the hope of the American colonies. For instance, Timothy Dwight professed his hope in 1783 that this new land would be the seat of God's final Kingdom where

Empire's last and brightest throne shall
rise. And peace and Right and Freedom greet
the skies.⁸⁶

This millennial spirit had two dominant tones, the post-millennial and the pre-millennial or what could be termed an optimistic and pessimistic apocalyptic spirit, each of which, as Martin Marty argues, has shaped the nation that emerged out of the thirteen colonies. Claiming that both forms of millennialism, sometimes concurrently, have been employed as spiritual justification and support for the symbols and covenants of the nation, and identifying their respective proponents, he elaborates:

Jonathan Edwards stood at the head of the postmillennial tradition: "The latter day glory is probably to begin in America". The millennium was attainable . . . Dwight

L. Moody picked up the loose strands of premillennial theory and reversed the process. The Edwardseans, with countless variations, have been the more optimistic transformers of society, without neglecting the individual. The Moodyites have been the more pessimistic, concentrating on rescuing the individual and then turning him loose, if he will, to help save other persons in society.⁸⁷

Given Marty's generalized perspective, dispensationalism is obviously on the rescuing side of the American millennial spirit.

To be more specific, this "belief that there will be a long period of unprecedented peace and righteousness closely associated with the second coming of Christ"⁸⁸ can be divided into three types:

- [1] Amillennialists (literally non-millennialists) interpret biblical references to the millennium figuratively and contend that the millennial reign of Christ occurs in the hearts of his followers.
- [2] Postmillennialists, on the other hand, believe that Christ will return after the church has established the millennium through its faithful and Spirit-empowered preaching of the gospel; . . .
- [3] Premillennialists expect Christ to return before the millennium in order to establish it by his might.⁸⁹

Discussion of each of these three forms of millennialism will illustrate how premillennialism distinguishes the fundamentalist and dispensationalist from the rest of the religious right.

Though the amillennial position is a popular motif among many Protestants and Roman Catholics, it has had the lowest profile within North American society. This

could be due to the fact that it does not easily lend itself to providential thinking and so it is difficult to explain and even more difficult to defend. The concept that the Kingdom grows within an individual or was proleptically incarnated in Christ and is therefore present in some form right now, is not an accessible religious idea upon which one can posit the destiny of a nation or even that of an individual. Complicated arguments lack the simple appeal and the display of transcendent power which some North American believers seek to claim and use in order to give divine sanction to their political, economic, or social action. Marsden also points out that the nomenclature for this idea was only formed in the early twentieth century, and so, as a concept, it lacks the authority of tradition.⁹⁰

Dispensationalists have little sympathy for amillennialism, and Lindsey has clearly identified it as the antithesis of his own position. In The Rapture he denounces the amillennial position, maintaining that it relies upon "an allegorical method of interpretation. . . . [and] assigns to words a meaning other than normally understood."⁹¹ Moreover, he claims that amillennialism has dangerous side effects: making God guilty of not keeping unconditional covenants and promises made to the physical descendants of Abraham (Gen. 12:7, 13:15-16, and 17:7-8) and instilling a propensity for anti-Semitism within Christian theology.⁹²

If amillennialism anticipates a purely spiritual Kingdom, postmillennialism believes that the church will establish a real Kingdom of God on this earth through the conversion of individuals and the transformation of social structures. Once this heavenly Kingdom is established Jesus will come (hence the name). Postmillennialism has a long history within the American religious right. As was pointed out above in Marty's explanation of the various millennial options operative in the American psyche, postmillennialism was a dominant theme within the Great Awakening, initiated by Jonathan Edwards. The eighteenth century evangelist viewed the "new" colonies as part of God's great reformation of the world which would lead to the founding of the long awaited Kingdom.⁹³

In both the pre- and post-Civil War periods postmillennialism grew in strength among Protestants of all varieties. Preachers sympathetic to liberalism, like Henry Ward Beecher, preached "the progress in science and morality as the coming of the Kingdom of God."⁹⁴ In fact, Beecher used the very passage which dispensationalists argue is the prediction of Jesus coming in the Rapture, and turned it into a vision of God's Kingdom coming through the discovery of natural laws and scientific disclosures. Not simply liberals but conservatives, such as Jonathan Blanchard, believed the Kingdom was growing quite naturally in America.

Consequently he proclaimed: "the Kingdom of God is simply Christ ruling in and over rational creatures who are obeying him freely and from choice, under no constraint but that of life."⁹⁵ More conservative still, Charles Finney, a respected orator, announced that the continued growing presence of the Kingdom of God on earth, would be brought about by diligence and morality.⁹⁶ In the optimism of the mid-nineteenth century, postmillennialism flourished as both a religious force for and a spiritual justification of the growing nation's ambitions. The postmillennial optimism of post-Civil War Protestant America, described by Marty, might also be ascribed to that which flourished among Protestantism after the Second World War.

For all their internal troubles, their growing divisions about the mission of the church, their schism over theology, their embrace of the world, Protestant churches were enjoying successes by the standards they most enjoyed, and the sun shone through stained glass on millions who were buoyant and optimistic about the future.⁹⁷

In summary, postmillennialism is, on one level, a convenient arrangement between a Puritanism which desired to Christianize the culture and an American nationalism which required a religious sanction for the expansion of its empire.⁹⁸ From another perspective, it embodies a religious pragmatism which strives to concretize, to incarnate, the 'good news' of Divine salvation in the social order.

It would be a mistake to argue, as Marty does,⁹⁹ that the postmillennialists were the innovators while the premillennialists only wanted to get out of the world. Before the predominance of dispensationalism, many premillennialists were also involved in various social programs.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, most social reformers (liberals and social gospelers) fell within the postmillennial camp¹⁰¹ and their specific eschatological hope was one major point at which they diverged from the fundamentalists.

Premillennial thought began as a popular trend in the 1870's though some varieties, such as the Millerites and adventist groups, had flourished earlier.¹⁰² In contrast to the optimism of the mid-nineteenth century, the urbanization and industrialization of America was changing certain segments of conservative, revivalist-based Protestantism as the century drew to a close. Thus, while premillennialism had great hope in the Kingdom of God, it had a growing pessimism about humanity's capacity to bring about the Kingdom on its own.

In essence, premillennialism affirms that Jesus must return to earth before the establishment of the expected Kingdom of God. Not all premillennialists hold similar views with respect to the timing of this Kingdom and consequently one must distinguish between historic and futurist premillennialists.

Historic premillennialists believe that some of the prophecies of the Bible have already been fulfilled and that the task of premillennial biblical scholarship is to determine where the present generation fits within the unfolding of prophetic events. They assert that "the prophetic scriptures, especially those in Daniel and Revelation, give the entire history of the church in symbolic form"¹⁰³ and as Timothy Weber contends that

for anyone to gain a respectable hearing for his millennial views, he had to demonstrate their correspondence with current events. This is especially true of historic premillennialism.¹⁰⁴

In this vein, historic premillennialists have identified, for instance, the exile of the Pope in 1798 as the exact fulfillment of Daniel 9 and Revelation 13 while the French Revolution was seen as the beginning of the times of judgment prophesied in Revelation 8.¹⁰⁵ These apocalypticists, using a certain amount of arithmetic and an allegedly proper discernment of which current event corresponded to which symbol in the book of Revelation, attempted to pin-point the exact date and time of the second coming of Christ. Robert Baxter, a missionary to Canada, excelled in this regard and with singular precision projected that Christ would return on March 12, 1903 between 2:30 and 3:00 P.M.¹⁰⁶

While the Mormons, the Shakers, the Seventh Day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses all grew out of historic premillennialism, William Miller is, perhaps, the

most notorious example of this version of Christian apocalypticism. As his popularity grew during the early years of the 1840's so also did the pressure from his followers who wanted to know exactly when the second coming would occur. Finally agreeing to fix an exact date for his predictions, he proclaimed that Jesus would come to bring about the heavenly Kingdom on October 22, 1844. Christ did not appear, and this unfortunate error in judgment "marked the whole millenarian cause rightly or wrongly, with the stigma of fanaticism and quackery."¹⁰⁷ Haunting all expressions of premillennialist visions, the Millerite fiasco became "a theological leper whose ceremonial denunciation was a part of the litany of millennarianism for the next century."¹⁰⁸

In contrast to historic premillennialism, futurist premillennialism posits that all the prophecies of Revelation and Daniel have yet to be fulfilled. The argument is that these prophecies do not relate to various stages in the church's history but to events that have yet to take place. Since futurist premillennialists "expect them all to come to pass within a short period just before the return of Christ,"¹⁰⁹ the book of Revelation is interpreted as a prediction of the last days of the world. The most influential type of futurist premillennialism is dispensationalism.

To conclude the comparative analysis of dispensationalism and fundamentalism, it is historically

and theologically most accurate to state that, while dispensationalism has some convergence with conservative evangelicalism and pentecostalism, it is a form of fundamentalism having in common a belief in the inerrancy of scripture and a premillennialist eschatology. Dispensationalism distinguishes itself from other forms of fundamentalism as a variation of Christian futurist premillennialism, owing its uniqueness to three key concepts: the theory of biblically based, historical dispensations, the radical differentiation between the people of Israel and the Christian church and the instantaneous Rapture. The remainder of this chapter will be given to an analysis of these formative ideas.

1.6 Dispensationalism, Analysis of its Unique Concepts:

An analysis of those theological aspects which characterize dispensational thought is no simple endeavour since these concepts were not proposed in an historical or ecclesiological vacuum. In the United States, dispensationalism was, and still is, one of many dimensions in the evolution of conservative Christian evangelism and religious practice. As the Protestant tradition moved from a position of relative optimism in the nineteenth century through the crucible of the First World War, it readjusted its perspective on the world, adopting a posture more liberal theologically. Dispensationalism, along with several other expressions of the fundamentalist

spirit,¹¹⁰ resisted this readjustment and for that reason it distanced itself from mainline Protestant thought¹¹¹ and practice. Since dispensationalism lost its denominational base and because it had no 'official' voice or founding organization, much of the broadly based, denominational acceptance of its special concepts suffered. Before the Great War dispensationalism enjoyed a position of theological respectability; later it fell into relative obscurity. This, in addition to the absence of an identifiable dispensational institution, makes the examination of dispensationalism a challenging enterprise. Basically it is the concepts themselves which become the focus of research and not any individual proponent of them, even though figures like Dwight L. Moody gave the Darbyite premillennialism great support.¹¹² Perhaps the primary perspective from which to understand dispensationalism, then, is to acknowledge it as a series of concepts, employed by many American evangelists and preachers, which gain greater popularity depending upon the skill of the orator employing them and the circumstance into which they are injected.

Though there were many dispensational theorists,¹¹³ it was the biblical editor, C.I. Scofield, who imposed a semblance of order on Darby's principles. For this reason, in the remaining portion of this chapter, the reference notes in The Scofield Reference Bible will be used as the normative statement of dispensational concepts. Scofield's

textual references are considered by most scholars of fundamentalism to be the classical expression of dispensational ideas.¹¹⁴ When appropriate, Lindsey's writings will also be cited to exemplify major dispensational hypotheses since, in the opinion of this author, based upon research contained in Appendix Six, Lindsey's writings reveal him to be a faithful disciple in the tradition of the major dispensationalist thinkers.

1.6.1. The Theory of Biblical Dispensations:

In essence, dispensationalism is a highly structured, biblically based theory describing God's special relationship with humanity. It combines a philosophical determinism¹¹⁵ with a purportedly inerrant reading of the biblical record and thus arrives at its first and basic principle, that of successive historical dispensations. It is believed that God has divided the history of the human race into distinct administrations or "dispensations" which are precisely outlined in the Older and Newer Testaments. Thus, if the Bible is read correctly as an inerrant document, attesting to God's will, it is thought possible to determine the past, present and future intentions of God with respect to this world and its inhabitants. While thought must be given to the exact nature in which the biblical hermeneutic and the Darbyite interpretation of history combine to create this theory of dispensations, some preliminary notes on the actual term 'dispensation' are in order.

'Dispensation' is one possible, though rather dated, English translation of the Greek word oikonomia which roughly means "management of a household or family."¹¹⁶ It is found in the Bible in such passages as 1 Corinthians 9:17, Ephesians 3:2 and Colossians 1:25. The most obvious source from which the term "dispensation" is derived is a sentence taken from the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In verse ten he writes: "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He (God) might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him."¹¹⁷ Elsewhere the root of this same Greek word is translated as "steward" or "stewardship". Furthermore, as a theological term it has been a rich resource in the history of Christian thought.¹¹⁸ Tertullian, for example, uses it as the foundation for his explanation of the Trinity and this same word is also a cognate of that from which the Christian church derives the concept of ecumenicism.

Initially the Scofield Reference Bible proposes that history is providentially progressive, using the concept of a divine economy (oikonomia) or a 'dispensation.'

Dispensations

are distinguished, exhibiting the progressive order of God's dealings with humanity, the increasing purpose which runs through and links together time periods during which man has been responsible for specific and varying tests as to his obedience to God, from the beginning of human history to its end.¹¹⁹

In addition to the Divine purpose, the idea of a progressive

flow of dispensations through human history is substantiated by the belief that a deposit of truth, apprehended in one dispensation, is carried forward into the next. The tranference is made through the agency of the few survivors of God's righteous anger who bridge the time between dispensational periods.

That God has dealt with humanity in successive modalities or covenants is not original to Scofield. It is implicit in Paul's letter to the Corinthians when he speaks about Jesus as the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22). According to the great Apostle, Jesus restores the broken relationship between humanity and God by establishing a new covenant based upon his sacrifice on the cross. The cross heals the wounds of the first Adam and binds up the broken, original covenant. So the theory of two covenants is incorporated directly into Christian theology and sacramentalism. In most Christian eucharistic liturgies, for instance, the element of wine is explained as that which actually or symbolically restores the second, new covenant between God and the people.¹²⁰

Though Scofield may find support for the basic concept of multiple covenants in Pauline theology, he develops a more sweeping theory and posits that there are, in fact, seven distinct covenants or dispensations which are distinguished one from another because each contains: 1) a deposit of Divine revelation; 2) humanity's

stewardship of the revelation which ends in disobedience; and 3) a specific period of time.¹²¹ Thus, Scofield's succinct definition of a dispensation is:

a period of time during which man is tested in respect to his obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.¹²²

Through each dispensation God desires "to place man under a specific rule of conduct."¹²³ It has been the unfortunate and undeniable fact of human history that humanity has consistently failed in its stewardship of God's specific rule for each successive dispensation.¹²⁴ It is this tragic reality of human faithlessness which necessitates the final and great Tribulation which ushers in the seventh dispensation of the Kingdom. Specifically, humanity has acted like the "wicked and slothful servant" in Jesus' parable of the talents, squandering the precious gift of God's covenant sealed by the cross and therefore a new covenant must be forged by the destruction of this world and the creation of a new Kingdom.

According to dispensational reasoning, it is not possible to attain salvation through good works. Moreover, in keeping with the Reformed tradition, Scofield also rejects 'faith righteousness,' affirming that even righteous obedience to God's covenants is "not a condition of salvation."¹²⁵ Rather, since it is impossible for human beings to achieve a pure state of trust in God, the only means of salvation throughout all the dispensations is to live by God's grace as revealed in Jesus Christ.¹²⁶

In the early stages of the development of dispensational ideas there was some disagreement concerning the actual number of dispensations which could be discerned in the biblical record. John Nelson Darby, the thinker who first articulated the theory of biblical dispensations, was not particularly concerned with the number of dispensations. The historian, Norman Kraus, indicates that "most dispensationalist teachers enumerate seven dispensations but the number varies from three to ten."¹²⁷ While W. E. Blackstone lists seven,¹²⁸ his choice of that number may have more to do with his belief in a law of sevens than in an adherence to careful exegesis.¹²⁹ It is most likely that Scofield's decision to identify seven dispensations is the factor which fixed both the number and the exact locations in the biblical text where reference to the dispensations were located. The precise nature of each Divine 'administration' is described in the references to the biblical verses Scofield has identified for the seven dispensations. To gain a succinct understanding of what Scofield intends by his delineation of dispensations his footnotes are cited here in their entirety.

Gen.1:28 The First Dispensation:
Innocence. Man was created in innocence,
placed in a perfect environment, subjected to
a simple test and warned of the
consequences of disobedience. He was not
compelled to sin but tempted by Satan. He
chose to disobey God. The woman was
deceived; the man transgressed deliberately.
The stewardship of innocence ended in the
judgement of the expulsion from Eden.¹³⁰

Gen.3:7 The Second Dispensation:
 Conscience (Moral Responsibility). Man had now
 sinned, the first promise of redemption was to
 be given and our first parents were to be
 expelled from Eden. Man's sin was a
 rebellion against a specific command of
 God and marked a transition from
 theoretical to experiential knowledge of good
 and evil. Man sinned by entering the realm of
 moral experience by the wrong door when he
 could have entered by doing right. . . . he
 was placed by God under the stewardship of
 moral responsibility whereby he was
 accountable to do all known good, to abstain
 from all known evil, and to approach God
 through blood sacrifice here instituted in
 prospect of the finished work of Christ.
 The result is set forth in the Adamic Covenant.
 Man failed the test presented to him
 in this dispensation (witness Gen. 6:5) as in
 others. Although, as the specific test,
 this time-era ended with the flood, man
 continued in his moral responsibility as God
 added further revelation concerning Himself and
 His will in succeeding ages.¹³¹

Gen.8:15 The Third Dispensation: Human
 Government. This dispensation began when Noah
 and his family left the ark. As Noah went into
 a new situation, God (in the Noatic
 covenant) subjected humanity to a new test.
 Henceforth no man had the right to take
 another man's life. In this new
 dispensation, although man's direct
 moral responsibility to God continued, God
 delegated to him certain areas of His authority
 in which he was to obey God through
 submission to his fellow man. God instituted a
 corporate relationship of man to man in
 human government. The highest function of
 government is the protection of human life,
 out of which arises the responsibility of
 capital punishment. Man is not
 individually to avenge murder but as a
 corporate group, he is to safeguard the
 sanctity of human life as a gift of God which
 cannot rightly be disposed of except as God
 permits. "The powers that be are ordained of
 God" and to resist the power is to resist
 God. Whereas in the preceding
 dispensation, restraint upon men was
 internal, God's spirit working
 through moral responsibility, now new and
 external restraint was added, i.e. the power

of civil government. Man failed to rule righteously. That both Jew and Gentile have governed for self, not for God, is sadly apparent. This failure was seen racially in the confusion of Babel; in the failure of Israel in the period of the theocracy which closed with the captivity in Babylon and in the failure of the nations in the time of the Gentiles. Man's rule will finally be superseded by the glorious reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose right to reign is incontestable. The dispensation of Human Government was followed as a specific test of obedience by that of Promise, when God called Abram as His instrument of blessing to mankind. However man's responsibility for government did not cease but will continue until Christ sets up his kingdom.¹³²

Gen. 12:1 The Fourth Dispensation: Promise. This dispensation extended from the call of Abram to the giving of the law at Sinai. Its stewardship was based upon God's covenant with Abram, first cited here. Observe (1) the specific provisions affecting Abram himself and his son and grandson Isaac and Jacob under which individual blessing depended upon individual obedience. (2) God made an unconditional promise of blessing through Abram's seed to the nation Israel to inherit a specific territory forever, to the church as in Christ and to the Gentile nations. (3) There was a promise of blessing upon those individuals and nations who bless Abram's descendants and a curse laid upon those who persecute the Jews. Consequently this dispensation had varied emphases. To the Gentiles of that period there was little direct application other than the test implied by Gen.12:3 and illustrated by God's blessing of judgement upon individuals or nations who treated Abram or his descendants well or ill. In continuation through the centuries of this stewardship of truth, believers of the Church age are called upon to trust God as Abram did and thus enter into the blessings of the covenant which inaugurated the dispensation of Promise. God's promises to Abram and his seed certainly did not terminate at Sinai with the giving of the law. Both the O.T. and the N.T. are full of post-Sinai promises concerning Israel and the land which is to be Israel's everlasting possession. But as a specific test of Israel's

stewardship of divine truth, the dispensation of Promise was superseded, though not annulled, by the law that was given at Sinai.¹³³

Exodus 19:1 The Fifth Dispensation: The Law. This dispensation began with the giving of the law at Sinai and was brought to its close as a time-era in the sacrificial death of Christ, who fulfilled all its provisions and types. In the previous dispensation, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as multitudes of other individuals, failed in the tests of faith and obedience which were made man's responsibility. Egypt also failed and was judged. God, nevertheless, provided a deliverer, a sacrificial and miraculous power to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. The Israelites as a result of their transgressions were now placed under the precise discipline of the law. The law teaches 1) the awesome holiness of God, 2) the exceeding sinfulness of sin, 3) the necessity of obedience, 4) the universality of man's failure, 5) the marvel of God's grace in a Saviour who would become the sacrificial Lamb of God to bear away the sin of the world. The law did not change the provisions or abrogate the promise of God as given in the Abrahamic covenant. It was not given as a way of life but as a rule of living for a people already in the covenant of Abraham and covered by a blood sacrifice. One of its purposes was to make clear the purity and holiness which should characterize the life of a people with whom the law of nations was at the same time the law of God. Hence the law's function in relation to Israel was one of disciplinary restriction and correction. . . . But Israel misinterpreted the purpose of the law, sought righteousness by good deeds and ceremonial ordinances and rejected their own Messiah. The history of Israel in the wilderness, in the land and scattered among the nations has been one long record of the violation of the law.¹³⁴

Acts 2:1 The Sixth Dispensation: The Church. A New Age was announced by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 12. The church was clearly prophesied by Him in Matthew 16:18, purchased by the shedding of His blood on Calvary and constituted as the Church after His resurrection and ascension at Pentecost when, in accordance with His promise, individual believers were for the first

time baptized with the Holy Spirit into a unified spiritual organism likened to the body of which Christ is head. Because of the emphasis of the Holy Spirit, this age has also been called the dispensation of Grace. The point of testing in this dispensation is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the message of good news about His death and resurrection. The continuing, cumulative revelation of the previous dispensations combines with this fuller revelation to emphasize the utter sinfulness and lostness of man and the adequacy of the historically completed work of Christ to save by grace through faith all who come unto God by Him. As those saved individuals who compose Christ's true church fulfill their Lord's commandment to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, God during this age is taking out from Jews and Gentiles, "a people for his name" called "the Church" and henceforth carefully distinguished from both Jew and Gentiles as such. The Lord Jesus warned that during the whole period, while the Church is being formed by the Holy Spirit, many will reject His Gospel and many others will pretend to believe him and will become a source of spiritual corruption and hindrance to His purpose in this age, in this professing church. These will bring apostasy, particularly in the last days. The Church Age will be brought to a close by a series of prophesied events, the chief of which are: The translation of the true Church from earth to meet her Lord in the air at a point of time known to God but unrevealed to men, and ever held before believers as an imminent and happy hope, encouraging them in loving service and holiness of life. This event is often called the Rapture. (2) The judgements of the seventh week of Daniel, called the Tribulation which will fall upon mankind in general but will include the unsaved portion of the professing church which will have gone into apostasy and thus be left behind on earth when the true Church is translated into heaven. This final form of the apostate church is in Rev. 17 as the harlot which will ride the political power (beast) only to be overthrown and absorbed by that power. (3) And by the return from heaven to earth of our Lord Jesus Christ in power and glory, bringing with him His Church, to set up His millennial kingdom of righteousness and peace. 135

Revelation 20:4 The Seventh Dispensation: The Kingdom. This is the last of the ordered ages which condition human life on earth. It is the kingdom covenanted to David. David's greater son, the Lord Jesus Christ, will rule over the earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords for 1000 years, associating with him in that reign His saints of all ages. The Kingdom age gathers into itself under Christ the various times spoken of in the Scripture. 1) The time of oppression and misrule ends when Christ establishes his kingdom, 2) the time of testimony and divine forbearance ends in judgement, 3) the time of toil ends in rest and reward, 4) the time of suffering ends in glory, 5) the time of Israel's blindness and chastisement ends in restoration and conversion, 6) the times of the Gentiles end in the smiting of the image and the setting up of the Kingdom of the heavens 7) the time of creation's bondage ends in deliverance at the manifestation of the sons of God. At the conclusion of the thousand years Satan is released for a little season and instigates a final rebellion which is summarily put down by the Lord. Christ casts Satan into the lake of fire to be eternally tormented, defeats the last enemy--death--and then delivers up the kingdom to the Father.¹³⁶

The validity of Scofield's theory of successive dispensations rests not only upon the presupposition that the biblical record is without error,¹³⁷ but also on a careful "rearranging" of many disparate, scriptural passages. Even though Scofield reasons that the 'common sense' meaning of a biblical text is closest to the truth, and that the believer should look no further than what is said in the text, nevertheless, a common sense (read, literal) meaning is not always immediately accessible in certain biblical passages. To obtain a proper reading, one which reveals the prophetic dispensational 'truth,' may require some rearranging,

'dividing' or harmonizing. Therefore Scofield and other dispensationalists treated the Bible (to put it crudely) as if it were a gigantic encyclopedic puzzle. They did not believe they were mistreating the Holy Scriptures, but on the contrary, they were, as Scofield said of himself, "taking the hard facts of the scripture, carefully arranging them and thus discovering the clear patterns that scripture revealed."¹³⁸

In addition to its particular hermeneutic, dispensationalism exemplifies a specific interpretation of history and it is this understanding of history which is the major contributing factor in the development of the concept of the biblically-based historical dispensations and which requires further explanation at this point.

Dispensationalism is not the first Christian movement to divide history into periods. It could be argued that, because of the doctrine of the Trinity, Christian thought is quite naturally predisposed to imposing some configuration of the Godhead upon human history. Modalistic monarchianism was certainly one example of this transference from a theological principle to an interpretation of history. In the middle ages Joachim de Fiore used the Trinity as a pattern for his division of history, and apparently Bullinger entertained similar ideas which reflected a triune pattern in the flow of earthly ages.¹³⁹ Besides these examples of trinitarian divisions, there are

other examples of Christian periodization of history. It is known that some Franciscan spiritualists explored the notion of partitioning history into successive ages,¹⁴⁰ and the Reformer Cocceius developed a theory of seven ages of church history.¹⁴¹ Johann Albrecht Bengel was yet another more recent theologian who saw a biblical design in the passage of time, deducing that the age of Babylon began in 1810 and predicted that the age of the Kingdom would arrive in 1836.¹⁴²

Even given the implicit potential within the Christian Trinitarian doctrine for a theory of periodization, the unique clarity and complexity of Scofield's scheme raises questions about its sources. While there is some truth in the claim, it would be simplistic to assume that the theory of historical dispensations was merely a modern version of modalism. It is, perhaps, more accurate to suggest that besides the inherent tendency of Christian doctrine mentioned above, the dispensational interpretation of history is rooted in three other factors: 1) in nineteenth century reasoning which imputes both dualism and progression to human history; 2) in the revivalist degradation of human nature based on an antithetical and pessimistic reasoning; and 3) in the American predilection for providentialism. Given that the providential roots of the theory of historical dispensations is germane to the central argument of this research found in Chapters Three and Four, only the first two factors will be examined here.

It was by its peculiar interpretation of history that George Marsden identified dispensationalism as a nineteenth century system of thought. His hypothesis is that dispensationalism is not unlike Marxism and Darwinism,¹⁴³ inasmuch as all three systems assume that the succession of ages is not simply coincidental. Rather, there is a definite pattern within history. Besides this assumption, the similarity between dispensationalism and Marxism rests in their common supposition that change in history takes place through violence and destruction. But, while a comparison between these two movements is intriguing, Marsden points out that the parallel theory of history which corresponds most obviously to dispensationalism is another nineteenth century invention, geological catastrophism, which

explained the various layers of flora and fauna as the result of successive epochs of geological history, each providentially brought to an end by a catastrophe which led to a new age.¹⁴⁴

Inasmuch as dispensationalism proposes that each succeeding 'age' receives the deposit of truth from the preceding dispensation it is similar to catastrophism.

Besides the assumption of discernible progression, which dispensationalism had in common with other nineteenth century interpretations of history, it also perceived a dynamic dualism within the struggle for progress. History was assumed to evolve through an interaction between two opposing forces. Marx was conscious of an economic duality

and believed this conflict to be between the owners of the means of production and the dispossessed who had to work for the owners. Dispensationalists understood the struggle to be between the powers of good and forces of evil. Humanity was caught in a cosmic struggle, and history was the record of "the ongoing warfare between God and Satan."¹⁴⁵ Hence, the dualism of dispensationalism was a variety of Manicheanism in which time and space were separated into the good realm of the spirit with its attendant heavenly visions and the evil world of the flesh with its concomitant lust-filled desires.¹⁴⁶

The dualistic inclination of the dispensational interpretation of history was strengthened by the spirit of revivalism which favoured a simplistic reduction of reality into two opposing dimensions, the 'Truth' and its antithesis. Rejecting any nuance, revivalism professed that there were only two possible positions for the human creature: to be a genuine believer or an agent of the devil. To paraphrase John's gospel, revivalists believed there was but 'one way, one truth and one life' (Joh 14:6). This antithetical reasoning, quite popular in the tent meetings as an explanation of things unseen, was also carried over into mundane concerns of daily living. Hence, politics, patriotism, social morals, in fact all aspects of earthly existence were subject to the spell of antithetic thinking. One's opponents in any of these spheres were not simply wrong or misguided, but also evil, almost bewitched agents

of Satan. Thus, a natural either/or mental paradigm was exaggerated into apocalyptic proportions, leading to a certain rigidity of thought or, as one author identified it, to a political and social "paranoia."¹⁴⁷ Under the impact of the revivalist spirit one is either totally right or totally wrong and so, given the often close proximity of religion and patriotism in America, it is not surprising that dispensationalism often combined a hyper-patriotism with a fervent anti-communism.¹⁴⁸

The dispensational interpretation of history manifests evidence of its Calvinist roots. It would be inappropriate to blame Calvin for everything that Calvinism has fostered but the Geneva reformer's 'high' doctrine of God, with its concomitant sense of the total depravity of human nature, lends itself to a dispensational interpretation of history in which humanity is unable to reverse its downward spiral. Marsden suggests that this played a large part in John Darby's approach to history since

his [Darby's] interpretation of the bible and of history rested firmly on the massive pillar of divine sovereignty placing as little value as possible on human ability.¹⁴⁹

With a pessimism about human nature fostered by an intense image of the Sovereign God, it is not surprising that Darbyite dispensationalism argues that the world is devolving, through a series of conflicts, to a point where it will become irredeemable and when, therefore, it will be destroyed.

Any summary of the origins of the theory of biblical dispensations is, to some extent, superficial or artificial. It is not simply a matter of combining a few contributing factors into a neat conclusion. Rather it would be more appropriate to see the theory of biblically based historical dispensations as the result of a complicated intermingling of dualistic antithetical reasoning, basic Christian anthropological pessimism, the American pioneering assumption of destiny, and the nineteenth century's fascination with evolutionary patterns within history.

Questions arise about the need for successive dispensations. Is humanity so faithless or God so dissatisfied that seven periods of history are required before ultimate salvation is accomplished? Does dispensationalism not believe that Christ died 'once for all?' Does the multiplicity of dispensations imply that the cross was not the central act of God's revelation of grace? These quandaries will be pursued in Chapters Four and Five, where Lindsey's eschatology is analysed, but at this point it can be noted that the theory of historical dispensations weakens, if not contradicts, the normative Christological presuppositions of the Protestant faith.

The theory of historical dispensations is a distinguishing aspect of dispensational thought. A second conspicuous feature is the radical distinction made between the people of Israel and the Christian Church. While not as prominent as Scofield's periodization of history, this

concept is perhaps a more novel and, in its direction, also a more profound principle.

1.6.2. The Radical Distinction Between the People of Israel and the Christian Church:

Dispensationalist ecclesiology serves a pragmatic function in its belief system. The possibility of the Rapture depends upon the distinction between the 'pure' body of 'true believers' and the fallen or unredeemed. The church needs to remain 'separate' if it is to be Raptured. Separation is not used to describe the isolation of religion so much as the spiritual purity of the Christian community.¹⁵⁰ Obviously on an individual level purity implies adherence to the five fundamental doctrines, a moral life style and undoubting faith. On the collective plane, it refers to the doctrine of the "believers' church," an ecclesiology which posits that the church consists only of the 'true believers' who seek to be pure in faith, free from the taint of worldly values. This principle of separation is not a peripheral idea in the dispensationalist movement, but a central element of faith since, not only does a separate church provide a useful social boundary, it also represents the sole means of preserving the purity necessary to a righteous life. Hence, the dispensationalist could not forsake the notion of being separate since one's

position about true and nominal Christianity is intrinsic to his faith. To ask him to modify it is to ask him for something he cannot perform. To abandon this

element is for him not only to abandon an unnecessarily uncharitable judgement about others but to abandon the very process of perception by which he understands himself as one grasped and helped by God.¹⁵¹

One manner in which dispensationalism achieves this sense of a separate status and resolves the need for purity is through the radical distinction between the people of Israel and the Christian church, a concept which has a long tradition in dispensational thought and several significant consequences for its theology.

In Scofield's reference notes for the sixth dispensation it is maintained that the Christian church is not an historical or spiritual successor of the people of Israel. According to the citation, God has chosen to distinguish between these two entities

taking out from the Jews and Gentiles, a "people for his name" called the church henceforth carefully distinguished from both the Jews and the Gentiles as such.¹⁵²

Before the sixth dispensation, God's providential attention was fixed upon the people of Israel and upon the five covenants which God had made with them. According to dispensational theology, these covenants have not been forgotten just because the church was established. By coming into existence, the church has effectively interrupted God's special activity with the people of Israel and because the dispensation of the church is viewed as a break in God's work with Israel it is sometimes referred to as the "great parenthesis."¹⁵³ As a Jewish scholar, Yona Malachy explains:

The dispensation of grace, in which we are now living is distinguished from all the others constituting a kind of mysterious parenthesis, having no connection with the Dispensation of the Law that preceded it or the Dispensation of the Kingdom that is to follow.¹⁵⁴

Two biblical arguments are used to support the idea of an interrupting sixth dispensation or 'church age.' First and foremost, through a reading of the Book of Daniel, chapter seven, dispensationalists argue that the Bible foretells a suspension in God's judgment against Israel. In that chapter there is a break between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks leading up to the divine and final judgement. This break is assumed to be the dispensation of grace. Second, dispensationalists make the point that in the Old Testament there is never any mention of the church and apparently not even the prophets could foresee its central role in God's plan. They interpret the absence of any reference to the church in the Hebrew scriptures as evidence that it had no part in the former covenants and promises of God. The church, which is a post-resurrection body, could only take part in dispensations which occur after the cross and therefore it has its own distinct covenant with God.

The distinction between the people of Israel and the Christian church allows the dispensationalists to make striking assertions concerning other texts and themes. Chief among these is the claim that all of the covenants made with the people of Israel concerning the land of Palestine

will be fulfilled. Since the establishment of the church does not abrogate any prior agreements, the promised Davidic Kingdom of justice and peace will be founded in the land given to their ancestors. This radical distinction also allows for a reading of Revelation in which the judgments of God's wrath are clearly assigned to the people of Israel or the people who only pretend to be Christian while the 'true' church is taken away in the Rapture.

According to Sandeen, this total separation of the Christian church from the people of Israel was a prominent, perhaps seminal, presupposition in Darby's thought. His disenchantment with the institutional Church of England pushed him to seek a 'True Church' outside the ruinous and corrupting influence of human governance.¹⁵⁵ Sandeen surmises that Darby's demanding ecclesiology developed into his division of the scriptures; the distinction between the Christian church and the people of Israel, according to Sandeen, constitutes the germ of Darby's dispensational structuring of the Bible.¹⁵⁶ This is indeed an interesting observation which, if accurate, would mean that in its original form, dispensationalism was basically a search for spiritual and ecclesiastical purity. In contrast, Lindsey's rendition of Darby's thoughts appears to be preoccupied with the recovery of God's mysterious eschatological plan, thus manifesting a shift towards a more existential or teleological orientation.

The distinction between a heavenly church and an earthly Jewish nation has several consequences for the dispensational system of thought. In the first place it is the justification for a rejection of other forms of millennialism, specifically post-millennialism. If the church is not the successor of the people of Israel, but rather a separate body, it can hardly fulfill the promises of the Kingdom made to Abraham's descendants. This being the case, the Kingdom cannot arrive through the efforts of individual Christians or the church as a whole, as postmillennialism proposes. The Kingdom, promised in the book of Revelation, is the Kingdom for the people of Israel and it will be established after Christ returns. The true church has nothing to do with its establishment.

Secondly, the distinction between the people of Israel and the Christian church implies that there is a dualism in Divine providence. Lewis Sperry Chafer, a successor to Scofield as the principal of Dallas Theological Seminary, expands on this double focus of God's providence by speaking about an earthly people and a heavenly people, declaring that

throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes; one related to the earth with earth people and earthly objectives, which is Judaism, while the other is related to heaven and a heavenly people and heavenly objectives which is Christianity.¹⁵⁷

Lindsey concurs with Chafer and explains that God's providential choice of the Jews was separate from that of

the church in order that they could receive and record the revelations of God and be the symbol of God's love for humanity. In addition, the Jews were chosen as the people through whom the Messiah was to be born.¹⁵⁸ God's purpose for the Christians is distinct inasmuch as the church has been chosen in this present age to proclaim the message of God's grace through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Lindsey posits a profound separation, stating that

I believe that God's purpose for Israel and his purpose for the church are so distinct and mutually exclusive that they cannot be on earth at the same time during the seven year tribulation.¹⁵⁹

A third and final consequence of the distinction between the people of Israel and the Christian church is that it deflects the more overt and traditional forms of Christian anti-Judaism. Since the church is not perceived by dispensationalists as the victor over the synagogue and since the promises to the people of Israel are not abrogated, dispensationalists have no justification for persecution of the Jews. On the contrary, given their belief that God has not forgotten the people of Israel and Israel's claim to the land of Palestine, the preservation of which is a pre-condition for the 'countdown to Armageddon,' there is a good deal of common ground between dispensationalists and fundamentalist Jews.¹⁶⁰ Through an interesting interpretation of certain biblical passages, dispensationalists are able to affirm the ultimacy of the Christian truth and the authenticity of the Jewish faith at

the same time; an affirmation which, no matter what its Christological consequences, is a formidable challenge to mainline Christian thinking as it attempts to divest itself of a theologically inspired anti-Judaism.

To achieve the ultimate separation of the 'pure' Christians from the ruinous state of this world Darby developed what appears to be his most notable idea, the theory of the instantaneous Rapture, a doctrine which requires some elucidation in order to be understood as one key to interpreting Lindsey's thought.

1.6.3. The Dispensational Rapture:

The dispensationalist movement is distinguished from fundamentalism and other groups in the religious right primarily by its belief in the imminent and physical ascension of the 'true' believers, known as the Rapture. It is said to be predicted in the biblical record that the Rapture will occur at a predetermined time just prior to the final days of the present dispensation, preceding the Great Tribulation in which God's judgment descends upon the unbelieving people of the earth. In this collective ascension all the true believers will rise physically and instantaneously into the sky, and once among the clouds they will meet face to face with Jesus.

Such a peculiar concept elicits many questions. Biblical scholars might inquire about the scriptural basis for such an eschatological scheme, while historians may ask

about its place within the evolution of dispensational thought. Most believers want to know simply when the Rapture will happen. To answer such queries, the concept of the Rapture will be analysed with respect to (1) its biblical roots, (2) its history within the dispensational movement and (3) its timing.

The Rapture, or "translation" is a concept taken from a dispensational interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 4:17 which reads:

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with him.¹⁶¹

Besides the obvious reference to an ascension in Thessalonians, dispensationalists enlist the support of other biblical passages as justification for the Rapture theory. Lindsey interprets Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth extensively in this regard and accordingly states that in chapter fifteen, when Paul speaks about the mystery in which "we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,"¹⁶² he is alluding to the Rapture. Philippians 3:20-21, which makes reference to the 'transformation' of the body also serves as an amplification of the Rapture motif.¹⁶³ In Lindsey's book, The Rapture, he summarizes what the scriptures teach about this event:

- (1) The Rapture was unknown until it was revealed to the Church by the apostles, especially Paul.
- (2) All believers living when the Rapture occurs will not experience physical death.
- (3) The Rapture will occur suddenly, without specific warning and will be instantaneous.

(4) In the Rapture, every living believer will be instantly transformed from mortal to immortal bodies which are like Jesus' glorified body.

(5) Those raptured will be caught up in the air to meet the Lord and the resurrected church-age believers who have died.

(6) At the time, we will be taken into God the Father's presence to temporary dwelling places that the Lord Jesus is presently preparing.¹⁶⁴

The conclusion of Lindsey's biblical exegesis on the Rapture is, as was the case with his predecessors, that this present generation should live in great hope since, "in the midst of a turbulent and increasingly dangerous world,"¹⁶⁵ it will witness the Rapture. Believers can, therefore, take heart in Paul's words: "Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58)."¹⁶⁶

There is some doubt as to the exact historical origin of the idea of Rapture. Dispensational legend has it that Darby first heard of the idea from an ecstatic utterance of a young Scottish girl, Margaret MacDonald. Apparently she and her family had become a special attraction in Scotland in 1830. Darby, having been commissioned by the Plymouth Brethren to investigate, heard the young MacDonald allude to the idea of the Rapture. Apparently in one of her trances she exclaimed:

I saw it was just the Lord himself descending from heaven with a shout, . . . we shall be caught up to meet him.¹⁶⁷

According to this account, Darby returned from the encounter

convinced of the error of ecstatic speech; nevertheless, he borrowed the idea of the Rapture for his own theological system. Lindsey is obviously acquainted with this anecdote since he repeats MacDonald's words verbatim at the conclusion of his book on the subject. In contrast to this report, the Plymouth Brethren writer, Samuel Tregelles, asserts that while Darby was visiting a member of Edward Irving's church community in 1832 he heard the idea of the Rapture from the ecstatic clamour of the crowd.¹⁶⁸ Darby himself claimed that the Rapture was a doctrine emanating quite logically from the biblical record once the distinction between the church and the people of Israel was made. In his own defense he maintained,

It is this conviction that the Church is properly heavenly in its calling and relationship with Christ forming no part of the course of events of the earth, which makes its rapture so simple and clear.¹⁶⁹

No matter which theory of the origin of the idea is accepted, there is no doubt that the concept of the Rapture proved to be a divisive point among dispensationalists. A difference of opinion between Benjamin Willis Newton and John Nelson Darby¹⁷⁰ eventually caused the Plymouth Brethren to separate into two denominations. The Rapture doctrine also occasioned a crisis within the American premillennial circles.¹⁷¹ At the turn of the century a controversy over the exact timing of the Rapture basically undermined the spirit of the renowned Niagara Bible

Conference. Among the organizing committee a disagreement, falling on the 'pre-trib,' 'post-trib' lines, became so insurmountable that no consensus could be reached on the correct doctrine to be preached at the annual summer meeting.¹⁷² Thus, the formidable institution for the propagation of the dispensational vision passed away amidst acrimony and dissent.

While in these cases the disruptive quality of the Rapture doctrine stems from questions concerning its actual timing, there has never been disagreement concerning its instantaneous, imminent character. Even though virtually all dispensational writers admit that the exact timing of the Rapture is a mystery known only to God, they also proclaim that it will occur soon, at any moment. Needless to say, it is the possibility of the 'any-moment' Rapture which has created tremendous excitement and expectation among the proponents of dispensational ideas. Lindsey uses the fascination created by the unknown timing of the Rapture to lend urgency to his evangelism and focuses upon this mysterious imminence in many of his writings. A typical rendering which illustrates the power and excitement generated by the potentiality of the instantaneous Rapture is found in The Late Great Planet Earth.

Someday, a day that only God knows, Jesus Christ is coming to take away all those who believe in Him. He is coming to meet all true believers in the air. Without benefit of science, space suits or inter-planetary rockets, there will be those who will be transported into a glorious place more beautiful, more awesome than we can possibly

imagine. Earth and all its thrills,
excitement and pleasures will be nothing
in contrast to this great event.¹⁷³

Obviously, the theme of the Rapture lends itself to rhetorical extravagance and Lindsey is not immune to the temptation of dramatizing that event. For instance, when referring to the actual ascension in The Rapture, he speculates that the "world will probably hear a great sonic boom from all our transformed immortal bodies cracking the sound barrier."¹⁷⁴ In another example of literary hyperbole, he sketches one scenario for the Rapture event in which the true believers just disappear in the midst of an ordinary day's events. At a football game, with thousands watching, the quarterback is struggling to the one yard line "when--zap--no more quarterback--completely gone, just like that."¹⁷⁵ Lindsey goes on to illustrate how the argumentative, but obviously righteous students and believers disappear from classrooms and churches in the instant of the Rapture.

Though the time is known only to God, there are some general historical events which would fulfill biblical prophecy and indicate that the Great Tribulation is not far off. The closeness of the Tribulation implies that the Rapture could be expected to happen momentarily. For a full explanation of the events leading up to the Tribulation, the reader is directed to the Appendix Three. Technically the Rapture must happen sometime between the cross and "the abomination of desolation" when the Anti-

Christ proclaims himself God in a rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem and so Lindsey's logic argues that the proximity of the Rapture is relative to the progress made in rebuilding the temple. Quite frequently he speculates that this generation will be the 'fortunate' one, the one which sees the termination of human history. The establishment of the state of Israel and the other events which fulfill the ancient prophecy about the 'final days' lead him to affirm: "It is my unwavering conviction that this is the terminal generation."¹⁷⁶ With expectation he proclaims:

Think of it. During this generation, at any moment, Jesus Christ might come back. We might find ourselves with just the average mundane day--suddenly the next moment we're face to face with the Lord.¹⁷⁷

Even through careful biblical study there is no sure way to predict the exact moment of the Rapture, and so Lindsey often counsels his followers to "plan our lives as though we will be here our full life expectancy, but live as though Christ may come today."¹⁷⁸ This waiting creates a tension between the 'any moment' nature of the Rapture and the necessity of planning as if it would not happen. Such a tension has led dispensationalists to develop a rather intense spiritual life-style. Combat Faith, Lindsey's recent work, and it concentrates on the necessity of sustaining the fervent expectation of the Rapture.

As we draw nearer to that most exciting of

all moments, when our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, will suddenly rend the skies, catch us up to meet Him, and transform our mortal bodies into beautiful eternal ones fit for the Father's presence, let us keep feeding our hope with constant reflection upon what God has promised.¹⁷⁹

R. A. Torrey, a dispensationalist who helped edit The Fundamentals in the first decades of this century, spoke in a similar vein to Lindsey with respect to waiting for the Rapture. He advised that believers should prepare themselves through a "separation from the world's indulgence of the flesh, from the world's immersion in the affairs of this life and intense daily earnestness in prayer."¹⁸⁰

1.7. Summary:

While dispensationalism is clearly part of the North American religious right because of its biblicism and revivalist penchant for conversion as the basis of the faith experience, its hermeneutic of inerrancy and its eschatology distinguish it as a specific form of futurist premillennialism.

On account of the peculiar concepts of the Rapture and the theory of biblically based dispensations, as well as the relative obscurity of dispensational thought, it is too often the case that academics or professional church leaders dismiss Lindsey's theology as nonsensical, not worthy of serious investigation. In the opinion of this author it is a mistake to ignore the implications of Lindsey's writings, no matter how unorthodox they may appear. The following

chapter is an analysis of the underlying motives of his thought and the reasons for its popularity. In this examination it will be illustrated that dispensationalism, in its anti-modernist and its supramundane aspects, raises fundamental questions which mainstream Protestantism should also address.

Chapter Two: Dispensationalism: An Anti-Modernist System
===== of Christian Thought:

The beauty of Darby's "postponed kingdom" and of his secret rapture as techniques for fitting together Scripture's inconsistencies must have thrilled the souls of many a sincere believer. What a privilege to possess in one's own hands the key to all of history, handed down by God himself! For many, the Bible must have seemed like a whole new book that was suddenly clear in its application to history for the first time -at least for the first time since the untidy demise of postmillennial optimism. As a way to identify with God who was still clearly in control of history, and to be assured that that control would work to the benefit of the righteous like oneself, . . . dispensational teachings were unparalleled.

Douglas W. Frank¹

2.1.Introduction: The Appeal of Dispensationalism and
 Levels of Tension and Ambiguity in its
 Thought

In the light of the foregoing analysis, a contradiction arises with respect to the central eschatological message of dispensationalism. Is there not an implicit weakness in doomsday crying? What happens when Armageddon does not materialize? How can dispensationalism retain its adherents and continue to promote its delineation of hope as a credible option during the years of waiting? Even though they may appear to contain an inherent flaw, the Darbyite concepts described in the last chapter obviously have some qualities which appeal to the religious population of North America. Dwight Wilson, in his study of the movement, indicates that the sheer number of dispensationalists--eight million² in the United States alone--is evidence that there may be several

factors, in addition to its eschatological arguments, which make dispensationalism attractive. This chapter seeks to explore these other dimensions of Lindsey's thought. Out of such an analysis some hypotheses may emerge which will both answer the question of his current popularity and identify the religious and cultural significance of his ideas.

While a single label can sometimes be misleading when attempting to describe a diffuse movement like dispensationalism, it can also lend structure to research into the primary characteristics of the subject. In this respect, the most appropriate adjective to attach to dispensationalism is 'anti-modernist.' Such a designation signifies that dispensational thought is, in many ways, a reaction to the modern world; to its technical reasoning which seems to deny 'common-sense'; to its liberal reading of scripture, which is deemed to border on fadism and elitism; to its social, political and religious pluralism which seems to assume that the simple truths of the past are lost; and to its secular optimism which appears to ignore the reality of worldly sin. Dispensationalism is not the only anti-modern, anti-liberal religious reaction. Liberation theology and neo-orthodoxy might be considered to have similarly critical attitudes towards the integration of theology and dominant cultural values. While most Christian movements, when they find themselves at variance with socially acceptable norms, are caught in the classical tension of being in the world but not of it,

dispensationalism reacts against the modern context, wishing to be neither of it nor in it. But even an extreme supramundane position like Lindsey's does not entirely avoid the ambiguous predicament of the Christian's role in society. Believers cannot cease to live day to day in some part of the world no matter how much they desire to leave it. In the Darby-Scofield system of thought, while the righteous wait for the Rapture it is unclear whether any reform of society is desirable or conceivable. Referring to this quandary Harvey Cox remarks that fundamentalists and dispensationalists

have never been able to decide whether to gather at the river and await the Rapture or to invade the citadels of sin with the sword of the Lord in hand.³

Concurring with Cox, George Marsden concludes that dispensationalists have been torn between the desire to hold back the tide of evil within creation in order to evangelize, and their essential perspective that, since this earth is soon to be surpassed by a glorious 'Kingdom,' there is no point in lavishing any concern on its continued existence at all.⁴ While on one level this ambiguity is the result of a long tradition of Christian dualism, it is perhaps more accurate to understand the present dispensational suspicion of the world as a reaction against the specific values of the modern era which developed out of historical circumstances at the turn of the twentieth century.

2.2. Dichotomies with Dispensational Thought and their resultant Anti-modernism

The dispensational ambivalence towards earthly existence, given primary expression in its eschatological schemes, may induce some Christians, theologians and lay people alike, to dismiss dispensationalism as a rather exaggerated and ludicrous form of dualism. Such a rejection, while it may have some validity as a general assessment of the Darbyite system of thought, would overlook the deeper implications of its ambiguity about the world. If it is possible to suspend judgement on the Rapture doctrine, the hermeneutic of inerrancy and the proclamations of 'Armageddon now,' more profound insights may be perceived. For instance, the dispensational, anti-modernist reaction to the North American context may be a manifestation of a deeper anxiety about this technological age which merits reflection. It is possible that Lindsey is giving voice to a general sentiment of mistrust in western civilization and its preoccupation with efficiency and domination. Is Lindsey expressing an anxiety, sensed by many in this culture, that the earth's ecology⁵ is unable to survive the ravages of industrialization? On another plane, Lindsey's ambivalence toward culture could have an ideological basis. The conservative principles underlying his faith are repulsed by what he perceives to be a liberal conception of human community manifest in modern society.

Even though the dispensational distrust of the world

certainly has an ideological bias,⁶ an analysis of Lindsey's writing indicates that his anti-modernism is based on a series of deeply felt dichotomies. The most prominent of these, Marsden argues, is that of a cultural and religious 'insider-outsider' paradox⁷ rooted in an historical change in the status of conservative ideas that took place at the turn of the century. A comparison of the evangelicals of the 1870's with those of the 1920's reveals, according to Marsden, a great shift in their position in society. The late nineteenth century evangelicals, many of whom were dispensationalists, were a respected and established segment of the religious world. They enjoyed access to denominational structures, held prominent positions in Christian enterprises and were in the forefront of popular, evangelical zeal. But by the 1920's, "they had become the laughingstock, ideological strangers in their own land."⁸ Where once the evangelicals and dispensationalists, along with their world view, spoke with authority within the American Protestant sphere, by 1925 they had lost this prestigious status and quite naturally they rejected the new forms of authority which were taking their place, i.e., the scientific method, liberal theology, secular optimism and political pluralism.

In Marsden's opinion, this insider-outsider dichotomy runs deeper than the loss of ecclesiastical stature would indicate. It was exacerbated by the fact that fundamentalism and dispensationalism were systems of thought which lived

according to socio-political paradigms forsaken by the modern industrialized, specialized and secularized community. Where once dispensational presuppositions about truth, life and knowledge had enjoyed broad acceptance and academic respectability, by the 1920's these same concepts were considered to be outdated and untenable.⁹ Using a psychological analogy, Marsden refers to the period at the turn of the century and up until the First World War as the critical time when dispensationalists lost step with the changing American culture, emerging from the experience of the war

not so much without social or political views as fixated on a set of views that had been characteristic of middle-class Americans in the last years before the crisis occurred. Their social views were frozen at a point that had been prevailing American political opinion around 1890.¹⁰

This shift in the views and values of most Americans was like a tremendous uprooting process for dispensationalists;¹¹ one that has biased dispensational thinking against the world and its claims of authority ever since.

The reversal in status, which produced the insider-outsider dichotomy of dispensationalism, represents one example of a more profound change in the orienting principle of American life. Jackson Lears, in a book on anti-modernism, points out that, at the dawn of what was ironically touted as the "Christian" century, there was a re-orientation taking place in the culture's dominant focus.

Forsaking the 'Protestant' model, he suggests that basic human ambitions within American society came to coalesce around a 'therapeutic' principle. Lears detects a "shift from arbitrary standards to demands of the growing personality, from fixed values to values in constant process."¹² Distinct from the previous concern over Salvation, the new 'therapeutic' world view "marked the beginnings of a culture stressing self-fulfillment--the dominant culture of our time."¹³ While admittedly general, these distinctions were exemplified in the confrontation of the Scopes Trial. Bryan was the man living by a set of fairly static Protestant principles of hard work, decency, thrift, sobriety.¹⁴ In contrast, Darrow clearly represents the 'new' liberal approach, personally self-assured, individually self-seeking and culturally and religiously pluralistic. Christopher Lasch recognizes the same phenomenon and qualifies the therapeutic preoccupation by adding that it is part of a narcissistic orientation of the present North American culture.¹⁵ In this respect, dispensationalism embodies an entirely different world view from the predominant one of the twentieth century culture. Given present criticisms of the North American culture developed by authors such as George Grant,¹⁶ it could be argued that dispensationalism, far from being backward sentimental thinking, may have preserved an orientation to human living which appropriately judges the inconsistencies of modernism.

Understanding its historical misfortune, it is possible to appreciate why dispensational thought has a defeated aura, portraying the 'true' believer as a powerless victim or as an alien in a foreign world whose people forsake the truth in the vain pursuit of their individual human potential. Throughout the fundamentalist and dispensational critique of modernization with its technologies and bureaucracies, there is an assumption of the powerlessness of the believer. The governing 'secular' forces are arrayed against the righteous individuals who refuse to convert to the modern therapeutic preoccupation. Given this besieged mentality, as John Kater argues, fundamentalism and dispensationalism depict themselves as theologies for helpless, trapped people who are in need of a power which can 'really' liberate them.¹⁷ Lindsey is no exception. In fact, he frequently cites world computers controlling the economy, bureaucracies spending tax money wastefully, and government interference in the private activities of individuals as evidence of the ever encroaching control¹⁸ and oppression of the 'true believers.' In light of its perceived powerlessness and the latent defeatism of its adherents, it is not surprising that dispensationalism is fascinated by power and consequently depicts God's action in the final days of the planet with potent images of triumphant might and majesty.

The shift in the social and religious status of dispensationalism leads quite naturally to a 'we-they'

distinction based upon righteousness. 'We' are the faithful ones who have not left the ideas of the last century and 'they' are those who laugh at our old-fashioned notions. 'They' may scoff and pretend to speak with assurance, but 'we,' who have the 'ultimate' authority through the prophetic scriptures, will be saved in the dreadful time of destruction as foretold in Revelation. As was previously explained, such a boundary drawn along soteriological lines is central to the dispensational mind. Upon the careful differentiation between moral and doctrinal purity and worldly corruption rests the personal identity and eternal salvation of the believer. So it is that Fackre claims: "the religious right elevates the distinction between an 'untainted we' and a 'tainted they' to Armageddon-like proportions."¹⁹

The we-they dichotomy, based on righteousness, also contains an implicit either-or dichotomy. One is either saved or damned. There are no dialectical, paradoxical or multi-dimensional positions in dispensational thought. Arising out of its inherent mistrust of elitist intellectualism and gaining impetus from its anti-modernist fervor, popular dispensationalist writers reduce any nuance of theological ideas to mere clichés²⁰ and one-dimensional concepts in which right and wrong are superficially distinguished. Hence, Billy James Hagaris, a member of the radical religious right, exemplified the 'either-or,' 'we-they' vocabulary in his address at the time of the

1968 U.S. Presidential election.

We will either win in 1968 and preserve Christian constitutional government which includes freedom of speech for the conservative fundamental Christian minority, or the nation will continue to plunge head-long into captivity which will necessitate the 2nd coming of Christ to take His church out of this unbelieving world, hell-bent on its own destruction. 21

Hagaris illustrates that the stridency of the 'we-they' polarity leads to an either-or structure of rationalization which is favourable towards the one-dimensional vision implicit within the premillennial expectations of Christ's second coming.²²

Dichotomies of we-they, insider-outsider, either-or are accompanied by what one might consider a martyr complex which runs throughout dispensational thought. For instance, in his Combat Faith, Lindsey so stridently claims that the 'true church' will be persecuted²³ that he creates an exaggerated and presumptuous separation between the righteous who are persecuted and the damned who are persecuting. It is difficult to determine if this complex was evident during the 1870's and 80's when dispensational ideas enjoyed popularity. Certainly after 1925 the fact that the true church was portrayed in Revelation as a persecuted body of believers encouraged the dispensationalists to understand and endure the decline in their social status, while at the same time offering a source of righteous assurance about the correctness and authority of their cause. Thus, the 'true' believers knew

they were right when they suffered the scorn of the media. Self-validation through suffering is evident in the introduction of Lindsey's book on the devil. He confesses:

At times I thought I'd shelve the whole idea, but every time the progress on the manuscript was slowed down, I was shown another reason for the urgency of this message. I have never before come under such personal attack. It was not my imagination.²⁴

It is unlikely that firm data could be discovered which would substantiate the thesis that a martyr complex is one of the contributing factors in dispensational anti-modernism, but it may be possible to argue that dispensationalists, like Lindsey, need to feel victimized by the "powers and principalities of the flesh" as a confirmation of their righteousness. Moreover, such an attitude also serves to justify and buttress the decision to leave the world rather than to attempt to reform it.

Gathering all the implications together, it can be surmised that the many dichotomies of dispensational thought develop into the antithetical thinking and believing which divide the world into distinct factions: forces of light and darkness. It is on the basis of such a division that the four specific instances of dispensational anti-modernism, described below, are constructed.

2.3 Dispensational Anti-Modernism and Detached, Technical Reason

Fundamentally, the dichotomies of dispensationalism raise a question about the nature of truth. According to

dispensational reasoning, truth is a static, eternal reality which can be perceived through a common-sense awareness of sensory data. In contrast, modern scientific reasoning was deemed to be based upon groundless speculation in which there were no absolute values and truths.²⁵ Thus, it could be argued that one of the tenets of dispensational anti-modernism is philosophical in origin.

On the philosophical plane, Marsden's insight into the reactionary nature of dispensationalism is profound. He contends that Darby's system of thought is informed by Baconian common-sense realism. Francis Bacon suggested that the world is an observable reality, the facts of which could be known through simple scientific deduction and the avoidance of speculation. According to his reasoning, if the human intellect were untainted by pretensions of grandeur, it would logically deduce the truth about God, life and the planet through an analysis of sensory data. Obviously such an approach was accessible to even the most rudimentary intellect. This innate populism and seeming simplicity meant that the common-sense philosophy provided a solid basis upon which to build a consistent world view, a moral life and an upright society. Revealing its predilection for Christian categories of meaning, it was assumed that

the bible, of course, revealed the moral law; but the faculty of common sense, which agreed with scriptures, was a universal standard. According to common-sense philosophy, one can intuitively know the first principles of morality as certainly as

one can apprehend other essential aspects of reality.²⁶

In contrast to Calvin's doctrine of the total depravity of humanity, common-sense realism advocated that the human intellect suffered from a "slight stigmatization"²⁷ which did not inhibit its capacity to see and know the 'good.' As a philosophy, it posited that that which is real can be readily perceived. Therefore, truth became equated with the formulated and arranged data of the senses. Using this premise, which is not unlike Aquinas' synthesis of the operation of reason and faith, dispensationalists advocated the careful discernment of the truth through the classification and generalization of sensory facts which would, it was contended, confirm what was revealed in the Bible. Generalizations and speculations based on hypotheses were incorrect, almost immoral approaches to the discovery of truth. It was for this reason that evangelicals, dispensationalists and finally fundamentalists argued against evolutionism, maintaining not that it was too scientific, but that it was not scientific enough. It was perceived to be baseless conjecture. Furthermore, since it was assumed that scientific knowledge coincided with scriptural evidence, it was accepted that God's presence and rule were the presuppositions upon which any worthy scientific analysis of nature could be founded. Bacon's method of reasoning, being basically optimistic, appealed to people in the American context since it emphasized a pragmatic, 'down to earth' interpretation of

truth while providing a broadly 'scientific' yet still religious-sounding approach to reality.

Thus, with regard to its philosophical structure, the anti-modernism of dispensationalism is not founded on the contrast between an emotional versus an intellectual approach to living. Rather, dispensationalism considers the modern interpretation of reason to be too detached from the principles of truth revealed in scripture. Consequently, modernity is overly preoccupied with open-ended technical questions and not concerned enough with issues of moral and spiritual values. As this detached or 'amoral' science, symbolized by Darwinism, achieved normative status within the North American culture, evangelicals were forced into extreme choices. Either they could give up their faith or "they could choose to say with Hodge that Darwinism was irreconcilable with Christianity--a new form of infidelity--and that it was speculative and hypothetical rather than truly scientific."²⁸ Dispensationalism chose the latter option.

A product of that prior choice, Lindsey's thinking certainly manifests his reliance upon common-sense realism. In The Late Great Planet Earth, he goes to great lengths to illustrate that the biblical predictions have been historically accurate. He wants to show that the Bible story makes good common-sense²⁹ and that when its truth is understood correctly it does not contradict historical or scientific data. Certainly the popularity of his writing is

grounded, to some extent, on his capacity to mount convincing arguments which equate the predictions arising from his dispensational reading of such apocalyptic texts as Daniel and Revelation with current political and social events.

It is, therefore, important to understand that, contrary to Barr's thesis,³⁰ dispensationalism is not 'anti-scientific' so much as a reaction against a particular kind of detached and objective scientific understanding of the world. Lindsey writes against that form of modern reason which neither needs nor accepts God as "a working hypothesis" (Bonhoeffer). Far from being anti-intellectual, dispensationalists favour a specific type of intellectual rigor which abhors skepticism and any hypothetical notion of an impersonal, evolutionary ordering of reality and truth. To summarize, Lindsey is not set against science so much as opposed to the modern scientific method which assumes that in its search for "technique"(Ellul) it can and should remain detached from any moral or spiritual values.

At the philosophical level there is some affinity between the dispensational critique of a 'value free' modern interpretation of truth and the judgment of liberation theology. Their common mistrust of elitism and disavowal of 'value-free' scientism are two points of contact. Nevertheless, the similarity is, at best, superficial since

these two movements take up radically opposing positions with respect to political and social programs resulting from their resistance to a modern mentality which purports itself to be 'value-neutral.' There might be more common ground between these two anti-liberal reactions if the dispensationalist critique was based simply on a rejection of secular reasoning, but this is not the case. The dispensationalist resistance to modernity is multi-faceted. Other dimensions of its reaction foster in it a certain reluctance to reform the world. Chief among these other aspects is the dispensational bias against liberal theology, its optimism and its method of biblical interpretation.

2.4 Dispensational Anti-modernism and Liberal Theology -----

In opposition to liberal theology, dispensationalism finds its roots in the spirit of revivalism--the heart-beat of American religious life since the time of colonialization. Beginning with Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening and following through to the second awakening in the first half of the nineteenth century, evangelicalism, and particularly revivalism, have held a strong place in American religious history.³¹ This revivalism depended upon at least four underlying principles which influence the dispensational, anti-modernist reaction to liberal theology: 1) pragmatic biblicism, 2) religious individualism, 3) cultural

primitivism, and 4) social dualism. All of these values seemed to be seriously weakened, if not denied, by modern liberal theology. An explanation of all four factors will illustrate that dispensationalism abjured the modern perspective on the world, not simply because of a philosophical resistance to an emerging secular definition of truth, but also because of its aversion to the modern, i.e., liberal, interpretation of faith.

Basically, the biblicism of revivalism argued that all of life's concerns, whether political or spiritual, were related to Bible teachings. It implied that the Holy Scriptures were open and understandable to any who cared to read them and could be considered a very pragmatic tool for daily living. In addition, revivalist biblicism engendered a sense of human equality before God among believers since, in the tent-meeting spirit, the Bible "was the great equalizer."³² Everyone stood under its authority and all, regardless of class or education, had the same opportunity to read its pages of truth and receive its word of grace.

Since dispensationalists used the Bible as the guide for all truth, it was difficult for them to understand those Christians who appeared to treat it differently--such as liberal scholars who employed the historical-critical method of interpretation. In liberal academics' hands 'God's book,' one filled with Divine revelation, became an all too human, all too complex and ambiguous text. Furthermore, the increase in numbers and varieties of institutions of

higher learning made necessary by the modern industrial society not only diminished the foundational character of the Bible, it also began to accentuate the inequality of access to the salvation offered in its many passages. One cornerstone of the dispensational attack on the 'higher' method of biblical exegesis was and is that it takes the Bible away from ordinary people. To a certain extent this is true. At least from the perspective of the dispensationalists, the modern theological seminary has developed into an institution of experts in which the lay person is not welcome and in which the Bible is dismembered. Dispensationalists concluded that, in this state of affairs, faith becomes a scholastic pursuit, and ordinary believers are cut off from the sources of Protestant spirituality. Weber points out how the anti-modernist spirit of dispensationalism resisted the transference of biblical study.

Questions of authenticity, dating, literary genre and the influence of other semitic cultures weighed heavily on anyone trying to read the bible and come to his own conclusions. . . . premillennialists on the other hand not only affirmed the inspiration and authority of the Bible, they still maintained that anyone with an open mind and basic human intelligence could understand it for himself.³³

The dispensationalist common-sense appreciation of the scriptures effectively preserved the Bible as a 'people's book.' Asking only that believers "read it and believe it," they retained a populist hermeneutic which Weber describes

as the process of 'simple' Bible readings, made famous through the Niagara Bible Conference, which enhanced its use among lay people.

Not only did the premillennialists preach the principle of every-man-his-own-interpreter, they practiced it. Their most characteristic proof was the Bible Reading, popularized in Bible and prophetic conferences. The Bible Reading was nothing more than the public reading of the Bible passages which had been selected to illustrate a particular point or doctrine. James Brookes explained how it was done. "have your leader select some word as faith, repentance, love, hope, justification, sanctification and with the aide of a good Concordance, mark down before the time of meeting the references to the subject under discussion. These can be read as called for, thus presenting all the Holy Ghost has been pleased to reveal on the topic.³⁴

In contrast to this unpretentious and simple use of the Bible, W.E. Blackstone declared that the liberals 'spiritualize' away the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments and consequently, they distort or diminish their practical and obvious meaning.

Why! the same process of spiritualizing away the literal sense of these plain texts of Scripture will sap the foundations of every Christian doctrine and leave us to drift into absolute infidelity or the vagaries of Swedenborgianism. What is the purpose of language, if not to convey definite ideas. Surely the Holy Spirit could have chosen words to convey His thoughts correctly. Indeed it is all summed up in the inquiry of a little child. If Jesus didn't mean what he said, why didn't he say what he meant.³⁵

In the same common-sense tone Lindsey describes his own method of reading the Bible in The Rapture.

. . . let us remember some basic principles of interpretation. First, if the literal sense makes common sense, seek no other sense.

Second, all things are intended to be taken literally unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.³⁶

As an unsophisticated and direct approach to the Bible, the dispensational hermeneutic appeals to the frontier, pragmatic spirit of American culture. It has a seemingly democratic quality purporting to be honest, 'straightforward' and accessible to all, giving the assurance that anyone with sincere intent will come to the truth of the dispensational vision. Moreover, its populist inclinations lend it an authenticity in keeping with the tradition of the apostolic church, which was open to any who read the Word and trusted in it.

Thus, dispensationalists, reacting against liberalism, could pride themselves on being democratically honest, intellectually serious and in having an evangelical openness reflective of the authentic spirit of the apostolic church. In contrast, the liberals appeared to be speculative, academic, frivolous and thoroughly modern. Such an anti-modernist critique, which explicitly favours dispensationalist simplicity over the more scholarly and nuanced forms of liberalism, is as appealing in the 1980's as it was in the 1880's.

The specific individualism of the revival movement also reinforced dispensational anti-modernist zeal since, contrary to the ontology of liberal theology which assumed that each person was separate and unattached, the Darbyite

reasoning challenged each person to find salvation through membership in the community of faithful candidates for the Rapture. While the revival was based upon an appeal to the individual, its leaders never imagined that humanity could be construed as a collection of distinct, disconnected beings, each pursuing his or her own interests. The sinner, who stood alone before God, was, nevertheless, the 'lost sheep' whose true place was in the 'flock of the good shepherd.' This religious individualism was simply the spiritual reflection of the pioneering spirit of the times. Settlers were called to make their own personal decisions but everyone was part of a collective effort to 'tame the wilderness.' Dispensationalism has carried on the priority of the individual's choice; however, as Lindsey's books indicate, the choice for salvation is the decision to belong to, and not to be separate from, the eternal and true community of faith.³⁷

With the growth of industrial corporate capitalism and through the depersonalization of urban centres the possibility for individuals to find or to create a sense of 'belonging' was undermined. Increasingly, in that period, the experience of being faithful was understood to be an isolated event. Church communities were not deemed to be as essential for salvation as in the past. In addition, the rise of the social gospel movement, through its emphasis on

moral action and social reform as the means of salvation, threatened further to diminish the role of the faith community in a believer's life.³⁸ Hence, because of its revivalist-inspired appreciation of a corporate identity, dispensationalism reacted against modernist individualism. While its evangelical appeals were based on the assumption that each individual stood before God, they were not individualistic nor were they promoting spiritual pluralism, which seemed to be the case with liberal belief. In contrast, revivalist evangelism required its adherents to follow a specific moral and theological code and conferred in return a clear, collective identity, one which was both socially comforting and theologically reassuring in its resistance to the fragmented modern society.

In addition to its pragmatic biblicism and identity-imparting individualism, American revivalism inspired a cultural primitivism within dispensational belief. Labeling dispensationalism as 'primitive' is not to imply that it was seeking to be simplistic or superstitious. On the contrary, as was noted above, it often presented itself as an intellectually strenuous and philosophically logical approach to faith. It was primitive, much like the culture within which it evolved, inasmuch as it aspired to a pristine state of existence which once seemed possible in America, but which was no longer either visible or viable. Whether this pristine state ever existed historically is doubtful, but revivalism made the ideal come alive in

the hearts and minds of a rurally-minded, self-reliant people who were reluctantly being transformed into an urban, specialized culture. In this vein, Kater speculates that dispensationalism carries on the primitivism of revivalism in the adoration of uncomplicated ideas, self-reliance, plain talk and moral living.³⁹ Thus, the call back to the old, better way of life free of the doubts and uncertainties of the modern world is a subconscious theme of many apocalyptic books. Dispensational primitivism is a slight adaptation of this familiar theme. For instance, Lindsey's work, The 1980's Countdown to Armageddon,⁴⁰ evokes nostalgic yearnings, but in contrast to the traditional revivalist primitivism, it combines the longing for a golden age with dismay about the present age and projects the longing forward into the eschatological kingdom.

While revivalism fostered specific varieties of biblicism, individualism and primitivism which were useful in the dispensationalist reaction, it also harboured a dualism or what has been termed an antithetical intellectual framework. Originating from the 'revivalist impulse,' this dualism perceived an antithesis between 'the saved' and the 'lost.'⁴¹ From the religious realm, this antithetical reasoning expanded and became the filter through which to interpret the entire world. Under the guise of revivalist dualism one saw sharp distinctions between the realm of the supranatural and the natural, between God and Satan. Any transition from one realm to the

other was drastic and radical, as was the conversion experience itself. In this regard representatives of the dispensationalism which emerged from tent meeting evangelism had great difficulty appreciating the liberal theological approach which emphasized a synthesis of the natural and supranatural rather than an antithesis. Not only was a synthesis of the world of nature and the world of the spirit difficult to understand, it was considered by dispensationalists to be highly suspicious, bordering on heretical. Accommodation to culture was capitulation to the forces of Satan, given the logic of revivalist reasoning. There is little doubt that Lindsey perceives the world through the lens of this revivalist inspired, dualistic suspicion. His book on Satan is a treatise on the antithesis between God and the devil and the dangers of confusing the things of the flesh with the things of the spirit.⁴² Identifying any feelings of uncertainty with the devil's realm, this religious dualism, therefore, repressed any inklings of doubt, preferring instead unrelenting self-assurance. While it enhanced the dispensational reaction against liberal theology, revivalist-dualistic thinking was also the source for another dimension of its anti-modernism, i.e., its antagonism towards ideologies other than American capitalism.

2.5 Dispensational Anti-modernism and Political Pluralism

Proponents of dispensational ideas have often framed

their analysis of the world through the use of the above-mentioned dualism; this approach casts social and political movements in starkly antithetical roles. In 1873, when W.E. Blackstone produced his famous dispensational work, he stated that socialists, nihilists and anarchists were an atheistic peril which was

rapidly spreading in our day, and which seeks to wipe out all law relating to marriage, property etc. It may be that these are the immediate precursors of the antichrist.⁴³

With an analogous passion Billy Sunday attacked Germany as the seat of the devil and all that was defiling the American way of life. During the First World War he would jump up on the pulpit waving a flag and proclaim: "If you turn hell upside-down you will find: 'Made in Germany' stamped on the bottom."⁴⁴ Similarly, Lindsey's writings focus on the evils of communism.⁴⁵ In his opinion communists cannot be trusted, except to break their international agreements, given that they seek world domination at all costs.⁴⁶ Hence, they will start the countdown to Armageddon in this generation. Summarizing this antagonism against communism, Kater points out that among fundamentalists "Marxism is conceived not so much as an alternative economic or political theory but as an alien theology."⁴⁷ It is not essentially the ideological program of communism but its aura of 'godlessness' which gives the dispensational bias against communism such a visceral and irrational character. Carl MacIntire, writing about the United Nations,

exemplified that irrational admixture of theological and ideological intolerance when he claimed that this international organization was conceived in sin because it "virtually made a pact with the devil when it included the godless communists."⁴⁸ Later in the same book he advocated the use of the bomb against the 'godless' Russians as an act of faithful stewardship before God.⁴⁹ Conversely, MacIntire cast the nominally Christian nation, the United States, as a redeemable country given its past religious heritage. Out of such dualistic mentality and providentialism, dispensationalism assumes that America is destined to be a land of great evangelism and the last remnant of the righteous who are faithfully awaiting the Kingdom. As a consequence, it proclaims that any political and social movements whose objectives seem to run contrary to the interests of the United States are evil and agents of the devil.

The capitalist economic structure, having evolved in conjunction with conservative Christian principles, was deemed to be salvageable, at least in the interim between the present and the final days. Thus, commensurate with its intolerance to other ideologies, especially communism, dispensational anti-modernism favours a variety of capitalism that was prominent in the 1890's. That is to say, Lindsey strongly adheres to the rhetoric of individualistic, laissez-faire capitalism. His lack of precision concerning exactly what this means indicates that

the term has more symbolic than practical importance. Lears argues that fundamentalism, and by inference dispensationalism, clings to a personable, entrepreneurial capitalism which was replaced at the turn of the century by an impersonal corporate capitalism. Reading between the lines, it is obvious that Lindsey wants to return to that time when each individual had the freedom to amass personal wealth through sheer hard work and determination--as God intended! There is a sense in which Lindsey's interpretation of Divine providence combines religious and economic principles into a unified whole. An attack on the 'traditional' free-enterprise economic system is akin, therefore, to attacking the God who ordained it,⁵⁰ and to defend it is a vital and faithful task. For this reason dispensationalists stridently champion the cause of free enterprise capitalism⁵¹ and resist any attempts to criticize or weaken its authority.

It could be concluded that some of the anti-modernist ardour of the dispensational movement derives from a fear of social and political pluralism since any diversity of opinions disrupts the neat categories of good and evil, righteous and unrighteous, saved and damned. It is not surprising, given this anxiety over ideologies or ideas which contest the assumption of the divinely ordained status of American capitalism, that dispensationalists consider all such threats to be part of a larger devilish plot. As Cox suggests:

They impute the moral decay and ethical flabbiness of the modern world to the conniving of secular humanists.⁵²

In this respect, Billy Sunday, W.B. Riley and George McReady Price all argued that the upheaval of the Bolshevik revolution was the result of a

diabolically clever world conspiracy made up of Kaiserism, evolutionism, Bolshevism, higher criticism and liberal theology.⁵³

Lindsey's writings betray a bias toward a conspiracy theory as well. Besides 'secular humanists', he points to a group he calls "the New Age Movement" which comprises burned-out fanatics of left and right, the Hare Krishna, Marxist political movements which advocate violence, eastern religions and advocates of alternate education and medicine. This movement is so large that only "the devil could co-ordinate such a vast divergence of interests, views and religions into a cohesive movement."⁵⁴ Kater argues that the preponderance of conspiracy theory originates in the dispensational doctrine of God. If God is all powerful, then there can be no accident or coincidence in history.⁵⁵ While this is a logical hypothesis, it can also be speculated that conspiracy theory stems from the paradoxical position of dispensationalists which Marsden has outlined. Dispensationalists had to explain to themselves and their detractors how they became strangers in their own land, how they fell from a position of dominance. Conspiracy was a useful explanation. Whatever their

source, conspiracy theories reinforce dispensational anti-modernism. If the devil is truly active in the world then only those who can remain 'pure' and free from the various temptations of communism, Marxism, nihilism, secular humanism, liberalism, and the "new age movement" (admittedly this implies a rather circumscribed group of individuals) will ever enter into the new world order when the present one is judged and destroyed.

In the light of its intolerance of political pluralism on the one hand and its partiality to capitalism on the other, it might be possible to describe dispensationalism, not only as an anti-modernist reaction, but as an ideological movement or ideologized expression of Christian faith. This is certainly the inference of Cox's analysis⁵⁶ and that of Kater as well. The latter describes it as more than a religion. In his perception dispensationalism is

a complete world view. It is a coherent whole providing an all-encompassing set of moral values, a political philosophy, a religious perspective and a prescribed social structure.⁵⁷

The ideological distortion⁵⁸ of dispensationalism is evident on two levels. In a general sense, the anti-modernist fear of political pluralism, evident in Lindsey's writings, betrays a disposition to the myth of America's providentially ordained status. To the extent by which he does not recognize this contextual bias, his books could be labeled ideological. For instance, in The Late Great Planet Earth, the United States is strangely missing from

the scenario of the last days as if it had no part in the evil and suffering of the Tribulation. If it is implicated at all, Lindsey argues, it would be as a rather vague and helpless accomplice to the main forces of the Antichrist.⁵⁹

In a more specific way, concrete ideological motives exert an influence in Lindsey's writings. In his work on the 1980's he developed a political vision which was very similar to the platform of the Republican party in the presidential elections of that year. Though he never explicitly endorsed any politician or political party, it is difficult to ignore the implicit support that his writings gave to Ronald Reagan's economic and social proposals. In this respect Lindsey claimed that the right posture for any American government ruling during the 'Terminal Generation' should be one of restraint on expenditures for social programs coupled with increased spending on the military.⁶⁰

Even though Lindsey may be implicitly supporting a conservative ideology or the myth of America's special destiny, his primary concern is never with the rule of this world or the ideological options available for the proper governance of the human community. Political and economic considerations are to be endured as inconsequential and interim matters to be considered only in the extent to which they assist or obstruct evangelism. The present age is frighteningly chaotic and his entire perspective on this

society is informed by his belief that the world will be imminently destroyed in preparation for the new heaven and the new earth. Thus, while the term 'ideological' may shed some light on the nature of dispensationalist anti-modernism, it does not explain the extent to which dispensationalism has a critical, almost angry, edge which permeates most of its discourse with the world. Dispensationalists are not content to have their own carefully structured life style and self-understanding. Though they seek to be separate, nevertheless they persist in attacking the world as a 'lost vessel,' a place of Satan, the domain of the Anti-Christ. This anger, which is essentially a profound mistrust of human existence, can not be explained entirely on the basis of the dispensationalist fear of ideological plurality but must be addressed as an anti-world bias.

2.6 Dispensationalist Anti-modernism and its Anti-World Bias

Marsden avoids speaking of dispensationalism as an ideological movement. Recognizing that it is more than a political or economic phenomenon, he is careful to point out that the essence of the dispensationalist movement is best understood as an anti-world bias.⁶¹ This is nowhere more evident than in its theory of biblical dispensations which assume that in every 'age' humanity will fail God, with the result that God intends to destroy creation. Marsden makes his judgment on the basis of his

observation that during the period between 1900 and 1925, when dispensational values came into greater and greater conflict with the accepted dominant social values, society seemed to be mired in an increasing social and ecological chaos typified by World War One. The logic of dispensational attitudes toward the world, fueled by the disorder of 'total war,' was that human civilization was so evil that it must be largely demolished before it can be restored. The distrust of the world, implicit in dispensational eschatological theory, was not simply based upon the traditional doctrine of original sin. Not only human existence, but the world itself was somehow 'fallen' and lost, a decaying planet in which, according to William E. Blackstone, "communism, socialism and nihilism are lifting their godless, headless forms."⁶² The anti-world disposition has lingered beyond Blackstone's time. Lindsey displays a similar inclination in such declarations as that which summarizes the thesis of The Rapture.

Although I grieve over the lost world that is headed toward catastrophe, the hope of the Rapture keeps me from despair in the midst of ever worsening world conditions.⁶³

One wonders if there is any circumstance in which the world would not be destroyed according to the dispensational scheme of salvation. Inasmuch as Lindsey does not seem to explore that possibility it can be affirmed that his vision has an a priori anti-world orientation.

This anti-world bias is possibly the deepest level of

dispensational anti-modernism. It results from the dispensationalists' distrust of the modern version of the American dream. They sensed that the faith which liberalism held out for the progress of North American civilization was actually misplaced. Intuitively they realized that the specialization, urbanization and the commensurate complication and alienation of daily life implied within the dream of progress, did not bode well for the struggling individual who became a pawn in the larger developing economy and culture. Life was becoming too complex and too superficial. It was not, therefore, a coincidence that dispensationalism gained popularity during the great upheaval caused by the rapid growth of industrialization in American society in the 1880's and 1890's. Conservative Christian believers, caught in the changes and great social shifts of that epoch, were often looking for direct and simple answers by which to understand their changing world. They longed for an experience of transcendence by which to sustain their faith. Dispensationalism was well suited to meet both these needs. For instance, Weber points out that the dispensationalist believed that in this age of 'destruction' the church's task was "simply to restate what the apostles taught and, of course, their words were found in the Bible alone."⁶⁴ If the expectation of the second coming was good enough for Peter and Paul, it should be sufficient for believers in any age. There was no need for complicated analyses of the human community, its class structure or its political

and social movements. Such a preoccupation was a diversion created by Satan as he brings about the conditions for the final destruction of this age.

In the anti-world frame of mind anything novel or foreign is construed as a portent of impending doom. Lindsey and Blackstone, in their respective times, followed this logic. Socialism, communism, nihilism, etc. were all 'agents of the devil.' Those ideas which threatened the simple, seemingly purer way of rural living were condemned. Blackstone even takes exception to the new improved mail service.

The mails, so useful for news and correspondence, afford a most convenient agency for disseminating the flood of obscene literature which is blasting the morals of the young.⁶⁵

This simplistic, dispensational social analysis is appealing in the modern age in which skepticism over the promise of the scientific and technological world-view abounds. Ecological disasters and the threat of famine, drought, the increasing crime rate, the spectre of war dispel the notion that science can resolve basic human problems. There is a longing for comprehensible and uncomplicated responses to the ambiguity of modern life. Hence it is not accidental that Lindsey, in his introduction of The Late Great Planet Earth, appeals to the public demand for solutions to life's increasingly perplexing problems. Indeed, the popularity of dispensationalism throughout the

last century, advanced by authors like Blackstone and Lindsey, is due to its capacity to formulate simple and credible answers to major, complicated questions. Furthermore, dispensationalism offers assurance with respect to every calamity or war, even nuclear war. Each disaster or catastrophe is deemed to be an integral part of God's final solution. Therefore political aggression by the Russians, for instance, is not surprising.⁶⁶ It is expected. Similarly, earthquakes or floods, far from being mere indications of chaos, are symbolic of the new age which is coming. Anxiety over the arms race is dispelled and, according to Lindsey's configuration of events, the more treacherous becomes the balance of world power, the closer is the long-awaited Rapture.

A positive dimension of the dispensationalist critique of modern values and events is its ability to counteract the banality of American life styles and culture. Part of the alienation felt by believers in recent times is due to the loss of mystery and depth of meaning in life. Tillich, for instance, suggests that some modern religions have lost their mythic base.⁶⁷ One manner of depicting this decline is to suggest that liberalism offered the believer an image of a God that was too mundane and all too human. Those who felt powerless were seeking an authoritative power outside their own tentative and uncertain lives. In keeping with its heavy emphasis on the common-sense truth of a biblically-based faith,

premillennial dispensationalism portrayed God in a clear, powerful way. The dispensational sense of transcendent majesty is enhanced by its fascination with mysterious revelations of other supranatural concepts such as angels, Satan, lakes of fire and bowls of divine wrath. According to Weber, as the North American civilization seemed to lose meaning and appeared more chaotic, the dispensationalists had an awareness of transcendence which insured order and purpose.

Their supranaturalism was just the kind of affirmation many Protestants were looking for. Instead of placing God within some historical or evolutionary process, instead of playing down his transcendence for the sake of his immanence, premillennialists still believed in a God who stood outside and above history and human life and would shortly intervene in it through the return of Jesus Christ.⁶⁸

To people who feel lost and helpless such an image of the supranatural, sovereign Lord of history is reassuring and must to some extent account for the appeal of dispensational ideas. This image of God will be the subject of the following chapter and little else needs to be said at this point.

The source of this need for transcendence grows out of the awareness of alienation. Dispensationalism was and is well-suited to speak to the classes of people who, because of the changing structures of labour or the shifting moral and social standards of living, find themselves on the margins of society. At the present time no sociological surveys or other studies have been published which might

1 give some firm data upon the basis of which to ascertain whether dispensationalism is more popular with one class as distinct from another. In the absence of such research, it can be conjectured that dispensationalism is well-suited to meet the challenging needs of those who are most affected by the vast changes introduced by modern technology. First of all, it renders rapid change meaningful inasmuch as such change is a necessary, apocalyptic phenomenon and a sign of the coming Kingdom of Christ. As the old ways deteriorate, people who believe in the dispensational concepts are expectantly preparing for the end. Blackstone comforted those who wanted to hide from the tensions of change.

We neither despair nor fold our hands to sleep. On the contrary we are filled with a lively hope, the most blessed hope while we strive to save some from this worldly sinful and adulterous generation which is nigh unto cursing and whose end is to be burned.⁶⁹

Lindsey responds to the shock of change with a similar message of hope.

As we see the world becoming more chaotic, we can be steadfast and immovable because we know where it's going and where we are going.⁷⁰

For the classes of people who are marginalized in the present society dispensationalism also provides a serious and profound affirmation of the value of each individual since it respects their anxiety. Far from the cold or indifferent face of mass culture, dispensationalism declares that personal pain is real and significant. In

fact, it is important enough to be integrated into God's eternal plan. The Almighty knows about every evil event and act of violence which leads the world towards destruction. By the act of conversion, even the forgotten and rejected people of this culture can sense the ultimate assurance of being in a select company.

In another respect, dispensationalism seems to give direction and purpose to those people who feel out of step with culture because of their perception that morals are declining, that religion in America is confused, and that the political and social structures are in chaos. All this 'decay' is predicted in sacred scripture, and thus dispensational theories are compatible with the form of cynicism which claims that nothing is improving, everything is going astray. Hence, for those people who are marginalized because of technological change, the impersonalism or immorality of modern society, dispensationalism offers a structure and incentive for a rejection of the present world order in favour of a transcendent, mysterious saving event which could happen at any moment, "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 16:52). To put the case in a positive light, dispensationalism proposes categories and principles by which to order, if not control, what appears to be chaotic and purposeless. Moreover, as Frank contends, its determinism instills in the believer an assurance that, not only was God in control of history but that this control would be efficacious.⁷¹

In addition to the preceding explanation, the anti-world bias of dispensational anti-modernism is finally and most profoundly evident in its promise of an escape from the earth-bound existence. Suffering and death may be inevitable, world war may almost be certain, but dispensationalists will be spared the pain of these events through the Rapture. Lindsey affirms this hope of escape for the faithful.

We have been examining the push of world events which the prophets foretold would lead the way to the seven-year countdown before the return of Jesus Christ to earth. The big question is will you be here during this seven-year countdown? Will you be here during the time of Tribulation when the Antichrist and the False prophet are in charge for a time? Will you be here when the world is plagued by mankind's darkest days? . . . God's Word tells us that there will be a generation of believers who will never know death. These believers will be removed from the earth before the Great Tribulation--before that period of the most ghastly pestilence, bloodshed and starvation the world has ever know.⁷²

While the basic escapism inherent in dispensationalism made explicit in this excerpt is a primary factor in its disparagement of world, there is a secondary escapism implicit in Lindsey's appeal to evangelize. As the believer waits to be removed from the disaster of this society and from the shadow of death, he or she must be engaged in vigorous evangelization. There is no time for involvement in mundane daily affairs except insofar as they might enhance the task of conversion. In this way, because of the instantaneous

quality of the Rapture, dispensationalism offers the escape of immediacy, the over-powering sense of urgency. It lends an eternal weight to the decision to accept Jesus which blocks out most other concerns. The imminence of the return of Jesus gives every day a special transcendent meaning and purpose. Small decisions take on new and greater significance as believers anticipate the 'any moment' return of Christ to receive the 'true' church. In this regard, Weber, who himself grew up among dispensationalists, points out that they

lived on the edge of eternity, only one second from the divine in-breaking. Spiritual commitments therefore, and even petty ethical decisions, took on new meaning.⁷³

Dispensational anti-modernism offers a sense of other-worldly transcendence to the powerless, gives an ultramundane purpose to the hopeless, and infuses an otherwise meaningless routine with a mystical urgency.

2.7 Summary

To reiterate, dispensationalism manifests a deep anxiety about the nature of human existence in the modern context. It distrusts the optimism and the secularization of the North American culture and laments the passing of an age when human community gave space for individual growth. It rejects the alienation and impersonalization of technological corporate capitalism and, through an authoritatively strong sense of identity and a populist

hermeneutic, it engenders in its adherents the assurance that history can be controlled and that their role in the establishment of a new order is vital. Thus, the anti-modernism of the movement is able (1) to reinforce a populist spirituality, (2) to make authoritative claims to truth, (3) to bolster faith in American economic and political institutions and (4) to render purposeful that which appears to be mindless and disorderly.

In the pre-Hiroshima age the dispensational eschatological vision remained relatively vague. There was no real notion of how the Great Tribulation would occur. After Hiroshima, however, the end-time scenario became more concrete. The bomb was to be the instrument of Armageddon and the herald of hope to the 'terminal generation.' So it happened that dispensationalist anti-modernism received a concrete dimension that it had formerly been lacking. The development and use of nuclear weaponry lent both clarity and authority to the Darbyite theories.

Lindsey popularizes an equation between dispensational predictions and the menace of nuclear war. It is this author's contention that Lindsey's success is due in particular to the powerlessness engendered by the threat of the bomb. His biblically-based predictions which, to an uninformed public, have an aura of authenticity, provide believers with a reason to hope and a sense of direction. In short, of the four characteristics of Lindsey's anti-

modernism mentioned above, it is suggested that the capacity to ascribe divine purpose and control to that which appears to be mindless and disorderly, is the key to his popularity. Lindsey is appealing to the extent that he can credibly impute Divine providence to world events, especially to nuclear war. It is to explore such a thesis more thoroughly that the first foundational question of this research is posed: What is Lindsey's understanding of providence and the Divine, and how do these doctrinal assumptions interact with his description of hope, with his eschatology? This now becomes the initiating question in the following chapter.

Chapter Three: Hal Lindsey's Understanding of the Doctrines
===== of Providence and God

The fact is that fundamentalism does not include any conceptual instrument that is capable of controlling millennialism. . . . Determinism takes over. The humanistic side of fundamentalist religion, with its stress on human acceptance and decision, disappears and expectation becomes sheerly supernatural: a whole series of earth-shaking events will be brought about by direct divine agency with little or nothing that man can do about it.

James Barr¹

3.1 Introduction: The Many Challenges of Dispensational Thought

William Martin, a contributor to The Atlantic Monthly, produced a very concise summary of dispensational eschatology in the June 1982 edition of that magazine. After a thought-provoking analysis of its basic concepts he advised his readers that, as strange as dispensationalism may appear, it merits earnest consideration. Qualifying dispensational premillennialist thinking as a sub-culture he affirmed:

As I trust this account of pre-millennial thought has shown, a sizable subculture exists in this country, for whom the past, present, and future are interpreted in a manner radically different from the way they are presented to us in secular media and institutions. Alien as it may appear to those unacquainted with it, this interpretation is bedrock and touchstone to millions of fundamentalist Christians, including some of the most studious and thoughtful of that increasingly important aggregate. Because it is of a long intellectual tradition with extensive and systematic content, it deserves to be accorded serious examination, not to be dismissed as nonsense.²

In the spirit of the serious examination which Martin proposes, the third and fourth chapters of this research focus on Lindsey's doctrines of providence and God and how they conspire to reinforce his premillennial eschatology. Having established some basis upon which to conclude that the uniqueness and popularity of dispensationalism stem from an anti-modernism which eventually declares its purpose and hope in spite of and because of the threat of nuclear war, the first of the two foundational questions of this research was proposed. Out of the intermingling of Lindsey's emphatic assurance that the righteous will participate in a glorious destiny and that ultimate destruction awaits the unrighteous, there emerges the issue of Lindsey's interpretation of Divine providence. Specifically, what does Lindsey understand as God's providence and how does this interpretation interact with his doctrine of God to produce his eschatology? In response to this question we will begin by defining the concept of providence as it is employed in his writing. Next, its function in relation to other doctrines and ideas will be outlined, and finally providence will be shown to have central importance as the guiding principle of his dispensational thinking. The conclusions drawn from this analysis lead quite naturally to an exploration of his doctrine of God.

While we shall concentrate on Lindsey's eschatology, it is appreciated that his apocalypticism is not the only

aspect of dispensational thinking which invites a response from other segments of the Christian tradition. Indeed, the dispensational system of thought confronts mainline Protestant theology with many serious and vexing questions. There is the challenge and dilemma posed by the dispensationalist sympathy for the Jewish people and the State of Israel. Although it may not be advisable to embrace Lindsey's antinomianism vis-a-vis the Israeli (See Appendix 6.) nation, dispensationalism does challenge mainline Christian theology with the need to develop a more sympathetic theological appreciation for Judaism. From a religious perspective the question is: Can Christianity repent of its universalist claims (perhaps inspired partially by the newer Testament itself) which have led to tremendous animosity against the Jews? Can its Christology relinquish an anti-Judaic bias implicit within its exclusivist claim to truth? No matter what the response, these are the fundamental issues which the mainstream of the Christian tradition should contemplate when reviewing the dispensationalist sympathy for the chosen people. While not a simple undertaking, it is a vital one if Christianity is to move responsibly into the pluralistic age of the next century.³

In another area, serious reflection on Lindsey's dispensationalism leads liberal Protestant theology to a re-examination of its own understanding of the authority of scripture. Even though his 'end-time' thinking is not the

only religious issue which confronts the traditional Protestant denominations with a different approach to biblical authority, it is a striking example of the same. This point has not been lost on Lindsey's critics since most of the books which analyse his writings originate from a concern over his hermeneutical and exegetical methodology.⁴

The theological issue which arises from the dispensational hermeneutic is the need for North American Protestantism to establish an appreciation of biblical authority without undermining its insight that biblical truth is a dialogue between the actual text and the social context, and between belief and unbelief. Essentially the question of the authority of scripture is one concerning the nature of truth. It is apparent that through the principle of inerrancy, dispensationalism has advanced a concept of truth which is static and propositional. In the age of 'future shock' (Toffler) and the pervasive anxiety of "meaninglessness and despair" (Tillich) such a position is understandably popular. People seek to possess a truth which is steadfast and eternal. Can responsible Christian theology articulate an interpretation of truth which resists the temptation of propositionalism, yet gives a sense of meaning to daily existence? This is certainly a question worthy of further study.

There are a few less vital dimensions of Lindsey's writing which deserve additional attention, but which can

not be the focus of this study. It might be meritorious, for instance, to trace his fascination with military imagery to its source. Why does Lindsey employ so much martial vocabulary? Is it part of what Jackson Lears has identified as a "worship of force" which began at the turn of this century as an anti-modernist response to growing luxury within American life?⁵ Lears speculates that the preoccupation with martial imagery developed out of the belief that the soldier's life had a salutary effect on both the individual and society as a whole because it disciplined the spirit and mind. While this may be one answer, it could also be suggested that the fascination with the military may also be a function of the dispensational inclination to expect Divine intervention in history to be dramatic and destructive. Descriptions of weapon systems and battle strategies are just part of the symbolic mythology surrounding the 'King of Kings' who will destroy the armies of the world at Armageddon. A further explanation of Lindsey's use of militaristic images may relate to the real or perceived impotence felt by many ordinary citizens. As mentioned in the previous chapter, his writing style appeals to the powerless because it allows the reader vicariously to participate in the greatest power-struggle of all times. Secret military strategies and war tactics form the basis upon which the powerless can experience some sense of potency and importance, even if they are apocalyptic in nature.

Another field of research which warrants some scholarly attention and sociological analysis is the correlation between social class and the popularity of dispensational apocalypticism. Building on Dwight Wilson's historical survey of the movement, it could be asked whether there are any discernible connections between the political and economic context or class affiliation and the rise in popularity of dispensational thinking. In this regard, one might question whether Blackstone and Lindsey were just fortunate that they both wrote the right books at a propitious time, or whether there were historical reasons for their respective literary successes.

Important as these issues may be in their own right, the central focus of this research is to investigate Lindsey's doctrines of God and providence. Do they inform his premillennial eschatology which equates the consummation of time with a nuclear holocaust? Like the concerns of anti-Judaism or his hermeneutics, this aspect of Lindsey's thought implies a re-thinking of the mainline Protestant theological position, its understanding of God's providential activity, its eschatology and especially the basis of its hope in the face of the nuclear threat. To respond adequately to this challenge, it is necessary to study Lindsey's doctrine of Divine providence, and it is to the detailed examination of that doctrine that this chapter now turns.

3.2. Hal Lindsey's Understanding of the Doctrine of Providence:

One preliminary observation concerning Lindsey's writing style is required before analysing his ideas concerning providence. He is addressing a broad audience and therefore does not display a great deal of concern for academic rigour. Given the evangelical purpose of his writing, his primary objective is to disseminate the prophetic message to anyone who will listen and so it would be erroneous to ascribe too much order to his thought. The basic tenets of his doctrine of providence are scattered throughout several books and thus complete consistency is difficult to sustain. Furthermore, Lindsey does not claim to be a systematic thinker and, consequently, he frequently does not explain his various theological doctrines in an orderly fashion. This is evident in his assumptions about many of his doctrines including those concerning providence and God.

3.2.1. A Definition of Lindsey's Doctrine of Providence

Research into Lindsey's understanding of the doctrine of providence is complicated by the fact that he uses the actual word quite sparingly. In The Late Great Planet Earth, he speaks of 'providence' only rarely, explaining the Japanese decision not to attack the continental United States after Pearl Harbour as 'providential',⁶ and employing it to interpret seemingly unbelievable coincidences between historical events and

biblical prophecy. On the whole his first literary achievement does not overwork the expression.⁷ In other volumes the term is found more frequently. In The Promise Lindsey refers to God's 'providence' which he perceives as working through the people of Israel.⁸ Providence is enlisted in his account for such divergent events as Mary's trip to Bethlehem⁹ and Napoleon's defeat at Akko,¹⁰ both described in A Prophetical Walk through the Holy Land. Without doubt the vocabulary of providence is more extensive in Combat Faith than in any of his books. In this recent text, providence is actually the subject of the sixth chapter, and is discussed in a subsection entitled "God's Gracious Providence."¹¹ These citations represent almost all the instances of Lindsey's actual use of the word.

In view of the extent and character of his publications one must acknowledge the scarcity of his references to providence. Nevertheless, a closer examination of those places where Lindsey does employ the term reveals that he gives it a connotation which is consistent throughout his writing. It is used to describe those miraculous or highly improbable events which occur in the history of the chosen people or in the lives of Christian believers. The convergence of separate and unassociated circumstances appears to be coincidental to the untrained, unbelieving eye; but to the 'truly faithful' such 'co-incidents' are evidence of God's

consistent providence. For example, in Combat Faith Lindsey explains that the incredible fact that the slave boy Moses received a highly sophisticated educational training in the court of Pharaoh was not a matter of good fortune, but the result of divine providence.¹² As corroborating evidence, the dispensationalist confidently affirms that the real mother of Moses had "cracked the faith barrier,"¹³ meaning she was able to trust in God's providence and put Moses in a reed basket in the river even though there was no reasonable expectation that he would survive. Having no knowledge of what would occur, nevertheless, she was "certain of the invisible (hand of) God's providential care."¹⁴ In like fashion, Mary is portrayed as the recipient of God's providential action in a chapter entitled "Divine Providence in Action" in A Prophetical Walk through the Holy Land. What appears to be coincidence, i.e., that Mary's accouchement fell within the time of Caesar's census, Lindsey declares to be the evidence of Divine providence which moved empires and directed emperors to act in accordance with God's purposes.

Many months before Mary was due to give birth, mighty Ceasar Augustus in far-off Rome decided to have the entire inhabited earth enrolled in a census in order for taxes to be extracted more effectively. . . . Caesar Augustus unwittingly issued an order that forced a very pregnant young Jewish girl to make a difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem and there she gave birth to the Messiah--in the exact place predicted by prophecy hundreds of years before.¹⁵

Lindsey returns to the same example of the nativity story

in The Promise. The result is a majestic image of the powerful God whose providence orchestrates human history so that prophecy is fulfilled down to the last detail.

Neither Mary nor Caesar nor the Roman tax collectors did the timing nor were they in charge of affairs. The God who rules the world had his hand on the wheel and He literally moved the peoples of the world and timed everything to the very day so that Mary and Joseph got to Bethlehem just in time for Jesus, the chosen Messiah, to be born in the right place, the place designated by the infallible finger of prophecy.¹⁶

Caesar Augustus was not the only emperor who was providentially guided. Lindsey recounts in A Prophetical Walk through the Holy Land that Napoleon could not take the port of Akko because of divine providential intervention. Under the sub-title, "A Lesson in Providence," he narrates recent history to give evidence of God's providential care in the timing of the last days.

Akko provides us with a modern demonstration of divine providence. Napoleon laid siege to Akko in A.D. 1798 after successfully conquering Egypt and Joppa. Akko was the last stronghold of the Turks. Had he captured Akko, all of Palestine would have been his. . . . The divine providence in the French army's failure to conquer Akko was this: Napoleon had promised the Jews that when he conquered Palestine he would establish the State of Israel and give it to them. Had this occurred in 1798, it would have completely thrown off the prophetic time table for Christ's return, for according to prophecy, the rebirth of the State of Israel is the key sign to a whole scenario of events that indicate Jesus Christ's imminent return.¹⁷

From this initial stage of analysis, it would seem apparent that when Lindsey uses the word 'providence' he

assumes a quite specific definition. It refers to those strange circumstances that on the surface may make no sense to the unbeliever but which, in fact, constitute the mysterious unfolding of the Divine plan.

Beyond the level of mere vocabulary, Lindsey appears to believe that providence is a guiding force in the lives of all believers. In and of itself this is not exceptional; most Christian theologians embrace such a concept. In Lindsey's case, however, providence is minutely tabulated. His unwavering trust in God's administration of earthly affairs leads him to affirm that nothing happens in the believer's life which is accidental. God's providence does not allow for such an occurrence.¹⁸ In superficial imitation of Reformed theology, Lindsey gives little credence to the possibility of chance in human destiny. While it is true that this bears some resemblance to the thought of Calvin, the literalism of Lindsey's doctrine must be sharply distinguished from the reformer's more nuanced providentialism, which always leaves a large margin of mystery in the working out of the divine economy.¹⁹

In relation to Lindsey's use of the concept of divine providence, whether explicitly or implicitly, several observations can be made about his definition of the term.

In the first place, Lindsey applies the word almost exclusively to the lives of the faithful who trust in God. Providence is a power open to the 'true' believers. Thus

Mary, Moses, John of Patmos, Isaiah, David, even Hal Lindsey, all obviously 'true' believers, are instruments and recipients of Divine providential acts. Only once (the case of Napoleon) is providence related to an individual of questionable faith. Therefore, it could be surmised that Lindsey's doctrine of providence is operative for the righteous ones who fit into God's plan. The unrepentant and unconverted must be governed by an alternate power. In certain instances Lindsey identifies the latter as emanating from the devil, mentioning that Satan has an authority comparable to that of a father²⁰ in the lives of those who are not saved. In this respect providence is a pivotal concept in the great cosmic battle between God and the devil, since in the earthly realm God's righteous providence battles against Satan's evil authority.

A second observation emerges out of Lindsey's use of the concept of providence as that power which moves empires and controls great rulers. Providence is cosmic manipulation, a controlling and intricately directive force which enters into the world to move it and shape it according to Divine edict. Neither emperors nor kingdoms can resist the operation of providence as it concretizes God's plan. In this way Lindsey depicts providence as an irresistible force which rules creation with a persistent intention that is impervious to the yearnings and suffering of any caught within its domain. He has very little

appreciation of God's providence as subtle, obscure, nuanced, interactive or co-operative. Providence is minute in its attention to detail, cosmic in its capacity to arrange world history and resistant to any notion of synergism.

In the third place providence acts within Lindsey's dispensational theories as the concretizing process of the Divine plan. Far from being a directionless or even a mysterious force, providence, in quite a clear-cut manner, executes God's purposes and moves steadily towards the final days of judgment. It arranges events in such a way that God's plan is neither interrupted nor frustrated by human actions. Concretely this means that in dispensational theology providence is the power which propels creation towards its final destruction as the necessary preliminary event prior to the establishment of Christ's millennial kingdom.

A fourth meaning, evident in Lindsey's story of Moses, revolves around what might be considered as his answer to the question of suffering. Even though providence makes God's intentions concrete, the Divine purpose may not be evident to those who trust in God because they have not yet been blessed with insight. For this reason, Lindsey counsels patience²¹ even in adversity. God will not ultimately harm the 'truly' faithful but will eventually bring their lives and circumstances into alignment with the providential design. In Combat Faith, Lindsey emphasizes

this theme several times.

Sometimes God's leading for our life doesn't make sense at all from the human viewpoint. But if we just keep trusting Him, He will ultimately bless us and teach us to crack the faith barrier in the process.²²

In this respect Lindsey's understanding of providence develops into a doctrine which optimistically counsels perseverance, since, when the believer looks back, God's providential guidance will be evident. A stalwart faith in providence assures the suffering person of ultimate meaning and hope in spite of present pain. It could be suggested, then, that Lindsey's vision of Divine providence becomes the source for his theodicy. The believer is enjoined to have patience in difficult times because all suffering, even that of the innocent, will eventually be rendered purposeful as its role in the Divine plan is revealed.

Finally, providence is more than an answer to suffering in Lindsey's thinking. It functions also as the spiritual teacher of divine love and guidance. When events initially look impossible but ultimately work out 'for the best,' the believer learns to trust God's providential control of human life. According to Lindsey, the experience of providence taught Moses when he fled from Pharaoh,²³ and it instructed the people of Israel when they arrived at the Red Sea,²⁴ and it is still teaching the faithful in this

'terminal generation.' Moreover, the providential acts of God are lessons, not only for the people involved, but also for the faithful who come later. In a personal note, Lindsey explains that his children "never tire of hearing about the mighty acts of God in their own family's history."²⁵ God's providential deeds are therefore "the most important lessons of faith we can pass on to our children."²⁶ This instruction of providence, even after the fact, instills 'blessed assurance' in the hearts and minds of the family of God.

Thus, a preliminary synopsis suggests that Lindsey defines providence as a cosmic power which manipulates world events and controls the lives of 'true believers' in such a way that God's eternal plan evolves in its proper time and place. It can be an answer to the problem of evil and a teacher of trust and assurance.

Given this definition, it can now be demonstrated that Lindsey's concept of providence is of central importance to his dispensational theories, particularly with respect to his explanation of (1) biblical promises, (2) the connections made between ancient symbols and current events and (3) God's interest in the evangelism of the world. All these elements of his thought depend upon his concept of providence.

3.2.2. Biblical Promises and Providence:

An adequate comprehension of the development of

Lindsey's notion of providence, requires elaboration of what he calls "biblical promises." These promises, of which there are at least 7000 found in the biblical record,²⁷ reveal both the intent and blueprint of God's providence.

Although Lindsey specifically speaks of 'biblical promises' as distinct from providence, there seems to be very little substantive difference between the two. Like providence, the scriptural 'promises' are means of giving comfort and assurance to the believer during times of testing and turmoil.²⁸ Likewise, even if a specific promise made in the biblical text does not refer exactly to a concrete situation or problem, taken together they fall into a pattern which confirms for the believer that his or her life is not governed by chance and circumstance but by the controlling power of God. In this regard the biblical promises function as the announcement that God's providential guidance is real and at work in concrete ways. According to Lindsey they allow the initiate to participate in the providential plan providing, of course, that they have been "claimed." If the promises are not claimed, that is to say if the believer does not ask them to be fulfilled by God through prayer, they are not effective and Lindsey consequently cautions the believer that God intends the promises to be claimed.²⁹ To ignore them is a sign of disbelief. These promises constitute the framework through which God's providence can operate to guide and protect the person of faith. Lindsey believes

his own life is evidence of the salvific nature of biblical promises.

I memorized hundreds of bible promises and started to categorize them in a notebook. That was one of the most important things I ever did. These promises have saved me so many times in so many ways. And more than once they have saved my life.³⁰

The biblical promises are not only the indication of the power of providence in the believer's life, they also outline the general program and precise plot of God's providential action. What is proclaimed in the Bible will happen. No matter how impossible it may seem, God's providence will work in such a way that the promises will be fulfilled as they are written in scripture.

Lindsey claims that these promises, which outline the plan of Divine providence, are guaranteed and that his own life is a testament to their trustworthiness.³¹ The ensured status of biblical promises is nowhere more important than in the case of the Rapture. Citing Jesus' statement in John 14:1-3 concerning the "mansion with many rooms," Lindsey comments:

The Lord gave us a guaranteed hope that he is going to come back for us and take us to a place of incredible beauty, joy and peace to be with him for ever.³²

Since the scriptures contain the providential plan, the core of Lindsey's doctrine of providence evolves from the belief that God carefully manipulates not only the intricate and complex web of human interactions but the very writing of the biblical record itself in order that

prophecy is fulfilled as it is intended. Therefore, providence is that force which guides the covenants and prophecies of scripture, both in their actual inscription in the canon of the Bible and in their eventual fulfillment. For example, Lindsey sees the hand of providence working in the fulfilled prophecy of King David who, in Psalm 22, predicted the details of Christ's crucifixion.³³ In a similar manner, Lindsey claims that providence was active in the prophecies of Isaiah 53:9 which predicted the precise details of Christ's burial.

. . . only Divine providence could have worked out all the intricate circumstances necessary to make it happen just the way Isaiah predicted.³⁴

With respect to the exact content of the biblical promises, Lindsey argues that a common sense interpretation of the biblical text reveals their intention. Read correctly, the 7000 promises can be trusted as historically accurate renditions of events which will come to pass. Lindsey makes this affirmation, trusting God to keep the promises God makes³⁵ since the Lord of history would "never go back on His Word."³⁶ By such a line of reasoning Lindsey links faith in God to faith in the biblical promises. To doubt the truth of his interpretations of the promises is to doubt God. This argumentation is implied in The Late Great Planet Earth when he states:

To us the biggest issue is over the question "Does God keep His promises?" For God unconditionally promised Abraham's descendants a literal world-wide Kingdom over which they

would rule through their messiah.³⁷

The logic which posits that God's providence will fulfill biblical promises and prophecy rests upon two key elements of Lindsey's thought. In the first place his common-sense realism, which informs his reading of scripture, persuades him to look for the most commonplace meaning of a biblical passage. Why look any further? Accordingly, when God promises Abraham (Gen. 12:1ff) that he will be the father of a great nation, common-sense leads the reader to believe that God's intention is to create a literal nation with a specific territory, thrones, crowns, kings and subjects. Common-sense reasoning is also the basis upon which Lindsey imputes the same authority to all biblical promises. A promise is a promise, and it is only logical, in his opinion, to assume that all biblical promises are equally unconditional and irrevocable. The second element of Lindsey's thought which supports his interpretation of biblical promises is his positivism. Philosophical positivism argues that reality is coterminous with what happens in time and space. So Lindsey asserts that the biblical promises relate to an empirical and temporal reality and that in order for a promise to be fulfilled it must actually be seen to take place. The dark and hidden mystery of the Divine transcendence working behind or above creation is not a concept that he develops at all. This positivist influence translates into a historical literalism and the mystical side of the divine-human encounter is lost

as Lindsey contends that the biblical promises must coincide with historical events. The one-dimensionality of Lindsey's interpretation of providence is in contrast to that of most prominent theologians, who depict providence as a paradoxical doctrine fraught with tension.³⁸ The most profound expositions of the dogma of divine Providence within the Judaeo-Christian tradition are attempts which, in humility, seek to clarify that which is essentially hidden and understand that which is a mystery, i.e., the Divine purpose within the events of the world. In contrast with such 'uncertainty,' as Lindsey himself proudly declares,³⁹ dispensationalism has no difficulty discerning the ways of God. In this affirmation Lindsey demonstrates the either-or dichotomy into which his thinking falls. There appears to be little interest in conceiving of biblical truth in a dialectical manner.

To recapitulate the argument to this point, the biblical promises explain the plan of God's providence and are operative for all individual believers since they are guaranteed through God's faithfulness. They will be fulfilled within history according to a literalist, common-sense interpretation of the biblical text. Inasmuch as the biblical promises are closely related to Lindsey's understanding of providence, it can be presumed that he believes Divine providence to be manifest in what takes place within chronological time and empirical space. To put it simply, according to Lindsey's undialectical reasoning,

God's providence is an event rather than a potentiality. It is static, not dynamic, having more to do with historical circumstance than ontological significance.

Since Lindsey understands Divine providence as an empirical reality which is evolving in and through the created order, an investigation of the principles which support his interpretation of the Divine plan for human history will disclose further nuances of meaning in his understanding of providence.

3.2.3. Lindsey's Understanding of Providence and God's Plan for Human History:

It has been asserted that, at the heart of dispensational thinking, is the unquestionable conviction that God has an exact and detailed plan for human history. Without this foundational proposition, the dispensational theological system would disintegrate. In Lindsey's thinking, Divine providence is the concrete power which manipulates and unfolds that plan. It is not necessary to explain the details of the dispensational understanding of God's plan for human history or the end times since this was elaborated previously. (The exact plan for the countdown to Armageddon can be found in Appendix Three.) As intriguing as the details of the eschaton may seem, they are not as important, for the present study, as an examination of the principles which Lindsey infers are guiding that eternal plan.

A perusal of Lindsey's descriptions of the providential

plan reveals that there are three basic principles governing its progression towards the eschaton. They are: its perfection and precision, its decline towards destruction and its evangelical invitation to the individual believers.

Lindsey's straightforward, linear argumentation is most evident when he refers to God's plan for history. If the Bible claims that God is perfect, then God cannot make mistakes in anything, including the providential design of creation. Therefore, God does not need to change or repent of God's purposes. Before the beginning of time, in Lindsey's theory, God had a design for all human history⁴⁰ and this plan carries forward to the present generation and beyond.⁴¹ Lindsey affirms that there are no flaws or errors in God's planning, and so it never needs to be altered for any reason. The precision of this heavenly program is progressing unflinching to the time, which only God knows,⁴² when the Saints of the Church will be Raptured. This exactitude is a key concept in The Promise and The Late Great Planet Earth. In these texts Lindsey adamantly claims that there is a precise correlation between God's plan found in the biblical prophecies and what is actually happening in current events. He predicts that this providential design will continue until the final days.⁴³ In the light of such assurance, the question of whether God's purposes could in any way be thwarted by human action never arises.

As was noted above, God's plan makes provision for several stages in human history. The key element which demarcates one dispensation from the next is the recurring tragedy of human faithlessness in keeping God's covenants. This is the second principle guiding the providential plan. The repeated failure of human faith which has not surprised God from the very beginning in the Garden of Eden,⁴⁴ inevitably leads each dispensation to some form of decline and ruination. Far from being arbitrary, destruction is integral to Divine justice and has therefore been part of God's intention from the very inception of the created order. Thus, the fallen state of humankind is justly punished throughout each dispensation. God has determined that all the ages of this earth shall be patterned on this cycle of faithlessness and demise. The ultimate example of this failure to trust in God's covenant was the denial of Jesus as the Messiah and his consequent crucifixion. The ultimate punishment for such a lack of belief and trust will be the Great Tribulation. Taken as a whole, the dispensational understanding of God's plan is governed by the principle that the human community will be faithless and therefore will suffer deterioration leading to a holocaust of one kind or another. This would imply that Lindsey understands God's providence as a force which is propelling the world towards its salvation by means of its own ultimate destruction. Using the Anselmic arguments regarding the holiness and justice of God, he claims that the final punishing judgment is not what the loving God

desires but that the faithlessness of humanity is such an affront that it cannot be ignored, particularly if the human creature is ever to receive lasting righteousness.⁴⁵

In spite of the affirmation that God has a precise program for the "terminal generation," every believer is invited to choose to be included in the 'eternal' plan. This is the final principle governing the providential design of history. Human beings are essentially free agents and Lindsey asserts that the believer can decide by his or her own free will to participate in God's eternal designs. If the individual turns away from God then that is his or her right.⁴⁶ Hence, Lindsey never misses an opportunity in his books to remind the reader of the imperative of making the choice and of the eternal significance of choosing correctly.⁴⁷

3.2.4. The Central Goal of God's Providential Plan:

There is an apparent contradiction between the relentless movement of God's providential plan towards the final day of destruction and the seeming openness with respect to an individual's participation in this plan. Though the general outline of history is predetermined, there is never any indication in Lindsey's writings that he espouses a form of double predestination which seals off each individual's fate. On a Theological plane, Lindsey could maintain that this contradiction is implicitly resolved through reference to the omniscience of God,

arguing that God knows in advance who will accept to believe and be saved and plans accordingly.⁴⁸ In this way there is no contradiction in the plan between the general thrust of God's purposes and its particular instances. On the other hand, given the unsystematic nature of Lindsey's writing, this contradiction may simply have been overlooked. It is certainly not inconsequential, however, since the predetermined nature of the providential plan, unless it is qualified in some manner, renders evangelism meaningless. Lindsey seems to be caught in the familiar tension, common to much American religious experience, between a type of determinism that is partly inspired by Calvinist predestinarianism and a revivalist-based voluntarism. On the surface he appears to argue both sides quite vigorously, wanting to claim the immutability of God's all powerful sovereign plan, while professing an undaunted belief in the 'saving of souls.' While the tension is always present and never clearly resolved in Lindsey's writings, it can be understood from the perspective of a dispensational soteriology which distinguishes between collective and individual salvation. In the dispensationalist's thinking, the fate of the earth has always been a foregone conclusion. God's saving acts do not extend to the planet in its corporate order. The salvation of which the Bible speaks is for individual human beings. Even the two peoples whom God has chosen, the people of Israel and the Christian Church, are portrayed more as individuals than collectivities with regard to their final salvation. Thus, there is a

determined pattern to the history of communities and nations which will not change and, on the other hand, there are the individual human beings who are free to choose whether to be part of that eternal plan. While this argument does not speak directly to the contradiction between Lindsey's implicit determinism and voluntarism,⁴⁹ it does appear to satisfy Lindsey himself, and most dispensationalist writers as well.

On a more mundane and practical plane it could be maintained that, even while they proclaim that the world is destined for imminent destruction in a predetermined pattern and that human beings are unable to alter this outcome, dispensationalists need to allow for individual freedom in order to make evangelism meaningful. Since it is assumed that evangelism is the essence of the believer's duty to God and the most worthy activity in which to engage while waiting for the Rapture, some possibility must exist that the uninitiated can actually repent and turn to Jesus for salvation. It is because human beings can choose to be saved that there is still a reason for dispensationalists to remain in the world. Their purpose is focused on the struggle to "save all you can" (Moody). Without the possibility of salvation through Christian evangelism, the eschaton loses a great deal of its importance and appeal. It is, therefore, not surprising that an analysis of Lindsey's writing discloses that he believes evangelization to be the central goal of God's providential program.

God's hope is to convert everyone on earth before the Rapture. Therefore, from the beginning to the end of time, individuals must always be free to believe and be converted or disbelieve and remain condemned. The proof of the centrality of this goal of 'world evangelism' becomes evident when investigating the separate yet similar Divine purposes which dispensationalism assigns to the people of Israel and the Christian Church.

It has been noted that Lindsey proposes that God has a specific concern for the people of Israel and a separate vocation for the Christian Church. Through a careful reading of The Late Great Planet Earth it becomes evident that this distinction is basically only temporal in nature. While God's preoccupation with the people of Israel was the focus of the Old Testamental period, Lindsey claims that since the ascension of Christ the Divine purpose for the church is God's "main program."⁵⁰ During the present age the church is charged with "the responsibility of evangelizing the world."⁵¹ Interestingly enough, this was also God's intent, according to Lindsey, with respect to the people of Israel.

. . . evangelizing was the task of the Jew. Of course he seldom fulfilled that obligation which is one of his great failures.⁵²

The evangelistic task of the Jews was not finished with the pre-Christian 'age.' After the community of true believers is Raptured out of the world, God's purpose remains consistent with that mission. Once the Christian Church is

gone, God expects the chosen people to resume their task of evangelism. This, in Lindsey's mind, is one of the key messages of Revelation.

During the Tribulation the spotlight is on the Jew--in the book of Revelation the Jew is responsible for evangelizing the world again.⁵³

In contrast to their previous failure to evangelize, Lindsey's rendering of the seventh chapter of Revelation indicates that during this Tribulation period the Jews will be successful in converting the whole world.⁵⁴ (That is to say they will bring to the 'true' faith all those who are not lost in the Tribulation.)

Whereas the Jews may be motivated to evangelize by the promise of the restoration of their Davidic Kingdom of shalom, Lindsey argues that it is the Rapture which has played a key role in motivating the true Christians to make every effort to bring the lost people of this earth back to Jesus. In his book The Rapture, he spells out his own evangelistic task through reference to the Rapture.

It motivates me to win as many to Christ as possible before it's too late. I want to take as many with me as I can.⁵⁵

Apparently evangelism is so essential to Divine providence that God does not easily abandon those people who will not accept Jesus as the Messiah. In Lindsey's exegesis of Revelation 14, he indicates that God pauses even between the various series of judgments for the precise purpose of allowing unbelievers, Jews or Gentiles,

the opportunity to be saved through conversion to Jesus Christ.⁵⁶ Lindsey claims that it is not until the time of the two reapings foretold in Revelation 14:14 that the possibility of choice is ended and God's evangelistic goal is consummated. The 'reaping' is done by angels who will separate those who truly believe from those who have not turned to receive their Lord. At that juncture all evangelism ceases and Lindsey laments that

grace is ended. Fates are forever sealed;
there is no more chance for the unbelieving.
This will be the saddest day in all of human
history.⁵⁷

Until that fateful day there is hope. God's providential plan unfolds and the primary responsibility of the 'true' believer is the task of evangelism. God never ceases to offer grace and forgiveness to the lost and assurance to the converted. Even in this 'terminal generation' the task of evangelism must not grow lax or lose its nerve.

There is still hope for the Terminal Generation. God knows what's happening--He predicted it. God also has a plan to right all wrongs and deliver everyone who trusts in Him. And you may be a part of his plan. The choice is up to you.⁵⁸

In the final analysis, Lindsey's insistence on both Divine sovereignty over history and the decisive free will of the human being, turns salvation into an individualized concept. Since God has predetermined the destiny of creation, the only real choice is an individual one. The only human act worth considering, therefore, is the act of

personal conversion.

3.3. Interim Elements that Hinder and Help God's Providential Plan of Evangelism:

The final goal of God's providential scheme is the conversion of as many lost people as possible before the final destruction of the world and the creation of the new Kingdom.⁵⁹ Thus, even while the scenario is evolving⁶⁰ toward the final war of Armageddon, the task of evangelism is still God's central providential purpose. This being the case, it is possible to discern who and what assists or obstructs Divine providence through identifying the persons or movements of this world which are likely instruments of evangelism and those which are working in opposition to conversion to Christ.

Here again, an inconsistency in Lindsey's logic becomes evident. If God is all-powerful and the plan immutable, then there should be no impediment to the fulfillment of the evangelistic purpose. Yet many agents are deemed to be serious threats to the Christian mission. It appears that Lindsey would like to claim that God needs no assistance since "He" is in complete control and at the same time that human beings must exercise their freedom in order to defeat the devil. Surely this is a serious inconsistency but one which does not inhibit Lindsey's denunciation of various agents of the devil.

Chief among the obstacles to God's offer of salvation

is communism. Given its atheistic ideology, Lindsey argues that it cannot be trusted⁶¹ and must be resisted by all moral and political means. Even though Russia has an integral, though negative, role to play within God's providential plan,⁶² it is to be opposed on account of it being a hindrance to evangelism. While Lindsey believes that communism wants to destroy capitalism and take over the world, his real difficulty with that ideology, apart from those reasons outlined in the previous chapter, is the extent to which it undermines the maintenance of a strong American base from which to increase Christian evangelism.⁶³

Other impediments to the task of evangelism often appear under the guise of religion. According to the dispensationalist's views the occult, strange religious practices, astrology, Eastern religions and the ecumenical movement⁶⁴ are all elements in the world which Satan will use to corrupt the minds of believers⁶⁵ and inhibit the conversion of people to the 'true' faith.

In general terms, those scholars, movements, religions or ideas which cause a Christian believer to doubt the authenticity of Christ's messiahship are definitely working contrary to God's providential plan of evangelism.⁶⁶ In Combat Faith, Lindsey arranges all the manifestations of opposition under the title of "The New Age Movement" and includes in it, besides the items mentioned in his other

works, such ideas as alternative medicine, yoga and meditation techniques which "visualize"⁶⁷ desired objects.

In the interim between the "present days" and the "end of the age" there are certain circumstances which enhance the righteous labor of evangelism. Besides moral character and sober living, Lindsey believes that a strong America is supportive of evangelism. In what amounts to the conclusion of his book, The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon, he proclaims that the United States has always been, and needs to remain, politically and economically strong in order that American Christians can carry on their essential evangelistic work.⁶⁸ America has a large community of 'true' believers and, Lindsey asserts, "we must keep the evangelism moving."⁶⁹ Since America sends out so many missionaries, "we must increase our support" of this work until the final hour⁷⁰ and not be distracted by other domestic, social crises.⁷¹

3.4. Seven Theses Explaining Lindsey's Doctrine of Providence:

By way of summation and in the light of the analysis of Lindsey's definition of providence, its connection with biblical promises, and its central goal of evangelism, we may advance seven theses which elaborate Lindsey's understanding of the doctrine of providence. They are:

1. The concept of Divine providence is an indispensable dimension of Lindsey's dispensational

theories, acting as the force which is intrinsic to the unfolding of God's plan for human history.

2. Divine providence is the power-filled manipulation of large and small events for the benefit of the true believers.

3. Providence operates according to a predetermined Divine plan which never changes and which is explained in the biblical record. With regard to its determined character Lindsey understands providence to be a fixed as opposed to a dynamic force. The veracity of this providential plan is assured through the fulfillment of what Lindsey identifies as biblical promises. In Lindsey's thinking, the fulfillment of biblical promises implies a direct correspondence to actual historical events. In this respect his interpretation of providence is imbued with a positivistic philosophy. For Lindsey, God's providence is experienced largely as an historical force as opposed to an ontologically significant reality/concept.

4. The central goal of this providential plan is the evangelism of the world in preparation for Christ's return, and this objective is the responsibility of the church and of the people of Israel, though at different times.

5. Inherent in the providential plan is the assumption that the destruction of the earth must occur before any lasting redemption can take place.

6. Any individual can choose to accept or reject inclusion in this providential plan.

7. In the interim between the present age and the last days, a strong America works towards furthering the goal of God's providential plan, while the rise of internationalism, communism and religions other than Christianity hinders this plan.

These seven theses point toward an initial assessment of Lindsey's understanding of the doctrine of providence. As a concept it appears that providence is necessary to Lindsey's dispensational theological system. The assurance that God's providence controls human history may, in fact, be one of the dominant and guiding principles of dispensationalism. A sense of purpose and destiny exercise such influence in Lindsey's thinking that it may be more appropriate to speak of Lindsey's 'providentialism' than to refer to his doctrine of providence. In concluding this discussion we shall attempt to show that providentialism functions as a synopsis of Lindsey's dispensational theories.

3.5. Lindsey's Providentialism: -----

Taken as whole, these seven themes reflect not only Lindsey's strong sense of transcendent destiny but they also show that his understanding of providence displays a vigorous, if naive, determinism. The combination of these

two dimensions in Lindsey's theology results in what could be designated as "providentialism." That is to say, his predisposition towards a highly structured and intensive view of Divine providence creates the paradigm for his entire theological system. Far from being one doctrine among many, providence becomes a controlling construct which gives both character and direction to the other principles of his theology.

The centrality of the providential paradigm becomes evident when we examine his dispensational theory of history. Even though the division of human history into various 'ages' may allow some dispensationalists to define and achieve a pure ecclesiastical structure (Darby) or designate the sure means to eternal salvation from sin (Blackstone),⁷² Lindsey uses it as a means of concretizing his sense of destiny. He is preoccupied with finding a teleological direction, a pattern, in recent events and worldly predicaments. Several of his books list the chaotic crises of recent times to introduce his explanation of God's purposes or plan.⁷³ In other words, Lindsey's writing is essentially an attempt to designate where and how Divine providence is operative.

Lindsey's books gain their vitality and appeal through his unshakable assurance that history does have a purpose which Divine providence is revealing and in which the reader can have a vital part. Combat Faith is devoted almost entirely to this theme.

The LORD has a specific plan for everyone's life. This is what is meant by "the race marked out for us". We are not in competition with anyone but ourselves. We are competing with the course marked out for us, striving to achieve the maximum within the perimeters of God's personal plan for us.⁷⁴

In addition to bolstering the dispensational historical theory, Lindsey's 'providentialism' becomes a filter through which he reads the scriptures. This is, perhaps, the most serious criticism of his hermeneutics. As opposed to allowing the Word of God to address him, Lindsey scours the Bible to discover biblical promises which can be interpreted in such a fashion as to corroborate his preconceived understanding of the divine providential plan.⁷⁵ In this manner, his belief in providence directs his exegesis rather than the other way around.

This observation leads to a larger issue. Could it be that providentialism is a popular paradigm in the North American religious experience? Is it possible that many American Protestants have the sense that they are called by God to fulfill a special destiny? In response, Kater maintains that, according to his research among religious conservatives,⁷⁶ the notion of Divine interference in human affairs is not a foreign idea but a generally accepted reality. In fact, the providential paradigm may be a key concept for understanding the character of American religion. Such was the conclusion of Marty's text, Righteous Empire. In it he focuses on the idea of the American people having had a special sense of destiny

because they understood themselves to stand in a covenantal relationship with the Divine. Writing of these foundational covenants, Marty explains that in spite of some modern shifts in religious interests, they have remained unchanged.

In a complex society, certain people are recognized as the translators or transformers of symbols. In American religion the presidents of the United States, poets and prophets, evangelists and theologians, preachers and pamphleteers have played the role from time to time. It was their task to assure the nation that the moves it was making were in line with original covenants, covenants which made the old social contracts possible. At the same time, they served as Jeremiahs or judges whenever it seemed as if people moved too far beyond the confines of the covenant. They called people back.⁷⁷

Marty further points out that this awareness of being a covenantal people--this appreciation of destiny--has coalesced into two varieties.

Resort to the old covenants in American Protestantism gradually came to be in the hands of two clusters of interpreters. Both groups could with some reason claim elements of the old covenant for the original characters were themselves ambiguous. Jonathan Edwards stood at the head of the postmillennial [group] . . . Dwight L. Moody picked up the loose strands of premillennial theory and reversed the process. The Edwardseans, with countless variations, have been the more optimistic transformers of society, without neglecting the individual. The Moodyites have been the more pessimistic, concentrating on rescuing the individual and then turning him loose, if he will help to save other persons in the society.⁷⁸

Marty concludes that both the optimistic and pessimistic forms of millennialism have roots in the religious and cultural tradition of this continent. It is not surprising, therefore, that in every generation both

varieties "have been blessed with ingenious and dedicated men who could translate their symbols one more time."⁷⁹ It is the contention of this author that Lindsey is just such a dedicated spokesperson for pessimistic millennialism.

The argument of this portion of the research could be summarized in the following way. While certain segments within American society have understood themselves to be 'destined,'--to be in covenant with a transcendent force beyond themselves--and while the assumption of providence is an element of most religious experience, it is notoriously conspicuous in fundamentalist and dispensational circles. In these movements it has become a paradigm through which other religious concepts are interpreted. Moreover, as the history of American religious experience illustrates, there are particular periods when groups of believers and charismatic leaders are moved to assume optimistically that it is the providential destiny of the nation to be the medium through which the Kingdom of Heaven, foretold in Revelation, will be established. In dark times believers not infrequently have proclaimed that the country's destiny is to be the matrix out of which a righteous remnant will be saved and a temporary haven from which the true believers can evangelize the world before the imminent Tribulation arrives. Whether pessimistic or optimistic, this basic paradigm remains static. The nation and individuals within it are the chosen ones enjoying a unique providential status, either to be the home of the emerging Kingdom or

the community from which Noah's ark will set sail.

I Lindsey, being a proponent of the latter option, reasons that the world civilization must decline, decay and eventually become self-destructive before God will bring about the time of peace and justice. A question arises about the source of this pessimistic type of providentialism. There are certainly sociological reasons which would explain the popularity of such a vision. However, this research will focus on Lindsey's Theology and it will be argued that the roots of Lindsey's pessimistic providentialism are largely found in his doctrine of God.

3.6. Lindsey's Doctrine of God: -----

Using primarily Lindsey's writings, it will be possible to respond to the concern expressed above. The basic argument of the remainder of this chapter is that Lindsey's image of God as the all-powerful sovereign, judge and director of human history is the primary, though not exclusive, source of both the deterministic and the pessimistic tone of his providentialism. In this study of his Theology it will also be necessary to allude to his Christology and soteriology. Throughout this analysis the abiding question remains: Who is Lindsey's God? As one of his critics inquired, "Who is the God of Armageddon?"⁸⁰

Before examining Lindsey's image of God, it needs to be acknowledged for the sake of clarity that his doctrine of God, while it is the major factor, is not the only one

contributing to the pessimism of his providentialism. Certainly the Darbyite tradition supports this reading of the doctrine of providence, and in this regard Lindsey is not a unique proponent of dispensational ideas. In the comparison between his thought and that of W.E. Blackstone, (Appendix Six) it was ascertained that Lindsey is basically adapting the traditional arguments to the modern context, using the threat of nuclear war to give his predictions more empirical weight and credibility than had previously been possible. Hence, as an 'orthodox' dispensational writer, he quite naturally has a pessimistic view of the world stemming from the inherent anti-modernist inclinations of Darby's system. As awareness of the modern technologically-induced alienation increases, one would anticipate that the dispensational pessimism about this world would increase proportionally. Lindsey is, therefore, simply another writer in a long line of pessimistic dispensationalists, and his disparaging view of the world is more a condition of his religious heritage than an invention of his own thought. It should also be conceded that the skeptical, sometimes satirical responses to his 'prophetic' utterances⁸¹ serve to reinforce a persecution complex which feeds his pessimism. The more his dispensational account is rejected, the less promising does the human experiment appear, and the more fatalistic does the tone of Lindsey's theology become. Nevertheless, the orthodoxy of Lindsey's pessimistic providentialism does not detract from the question at hand.

On the contrary, given his continuity with tradition, his anti-world bias may be imputed to the dispensational movement in general and may not have a particular significance for him.

As was the case with Lindsey's doctrine of providence, some explanation is required concerning his articulation of the doctrine of God. It must be understood that Lindsey is not a systematic theologian; his doctrine of God must be gleaned from scattered and disjointed sources throughout his many books. In this respect Lindsey has even been disowned by his former colleagues, who deem him to have strayed from the strict scholastic heritage of Scofield and Chafer. In his defence it can be noted that Lindsey is addressing a large audience and writing to a wide readership. Consequently he employs a journalistic flair which does not take heed of the finer nuances of theological thought, preferring instead to concentrate upon impressionistic style and evangelical appeal. The one segment in all of Lindsey's writings which sets forth his doctrine of God in what might be considered an organized fashion is found in Lindsey's most systematic book, The Liberation of Planet Earth.⁸² Essentially this book is a discourse on the means by which individuals can experience liberation from sin and find true fellowship with God. The contrast between the title and the content of this text explains a great deal about Lindsey's conception of worldly liberation and how he conceives of

Divine liberating intervention in the life of the planet. Since the book is an explanation of substitutionary atonement focusing on the individual sinner, it appears that Lindsey equates the liberation of the planet with the personal salvation of human souls. Quite apart from the implications of the title, The Liberation of Planet Earth is an illuminating exposition of Lindsey's Christology, soteriology and, of course, his Theology. In the case of the latter, he introduces a discussion of the flawless character of God with a synopsis of God's attributes.

1. Sovereign. God has a will. By himself and with assistance from no one He makes decisions and policies and sets up principles. He has a right to do as he pleases. He always acts in accordance with the other attributes of His character, . . . He knows how to express his love without compromising His justice.
2. Righteous. God is absolute righteousness and perfection. It is impossible for Him to do or cause anything that is wrong.
3. Just. God is absolutely just. It's impossible for Him to do anything that's unfair either to Himself or to man.
4. Love. God is perfect infinite love. It is given freely and without any considerations to the loveliness or merit of the object.
5. Eternal life. There has never been a time when God did not exist and there will never be a time when He ceases to exist.
6. Omniscient. God possesses all the knowledge there is to have.
7. Omnipresent. God is infinitely and everywhere personally present through all of time and space.
8. Omnipotent. God is all powerful having more than enough strength to do the sum total of all things.
9. Immutable. God never changes in His nature of attributes.
10. Veracity. God is absolute truth.⁸³

Judging by the portrayal of God throughout Lindsey's books, some of these ten attributes are more significant

than others. The present analysis will confine itself to the consideration of three attributes of God which appear to be substantive within Lindsey's dispensationalism: God's omnipotence, God's sovereignty over history and God's role as judge of sin. Underlying these three conceptions is a fourth characteristic of the Divine which can hardly be ignored in Lindsey's writings--the conspicuously monarchian quality of his image of God.

3.6.1. Divine Omnipotence:

Among the ten attributes which Lindsey imputes to God, he employs the adjective of power most frequently. Defining omnipotence as "enough strength to do the sum total of all things" Lindsey seems to associate Divine power with physical strength or the capacity to 'get things done' rather than seeing it as a quality of 'being.' In this respect Divine omnipotence is manifest in the manipulative might which moves empires and shapes world events. This is consistent with--perhaps even the origin of--his perception of providence as the force of cosmic manipulation.

This power or strength of God is exhibited in numerous ways, but in Lindsey's publications it is most obvious when God confronts the work of Satan in the world. Even though the devil has some temporal power, the omnipotent God is always the victor of the struggle between the forces of light and darkness.⁸⁴ In fact Lindsey claims that

God could actually destroy Satan at any time but allows the devil to survive as a means of testing and instructing believers. When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness this dynamic was at work.

Satan would have done anything to get Jesus to step outside the Father's will and use His own divinity to meet his needs. Jesus flatly rejected Satan's offer and allowed the Father to sustain Him through the Holy Spirit. One reason he did this was so that you and I might have a pattern to follow and might know what a great and powerful God we have available to meet our every need.⁸⁵

Besides his reference to omnipotence in connection with the struggle against evil forces, Lindsey refers to Divine omnipotence when speaking of the progression of dispensations⁸⁶ and the great destruction of the Tribulation period.⁸⁷ In all of these instances God's power is understood to be Divine action which controls world events, overpowers obstacles and bends history towards the fulfillment of the providential plan.

As was illustrated above in the explanation of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness, God's power works most effectively through people who subjugate their own will to God's. Taking a cue from Paul, Lindsey professes that God's strength is 'made perfect' when the human creature recognizes its utter hopelessness in meriting grace.⁸⁸

God's power is set free to work without hindrance through the one who realizes that he is too weak in his human ability to accomplish God's will.⁸⁹

Once the believer relies upon God as the source and strength

of all righteous and truthful living, then Divine power can work through his or her life. Lindsey claims:

We begin to realize that we can do all that God calls us to do because our faith in Him releases His power to accomplish it.⁹⁰

When God's power is allowed to be the force of a person's life, it can become his or her very sustenance. This is especially true of the people who live in the 'terminal generation.' According to Lindsey, God's power and strength intertwine with the endeavours of the believer like the strands of a rope.⁹¹ It is only by such a "life line" that anyone can survive the 'perilous waters' of trial and persecution which face the 'true' Christians in the days ahead.⁹²

Divine omnipotence is not only strength to the weak as the times of Tribulation approach, it is also the force which can set the believer free from the "depression and despair" which arise in daily living. Lindsey relies upon his nautical background to illustrate how God's power operates to alleviate anxiety.

Our lives can become as embedded in the muck of depression and despair as that barge. If that happens human efforts are useless. Only the hope inspired by the promises of the Bible--which are backed by the irrepressible strength of God's power--can pull us loose. When we surface and are free, the atmosphere has new motivation, peace and confidence.⁹³

Although Divine power can and does transform world events, it is instructive to note that Lindsey seems to

focus his discussion of omnipotence on its presence in the personal life of believers. In this respect it is active as the means of promoting conversion and sustaining belief and trust in Jesus. It is, perhaps, this individualized orientation which Lindsey imputes to Divine omnipotence that leads him to emphasize world evangelism as being the chief goal of providence. Since God's power is focused on individuals, God's primary purpose must be their conversion and salvation.

Lindsey's persistent usage of the adjective 'powerful' to describe the Divine Being actually assumes a second, more pivotal attribute of his Theology, that of God's sovereignty over history.

3.6.2. God as Sovereign of Human History:

In the first section of this chapter it was surmised that dispensationalism is contingent upon the belief in providence as the power which is active in human history, directing all events and manipulating all circumstances according to the Divine will and plan. Dispensational providentialism can only be maintained on the basis of an image of God who is the Lord of history. The fact that Divine sovereignty heads Lindsey's catalogue of God's attributes is an indication of its predominance in his thinking.

This sovereignty is, first and foremost, absolute. It

was demonstrated that dispensational theory presupposes that God's plan for history has not changed from the very beginning of time and that there is no force that can really challenge the Divine rule. Not Satan, nor the suffering of the condemned at the flood, nor the faithlessness of the people of Israel, nor their repentance could undermine God's sovereign rule over history.⁹⁴ Even the greatest power known to humanity, nuclear power, cannot subvert or alter the Divine agenda for the human experiment.⁹⁵

Divine sovereignty in human history, though it is absolute, is being challenged constantly by the devil. History is the battle ground in which these two opposing forces attempt to assert their rule. The latter is momentarily allowed to wreak havoc among God's creatures simply because they are unaware of how easily they could be free from Satan's power.⁹⁶ According to Lindsey, it is plain that any who accept the atoning work of Christ on the cross will receive all the Divine power necessary to resist the devil. Though this cosmic antithesis between Satan and the Almighty will continue up until the Tribulation, in the end God's sovereignty cannot be thwarted. Even now, Lindsey affirms, when God's power is working in the true believer, Satan is helpless.⁹⁷ Borrowing words taken from Paul's letter to the Romans,⁹⁸ Lindsey underlines God's sovereignty.

If God is for us who is against us? The very nature of the question implies that "whoever"

might be against us, they don't amount to anything because of the Almighty, sovereign God of the universe who is for us.⁹⁹

God is not only the Sovereign over human history but also over the whole universe and the very laws which govern the natural order. The extent of that sovereignty is manifest in Lindsey's discourse on the virgin birth.

It isn't his [Jesus'] birth which is questioned. That is quite normal. But it's the matter of how he was conceived which is disputed. . . . When you get right down to it, all life is a miracle. Sperm and ovum come into contact with each other constantly and yet life doesn't always result. If I believe in an all-powerful sovereign God, who can do anything He chooses, then it's no big thing to believe that He could give life to an ovum, in a woman's womb without the aid of a male sperm and He himself could uniquely be the child's father.¹⁰⁰

Quite naturally, Lindsey fashions his image of the Sovereign Lord of human history after the model of an absolute monarch who controls all events, who resists and eventually defeats any opposition to his rule and who is not bound even by his own laws.

There is little need to elaborate on the manner in which this image of God as the sovereign Lord of history informs Lindsey's providentialism. They are almost one and the same phenomenon. God could not work providentially to bring about the changing of the dispensations, the Rapture or the Tribulation, if God were not the real and only sovereign of human history. Lindsey's providentialism would be meaningless unless God

were the all-controlling Being which he describes.

It is difficult to determine which of the two doctrines, his providentialism or his image of God as the sovereign Lord, takes precedence in his theology. Given Lindsey's circular type of reasoning, as evidenced, for instance in The Late Great Planet Earth, the question may not be important. According to the thesis of that book, God is sovereign Lord because the Bible bears witness to that truth. God acts providentially in the world because God is the sovereign of human history. And because God is sovereign and has a providential plan for human history God insures that the biblical prophecies will occur as they are written. The fact that the prophecies are actually being fulfilled is proof of the veracity of the Bible and evidence of God's sovereignty.¹⁰¹ In a sentence, Lindsey argues that the Bible is true because God said as much and God can be trusted because that is what the Bible proclaims. The serious weakness of this circular argumentation is that doubt can not be entertained with respect to any of its propositions. Furthermore, there is no place in this rationalization for any serious reflection on its underlying assumptions. If one aspect is dubious, the entire configuration of dispensational faith is threatened. It is possibly for this reason that Lindsey and other dispensationalists hold so strongly to the image of the sovereign God. The God who is in complete control brooks no resistance and crushes all doubts. Such a deity, therefore,

corroborates the rigidity of fundamentalist thinking and believing.

As was the case with Divine omnipotence, Lindsey accentuates the sovereignty of God within the individual life. God wills to be the Ruler in every believer's heart. Even though God could obviously take charge unilaterally, Lindsey often urges his readers voluntarily to give God the control over their lives.

God wants you to decide who is master of your life. When you accept Jesus Christ, you receive eternal life and become a member of God's family. After that he urges you to present Him the title deed to your life, although He will not force you. But it does make sense to do it. After all who really would know better how to run you than the One who put you together atom by atom, molecule by molecule?¹⁰²

This rule of God is not intended to make the human being 'perfect.' Rather with God 'running' one's life one is better suited to the task of evangelism in preparation for the Rapture.

In none of Lindsey's writings is there any indication that God's sovereignty is altered or conditioned in any way. This is not surprising, since in Lindsey's synopsis God's ninth attribute is listed as "immutability." There is only one instance when the absolute and unchanging nature of God's sovereignty is qualified. In The Rapture, Lindsey does allow that God took a risk in creating humanity. But even the risk of creation was taken in full knowledge of the consequences and so that humanity could

respond in love to this creative act.¹⁰³ Apart from this risk, God is portrayed as a Being free of feelings, pain, regret, abandonment or any weakness. On the contrary, according to Lindsey's writing, not even the cross is a source of disruption in the Divine rule. Using a format reminiscent of Anselm,¹⁰⁴ Lindsey claims that the cross was essentially the means by which God defeated human sin and consequently the devil,¹⁰⁵ not a central, yet perplexing, revelation of the Divine love so much as an object lesson in God's sovereignty. For the dispensationalist, the cross did not reveal any significant attribute of God, except divine, controlling power.

Since He is the supreme sovereign of the Universe, this in no way tainted His deity. God could take on any form He wanted to and it wouldn't have affected who he intrinsically was.¹⁰⁶

A further explication of Lindsey's Christology will offer a bridge to the next attribute of God which is central to Lindsey's pessimistic providentialism, i.e., the judgment and wrath of God.

3.6.3. The Wrathful God as Judge of Sin:

Lindsey depicts the cross in the tradition of a theology of glory. In this sense he is not unique in wanting to protect the Creator God from the suffering of creation. Much like the adherents of the school of Alexandria in the patristic period, he accentuates the divine over against the human when describing God's Christological presence in the world. While retaining the humanity of Jesus in theory,

in practice he seems to dwell so exclusively upon God's transcendence as effectively to eliminate any appreciation of God's immanence. The incarnation is primarily the event through which God's triumphant sovereignty over human sin is displayed and not the symbol of Divine involvement with human suffering. Nor does Lindsey indicate any appreciation of the cross as a "stumbling block" to the religious as it criticizes pretentious piety or "foolishness" to the wise as it refutes moralistic self-righteous thinking. For Lindsey the cross is primarily the occasion through which God punished human sin. Consequently God is not personally involved in, nor is God's sovereignty modified by, Christ's pain and humiliation. Conversely, Jesus suffers the punishment of God's wrath against sin, whereas the notion of estrangement or abandonment from God¹⁰⁷ is not important. In this respect, Lindsey explains the cry of abandonment from the cross as a prophetic utterance, the purpose of which is to teach believers about the mystery of God's providential plan.¹⁰⁸

The focus of Lindsey's soteriology is, in short, the judgment of God. The image of Jesus on the cross is portrayed as the supreme event in which "the poured out fury of a holy God" fell on Jesus "like an atomic blast"¹⁰⁹ as a punishment for the sin of humanity. Christ brings salvation by suffering the wrath of a righteously angry God. It is, therefore, through Lindsey's atonement theory that the importance of this third attribute of God as

judge becomes discernible.

By declaring that the cross is "the central message of the Gospel"¹¹⁰ and that "it's what Christ did there that makes reconciliation with God possible,"¹¹¹ Lindsey develops a substitutionary theory of the atonement. In The Liberation of Planet Earth, he appears to begin, as Anselm did, with the supreme holiness of God and the affront to this holiness caused by sin. Referring to the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, he outlines the impossibility of achieving fellowship with God on account of this sin.

The Law of God, which is summarized in the 10 commandments and the Sermon on the Mount expresses the overwhelming purity of God's holy character. All the laws that God has ever given to men tell us what we'd have to be like if we were to try to approach God on the basis of our own merit. . . . we could keep every single point of the law and yet stumble in just one small area and that would be enough to disqualify us from enjoying fellowship with God . . . What a commentary on the magnitude of God's holiness.¹¹²

The weight of human sin and the impossibility of humanity making amends for this affront to the holiness of God leads Lindsey to conclude that

there is no possible way to achieve right standing with God by our own human efforts. The standard is too tough. There has to be some divine intervention by which man has supranaturally credited to him God's own righteousness.¹¹³

Holding to the reasoning of substitutionary atonement theory, Lindsey alleges that human beings could not be declared righteous by Divine fiat. That would be a

circumvention of God's justice. If humanity can not become divine, the Divine must become human and in this manner God's justice is not superseded by God's love.

For a Holy God who had an unquenchable love for man and a divine necessity to vindicate his justice the only solution was to leave the glory of heaven, take on flesh and blood and enter the human race.¹¹⁴

Lindsey follows the classical argument about the loving yet holy God whose justice must be vindicated, but when he expands upon the atoning work of Christ on the cross he departs from the medieval theologian and accentuates the anger of God as opposed to Divine love. In contrast to the notion that the death of the innocent man, Jesus, builds up a store of merit which God imputes to the sinful believers, Lindsey depicts Jesus as the victim of Divine wrath who is being punished for our sin. Jesus is the target of God's anger because who else

could qualify to step in as a substitute and take the compounded wrath of God against all sin that would ever be committed?¹¹⁵

Instead of depicting Jesus as the sacrificial lamb, Lindsey portrays him as a scapegoat. Thus, at the heart of Lindsey's atonement theory lies the image of a determined and wrath-filled Deity who must punish Christ in holy anger against all sin.

God, as the sovereign and righteous judge of the universe, must direct his wrath against sin wherever it is found.¹¹⁵

In The Late Great Planet Earth, Lindsey defends this understanding of God through his interpretation of the

fifty-third chapter of Isaiah: "Surely he has born our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities."¹¹⁶

Lindsey is obviously not the first dispensationalist, nor the first writer of the Reformed tradition, to make this subtle shift from Jesus as sacrificial lamb to Jesus as scapegoat.¹¹⁷ The Niagara creed (Appendix Four) makes a similar claim in its sixth article.¹¹⁸ Even though Lindsey may wish to portray God as the loving Sovereign, nevertheless the image which dominates his atonement theory is that of a God who is a wrathful, punishing Judge.

Lindsey's predisposition to the God of judgment is comprehensible in the light of his antithetical reasoning and its traditional flesh/spirit dichotomy. In this dualism the flesh is to be endured and kept in check because it "is in rebellion against God" and "is self-centered and wants its own way."¹¹⁹ Believers are bound by 'the flesh' until the Rapture, when they will be freed and given their spiritual bodies. Given his description of the evils of the flesh, it is understandable that he believes the most heinous sins are sexual or sensual in nature,¹²⁰ and that he prefers the image of a spiritual, righteous Judge rather than a God of the impure and unclean.

In Lindsey's writing the inherent dualism of flesh and

spirit is a microcosm of the great cosmic dichotomy, the struggle between Satan and God which has been waged since Adam and Eve. Lindsey portrays this greater dualism by speaking of two "fatherhoods of humanity." Satan is the father of the earthly people who are enslaved by their sin while God is the Father of a heavenly band of believers who are free because they "fear the Lord."¹²¹ But even in the role as the spiritual heavenly 'Father,' God is still a Great Judge.

Another instance of the Almighty as an angry Judge is found in Lindsey's depiction of God as central actor in the Great Tribulation. The church is taken out of the world before the Tribulation so that God's wrath can fall with impunity upon the unbelievers.¹²² God as Great Judge becomes the paradigmatic image which typifies Lindsey's eschatological predictions. In the final scene the Judge of all time condemns Satan, the unbelievers, the beast and the Anti-christ. Here is unmitigated punishment and everlasting judgment sealed by the lake of fire.

Where does this conception of the divine Being originate? It could be a product of Lindsey's common-sense reading of the Bible since there are numerous textual references to the angry, jealous, vengeful God who is, above all, to be feared.¹²³ Lindsey may simply have read the Bible at face value and patterned his God accordingly. There is also the possibility that the wrathful God is a

product of the revivalist tradition which insisted upon God's majesty and holiness. Moreover, Lindsey stands in a long line of world-disparaging Christian thinkers who, like the docetists, so interpret the paradox of the incarnation effectively to eliminate Christ's humanity and compassion, while dwelling on his detached and judging divinity. In evangelical settings the notion of an angry Deity was more than a fine point of Christological debate, being primarily an effective homiletical device which incited listeners to convert. For this more practical reason it may commend itself to Lindsey. Finally, the image of the Judge can be seen as being a derivative of the first two attributes which Lindsey assigns to God's nature. How could any God who is so far above human frailty, who controls the universe, be anything but wrathful when faced with the impertinence of human sin?

Whatever its source, Lindsey's image of the detached, wrathful and judging God lends a decidedly pessimistic flavour to his perspective on the world and his assumptions regarding divine intervention in it. In comparison with God's purity and majesty, the earth does not appear to be capable nor even worthy of salvation.

3.6.4. Lindsey's Monarchianism:

From the vocabulary employed in many citations of Lindsey's work it is apparent that his image of God is a very masculine one. Given the date of publication of his

earliest writings this is not surprising. Most religious authors of that era were not sensitive to exclusive language. But an attentive reading of his description of God reveals an implicit monarchianism within his Theology which would mitigate against an inclusive image of God, even if he had been receptive to changing his nomenclature. God as male is intrinsic to his patriarchal and hierarchical portrait of the Divine Being. The hierarchical nature of Lindsey's monarchianism can be perceived at various levels in his writings. It is evident both in his doctrine of the Trinity and when he outlines the basic dispensational theories surrounding the coming Kingdom. An exploration of these two areas will deepen the analysis of Lindsey's image of God.

Though he professes belief in the doctrine of the Trinity,¹²⁴ it is not very evident as a concept in Lindsey's texts. He mentions the Trinity several times but he uses a trinitarian formula only twice.¹²⁵ In each of these examples Lindsey's concept of the Trinity is reasonably orthodox.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, there is an implicit subordinationism in his description of the relationship between God the 'Father' and God the 'Son.' For instance, in The Liberation of Planet Earth Lindsey affirms that God is the 'Father' of Jesus' humanity¹²⁷ and that Jesus is subordinate to the 'Father.' In his humanity Jesus is subject to the 'Father' because the 'Father' is greater than his humanity.¹²⁸ This

hierarchical relationship between God the Parent and the human being Jesus is apparent also in Lindsey's commentary of the book of Revelation. In that text he portrays God as the loving 'Father' who controls and heals the suffering son, Jesus, after the crucifixion.¹²⁹

In the same commentary Lindsey distinguishes between God the Creator who is sitting on the throne in "glowing radiance and flawless perfection"¹³⁰ and Jesus Christ who seems strangely passive. According to Lindsey's reading of the book, it is God the Father who is actively working to establish the New Kingdom while Jesus, characteristically subordinate to God, only appears at the end of the Great Tribulation when he is given the title deed to the Kingdom of Earth.¹³¹ Up until this point God the 'Father' is the central focus of the unfolding events of the 'final days.'

Lindsey's tendency to accentuate the priority of the Kingly Father God and to blur the real distinctiveness of the other two members of the Trinity becomes explicit in his dispensational theories. Jesus Christ may be a dimension of the Trinity, but God, the Creator-Parent, is the Primary Being who makes the successive covenants of the seven dispensations. God is portrayed as the heavenly Monarch and the Great King above all kings in each succeeding age,¹³² while Jesus Christ appears only at the termination of the fifth dispensation as God's 'Plan B.' The picture of Christ the Redeemer and Saviour fades into the

background as the 'Father' moves through another dispensation. The Holy Spirit, as the sustainer of faith and restorer of trust, is rarely mentioned since most of Lindsey's writing is concentrated on the actions of the God who is bringing this age to a close in preparation for the millennium.

Bolstering this hierarchical tendency in Lindsey's monarchian image of God is the inherent modalism of the theory of progressive dispensations. God the Creator is active in the first five dispensations and Jesus appears for a brief moment at the end of the fifth. The Holy Spirit is most evident in the present dispensation of grace, while God, the Creator-Judge, is prominent in the time of the Tribulation, and Jesus returns to prominence in the final stages of the dispensation of the Kingdom. But unlike the classical expression of Sabellius, dispensationalism actually proposes a slightly altered or 'interrupted' form of modalism since in the final stage of human history God is active in all three modes.

Essentially, if an antecedent to Lindsey's ideas is evident in the history of Christian thought, there is some merit in comparing his Theology to that of the early Christian gnostics. Like the Arian variety, Lindsey's Theology implicitly subordinates the Son to the Creator God. Similarly it favours a dualistic cosmology and bases the assurance of salvation upon the acquisition of certain

secret mysteries.

The question of Lindsey's identity as docetic, gnostic or modalistic is not a very important issue. Neither does the label of heretical, which Barr is quick to impose on dispensational doctrines,¹³³ resolve the investigation into Lindsey's understanding of God. It is more relevant to recognize that, through the docetic, gnostic, monarchian and modalistic tendencies in Lindsey's Theology, God is distanced from the suffering and unclean world as The Transcendent Word of Judgement.

3.7. Summary Observations:

When taken together, the dimensions of Lindsey's Theology indicate that he conceives of a divine Being whose power and holiness overshadow any sense of compassion and forgiveness. Lindsey's God is the eternal King who rules with great authority and who is distant from creation and removed even from the work and person of Jesus Christ. In a spirit similar to that of docetism, this Deity is all transcendence and only appears to be immanent within creation.

Who is Lindsey's God? In response to that question, the following generalization may be ventured: this deity has affinity with the transcendent God of neo-orthodoxy who, far from accommodating to the values and principles of modern culture, pronounces a Divine 'No' of judgment against pretentiousness of postmillennial optimism. However,

although Lindsey's doctrine of God may incline towards the transcendence of neo-orthodoxy, it lacks the critical nuance of thought which distinguishes that theology. One cannot imagine that Lindsey's Theology could achieve the subtlety or compassion captured in Barth's The Humanity of God. Even though dispensational scholastics are drawn to neo-orthodoxy, Lindsey's description of God in The Late Great Planet Earth is too one-dimensional to be the God of crisis theology.

Another response to the question of the identity of Lindsey's Deity may be to argue that this God is conditioned by the American religious context. In this respect Lindsey's Theology may be the product of New England Puritanism. God is a hard, demanding Being who watches and controls all, passing rigid judgment and seeking to limit human community and its impulses. In another vein, and cognizant of the alienation of the modern society, Lindsey's puritanical image of God may be a natural response to anxiety and frustration. Hence, the dispensational God is a Ruler who appeals to a people who look for absolutes because of their own fear of vulnerability and powerlessness.¹³⁴ The social passion for unequivocal power is certainly one essential element which influences Lindsey's doctrinal reasoning

While these explanations are helpful, there is yet another, in my opinion, more significant manner of depicting

Lindsey's Theology. Given the transparent and supramundane quality of his Theology it seems most appropriate to identify Lindsey's doctrine of God with that one described in the tradition of the theologia gloriae which, as Martin Luther explained, "looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened."¹³⁵ To be even more precise, the providentialism of Lindsey's theological system reduces his image of God to an exaggeration or an apocalyptic reductio ad absurdum of the Theology of glory. This God of triumph who awaits Armageddon is the Great Being embroiled in Apocalyptic struggles, waging the cosmic battles of history. Not overtly concerned with the present pain of creation, Lindsey's God is therefore free from the encumbrances of any doctrine which might cause doubt or instill uncertainty as the final conflict approaches. There is neither mystery nor obscurity in this God, such dimensions having been discarded as inconsequential in the light of the coming Rapture and Tribulation. To appear equal to the challenge of the final battle Lindsey depicts his God as One who is all power, might and control.

It could be argued that the apocalyptic portrayal of the Divine which emerges out of Lindsey's theology is a form of idolatry in which the deity is reified into the single-minded and unmoving object of worship, being a projection of human inadequacy, hatred and insecurity.¹³⁶ Caught in the momentum of its own apocalyptic visions, the Armageddon God

requires the world's sacrifice as the condition of salvation.

Though such an accusation may seem to be a reasonable psychological explanation of Lindsey's apocalyptic preoccupations, it does not further the investigation of how his providentialism and his particular understanding of God interact to produce his dispensational eschatology. It is through such an exploration of the relationship between these two facets of Lindsey's system of thought that his concept of hope will be evaluated. Therefore, the following chapter will address the question of how Lindsey's doctrine of God and his providentialism combine to create his premillennial eschatology.

Chapter Four: Hal Lindsey's Eschatology

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This kind of Christian eschatology is unsettling to most Jews and to a great many Christians for it reflects an other-worldly escapism and a dualistic cosmology that anticipates, with pious rapture, the final violent denouement between the forces of Good and Evil.

Yehezkel Landau¹

4.1. Introduction: The Quest for a Comprehensible Tomorrow:

In the first chapter of The Late Great Planet Earth, Hal Lindsey explains that "people have been obsessed with the desire to know what is going to happen in the future."² He responds to this perceived trend in society with a double message. On the one hand he goes to considerable lengths to discount what he considers to be the crass, commercial "trade in the future"³ represented by such movements as astrology, soothsayers and E.S.P. These systems, Lindsey suggests, pretend to have knowledge of tomorrow's events, but they are actually misguided and without authority. They may even be agents of the devil, albeit unwittingly.

I am convinced that the vast majority of people today, even those directly involved in ESP, astrology, the occult and various forms of Eastern religions, do not realize with whom they are dealing.⁴

The corollary of Lindsey's misgivings about secular apocalyptic ideas is his belief in Bible prophecy. In contrast to the purveyors of treacherous and erroneous predictions, Lindsey commends to his audience the prophetic

message of the Bible as authoritative and trustworthy.

The Bible makes fantastic claims but these claims are no more startling than those of present day astrologers, prophets and seers. Furthermore the claims of the Bible have a greater basis in historical evidence and fact.⁵

It is interesting, if not ironic, to note that even though Lindsey condemns the secular obsession with soothsayers and other oracular visions of the "unknown and unseen,"⁶ he is the one American writer who has gained the greatest notoriety from the apocalyptic mood of the last few decades. In this regard, one of his critics sarcastically reports that "seldom has a prophet been accorded such honor, or rather sales, in his own land."⁷ Whether through sales or by honor due his ideas, it is the opinion of Weber that Lindsey has been a key force in the burgeoning interest in eschatology themes which is presently manifesting itself.⁸

Quite apart from the question of who profits, it is obvious that Lindsey's premillennial eschatological vision is not simply a timely invention devised to attract a wide readership. On the contrary, his eschatology is the central theory by which his dispensational writings are directed and from which his zeal for evangelism emanates. In this respect, his eschatological concern overshadows his assault on liberalism, communism and secular humanism, and it overwhelms his criticism of the traditional institutional churches. In this chapter it will be suggested that his

eschatological concepts strongly influence, if not control, his other theological ideas. Lindsey, himself, underscores the centrality of eschatology in the introduction of his first book.

This is a book about prophecy--Bible Prophecy. If you have no interest in the future, this isn't for you. . . . This is not a complex theological treatise but a direct account of the most thrilling optimistic view of what the future could hold for any individual.⁹

The Terminal Generation, The Rapture, There's a New World Coming, Combat Faith and The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon all contain similar introductory remarks oriented by an eschatological preoccupation.¹⁰

It has been observed that Lindsey's providentialism assures him that all of life's actions and events have a purpose or destiny which fit into the Divine design leading to Armageddon. Thus, like most Christian theologians his providentialism leads directly to a consideration of eschatology. But unlike many other scholars, Lindsey professes to be able to know the actual will of God, to penetrate the mystery of the Divine plan and to possess the knowledge of God's will for all eternity. Through a simplistic depiction of God and Divine providence, Lindsey produces a rather literalistic eschatological vision. His desire to articulate the exact purpose of this earthly existence and to discern precisely God's direction in the midst of "the large problems of the world"¹¹ produces what will be called (1) an underlying logic and (2) a concrete

configuration to his quest for eschatological meaning.

Before describing the logic and configuration of Lindsey's eschatology a brief reiteration of the reasons for its popularity will attest to its importance and relevance in an age of nuclear anxiety. It would not be an exaggeration to assert that the appeal of Lindsey's writings derives basically from its eschatology. That is to say, the attractive quality of dispensational thinking is the manner in which it assists people to come to grips with the frightening contingency of the future caused by the possibility of a nuclear holocaust. It begins by reassuring the reader that absolute assurance of everlasting life is possible even in the modern age.¹² Furthermore, the 'guaranteed' status of his vision extends past the present days into the future. The 'true' believer can be 'certain' about tomorrow in spite of the spectre of destruction embodied in nuclear weaponry. Adding to this assured hope, Lindsey proposes a credible scenario which reconstructs a semblance of order and divine intention out of seemingly unrelated and chaotic world catastrophes.¹³ This is the inference made by Keith Suter when he suggests that Lindsey's writings

appeal to readers who want a book which can somehow make sense of all the world's current confusing developments by putting them into a comprehensible pattern.¹⁴

Martin concurs with Suter, speculating that

Premillennial teaching is probably most attractive to those who feel that the world, or

at least their segment of it, is out of control, and can be brought to a good end only by concerted supernatural intervention.¹⁵

Martin intimates that, besides giving a pattern to chaos and order to confusion, dispensational eschatology corresponds with a vague desire to control, which is perhaps unconscious and inarticulate in a modern technological society. As was noted in Chapter Two, Douglas Frank proposes that the awareness of modern alienation and a commensurate need for a sense of control was one reason for the rise in popularity of several forms of religious fanaticism, including dispensationalism, at the turn of the century.¹⁶ According to Frank's reasoning, people of that epoch intuited that the liberal/scientific optimism liberated the future from its pre-modern presuppositions, making everything possible. The fundamentalists interpreted the modern world view as something which, in turning tomorrow into an unlimited possibility, rendered it meaningless and frightening. Unable to live with an open-ended future, some believers searched for a means of controlling it. Premillennial eschatology was one useful idea. While Frank was speaking of conditions at the beginning of this century, it could be speculated that this need to control is also evident at the century's conclusion. Whereas the people caught in the fundamentalist controversies of 1900-1925 were struggling against a pretentiousness that claimed the future is a progressive potentiality, the dispensationalists in the nuclear age employ their

eschatological schemes as a response to the very absence of tomorrow or, as Robert Lifton prefers to say, to the threat of "radical futurelessness."¹⁷

John Mudler, in a review of The Terminal Generation, states that, even though Lindsey's work is of "grade eight eloquence," dispensational eschatology has "unquestionably tapped the pervasive apocalyptic mood in America."¹⁸ In Mudler's opinion, Lindsey's ideas have received favour because Christians have come to realize that the future is not an open-ended, continual progress upward and that some limitations on the assumed potentiality of tomorrow must be established.¹⁹

The popularity of dispensational eschatology is explained in other ways. For some Christians the adherence to premillennial eschatology was part of their inherited Christian tradition. Martin writes:

To many however an apocalyptic outlook is simply part of the package they have inherited and adherence is less a matter of alienation or attraction than of received tradition and perceived truth. If the bible says these things shall come to pass, they shall come to pass whether or not the prospect pleases. And if current events seem to offer tangible supporting evidence then faith is strengthened and hope increased.²⁰

Weber contends that another reason Lindsey's eschatology is well received is its accessibility to the untutored lay person. No longer is eschatology the pursuit of the few distant scholars or religious mystics. Now it "has reached cult status in American society."²¹ Anyone

with a Bible and the courage to read its common meaning can fathom the mystery of the future.²²

Given these explanatory notes it can be asked: How does Lindsey's understanding of providence and his doctrine of God interact with his eschatology? We have proposed that Lindsey's doctrine of providence is actually one variety of providentialism which is the predominant mood of American religious life. It was further stated that his doctrine of God, in an unintentional manner, lends his providentialism a pessimistic character so far as human civilization is concerned. Proceeding from these assumptions, the following analysis of Lindsey's eschatology is divided into two segments. In the first place, the depth of the deterministic character of his eschatology will be explored in the light of his "high" image of God. Secondly, the extent of a Manichean predisposition within his eschatological scenarios will be outlined.

4.2. Lindsey's Premillennial Eschatology: -----

Premillennial eschatology has a long history predating the work of John Nelson Darby. In fairness to other premillennialists who disassociate themselves from dispensationalism, it should be understood that Lindsey's eschatology is only one type within the premillennial approach to the eschaton.²³

Lindsey's eschatology is labelled by one author as an

"inaugurated eschatology,"²⁴ meaning that it posits that the eschaton has been inaugurated but not yet realized. Though this is an interesting suggestion, it is perhaps more explicit to speak of Lindsey's eschatological 'logic' and 'configuration.' The logic of Lindsey's eschatology refers to its underlying rationale while the configuration pertains to the concrete explanation of how this logic is incarnated in current world events. An explanation of these two aspects of his eschatology will serve as the basis on which the deterministic and Manichean dimensions of his thought can be deciphered.

4.2.1. The Logic of Dispensational Eschatology:

Allusions to what is being called dispensational eschatological 'logic' have been made several times during this dissertation. It is implicit in the theory of historical dispensations. At the beginning of each dispensation God makes a covenant and humanity subsequently breaks the covenant. In response to that sin, God punishes humanity and inaugurates a new dispensation. The eschatological vision for the present generation is no different. Human faithlessness will again lead to Divine punishment, resulting in the destruction of the world's civilization. The basic eschatological logic implicit in this theory is simple. The moral disorder and spiritual decadence must increase and culminate in destruction before proper order and righteousness can be established. Tom Sine summarizes this logic in an article

entitled "Bringing down the Final Curtain".

The teaching strongly implies that the world is in such bad shape that it can only get continually worse until Christ comes.²⁵

Essentially Lindsey is affirming that the calamities of the present times are actually portents of the 'good news' of the gospel. This logic leads to a perverse understanding of Christian hope which watches in 'rapt' expectation as the disasters of the world multiply. Lindsey's book The Rapture offers a good example of his eschatological logic.

Few people today doubt that history is moving toward some sort of climatic catastrophe. . . . Of far greater significance is the fact that all the predicted signs that set up the final fateful period immediately preceding the second coming of Christ are now before us.²⁶

The destruction of the world is, of course, troubling even to those who will escape it through the Rapture. Lindsey admits:

It breaks my heart as I daily pour over world events and see how rapidly the world as we know it is moving toward a catastrophic end.²⁷

Nevertheless, in the last paragraphs of the book Lindsey illustrates the logic of his eschatology while explaining the rationale for his hope. After citing a long list of events which foretell the "catastrophic end," Lindsey alleges:

To the untrained eye this may sound like unrelated bad news. But to the student of prophecy, it all fits into a precise pattern that was forecast long ago. This pattern clearly shows us that the Lord's coming for the church is very near. . . . Although I grieve over the lost world that is headed towards catastrophe, the hope of the

Rapture keeps me from despair in the midst of ever worsening world conditions.

The one who knows that Jesus Christ is in his heart and has the sure hope of the Lord's coming for him before the Tribulation is the only one who can face today's news and honestly be optimistic. My prayer is that this book has helped you to have a certain and sure hope of the Lord's 'any moment' return to take you to His Father's house.²⁸

Is Lindsey's eschatological logic in keeping with the basic precepts of the Christian tradition? This is the central query to be raised with respect to Lindsey's dispensational visions. It must be admitted that the logic of 'new' life emerging out of decay and death is one key insight of the gospel record. In one respect, then, Lindsey is not departing from the traditional wisdom of the Christian religion, the wisdom of the cross²⁹ by which it is believed that the salvation of resurrection is possible only because of the crucifixion. This is the rhythm made manifest in the passion narrative. The death on the cross leads to the resurrection and the empty tomb.

Yet in spite of a certain superficial resonance with the basic pattern of Christian thought, there are several points where Lindsey's eschatological logic is seriously at variance with the orthodox understanding of the biblical message. In the first place the biblical record, especially the Book of Job, breaks the linear equation of suffering and salvation. Ultimate salvation is never a justification of immediate suffering and pain. Death, even if it precedes new life, is not to be hailed as good and right. The cross,

even while it is the entry into resurrection is not to be embraced. As Moltmann affirms, "The cross is not and can not be loved."³⁰ In this respect the human creature is never allowed to acquiesce in its confrontation with death by the rationalization that death is a prerequisite of new life.³¹ Furthermore, the capacity to bring new life out of death rests with the Creator. New life is a gift and not something to be presumed upon or possessed by the creature in the manner Lindsey's predictions seem to imply.³²

If dispensationalism claims that destruction is the necessary prerequisite for salvation, then does not Lindsey's eschatological logic appear to be a spiritual version of the twisted thinking of total war? This reasoning was articulated by a commander in Viet Nam who presumed to have the knowledge of when and how salvation from destruction was desirable. Surveying the communist occupation of a peasant village he was reported to have claimed that "in order to save it we'll have to destroy it."³³ Such thinking, while it may adhere to its own internal logic, is certainly foreign to the reasoning of the Judaeo-Christian heritage.

There is another way in which Lindsey's eschatological logic breaks from past tradition. The rhythm of death leading to new life is imputed to the created order within the overarching assurance of the ancient 'rainbow' covenant. While the earth or its creatures may appear predetermined to

be violent, and while suffering and chaos may give evidence of reigning forever, nevertheless the Judaeo-Christian faith professes to believe that God made a binding and eternal commitment to Noah and his descendants. The earth would never again be destroyed by a flood (Gen.9:11). By implication this covenant has been understood to extend God's injunction against any whole-scale destruction of creation as a means to resolving the problems of human sin. Moreover, the broad significance of Christ's crucifixion is that God would prefer to suffer humiliation and death Him/Herself rather than allow human beings to be destroyed by their own folly. Lindsey's logic undermines both the ultimacy of the rainbow covenant and that of the cross and posits that God's new life is accomplished through the annihilation of the very world God blessed, declared to be "very good" (Gen. 1:31) and for the love of which Christ died (John 3:16).

The insinuation of a 'logic' or pattern to history is not unique to Lindsey. Apocalyptic writers, prophets and saints have, as Carol Newsom explains, always attested to "an inner necessity or natural law which tends to shape free human actions into similar patterns."⁴³ The novelty of Lindsey's eschatological logic is not that he sees an inner design in creation but the extent to which he zealously applies that pattern to current events. This application is called the 'configuration' of his eschatology.

4.2.2. The Configuration of Lindsey's Eschatology:

To the basic logic of salvation by destruction, Lindsey adds a concise configuration of events which he perceives are immanent and which will lead to the coming Kingdom. This eschatological configuration is constant throughout his writings.³⁵ Since the Appendix Three outlines the precise details of that configuration, a brief summary will be sufficient here. There is the usual catalogue of world events, disasters and wars which indicates that the final days are actually approaching. Recent catastrophes are incorporated into the configuration of the events in such a way as to give further testimony to the veracity of his interpretation of biblical prophecy. In this configuration the same elements are present. Natural disasters are increasing. Decency and morality are declining. The temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem and Israel is threatened by the Russian empire. The European Economic Community (E.E.C.), which gains prominence in world affairs, is led by a charismatic leader who is revered by the world's population as a great Saviour. To obtain the great riches of the Dead Sea, and presumably because of its naturally atheistic belligerency, Russia invades Palestine and betrays the Arab states which had been its allies. The E.E.C. comes to Israel's aid and the armed forces of communist China march across the sub-continent to be part of the final battle. It is while these evils and injustices increase that the Rapture can be expected. Throughout this period of escalating violence, nuclear weapons will be used in a

limited way. Eventually the Eastern and Western world empires will face each other in battle in the Valley of Armageddon, a colossal conflict which incorporates the devastating effects of a massive nuclear conflagration. The only hope for a resolution of this genocidal confrontation is the personal return of Jesus Christ in Kingly glory. Upon defeating the forces of darkness, the new Kingdom, with its capital in Jerusalem, will be established and ruled by Christ. According to Lindsey's eschatological configuration, the Great Tribulation should be starting any time during or soon after 1988 since this represents the time of one generation after the establishment of the State of Israel.³⁶

While this configuration makes Lindsey's eschatological logic concrete and consistent, at the same time it undercuts the fear of specific calamities. Weber concludes that premillennialists have always used eschatological configurations of events to survive in a world which seems increasingly chaotic.

The war years also demonstrate how the premillennialists used their eschatological perspective to make sense out of the events of their time. Their prophetic program gave them a general superstructure on which to place events which seemed chaotic and meaningless to other people. By having a pre-existing script premillennialists were able to explain the events of their time and as dispensationalists understood so well, once a historical event was placed somewhere within God's eternal plan, it lost its ability to terrorize. That is why premillennialist could be so calm in the face of a dismal and catastrophic future.³⁷

Thus, the providential eschatological configuration has a very timely function. It provides a convenient plan within which to place threatening events and thereby to assert control and order over what appears to be contingent or terrorizing.

It is Lindsey's eschatological configuration of current events which is the most troublesome for those theologians who have reviewed his writing. It seems to transform Lindsey's biblical predictions into "sensationalism"³⁸ or "opportunism."³⁹ It is suggested that the biblical, apocalyptic spirit is mutated by Lindsey's configuration. When the mystery of a 'new world', portrayed in the book of Revelation, is identified with Lindsey's predictions, it is robbed of the inscrutable depth which has inspired spiritual humility for centuries. The predictable future becomes a banal possession of dispensational faith which narrowly concentrates on the fulfillment of this prediction as "the only thing that really matters"⁴⁰ to the exclusion of other theological and ethical concerns.

The logic and configuration in Lindsey's eschatology converge into a system of thought which has several predominant characteristics, chief among them being an obviously deterministic quality.

4.3. The Deterministic Flavour of Lindsey's Eschatology:

Relying upon Scofield's notes, Lindsey unequivocally states that God's providential plan for this earth is determined from the very beginning. Quoting Hebrews 1:2 Lindsey infers that God "planned and designed the various stages into which man's history would flow before time and space were set into operation."⁴¹ According to this interpretation of the biblical record, God has a "perfect time schedule for his program"⁴² which will not be altered by world events.⁴³

As has been indicated previously, the fundamentalist theological ethos does not easily lend itself to subtlety of expression. The tendency to base belief upon tautological arguments mitigates against flexibility in theological discourse. This aspect of fundamentalist theology quite naturally penetrates Lindsey's eschatology, as it does his biblical hermeneutics, and the result is a rigidly deterministic interpretation of the eschaton. If there is any shift throughout Lindsey's writings, it is towards more rigidity rather than less. This might be an example of Barr's theory of 'maximal conservatism,'⁴⁴ in which the drift of fundamentalist thinking is always towards the maximization of a conservative principle.

In the previous chapter the deterministic colouring of Lindsey's eschatology was shown to arise from his strong sense of destiny or what has been designated as his

'providentialism.' Lindsey is convinced that God has a sure destiny for each individual and for the whole community of true believers. Buttressing this strong sense of destiny is the interaction between his providentialism and his 'high' doctrine of God. The all-sovereign Deity would not and could not allow anything to happen by chance. To acknowledge the possibility of coincidence or chance would be tantamount to denying the existence of God. Therefore, everything must be pre-ordained and providentially guided.

The charge that Lindsey's eschatology is deterministic is made by many of his critics.⁴⁵ Perhaps the harshest criticism is voiced by Andrew Lang, who, calling it "divine determinism," suggests that Lindsey's eschatology portrays a God who "controls history" while human beings "are all actors in a script written by God and understood only by dispensationalists."⁴⁶ Lang claims that the deterministic quality of Lindsey's Theology turns God into the guarantor of the believer's salvation in the event of a nuclear war, and therefore Lang maintains that the Rapture becomes "God's guarantee that born-again Christians will survive the nuclear warfare of the end-time."⁴⁷ In effect, Lang continues, this deterministic eschatology is almost "a civil defence plan for the elect"⁴⁸ and Lindsey's eschatological configuration devolves into the religious equivalent of the military strategy known as "nuclear use theory."⁴⁹

Weber does not draw any political implications from

his assessment of the deterministic colouring of dispensational eschatology. Rather, he concludes that the predisposition of the movement to view past and current events as part of a predestined Divine program lends itself to ecclesiastical animosity. According to Weber, the dispensationalist overconfidence engendered by their faith in a 'fixed' plan of history leads to a stereotyping of other Christians as 'enemies of God' and an intolerance of those who do not agree with their position.⁵⁰

Newsom criticizes Lindsey's eschatology as a low form of theological discourse which has public delusion as its primary function.

The revival of a naive determinism in the sensational neo-apocalyptic of Hal Lindsey and others is enough to convince many people that apocalyptic represents the lowest ebb of theology that drugs an anxious and suffering people with visions of hope based on divine predestination.⁵¹

Offering an alternate explanation for the deterministic dimension of dispensationalism, Roy Harrisville, a Professor of New Testament Studies, proposes that the deterministic claims of Lindsey's eschatology are more the invention of Lindsey's egotism than serious biblical exposition of God's design for human history. Harrisville writes:

What emerges is not a lucid portrayal of God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ but the capricious judgment of a man intent on reading God's mind come hell or high water and from out of the daily newspaper.⁵²

It may be melodramatic to claim that this deterministic quality is a "civil defence plan for the elect" or "the capricious judgement" of an egotist or the theological attempt to "drug" the suffering. Nevertheless, Lindsey's eschatology does seem to diminish the importance of human existence on this planet by denying the basic freedom of the creature. In the final analysis everyone and everything is manipulated and restrained by God's sovereign control. In the light of the deterministic nature of his eschatology, it must be asked whether human existence has any significance at all outside of its role in the relentless march towards the Rapture and Tribulation. Lindsey's eschatology sweeps past both the eloquent and the mundane, the tragic and the heroic in human history, regarding as significant only those events which fit into the predetermined prophetic plan. He might appropriately be asked if there has been no human achievement worth saving or cherishing, since he discounts most of the profound thinkers of recent times as agents of the devil⁵³ and never mentions works of art or creative expressions of the human spirit. Moreover, since Lindsey dialogues with very few other organized systems of thought, he seems to imply that neither philosophical nor artistic insight is worthy of reflection. Apart from some historical and archaeological material found in A Prophetical Walk through the Holy Land, Harrisville's assessment is correct. Much of the "data" upon which Lindsey deliberates is taken from superficial sources like

newspapers.⁵⁴ Lindsey's interest in examining the human condition is narrowly focused by his eschatological vision. Ironically, the very fact of a fixed providential plan which Lindsey proposes as a means for human beings to secure great assurance and hope eventually belittles and marginalizes the whole human adventure. Far from being the medium through which divine love is made manifest, the human community appears to be the mere precondition for God's 'real' plan which waits for another world.

The irony of Lindsey's deterministic eschatology does not end with reduction in the significance of human life. The very presence of God is also rendered superfluous to the devolving Divine plan. This is the conclusion offered by Sine.

Ironically in this deterministic view of the future, not only can't the church make a difference, neither can God. This eschatology of despair unwittingly seems to lock God outside of history. . . . God is the impotent absentee landlord.⁵⁵

It would be appropriate to ask if Lindsey has not given voice to a twentieth century variety of deism in which God's sovereignty over human history is so exact and immutable that God's immanent presence is no longer necessary for the continuance of the created order. The time-table of the world's decline toward the eschaton never changes because the transcendent, powerful God effectively eliminates any possible opposition, and God is, in a manner of speaking, redundant. Furthermore, since the plan is so predetermined it appears that Lindsey's eschatology

effectively binds the sovereign God to the very providential plan that "He" designed. In a very real way, the Sovereign Lord of history is as controlled by the countdown to Armageddon as is humanity. This is the fundamental observation and critique of Lindsey's eschatology. He accentuates the absolute sovereignty of God to the detriment of Divine freedom, immanence and solidarity, and, when combined with the deterministic quality of dispensational eschatology, the result is that even the Transcendent God is subordinated to the providential plan.

Perhaps, this 'captivity of God' is the logical extension of the human anxiety about the future elaborated above. Eventually the human need to regulate the open-ended potentiality of creation evolves into the control of Transcendence.⁵⁶ It may also arise from the exaggerated anxiety of the nuclear age⁵⁷ in which the threat of futurelessness entices believers to bind their deity to a purpose above and beyond the unsettling chaos of this world. Whatever the source, the consequence of Lindsey's deterministic eschatology is that the Divine becomes a known quantity, a well managed entity whose dominion over history is "locked into" a specific train of events, the knowledge of which has been bequeathed to an 'enlightened' few.

Besides the disparagement of human culture and the apparent captivity of Transcendence, the deterministic

character of Lindsey's eschatology produces a disquieting disregard for the integrity of creation. The earth and all its God-given fruits are to be melted, blasted and literally obliterated. Their usefulness, beauty and life-sustaining properties are entirely dispensable in Lindsey's portrayal of the final days of the Tribulation. Referring to the seven vials of judgment described in Revelation, he reports:

As the clouds from the nuclear exchange begin to dissipate, holes in the ozone layer will let in deadly radiation, heating up the planet's surface until it becomes unbearably hot. This will be one of the worst judgments that man will experience, since there will be no water to drink to gain any relief. But the most startling thing about the whole chapter (of Revelation) is that men will go through all of this and still not repent.⁵⁸

This earth, which the God of Genesis calls "good", appears to be expendable in this eschatological vision. It is the stepping stone to a new world which is coming and, according to Lindsey, the preparation for that time and space is the most important activity of the 'true' Christian.⁵⁹

This anti-creation bias, which emerges out of the determinism of Lindsey's end-time scenario, leads directly to another questionable dimension of his eschatological thinking, i.e., its implicitly Manichean predisposition.

4.4. The Manichean Predisposition of Lindsey's Eschatology: -----

Douglas Hall has concluded that the Christian tradition has been, at best, "ambiguous" about life in this world.⁶⁰

This ambiguity has sometimes given way to a spiritual determination to escape the 'vale of tears' through meditation on the glorious new life which awaits the believer above or beyond earthly existence. Premillennial dispensationalism is, therefore, one in a relatively long history of Christian apocalyptic movements which confronted the distresses of the present life by praying and waiting for the next. But Robert Jewett, a scholar who has examined Hal Lindsey's writings, observes that Lindsey's dispensational eschatology breaks the anti-world pattern of older apocalyptic literature.

It is unprecedented because Christian apocalyptic schemes prior to the 1830's all taught that Christians would have to suffer for their faith.⁶¹

Jewett implies that it is the avoidance of suffering which marks the distinction between dispensational eschatology and earlier forms of apocalypticism. The temptation to escape the cares of this world, inherent in dispensational eschatology, relativizes the importance of this realm and fosters a basic dualism in Lindsey's eschatology between the present world and the "new" world to come. It is because of this dualism that it may be labeled Manichean.

To be explicit, there are two perspectives from which Lindsey's eschatology could be considered to have a Manichean predisposition. First of all, it manifests a consistent distrust of the things of the world, explaining that the ultimate realities are found in another world. Secondly, it offers an escape from this deceptive world into

the spiritual world above and beyond. These two aspects of Lindsey's eschatological dualism are mentioned by several authors. Sine confirms that "the emphasis of this movement has been the abandonment of God's earth in favor of a non-material heaven."⁶² Vanderwaal subscribes to the same conclusion.

. . . we must recognize this attitude for what it is, namely, a revolutionary escapism that flees the here-and-now, sees no more promises to cling to and awaits for the overthrow of all that is good and just.⁶³

Yehezkel Landau, in a revealing article about the connection between this end-time thinking and presidential politics, formulates the conclusive evaluation of Lindsey's Manichean eschatology and its concomitant escapism.

This kind of Christian eschatology is unsettling to most Jews and to a great many Christians for it reflects an other-worldly escapism and a dualistic cosmology that anticipates, with pious rapture, the final violent denouement between the forces of Good and Evil.⁶⁴

It is the concept of the Rapture which Robert Jewett identifies as the source of dispensational escapism and, therefore, of its Manichean predisposition.

The doctrine of the rapture introduces a highly appealing element of escapism into the modern form of a apocalyptic theology. True believers are promised that they will not have to experience the world wide destruction of an atomic holocaust because they will be raptured from their homes and automobiles before the tribulation commences.⁶⁵

Jewett argues that the debasement of this world and the promise of an escape to the next undercuts the sense of

human responsibility for this planet. Rather than calling people to work diligently uncovering injustices and nationalistic pride so as to avert such wrath, dispensationalism has tended to offer an other-worldly escape, a promise of safety in the next life.⁶⁶

While arguing that dispensational eschatology has a Manichean predisposition, it is not assumed that Lindsey believes the material world to be intrinsically evil. The poles of dispensational dualism are not exclusively tied to the traditional body-soul, flesh-spirit polarity. Though this is evident in Lindsey's thought, the real dualism is eschatological in nature. This decaying 'today' is compared to the bright 'tomorrow,' and the fate of this earth can hardly rival the glory of the world that is coming. At its mildest, this dualism fosters resentment at being bound to the 'here and now' and leads to pronouncements like that of a lay person and follower of Lindsey in Amarillo, Texas: "the world stinks."⁶⁷ At its worst, the eschatological Manicheanism turns the present suffering of the world into "heart-warming" evidence of Christ's coming victory. For example, Lindsey is filled with excitement and hope when he exclaims:

What a time for us to be alive! We can see the rulers, the powers, the world forces of this darkness, engulfing Planet Earth, but we can have Christ's authority, Christ's power to bring about the victory.⁶⁸

Something happens to hope when it is posited upon an increase in earthly catastrophes and directed solely towards

a 'real world' located in another time and space. Hope no longer confronts human despair, preferring to avoid it, or to pretend that it isn't real. When this dialogue is interrupted, hope is substantially weakened. Those who would discover authentic hope, according to Robert McAfee Brown, "are entitled to do so only if they have measured that which has the power to obscure hope, only if they have lived in the shadow of utter denial."⁶⁹ Hence, when hope is detached from denial it is reduced to a one-dimensional optimism. In this respect, Lindsey's understanding of hope, being divorced as it is from the doubts of faith, from the abandonment of the cross, is a "cheap" (Bonhoeffer) substitute for real hope.

In the final analysis, the Manichean disposition of Lindsey's eschatology leads to a rather strange reading of the gospel message. Lindsey fervently expects and hopefully awaits the nuclear conflict which will destroy most of the earth.⁷⁰ A hope which promotes a definite rejection of the world leads Landau, with facetious style but, nevertheless, serious intent, to reflect that "such a political theology boils down to this perverse parody of John 3:16. "God so loved the world that he sent it World War III."⁷¹

4.5. Conclusions:

The first mandate of this dissertation was to explore the nature of Lindsey's doctrines of providence and of God,

and to ascertain whether they interacted positively with his eschatology. This chapter has been a response to that objective. It has been illustrated that Lindsey's providentialism and 'high' doctrine of God result in the development of two substantial characteristics of his eschatology. Out of the 'logic' and 'configuration' of Lindsey's eschatology, which have their basis in his providentialism, there emerges a Manichean dualism in which the 'today' of earthly suffering is sacrificed to the 'tomorrow' of a supramundane Kingdom. Proceeding from this dualism is Lindsey's interpretation of hope, which becomes the expectation of ruination. Eventually his eschatology develops an escapist orientation which eschews any real dialogue with despair. In this respect it could be concluded that Lindsey's concept of hope has a superficial character, mistakenly equating the emotional feeling of hopefulness with the essence of authentic hope.

The key observation has been the recognition that when the deterministic quality of Lindsey's eschatology and his 'high' image of God as Sovereign Lord are combined with his providentialism, an eschatological vision evolves to which even God is finally bound. In other words Lindsey's eschatology eventually re-defines his Theology and his Christology.

What, then, can serious Christian thought offer in response to this eschatological vision? Does Lindsey's

premillennialism elicit a reaction from 'mainline' Protestant theology? Robert Jewett believes that, given the dangers which the nuclear era places upon all human life, there is a need for genuine dialogue between dispensationalist and liberal thinkers.

It is neither sufficient nor responsible to reject Lindsey's eschatology as nonsense and end the conversation at that point. Liberal theologians and mainline congregations need to enter this conversation, fully aware of the shortcomings of their own perspectives and respectful of the theological commitments of their conversation partners. There is a very real need for us to discover together what Jesus had in mind when he wept over his beloved Jerusalem, doomed by its apocalyptic blindness: "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!"⁷²

This author concurs with Jewett that there is indeed a need for such dialogue between mainline Protestant theologians and dispensationalists. For liberal Protestants the challenge is clear. Can they both hear the fundamentalist criticism of liberalism and at the same time develop their own responsible eschatology for the nuclear age?

Chapter Five: Dialogue with Dispensationalism: Insights on
an Articulation of Hope in the Nuclear Age
Gained from an Evaluation of Lindsey's
Eschatology

God's ways are just, right, wise but neither transparent nor immune to misunderstanding. There is an unfolding and a shrouding, a concealing with a disclosing, consoling as well as confusing.

Abraham Heschel¹

. . . the church has no business more pressing than the re-appropriation of its memory in its full power and authenticity. And this is true among liberals who are too chic to remember and conservatives who have overlaid the faith with all kinds of hedges that smack of scientism and enlightenment.

Walter Brueggemann²

5.1. Introduction:

When evaluating Lindsey's apocalypticism there is a quite natural, yet unfortunately premature, temptation to dismiss his dispensational system with its vision of the end-times, believing that there is nothing to be gained from his articulation of Christian hope. This inclination is further complicated by a tendency, typical of North American thought in general,³ to assume that one can always start afresh if 'older' or 'traditional' responses fail to enlighten the current predicaments of human existence. In the case of an eschatology adequate to the nuclear context, such an inclination suggests that one can begin de novo to formulate a theological framework employing 'new' definitions of the Divine, articulating 'new' conceptions of hope, and developing 'new' eschatological visions. All this

newness seeks to divorce itself from previous errors, such as those imputed to the apocalypticism of dispensationalism.⁴ But caution must be exercised in the light of the 'can-do' spirit of North American theology. To seek prematurely for a resolution or definitive conclusion to the theological conundrum posed by Lindsey's eschatology is to misjudge the depth of the problem.⁵ Hence, careful thought ought to be given to the significance of a few insights reflected either explicitly or implicitly in Lindsey's eschatology, and this chapter proposes to explore these insights.

Given this caveat, it appears reasonable and judicious that dialogue, not denunciation, should characterize any interaction with dispensationalism. While dialogue with dispensationalism is the dominant theme of this final chapter, it should not be construed (as much professed dialogue within denominational structures seems construed) as an attempt to reconcile irreconcilable positions. Such efforts habitually conclude in a compromise that represents the lowest common denominator to which all parties can give assent and by which no side will be governed. There is very little likelihood that a consensus could or even should be reached between dispensational eschatology and most other varieties of eschatology found in Protestant theology. Furthermore, to suggest a dialogue with dispensational thought is not to invite theological capitulation. While it cannot be ruled out, conversion of thought should not be the

intention of any serious encounter between premillennialist, amillennialist or postmillennialist thinking. Rather, a dialogue is proposed as a means by which each, in reflection on the divergent positions regarding Christian hope, might re-evaluate its own principles and struggles.

There are essentially two major observations to be made on the basis of an analysis of Hal Lindsey's dispensationalism which are valuable in any theological elaboration of an adequate eschatology for a nuclear age. The first derives from the one-dimensional quality of his providentialism and the second from the triumphalistic and docetic inclination of his Theology. An analysis of each of these insights, based on the observations made in previous sections of this dissertation, will constitute the dialogue with dispensationalism proposed in this chapter.

5.2. Lindsey's Providentialism and the need for a Dialectical Tension in Eschatology

Two aspects of Lindsey's providentialism merit recognition as useful correctives to both postmillennial and amillennial thought. The first concerns his interpretation of history, while the second involves his apocalyptic urgency. In either case, his providentialism proposes a Divine order within creation and a Divine choice of individuals, and it is with regard to the order and choice of his providentialism that these two aspects arise.

In the first place, Lindsey's interpretation of time and history counteracts a liberal, linear understanding of history which posits constant progress. According to the dispensational understanding, there is a repetitive order to history. Given the imminence and finality of the Divine judgement of human civilization portrayed by the configuration of his eschatology, it is evident that his interpretation of history does not allow for limitless growth or constant progress. On the contrary, his eschatology argues that time has a fixed limit. In keeping with the insights of dispensational anti-modernism, he senses that history is not an infinite, ever flowing stream, sweeping human capacity towards greater and nobler states of being. Hence, echoing the Hebraic roots of his belief,⁶ and basing his argument upon a dispensationalist reading of Genesis and Revelation, he maintains that time has a definite beginning and a very rapidly approaching end, both of which are controlled by God. In essence, Lindsey employs an apocalyptic conceptualization of history which, while not fully articulated, is nevertheless omnipresent through his writings. What might appear, upon superficial analysis, to be a linear understanding of history is, in reality, a circular or spiral interpretation. Although his dispensational understanding of history appears to have an affinity with the evolutionary theories of the nineteenth century, the deterministic dynamic of the Darbyite theory breaks any linear progression within time. As his providentialism

I indicates, there is certainly an order to history, but it is repetitive not evolutionary. In each dispensation human beings are simply repeating a pattern that has been established from before time. The flow of dispensations is progressive only inasmuch as the truth from one age is passed to another. Essentially, human beings never disrupt the prescribed eschatological logic embodied in the recurrence of God's covenant, human faithlessness, and the earth's destruction. Each dispensation is simply the enlargement of that pattern to a wider and wider community until the entire earth must suffer the consequences of God's final judgment.

Suspending criticism of this eschatological logic and concentrating on his theory of history, it is important to note that Lindsey departs from the assumption of limitless progress. Unlike the modern, linear view which posits an endless and continuous process of time,⁷ the dispensational spirit proclaims an end, a limit to time, and in this sense a limit to human capacities, to the human potential for effecting its own salvation and, therefore, to human pretense. Here is a provocative response to modernism and its assumption of evolutionary progress. To the culture's optimistic claim that time is endlessly evolving upwards, Lindsey's apocalypticism implies that no such progression is evident. Thus, in dispensationalism, albeit hidden and unorganized, is the declaration that history and progress are not identical. Lindsey's eschatology portrays God as the

limit to history, as the counter-balance to progress. Eternity is, therefore, time's limitation,⁸ its marked discontinuity and, in an existential sense, its profound meaning since it sets boundaries around human life that lend importance to the here and now. In Lindsey's system, Christian faith in God--who is the limit to human time--acts as the disruption of an evolutionary mentality and as the interruption of history.⁹ Thus, understood properly, his apocalyptic appreciation of time and history revitalizes both while rendering human existence more meaningful. According to Lindsey, every moment has an eternal significance since within each moment there is also the hint of an ending. The eternal is both a surprising, grace-filled potential in every temporal moment and an awesome, judging limit within each passing instant. It is from this perspective that human existence is revitalized and invested with unique value.

The divergence from a linear interpretation of history, in addition to its ontological significance, is a profoundly ethical insight. Inasmuch as time is limited, there is a moral imperative imputed to a life of faith because, given an apocalyptic sensitivity, any actions and decisions must be made in the light of the dwindling time available and judged against the new, moral order which is to be established by the eschaton. While Lindsey does not seek to apply his interpretation of history to the ethical sphere, it could be suggested that this aspect of his anti-

modernism has relevance for the elaboration of an eschatological basis for Christian ethics.¹⁰

Derived from Lindsey's understanding of history and motivated by the fear of eternal damnation, is a second aspect of his providentialism which deserves comment, i.e., its apocalyptic urgency. Evident in Lindsey's conviction concerning God's eternal plan and his periodic calls for conversion is the unrelenting imperative of faith. Given that "true belief," according to dispensational standards, makes the difference between eternal life and everlasting damnation, this urgency is not surprising. Moreover, recognizing that Lindsey's eschatology proclaims that those who have kept their faith pure will not only enjoy the fruits of heaven forever, but might also be freed from the pain of physical death, the compelling tone of his apocalypticism is quite understandable. Since Armageddon is imminent, there is no more urgent undertaking in human existence than the acceptance of one's Divinely-ordained place within the community of Rapture saints. One's eternal destiny awaits the simple act of conversion, and, given the proximity of the Rapture, a believer must waste no time in making such a momentous decision. While listing Lindsey's apocalyptic urgency as a commendable aspect of his providentialism, it must be noted that his passion is not praiseworthy simply because it is fervent. Passion for passion's sake is, of course, inappropriate. Nevertheless, there is a commendable and compelling spirit manifest in

his eschatological pronouncements. Faith is presented as an absolutely vital undertaking, one which implies the total commitment of a believer's life. Indifference to the gospel is dispelled and his apocalyptically-based urgency places the choice of faith in a compelling light. Capturing the apostolic spirit, which itself was influenced by apocalyptic expectations, Lindsey injects an ultimate and demanding quality into Christian faith.

The urgency of Lindsey's apocalypticism intersects the repressed anxiety of North America in our times. It appeals to segments of a society beset by fears of nuclear warfare and the escalation of the arms race, depressed by a pervasive sense of alienation due to specialization of work and frustrated by the bureaucratization of social structures.¹¹ In Lindsey's writings there is a word to ordinary people who sense that the present age is seriously debilitating and recognize they are powerless to effect any real change in this gradual decline.¹² Whether or not one discounts the Rapture doctrine, it cannot be denied that Lindsey has given expression to a "sense of ending," an awareness of the apocalyptic which is embodied in nuclear weaponry, the ever present menace of the arms race and the worsening of the earth's ecology. To those who feel powerless when confronted by the dangers of this age; to those who feel that previously accepted moral and political order is rapidly deteriorating, Lindsey offers a vital and impelling gospel. Over against what Ernst Bloch called the

West's "patronizing pluralistic boredom,"¹³ Lindsey proclaims a Christian message that leaves no room for quietism or indifference. An individual's faith is vital and decisive action is urgently needed.

These two aspects of Lindsey's providentialism point to an important observation regarding the articulation of an eschatology for the nuclear context. Eschatology must embody the sense of history's limitation and speak to the urgency of the present nuclear threat. But while there is much to commend Lindsey, it must also be recognized that he illustrates the dangers of an eschatology founded upon a one-dimensional or positivistic interpretation of providence. His providentialism eventually becomes deterministic because of its strident claims to know the will and purpose of God and to impose an unyielding order on the flux of historical events. The interpretation of a pattern or order which criticizes human pretense and the concept of limitless progress is helpful, but if it is unqualified by theological humility it devolves into an idolization or reification of God. The apocalyptic imperative, which is an essential dimension of authentic eschatological faith, becomes frantic and impulsive if it is not balanced by patience. No matter how important the apocalyptic urgency of faith may appear, it must be qualified by the declaration of God's forgiving grace. Otherwise, the decision of faith becomes a desperate grasping after personal righteousness.

Thus, Lindsey illustrates the problem of any eschatology which is not based upon a dialectical concept of providence. When human beings pretend to know the will and purpose of God, it is at that very moment that they in fact lose sight of the Divine Being. As Abraham Heschel points out,

God's ways are just, right, wise but neither transparent nor immune to misunderstanding. There is an unfolding and a shrouding, a concealing with a disclosing, consoling as well as confusing.¹⁴

While the pervasive threat of the nuclear age is great, it should not persuade Christian theology to adopt a more frantic or self-assured tone which attempts to predetermine God's actions and purpose. Too close an association between current events and Divine providence is surely misleading and pretentious. Hence, Lindsey illustrates the challenge for any eschatology written in the nuclear age. It is the predicament of responding authentically to an apocalyptic anxiety, to the sense of urgency, without disrupting the dialectical tension between the disclosure and hiddenness of Divine providence.

In general terms, then, the first insight regarding Lindsey's eschatology is the proclivity of dispensationalism to advance an undialectical interpretation of truth which equates faith with unflinching adherence to one dimension of a multi-faceted doctrine. Lindsey's eschatological urgency, his apocalyptic imperative, becomes desperate, fastening

upon each passing event as a portent of the immanent last days, retreating into a rigid posture which is informed less and less by apocalyptic expectancy and more and more by reactionary, psychological intransigence. Even though dispensationalists, like Lindsey, proclaim it often enough, it is difficult for apocalypticists to remember that the timing of the eschaton is God's affair, and any humanly specified designation of God's eschatological action is not only premature and pretentious but inherently idolatrous. Thus, while dispensationalists are correct (profoundly so) in their proclamation that the time will end, they fail to recognize that there is also wisdom in asserting that the designation of ways and means of that actual ending is not a matter for human speculation.¹⁵ Christian expectancy is always caught within the tension of the 'now' and the 'not yet' of the eschaton. This eschatological tension is one dimension of the broader tension or paradox of Christian faith, i.e., the tension to be in the world but not of it. To manifest an eschatological faith is to wait expectantly for the new world while at the same time existing as a citizen of earth, working patiently for its reform.¹⁶

This, then, is the first and fundamental point to be made regarding hope in the nuclear age. It must be informed by the dialectic between the 'now' and the 'not yet.' In the North American context an apocalyptic imperative about time and a concomitant sense of an ending are helpful correctives to what has been too heavy an emphasis on the

'not yet.'

5.3. Lindsey's Triumphalistic Theology and its Docetic Christology:

The second major observation arising out of an analysis of Lindsey's eschatology concerns his doctrine of God. As was noted in the previous chapter, his Theology is so triumphalistic that the image of God as a sovereign, angry Judge overshadows any notion of God as the loving, grace-giving Parent. To put the dynamics of Lindsey's Theology in another fashion, divine transcendence overpowers immanence. Hence, in Lindsey's thought, God is effectively detached from creation and interested only in taking individuals out of it. In this respect it was argued that his Theology is not sufficiently influenced by Christology, and, reflecting a docetic quality, it portrays a deity who only appears to be incarnate in the world through the life and work of Jesus Christ. The momentum of Lindsey's providentialism leads to an apocalyptic paradigm which, because his Christology is weak and has no capacity to resist such a frame of reference, imposes its pattern upon his doctrine of God. His image of God devolves into an apocalyptic deity who triumphs through the destruction of creation. His providentialism, accentuating this triumph of God, captivates divinity in an eschatological logic and configuration from which there is no escape. Thus, the free God of the Bible becomes the predetermined deity of Armageddon.

This particular weakness within Lindsey's Theology stems from his lack of dialectical tension between the transcendence and immanence of God, between divine detachment and the concept of synergism. Briefly, Lindsey's Theology has no appreciation for the paradox of the incarnation. Dispensational thought, having a natural aversion to paradoxical or even nuanced ideas, is unable to grasp the importance of retaining a tension within the image of God created by the simple and yet perplexing fact that God loves. Thus, unable to think of theological discourse as a metaphorical¹⁷ attempt to describe that which is essentially indescribable, Lindsey creates a literalistic and one-dimensional image of God which accentuates sovereignty and triumph. While he argues vehemently that he is being faithful to scripture, there is a sense in which his providentialism distorts his exegesis as he goes to the Bible to find evidence of a God of Armageddon. Hence, he either misses, or chooses to give a supramundane interpretation to, those texts which speak of God as the One revealed in the cross, the One who is made manifest to the impure and lowly through suffering. In Lindsey's exaggerated version of a Theology of glory,¹⁸ his doctrine of God is undermined because the dominating influence of his apocalypticism does not allow him to remember an image of God which is at variance with the triumphalistic one.

Lindsey's eschatology illustrates, therefore, that

the memory of God, far from being simply an intellectual exercise, is an essential pre-condition for the exercise of hope. While eschatological hope is neither created nor invented through an intellectual, emotional or spiritual manipulation of Theological insights, nevertheless, certain ideas could be considered as preconditions for the emergence of hope. One such idea is the notion of memory. In the theological realm, memory becomes central to an articulation of a doctrine of God because of the need to explore the tensions within the Judaeo-Christian concept of the divine. It functions as counterpoint to speculation and discernment and is, therefore, that act which mitigates against the "domestication of the divine."¹⁹ While in the present culture memory may be a difficult habitus to maintain,²⁰ it is essential as a stabilizing factor in the elaboration of an eschatology for the nuclear age. It is in regard to this central role of memory that dispensationalism is clearly deficient, and it is, in particular, Lindsey's lack of memory concerning God which weakens his proclamation of hope in the nuclear context. Given a broad interpretation of the notion of memory, i.e., not simply rational recollection but present participation in solidarity with the past,²¹ it could be asserted that Lindsey lacks the specific memory of the God whom Heschel identifies as the God of pathos.

By applying the term pathos to God, Heschel is maintaining that Yahweh is the One who was and is both passionate about and intimate with creation. In its

Theological sense, pathos is not to be equated with sentimentality, nor a psychological state of mind.²² Rather, it connotes a world-directedness²³ and solidarity with the created order in its suffering and struggle for life. Given this definition it is not surprising that the prophets felt the Divine pathos most strongly²⁴ while the false prophets of the Older Testament, i.e., theologians of glory, found it most cumbersome.²⁵ In a reversal of traditional Theological speculation, Heschel develops the concept of Divine pathos by reference to God's subjectivity, implying that God is the "subject" not the "object" of human experience. Consequently, according to the biblical record, humanity does not know God through reflection on the idea of a detached Being of heaven.²⁶ Instead, the believer comes to know the Divine through God's actions in this world. Thus, in contrast to Lindsey's providential assumptions, humanity does not search out the mysterious will of God. God is encountered as the One who exposes the hidden depths of human experience to the human creature.²⁷ So it is that believers approach this divine being by recognizing that, contrary to being the object of their speculation and supplication, they themselves are the object of God's thinking and acting.²⁸

Given Heschel's description, it is evident that God's pathos is not void or bereft of meaning and intention. On the contrary, it is motivated by a central, guiding principle. Yahweh is revealed as a God who has an immanent

connection with, and deep implication in this planet and its life, not as a peripheral interest but as God's ultimate concern. Moreover, this pathos has a clear partiality inasmuch as God's world-directedness is particularly focused on protecting and sustaining the lost, the outcasts and the oppressed. Such a revelation is often lost to dispensational Theology. Lindsey's triumphalistic image of God does not allow for God to be intimate with the broken, the flawed and marginalized. Thus, in contrast to Lindsey's interpretation, the prophetic writings, while containing an apocalyptic imperative, are much more ethical in their preoccupation. They are not so much engrossed in predicting the final end of creation as in declaring God's ultimate concern for the sustenance of human life, however flawed, in the here and now.²⁹ In spite of, and because of, Divine judgment, and anguish, the chief implication of the Divine pathos is that God shares the fate of this earth and, more specifically, the life of the forgotten peoples of the planet. Emerging from the prophetic scriptures it can therefore be affirmed that memory of divine pathos implies that, in opposition to dispensational escapism, the world is not to be prematurely written off.³⁰

Hence, the memory of God's pathos involves an appreciation of both Divine anger and compassion, realizing that they are not mutually exclusive but dialectically united.³¹ At the heart of the pathos of God, then, is a mixture of rage over the cruelty of human life and sympathy

for the pain of human existence.³² The word "sympathy" is used advisedly, not as a counselling term, a psychological frame of mind or inclination of the heart. In its broadest sense sympathy denotes a solidarity of suffering, a passionate presence for another, a living with and for the other. To speak of God's sympathy for the world is to describe God's critical and compassionate presence with it and for it.³³ Far from Divine omnipotence, or omniscience, it was this overpowering awareness of Divine sympathy that captured the prophetic mind, and which inspired and inspires the prophetic faith.³⁴ Thus, it would be more appropriate to describe the Divine, if such a description is possible, not as an all-powerful being, so much as the all-sympathetic God. Such a designation is a needed counter-balance to Lindsey's description of the all-sovereign deity, and it may be a more meaningful image of God for a nuclear age which is foundering particularly because of its adoration of power as the means of economic, political and religious salvation.

Christians would contend that the pathos of God is uniquely revealed in the cross. When a Christological structure is imposed on the notion of Divine pathos, it can be asserted that, given the agony of the created order, the sympathetic God does not coerce or command in power but, as several theologians have argued,³⁵ allures and uplifts through the suffering of the cross. Could it not further be argued, then, that central to the prophetic affirmation of God's concern for the earth is the belief

that not only can God suffer,³⁶ but that God's providential power is made manifest most effectively through suffering? (2 Cor. 12:9) In this respect, Bonhoeffer suggested that a suffering God was the only hope for creation, and for the Christian believer.³⁷

The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us (Mark 15:34). The God who makes us live in this world without using him as a working hypothesis is the God before whom we are standing. Before God and with him we live together without God. God allows himself to be edged out of the world and on to the cross. God is weak and powerless in the world and that is exactly the way, the only way, in which he can be with us and help us. Matthew 8:17 makes it crystal clear that it is not by his omnipotence that Christ helps us but by his weakness and suffering.³⁸

From the Christological point of view, compassion for the weak and defeated is not peripheral but the central revelation of the pathos of God.³⁹ Hence, this God of the cross is not a Being who overwhelms the world with power, but a God who, as Walter Brueggemann suggests, "underwhelms its competence and competition"⁴⁰ with sympathetic suffering and weakness. So it is that the sympathetic God calls out to the community of faith from the very point where Lindsey's God is deemed to be absent, from the midst of the lost, suffering peoples and the ravaged ecology of the earth. In a reversal of worldly wisdom, Divine sympathy displays a partiality for the weak,⁴¹ the enslaved, the lost -all those whom human history has forgotten.

Lindsey's dispensationalism has missed this key point

precisely because of the triumphalistic assumption that the primary attributes of Divine power are cosmic manipulation and magisterial control. His triumphalistic image of the Divine militates against any appreciation of transcendence which might be discovered within the tradition of the suffering of God. Moreover, the monarchical vocabulary which Lindsey associates with the Divine, when incorporated into his ecclesiology of separation, dissuades believers from participation in the condition of the lost, lowly, ignoble elements of the world. Thus, it could be speculated that Lindsey's Theology of glory reinforces an ignorance of or indifference to the precise instances where God is most present and active. Therefore, it is only to the extent to which this powerful God, who dictates the movements of creation like a triumphant King, is devalued, that the God of the cross, of those who suffer, can be remembered.⁴²

For Lindsey, however, this memory of the Divine is threatening. It undermines the dispensational preoccupation with a divinely powerful conclusion to human civilization, and it disrupts the Darbyite interpretation of history which favours the pure over the impure and the saved over the damned. The memory of God's pathos reveals the possibility of a future which, far from dispensational determinism, liberates the lost and the forgotten.⁴³ Moreover, such a memory is dangerous because it makes demands of the one who remembers, i.e., a change of attitude and orientation.⁴⁴ Not only does the believer now have to

understand human existence from the "under-side of history" (Gutierrez)--the side of the victimized and defeated--but he or she is now called to participate in the struggles of the people whom society tries to ignore. This Theology implies, as Bonhoeffer claimed, that those who would remember God must strive to accompany God in the suffering of the weak in the world. Authentic belief is, therefore, an invitation into the pain of existence, not a guarantee of a place in an exalted future Kingdom. Thus, in response to Lindsey's theology of glory which has suppressed the pathos of God, we suggest that dispensational Christology needs to appropriate the insights of the theology of the cross, which accentuates Divine sympathy and God's essential solidarity in suffering of creation.

Commensurate with Lindsey's unwillingness to remember the God of pathos is his facile assumption that Divine favour bestows upon the believer an exemption from serious questioning, from faithful ethical action and from implication in the ambiguity of life. According to Lindsey, the only obligation of believer in the interim between the present time and the Rapture, is personal purity and the determination not to be distracted from the central task of evangelism by the pain of the declining world order. Here the cost of discipleship is undercut by a righteous bravado which, when it is contrasted with the suffering it ignores, is both escapist and ethically suspect.

In summary, the second insight gleaned from an

analysis of Lindsey's eschatology is the necessity for Christian eschatology to be based upon a Theology which incorporates both God's transcendence and God's pathos, upon an image of the divine which allows God's strength and power to be revealed through the weakness and powerlessness of the cross. The primary fault which pervades dispensational eschatology, though it is in no way exclusive to it,⁴⁵ is its accentuation of the transcendent, sovereign control and triumphant power of God which, while being an attractive image for people who feel powerless in the nuclear context, is a misleading inclination. It allows for a positivistic identification between world events and Divine providence on the basis of an equation of Divine power with dominance and manipulation. In this manner, Divine providence overpowers human responsibility and Christian discipleship therefore loses its "costly" (Bonhoeffer) quality. Since participation in the eschatological community of hope has no real price, adherence to Christ is reduced to simple credulity.

It was mentioned previously that hope which is not confronted with its antithesis, dissolves into shallow optimism.⁴⁶ In this regard dispensational eschatology, being an exaggeration of a theology of glory which eschews the suffering and despair of hopelessness, is ill-equipped to offer an authentic vision of hope for the nuclear context. Lindsey's eschatology thus illustrates the inadequacies of an eschatology based upon a triumphalistic image of God.

5.4. Conclusion:

The problem of developing an authentic eschatology for the nuclear age is, at its roots, a Theological question; one of orchestrating the dialogue between the dominant, traditional assertions of Divine judgment and transcendence and the awareness of Divine compassion and immanence. As was stated in the introduction, the possibility of nuclear-induced extinction of the human species puts orthodox definitions of Divine omnipotence into question. The dispensational Armageddon solution appears to abrogate human responsibility entirely and therefore misunderstands both the potential danger and opportunity opening up for the human creature in the present context.

However, the dialogue with dispensationalism has indicated that the Theology of this context which trivializes God's judgment or sentimentalizes God's providence is also inadequate to the task of providing an enduring vision of hope. Without an apocalyptically-inspired limit to human pretense (a limit associated with God's judgment) and the eschatological urgency regarding the life of this planet (an urgency emanating from proximity of God's reign on earth), the Christian tradition cannot expect to articulate an authentic appreciation of hope.

Hence, any lasting foundation for hope in the nuclear age will be contingent upon the development of a doctrine of God which both affirms the immanence of God within

creation and human history and, at the same time, preserves the Divine detachment from any specific human ideology or project.

While this theoretical work is important, it is the author's conclusion that there is a task that must have priority over such theological reflection. I allude to the simpler, yet more exacting task of concrete discipleship, that is, participation in God's suffering with and transformation of the world. According to the methodology of liberation theology, authentic theological reflection arises from such lived identification with God and the world. The first step towards genuine hope for the reign of God in the world, and the only one adequate to the challenges of the nuclear age, is a more profound and compassionate exploration of human hopelessness. This exploration begins only through solidarity with and sympathy for those who are oppressed--who "sit in darkness and the shadow of death."

Even though a theology of the resurrection is essential if faith is ever to establish the possibility of an eschaton, at this particular moment in the context of nuclear weaponry, and given the naïvete of North American discipleship, it would be premature to speak about hope as if it is something to be achieved easily. For the present time, the question of an eschaton is not answered by creating a manageable explanation of the future which

I appears hopeful. On the contrary, eschatological hope emerges when believers recognise, through their participation in the sufferings of God on this planet, that the struggle for life is not yet finished, and that no matter how much human beings despair of the world, God does not.

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Notes:

Introduction

¹ Robert Jewett, "Coming to terms with the Doom Boom," Quarterly Review, Vol. 4, No. 3, Fall 1984, p. 22.

² Juan Luis Segundo, The Liberation of Theology (New York: Orbis Books, 1979), p. 9.

³ Harvey Cox, Religion in the Secular City (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 24. Cox makes a useful comparison between North American fundamentalism and Latin American liberation theology. In each movement the theology bubbles up from the grass roots rather than emanating from the seminaries or church hierarchies.

⁴ Throughout this dissertation the term "mainline" Protestantism is used in accordance with a definition offered by Wade Roof and William McKinney in American Mainline Religion (London: Rutgers University Press, 1987). They identify three denominations as occupying the traditional "mainline" position within America: "the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, and what is now called the United Church of Christ. The colonial 'big three,' they came to have a dominant influence early in the nation's history and became accustomed to power and influence" (p. 85). Recently the more moderate Protestant denominations which were the result of nineteenth century revivalism joined the mainline. They would be Methodism, Disciples of Christ, Northern Baptists and Lutherans. These denominations, known also as "liberal" communities of faith have the following theo-sociological characteristics: middle to upper class, stress on individualism, belief in pluralism, and a general affirmation of American culture.

⁵ The most prominent author in the field of the effects of a nuclear war is Dr. Helen Caldicott whose most famous book is entitled Missile Envy (New York: Bantam Books, 1985). Other authors are listed in the bibliography under the heading: "Nuclear War: Effects of."

⁶ Jonathan Schell, The Fate of the Earth (New York: Avon, 1982), pp. 94-95.

⁷ John C. Bennett, "Divine Persuasion and Divine Judgement," Christian Century, May 19, 1985, p. 554.

⁸ This has been the conclusion of such authors as Gordon Kaufman and Jonathan Schell. In traditional theological systems the description of the doctrine of providence is that point in which the relationship between Divine power and human activity is explored. The dilemma of providence has always centered in the tension existing between God's rule within creation and the capacity of human

beings to alter their personal circumstances. How can God's decisive will and the human will operate together without one or other suffering some form of reduction? This has certainly been a classical question of Theology, often implied in the scriptures when the issue of evil and suffering is confronted. Kaufman and Schell propose that this traditional tension within the doctrine of providence becomes particularly problematic in the nuclear context. How does one comprehend the relationship between the providential action of a Divine "all Sovereign" Being and the 'free' activity of the human being when mortal creatures seem to have gained the means for tremendous destruction? The threat of a nuclear disaster changes this traditional tension of providence. The 'balance of power,' so to speak, or the dynamic governing the relationship between the Divine and the human, has shifted. A summary of the basic argument found in Jonathan Schell's work, The Fate of the Earth, will explicate the concept which nuclearism calls into question--the notion of human dependence upon a Divine being.

Hiroshima established the possibility for humanity to achieve a greater dominion over creation and a more distinct independence from natural forces than it previously possessed. As Schell points out, there is definitely a quantitative and qualitative difference between the destruction embodied in nuclear war and that available to the human creature through conventional arms (if instruments of bloodshed can ever be 'conventional'). Since nuclear technology has proven itself to be the most powerful force yet to be discovered and manipulated by human hands, the sheer capacity of nuclear weapons raises the spectre of a self-inflicted annihilation, not just of some few human beings but of entire continents. Incredible as this may seem, the prospect of nuclear war threatens the very life-sustaining systems of earth and raises the question of human extinction, either accidental or suicidal. In pre-Hiroshima time human dominion over the earth could have devastating consequences, but all such consequences were contained within the all encompassing rhythm of the earth's life. Schell argues that the prospect of nuclear war breaks the trusted "frame of life." If Schell's research is correct, then human beings can no longer trust the resilience in the natural processes to save the species from its own folly. In this fashion, humanity is progressing beyond subservience to the world of matter and gaining, through what Bonhoeffer referred to as "the technical organization of various kinds," an independence from nature. Though he is always careful to note that one is dealing in immense imponderable factors, Schell posits that nuclear war does present a new dilemma, namely the possibility of human extinction, and on account of this new dilemma he proposes that the fundamental parameters of human life on this planet have been changed. "According to the Bible, when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge God punished them by withdrawing from them the

privilege of immortality and dooming them and their kind to die. Now our species has eaten more deeply of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and has brought itself face to face with a second death--the death of mankind. In doing so we have caused a basic change in the circumstances in which life was given to us, which is to say we have altered the human condition" (Schell, p. 115). This second death, as Schell calls it, the extinction of the human species, implies two alterations to the human state, each of which reinforces the fact of human independence from the natural order and possibly from God.

In the first place humanity has now achieved a status as destroyer which had previously been attributable only to God. No longer subject to the whims of an unfathomable and absolute Deity, human beings can theoretically 'pre-empt' the divine design of history and, as Gordon Kaufman suggests, perpetrate its own eschaton: "The end of history, therefore--whether viewed as ultimate catastrophe or ultimate salvation--was to be God's climatic act. A consummation of this sort was something that the faithful could live with--even look forward to with hope--for it would be the moment when God's final triumph over all evil powers was accomplished. In contrast the end of history which we in the late twentieth century must contemplate--an end brought about by nuclear holocaust--must be conceived primarily, not as God's doing but as ours" (Theology for a Nuclear Age [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985], pp. 3-4).

Given the newly discovered power to destroy which humanity now wields, the biblical creation stories must undergo some re-interpretation. The "dominion" which God offered to Adam and Eve, can now apparently be exercised independently of Yahweh. Until the invention of nuclear technology, human manipulation of creation was partial, being both circumscribed and reinforced by the finiteness of human capacities. Thus, the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve exercised limited governance of the world out of necessity because they shared this governance with the One "who made heaven and earth." Granted, the responsibility of shared dominion was often compromised in practice when human beings pretended to be gods. Nevertheless, the human thirst for more--more knowledge, more skill, more material possessions--did not ultimately contradict the foundational truth of human dependence upon God's creation. To employ the biblical symbol of the steward, it could be argued that before Hiroshima, Christians ultimately had no other option but to become stewards since they could never achieve the status, no matter how much they longed for it, of owner/creator. After Hiroshima, the role of the steward becomes a choice. The human community is no longer required, by virtue of its limited state, to respect the law of life which governs the universe. The human race can now actually achieve complete and independent control to dominate and destroy the earth. Hence, there is a sense in which the nuclear event thrusts humanity back into the original Garden of Eden myth except that the present

choice does not concern the tree of knowledge, but the second tree mentioned in Genesis 3:22--the tree of life. The children of God can, if they wish, now forsake the vocation of steward and pre-empt the prerogative of God and cut down this tree and end life on earth. Therefore, the choice to be a steward is, for the first time, a real choice, and one which in many respects runs contrary to the technologically-inspired spirit of hubris of the present context. In contrast to the world's standards of measurement, the work of stewardship implies a curtailment rather than an enhancement of human potential. In other words, stewardship in the nuclear age, unlike any other generation, involves the self-imposition of limits. Humanity must gain the maturity to develop appropriately diminished expectations regarding its absolute rule over the earth and the use of its resources. Any redefinition of Christian Theology cannot avoid the challenge of establishing the rationale and framework by which humanity can embrace some authentic and realistic restraints on its relationship to the created order.

While the altered condition of human dominion over creation is the first consequence of nuclearism, the second involves another aspect of existence over which humanity had, until August 6, 1945, no control, i.e., the future. If the flash over Hiroshima cut history into two periods, then such a division could be distinguished by reference to the concept of time. Before that event humanity was subject to time while after it they became the caretakers of time. In this regard Schell argues that the future is no longer a 'given' or a dimension of creation beyond human control. Commensurate with the possibility of a self-inflicted nuclear holocaust is the equally frightening prospect that human beings could eliminate the promise of tomorrow and deny the future. "Formerly the future was simply given to us; now it must be achieved. We must become the agriculturists of time. If we do not plant and cultivate the future years of human life, we will never reap them" (Schell, p. 174). Such a re-orientation of the concept of time implies that the human creature must re-evaluate its commitment to life on behalf of the life of unborn generations. Schell explains: "In asking us to cherish the lives of the unborn, the peril of extinction takes us back to the ancient principle of the sacredness of human life, but it conducts us there by a new path. Instead of being asked not to kill our neighbours, we are asked to let them be born. If it is possible to speak of a benefit of the nuclear peril, it would be that it invites us to become more deeply aware of the miracle of birth and of the world's renewal. 'For unto us a child is born'" (Schell, p. 174).

Schell is suggesting that the post-Hiroshima community has the obligation to protect and preserve the potential of the future. Such a task confronts people of this context with unique responsibilities and questions, hitherto unknown. "The possibility that the living can stop the future generations from entering into life compels us to ask

basic new questions about our existence, the most sweeping of which is what these unborn ones, most of whom we will never meet even if they are born, mean to us. No one has ever thought to ask this question before our time, because no generation before ours has ever held the life and death of the species in its hands" (Schell, p. 116). Even while trying to appreciate the profound value of generations yet to be given birth, Schell recognizes that in the present context the preservation of the future, of tomorrow's children, requires more than passive resistance to the "terminal madness" of nuclearism. It is also a creative act. He speculates that since the nuclear arms race has the potential to "amputate the future" and since it is presently imbued with an inertia which is driving towards this "end to end all ends," then human beings must actively 'achieve' or create the possibility for the future through opposition to nuclear weapons. Left unobstructed, the arms race would naturally drift into a nuclear conflict, and, in this respect, the realization of the future becomes an act of human creation. As Sallie McFague explains: "We have become willy-nilly, co-creators in the sense that we have the power to 'let life continue'" (Models of God, Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age, [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987], p. 17). If McFague is correct, then human dependence upon the divine Sovereign has been seriously undermined. Humanity can, in some measure, create time by allowing the world to continue and depending on how this choice is made, more or less meaningful life will result. To use an analogy, humanity is like a child who has grown beyond the confines of infancy into the age of adolescence when new and often frightening responsibilities become evident. In infancy the child senses and relies upon the security of the parent. External physical dangers and internal emotional anxieties are deflected through trust in the omnipotent protection of the adult guardian who, it is assumed, will be capable of stemming the tide of any serious threat. In contrast, adolescence is that stage of life in which the 'blessed assurance' of parental security dwindles. In fact, the child becomes an adult through the very process of accepting responsibility for the continuance of his or her own life. It is instructive to recall that adolescence is that stage in life when normal dangers or mortality become frighteningly real and suicide arises as an alternative to the pain and frustration of living. In certain circumstances, attempted suicide is the first and ultimate act of defiance through which the child proves his or her independence from the parent. Knowledge of the possibility of and means for accidental death or intentional suicide, constitute strangely alluring, and yet terrifying options throughout the tumultuous upheavals of young adulthood. To choose to resist these temptations is a creative venture--one which lets life continue. The knowledge of nuclear technology and the beguiling power it represents function in a similar fashion for humanity "come of age." The human species has grown beyond the relative

innocence of infancy into a new stage of accountability in which much is possible, including a nuclear-induced, self-imposed end to the human adventure. Hence, stemming the suicidal tendencies of the nuclear arms race is a life-restoring, life-creating achievement.

Inherent within the possibility of suicide, on an individual or collective basis, is the denial of the importance and the restorative power of the future. Those who would take their own life despair of any meaning or direction inherent in or external to their being which could restore health and wholeness to their broken existence. Suicide is a deed that, by its very nature, forecloses on any lasting, refreshing purpose within the 'here and now.' Thus, to speak theologically, resistance to the temptation of the suicide implicit within the threat of nuclear war is, in fact, a confession of faith, while acquiescence is a refusal to trust in the possibility of grace. In this light, it can be maintained that the altered state of human existence brought about by the development of nuclear technology imposes upon the creature some measure of responsibility, not simply for creation, but also for one of the key concepts of Christian faith--the notion of grace. This is not to suggest that human beings can offer grace to others, but that humanity now has the power to allow grace to be given through the conservation of the future. Therefore, any re-thinking regarding an appropriate Theology for the nuclear age must appreciate the extent to which humanity now operates jointly with the Divine in the fulfillment of the spiritual as well as the physical dimensions of life on the planet.

⁹ William E. Blackstone, Jesus is Coming (New York: Fleming Revell, 1908), pp. 119-120. The first and most prominent dispensational text was W.E. Blackstone's Jesus is Coming. Mirroring the success of Lindsey's first book a century later, Jesus is Coming required many printings, eventually selling over a million copies. It was translated into forty-eight languages including Hebrew. It is difficult to measure the public reaction to Blackstone's dispensationalism and to determine whether there is a correlation between the number of books sold and widespread approval of dispensational doctrines. Even in the absence of such a measurement, it can be assumed, however, that Blackstone's ideas enjoyed considerable popularity.

One indication of the extent to which his ideas were appreciated relates to his efforts to restore Palestine to the Jews, a project which received a good deal of support. For instance, on March 5, 1891 he sent a memorial to President Benjamin Harrison asking for the establishment of a Jewish homeland. This memorial was signed by four hundred and thirteen very prominent politicians including the Chief Justice, the Speaker of the House, a future president and the Chair of the House Committee on Foreign Relations. Such a list of signatories

indicates that there was strong political sentiment in favour of supporting the establishment of a Jewish homeland. It also indicates, however, that Blackstone, an unapologetic dispensationalist, was a respected and influential writer and speaker. He could hardly be called a member of the radical or 'lunatic' fringe. It is this author's contention that his political respectability was a boon to the efforts of promoting his dispensational ideas.

¹⁰ Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), p. 136. The other texts written by Lindsey are as follows: Satan is alive and Well on Planet Earth (New York: Bantam Books, 1972); The Liberation of Planet Earth (New York: Bantam Books, 1974); The Terminal Generation (New York: Bantam Books, 1976); The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon (New York: Bantam Books, 1980); The Promise (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1982); The Rapture (New York: Bantam Books, 1983); A Prophetic Walk Through The Holy Land (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest Publishers, 1983); There's a New World Coming (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest Publishers, 1984); Combat Faith (New York: Bantam Books, 1986).

¹¹ Lindsey, Late Great, p. 136.

¹² There were many conferences before and after the turn of the century which had a great deal to do with the promotion of dispensational theories. Among the many summer conferences organized by premillennialists, the Niagara Bible Conference was the most formative. From it emerged the great promoters of premillennial vision. People like James Brookes, A.J. Gordon, William Moorehead, Nathaniel West, Arthur Pierson, and W.J. Erdman, all participated in these summer gatherings at Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The Niagara Bible Conference first met in New York City in 1868. Almost a decade later, in 1875, it was reconvened at Niagara-on-the-Lake in Ontario where it met regularly for two weeks each summer until 1901. Public lectures and sermons, Bible readings and prayer were the basic pedagogical tools of the meetings. It followed the pattern of many evangelical camp meetings: Bible study and worship in the morning and communion and prayer meetings in the evenings. What made the Niagara Conference unique was that besides being the first so called 'Bible conference,' it had a special 'primitive' spirit which is to say it engendered a religious communion similar to that which formed the first New Testament church. In the spiritual atmosphere of the Niagara conference, according to Ernest Sandeen "denominations could be and were consistently ignored; the minister became the Bible teacher and the sermon was transformed into the Bible Reading" (The Roots of Fundamentalism, [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970], p. 136).

Apart from producing leaders who went on to organize and host the many Prophetic Bible Conferences at which premillennial and dispensational ideas were discussed, the Niagara Bible Conference also provided a forum for the gathering of the faithful premillennialists, the spreading of 'the message' and the production of creedal statements. The best known statement to come from Niagara was drawn up by James Brookes in 1878. Even though it has been confused with a five point creedal statement of the Presbyterian General Assembly in 1910, it acts as one of the early expressions of faith out of which grew the fundamentalist movement. The creed, which is found in Appendix Four, gives an indication of the strong Reformed influences within the dispensational movement. Though the final article on the millennial hopes of Christianity allows for various readings, it could be argued that it has a dispensational character since, according to Sandeen, "the leaders and speakers at the conference consistently advocated the doctrine of an any moment coming of Christ" (Roots, p. 141). An important aspect of the Niagara conference was its capacity to elaborate a complete world view and teach dispensationalism within the framework of a comprehensive theology. This had a relativising effect on believers who confronted the unsettling reality of the growing secular liberal society. In this respect Niagara embodied a vision of a church which inspired many believers. Here was a foretaste of the sort of community of faith they wished to promote and eventually did establish in the 1920's and following.

13 Sandeen, Roots. Sandeen's basic thesis is that millennialism and specifically premillennialism, was the cutting edge and driving force behind what has become known as the Fundamentalist movement. "It is millenarianism which gave life and shape to the fundamentalist movement" (p. xv).

14 George Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism, Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1988). This is the basic thesis which orients his analysis of the evolution of Fuller Seminary--that key dispensational issues such as inerrancy and separation were the battle ground between the rigid fundamentalists and the "new evangelicals."

15 George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture (New York: Oxford Press, 1980). Marsden states: "Such Calvinist attitudes (intellectual assent to precisely formulated statements of religious truth) were carried over into American revivalism and continued into twentieth-century fundamentalism" (p. 225).

16 Though dispensational thought has traditionally had more adherents in North America, its roots are

found in the ideas of John Nelson Darby, an Irishman. Darby was educated in law, but in 1825 he became an Anglican priest. Dismayed by the political interference in ecclesiastical affairs, he grew convinced of the ruin of the Church of England, and he joined the Plymouth Brethren in a search for the true fellowship. Benjamin Willis Newton, another future leader of the Brethren Church, joined the Brethren for the same reasons. These two figures disagreed on the concept of the instantaneous Rapture, and the Plymouth Brethren Church divided into two groups. In spite of this controversy, Darby became the advocate of the Plymouth Brethren Community traveling throughout Europe, Canada and the United States, and preaching the gospel of the 'true' Church. He called upon believers to leave behind their 'impure' ecclesiastical systems and worldly pretensions and to live in simplicity while awaiting Christ's secret return. Even though he was interested in spreading his message of dispensationalism, his primary purpose was to promote the life and work of the Plymouth Brethren Church and in its service he was a tireless servant trying to encourage membership wherever he visited. This relentless activity partially explains why Darby was not particularly precise about his dispensational theories, being rather more concerned about the growth of his community of faith than about the numbers of divine "administrations."

Darby travelled to North America on several occasions for extended lengths of time. Though the Plymouth Brethren never expanded into the movement which Darby anticipated, his ideas elicited a favourable response from many quarters, particularly from Northern Presbyterians and Baptists. Darby's appeal to join his church went unanswered by the members of these mainline denominations. Sandeen explains the minimal effect of Darby's efforts to gain new members for his own denomination. "Darby never understood the difference that the disestablishment of the church had made in the United States or how much his own doctrine of the ruin of the church had been shaped by early nineteenth century British social conditions. That Americans showed little concern about abandoning their denominations remained the greatest puzzle of Darby's American experience" (*Roots*, p. 79). Though in Darby's time denominational loyalty was an abiding belief and a necessary posture of American evangelists, at the turn of the century this situation changed. The second generation of dispensationalists did not feel the same allegiance to the traditional Protestant communities of faith and participation in these churches was no longer necessary in order for a preacher to have credibility in the public sphere. After the fundamentalist controversy in the 1920's, dispensationalists no longer held positions of influence with the mainline churches, and they were freed to form their own communities of faith.

The direct connections between Darby's thought and that of the American proponents of dispensationalist ideas

are tenuous at best and difficult to substantiate. Darby may have met some of the future spokespersons of dispensational doctrines while visiting the United States, but even Sandeen admits that these contacts are tenuous and their importance is even more difficult to assess. It is known that Darby met and spoke with Dwight Moody during one of his first trips to Chicago, but in this meeting Darby remained unimpressed with the evangelist. It is not known to what extent there was an exchange of ideas. He also went to St. Louis in 1872 where he might have met or influenced in some way James Hall Brookes. Brookes became the most stalwart advocate of the dispensational concepts in America until C.I. Scofield who was actually called to the ministry under Brooke's guidance. Darby also visited a Baptist minister in Boston in 1875 who might have been another proponent of dispensational visions, Adoniram Judson Gordon. There is little doubt that of those people he met, Dwight Moody was the most famous and the one who did a great deal to promote the concepts of dispensationalism.

17 Sandeen, Roots, p. 222.

18 James Davison Hunter, Evangelicalism, The Coming Generation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Hunter explains that the Scopes trial marked a watershed; fundamentalist theology from "this point on, . . . would be an object of ridicule, derision and contempt. It had lost credibility and respect as a public ideology" (p. 192).

19 Clarence Darrow, the lawyer who fought against the anti-evolution cause, called the fundamentalists "bigots and ignoramuses."

20 Hunter, Evangelicalism, p. 120. Hunter argues that in the Scopes trial there were actually two trials, the legal confrontation and the trial of and for public opinion.

21 Marsden, Fundamentalism. He states that the analysis of one journalist, H.L. Mencken, was followed by most other writers so that "the obscurantist label . . . would ever stick to fundamentalists. . . . they would be overshadowed by the pejorative associations attached to the movement by the seemingly victorious secular establishment" (p. 188).

22 Jewett, "Doom," p. 16.

23 Jewett, "Doom," p. 16.

24 Rheta Grimsely Johnson, "Oral Roberts Reaches so Low it Makes one Hope there is a Hell" in The Whig Standard (Kingston), January 17, 1987.

25 Richard Ostling, "Power, Glory and Politics,"

Time, Feb. 17, 1986, p. 65. The article ends with Malcolm Muggeridge's critique of fundamentalism, Christ and the Media, which paints Jesus as rejecting the temptation of a T.V. talk show because he was concerned about "truth and reality rather than fantasy and images."

26 Hunter, Evangelicalism. Hunter makes the following point regarding the growth of conservative churches: "While virtually all Protestant denominations show increased membership growth between 1935 and 1965, it has only been the traditionally Evangelical denominations that continued this trend from 1965 to the present. . . . Evangelical denominations have increased their membership at an average 5 year rate of 8 percent" (p. 6).

27 Hunter, Evangelicalism. Hunter reports that the journalist, Mencken, proclaimed fundamentalist doctrine to be: "'childish theology' for 'halfwits,' 'yokels,' 'the andropoid rabble'--'the gaping primates of the upland vallies'" (p. ix).

28 Reginald Bibby, Fragmented Gods (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1987). See the tables on pages 14 and 15 for details.

29 Examples of these novels are: Jerome Lawrence's Inherit the Wind and Ray Ginger's Six Days or Forever. See also: Richard Hofstadter, Anti-intellectualism in American Life, and William McLoughlin The Paranoid Style in American Politics.

30 Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New York: Yale University Press, 1952). For Tillich's discussion of the anxiety of meaninglessness see pages 47ff.

31 George Grant, Philosophy in the Mass Age (Montreal: Copp Clark, 1959), pp. 90ff. Grant speaks about the chaos and confusion of the mass culture in his final chapter, "Law, Freedom and Necessity."

32 Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism (New York: Warner Books, 1979). See chapters I and II for his explanation of the narcissistic reaction to a meaningless world.

33 Lasch, p. 17.

34 Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Smidler, Steven M. Tipton, Habits of the Heart, Individualism and Commitment in American Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 281.

35 Louis Gasper, The Fundamentalist Movement 1930-1956, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1981), p. 1.

36 Lindsey, Late Great, p. vii.

37 Timothy Weber, Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). He writes: "at a time when most 'mainline denominations' are struggling to reverse declining memberships and contributions, many evangelical groups are experiencing impressive growth. In fact evangelical enterprises in general are doing better than ever. Missionary agencies, colleges, and seminaries and evangelical organizations are in obvious ascendancy" (p. 3).

38 Sydney Ahlstrom, A Religious History of America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 809.

39 James Daane, "Demonic Spirits" in The Christian Century, Vol.90, Jan. 4-11. 1973. Daane typifies the traditional perspective on Lindsey when he states: "His Christian instincts are sound but his mind has not caught up with his conversion" (p. 738).

40 The Biblical scholars specifically studying Hal Lindsey's books are B. Robert Bate (Queen's Theological College, Kingston), C. Vandervaal, Hal Lindsey and Biblical Prophecy (St. Catharines: Praideia Press, 1978) and T. Boersma, Is the Bible a Jigsaw Puzzle (St. Catharines: Praideia Press, 1978). Robert Jewett and Daniel Fuller have done broader analyses of dispensational ideas and they mention Lindsey but he is not the central focus of their work. These texts are footnoted below in content footnote 61.

41 See endnotes 14 and 15 for Marsden's book titles and publication details. These texts are perhaps the most profound analyses of the theoretical background of dispensational ideas.

42 Weber, Shadow. This work is another classic examination of the history of the dispensational movement.

43 Douglas Frank, Less Than Conquerors: How Evangelicals entered the Twentieth Century (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986). Frank explores three movements within the American Evangelical community, one of which is dispensationalism. He gives good theoretical background to the sentiments which supported Darby's ideas.

44 There are several doctoral dissertations which pertain to the history of the dispensational movement. They are: Paul Wilt, Premillennialism in America, 1885-1918, with Special reference to Attitudes to Social Reform, American University, 1970; Douglas E. Herman, Flooding the Kingdom: The Intellectual Development of Fundamentalism, 1930-41, Ohio University, 1980; Joel Carpenter, The Renewal of

American Fundamentalism, Johns Hopkins University, 1976.

45 Richard Ostling, "Power, Glory and Politics" in Time, February 17, 1986, p. 60.

46 Journal of Stewardship, ed. by Nordan C. Murphy and Kendall W. Zellmer, (New York: Commission on Stewardship, 1987) Vol. 39, pp. 31-32.

47 Ostling, "Power," p. 56.

48 Gabriel Fackre, The Religious Right and Christian Faith (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 4.

49 Wade and McKinney, Mainline. Arguing that the mainline, i.e., the central social and political voice of American Christianity, has shifted, they maintain that "throughout this century the balance of power within Protestantism has shifted back and forth--first from the conservative to the liberal and more recently from the liberal to the conservative wing. What we call the liberal mainline churches (perhaps 'old mainline' is more apt) have gradually lost ground to more conservative bodies" (p. 223).

50 At one point during the writing (February 1988) Robertson was among the top three contenders for the Republican nomination for President.

51 Weber, pp. 4-5.

52 Weber, p. 4.

53 For examples of Reagan's use of apocalyptic imagery see: Yehezkei Landau, "The President and the Prophets," Sojourners, Vol. 13, No. 6, June/July 1984, pp. 24-25.

54 Reagan was quoted in the Chicago Sun-Times, Thursday Oct. 29, 1983.

55 Grace Halsell, Prophecy and Politics (Westport, Connecticut: Lawrence Hill, 1986), p. 40.

56 Halsell, p. 43.

57 Paul Hanson, The Dawn of Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975). This is a highly regarded text on the subject of the sources of apocalyptic thinking.

58 Paul Hanson, "The Apocalyptic Consciousness" in Quarterly Review, No. 3, Vol.4, Fall 1984, p. 26.

59 Hanson, "Apocalyptic Consciousness," p. 26.

60 Hanson, "Apocalyptic Consciousness," p. 38.

61 Roland Bainton, Here I Stand, A Life of Martin Luther (New York: Mentor Books, 1950). Bainton explains that Luther "mistrusted Revelation because of its obscurity. 'A Revelation,' said he, 'should be revealing'" (p. 261). Luther's sentiment has been reflected in mainstream Protestant theology on this continent during the last century. The book of Revelation, apocalypticism and millennialism are shunned as unimportant for, or inappropriate to, scholarly reflection. On the practical, pastoral level Protestant churches have given too little attention to instruction in apocalyptic literature. It is no longer acceptable to dismiss Revelation, as Luther did, because it is incomprehensible. The final book of the Bible has a fascination and mystery which is doubly attractive in the present apocalyptic mood of the North American nuclear context. It is therefore regrettable that the Reformed tradition has largely abandoned the Book of Revelation to the fundamentalists. If in no other way, Lindsey's writings should prompt the mainline Protestant churches to take more seriously Revelation and other apocalyptic texts and to enunciate appropriate interpretations of these books and their images.

But the issue is broader than use or abuse of one book in the Bible. Serious reflection on Lindsey's dispensationalism leads mainline Christian theology to re-examine its own understanding of the authority of the entire scriptural record. This 'end-time' thinking is not the only religious issue which confronts the traditional Protestant denominations with a different approach to biblical authority, but it is a striking example. This point has not been lost on Lindsey's critics since most of the books which analyse his writings originate from a concern over his hermeneutical and exegetical methodology. (Of the four books which analyse Lindsey specifically, all were written by biblical scholars. There are the books by Vanderwaal and Boersma mentioned above. Robert Jewett's book Jesus Against the Rapture and Daniel Fuller's Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum have a slightly broader concern than Vanderwaal's and Boersma's texts but they are not substantially different.) For instance, C. Vanderwaal and T. Boersma focus their books on Lindsey's use of the scripture and how his hermeneutic is appropriated by the laity. Vanderwaal reports being shocked when encountering Christian lay people "who are simply infatuated with Lindsey" (p. 9), and so records his resolution to produce a book which appeals to fellow believers of his denomination, asking them to "uphold" the Reformed tradition's interpretation of scripture.

Responding to what he believes to be a grave threat to the Reformed faith, Vanderwaal reserves his most biting criticism of dispensationalism for the discussion of Lindsey's treatment of scripture. He protests that Lindsey uses the Bible like "a political almanac" in which he conducts a "treasure hunt for texts containing

predictions" (p. 83). According to Vanderwaal, Lindsey's hermeneutical efforts are focused on the revelation of prophetic messages which have been concealed even from the gospel writers themselves. Noting that Lindsey imputes to himself some secret Divine knowledge which is hidden from ordinary people, Vanderwaal concludes that Lindsey's reading of the scripture is basically "a new form of Christian gnosticism" (p. 55).

Boersma concurs with Vanderwaal and adds that Lindsey has mistakenly equated prophecy with prediction about the future. Such a misconception devolves into what Boersma characterizes as a 'jigsaw puzzle' hermeneutic affirming that "according to Lindsey the Bible tells about the future. Here are all sorts of unfulfilled prophecies which relate to the final period of history. We are able to map out this future period if we take all those prophetic fragments, lay them out like puzzle pieces and fit them together in the proper manner to get a complete picture. Lindsey lifts pieces from all parts of the Bible, a prophecy from Daniel, a prediction of Jesus, a prediction of Revelation and forces them together" (p. 21). Without a doubt, the dispensational hermeneutic of inerrancy, utilized by Lindsey, misuses the Bible when it reduces prophecy to a linear "forward looking" prediction. Roy Harrisville explains that Lindsey understands biblical prophecy "and its fulfillment in terms of a linear, forward, one-to-one relation" (Roy A. Harrisville, "Tomorrow with Hal Lindsey," in Dialogue, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 295). Prophecy is pre-festum in Lindsey's view yet, as Harrisville argues, Christians have understood it to be post festum. Any comprehensive response to dispensationalism would not be complete without a critique of its biblical hermeneutic. Nevertheless, a simple rejection of the hermeneutic of inerrancy misses several substantive concepts raised by dispensational use of scripture, i.e., biblical literacy, biblical authority and the nature of truth.

It is noted in Chapter Two that the dispensational hermeneutic has a certain popularity because it keeps the Bible accessible to lay people. The challenge for mainline Protestant theology is to develop a hermeneutic which, without losing its theoretical rigor, is equally accessible to the laity.

On one level this concern may be more pastoral than theological. It could be possible that established denominations have not developed a sufficient capacity to conduct Bible studies or preach biblically in the modern context. Consequently church members do not know how to integrate the words of the Bible into faithful living. Certainly authors like Leander Keck believe that the Protestant church's weakness is due to the biblical illiteracy of both ministering personnel and lay people. Keck states: "Effective biblical preaching is an art as well as a skill. The more I have pondered the matter, the more convinced I have become that it is an art that needs to be recovered" (Leander Keck, The Bible in the Pulpit

[Nashville: Abingdon, 1978], p. 7). Imaginative and determined efforts in local communities may be required in order for the Bible to become a book of the pew again. The development of different hermeneutics, like Segundo's hermeneutic of suspicion, which uses human experience as the basis for reading and interpreting scripture, may need to be introduced if the laity is to become informed and transformed by their reading of scripture.

The theological issue which arises from the dispensational hermeneutic is the need for traditional Protestantism to establish an appreciation of biblical authority without losing the conception of biblical truth as a dialogue between biblical text and social context, and between belief and unbelief.

Underlying the question of biblical authority is the issue of truth. It is apparent that, through the principle of inerrancy, dispensationalism has advanced a concept of truth which is static and propositional. In the age of 'future shock' (Toffler) and meaninglessness (Tillich), such a position is popular. People seek to possess a truth which is steadfast and eternal. In response can Christian theology articulate an understanding of truth which resists the temptation of propositionalism, yet gives a sense of meaning to daily existence? These are questions for further study.

⁶² File: Person's Index of World Events, (August 29-September 4th, 1945) p. 276. Quoted in Peter Ellersten, "James Age, the Bomb and Oliver the Cat" in The Christian Century, July 31-August 7, 1985, p. 710.

⁶³ Walter Rauschenbusch, Christianity and the Social Crisis (New York: MacMillan, 1907), pp. 202-203.

⁶⁴ Eerdmans' Handbook to Christianity in America, ed. by Mark Noll and Nathan Hatch, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 373.

⁶⁵ Jewett, "Doom," p. 9.

⁶⁶ Douglas Hall, The Stewardship of Life in the Kingdom of Death (New York: Friendship Press, 1985), pp. 37-38.

⁶⁷ Lindsey, Rapture, p. 13.

⁶⁸ Jewett, "Doom," p. 21.

⁶⁹ Jewett, "Doom," p. 22.

⁷⁰ Jewett, "Doom," p. 22.

⁷¹ Robert Scheer, With Enough Shovels: Reagan, Bush and Nuclear War (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), p. 260.

⁷² Martin Marty, Righteous Empire (New York: The Dial Press, 1970), pp. 263-266.

⁷³ Marty, pp. 263-266.

⁷⁴ The contribution of dispensationalism to the Jewish-Christian dialogue is an area of concern which merits further study. The present work does not touch directly upon the implications of this topic but an extensive footnote here will outline some of the considerations that further research might explore.

It was briefly indicated that dispensational theory posits a dual purpose within the divine plan for creation. The God revealed through dispensational exegesis is concerned with both the people of Israel and the 'true' Christian church. This dualism was present from the very inception of dispensational theory in Darby's writing and preaching and has been a common theme ever since. One biblical scholar, Daniel Fuller, proposes that this distinction is made "in order to keep the teachings of grace in Scripture free from the teachings of the law" (Daniel Fuller, Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1980], p. 3). He further states that his book "is an inquiry into the underlying principles of interpretation which lead dispensationalists to make these distinctive emphases in their exposition of the Bible. Its thesis is that dispensationalism draws a sharp distinction between Israel and the Church in order to keep the teachings of grace in scripture free from the teachings of the law" (p. 3). Though this seems a plausible explanation for earlier dispensationalists like Darby, Scofield, and Chafer, it does not appear to be the primary reason for the distinction between Israel and the Church made by Lindsey. Apart from its use in the text Liberation from Planet Earth, this distinction serves an eschatological as opposed to a soteriological purpose.

There is a perplexing double message discernible in Lindsey's writings on Israel. Throughout his books one notes a contrast between his uncritical and strident approval of the State of Israel, with all its contiguous pro-Judaistic implications, (See Terminal, p. 50 and Countdown, p. 158.) and his explicit assumption that all Jews will eventually be converted or be damned to the lake of fire for all eternity. What appears to be unbridled sympathy on one level could be judged as pernicious religious imperialism on another. Herein lie the questions. Is Lindsey in particular, or dispensational theology in general, serious about maintaining this notion of the dual, covenantal purpose of God? Does their support of Israel reduce or ameliorate the anti-Judaism which is inherent in most Christian theology? Is dispensationalism less prone to anti-Semitism, as Lindsey claims? (See Rapture, p. 37, where he says that "No person who believes in the pre-millennial

view can be anti-semitic. In fact, the premillennialists are probably the truest non-Israeli friends the Israelites have in the world today.") Or is the dispensational commitment to Israel a "marriage of convenience," as one author suggests? (See Robert I. Friedman, "Terror on Sacred Ground" in Mother Jones, August / September 1987, p. 40.)

It is, perhaps, too simplistic to dismiss these questions, as Dwight Wilson does, by maintaining that the dispensational support of the State of Israel has been and still is fundamentally "opportunistic" (Dwight Wilson, Armageddon Now [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker House, 1977], p. 96) and that underneath all the eloquent affirmations lurks a rather devious form of anti-Semitism (Wilson, p. 138). Certainly there is an element of truth in Wilson's argument. Dispensationalists need the State of Israel for their own eschatological reasons, and they are willing to support it, seemingly, at any cost. (For confirmation of this antinomian support see Grace Halsell's book, Prophecy and Politics in a chapter entitled: "What Israel Gets from the Alliance--Money," pp. 162ff.) According to the Darbyite reading of the scriptures, neither the Rapture nor the Great Tribulation nor the long awaited Kingdom will occur if the State of Israel does not exist. So it is presumed that the dispensational loyalty to Israel is conditional and that it extends only to the time of the Rapture and no further. In the final analysis, dispensationalists proclaim that all the Jews will convert and this raises concerns about religious imperialism. Nevertheless, important and viable as the accusation of convenience may be, it does not prove helpful in reflecting on the deeper realities of the dispensational loyalty to Israel.

Two responses to the charge of dispensational opportunism with regard to Israel are possible. First, Wilson's comments do not do justice to the fact that the existence of the chosen people of Israel is a theological a priori principle in dispensational thought based on the dialectic between law and gospel, and therefore it is more than an convenient idea. Second, Wilson's attitude ignores or forgets the tragic history of Christian anti-Judaism. When the dispensationalist attitudes towards the Jews are compared with the more orthodox adversus Judaeos tradition (Ruether), dispensationalism appears to be more appropriately sympathetic to the chosen people both in sociological and theological terms. In elaborating these two considerations, this challenging aspect of dispensational thought becomes evident.

Theologically, support for the people of Israel is at the very heart of dispensational thinking. According to Lindsey and Scofield, it was at the beginning of the fourth dispensation that God chose the people of Israel (1) as the community through which the Messiah would be revealed to the world and (2) as the nation which would enjoy the glorious Kingdom prophesied in Revelation. (See Promise, pp. 16-17 and The New Scofield Reference Bible,

ed. C.I. Scofield [New York: Oxford University Press, 1967], p. 20.) God made a covenant with Abraham which forms the basis for the dispensational respect and reverence for the Jews. Dispensational theology claims that the Abrahamic covenant will be literally fulfilled after the Tribulation, since the Jews never lost their status as the chosen people. Citing several texts, Lindsey confirms that "God has unconditionally promised Abraham's descendants a literal world-wide kingdom, over which they would rule through their Messiah who would reign upon King David's throne. . . . It is promised that Jerusalem will be the spiritual centre of the entire world and that all people of the earth will come annually to worship Jesus who will rule there (Zech. 14:16-21, Isaiah 2:3, Micah 4:1-3). The Jewish believing remnant will be the spiritual leaders of the world and teach nations the ways of the Lord. (Zech. 20-23, Isaiah 66:23)" (Late Great, p. 165).

Lindsey's sentiments are not new. They have their roots in Darby, Blackstone, Scofield, Chafer and others. The vision of a restored Davidic Kingdom which is contingent upon and embodied by the existence of the State of Israel is figuratively and quite literally the 'launching pad' for their eschatological hopes. In recognizing this fact, however, it must be immediately asserted that allegiance to Israel is not simply a result of over-ambitious millennialism. The chosen people are the thread which draws together the dispensational interpretation of history. The life and struggles of the people of Israel are the central plot of the drama of the ages, while the Christian church is an interruption of the main action. The continued existence of the chosen people gives the temporal realm a concrete goal, i.e., the Kingdom. It also provides the dispensationalist Christians with a specific ethic and strategy: the establishment and support of the State of Israel leading to the rebuilding of the temple. Besides its eschatological significance, the distinction between the church and the people of Israel is central to the dispensational 'division' of scripture which produces the essential chronology of events leading up to judgement day. (See Appendix Three.) Without the differentiation between these two groups, the end times scenario would become directionless.

Through a concise delineation of terms, it could be argued that dispensationalism is not overtly anti-Semitic but that it does have the potential for anti-Judaism. The question of anti-Judaism is important in the present context and, though it ought to be addressed by any Christian theology, it would be especially important for further research into Lindsey's ideas to establish whether the dispensational system of Christian thought has any unique perspective on Judaism which might enlighten the on-going Christian-Jewish dialogue.

Dispensationalist loyalty to the State of Israel has a long history within that system of thought. Lindsey's views are similar to those of W.E. Blackstone, who championed the

cause of resettlement for the Jews in Palestine before and during the rise of Zionism. (See Blackstone, p. 162.) From the time of Blackstone through the twentieth century, dispensationalists have given unswerving, enthusiastic and determined support to the State of Israel. Dwight Wilson underlines this tenacity and enthusiasm as that which distinguishes premillennial dispensationalism from other religious groups: "So premillennarians did not have a monopoly on Christian support for Israel; what was unique was their deterministic, non-moral approach and their eagerness. This eagerness was not expressed in direct political action on Israel's behalf but rather this great event was heralded in press and pulpit as a sure sign of the end" (Wilson, p. 141). More recently, evangelists like Jerry Falwell have openly defended the cause of Israel. In an interview given to Christianity Today in 1981, Falwell links God's providential choice of America and the Jewish people by saying that "God has raised up America in these last days for the cause of world evangelism and for the protection of his people, the Jews. I don't think America has any other right or reason for existence than those two purposes" (Ruth Moly, Roland Robertson, "Zionism in American Premillennial Fundamentalism" American Journal of Theology and Philosophy, Vol. 4, No. 3, Sept. 1983, p. 97).

It was perhaps on account of such supportive pronouncements that the Israeli Prime Minister of this period, Menachin Begin, called Falwell in 1981 to seek his support for the Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor. (See Moly and Robertson, p. 97.) Furthermore, Begin was known to have argued that the major pro-Israel pressure group within the United States was the Christian evangelical community within which the dispensationalists were the most significant segment (Moly and Robertson, p. 105).

It is debatable whether or not the dispensational position can be labeled as "Zionism." In his work on the subject of fundamentalists and Zionism, Yona Malachy concludes that the dispensationalists were only "philo-semitic" and that their Zionist belief had only an eschatological significance. (See Yona Malachy, American Fundamentalism and Israel, [Jerusalem: The Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1978], p. 161.) Since Malachy researched this subject, the links, both economic and political, between dispensationalists and radical Israelis would appear to be strengthening. When Christians organize their own "Christian Zionist Congress" on the site of the first Zionist congress held in Basel in 1897 it is difficult to ignore the strong Zionist flavour of dispensational religious life. (For an account of this event, read Halsell, pp. 131ff.) The seemingly uncritical pro-Zionism of dispensationalist Christians has spawned an increasing body of research examining the relations between Jewish and Christian religious

fundamentalists. One author calls the alliance between Jewish and Christian fundamentalists "the ultimate marriage of convenience, with the two groups united to bring on the messiah and each side convinced the Messiah will be its own" (Friedman, p. 40). Another writer, Grace Halsell, fears the threat to peace created by the political and spiritual obsessions of fundamentalists in each religion. "Leaders in both groups are obsessed with their own belief system, their own ideology, their own certitude that they have both the right and the power to help orchestrate not only their own End of Times but doomsday for the rest of the species" (Halsell, p. 200).

Behind the special status and loyalty accorded the people of Israel is the unyielding dispensational conviction that the Jews will eventually accept Jesus as their Messiah. Lindsey believes that the conversion of the Jews to Christianity is as inevitable as the establishment of their Kingdom and writes: "Against incredible odds, the Jews had unwittingly further set up the stage for their final hour and conversion" (Late Great, p. 45). Part of the dispensational understanding of the end times is that 144,000 Jews will convert and evangelize the whole world. "God is going to reveal Himself in a special way to 144,000 physical literal Jews who are going to believe with a vengeance that Jesus is the messiah. They are going to be 144,000 Jewish Billy Grahams turned loose on the earth --the earth will never know a period of evangelism like this period" (Late Great, p. 99). Is this anti-Judaism? In response to such a query it should be noted that the Christianizing of the Jews does not diminish their unique status as a chosen people of Yahweh in Lindsey's thought. After the Tribulation, the Jewish Davidic Kingdom will be established in spite of the fact that all the Jews who survive will have accepted Jesus as their Messiah. This may seem to be a latent species of anti-Judaism but in comparison with the overt anti-Judaism of mainstream Christian thought it is mild indeed.

A cursory reading of the early Christian 'Saints' illustrates the fierce anti-Jewish bias. Tertullian accused the Jews of idolatry stating: "According to the divine Scriptures the people of the Jews quite forsook God and did degrading service to idols and abandoning the Divinity surrendered to images. Whence it is proven that they have been guilty of the crime of idolatry" (Rosemary Radford Ruether, Faith and Fratricide, [New York: Seabury Press, 1979], p. 126). John Chrysostom decried the sensuality of the Jewish people and their subsequent rebellious behaviour. "As an animal, when it has been fattened by getting all it wants to eat, gets stubborn and hard to manage, so it was with the Jewish people. Reduced by gluttony and drunkenness to a state of utter depravity, they frisked about and would not accept Christ's yoke" (Ruether, Faith, p. 127). The great Christian preacher went on to vilify the Jewish synagogue, and malign all things Jewish. "I know many people who hold a high regard

for the Jews and consider their way of life worthy of respect at the present time. This is why I am hurrying to pull up this fatal notion at the roots. A place where a whore stands on display is a whorehouse. What is more the synagogue is not only a whorehouse and a theatre; it is also a den of thieves and a haunt of wild animals. . . . The Jews have no conception of (spiritual) things at all, but living for the lower nature, all agog for the here and now, no better disposed than pigs or goats, they live the rule of debauchery and inordinate gluttony. Only one thing they understand: to gorge themselves and to get drunk" (Ruether, Faith, p. 178).

Chrysostom and Tertullian were not alone in their condemnation of Judaism and the Jewish people. Augustine, Cyprian, and Luther, to mention only a few, produced similar tirades against the Jews. In these tracts the Jews were depicted as a sensual, idolatrous and defeated race, subordinate to the righteous and triumphant Christian church. In most anti-Jewish tracts, the Christians are depicted as the spiritual successors to the Jews. The promises made to the people of Israel are transferred to the Christian church. This implicit triumphalism and theological anti-Judaism of such notions have formed a tragic and reprehensible tradition within the history of Christian thought.

In contrast, dispensationalism not only tolerates the Jewish people, but believes that they have and will continue to have a special and undeniable purpose within God's providential plan. The Jews suffer persecution as part of God's plan, but eventually their covenant is to be fulfilled, and they are to be restored to their homeland to enjoy peace and prosperity. It is for this reason that at no point in Lindsey's writings is the special 'chosen' status of the people of Israel ever questioned or reduced in importance. With some justification he can claim "that no person who believes in the premillennial view can be anti-Semitic. In fact, the premillennialists are probably the truest non-Israeli friends the Israelites have in the world today" (Lindsey, Rapture, p. 30).

Not only theologically, but also politically there is a great deal of common ground between dispensational fundamentalism and Jewish fundamentalists. Each is hoping for the return of their Messiah. One American author, Nathan Perlmutter, contends that because the existence of the State of Israel is a priority for each group, other possible differences are inconsequential. He explains: "Jews can live with all the domestic priorities of the Christian Right on which liberal Jews differ so radically because none of these concerns is as important as Israel. . . we need all the friends we have to support Israel" (Halsell, p. 155). Speaking about the dispensational belief in the eventual conversion of the Jews, he reasons: "If the Messiah comes, on that day we'll consider our options. Meanwhile let's praise the Lord and pass the ammunition" (Halsell, p. 155). Apart from the conversion

of Jews when the Messiah appears, there is very little that distances a dispensationalist Christian from a fundamentalist Jew. According to Lindsey's plan, the Jews will have their Davidic Kingdom in Palestine ruled by the Messiah. The Jewish people will be freed from oppression, their persecutors will be judged and all will be peaceful.

From the perspective of its overriding loyalty to a Jewish homeland, dispensationalism appears to be distinctly more favourable (and more useful) than other Christian traditions to the State of Israel. Hence, in certain Jewish circles, it is viewed with more sympathy than other Christian systems. Even if the dispensationalists openly declare that the Jews should convert and proclaim that in the final days they will convert, some Jewish leaders point out that the dispensationalists are 1) unequivocally supportive of the State of Israel both monetarily and politically; 2) not seeking to persecute the Jews if they do not convert; 3) desirous of giving the Jews a special religious status and 4) willing to wait until the end of time before requiring the final conversion of the Jews. This is certainly a more favourable proposition than the thinly-veiled injunctions of Chrysostom that all the Jews should be slaughtered or the shameless apathy of Christians who ignored the Holocaust.

Although it may not be advisable to embrace the dispensational antinomianism vis-a-vis the Israeli nation, dispensationalism does challenge mainline Christian theology with the need to develop a sympathetic theological appreciation for Judaism. Can Christianity repent of its spiritual self-righteousness which has led to tremendous animosity against the Jews? Can its Christology relinquish the anti-Judaic bias implicit in its triumphalism? Can the faith in Christ shed its exclusivistic claim to truth? These are the questions which mainstream Christian thinkers should contemplate when reviewing the dispensationalist sympathy for the chosen people. This is not a simple undertaking but it is a vital one if Christianity is to move responsibly into the pluralistic age of the next century.

In a deeper sense, the issue becomes one of the relationship of Christianity to its own religious and theological roots. In the evaluation of its anti-Judaism, could Christianity re-discover some themes or formative notions which it has discarded over two thousand years of theological discourse? For instance, is not the Hebraic love of life and creation, its appreciation of human sexuality and its emphasis on justice very necessary correctives to Christian dogma?

These considerations extend beyond theological issues. In the context of increasing unrest in the occupied territories, Christian theology must find an authentic approach to Judaism which allows it to critique the State of Israel, as it does any other nation, without falling prey either to latent anti-Judaism or blatant anti-nomianism.

One biblical scholar, Robert Bate, who has studied the dispensational political connection to Israel, recently underlined the difficulty of this task when he wrote: "What right have Christians, whose fathers in the faith habitually labeled their Jewish neighbours as Christ-killers and demon-possessed and in so doing helped to pave the road to the Holocaust, to claim now the office of Judge? If we presume to speak it can only be after we have listened long enough to have learned some humility about our past" (Robert Bate, "Callous Treatment of Jews robs the World of its Right to Condemn Israel" in The Whig Standard, Kingston, April 30, 1988, A4).

⁷⁵ See footnote 8 of the Introduction.

Notes:

Chapter 1

¹ Hunter, pp. 158-159.

² Weber. When speaking about the fundamentalist debacles of the 1920, Weber points out that recently evangelicalism had emerged as "a powerful and highly visible force on the American Religious scene" (p. 3).

³ The term: "religious right" is used in this dissertation to denote the spectrum of conservative, Protestant Christians. No doubt there are many Roman Catholics who would also claim conservative standing, but in the present work the term refers only to Protestants and traditional Protestant churches will be understood to include: Presbyterians, Methodists, Northern Baptists, Lutherans, Disciples of Christ, United Church of Christ and Anglicans.

⁴ Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism, p. 152. Marsden makes the point that because dispensationalists and fundamentalists lacked ecclesiastical structures to arbitrate disputes and make distinctions between righteous and unrighteous belief, "theological minutiae" played the role of setting up much needed boundaries between the pure and impure believers.

⁵ Hunter. He argues that among fundamentalists there is no possibility for vagueness with respect to moral purity. In his view there existed "a clear and fundamental distinction . . . between Christian conduct and non-Christian or worldly conduct. In this dualist conception of good and evil, there was, for all practical purposes, no middle ground, no ethically dubious territory" (p. 57).

⁶ Hunter, p. 72. Discussing the shifting emphases in conservative moral principles, Hunter suggests that renunciation is the primary goal, while the actual objects of renunciation are secondary.

⁷ Hunter. In his text, Hunter recounts the primacy of the American family for fundamentalists as proclaimed by certain conservative Christian authors. "A spiritually strong and loving family is ultimately the basis for a strong and healthy nation. . . . The hope of America today is strong Christian families. Determine to make your family a fortress of spiritual and moral strength against the shifting tides of moral change" (p. 82).

⁸ Hunter. It is not an extraordinary fact that fundamentalist believers hold conservative political views, since as Hunter points out: "Conservative Protestantism

has . . . helped to define America. It is part of the myth itself. It is not surprising, therefore, that conservative Protestantism would define its political interests as the conservative defense of all that constitutes the American ideal. In so doing, it fosters and protects its own interests as a religious people" (p. 116).

⁹ Hunter. The fear of and animosity towards communism has been a recurrent theme throughout fundamentalist history. Hunter notes that, according to conservative religious thinking, communism was the "predominant symbol of evil in the world, particularly as this insidious force 'threatened to undermine, internally, the strength of American institutions and values'" (p. 122).

¹⁰ Hunter. The evidence of the conservative zeal for global evangelism is given by Hunter when he explains that in "1980, the U.S. sent abroad 30,000 evangelical nationals as missionaries, constituting nearly eleven times the number of American liberal Protestant missionaries" (p. 7). Locally the spirit of evangelism among conservatives is evident in their generous stewardship in supporting local church communities. Again, Hunter notes that "Evangelicals give the church an average of 40% more than do liberals" (p. 6).

¹¹ James Barr, Fundamentalism (London: SCM Press, 1977). Barr underlines the possibility for this convergence of belief on the right by citing the example of a common respect for the Bible. "Fundamentalist attitudes to the bible are shared by a wide variety of groups and religious currents which may be interested primarily in faith healing, in speaking in tongues or in forecasting the end of the world" (p. 41).

¹² This point is made in Chapter Two of the present work. George Marsden points out that much American conservative religion had its origins in the revivalist movements of the nineteenth century.

¹³ Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism. Marsden notes that liturgical form in conservative or fundamentalist meetings "was secondary and subordinate to evangelism so that catchy hymns and choruses or thrilling xylophone recitals to warm up the audience transformed or entirely crowded out the traditional Protestant liturgy" (p. 85).

¹⁴ Fackre. After outlining the broad categories of denominations or movements within the "right wing", Fackre points out that in "evangelicalism, as in all dynamic movements, there is mobility among and within the various types. The reality is clearly not as neatly structured as the above catalogue suggests" (p. 7). This situation is further complicated by the fact that many churches of the religious right operate autonomously and, therefore, are free to use whatever liturgical style suits

the community. Often this means that popularity determines which ideas, programs or initiatives become the focus of worship.

15 Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism. Marsden argues that "one of the peculiarities of American evangelicalism is that its theological disputes are often settled in the court of popular opinion. Whereas evangelicals appeal to the 'Bible alone' for authority, they lack adequate mechanisms for settling differences on how the bible is to be understood. . . . the authority of anyone in most of evangelicalism thus depends on winning popular support" (p. 291).

16 Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism. Marsden argues that fundamentalism needs clear boundaries in order to establish the ecclesiastical purity so important to their understanding of salvation. Thus, "because America . . . had boundless religious freedom and had no establishment church" Christian believers "needed practical equivalents to set boundaries. Theological minutiae could play that role" (p. 152).

17 Cox. He maintains that fundamentalist "insistence on absolute doctrinal conformity and their sharp distrust of any authoritarian hierarchy has led fundamentalist leaders into an acrimonious history of mutual condemnation and founding of new churches" (p. 45). Cox's comment is supported by Erling Jorstad, The Politics of Doomsday (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970). Jorstad explains that the "failures of the fundamentalists to unite in 1942 pointed up the problems faced by the heirs of Dwight L. Moody in the mid-twentieth century. Where once the orthodox stood proudly together in the midst of a great revival, their descendants could now only argue bitterly with one another. The best of Moody's evangelism . . . had hardened into bitter doctrinal acrimony" (p. 36).

18 Jorstad. On the topic of Carl McIntire's insistence that the Bible taught the separation of the true church from the unbelieving traditional Protestant denominations, Jorstad points out that many "conservatives thought not, and on that issue the heirs of Moody chose battle among themselves rather than unite against the common foe" (p. 36).

19 Lindsey, Rapture. Lindsey states that the purpose of his book was to clear up confusion about the Rapture. He writes: "I decided to write this book because I see a growing confusion and anxiety developing throughout the body of Christ world wide. The confusion and anxiety comes from an uncertainty about whether the true church . . . will go through the Tribulation" (p. 23). In another work: Satan is alive and Well on Planet Earth, Lindsey has a similar message: "However we must be

doctrinally correct in what we teach. Many Christians. . . won't buy the message intended by the term 'baptism of the Spirit' because they know that term is a misapplication of a valid biblical doctrine" (p. 233).

20 Fackre, pp. 6-7.

21 Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism. Speaking of the "new-evangelicals" who were attempting to break new ground for conservative belief, Marsden comments that the "most explosive issue facing these post World War II reformers of fundamentalism was the same one that had plagued Protestant reformers in America . . . Must they separate from corrupted denominations" (p. 6)? According to Marsden, those who held out for strict separation were "the right wing of fundamentalism" (p. 8).

22 That dispensational concepts act as a boundary between right and wrong belief is made evident in Marsden's analysis of Fuller Seminary's growth. When he outlines the crisis points of that seminary's life, Marsden highlights two dispensational notions, biblical inerrancy and strict separation of the pure believers from the other corrupt denominations, as the major foci of that institution's early struggles (Reforming Fundamentalism, pp. 197-219).

23 Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism. Quoting scripture, Marsden makes an excellent distinction between the relatively open evangelism of the conservative evangelical and the intellectually antagonistic variety of dispensationalism. The former's message is "Ye must be born again" while the latter proclaims "Ye should earnestly contend for the faith" (p. 162).

24 Frank, p. 12.

25 Examples of Lindsey's appeal for conversion are numerous. Late Great. "First, if you are not sure you have personally accepted the gift of God's forgiveness which Jesus Christ has purchased by bearing the judgement of a holy God that was due to your sin, then you should do so right now wherever you are" (pp. 174-175). Rapture. "The one who knows that Jesus is in his heart . . . is the only one who can face today's news and honestly be optimistic" (p. 176). Prophetical. "If you haven't received his pardon, invite him to come into your life" (p. 198).

26 Lindsey, Prophetical, p. 198.

27 Barr, p. 6.

28 Lindsey, New World, p. 6.

29 Lindsey, Terminal. He points to the principle of inerrancy and affirms that the "most extraordinary and

unique claim of the Bible about itself is that although human beings were used to write it, the words are exactly the ones that God wanted to say" (p. 113).

30 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 114.

31 Barr, p. 26.

32 Lindsey, Rapture. In support of a separatist ecclesiology Lindsey states that "the New Testament reveals that not everyone in the local church is part of the true Church universal" (p. 76).

33 Lindsey, Late Great. Making this distinction clear, Lindsey writes: "We will refer to the event when the church (those who believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour) will meet Christ in the air as the Rapture" (pp. 127ff). Further in the same text, he continues: "There is an ever widening gap between the true believers in Christ and those who masquerade as 'ministers of righteousness'" (p. 172).

34 Lindsey, Late Great. The dispensationalist points out that in the end times there "will be unprecedented mergers of denominations into religious conglomerates. . . . As more of these truths are discarded as irrelevant because of unbelief in Biblical authority, there will be no reason to be divided" (p. 171). He predicts the end will be near when there appears a "world religious organization, spearheaded mostly by the unbelieving leaders of the institutional churches" (p. 172).

35 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 170.

36 Walter J. Hollenweger, The Pentecostals (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972). Hollenweger claims that "most Pentecostals would say that the distinguishing feature is the experience of the baptism of the spirit with the initial sign of speaking in tongues" (p. xx).

37 Nils Bloch Hoell, The Pentecostal Movement (London: Allen Unwin, 1964), p. 2.

38 Hoell, p. 10.

39 Hollenweger. He presents a useful chart outlining the two stage and three stage explanation of the Pentecostal experience which lists the various denominations formed under each idea (pp. 24-25).

40 Hollenweger, p. 12.

41 Hoell. He explains the uprootedness of that period stating: "Industrialization and the growth of cities involved revolutionary changes of attitude to life and

conduct. The agrarian population was suddenly forced into an industrial milieu and the hectic life of the big towns. Here too the sudden change of milieu inevitably led to social and political rootlessness. . . . in short, the special circumstances in the U.S.A. at the turn of the century had established a mentality which facilitated the birth of primitive religious mass-movements like the pentecostal movement" (p. 10).

42 Frank, p. vii.

43 To understand the emotional origins of the pentecostal movement some historical background is necessary. As an introduction to a short history of the American pentecostal movement, it should first be recognized that there have been many times in the history of the Christian tradition when charismatic revivals and movements of speaking in tongues have emerged. Montanism is one good example in the early church period. The American version of this Christian phenomenon which is known as Pentecostalism or the "Los Angeles Movement" or the "Tongues Movement" began at the turn of the 20th century. In general, it is a child of American revivalism and specifically of the Holiness movement of the nineteenth century which originated in Great Britain as the Keswick conferences.

There are several possible dates for the beginning of the American Tongues Movement but the pentecostals themselves set the date at 1901 in Bethel College of Topeka, Kansas. The Bethel College was organized by Charles F. Parham who is regarded, with mixed emotions, as the founder of the tradition. Established for the study of the Bible, the College's first students are described by Hoell as "Methodist-inspired experimental Christians of emotional or ecstatic character . . . [belonging] to the Holiness Movement with its elastic doctrines and undeveloped organization" (Hoell, p. 19). Many Christians of the Holiness movement sought the gift of speaking in tongues as an entry back into the primitive and therefore seemingly more truthful experience of the apostolic church. Parham's college became almost a cloistered retreat in which spiritualism could flourish and from which it was hoped ecstatic utterance might flower. It is reported that hunger for the gift of tongues was at a high pitch when eventually Agnes N. Ozman received the Baptism of the Spirit along with the gift of tongues. She recounts the events in the following way: "It was nearly eleven o'clock on the first of January that it came into my heart to ask that hands be laid upon me that I might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. As hands were laid upon my head the Holy Spirit fell upon me and I began to speak in tongues glorifying God. I talked several languages" (Hoell, p. 23).

Soon after this first experience of tongues the whole

college was speaking and praising God through ecstatic speech. After a time of evangelism in Topeka, the students spread out to other parts of Kansas, Missouri and Texas. Parham brought the new movement to Houston where it grew slowly, but while there, Parham instructed a black Baptist preacher, one W.J. Seymour, who took the message of the baptism of the spirit to Los Angeles. There it was to take root, and Seymour was to become the dominant leader of the pentecostal revival.

In Los Angeles the movement grew vigorously. According to pentecostal records the "fire fell" first on April 9, 1906 and spread rapidly. Some historians conjecture that the initial interest in the Azusa Street pentecostal meetings was influenced by, among other things, the San Francisco earthquake. For instance, Hoell relates that "it cannot be doubted that the increased attendance at Azusa Street was partly a fruit of the apocalyptic spirit created by the San Francisco catastrophe" (Hoell, p. 40). After the initial flurry of gatherings in Los Angeles, the pentecostal experience grew into a movement which sent missionaries around the globe. This initial impetus to the start of pentecostalism is indicative of its emotional origins and its continued appeal.

There are many hundreds of churches and organizations which grew out of the initial revival of pentecostalism in Los Angeles. The two major denominations are the Holiness Church of God (Cleveland) and the Assemblies of God. The latter is the only Christian denomination in North America which holds that the dispensational understanding of the end times is doctrinally normative for its members. For explicit details on the organization and size of these two churches, see Hoell, pp. 53-94 and Hollenweger, pp. 21-62.

⁴⁴ Lindsey, Satan, p. 118.

⁴⁵ Lindsey, Satan, p. 119.

⁴⁶ Lindsey, Satan, p. 130.

⁴⁷ Lindsey, Satan, p. 128.

⁴⁸ Lindsey, Satan, p. 131.

⁴⁹ Lindsey, Satan, p. 133.

⁵⁰ The common sense Baconian realism which underlies many of Lindsey's dispensational doctrines is discussed in Chapter Two and it is this 'common sense' approach to scriptures which abhors the spiritualism of the pentecostals, arguing that it does not rely for its sustenance upon the words, revelations and prophecies of the Bible.

⁵¹ "Dividing" the scriptures became the terminology

for dispensational Bible study and a key to dispensational thinking. C. I. Scofield wrote a summary of his views in a text entitled: "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth" quoted in Marsden, Fundamentalism. Marsden points out that "the disposition to divide and classify everything is one of the most striking and characteristic traits of dispensationalism" (p. 59). Lindsey uses the phrase "dividing" scriptures in criticizing pentecostals. He writes: "It is too easy to become unbalanced in our Christian walk if we are not rightly dividing the Word" (Satan, p. 133).

52 Sandeen, Roots. One of the conclusions of Sandeen's work is that "it is millenarianism which gave life and shape to the Fundamentalist movement" (p. xv). Jorstad argues that the attack on liberal theology, has as its "prime resources pre-millennialism, dispensationalism, verbal inerrancy and religious nationalism" (Jorstad, p. 20). Weber also concurs with Sandeen and Jorstad when he notes that most Bible Colleges, which were the backbone of the fundamentalist movement, gained their strength from dispensational premillennialism (Weber, pp. 34-35).

53 The documents which informed dispensationalism were many. One important publication for dispensationalism, The Fundamentals, was produced before and during the time of the First World War. It was actually a compilation of articles grouped into twelve volumes and it represents the example of scholarship expressing fundamentalist and dispensationalist thought. The sponsor of The Fundamentals, Lyman Stewart, became a dispensationalist after hearing A.C. Dixon, and together they developed the idea of publishing a series of articles outlining the fundamentals of the Christian faith which could be sent to every pastor, evangelist, minister and missionary who "were no longer receiving an adequate grounding in the Bible" (Sandeen, Roots, p. 194). Not all the sixty-four authors who contributed articles were dispensationalists, but Sandeen maintains that over half the American authors were millennialists, and many of the most prominent premillennial dispensationalists contributed to this literary undertaking.

54 Sandeen, Roots. Pointing out that there has been confusion over the five points known as "the fundamentals," Sandeen says that Stewart Cole, an early historian of the Fundamentalist movement, confused the Niagara creed with the five points of the Presbyterian church. Sandeen explains: "The Niagara creed, one of the most significant documents in the history of the Fundamentalist movement, was first written in 1878 and contained fourteen articles. Building upon this confusion and ignoring the fact that the five points of the Presbyterian General Assembly did not duplicate those attributed to the Niagara Conference by Cole, students

have learned to define the Fundamentalist as one who believed in the five points" (pp. xiv-xv).

55 Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism, p. 152. He points out that public opinion was the essential arbitrator of disputes. The side which was most popular became the victorious and "correct" one.

56 Barr. He suggests that inerrancy rules out "not only theological error, but error in any sort of historical, geographical or scientific fact" (p. 40).

57 Lindsey, Late Great. In comparison to past prophecies and predictions from other religions, Lindsey concludes that "the claims of the Bible have a greater basis in historical evidence and fact" (p. 7).

58 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 9.

59 Lindsey, Promise, p. 9.

60 Barr. Explaining this correspondence, Barr states: "For fundamentalist interpretation this means: not only is there an event to which the passage refers but the event is extremely like the description of it given in the bible" (p. 49).

61 Lindsey, Late Great. In his first publication, he writes: "The claims of the Bible have a greater basis in historical fact" (p. 7). The question then arises: What is the principle by which Lindsey judges historical fact? It appears that 'common sense' is the determining factor. "Once again, let us remember some basic principles of interpretation. First, if the literal sense makes common sense seek no other sense. Second, all things are intended to be taken literally unless the context clearly indicates otherwise" (Rapture, p. 44). The 'common sense' interpretation of truth will be explored in Chapter Two.

62 Lindsey, Late Great, pp. 48ff. He makes this assertion in Chapter 5 entitled "Russia is Gog."

63 Lindsey, Late Great, pp. 70ff. Lindsey makes this connection in Chapter 7 entitled "The Yellow Peril."

64 Lindsey, Late Great, pp. 75ff. Lindsey makes this correspondence in Chapter 8 entitled "Rome on the Road to Revival."

65 Paul Tillich, A History of Christian Thought (New York: Touchstone, 1967). Tillich states: "What does positivism mean after all? It means accepting what is positively given as such, observing and describing it without trying to criticize it or without trying to make a

constructive system out of it" (p. 358).

66 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 116.

67 Barr. He explains that any biblical criticism is interpreted by fundamentalists as the thin edge of the wedge of doubt which very quickly leads "to the extremes, dissecting the simplest document into a multitude of fragments. The way to prevent this unhappy extreme from taking place is to prevent the process from beginning at all. If you allow a man to say that Deuteronomy is from a long time after Moses, then next he will be saying that Jesus never said the things he is reported to have said, and from this it is but a short step to saying that Jesus never existed, or that the patriarchs were moongods. . . . All these things work by the same essential logic and if you are to oppose the extreme developments you must already have opposed the smallest beginnings. Once the camel gets his nose inside the tent he soon comes to occupy the whole space within" (p. 68).

68 Barr, p. 49.

69 Barr, p. 45.

70 Scofield, p. 2.

71 Barr. He outlines the functioning of the 'gap theory' in the following way: "The importance of the interpretation (Ex.6:16ff) is that it stretches out the distance between Levi and Moses to something adequate to allow the descent into Egypt" (p. 45).

72 Lindsey, Late Great. Lindsey allows for some flexibility in the interpretation of the word generation. When writing about the "generation" who would see the second coming he states: "A generation in the bible is something like forty years. If this is a correct deduction then within forty years or so of 1948, all these things could take place" (p. 43).

73 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 24.

74 Scofield, p. 913.

75 Lindsey, Terminal. Lindsey claims that "Jesus and the apostles believed the scriptures were infallible right down to the words" (p. 115).

76 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 118.

77 Lindsey, Terminal. Lindsey delineates the role of the Jewish people in the following words: "The Old Testament has the same reliable evidence. According to Moses one of the great reasons for the creation of the

race of the Jews was so that they could receive, write down and preserve God's revelation to man" (p. 119).

78 Barr, pp. 55-56.

79 Barr, p. 56. This quote is originally taken from C.E. Graham Swift's commentary on Mark, p. 875b of the New Bible Commentary Revised, quoted in Barr's text.

80 Sandeen, Roots. Sandeen points out that this principle of harmonization was the primary reason for Nelson Darby's division of scripture into that a) which relates to the Jews and b) that which speaks only to the church. "Too traditional to admit that the biblical authors might have contradicted each other and too rationalist to admit that the prophetic maze defied penetration, Darby attempted a resolution of his exegetical dilemma by distinguishing between scripture intended for the church and scripture intended for Israel" (p. 66).

81 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 116.

82 Lindsey, New World, p. 7.

83 Scofield, p. ix.

84 Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism. This is clearly the thesis which directs Marsden's reading of the strife within Fuller seminary. Inerrancy was the key point which precipitated the break between strict fundamentalism and dispensationalism and opened the way for broader views to flourish within that institution.

85 Catherine Albanese, "Dominant and Public Centre: Reflections on the One Religion of the United States" in The American Journal of Theology and Philosophy, Vol. 4, No. 3, September 1983, p. 95.

86 Marty, p. xi. Marty quotes Dwight in his introduction to explain the importance of the explicit assumption of destiny among America's founding leaders.

87 Marty, p. 265.

88 Weber, p. 9.

89 Weber, p. 9.

90 Marsden, Fundamentalism. Marsden states that "amillennialism, not so termed until the twentieth century, holds that the prophecies concerning both the struggles with the anti-Christ and the reign of Christ are being partially fulfilled already in the present church age so that the millennium does not represent a separate historical period" (p. 240).

91 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 29.

92 Lindsey, Rapture. Lindsey explains amillennialism's propensity for anti-Semitism in the following way: "Amillennialism teaches that the church has been given the promises made to the Israelites because they crowned a history of unbelief by rejecting the Messiah. Therefore, since, in this view, the Israelites have no future in God's plan, and since they believe that the 'Jews engineered the execution of Jesus', a subtle justification for the persecution of Jews resulted" (p. 30).

93 Marty. He refers to Edwards when he states: "This nation was, of course, 'the principal nation of the Reformation', and Jonathan Edwards, the colonies' greatest theologian, had seen it" (p. 49). Sandeen confirms that Edwards was "the first postmillennial theologian in U.S. history" (Roots, p. 43).

94 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 24.

95 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 28.

96 Frank. He quotes one of Finney's statements which reflects his postmillennial stance: "Now the great business of the church is to reform the world--to put away every kind of sin. The church of Christ was originally organized to be a body . . . to reform individuals, communities, and governments, and never rest until the kingdom and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the most high God" (p. 24).

97 Marty, p. 176.

98 Marsden, Fundamentalism. He states: "the idea of transforming the culture fit well with the Puritan [ways] . . . The spiritual hope was partly secularized and nationalized as the American civil religion was born" (pp. 49-50).

99 Marty. He states that the "Edwardseans with countless variations, have been more optimistic transformers of society" (p. 265).

100 Marsden, Fundamentalism. When speaking about the dramatic decline in the work of fundamentalists, he states that "the Great Reversal took place from about 1900 to about 1930 when all progressive social concern, whether political or private, became suspect among revivalist evangelicals and was relegated to a very minor role" (p. 86). Marsden speculates that the suspicion around social issues developed because they were associated with churches which had embraced liberal

theology.

101 Marsden, Fundamentalism. He points out the contrast between fundamentalist evangelicals and the proponents of the social gospel on the issue of different millennial views. "The liberal and Social Gospel emphasis on the Kingdom of God as realized in the progress of civilization was readily contrasted with premillennialist eschatological hopes. The dichotomy between the Social Gospel and the Revivalist Gospel became difficult to ignore" (p. 92).

102 Weber, p. 15. He points out that in 1839 William Miller, the advocate of a historic premillennialism, had over a million followers in the North Eastern states.

103 Weber, p. 10.

104 Weber, p. 14.

105 Sandeen, Roots. He points out that premillennialism began in Great Britain with the apparently complete and precise fulfillment of biblical prophecies during the French Revolution. Furthermore, in 1829 a conference of millennialists believed that the "1260 years of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 ought to be measured from the reign of Justinian to the French Revolution. The vials of wrath (Revelation 16) are now being poured out" (pp. 21-22)

106 Sandeen, Roots, p. 59.

107 Sandeen, Roots, p. 55.

108 Sandeen, Roots, p. 42.

109 Weber, p. 100.

110 The structure of Frank's text, Less Than Conquerors, is based upon his discussion of three movements which he labels as 'evangelical'--dispensationalism, the holiness movement and the great evangelical crusades. He develops extensive arguments to illustrate that each one was in conflict with the changing moods of American culture.

111 It has been argued that The Fundamentals were more than a series of books which promoted certain dispensational ideas. The twelve volume series was the evidence of co-operation between conservatives of mainline Protestant churches and dispensationalists; a co-operation which gave the latter a place of importance and prestige in the American religious community. The publication of The Fundamentals was, perhaps, the most prominent example of this alliance between the conservative elements of mainline Protestantism and the premillennial

dispensationalists. Sandeen attests that in "The Fundamentals, we see the last flowering of a millenarian-conservative alliance dedicated at all costs to the defense of the cardinal doctrines of nineteenth century American evangelism" (Roots, p. 207).

After the turn of the century this alliance began to weaken. Eventually it disintegrated, and this rupture in relations precipitated a reversal in the status of dispensational ideas. At the end of the nineteenth century dispensationalists and other millennialists were not on the margins of the American religious life. They were respected and influential members of the religious community. Sandeen argues: "Although not convincing the nation of the truth of its position and not even winning the majority within the two denominations where their reception was warmest, the millennialists nevertheless reached a position of relative success and influence by the end of the nineteenth century. They were treated with respect by conservatives within Baptist and Presbyterian seminaries and denominational boards" (Roots, pp. 186-187). This time between the turn of the century and the First World War has been called the 'millennial meridian' since until the Great War the premillennialists were respected and after it the premillennial influence within mainline denominations began to decline and suffer serious reversals. There were several reasons for this. Perhaps the basic anti-modernist attitude of dispensationalists forced them into an isolated position away from the world and social programs. They began to separate themselves from social programs and inner-city evangelistic projects. Sandeen argues that this separation grew out of the growing dispensational displeasure with liberalism and the social gospel movement.

Writing about this great reversal in the fortunes of dispensationalism, Marsden speculates that the shock of liberalism's rise within mainline denominations and the advent of the modern scientific mentality with its concomitant moral flexibility led to a marginalization of dispensational and premillennial church leaders. Beyond this he suggests that the First World War exacerbated this separation between the emerging modern church and the dispensational movement. For the dispensationalists, the war had been a confirmation of their fears and the optimism of the post-war liberal Protestant church seemed foreign to their system of thought. It is for this reason that Marsden claims that dispensationalists "emerged from the experience [of W.W.I] not so much without social or political views as fixated on a set of views that had been characteristic of middle class America in the years before the crisis" (Fundamentalism, p. 93).

A further explanation of this reversal was the problem of leadership. In the 1920's the dispensational movement lacked sophisticated leadership and this situation was complicated even more by internal strife. Sandeen's assessment is that millennial "leadership in the twenties

did not show the strength of character, deep grasp of and reverence for biblical truth or intellectual acuity demonstrated by the late nineteenth-century leaders. The movement appears split and stricken, possibly because some of the men who became most popular could not direct their followers either as consistent conservatives or as moderate liberals" (Roots, pp. 268-269).

Though dispensationalists were involved in the Fundamentalist Controversy of the early 1920's concerning the battle against evolutionism and liberalism, they no longer held influence within the mainstream Protestant denominational circles and they gradually concentrated their efforts on the evangelistic enterprises emanating from the nondenominational Bible colleges. Sandeen asks the question in this regard: "Why did twentieth century millenarians find it possible to drop denominational affiliations when the much admired patriarchs of the movement, . . . felt they should not? Dissatisfaction with the denominations certainly grew stronger with the progress of Liberalism, but the really deciding factor seems to have been the development of nondenominational institutional structures which could function in the same manner as denominations" (Roots, p. 240).

112 Dwight Moody was never a rigid dispensationalist. He was above all a Christian evangelist. Nevertheless, he used the idea of the imminent Rapture and the coming Tribulation to great advantage in his evangelistic preaching campaigns, and several of these homiletical images have become legendary. For instance, he would often proclaim to his rapt audience: "I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a life-boat and said to me 'Moody, save all you can.' God will come in judgement and burn up this world, but the children of God don't belong to this world; they are in it but not of it, like a ship in the water. This world is getting darker and darker; its ruin is coming nearer and nearer. If you have any friends on this wreck unsaved, you had better lose no time in getting them off" (Weber, p. 53). Another example of his homiletical skill in the use of dispensational concepts is found in his famous sermon, "The Lord's Return" in which he popularized the idea of the any-moment secret Rapture. ". . . the trump of God may be sounded, for anything we know, before I finish this sermon--at any rate--we are told that He will come as a thief in the night, and at an hour when many look not for Him" (Weber, p. 54).

Apart from his preaching, Moody's influence in promoting dispensational concepts took three forms: he was (1) instrumental in organizing the Moody Bible Institute; (2) a key figure in the Student Volunteer Movement and (3) the guiding light of the Northfield Conference Centre. In these three areas of Moody's work it is possible to recognize a common pattern in the dissemination and role of dispensational ideas in America.

Dispensational concepts were rarely found alone or isolated from other evangelical programs and organizations. At times they were a central motivation but more often they appear as one among several preoccupations. This situation is further complicated by the fact that in the early stages of its development, the basic tenets of Darby's thought were not clearly distinguished from a broader collection of premillennial ideas and in what follows the two terms are almost interchangeable.

There is good evidence to confirm that the Moody Bible Institute had a premillennial orientation from its very beginning. The Chicago-based institute, which took Moodys' name after the founder's death, was initiated in 1886 as a project by W.J. Erdman, W.G. Moorehead and Emma Dyer, all of whom were millennialists. R. A. Torrey, a convinced dispensationalist, became a superintendent of the school in 1889. Thus, there seems to be little doubt that dispensational ideas were given a good audience at the institute.

The purpose of the Moody Bible Institute was to train what Moody called "gapmen" who "'know the Word' and who could 'go into the shops and meet the bareheaded infidels and skeptics in order to appeal to them in the name of Jesus Christ'" (Weber, p. 34). But the Bible Institute also provided the means for publishing and distributing tracts and books which promoted dispensational ideas. For instance, James Gray, the dean of Moody Bible Institute after Torrey, had Blackstone's work, Jesus is Coming, republished and distributed to students in 1909.

The Moody Bible Institute was one among many colleges promoting dispensational ideas to spring up across the country in the period before and after the turn of the century. A.J. Gordon started a school to train missionaries for the Congo and among the teachers at this college were other dispensationalists like James Gray and Robert Cameron. Will Bell Riley, an early believer in dispensational theories, began a similar school in Minneapolis. Premillennialists set up colleges in Los Angeles, Toronto and Philadelphia. From these institutions came a number of dispensationalist pastors who introduced the concepts to the wider public.

The importance of these Bible institutes was not restricted simply to the dissemination of information and the training of dispensationalists. Weber notes that after the 1925 controversy many dispensationalists began to view and use their particular Bible college like a separate denomination. Whereas the first believers in dispensational ideas required membership in good standing in one of the evangelical churches in order to maintain their credibility, many dispensationalists who followed the great thinkers like Blackstone, Brookes and Gordon were able to draw on a totally independent base of support. It was the Bible institutes which gave this support and which acted as quasi-denominational centres for premillennialists. (See also

Sandeen, Roots, pp. 241ff.)

Besides pastors, the Bible colleges produced countless numbers of dispensationalist missionaries. Contrary to criticism at the turn of the century, dispensational ideas did not undermine the evangelical spirit. Weber's research suggests that dispensational activists of the 1920's claimed that the majority of missionaries were inspired by the thought of the premillennial return of Christ. Weber states: "Though it is impossible to determine exactly how many premillennialists were serving overseas at any time, by the 1920's premillennialists were claiming that they made up an overwhelming majority of the movement" (Weber, pp. 80-81).

The religious zeal in the 1880's and 90's which gave rise to the Bible institutes, was also evident in the missionary organizations of lay people. One movement which was both missionary and dispensational, the Student Volunteer Movement, was a second instance of Moody's influence in the spread of dispensational notions. His evangelical energy and work with students gave Darby's ideas another audience among which to develop and gain credibility. Evangelistic enthusiasm among students and young people began at Moody's Northfield Conference in 1886. In a move not uncommon to mass gatherings of that day, the students who met at Northfield that year dedicated themselves to foreign missions and held a founding conference of the Student Volunteer Movement which manifested a premillennial bias inasmuch as it featured such dispensational speakers as James Brookes, William Moorehead and A. J. Gordon. Though the Student Volunteer Movement and other missionary societies, like the China Inland Mission, never explicitly endorsed premillennial or dispensational concepts, their zeal and determination were inspired by the strong millennial beliefs of many of their members (Sandeen, Roots, pp. 183ff).

The missionaries who were influenced by premillennialism and dispensationalism understood their task to be one of preaching the good news and making available to the whole world the teachings of Christianity. Because of their dispensational pessimism, they had no illusions about converting the whole world. The main goal was to inform the world of the coming disaster and to give as many people as possible the information necessary for their salvation. Churches could be established later if there was still time. For instance, Hudson Taylor had this dispensational motive in mind when he organized the China Inland Mission. Weber confirms this analysis when he states: "The main purpose of China Inland Mission was not to win converts or build Chinese churches but to spread a knowledge of the Christian gospel throughout the empire as quickly as might be" (Weber pp. 75-76).

Premillennialist and dispensationalist missionaries

looked upon the world with what they called 'realism' and in large measure they established themselves as respected members of the missionary movement. Appendix Five is the account of James Cunningham, a missionary for the China Inland Mission, and grandfather of this author. It not only illustrates his evangelical zeal, the dispensational goal of reaching as many people as possible, but also reveals him to be a sincere and respected missionary.

Besides the students' societies there were other assemblies in which the dispensational concepts could take root. Moody's Northfield Conference Centre was one such gathering. The Northfield Centre, which began its meetings in the summer of 1880, offered a regular program of speakers and Bible study to both ministering personnel and lay people. Mixing recreation, camping spirit and evangelism it featured such dispensational orators as A.J. Gordon, James Brookes and George F. Pentecost at the first meeting. Millennialists, though not always in the majority at these conferences, often held prominent positions in its organization. For instance, Moody asked A.J. Gordon to take his place as director of the Conference in 1892 and 1893. Sandeen confirms that the Northfield Conference was important because it gave premillennialists a "naturally prominent public platform from which to teach and an extraordinary opportunity to establish themselves as sincere, reputable Protestant ministers" (Roots, p. 175).

It was through the Northfield Conference meetings that Moody introduced the British Keswick Holiness movement to American evangelical leaders. The Keswick Movement had an almost complete emphasis on "a personal experience of joy, peace and victory with the practical results seen in enhanced devotional life and zeal for missions" (Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 96). One theme of the Keswick Movement was the belief that a Christian could reach the state of perfection or freedom from the pain of sin. Though separate from dispensationalism, there was some overlap in terms of members and ideas. Marsden conjectures that the Keswick ideas supplemented Darby's objective eschatological ideas with the subjective, emotional element that they had been missing. "Keswick teaching played at least two important roles complementary to dispensational premillennialism in the Bible institute movement. First, it provided an important subjective confirmation of the faith to stand alongside more objective arguments from the Bible and common sense. Secondly, while premillennialism involved abandonment of the optimistic estimate of the conquering power of the Holy Spirit throughout society, Keswick promised personal victory. . . . The light of optimism, then, still prevailed in American evangelical outlook--only it now shone on the individual rather than on the culture" (Fundamentalism, pp. 100-101). Moody's Northfield Conference was certainly important for the spread

of dispensational concepts, and it was Moody's association with the Conference which gave some credibility to the ideas expressed at that annual gathering.

113 Ahlstrom. He writes: "American dispensationalists began to elaborate and improve upon Darby's never very precise scheme" (p. 809). These thinkers would be Brookes, Blackstone, Torrey and Scofield.

114 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 119. Marsden listed The Scofield Reference Bible along with Blackstone's Jesus is Coming, as the most important publications. Sandeen corroborates, stating that Scofield's Reference Bible enjoyed "unparalleled success" among dispensationalists (Roots, p. 233).

115 Determinism in this dissertation is understood as it is described by George Thomas White, Introduction to Philosophy (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1924). White writes: "Human acts like all other events in nature obey nature's law. They are strictly deducible from other antecedent events. All transitions are necessary transitions. It would be impossible to conceive of an event, even a human act of choice, as being uncaused. . . . The feeling of freedom is an illusion, arising from the fact that we are unconscious of the causes which determine our conduct" (p. 328).

116 This translation of oikonomia is taken from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, Seventh Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 546.

117 This verse is taken from the King James Version. See Luke 16:2-4 for this translation of the Greek word, oikonomia as stewardship. A cognate is also used to speak of the "steward" in Luke 12:42 1. Cor. 4:1-2, Titus 1:7 and 1 Peter 4:10.

118 Tillich, History. Tillich speaks of the word "economy" and its importance in the early history of Christian thought and speculates that to "speak of the divine economy is to speak of God 'building up' his manifestations in periods of history" (p. 46).

119 Scofield, p. vii.

120 Service Book (Toronto: Canec Publishing, 1982). In the United Church liturgy of the Lord's Supper one reads in the explanation of the wine: "After the same manner he took the cup, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink" (p. 30).

121 Scofield, p. 3. He lists these three attributes of a dispensation in his introduction to his Bible.

122 Scofield, p. 3.

123 Scofield, p. 3.

124 Scofield. He explains the consistent failure of humanity through the dispensations in almost a deterministic fashion: "In every past dispensation unregenerate man has failed, as he has failed in this present dispensation and will in the future" (p. 3).

125 Scofield, p. 3.

126 Scofield. The reconciliation between humanity and God in each dispensation is achieved, according to Scofield's orthodox soteriology "by God's grace through the work of Christ that was accomplished through the cross" (p. 3).

127 Norman Kraus, "Dispensationalism" found in Eerdmans' Handbook to Christianity in America (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 327.

128 Blackstone. His dispensations are called "innocence, Antediluvian, Post-diluvian, pilgrim, Mosaic, mystery and manifestation" (pp. 222-233).

129 Blackstone. He illustrates how the number of dispensations relates to a "law of sevens" found in the scriptures when he states that "the division of time into sevens, or weeks, permeates the Scriptures . . . even the duration of Israel's great punishments was based upon this law of the sevens" (pp. 38-39).

130 Scofield, p. 4.

131 Scofield, p. 7.

132 Scofield, pp. 13-14.

133 Scofield, p. 19.

134 Scofield, p. 94.

135 Scofield, p. 1162.

136 Scofield, p. 1374.

137 Scofield. The evidence that Scofield's notes employ a hermeneutic of inerrancy is found, for instance, in his references covering the dispensation of "conscience." Here he argues that in the second covenant, humanity was to approach God "through blood sacrifice here instituted in prospect of the finished work of Christ" (p. 7). Scofield interprets Gen. 3:21, which reads: "For Adam also and for his wife did the Lord make coats of skins and clothed them"

(p. 8), as the explanation of God's provision for this sacrificial rite. Obviously Scofield assumes that the skins which God provided for Adam and Eve were taken from ritually sacrificed animals which may or may not be a fair reading of the text but which is clearly not its literal meaning.

138 Scofield, p. v. Lindsey also treats scripture as a great puzzle. He even uses that analogy to describe the mysterious nature of biblical prophecy in The Promise. When speaking of the prophet Micah, Lindsey suggests that he "added several strategic pieces to the jigsaw puzzle of messianic prophecy" (p. 58).

139 See Ahlstrom, p. 809, and Vanderwaal, p. 19. Vanderwaal argues that Joachim de Fiore also developed a division of history according to the doctrine of the Trinity.

140 Vanderwaal. He states that within the spiritualist circle of Francis's order "arose speculation about the seven ages of church" (p. 20).

141 Vanderwaal. He alludes to a periodization of history undertaken by Cocceius stating that Cocceius "made the doctrine of the covenant central but he did not accept the continuity of the covenants. . . . Important for our purposes is that his disciples stressed his more dubious doctrines, such as his theory of the seven ages of the church" (p. 21).

142 Vanderwaal, p. 21.

143 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 65.

144 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 65.

145 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 63.

146 Marsden, Fundamentalism, pp. 61ff. Marsden develops the argument that dispensationalism, fueled by the social pessimism of the post-Civil War period, developed a dualistic and pessimistic perspective on the world, positing goodness and purity to be in the heavenly sphere.

147 Marsden, Fundamentalism, pp. 189-190.

148 The anti-communism of dispensational writings is evident in Lindsey's works. The reader is referred to Appendix Six where it is illustrated that this anti-communism is also part of Blackstone's thinking.

149 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 46.

150 Frances Fitzgerald, "A Reporter at Large," in the

The New Yorker, May 18, 1981. Fitzgerald reports that Jerry Falwell believes himself to be "a separatist" as well as a "premillennialist, pretribulationist . . . this is the terminal generation before Jesus comes" (p. 60).

151 Barr, p. 17.

152 Scofield, p. 1162.

153 Malachy, p. 127.

154 Malachy, p. 127.

155 Sandeen, Roots, pp. 66-67.

156 Sandeen, Roots. Sandeen writes that Darby's "doctrine of the church seems to have acted as the catalytic agent for the rest of his beliefs. Deeply distressed with a worldly Erastian establishment, Darby had declared that church to be in ruins and sought earnestly for the true church" (pp. 66-67).

157 Malachy, p. 130.

158 Lindsey, Promise. While explaining why God has spared the people of Israel, Lindsey states: "The fourth reason for Israel's continued miraculous existence and the one that's most relevant to this book, is that this was to be the ethnic people through which the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, would be born" (pp. 16-17).

159 Lindsey, Rapture, pp. 69-70.

160 This is the basic argument of the article written by Friedman. He suggests that because fundamentalist Jews and Christians both require a strong Israeli government, albeit for divergent reasons and because each longs for the re-establishment of Jewish temple rites, they share common strategies.

161 See I Thes. 4:17.

162 See I Cor. 15:51.

163 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 39.

164 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 45.

165 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 45.

166 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 45.

167 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 169.

168 Sandeen, Roots. He believes this story is

probably not true since it appears to come from Darby's adversaries and therefore "this seems to be a groundless and pernicious charge" (p. 64).

169 Weber, p. 22. Weber quotes from Darby's Collected Works.

170 Sandeen, Roots. When speaking about the conflict between Newton and Darby he affirms: "The focus of their disagreement was Darby's teaching about the second coming of Christ, known at that time and since as the secret rapture" (p. 62).

171 Sandeen, Roots. He writes: "the most serious crisis among American millenarians involved the acceptance of that crucial point in Darby's eschatology, the any-moment coming or secret rapture" (p. 210).

172 Sandeen, Roots. Speaking about the controversy over the Rapture doctrine he writes: "In spite of this apparent surge of interest, . . . the convening committee of the Niagara conference announced in May 1901 that they had regretfully decided to hold no further meetings. Thus amid the barely suppressed rumblings of controversy, Niagara expired" (p. 213).

173 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 126.

174 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 41.

175 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 125.

176 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 185.

177 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 188.

178 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 176.

179 Lindsey, Combat, p. 236.

180 Weber, p. 47.

Notes:

Chapter 2

¹ Frank, pp. 74-75.

² Wilson, p. 13.

³ Cox, p. 48.

⁴ Marsden, Fundamentalism. He states: "My conclusion . . . is that fundamentalists experienced profound ambivalence towards the surrounding culture" (p. viii).

⁵ The sense that Western civilization, and perhaps nature itself, can no longer be trusted is evident in a series of movies depicting the inconsistency and absurdity of life: "One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest," "Catch 22," "Apocalypse Now," "The Day After," etc. See also the art works described in "Remembering Ourselves." "In art Erika Rothenberg created in acrylic in 1982 called Pushing the Right Button a painting of two buttons, the one on top labeled "Launch" and the one beneath it 'Lunch.' Alex Grey, in 1980, painted Nuclear Crucifixion, in oil on linen reminiscent of Matthias Grünewald's painting in the 16th century except here Jesus is crucified in a mushroom cloud. Michael Smith and Alan Herman produced a mixed-media work in 1983 called Government Approved Home Fallout Shelter Snack Bar, a survivalist food counter for the prudent nuclear family, equipped with provisions and three stools . . ." (Time, July 29, 1985, p. 49).

⁶ See the argument below on dispensationalist anti-modernism as an anti-pluralist reaction to new political ideologies influencing America life.

⁷ Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. viii.

⁸ Marsden, Fundamentalism. Speaking about the shift in the status of North American fundamentalism at the turn of the century, Marsden speculates that the fundamentalists whose "world view, which until recently had been generally considered both sacred and academically impeccable, was now becoming the laughingstock" (p. 218).

⁹ See endnote 7.

¹⁰ Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 93.

¹¹ Marsden, Fundamentalism. He introduces his study of fundamentalism with this presupposition: "Their traditions, the ways they maintained them and the ways they modified them are all understood better in the context of the collective uprooting" (p. viii).

12 T.J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), p. 54.

13 Lears, p. 54.

14 Marsden, Fundamentalism. He claims that Bryan "mixed a simple do-it-yourself Gospel message with the traditional American moral virtues of decency, patriotism, manliness, thrift, sobriety, piety and hard work" (p. 135).

15 Lasch. He explains that people in the present era have a therapeutic goal which is distinct from the past. "People today hunger, not for personal salvation, let alone for the restoration of an earlier golden age--but for the feeling, the momentary illusion of personal well-being, health and psychic security" (p. 31).

16 Grant, Philosophy. His criticism of liberalism begins: "The belief that forms of society can easily be changed by our choices is a relic of the faith in liberalism and as limited as most of that liberal faith" (p. 5). This critique continues throughout the book.

17 John Kater Jr., Christians on the Right (New York: Seabury, 1982). It is because fundamentalists search for power that Kater argues they have a powerful image of God. He maintains that because of their perceived powerlessness "God is portrayed in terms of power and this also explains the symbolic role of guns and the freedom to use them and teach one's children about them. The gun is a symbol for pioneering freedom and the power and right to defend oneself" (p. 46).

18 Lindsey, Countdown, pp. 141ff. He points to world computers as the means by which the Antichrist will control the world economy. Bureaucracies, taxes and undue government interference are criticized as well.

19 Fackre, p. 48.

20 A comprehensive reading of Lindsey's writing reveals a predilection for populist phrases and ideas. For instance he often calls the Rapture the "big snatch" and he gives colloquial titles to his chapters, i.e., "Sheik to Sheik," "The Ultimate Trip." Clearly Lindsey is appealing to a wide, non-theological audience and the minutiae of his argument, its possible contradictions or ambiguities, are secondary to the task of holding the reader's attention in the hope of making a convert.

21 Jorstad, p. 138.

22 Lindsey, Countdown. Lindsey, while more positive

and less colourful than Hagaris, employed the same notion of the righteous people living within a sinful nation that needs to repent before it is too late. "I believe that America will survive this perilous situation and endure until the Lord comes to evacuate His people. But this will only be because God's people have humbled themselves, turned from their sins in repentance and sought God's face in prayer" (p. 158).

23 Lindsey, Combat. He asks and answers his own question when he writes that many "Christians in the United States ask me if the Church will see persecution before the beginning of the Tribulation . . . It definitely will" (p. 2).

24 Lindsey, Satan, p. xii.

25 Fackre. He makes the point that this is also the reason for the fundamentalist criticism of humanism. "Secular humanism is seen basically as a view of a world without God and thus without any absolute values" (p. 7).

26 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 15.

27 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 16.

28 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 20.

29 The reader is referred to Appendix Two which gives an overview of Lindsey's first book and illustrates how he tries to make that work credible through the identification of biblical prophecies and modern historical events.

30 Barr. He orients this anti-scientific attitude in the anti-evolutionary battle of the 1925. He does note that this "older conflict between fundamentalism and science has greatly decreased" (p. 92).

31 Marsden, Fundamentalism. He underlines the importance of revivalism, writing that "to a remarkable degree, American religious experience and hence American culture was shaped by . . . the dynamics of unopposed revivalism. . . . Revivalism had little competition when it came to determining the distinctive characteristics of American religious life" (p. 224).

32 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 224.

33 Weber, pp. 36-37.

34 Weber, p. 37.

35 Blackstone, pp. 22-23.

36 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 44.

37 Lindsey, Liberation, pp. 125-140. Lindsey devotes a whole chapter to the eternal importance of the individual's choice. It is entitled: "The Decision of Destiny." The importance of this individual decision is repeated in every book, but nowhere as strikingly as in the last paragraph of The Prophetic Walk through the Holy Land Lindsey writes: "if you haven't received his pardon, invite him to come into your life. Don't put it off. . . you may be playing Russian roulette with eternity" (p. 158).

38 Marsden, Fundamentalism. Marsden contends that the basic liberalism of the Social Gospel Movement eventually dissuaded evangelicals from continuing in their social ministries. He says, "Prominent exponents of the Social Gospel were specifically contrasting their own social view with the old individualist, soul-saving evangelism. Furthermore, the liberal and Social Gospel emphasis on the kingdom of God as realized in the progress of civilization was readily contrasted with premillennialist, eschatological hopes. . . . As the attacks on liberalism heated up the position that one could have both revivalism and social action became increasingly cumbersome to defend. In any case this attempt at balance declined in proportion to the increase of strident anti-modernism" (p. 92).

39 Kater, pp. 7-8. Arguing that fundamentalism was a religion suited to the self-reliant, pioneering American spirit, Kater depicts fundamentalism as the religion of the plain people. It valued highly self-reliance, common sense and plain talk.

40 Lindsey, Countdown, p. 141. Under the sub-title "The threat of Self-Doubt," Lindsey argues that Americans have been doubting too much and that they need to have faith in their system.

41 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 224.

42 Lindsey, Satan, p. xi.

43 Blackstone, p. 112.

44 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 142.

45 Lindsey, Countdown, p. 69. In one of many quotes in this book Lindsey portrays the communists as bent upon "world domination." On page 77 he states: "communists believe there is no God." On page 78 he writes that for Communists "it's immoral to keep an agreement when it no longer serves the goal of liberating the world for communism."

46 Lindsey, Countdown, p. 77.

47 Kater, p. 13.

48 Jorstad, p. 148.

49 Jorstad, p. 148.

50 Kater. He states that fundamentalists "believe that free-enterprise is inherent in American identity and therefore part of the divine givenness of the country" (p. 62).

51 Jerry Falwell, Listen America (New York: Doubleday, 1980). He states: "The free enterprise system is clearly outlined in the Book of Proverbs, in the bible. Jesus Christ made it clear that the work ethic was part of his plan for man. Ownership of property is biblical. Ambitious and successful business management is clearly outlined as part of God's plan for his People" (p. 12). Pointing to the general decline in faith and the weakness of religious practice in America, Hal Lindsey makes almost the same connection in The 1980's: The Countdown to Armageddon. He affirms that the nation is a troubled land. "Many in America have begun to doubt the free-enterprise system" (p. 141).

52 Cox, p. 41.

53 Jorstad, p. 24.

54 Lindsey, p. 9.

55 Kater. When speaking about the fundamentalists' approach to living he states that from their perspective of the powerful God "there are no accidents, only the effects of God's favour or disfavour" (p. 40).

56 Cox. Cognizant of the anti-pluralistic aspect of anti-modernism, Cox describes dispensationalism as an ideological expression of Christian belief. He develops a definition of ideology which he applies to fundamentalism and by implication to dispensationalism. Ideology "is a cluster of ideas and values that provides a class or a nation or some human group with a picture of the world that can guide and inspire corporate action" (p. 61).

57 Kater, p. 8.

58 Ideological distortion is, of course, the risk of any contextual theology. The Word cannot become incarnate except that it is used by the forces of the world for political ends. While this is deplorable, it is, nevertheless, a reality with which every religious tradition must struggle. The crucial point is not to attempt

to divest theological ideas of all their ideological "baggage," a feat which is probably impossible, but to acknowledge the ideological bias which one brings to the religious discourse.

59 Lindsey, New World. Lindsey apparently feels that the United States will not play a major role in the final battle of Armageddon. He is unsure exactly what will happen. "We've already seen that the U.S. is destined to lose its role as the leader of the West. This leadership will instead fall to the European confederacy . . . There's no Scriptural indication that the United States will have been wiped out before this time, so we can only deduce that she will be part of the Western confederacy which unifies nations against the great Asian power" (pp. 213-214).

60 Lindsey, Countdown. When concluding his analysis of international and domestic strife Lindsey argues for a strong military and cuts in social programs. "We need to elect men and women who will have the courage to make the tough decisions needed to insure our nation's survival. They must be willing to clamp down on big government, cut exploitation of the welfare system, keep our strong commitments to our allies and stand up to communist expansion" (p. 157).

61 Marsden, Fundamentalism. Marsden states: "My conclusion . . . is that fundamentalists experienced profound ambivalence toward the surrounding culture" (p. viii).

62 Blackstone, p. 150.

63 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 176.

64 Weber, p. 38.

65 Blackstone, p. 150.

66 Lindsey, Late Great. He claims that Russia is a country founded upon atheism and that revolution "is part of the communist movement which has supported wars of liberation in countries around the world" (p. 62). Lindsey claims that Russians have always been playing games with the Arabs in order to accomplish the old Russian dream of year-round seaports and oil supplies.

67 Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. #1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951). Under the heading of "The Depth of Reason" Tillich explains that modern Protestant Christians, in concert with the Enlightenment, "agree in the judgement that there should be neither myth nor cult" (p. 80). He continues to explain how superficial understandings of reason have denied the possibility of a "serious interpretation of myth within modern religious

communions."

68 Weber, p. 41.

69 Blackstone, p. 142.

70 Lindsey, Late Great, pp. 176-177.

71 Frank, pp. 75-76. See the quote at the heading
of Chapter Two.

72 Lindsey, Late Great, pp. 126-127.

73 Weber, p. 63.

Notes:

Chapter 3 -----

¹ Barr, p. 205.

² William Martin, "Waiting for the End" in The Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 249, No.6 June (1982), p. 36.

³ See the Introduction endnote 74.

⁴ See the Introduction endnote 61.

⁵ Lears. He points out that one anti-modernist response evident within America at the beginning of the twentieth century was a romanticism of martial combat, war and medieval chivalry. He speculates that people believed "military adventure could lance the festering sore of luxury and return . . . Americans to simpler purer ideals" (p. 112). This feeling extended to physical sports. He notes: "The notion that sport toughened 'the leaders of tomorrow'. . . originated in the fin de siècle worship of force" (p. 108).

⁶ Lindsey, Late Great, p. 72.

⁷ Lindsey, Late Great. Providence is used to explain the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour and also how historical events have coincided with the writing of his book. Lindsey states: "However in writing this book too many pieces and events have fallen into place for us to believe they could all be coincidence. This is why we believe what one vague religionist has called 'the divine hand from somewhere' set the stage the week we began this chapter" (p. 61). In believing his writing was providentially guided, Lindsey is similar to Blackstone who confessed in the revised edition of his book that he was providentially led to issue the first edition of Jesus is Coming. See Blackstone, p. 2.

⁸ Lindsey, Promise. He points out that many people question "why God found it necessary to isolate one nation and give it such providential treatment" (p. 14). The book is partly an answer to that question.

⁹ Lindsey, Prophetical, pp. 81ff. He explains Mary's trip to Bethlehem because of the decree of Caesar Augustus, as "Divine Providence in Action."

¹⁰ Lindsey, Prophetical, pp. 144ff. Under the heading: "A Lesson in Divine Providence," Lindsey explains how, because Napoleon was defeated at Akko, the Jews were not given their homeland prematurely.

¹¹ Lindsey, Combat, p. 70.

12 Lindsey, Combat. Enumerating the acts of God which illustrate God's providential action in Moses' life, Lindsey writes: "Fifth, in the gracious providence of God, Moses, was officially adopted as Pharaoh's daughter's son and became heir apparent to the throne of Egypt. As a result, he was trained in all the knowledge of the Egyptians, which at that time was the most advanced in the world" (p. 51).

13 Lindsey, Combat. Lindsey uses the phrase "cracking the faith barrier" as a metaphor for trusting completely in God. He states that Moses' mother "had cracked the faith barrier when she defied the king's order and later committed her baby to the Lord" (p. 51).

14 Lindsey, Combat. Lindsey's sentence reads: "She was sure of her future hope, and certain of the invisible God's providential care" (p. 51).

15 Lindsey, Prophetical, p. 81.

16 Lindsey, Promise, p. 61.

17 Lindsey, Prophetical, pp. 144-146.

18 Lindsey, Combat. Lindsey affirms that "God never allows anything to happen in a believer's life by accident. If we trust him everything will work together for our good" (p. 71).

19 It is unwise to draw a close connection between Lindsey's understanding of providence and Calvin's. The Geneva Reformer was much more subtle and careful in his distinctions. Lindsey is rather crude and literal in comparison. However, Lindsey does argue, as Calvin did, that there is very little room for chance within creation. Calvin allowed that there are the two concepts of fortune and fortuitousness within human existence but they are not to be identified with providence. These were "heathen terms" which had no place in Christian discourse since God's providence was much more dynamic than these two poles of the tension suggest. Calvin clearly argues against both chance or fate, but he appears to reserve a harsher criticism for the idea of chance. In this respect Lindsey falls within his tradition. See John Calvin Institutes of the Christian Religion Vol. one, trans. Henry Beveridge, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 171ff.

20 Lindsey, Liberation. Lindsey affirms that Satan is the father of the unbeliever and that he is "an evil sadistic creature who has imprisoned his children in a slave camp, caring nothing for them as human beings. He uses them for his purposes and then throws them on a junk heap when he's finished with them" (p. 54). In Combat Faith, Lindsey refers to the devil's rule over human beings stating that one of the four reasons for human

suffering is "Satan's authority over mankind and planet earth" (p. 157).

21 Lindsey, Combat, p. 91. Lindsey admonishes his readers saying that you have to learn to wait when God delays in keeping a promise.

22 Lindsey, Combat, p. 109. Interestingly, Lindsey uses this idea of waiting for providence in connection with the sudden death of a professor who was blocking the Campus Crusade on a particular university campus. This was a providential act of God.

23 Lindsey, Combat. Under a subtitle "God's Gracious Providence," Lindsey explains how Moses was providentially led to marry Zipporah, who was one of the "true believers in the world outside Egypt" (p. 70). And Moses learned about providence on his sojourn back Egypt. This is clear from the naming of his son. "The meaning of this name (Eliezar meaning God is my helper) indicates that Moses had a real change of perspective concerning God and circumstances. He apparently had begun to recognize God's gracious care for him and His providential arrangement of circumstances for his best good" (p. 71).

24 Lindsey, Combat. Explaining that the Israelites panicked when they were caught at the Red Sea Lindsey reminds us that one must continue to trust. "You see, the only way we can learn to crack the faith barrier is to believe God in the midst of unexplained, impossible situations, when circumstances seem to be going against all that God has promised, and the only hope we have is to cling tenaciously to those very promises. It's remembering that in every circumstance, no matter how grim, God's ultimate purpose is to bless us, if we only keep trusting Him. God doesn't allow trials into our lives to make us miserable. When we boldly claim His promises, He delivers us" (p. 112)!

25 Lindsey, Combat, p. 53.

26 Lindsey, Combat, p. 53.

27 Lindsey, New World. Lindsey claims that someone "has counted over seven thousand promises in the Bible which God has made concerning His children and their welfare" (pp. 50-51).

28 Lindsey, Combat. Lindsey affirms that in times of hardship "as soon as we react to a trial with faith in the LORD's promises, He removes it. . . . His ultimate purpose is to teach us to believe Him so that we may have inner peace, joy and effective service for Him now, and great rewards in eternity" (p. 118).

29 Lindsey, Combat. Lindsey refers to Hebrews 4:1 and says: "verse one chapter four commands us to fear establishing a pattern of failing to claim God's promises" (p. 41). The same message and text is offered in Satan. Lindsey writes: "These promises are real. One of the few things God tells us to fear is that we fail to claim his promises" (p. 209). When speaking about claiming God's promise of forgiveness and grace Lindsey explains how the biblical promise must be claimed in order to be effective for the believer. In addition, he writes: "I said at the beginning of this chapter that if someone had put \$100,000 in a bank account for you, it would do you no good unless you knew about it and then withdrew it from the bank" (Liberation, pp. 139-140).

30 Lindsey, Combat, p. 41.

31 Lindsey, Terminal. Lindsey offers the following testimony about the assurance of biblical promises: "I guarantee it--God has promised it and I've tried it. I've seen that it's true" (p. 105).

32 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 194.

33 Lindsey, Promise, pp. 137-138. Lindsey explains that God was about to unfold the fulfillment of the Messianic sufferings of Psalm 22 and he wanted the whole world to know it was happening to his chosen son. Lindsey goes on to explain that God's providential inspiration guided David's pen. Thus the cry of abandonment on the cross was a means for the world to learn of and believe in the truth of Bible prophecies.

34 Lindsey, Promise, p. 160.

35 Lindsey, Combat. Lindsey assures his reader that "faith works because God is faithful and able to keep his promises" (p. 22).

36 Lindsey, New World, p. 83.

37 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 165.

38 Tillich makes this point concerning the constant tension in the doctrine of providence. See his Systematic Theology Vol. 1. "Providence is a paradoxical concept. Faith in providence is faith 'in spite of'--in spite of the darkness of fate and of the meaninglessness of existence" (p. 264).

39 Lindsey sees no difficulty in understanding God's will and design. His first work is a careful explanation of that subject. His biblical works reinforce his certainty.

In The Rapture and The Terminal Generation Lindsey claims to see the work of God so well that he can predict approximately when the final judgment will arrive.

40 Lindsey, Satan. Lindsey explains that this plan began with a battle between God and Lucifer. He states that the "key to understanding man's purpose and destiny is related to the pre-history conflict that began with Lucifer's revolt against God" (p. 30).

41 Lindsey, Late Great. Lindsey points out that the plan is coming to its end. "It's happening. God is putting it all together. God may have His meaning for the 'now generation' which will have a greater effect on mankind than anything since Genesis 1" (p. 69).

42 Lindsey, Late Great. Lindsey is tentative about the actual timing of the Rapture, stating that "Someday, a day that only God knows, Jesus Christ is coming to take away all those who believe in him" (p. 126).

43 Lindsey, Promise. Lindsey, while speaking about the veracity of biblical prophecies which illustrate God's guidance of history, maintains: "But what is unique to the Bible is that it has been 100 percent accurate in every prophecy fulfilled to date" (p. 9). He argues that historical accuracy is the proof of a real prophet. "When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true that is a word which the Lord has not spoken" (Late Great, pp. 9-10). In this respect he says that the prophets of Israel could not allow themselves errors in judgment or mistakes in the smallest detail.

44 Lindsey, Satan. Lindsey explains that "when Satan made man fall he played right into the hand of God. Far from defeating God, he set a trap for himself. He set up a situation through which God could demonstrate His justice and His love to the infinite degree. God did not want man to fall but he wasn't surprised when he did. And he had a plan, a plan to save man from his own rebellious state" (pp. 43-44).

45 Lindsey, Liberation. Speaking about God's need for justice and the providential plan which includes the cross, Lindsey writes: "He can't let His love for man cause Him to compromise His just condemnation of man's sin" (p. 84).

46 Lindsey, Prophetical. Lindsey states that there are two possible plans which human beings can employ to bring about their salvation. "In effect God offers man two ways of approaching Him.. I call these ways Plan A and Plan B" (p. 99). (See also Countdown, pp. 164ff.) According to Lindsey all people have a choice about their salvation and he outlines this possibility when speaking about a "Plan A" and a "Plan B." In A Prophetical Walk through the Holy

Land these two plans are explained as the two possible ways to approach God. One is the right plan and the other is wrong. "Plan A" is the law and those who choose the law are egotistically trying to make themselves acceptable to God through the performance of certain tasks. This choice will end in hopelessness and injurious behaviour since no one is righteous enough to merit God's love. "Plan B" is grace, and those who choose this path are humbly trusting in God's forgiveness and love. This plan results in eventual joy as the believer is included in the Rapture. Given his description, it is difficult to imagine why anyone would choose "Plan A," but Lindsey is not particularly concerned about the finer points of debating the question of free will. Humanity is sinful and needs forgiveness and the assurance of the Rapture, so he writes to convict and convert.

47 Lindsey, Late Great. He makes the choice clear when he explains the grace of God's love. It is a free gift available to all human beings who wish it. In his first book he says if "you are not sure you have personally accepted the gift of God's forgiveness . . . then you should do so right now wherever you are" (pp. 174-175). In Prophetical, Lindsey puts the consequences of the choice clearly. "If you haven't received his pardon, invite him to come into your life . . . Don't put it off. You may be playing Russian roulette with eternity" (p. 198).

48 Lindsey could say that God knows who will convert and is able to plan his providential scenario accordingly. This would be the implication of his declaration in Liberation, he writes: "God possesses all the knowledge there is to have" (p. 32). However, there is no direct reference to this line of reasoning in his other works.

49 For a discussion of the tension between determinism and voluntarism the reader is directed to Reinhold Niebuhr's work: Faith and History, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), pp. 79ff.

50 Lindsey, Late Great. Lindsey states: "First there is a great distinction between God's purpose for the nation of Israel and His purpose for the church which is his main program today" (p. 131).

51 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 131.

52 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 131.

53 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 131.

54 Lindsey, New World. Speaking of the interim between the Rapture and the final judgement day, Lindsey affirms: "God's special focus and blessing will shift back again to the Jew. This fact is guaranteed to Israel by

hundreds of unconditional promises in the Bible. The Jews will once again be responsible as God's representatives to take his message to the world. But this time these 144,000 Jews will do in only seven years what their nation has failed to do in all its history--evangelize the whole world" (p. 104).

55 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 176.

56 Lindsey, New World. Lindsey says that after the judgment of the seven seals God will "eagerly wait for them to turn in repentance to Christ" (p. 116). Further on he explains that God "interrupts the quick succession of trumpet judgments with a pause . . . Hopefully this announcement [of the coming judgment] will motivate men to turn to Christ" (p. 121). In each instance humanity has hardened its heart and there are very few who return to the Lord.

57 Lindsey, New World, p. 193.

58 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 41.

59 See Appendix Three for the exact chronology of events.

60 Lindsey, Countdown. With respect to the rise of international organizations and movements like Trilateralism, Lindsey argues that they are "unwittingly setting the stage for the political economic one world system the Bible predicted for the last days. . . . What the trilateralists are trying to establish will soon be controlled by the coming world leader--the anti-Christ himself" (p. 128).

61 Lindsey, Countdown. Lindsey displays his anti-communism when he asks: "Can we trust the Soviets?" He answers: "We can trust the Soviets to follow their communist doctrines and beliefs. But because of the fundamental doctrines (atheism) of communist philosophy we can not trust them in any other way" (p. 77).

62 Lindsey, Countdown. When speaking of American weakness and Soviet military strength Lindsey explains that the "most important lesson to be learned from this chapter is that the Soviet Union and its satellites have now reached the position of military superiority and strategic world power to fulfill their predicted, dreadful role in history" (p. 86).

63 Lindsey, Countdown, pp. 157-158. After explaining that the United States has to be strong in order to stand up to communist expansion, Lindsey goes on to imply that this strength is really an aid to evangelism. Communism has an appointed role to play in history but it is also a

competitor for the souls of the unsaved. The thing to keep in mind about communism, according to Lindsey, is that it is "more like a religion than a political philosophy" which "believes that man has no soul. . . . This notion is diametrically opposed to Judeo-Christian thought" (p. 78). The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon, presents Lindsey's anti-communist perspective. Communism is the world power because it must fulfill a prophetic role, but the United States must stand up to Russia as long as possible in order "to keep the evangelism moving" (p. 157). In another text Lindsey emphasizes this point by saying that "Communism is certainly one of the significant sources of persecution of the church in these last days" (Combat, p. 16).

⁶⁴ Lindsey, Late Great, pp. 119ff. Lindsey illustrates how the ecumenical movement and other international organizations prepare the way for the Tribulation. He points out that the Ecumenical movement denies the deity of Christ, reduces distinctions and sets the stage for one world religion controlled by Satan.

⁶⁵ Lindsey, Satan. Lindsey argues that "Satan wants a world that is religious" (p. 29) because the religious mind can be corrupted to believe wrongly.

⁶⁶ Lindsey, Satan. Lindsey speaks about the North American world being infected by "thought bombs" which have contaminated North American thinking. He writes: "The men, who devised these thought bombs are the subject of this chapter. Satan took their concepts and wired the underlying frame of reference for our present historical, educational, philosophical, sociological, psychological, religious, economic and political outlook. You and I have been ingeniously conditioned to think in terms that are contrary to the biblical principles and truths . . ." (pp. 71ff). The men to which Lindsey is making reference are: Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Marx, Darwin, and Freud. Lindsey points out that these thinkers have created the conditions in which Christian evangelism and faith are undermined. He states: "The world system has established this atmosphere of thought that subtly seeks to gain footholds in the believer's thinking. Once this is done, a steady pressure is exerted to pull him away from the divine point of view" (Satan, p. 83).

⁶⁷ Lindsey, Combat. Lindsey explains "visualization" as "another popular religious exercise" linked to meditation. "A person is taught through various meditation techniques how to use his powers of imagination to visualize what he wants and then will it into existence" (p. 13). Lindsey views this as an "occult practice" open to "strong demonic oppression" (p. 14).

68 Lindsey, Countdown. Lindsey points out that the United States needs to be strong in order for the countdown to Armageddon to continue since America protects the State of Israel, a key element in the final days. Furthermore, the United States needs to keep the Soviets from starting a global war before the right moment. He says, "And the bible is telling the U.S. to become strong again. A weak military will encourage the Soviet Union to start an all out war" (p. 149). Such a war would pre-empt the 'divine' countdown to Armageddon.

69 Lindsey, Countdown, p. 157.

70 Lindsey, Countdown, p. 158.

71 Lindsey, Countdown. He complains that "Welfare programs, grown large because of recipients' attitudes and the self-perpetuating nature of bureaucracies which run them, threaten to strangle the entire country" (p. 141).

72 Sandeen, Roots. Speaking about Darby's theology, Sandeen explains: "His doctrine of the church seems to have acted as the catalytic agent for the rest of his beliefs. . . . In opposition to the worldliness of the church, Darby advocated a church so spiritual that it existed outside of history. The church in this new dispensation of grace was so much a mystery that it has been hidden even from the prophets" (pp. 66-67). For Blackstone's preoccupation with the separation of the dispensations the reader is directed to Appendix Six.

73 The list of chaotic events is used as an introduction to Satan, pp. 4ff, Countdown, pp. xiff, and is listed in the conclusion to Late Great, pp. 171ff.

74 Lindsey, Combat, p. 224.

75 Lindsey, Promise, pp. 5ff. Lindsey looks upon this book as proof that Jesus is the Messiah spoken of in the Older Testament. Essentially the text is an arrangement of scriptural passages which leads to the conclusion of the second coming and the dispensational vision of the new Kingdom.

76 Kater. While speaking about the conservative ideological bias among American Christians, he states: "All such ideology rests ultimately on that act of faith in the chosenness of America. The national identity so conceived as vocation, both as an example to the world and as a special relationship with God which brings its own special blessing, underlies all the Christian Right's speculations about what it means to be American" (p. 62).

77 Marty, p. 264.

78 Marty, p. 265.

79 Marty, p. 266.

80 Andrew Lang, "Armageddon: The Religious Doctrine of Survivable Nuclear War" in The Japanese Christian Quarterly, Vol. 53, Spring 1987. In the conclusion of his article Lang asks the question about the dispensational doctrine of God. He queries: "Who is the god of Armageddon theology? Who is the god who annihilates 1.5 billion of his creatures to fulfill his master plan for history? Who is the god who requires human sacrifice" (p. 112)?

81 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 56. Lindsey confirms that the scorn which others have for his ideas is confirmation of their truth.

82 In The Liberation of Planet Earth Lindsey uses a structured pattern to explain human sinfulness and Divine grace. He outlines four barriers to knowing God's love, four acts of Christ which tear down these barriers and four resulting conditions or "new positions" that Christ's acts have created.

83 Lindsey, Liberation, p. 32.

84 Lindsey, Satan. Lindsey concedes that in the 'Last Days' "Satan will be permitted a greater freedom to counterfeit the miracles . . . of the Holy Spirit. . . . As the days draw near for the return of Christ, the Bible says that God will allow false prophets to work miracles in the power of His archenemy--Satan" (p. 117). Further on in the same book Lindsey does indicate that God has decisively crushed Satan's power. "Many people think that God and Satan are opposites, but equal in power and authority. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Satan is a vanquished enemy" (p. 224).

85 Lindsey, Satan, p. 196.

86 Lindsey, Rapture, pp. 48ff. Lindsey explains the succession of ages or dispensations through the explanation of the all powerful God who is "King of Kings" and who "created all things."

87 Lindsey, New World, pp. 81ff. Lindsey's description of the final seven years, and the destruction of Armageddon, reinforce the image of the power-filled God, who can be merciful but who is able to move all things according to the Divine plan.

88 The Niagara Creed also points out that no effort on the human's part, no matter how noble, "can help the

sinner take one step toward heaven" (Article V). See Appendix Four.

⁸⁹ Lindsey, Combat. Lindsey explains the need for human beings to recognize their weakness. "My power is made perfect in weakness. This means that God's power is set free to work without hindrance through the one who realizes that he is too weak in his human ability to accomplish God's will" (p. 73).

⁹⁰ Lindsey, Combat, p. 73.

⁹¹ Lindsey, Terminal. Lindsey uses the rope analogy to explain how God's strength intertwines with the believer's once the believer has relinquished all desire to be strong. He writes: "God promises that those who hope in the Lord, will gain new strength to face the tensions and stresses of life,--our strength is woven into His mighty strength like the strand in a rope" (p. 93).

⁹² Lindsey, Combat. In this, his recent book, Lindsey explains that the true believers will suffer persecution according to the prophetic plan. "If we are indeed living in the last days of God's prophetic program of history, which I am convinced we are, then we must expect and prepare for a growing and accelerating persecution of the True Church" (p. 19).

⁹³ Lindsey, Terminal p. 123.

⁹⁴ Barr. The unswerving nature of God's sovereignty is explained by Barr as part of dispensational determinism. At the point of the great plan for history, Barr contends: "Determinism takes over. The humanistic side of fundamentalist religion, with its stress on human acceptance and decision, disappears and expectation becomes sheer supernatural: a whole series of earth-shaking events will be brought about by direct divine agency with little or nothing that man can do about it" (p. 205). Barr's point is certainly reflected in Lindsey's reading of the Book of Revelation. The Divine "countdown" is going to happen as planned and no amount of pain or suffering will change its outcome.

⁹⁵ Lindsey, Late Great. Lindsey affirms that God has a choice over the final destruction of the world. God could choose to destroy it alone or let nuclear weapons do the job. When explaining the annihilation of the Russian army, Lindsey suggests: "Once again, this could be a direct judgement from God or God could allow the various countries to launch a nuclear exchange of ballistic missiles upon each other" (p. 150).

⁹⁶ Lindsey, Liberation. Lindsey explains men are slaves to Satan because of their ignorance that their freedom

has been purchased. "But until they find this out [that their slavery has been broken] man's slavery to Satan is a barrier to a restored fellowship with God" (p. 54).

97 Lindsey, Satan. Lindsey states: "All of the power of God is behind us and even Satan has to respect that and back off" (p. 222).

98 See Romans 8:31.

99 Lindsey, Liberation, p. 157.

100 Lindsey, Promise, p. 64.

101 Lindsey, Late Great. Lindsey explains that world events are unfolding as the Bible predicts. He says, "As world events develop, prophecy becomes more and more exciting. Also the understanding of God's prophecies becomes increasingly clear as we look at the Bible and then at the current scene" (p. 77). In The Terminal Generation, he emphasises the link between biblical proof and God's sovereign rule. He says, "The Bible itself has been proven true in my experience because God does what the Bible says He will do. The prophetic scriptures have been proven in history with 100% accuracy" (p. 171).

102 Lindsey, Satan, p. 200.

103 Lindsey, Rapture. Lindsey outlines the risk of creation: "God took the calculated risk and created man in His own image, as defined above, in order that man could respond to Him in true love and fellowship" (p. 53).

104 Lindsey, Liberation, pp. 63ff. Lindsey uses Anselm's great question as the title of his seventh chapter: "Why God had to become Man."

105 Lindsey, Satan. Lindsey explains that God triumphs over Satan because "Satan didn't anticipate that God, as a man, would later go to the cross and bear His own righteous judgement" (p. 49).

106 Lindsey, Liberation, p. 68.

107 Lindsey, Satan. Lindsey points out that "He [God] poured out all his anger that He would have against our sins onto Jesus as he hung on the cross" (p. 177). Lindsey confesses that Jesus went to the cross and endured the shame and pain "because of the joy that was set before Him" (Liberation, p. 77).

108 Lindsey, Promise. Lindsey explains the cry of dereliction on the cross in the following manner: "Perhaps no other statement that Jesus made has provoked more

curiosity and controversy than his cry from the cross: 'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me!' I don't believe Jesus asked the question because he didn't know the answer. It's that he wanted us to find out what it was . . . [and look at] David's prophetic psalm from where it was quoted" (p. 134).

109 Lindsey, Liberation, p. 95.

110 Lindsey, Liberation, p. 119.

111 Lindsey, Liberation, p. 119.

112 Lindsey, Liberation, pp. 33-34. The impossibility of human efforts to achieve salvation is also affirmed in an older document which inspired dispensational thinking, the Niagara Creed, Article V. (See Appendix Four.)

113 Lindsey, Liberation, p. 35.

114 Lindsey, Liberation, p. 68.

115 Lindsey, Liberation, p. 84.

116 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 26.

117 Lindsey, Late Great, pp. 29ff. Lindsey describes his own notion of crucifixion in these pages.

118 See Appendix Four, Article VI, which reads: "We believe that our redemption has been accomplished solely by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ who was made to be sin and made a curse for us, dying in our room and stead."

119 Lindsey, Satan, p. 54.

120 Lindsey, Satan, p. 55. Lindsey outlines Paul's list from Galatians, 5:19-21 which includes "sensuality, impurity and immorality," all ideas which concern sex or over indulgence of the flesh. Furthermore, the deeds of the flesh could cause a believer to lose his or her spiritual status with God. "Continuous unbroken toleration of the deeds of the flesh should cause a person to question whether he has really been born spiritually. A true Christian can and does experience these deeds of the flesh but he will have a desire to be delivered from them" (p. 56).

121 Lindsey, Liberation. Lindsey argues that Jesus warns believers about the fatherhood of the devil. "At the beginning of this chapter we talked about a conversation Jesus had with some unbelieving Jews and how he told them that Satan was their father. When you think of someone as being a 'father' you usually picture some kindly, concerned and tenderhearted person who has his children's best

interests at heart. But though Satan knows how to masquerade as an 'angel of light' his heart is black and evil, full of hate and bitter revenge against God and men. This is no normal father. This is an evil sadistic creature who has imprisoned his children in a slave camp, caring nothing for them as human beings" (pp. 53-53).

122 Lindsey, New World. Claiming to have discovered a prophetic pattern in God's dealing with the world Lindsey establishes that the righteous people will always escape God's judgment. He writes: "There's the pattern. First a prophetic warning, then God removes His people and judgment falls on all unbelievers" (p. 64).

123 There are many biblical verse which speak of "fear of the Lord" or "fear of God." Some are: Psalm 36:1, 19:9, 34:11, 111:10; Isaiah 2:10, 11:2; Acts 9:31; Romans 3:18.

124 Lindsey, New World. Lindsey formulates the following creedal statement about the Trinity: "I personally believe that all three members of the Trinity--God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit would be present" (p. 276). A second, rather standard, formulation of the Trinity is found in his book The Terminal Generation. While speaking about the process of Salvation, Lindsey refers to the Trinity and claims: "The moment that we receive Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, the Spirit of God--who is the third person of the Divine Trinity, co-equal in power, wisdom and being with the Father and the Son . . ." (p. 104).

125 The above examples are the only two instances when he uses a Trinitarian formula.

126 Lindsey's understanding of the Trinity is in keeping with the Niagara Creed which affirms in Article II: "We believe that the Godhead eternally exists in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and that these three are one God, having precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections, and worthy of precisely the same homage, confidence and obedience."

127 Lindsey, Liberation. He explains: "God was the father to the humanity of Jesus. The deity of Jesus is not the focus of the title 'Son of God', for his divinity needed no Father. He's called the son of God because in His human nature He is the Son of God. It's so simple it's profound" (p. 74).

128 Lindsey, Liberation. Lindsey maintains: "In Jesus' humanity He is subject to the Father because the Father is greater than his humanity" (pp. 74-75).

129 Lindsey, New World. Lindsey depicts the resurrection in a style which portrays God, the Father as a

loving, more powerful, parent. He says, "When God raised Jesus from the dead, He could very easily have erased the nail prints . . . Yet for some reason He left them there" (p. 78).

130 See Lindsey's description of God in New World, p. 67ff under the title of "The Splendor of God" and "The Throne and Those around it."

131 Lindsey, Rapture. Lindsey explains: "Meanwhile (after the seventh Trumpet blast) in heaven the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, proclaims his right to the title deed of the earth and inaugurates his Kingdom" (p. 15).

132 Lindsey, New World. The subordination is accentuated by Jesus' passivity during the days of the Tribulation and his seeming separation from God who is the main actor. In what is exemplary of the imagery of the entire book, Lindsey describes God's pause in the judgments of the trumpets as if God is completely separate from Christ. God punishes while Christ, somewhere else, receives contrite hearts. "It's extremely important to see that God seeks to extend the interlude of quietude as long as he can. He will give man more than adequate opportunity to think over the sixfold judgements which the world has experienced. He'll wait eagerly for them to turn in repentance to Christ" (p. 116).

133 Barr. He claims: "It can scarcely be doubted that dispensationalist doctrine is heretical. . . . If dispensationalism is not a heresy, then nothing is a heresy" (p. 196).

134 Kater, pp. 46ff. He argues that the sense of powerlessness felt by dispensationalists is linked to their abhorrence of gun regulation since guns are understood as a symbol of power.

135 Martin Luther, Heidelberg Disputation, found in Luther's Works, Career of the Reformer, Vol. 31. p. 40. Thesis 19.

136 Lang, p. 112.

Notes:

Chapter 4

¹ Yehezkel Landau, "The President and the Prophets," Sojourners, Vol. 13, no. 6, June/July 1984, p. 24.

² Lindsey, Late Great, p. 1.

³ Lindsey, Late Great. Lindsey's first chapter deals with all the various cults and modern schemes to foretell the future. Basically they all are inadequate and misleading according to Lindsey.

⁴ Lindsey, Satan, p. 27.

⁵ Lindsey, Late Great, p. 7.

⁶ Lindsey, Late Great, p. 6.

⁷ John Mudler, "Review: The Terminal Generation" in Theology Today, Vol. 33, Jan. 1977, p. 442.

⁸ Weber. Weber states that the present interest in apocalyptic and eschatological ideas "is due in large part to Hal Lindsey's Late Great Planet Earth" (p. 4).

⁹ Lindsey, Late Great, p. vii.

¹⁰ In The Terminal Generation, Lindsey declares: "This is a book about hope" (p. ix), and he then goes on to explain that trustworthy hope comes from biblical prophecy. Lindsey begins The Rapture saying that there is more prophecy "pertaining to these seven years than to any other time period with which the Bible deals" (p. 1). In fact, The Rapture is Lindsey's attempt to defend this reading of biblical prophecy. There's a New World Coming is nothing but an explanation of the eschaton, and The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon and Combat Faith each begins with the message that a new age is about to dawn and the days of this age are numbered.

¹¹ Lindsey, Late Great. Lindsey opens his writing in this text by explaining that the world is encompassed by problems that neither politicians nor scientists can solve. People need answers to "the larger problems of the world" (p. vii).

¹² Lindsey's assurance that hope is possible is based upon his interpretation of biblical prophecy. He believes the material of his interpretation of these biblical passages is trustworthy. He begins his commentary on the book of Revelation by asserting that the "information in the book you are about to read is more up-to-date than tomorrow's newspaper. I can say this with confidence because

the facts and predictions in these next few pages are all taken from the greatest source-book of current events in the world" (New World, p. 6). In a similar fashion he states at the beginning of his first text that "compared to the speculation of most that is prophetic, the Bible contains clear and unmistakable prophetic signs" (Late Great, p. 7). In the conclusion of Late Great, he reassures the reader that hope is certain since, in spite of these things, God is going to raise up a believing remnant of true Christians.

13 Lindsey, Late Great, pp. 32ff. In this book Lindsey elaborates his dispensational predictions, employing the interpretations of scripture which identify 'Gog' with Russia, the 'Kings of the East' with China, the ten headed beast with the European Economic Community, etc. As is noted in Appendix Two, his predictions of historical political and military events do not change drastically from this first book. His work, Countdown, is the most factual with respect to modern military considerations while his Prophetical is the most visually interesting since it has pictures and battle maps detailing the exact movements in the final war of Armageddon. To the untrained eye many of Lindsey's predictions seem plausible, and when they are linked to the Bible, they gain a certain 'authority' than they would otherwise receive.

14 Keith Suter, "The Bible and World War III" in St. Mark's Review, No. 118, June 1984, p. 16.

15 Martin, p. 37.

16 Frank. He links the popularity of dispensationalism, among other religious movements, to a need for control. "It is not difficult to surmise that evangelicals would feel a sense of defeat when they identified themselves with a God who was letting Catholics and Jews take over their country, liberals take over their churches, Darwinists and secularists take over their schools and a variety of progressive reformists take over their political institutions--at least this is the way it appeared to some. Their God appeared to be no longer in charge of the American corner of the universe, where it had appeared that the millennium was about to dawn just a few decades before" (p. 138). In response to this growing sense of alienation Frank proposes that premillennialism was an attempt to regain control. "I suspect that the wildfire growth of premillennialism in the decades after the Civil War really represented a bold move on the part of evangelicals to recapture their control of history" (p. 68).

17 Robert Lifton, Richard Falk, Indefensible Weapons (Toronto: C.B.C. Enterprises, 1982). Lifton points out that the possibility of extinction threatened by a nuclear war poses the psychological anxiety of "futurelessness." People sense that the future is in

question, and so daily life is lived without the assurance of tomorrow. Dispensationalists could be reacting to this anxiety. Lifton argues that "this sense of radical futurelessness does not itself cause any of our mental conflicts or aberrations but at the same time influences all of them and colors all that we experience" (p. 67).

¹⁸ Mudler, p. 444.

¹⁹ Mudler. Mudler cautions his readers that the apocalyptic spirit of Lindsey is speaking to people in whom "a realization is growing that we are living in a world of limits, not an open future" (p. 444).

²⁰ Martin, p. 37.

²¹ Weber, p. 4.

²² The popular appeal, relating to its accessibility was described in Chapter Two.

²³ Wilson, pp. 12ff. Wilson lists a series of premillennialists who were contemporaries with Darby who did not develop their premillennial ideas into dispensationalism. For instance he mentions John Cummings of Scotland, Peter Toon, and Jacob Janeway as premillennial authors who did not accept the dispensational structuring of history.

²⁴ Suter, p. 19.

²⁵ Tom Sine, "Bringing Down the Final Curtain," Sojourners, Vol. 13, No.6, Je/J1 1984, p. 13.

²⁶ Lindsey, Rapture, p. 1.

²⁷ Lindsey, Rapture, p. 175.

²⁸ Lindsey, Rapture, p. 31.

²⁹ The wisdom of the cross which appears to the world as foolishness is the awareness, as Luther explains it in the Heidelberg Disputation, thesis 20, Luther's Works, Career of the Reformer, Vol. 31. He states: "the visible and manifest things of God " are only seen "through suffering and the cross" (p. 40).

³⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, The Crucified God, (London: SCM Press, 1974), p. 1.

³¹ This idea will be developed in Chapter Five, but it is important to underline that the covenant between God and the people does not allow either to choose death over life nor to accept suffering gladly.

³² There is a sense that Lindsey's careful delineation of the final days is an attempt, perhaps unconscious, to possess or control the eschaton. In prior days the timing and the actual means of the final judgement were left to God. Lindsey's writings seem to encroach upon that divine prerogative.

³³ This quote is reportedly accurate but has been impossible to trace. While it may be difficult to verify, it captures the spirit of that and other conflicts since in which the notions of destruction and liberation were strangely intertwined.

³⁴ Carol Newsom, "The Past as Revelation, History in Apocalyptic Literature," in Quarterly Review, Vol. 4, No. 3, Fall 1984, p. 42.

³⁵ It is noted in Appendix Two that Lindsey's configuration of the final events of this dispensation does not change from his first book to his most recent. Apart from a few refinements, the actual sequence and the events themselves remains consistent.

³⁶ Lindsey, Late Great, p. 44. Though Lindsey does not give a date for the Rapture and the Tribulation, he argues that a biblical generation is forty years and the starting point for any timing of the final days would be the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. The implied assumption is that 1988 is the outside time frame for the final days to arrive. In his article: "Recalculating the Second Coming" in The Christian Century, Vol. 96, Sept. 12, 1979, p. 840, Stanley Walters suggests that Lindsey has been altering his calculations and setting the beginning point of the prophetic countdown at the recapture of the temple wall in the 1967 war.

³⁷ Weber, p. 127.

³⁸ Newsom. Newsom argues that Lindsey's work is "sensational" and "neo-apocalyptic" (p. 40).

³⁹ Wilson. Wilson explains that the cry of "Armageddon Now" was "an effective evangelical tool of terror . . . the result as a whole has been gross opportunism" (p. 218).

⁴⁰ Lindsey, New World, p. 7.

⁴¹ Lindsey, Rapture, p. 50.

⁴² Lindsey, New World, p. 59.

⁴³ Lindsey, Prophetical. Lindsey lists a series of political events and claims: "All the predicted signs are before us. No other generation has ever witnessed the simultaneous coming together of these prophetic events. It

is because of this that I believe we are the generation that will see the Lord Jesus' return" (p. 198). This and similar pronouncements in other books illustrate that each new disaster or crisis is simply worked into the list of final events. Nothing will alter God's plan for the "terminal generation."

44 Barr, p. 87. Barr explains that there is, intrinsic to fundamentalism, a dogmatism which leads believers to the "maximally conservative" position. In Lindsey's case this maximization would take him closer to unquestioning adherence to his own predictions rather than away from them.

45 Lindsey's deterministic eschatology is noted by Michael Barkum who wrote: "Divided Apocalypse" in Soundings, Vol. 66, No. 3, Fall 1983, p. 260. Barkum argues that apocalypticism, whether religious or political, has the common concept of a determined world not "accidental". James Barr claims that in the dispensational eschatological scheme "Determinism takes over . . . a whole series of earth-shaking events will be brought about by direct divine agency with little or nothing that man can do about it" (Barr, p. 205).

46 Lang, p. 107.

47 Lang, p. 107.

48 Lang, p. 107.

49 Lang, p. 107.

50 Weber, p. 181.

51 Newsom, p. 40.

52 Roy Harrisville, "Tomorrow with Hal Lindsey," Dialogue, Vol. 13, No.4, p. 294.

53 Lindsey, Satan, pp. 70ff. Lindsey discounts Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard, Kant, Darwin, Freud...as agents of the devil. In Combat, (pp. 9ff), he lumps many new trends in education, medicine, physical fitness under the title of the "New Age Movement" and claims it is also a sign of the final days.

54 Harrisville. Summarizing Lindsey's hermeneutics, he comments that his material is not profound since it comes from a daily newspaper. "What emerges is not a lucid portrayal of God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ the Lord but the capricious judgement of a man intent upon reading God's mind come hell or high water and from out of the daily paper" (p. 294).

55 Sine, p. 14.

56 Mudler, p. 444. This is Mudler's point. People have difficulty believing in an "open-ended" future. They seek to set limits on it in order to control their hope for it.

57 Lifton, Indefensible, pp. 80ff. Lifton makes the argument that the possibility of a nuclear-induced futurelessness impairs our collective "imagination of the future." This impairment leads naturally to an attempt to regain some sense of security, and for fundamentalists this means the conversion of religion into a "totalism", an all or nothing system of meaning. Part of the totalists' approach to security is to capture the sense of transcendence. Lifton writes: "One reason for the great success of fundamentalism . . . is the 'high' state so often associated with it. Fundamentalist movements tend to offer the direct experience of transcendence."

58 Lindsey, New World, p. 207.

59 Lindsey, New World. In the introduction to this book Lindsey spells out his understanding of the real priority for a Christian. "Please be honest with yourself as you read this book, for at the end of the story there's a new world coming, and being ready for this is the only thing that really matters" (p. 7)!

60 Douglas Hall, Imaging God (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986). Under the subtitle of "Christian Ambiguity about this World," Hall states: "Christians throughout history have manifested an extreme uncertainty about the appropriate Christian attitude toward this world" (p. 26).

61 Jewett, "Doom Boom," p. 20.

62 Sine, p. 13.

63 Vanderwaal, p. 44.

64 Landau, p. 24.

65 Jewett, "Doom Boom," p. 14.

66 Robert Jewett, Jesus against the Rapture (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), p. 102.

67 A. G. Mojtabai, Blessed Assurance, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1986). This quote is taken from her interviews with members of the local Pentecostal church in Amarillo. Judy gives her Christian perspective on the life on earth. "There's a possibility of nuclear war, but if it comes, it's because God allowed it. I believe as a Christian I'm ready to go home at any time--the world stinks" (p. 95).

68 Lindsey, Satan, p. 228.

69 Elie Wiesel, Night (London: Bantam, 1960), p. vi. McAfee Brown writes this portion regarding hope in the preface to the twenty-fifth anniversary edition.

70 Lindsey, New World. Speaking about the imminent conflict between Russia and the ten Nation Confederacy which will unleash the massive nuclear exchange Lindsey writes hopefully: "As world conditions increasingly fall into the pattern that Jesus spoke of, it may sadden the believer, but it should give us a sense of intense anticipation that we are indeed the generation that is standing on the brink of the return of Jesus Christ to this earth" (p. 92).

71 Landau, p. 24.

72 Jewett, "Doom Boom," p. 22.

Notes:

Chapter 5

¹ Abraham Heschel, The Prophets, (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), Vol. I, p. 175.

² Walter Brueggemann, The Prophetic Imagination (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), p. 12.

³ This seems evident from the predominance of the notion of progress within the American context. Each year the North American culture expects a new and improved line of cars to be produced. Moreover, each new product is new and "improved." Implicit in this state of thinking is the assumption that the evolution of time will solve past errors in judgement and technology. Therefore, the human species can always find a solution to its problems given a certain amount of time and the courage to try new ideas. Thus, we live with the assumption, born of the pioneering spirit, that we can always start afresh.

⁴ There are two authors who seek to begin again to re-create an appropriate eschatology for the nuclear age: Sallie McFague in her work: Models of God and Gordon Kaufman in his text: Theology for a Nuclear Age. (For publication details see note 8 of the Introduction) Each assumes that past theological symbols and definitions are inadequate for the present context, and they set out to re-create new images of the divine which avoid the fatalism and determinism of an apocalyptic mentality like Lindsey's. Kaufman eventually favours an understanding of God as "creative inter-dependence" in which God is understood as the force of creation which moves through the inter-dependence of all living things. McFague argues for the image of God whose body is the earth, and in this way she gives to her understanding of God a strong sense of immanence and proximity. Using such definitions they seek to avoid the dangers of triumphalism that powerful definitions of God have engendered.

⁵ This misjudgment is quite typical of Christian circles on this continent. Hoping for a swift and easy resolution to problems of life, believers are prone to seek out the most expedient answer to the predicament rather than live in ambiguity. This attitude stems from several sources: the natural optimism of this culture which prefers to see the brighter side of issues, the denial of doubt and uncertainty because such traits demonstrate 'unmanliness' or weakness, and a lack of real experience of the dark side of human existence induced by the middle-class life-styles predominant among North American Protestants. Besides the present issue of eschatology, the same avoidance is evident with such issues as wife abuse, economic distress and poverty, the ecological crisis and the arms race.

⁶ Johann Baptist Metz, Faith in History and Society, trans. D. Smith (New York: Seabury, 1980). Metz suggests that the biblically-based apocalyptic spirit is the essential Christian attitude to time which opposes the modern, evolutionary understanding of time. Commenting on the evolutionary principle, he maintains that people believe everything "is timelessly and continually reconstructed . . ." (p. 171). Such an ever changing existence means that no specific time or event has any significance. Suffering, pain and death are rendered less meaningful since history is deemed to be building ever upward. Thus, he can argue that a "society and church without a Christian apocalyptic vision has . . . made death more deadly" (p. 178) through robbing it of its ultimacy. Given this argument it could be suggested that Lindsey does rely upon the apocalyptic spirit of the Old Testament understanding of history when he writes his eschatology.

⁷ This is George Grant's argument in his work: Philosophy in the Mass Age. In this book he makes the comment that the North American world has no history behind the age of progress, and that the notion of "progress has crushed the Christian idea of providence" (p. 52). From this notion of progress arises the evolutionary mentality which assumes that history is always moving forward to greater and greater heights of human achievement.

⁸ Metz, p. 174. Metz suggests that the eternal is not to be understood as the end of time, but as its limitation and as its discontinuity.

⁹ Metz, p. 174. Metz suggests, given that God is the limit to human time, that religion, therefore, is not accommodated to culture or its history, but an interruption of both.

¹⁰ This is a grave weakness of Lindsey's apocalyptic mentality. The ethical insights of the apocalyptic imperative are lost in his urgent and desperate attempt to escape the coming Tribulation. Surely the nature of the kingdom which is coming has some bearing on the ethical choices which might be made in the present age. Looking ahead to that reign of God, it is possible to judge present human actions and motives in the light of the Christian vision of God's kingdom come to earth. The ethical implications of eschatology are not simply missing from Lindsey's thinking, but from much ethical reflection. Perhaps the ethics of liberation theology come closest to appropriating the vision of the coming Kingdom as a standard for present ethical decision making. Certainly the attempt to look upon the world through the eyes of the oppressed, a notion suggested by the preferential option for the poor, is a step towards the development of an eschatologically-based system of ethics. For a more thorough discussion of this issue see: Carl Braaten, Eschatology and Ethics

(Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg, 1974).

11 This idea of the bureaucratization of social services does not refer simply to those services organized by the government or other social agencies. Rather, it is being suggested that interpersonal relations found in family life and the work place, are increasingly governed by systems of ideas and structures of accountability which tend to distance human beings one from the other.

12 See Chapter Two for argument regarding the appeal of dispensationalism for the powerless. In summary form, Lindsey appeals to those who feel the world or its course are out of control. His ideas allow for people to sense that there is a purpose to the chaos. Thus, even while powerless to alter world events, they have a sense of security in knowing where the current events are leading.

13 Metz, p. 92.

14 Heschel, Prophets, Vol.I, p. 175.

15 Marsden , Reforming. In connection with a reflection on Carl Henry's thought, Marsden explains: "Against the liberal Christian he (Henry) wanted to emphasize that the world would end. Fundamentalism, on the other hand, 'was not wrong in assuming a final consummation of history, but rather in assuming that this is it'" (p. 77).

16 Rudolf Bultmann, History and Eschatology (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1957). Making allusions to the great reformer, Bultmann sums up the tension of Christian living when he states: "The paradox that Christian existence is at the same time an eschatological unworldly being and a historical being is analogous with the Lutheran statement simul justus, simul peccator" (p. 154). In another chapter of his work Bultmann, describing this fundamental tension in a different way, contends that the Christian life is a dynamic existence (p. 46) "on the way, between the no longer and the not yet."

17 The notion that theological language is metaphorical is the basis of McFague's work, Models of God. In that work she explains her understanding of theology as metaphor and states: "What this sort of enterprise makes very clear is that theology is mostly fiction: it is the elaboration of key metaphors and models. It insists that we do not know very much and that we should not camouflage our ignorance by either petrifying our metaphors or forgetting that our concepts derive from metaphors. We must not forget the crack in the foundations beneath our imaginings and the conceptual schemes we build upon them. That crack is exemplified in the 'is not' of metaphor which denies any identity in its assertions" (p. xi-xii).

18 The loss of memory found in Lindsey's theology is due to his exaggerated version of a theological paradigm which Martin Luther identified as the theologia gloriae. By such a term the great reformer was describing a faith perspective which, on the one hand, professed to know the visible things of God and on the other, identified the Divine with all the glorious and triumphant images, dreams and ambitions of the human mind. Quite evidently, a theology of glory does not encourage the exercise of memory --the remembrance of a Divine being other than the glorious God who's "got the whole world in his hands." A concentration on God's triumph, for instance, does not allow for doubt or uncertainty which might force the believer to reflect on the depth and mystery of the Divine presence within the suffering of human history. This is especially true of dispensationalism which has a fundamental aversion to doubt. Such a triumphant God, while being well suited to interests of empire, is a block to the serious theological reflection which arises, as Luther suggests, from suffering and doubt. Lindsey's powerful God of Armageddon allows for absolutely no doubt, promises freedom from all suffering. Hence, the unshakable image of the righteous God, the powerful and triumphant God, prevents any appreciation of a God who is one with the impure, who is implicated in the dark or baser aspects of human existence.

19 Rosemary Radford Ruether, The Radical Kingdom (New York: Paulist, 1970), p. 177. Ruether uses this phrase to describe how churches try to re-create the divine in their own, culturally-acceptable images.

20 While the importance of memory within the Christian tradition can hardly be denied, it is also evident that, in the North American context, it has been subjected to a great deal of distortion.

The loss of memory among dispensationalists can be accredited to several factors. In one sense it could be argued that the capitalist economic and political structure of the North American world, which values production and efficiency over reflection and creativity, undermines the place of memory within this society. In such a system, it serves no purpose and does not enhance the single-mindedness necessary for the maximization of production. Turning the human subject into an object to be manipulated, the recurrent quandaries of existence are pragmatically reduced to "how and how much," while the searching questions of memory, i.e., "who and why," are largely ignored. As the predominance of capitalist principles inculcates, not only the work place, but also the social, political and religious space, a culture based upon exchange is born in which human interaction serves merely a function of need. In this society love is equated with the satisfaction of desire, and the human being is essentially motivated by the will to possession. In such a society memory is not only irrelevant, but undesirable, since it counteracts the dominant and

illusory rationalization that meaning can be purchased and truth possessed.

In another line of reasoning, it has been speculated that the loss of memory manifest in North American religious expressions is linked to the manufacture and stock-piling of nuclear weapons. In this respect Robert Lifton, a renowned psychiatrist and researcher into the psychological affects of nuclearism, suggests that a pre-condition for the possession and use of nuclear weapons is the "numbing" of the human spirit. In order to remain steadfast and vigilant in the resolve to use various weapons systems of enormous destructive power, people must deaden their sensibilities to life and suppress the knowledge of the historical connectedness between past and future generations. Through living with the threat of nuclear war, and preparing to make that threat real, the people, not simply military strategists but the general public, become numb to the past, repulsed by what it implies for a future which may not materialize. Instead, according to Lifton, they concentrate all the more desperately on the present moment cultivating a collective amnesia as a defence against the anxiety of "futurelessness" embodied in nuclear weaponry. Speaking in religious terms, Lifton speculates this nuclear-induced "numbing" deadens the human spirit making it less capable or interested in believing.

Valid as these general explanations are, George Grant, among others, identified a phenomenon pertinent to theological discourse which explains the lack of memory of both in dispensational and liberal Protestant thinking. Germane to the entire subject of memory loss in the North American religious community is the notion of progress or evolution. The Canadian philosopher argues that since the North American world has no history of its own before the age of progress, it has no capacity for remembrance of the shadow side of human existence, no memory in which progress was not assumed, no recollection or familiarity with a time of non-progress, of defeat or darkness. Belief and trust in progress are not simply the culture's capitulation to a secular principle. Grant suggests a more complex interaction in which the enlightenment appreciation of human freedom combined with the Judaeo-Christian notion of hope, and the result was a quasi-religious notion of progress. Hence, to be a North American is to live in an environment where progress, a quasi-spiritual expectation, is the assumption, the measure of all things. To be a creature of this context is to believe that each moment, each event, is caught within an order, a plan which is gradually progressing towards a better, brighter world. Clearly this is the case with both dispensationalism and liberalism, even though the former has a rather jaded version of the basic myth. The secular thinker looks upon progress as self-evident, given an examination of certain narrowly defined criteria. The religious mind understands progress to be part of the providential destiny of this

land. Whether understood in secular or religious terms, progress/evolution has become a predominant paradigm through which other principles or ideas are interpreted. Hence, the world of commerce, education and politics orients itself according to the assumption of progress. It is quite naturally assumed that each new step, every new program or product is better than the previous ones, not by virtue of its intrinsic value, but simply because of its newness. As Grant maintains, progress is not merely one of the possibilities within Divine providence; it becomes intrinsic to it. Eventually the idea of progress crushes the idea of providence and progress becomes the locus of the Divine will. A chief "casualty" in the momentum of progress, in the presumption of limitless evolution, is the exercise of memory. If each new tomorrow is by its very nature predestined to be better than today, there is no point in calling to mind a yesterday. Past time has no significance, and memory is outdated and obsolete--useful only for the cultivation of sentimentality. Given the importance of memory within the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the devaluation of memory in this culture has grave theological consequences. Therefore, since dispensationalism and liberalism suffer from the general amnesia of society, they both labour under a theological handicap.

21 Metz. Metz argues that Christian memory has "fundamental theological importance" as "solidarity in memory with the dead and the conquered" (p. 184). In this regard, memory breaks the grip that progress and triumph have held on human history and brings the believer into touch with another history, that of suffering. Further on Metz speaks of a memory of freedom from past distortions, one which has as its intent the liberation of those who have been forgotten. He states: "In its practical intention, the memory of freedom is, primarily a memoria passionis, a memory of suffering" (p. 195). Metz concludes his chapter on memory by explaining that memory becomes dangerous because it has an eschatological importance which envisions a future which is still waiting. He argues in the following way: "What is meant in this context is that dangerous memory that threatens the present and calls it into question because it remembers a future that is still outstanding" (p. 200).

22 Abraham Heschel, The Prophets (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), Vol. II. Heschel argues that pathos is not to be understood psychologically but theologically, "signifying God as involved in history" (p. 6).

23 Heschel, Prophets, Vol. II. In speaking of the prophet's vision, Heschel comments that "the prophet does not see the human situation in and by itself. The predicament of men is a predicament of God Who has a stake in the human situation" (p. 6). Further, he states: "God 'looks at' the world and is affected by what happens here."

Thus Divine pathos indicates God's "world-directedness . . ." (p. 263).

24 Heschel, Prophets, Vol. I. Heschel suggests that the prophetic utterances were characterized above all by their awareness of God's pathos. "Analysis of prophetic utterances shows that the fundamental experience of the prophet is a fellowship with the feelings of God, a sympathy with divine pathos" (p. 26).

25 Heschel, Prophets, Vol. II. Heschel comments that many other theologians, those who are not part of the prophetic tradition, have found the notion of God's pathos embarrassing. "For more than two thousand years Jewish and later Christian theologians have been deeply embarrassed by the constant reference in the Bible to divine pathos" (p. 27). Brueggemann makes a similar point in The Prophetic Imagination. Speaking about empires "preferring systematic theologians who see it all, who understand both sides" (p. 24) Brueggemann contends that theologians of empire are unable to grasp the passion of God, God's world-directedness and God's partiality for the oppressed.

26 Heschel, Prophets, Vol. II. In his introduction to this second volume, Heschel makes the point that the prophets were not interested in the idea of God, of a being who is far off and detached. "Their God-understanding was not the result of a theoretical inquiry of a groping in the midst of alternatives about the being and attributes of God. To the prophets, God was overwhelmingly real and shatteringly present" (p. 1).

27 Heschel, Prophets, Vol. II. Heschel points out that God is not the subject of man's quest but "He who is in search of man" (p. 266). Heschel maintains that we approach God not by making God the object of our thinking but by discovering ourselves as the objects of God's thinking.

28 See endnote 27.

29 Heschel, Prophets, Vol. II. Heschel contends that God's ultimate concern is with the present life of the earth. Accordingly, biblical faith says "just as there is an ultimate origin, there is an ultimate concern. Human life is the life that God cares for and that is concerned with Him" (p. 58).

30 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans. Reginald Fuller (London: SCM Press, 1953). Bonhoeffer's actual words are couched in a longer paragraph which has bearing on the dialogue with the salvation myth of dispensationalism. "The Christian, unlike the devotees of the salvation myths, does not need a last refuge in the eternal from earthly tasks and difficulties. But like Christ himself ('My God, my God, why hast thou

forsaken me?') he must drink the earthly cup to the lees, and only in his doing this is the crucified and the risen Lord with him, and he crucified and risen with Christ. This world must not be prematurely written off" (p. 154).

31 Heschel, Prophets, Vol. II. Heschel makes the point that God's anger is not opposite or contrary to God's sympathy. "It is not an expression of irrational, sudden and instinctive excitement, but a free and deliberate reaction of God's justice to what is wrong and evil" (p. 66). Divine judgment is certainly one dimension of Divine sympathy.

32 Heschel, Prophets, Vol. II, p.66.

33 Heschel, Prophets, Vol. II, pp. 95ff. Heschel describes God's sympathy for the world not as cosmological but as anthropological in significance. It is a mixture of Divine wrath and grace. Heschel means that sympathy is not an empathetic quality of God. Rather, it is God's capacity to live "with another person" (p. 89) in an active way.

34 Heschel, Prophets, Vol. II. Heschel re-iterates in this book the thesis of his first volume, i.e., that the pathos of God "defines the prophetic consciousness of God" (p. 4).

35 The notion that God is an alluring force within creation is one tenet of process thought and Theology. Kaufman uses it in his basic description of the divine and "creative interdependence" in Theology for a Nuclear Age.

36 Heschel, Prophets, Vol. II. The depth of the prophetic message is expressed in "the fact that God can actually suffer. At the heart of the prophetic affirmation is the certainty that God is concerned about the world" (p. 39).

37 Bonhoeffer, Letters, p. 164. Bonhoeffer argues against those who would use God as a "stop-gap" or "working hypothesis" to fill in the unknown corners of their knowledge. Believers only come to believe in a true God when they cast off this God as a working hypothesis in favour of knowing God through participation in God's suffering in the world.

38 Bonhoeffer, Letters, p. 164.

39 Heschel, Prophets, Vol. I. Heschel echoes the interpretation of God's partiality for the oppressed which is presently expressed by liberation theologians when he states: "The prophets proclaimed that the heart of God is on the side of the weaker. God's special concern is not for the mighty and successful, but for the lowly and the downtrodden" (p. 167).

40 Brueggemann. He suggests that the ultimate criticism of the world of empires and imperialism is not powerful opposition. Rather, Christian "criticism consists, not in standing over against but in standing with; the ultimate criticism is not one of triumphant indignation but one of the passion and compassion that completely and irresistibly underwhelms the world of competence and competition" (p. 91).

41 This is the principle enunciated by liberation theology. While God loves the world as a whole, there is a partiality within God's concern for the human community. God has a preferential bias towards the oppressed.

42 Heschel, Prophets, Vol. II. Heschel points out that the prophetic faith "finds its deepest expression in the fact that God can actually suffer. At the heart of the prophetic affirmation is the certainty that God is concerned about the world" (p. 39).

43 Metz. While arguing for the importance of memory, Metz explains why Christian memory is a "dangerous" memory. "This memoria Jesu Christi is not a memory which deceptively dispenses Christians from the risks involved in the future. It is not a middle class counter figure to hope. On the contrary, it anticipates the future as a future of those who are oppressed, without hope and doomed to fail. It is therefore a dangerous and at the same time liberating memory that . . . questions the present because it reminds us not of some open future, but precisely this future" (p. 90). Further on in the same book he becomes more specific when he writes: "What is meant in this context is that dangerous memory that threatens the present and calls it into question because it remembers a future that is still outstanding [i.e., the future of the oppressed]" (p. 200).

44 Metz. Metz explains that memory, properly understood, is an act of solidarity in which the one who remembers experiences afresh the insights of the past. ". . . there are dangerous memories, memories which make demands on us. There are memories in which earlier experiences break through to the centre-point of our lives and reveal new and dangerous insights for the present" (p. 109).

45 As was pointed out previously (endnote 8 of the Introduction) the predicament of using powerful imagery for God becomes complicated in the nuclear context. The more triumphant the terminology used to describe the Divine, the more difficult it becomes to explain God's role in the arms race and the threat of nuclear war. Either one is forced to accept that God's power is concerned with another world separate from the planet earth, or one must explain how

God's power can co-operate with human power. While Lindsey is one clear example of the former solution to this Theological problem, he is, by no means, alone. Most Christian Theologies which posit God's complete control over human history and employ powerful definitions of the Divine, are caught with this problem, that is with the problem of an image of God which cannot address the complexity of the present historical circumstance.

46 Douglas John Hall, Lighten our Darkness (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976). In this text Hall explains how real hope is born of the encounter with despair and doubt. That variety of Christian hope which does not enter into the darkness exists as mere optimism.

APPENDIX ONE:

HAL LINDSEY: A SHORT AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TESTIMONY

Hal Lindsey: A Short Autobiographical Testimony:

The following information on Hal Lindsey's life is taken from his own writing. In his book: The Liberation of Planet Earth, he devotes the first chapter to an autobiographical testimonial. Though testimonies of this sort may tend toward neat embellishment or excessive clarity of past thoughts and actions, they can be trusted to offer some insight into facts of the author's life. While certain details of his early life are missing, Lindsey's recollection of his religious quest gives ample evidence of his theological roots.

Hal Lindsey was born in Houston Texas and spent his childhood and teen-age years in that same city. While his parents were not active church participants, their sporadic attendance gave him a certain affinity with church life and worship. At the age of twelve, he responded to an altar call, was baptized and subsequently lost heart and interest. Lindsey claims that he became discouraged about the commitment and the difficulty of living a "new life" stating:

Well, I really tried to stick with this new commitment and find some meaning in it. Yet after a few months I realized that if there was a God, I still didn't know Him. There was no reality of God or Jesus in my life. I kept going to church periodically listening and trying to find out where I'd missed the boat. 1

At age fifteen there was some unspecified "conflict"² in his house, and Lindsey went

through a second altar-call and baptism experience in another church. But the end result was the same. He claims that he was searching for an experience of Jesus and this didn't happen through the baptism. During his seventeenth year, while he was "doing a lot of things everyone else was doing,"³ he felt a deep sense of guilt, and, in yet another church, he responded once more to an altar-call and was baptized a third time.

The third baptism was followed by the same frustrating inability to gain an experience of Jesus and capacity to live the new life which had been promised by the preacher. At this point Lindsey claims to have given up on the church and God. He had offered God a chance, and God had failed him. What followed, according to Lindsey's testimony, was a riotous life of drinking and sex in which he "pulled out all the stops."⁴

The brief biographical references on the back covers of some of his books indicate that he went to the University of Houston. He did enter that institution, but according to his own admission he "partied"⁵ his way through two years of higher learning. When it became apparent that he might be drafted, he joined the Coast Guard and was sent to Connecticut for a year's training. Whenever he could manage it, he took his leave in New York City where he travelled and caroused with his friends. New York's free living was "the apex"⁶ of his fast and loose existence.

One day in New York City Lindsey, being broke, went to a Christian soup kitchen. While there he was confronted by an evangelist, and the encounter seems to have left its mark upon Lindsey's faith journey since he recounts the exact words of the preacher.

. . . sailor, . . . you look as if you've lived a pretty rough life. But with God it's not a matter of how bad you've been or even how good you've been. The only issue with God is whether you've come to see that when Jesus hung on that cross, God put all those sins of yours onto Him and then Jesus took the punishment of death for those sins which should have fallen on you. Now he can offer you a gift of His love and forgiveness instead of His holy wrath. If you'll accept that forgiveness, it'll bring you to God and make Him real to you. 7

Lindsey refused this offer, and the evangelist reverted to a message of God's wrath and judgement when he called after Lindsey: "Young man, you may reject me, but if you reject the gift of God's love, then His wrath will fall on you for all eternity."⁸ Although this sermon was unsettling, Lindsey claims to have become too hardened and cynical to be moved by it.

He was stationed by the Coast Guard in New Orleans for two years and stayed there after his discharge. For the next four years he worked as a tug boat captain on the Mississippi River. He describes his life style with a clarity born of humble confession.

I hit New Orleans every other week with a full paycheck and a week in which to spend it. Every other week I'd drag myself back to the boat half dead and broke. Wow! I really

thought I was living.⁹

At age twenty-six his life style was yielding diminishing returns. He had grave doubts about his outlook on work and began questioning his friends about their faith. His marriage ended in divorce, and this added to his uncertainty about the purpose of his existence. It was during this unsettling time in his life that he had a brush with death. While piloting his tug through the fog, he was nearly rammed by a freighter. With dramatic flair he explains how he manoeuvred his boat by instinct and narrowly missed being cut in two. "God was really with me. Had we been hit broadside, it would have cut our craft in two and sent it to the bottom within seconds."¹⁰ This experience quite naturally forced him to think hard about where he was headed and what lay beyond the grave. Lindsey admits that this event was a turning point in his life.

He turned to his New Testament, the third chapter of the gospel of John--the story of Nicodemus and the idea of new beginnings and rebirth. Reflecting upon his pattern of never finishing things which he had begun, Lindsey considered yet another beginning. "Maybe the season time around I could get it all together."¹¹ Alone in his cabin he accepted Jesus into his life. At this juncture a tavern preacher confronted Lindsey and guided him through the biblical promises and reflected with him on the implications of his commitment

to God. Lindsey began to attend church and study the Bible carefully. After a few months he left New Orleans and went back to Houston where he hoped to find an environment more conducive to his Christian ideas and someone who could explain the Bible.

Soon after his return, he was invited to a church gathering at which a scholar spoke on the subject of the "Suez Crisis and how the Bible had predicted much of what was happening in the Middle East."¹² The speaker's ideas captivated Lindsey who was so excited that when he went home that night he couldn't sleep. Instead he stayed awake all night to read through his Bible to check out the details of the Bible's predictions. "By morning all those prophecies had convinced me that the Bible really was the inspired Word of God."¹³ Lindsey stayed at this church and threw himself into the study of scripture under this particular scholar's guidance.

Lindsey radically changed his life-style, which led his parents to question his authenticity. There was a verbal confrontation in which his father was converted on the spot and his mother a few months later.

After a year of study he spoke at his first Bible study class. His eloquence impressed one of the participants who helped him with his grammar and syntax. All this time Lindsey claims that he was growing rapidly in his understanding of scripture.

During this period of enlightenment the desire to enter a seminary in order to study the Word grew in Lindsey. Through prayer and the aid of a local pastor he was admitted to Dallas Theological Seminary. Funds for his education arrived unexpectedly, and he was able to begin the four year course.

Eventually he graduated from the seminary with a degree in New Testament studies.

While in seminary he met Jan Houghton, and in his late twenties he married for a second time. Jan was working for the Campus Crusade for Christ at Smith College in Northampton. After his seminary training they worked as a team for this organization for eight years. Eventually his writing and speaking took all of Lindsey's time.

At the present time Lindsey is writing and speaking through the auspices of the Hal Lindsey Ministries of California. This ministry consists of speaking tours, study trips to Palestine, T.V. interviews, video and audio tape sales and other education projects.

Observations:

From this brief outline of Lindsey's 'faith journey' it is possible to observe at least three points which have a bearing on his dispensational theology and which may explain his popularity. First of all, Lindsey has been

interested in biblical prophecy from the beginning of his spiritual awakening. It is impossible to know whether the key speaker at that church in Houston in which Lindsey found his faith was a dispensationalist. It is likely that he was. Whatever the details, Lindsey believes that prophecy was central to his growth in faith and not a later addition. Dispensational thinking was the key motivation of his faith journey and therefore to his theological perspective. To believe, for Lindsey, means to believe in the dispensational understanding of biblical prophecy.

Secondly, it is clear from Lindsey's testimony that the impossibility of the law and the experience of grace are also central concerns in his journey of faith. It is therefore not surprising that they are focal points in most of his writings. There is an unspoken equation in Lindsey's thought between law and the Tribulation, between grace and the Rapture.

Finally, Lindsey's background of the tough, rough river boat captain gives his writing a vividness and concrete quality which is appealing. There is no doubt that he can touch the chords of frustration and despair which run through middle America since he has a capacity to speak directly and comfortably to the heart of everyday concerns--a talent which is evident in the popularity of his writing and speaking.

Notes:

- ¹ Hal Lindsey, The Liberation of Planet Earth (New York: Bantam Press, 1974), p. 2.
- ² Lindsey, Liberation, p. 2.
- ³ Lindsey, Liberation, p. 3.
- ⁴ Lindsey, Liberation, p. 4.
- ⁵ Lindsey, Liberation, p. 4.
- ⁶ Lindsey, Liberation, p. 4.
- ⁷ Lindsey, Liberation, pp. 5-6.
- ⁸ Lindsey, Liberation, p. 6.
- ⁹ Lindsey, Liberation, p. 6.
- ¹⁰ Lindsey, Liberation, pp. 7-8.
- ¹¹ Lindsey, Liberation, p. 9.
- ¹² Lindsey, Liberation, p. 12.
- ¹³ Lindsey, Liberation, p. 12.

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APPENDIX TWO:

SYNOPSIS OF LINDSEY'S BOOKS:

A Synopsis of Hal Lindsey's Books:

Given the relative obscurity of Hal Lindsey's writings among traditional Protestant theologians, it seems appropriate to attach to this dissertation a brief synopsis of his major works. The following list does not contain any of Lindsey's sermons or audio tape recordings since much of this material is incorporated into his books. These synopses are in chronological order according to the first publishing date listed in each volume.

1. Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth (first published Zondervan Pub., 1970), New York: Bantam Books, 1973.

This publication is clearly Lindsey's most widely read book, having sold over twenty million copies. It has been translated into thirty-one languages and was distributed in over 50 countries. It stands as an enormous publishing achievement.¹ The New York Times declared The Late Great Planet Earth to be the best selling non-fiction book of the 1970's. Moreover, if readership is any indication of influence, it is interesting to note that The Late Great Planet Earth has been read by Ronald Reagan and discussed in Pentagon workshops.

The purpose of the book, according to Lindsey, is to lay out in simple fashion the prophecies of the Bible. Lindsey elaborates that this book

is not a complex theological treatise but a direct account of the most thrilling optimistic view of what the future could hold for any individual.²

The premise of The Late Great Planet Earth is that the world is caught in a crisis. From Lindsey's perspective, the larger problems of life on this planet are not being solved, and they're getting worse. People are searching for answers since the traditional responses to the questions of meaning have not been helpful. Lindsey suggests that his book is an attempt to "give God a chance to present his views"³ on where hope and purpose are to be found.

Though he never mentions it explicitly, the book clearly offers a standard dispensational understanding of history. Accordingly, the present age is coming to the conclusion of the sixth dispensation at which time the faithful will be taken up into heaven to meet Jesus (the Rapture) just before the world, as it now exists, is destroyed. Once the Rapture has taken place the Great Tribulation begins.

In his interpretation of biblical prophecies relating to the end times, Lindsey clearly avoids any precise predictions regarding the timing of the Rapture and the Tribulation. Thus, he couches his prophetic interpretations in conditional phrases, theoretically leaving room for the mystery in God's providence. He doesn't wish to be caught making the mistake of the Millerites who predicted

the world would end on October 22, 1844. But like many of his predecessors, Lindsey cannot resist the temptation to draw some general parameters within which one might logically expect the final events to take place. Using the establishment of the state of Israel as the starting point and combining it with Matthew 24:34, ("Truly I say to you that this generation will not pass away until all these things take place") he predicts that this may be the terminal generation. Lindsey argues:

What generation? Obviously in context, the generation that would see the signs--chief among them the rebirth of Israel. A generation in the Bible is something like forty years. If this is a correct deduction then within forty years or so of 1948 all these things could take place. Many scholars who have studied Bible prophecy all their lives believe that this is so.⁴

According to Lindsey's timetable we are reaching the outside limit of the biblical prophecy, and such an affirmation has its own apocalyptic appeal. But more than the actual predictions of time, Lindsey's prophecies are popular because they have a mysterious aura of authority arising from his uncanny combination of historical facts, biblical texts and political predictions.

In The Late Great Planet Earth there is a detailed account of the Rapture, the seven year Tribulation period and the second coming of Christ. (See Appendix Three for the exact chronological order of events leading up to the last days.) He concludes the text

with a challenge to the reader to accept Jesus and join the fortunate few who will meet the Lord in the clouds. In a paragraph reminiscent of Reuben Torrey, a turn of the century dispensationalist, Lindsey advises the true believers to live "as though we will be here for our full life expectancy but live as though Christ may come today."⁵

Basically, this first book contains the fundamental ideas in Lindsey's later works. Russia is Gog, the aggressor mentioned in Ezekiel 38:18 who will march against Israel. The Anti-Christ of Revelation is, in fact, a Roman ruler who, along with a Jewish false prophet ruling in a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, will bring the free world under his economic and political control. Russia will attack Israel. The ten nation confederacy under the Anti-Christ will attack Russia, and the Chinese will attack both in the final battle of Armageddon. Before this happens the true believers will physically and instantaneously go up into the clouds to be with Jesus. As the seven years of Tribulation come to an end, Jesus will return to destroy the Anti-Christ and the False Prophet and take up his one thousand year rule. Throughout the entire eschatological scenario Lindsey makes a clear distinction between God's purpose for the people of Israel and God's purpose for the Church.

There is very little deviation in later writings from the predictions he makes in The Late Great Planet Earth.

The notion of the ten nation confederacy mentioned in Daniel and Revelation, which Lindsey interprets as being the European Economic Community, is modified in more recent texts since the E.E.C. has grown beyond a community of ten nations.⁶ In addition, Lindsey adds some details which are not found in The Late Great Planet Earth, but they are generally minor details. For instance Lindsey does not mention in this book that he believes the Israelites will make use of Petra as a refuge during the Tribulation. The details of some of the plagues predicted in Revelation are explained in more depth in his work The Rapture. There is also a new note of patience sounded in his last work, Combat Faith. But besides these minor shifts, a careful reading of all his writings will not reveal any substantial change from his first great work.

As a dispensational tract, The Late Great Planet Earth, does not contain much that has not been said elsewhere, but Lindsey does seem to construct a precise and minutely detailed series of predictions which are both fascinating and authoritative. The careful structuring of the eschaton and his popular 'folksy' style make it a convincing and easy book to read and comprehend. The hint of revealed ancient mysteries and the authoritative tone of biblical predictions combine to make it the kind of book that efficient marketing can turn into a best seller.

2. Hal Lindsey, with C.C. Carlson, Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth (first edition: Zonde van Pub., November 1972), New York: Bantam, 1973.

Developing one aspect of The Late Great Planet Earth, Lindsey uses this book to explore the role of Satan in the unfolding events of the last days. Beginning with the observation that in "America, a so called civilized country, people are involved in dark rites and rituals,"⁷ he goes on to explain, "This book is an attempt to define a personal enemy who rules our world system."⁸ Satan is obviously a key figure in Lindsey's interpretation of those biblical prophecies found in Revelation, and this is, no doubt, why he devotes a whole book to the subject.

With a dramatic warning that anyone involved with this book could become the target of its central character, i.e., the devil, Lindsey goes on to explore various movements within the North American world which provide evidence of Satan's lively presence on planet earth. Witches, yoga, eastern religions, Soviet psychics, ESP, astrology, and the historical critical interpretations of Scriptures are all offered as evidence of the devil's activity.⁹ Recent thinkers and writers who have been used by the dark Lord include Hegel, Kant, Kierkegaard, Marx, Darwin, Freud, Lenin, Spock, Dewey, Skinner and the clairvoyant Jeanne Dixon.

Furthermore, the devil uses the religious moral law of the Old Testament, behaviour modification, communism, permissive parenting, existentialism, liberalism, moral permissiveness and certain spiritual cults as tools to prepare the world for the destruction of the last days. In Lindsey's opinion, time is on the devil's side. Everything is settling into place, and all that is needed is a leader. Lindsey points out, "All that radical panaceas for world problems need in order to flourish are crisis times and satanically inspired leaders like Lenin and Hitler."¹⁰ Obviously the Anti-Christ of Lindsey's prediction will be the leader who is needed to bring the devil's work to fruition.

Lindsey uses this book to warn true believers to be discerning when dealing with the spiritual world,¹¹ indicating that speaking in tongues should not be considered as normative Christian behaviour. He actually discourages this practice through a personal testimony saying: "I have never spoken in tongues nor do I honestly see any scriptural evidence that I should seek it."¹² Coming at the end of the book, as this disclaimer does, it seems that one unannounced purpose of the book is to make a clear distinction between Lindsey's ideas and those of pentecostalists who want to appropriate Lindsey's dispensational themes. Not unlike his predecessors, Lindsey is highly suspicious of out-pourings of the Spirit since dispensationalism is too rational and too oriented by

common-sense to embrace the practice of speaking in tongues.

Lindsey concludes the book with a rejection of legalism and the guilt it produces and enjoins his readers to cling to the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. He wants believers to live by God's grace and resist the devil in all his manifestations, including the confusions created by conflicting claims for speaking in tongues.

This work captures some of Lindsey's penchant for conspiracy theory that runs through many fundamentalist writings. It obviously caters to a curiosity about personified evil, and it serves the purpose of distinguishing Lindsey's religious position as opposed to other groups on the Christian right who are gaining prominence in the American religious scene.

3. Hal Lindsey, There's a New World Coming, Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1973.

This book is a carefully orchestrated "in depth analysis of the book of Revelation."¹³ Each chapter of the text corresponds to a chapter in the book of Revelation.

There's a New World Coming is probably the closest Lindsey comes to a scholarly text, as it is traditionally understood. Setting aside criticism of his apocalyptic

hermeneutic, it is clear that he has kept close to the original text, used original languages, and constructed a logical format for analysis. He offers the reader a thorough and detailed dispensational reading of the last book in the Bible.

He defends his decision to examine Revelation because it

is the Grand Central Station of the whole Bible. Nearly every symbol in it is used somewhere else in the Bible but finds its ultimate fulfillment and explanation in this final prophetic book of the Bible.¹⁴

The reward for being attentive to his analysis of Revelation is that "at the end of the story there's a new world coming and being ready for this is the only thing that really matters."¹⁵

For traditional Protestants who have been accustomed to the historical-critical method of biblical hermeneutics, Lindsey's work may seem to do violence to the biblical record. One must understand that he, like most fundamentalists, looks upon the Bible as a complete whole which contains no historical, geographical, nor scientific errors. Furthermore, the Bible contains no contradictions with respect to the inter-relatedness of all its parts. Therefore a verse from Matthew can easily be referring to exactly the same historical event as a verse from Revelation or Daniel. Throughout the book Lindsey makes direct equations between biblical texts/themes and

current events, military strategy, ecological data and political analysis. The result is an intriguing pseudo-intellectual product which must have a certain religious authority for the biblically illiterate reader.

Even though his commentary on Revelation lists destruction after destruction, the basic tone of the book is one of anticipation.

As world conditions increasingly fall into the pattern that Jesus spoke of, it may sadden the believer but it should give us a sense of intense anticipation that we are indeed the generation that is standing on the brink of seeing the return of Jesus Christ to this earth..6

After completing his commentary on Revelation (which traces the basic dispensational pattern), Lindsey warns about the lateness of the hour and calls upon believers "to get out the message of his coming" and to be "sure we're in the centre of his plan."¹⁷ With typical bravado, Lindsey ends this book with a prayer for the true believers. "My sincerest prayer is that I'll see you in the NEW WORLD THAT'S COMING."¹⁸

This is a useful addition to The Late Great Planet Earth because it gives a complete synopsis of his dispensational ideas. It chronicles the last days and offers an explicit understanding of the Rapture. For these reasons I imagine this work would be used in Bible study sessions among the faithful. It isn't a work that would be distributed to a wide audience.

4. Hal Lindsey, The Liberation of Planet Earth (first edition published by Zondervan Pub., 1974), New York: Bantam Press, 1976.

This text is definitely misnamed. It hardly touches upon Lindsey's dispensational hopes for the Planet Earth. In fact, it is in this book that he works out, in its fullest detail, his understanding of individual salvation through Christ's atoning sacrifice. Essentially Lindsey offers a theological and autobiographical amplification of his appreciation of grace and Divine purpose. He explains in the introduction that the world is suffering from a lack of purpose and meaning, and proposes through this book to respond to this alienated, frustrated and hopeless state of the world.

I have written this book to share how I was rescued from my own personal alienation from God, myself and society and how I found the reason for why I had been put on this earth. My sincere hope is that kindred souls who need forgiveness, encouragement and hope will read these pages and find God's solution for their lives.¹⁹

After an autobiographical testimony of how he came to know God's grace, Lindsey outlines four barriers to knowing God's forgiveness which, he argues, are humanity's basic problems.²⁰ These barriers are repeated in similar fashion elsewhere in his writing.²¹ They are:

Barrier Number One: God's Holy Character . . . The character of God is so flawless and the nature of man is so full of flaws that the very holiness of God becomes a barrier to

man.22

Barrier Number Two: The Debt of Sin . . . It is because men can't stand to admit that they have this internal weakness called sin--they've invented religion.23

Barrier Number Three: Slavery to Satan . . . the third barrier to knowing God's forgiveness is slavery to Satan . . . There are two fathers of mankind, the fatherhood of God and the fatherhood of Satan.24

Barrier Number Four: Spiritual Death . . . Aside from all the other disastrous consequences of man's disobedience to God, perhaps the worst is that God withdrew from man His spiritual life and left man a dead spirit, a spiritual vacuum.25

Corresponding to these four barriers Christ offers 1) propitiation (the turning away of God's wrath); 2) redemption (the cancellation of our debt of sin); 3) substitutionary death (dying in our place to have victory over death); and 4) reconciliation (bringing humanity into a new relationship with God). These acts of Christ will tear down the barriers between humanity and God if, and only if, individuals freely choose to accept God's gracious love by faith alone. Using a banking analogy, Lindsey explains the necessity of freely acting upon God's offer of grace.

I said at the beginning of this chapter that if someone had put \$100,000 in a bank account for you it would do you no good unless you knew about it and withdrew it from the bank. Now you know what it is that God has done for you on the cross and how to draw upon it by faith alone. The next move is up to you.26

Having made the choice to receive God's grace, the

believer is in a new position with God which is characterized by four new traits: 1) justification, 2) forgiveness, 3) freedom and 4) redemption. The new position with God, offers the believer "a life of great spiritual depth, power and victory."²⁷

In one sense this text is a reworking of Anselm's themes in Cur Deus Homo. It even contains a chapter entitled: "Why God had to become Man." Lindsey clearly uses Anselm's vocabulary but his explanation of the incarnation is closer to Calvinism than Anselm. Jesus is no longer the innocent man whose righteousness is imputed to the sinner. Jesus becomes the scapegoat sacrificed in place of sinners. Lindsey explains his position in these words:

It would have to be someone of God's choosing who could qualify to step in as substitution and take the compounded wrath of God against all sin.²⁸

This shift of emphasis from imputed righteousness to substitutionary sacrifice comes from the liberal Calvinism of New Haven theology which gained prominence in the middle of the last century and which many early, and most subsequent, dispensationalists appropriated.²⁹ Throughout Lindsey's writings his understanding of atonement has this edge of punishment of sinner and sin. God chooses to victimize Jesus rather than the sinner.

Revolving around Lindsey's doctrine of God, his

Christology and more specifically his soteriology, The Liberation of Planet Earth contains Lindsey's clearest statement about the nature of the Trinity. In this respect it reflects a tri-theism and modalism. These two characteristics, along with a clear division of the human being into body, soul, and spirit gives the work a very gnostic tone.

5. Hal Lindsey, The Terminal Generation (first edition Fleming Revell, July 1976), New York: Bantam, 1977.

The Terminal Generation, contrary to its ominous title, is a book about hope. Beginning with a familiar explanation of the despair and hopelessness of our times, Lindsey suggests that society and individuals need hope, but "hope must be placed in something that is able to fulfill our expectations."³⁰ Though he does not immediately mention the Rapture, the book is focused on this idea, and it is clearly the hope he wishes to hold out to the world which "stands on the precipice of both the greatest peril and the greatest realization of hope in the history of man."³¹

The first few chapters are a re-write of the evil influences working in our society which he described in Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth. Lindsey expands upon a list of European thinkers mentioned in that book. He points out how people like Kierkegaard,

Marx, Darwin and others have infected American society with despair. Lindsey adds to the list of agents of decay: modern art, orgasmic rock music, explicit movies, pornography and value-free education. After this litany of woes, he concludes: "There's no use denying it, our society is deteriorating rapidly."³²

The obvious question is raised about what can be done. Where is real hope to be found? Lindsey begins to answer this question by outlining where it is not found: Peace initiatives between Israel and Egypt, the renewed relations between the U.S. and mainland China. Such efforts will not bring real improvement, nor will new socio-psychological movements like transcendental meditation or the new consciousness movement.

In the seventh chapter, the author begins to answer the question of hope positively. Real hope gives endurance, inspires trust, gives refuge and is based upon the promises of God. This real hope is biblically based and is guaranteed according to Lindsey. In an exultant tone he affirms: "I guarantee--God has promised it and I've tried it. I've seen that it's true."³³

Lindsey's hope is founded in biblical prophecies and at this point in his writing he explains his theory of biblical interpretation, i.e., biblical inerrancy. "Our whole basis in having confidence and boldness in living for God comes out of knowing that God's promises

have been accurately written and preserved for us."³⁴ The marvel of this biblical hope is that even though the Bible was written by so many authors, it falls into a "cohesive and homogeneous whole to form one book."³⁵

After the explanation of his biblical hermeneutic, Lindsey recounts his understanding of grace and the spiritual life freed from the guilt of the law, defining the latter in a novel way calling it either neurotic or legal.

Given this justification of the need for real hope, Lindsey explains that the basis of this hope is, of course, the dispensational idea of "the Rapture." "As this generation races toward history's darkest hour, it's imperative that we understand this hope (the Rapture)."³⁶ The Rapture will be instantaneous. It could happen any time since this is the terminal generation.³⁷ Lindsey exclaims: "Think of it! During this generation, at any moment, Jesus Christ might come back. We might find ourselves with just the average mundane day--suddenly the next moment we're face to face with the Lord."³⁸ The expectation of this instantaneous event gives hope to Lindsey and his friends in the face of death and suffering. The Rapture will transform amputated³⁹ or diseased bodies into perfect immortal bodies so this hope is even effective for the desperately handicapped or sick, according to Lindsey.

The book ends with a standard appeal to live as if we will die in the natural way, but with the hope that each day may be our last. Believers in this day have been given the hope and insight which was not available even to the disciples. "Today may be the one which will signal that it is all over but the shouting in His presence."⁴⁰

In summary, The Terminal Generation does give some insight into Lindsey's definition of hope as it is embodied in the idea of the Rapture, but apart from that point, this work is a re-examination of themes expressed in previous writings.

6. Hal Lindsey, The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon (first edition Bantam Press, 1980), New York: Bantam, 1982.

With The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon, Lindsey breaks new ground. Much like William E. Blackstone who entered the political arena to petition presidents on behalf of the Jews a century before him, Lindsey explains his views on pressing political and social issues and makes an appeal for "right" political action. He deals with the issues of American foreign policy, domestic programs and economic problems. This work sounds very much like Jerry Falwell's book, Listen America, which was published just a few months later. One must guard against any conspiracy theory but it is not stretching the imagination to see the links between Lindsey's views and the election

program of Ronald Reagan. Inasmuch as Lindsey is on the right of the political spectrum, his views would naturally be reflected by other politicians and in the political platforms of the right.

The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon was another popular book. It was declared the best selling religious book of 1981 and was among the top fifteen best-sellers on the year-end list of the New York Times.

Lindsey begins the book with a list of events that illustrate, for him, the decline of modern civilization. Inflation and wars and rumours of wars form the basis of this list. Moreover, he portrays the communists or Russians as a growing power within the world, while the United States is pictured in a decline. Current events illustrate that with "an ever-escalating rate of speed" our times are entering "into a prophetic countdown"⁴¹ which will end with the final great battle of Armageddon.

The body of the book begins with a review of the popularity of his ideas and especially his first work. Lindsey explains how he has been giving speeches on his ideas to the American War College, the Pentagon, and to a secret agency which is charged with predicting military strength around the world. This review of the popularity of the ideas of The Late Great Planet Earth ends

with the stated purpose of the present volume. "The goal of this book is not merely to show which prophecies have been fulfilled since Late Great came out in 1970. Even more important, it is intended to analyse what will occur in the decade we have just entered."⁴² The 1980's "could very well be the last decade of history as we know it."⁴³

At this point in his book, Lindsey reviews the past events which he had predicted. While examining the various signs which point to the coming of the Tribulation, it is important to note that it is not the events themselves so much as their increasing frequency which is prophetically significant.⁴⁴

In the next eight chapters Lindsey outlines all the signs (birth-pains) and events which signal the coming of the Tribulation. They are: war, international revolutions, plagues, famines, Russian aggression, Israeli nuclear capacity, U.F.O.'s, the power of O.P.E.C., the rise of the E.E.C., trilateralism and global economic systems. Such momentous events, he affirms, are all predicted in the Bible as evidence of the coming Tribulation.

The final chapters of the book provide Lindsey's perspective on where the United States fits into the scenario of the last days. Since "there are no specific or even indirect references to America in the Bible prophecy,"⁴⁵ Lindsey suggests three possible

eventualities. America might be overrun by the communists in the near future, or it will disappear in a Russian nuclear first strike in the war of Armageddon or disappear in the battle of Armageddon fighting along with the ten-nation confederacy ruled by the Anti-Christ. Admittedly none of these prospects is very appealing to an American. Lindsey's solution to this predicament is to bolster military spending, to redress the balance of military power vis-a-vis the U.S.S.R., renounce Salt II,⁴⁶ strengthen the free enterprise system,⁴⁷ cut social programs like welfare⁴⁸ and generally try to hold back its inevitable flood for as long as possible so that as many believers as possible can be brought into the 'lifeboat' of the Rapture.

In the process of promoting his ideas, Lindsey sounds almost like an electioneering politician as he repeatedly calls on Americans to elect people of courage who can "make the tough decisions needed to insure our nation's survival."⁴⁹ America needs to remain strong.

Given the dispensational notions about the end times one might ask why any true believer should be concerned about preserving America. There are several possible answers. First and foremost, as Lindsey emphasizes at the end of the text, believers must live responsibly until the Rapture comes. This entails preserving their nation so that it can continue in its task

as the ally to Israel and base for Christian missionary work. In the second place the U.S. must remain strong so that the U.S.S.R. does not pre-empt God's plans in the Middle East by attacking it instead of Israel as the Bible predicts. Finally, America must retain an unflinching moral determination since it has a large population of true believers who might be tempted to fall by the way side if the country becomes weak and complacent.

Even though the book ends with Lindsey's prediction that "America will survive this perilous situation and endure until the Lord comes to evacuate his people,"⁵⁰ the book has a clearly alarmist, anti-communist tone. Apart from a few references to the Rapture the book is totally political in its content and reads like many right-wing tracts on the ills of America--an innocent nation gone astray.

7. Hal Lindsey, The Promise, Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1982.

The Promise is Lindsey's explanation of thirty-six biblical promises which relate to the messiah. He has chosen these thirty-six out of what he claims are three hundred other biblical promises which he contends relate to the coming of the anointed One. Some of these promises have been fulfilled, and others await fulfillment in the near

future. Affirming that the "Bible has been 100 percent accurate" to date⁵¹ in its predictions, Lindsey proposes in The Promise to explain how this age will unfold according to the Bible.

After a traditional description of the reasons for God's election of the people of Israel, Lindsey introduces this book with an explanation that it is intended to show the reader (possibly the Jewish reader) that Jesus Christ is "God's Messiah, the Saviour of mankind and that you will be drawn to him for eternal life."⁵²

As a whole, the book is a series of Lindsey's interpretations of biblical prophecies which both point to the veracity of the scriptures and to the truth of Jesus' claim to messiahship. There is very little new material in this work except its strong evangelical thrust aimed at the Jews. They are the chosen people who will have an opportunity at the time of the great tribulation "to more than make up for failing as God's witnesses during their history."⁵³

Throughout the book the image of God that is presented is one of an all-powerful, all-controlling deity who has a plan in which even the final end of history "won't be dictated by the whims of men with their fingers on the nuclear buttons."⁵⁴ This plan for the coming Kingdom is now in motion, and Lindsey claims that the prophets of Israel "are unanimous in saying that this

Kingdom will only come about after man has gotten himself embroiled in the greatest war of all time."⁵⁵

This book, like his commentary on Revelation, was probably intended for a narrow audience. It has the quality of an expanded tract which would be useful in Bible study or for proselytizing among non-believers.

8. Hal Lindsey, The Rapture, Truth or Consequences, New York: Bantam Books, 1983.

The Rapture opens with Lindsey's dispensational chronology of the final days leading up to the Rapture and the Great Tribulation. (See Appendix Three for details.) According to Lindsey this text "represent hundreds of hours of my own study over a period of twenty-six years as well as the work of a number of other biblical scholars."⁵⁶ Essentially his chronology of events has not changed since he wrote the Late Great Planet Earth or There's a New World Coming.

The real purpose of the book is to clear up the "confusion" about the timing of the Rapture. Lindsey argues that there is real disagreement in the ranks of the premillennialists concerning this point. He writes in the second chapter that "the confusion and anxiety comes from the uncertainty about whether the true Church, . . . will go through the Tribulation or through half of the Tribulation or will be taken out of the world

by Jesus before the Tribulation begins."⁵⁷ Lindsey argues that this question is the most important one a Christian faces today. Its importance stems from the hope of evading the pain and suffering of the Tribulation times. The three possible premillennial positions on the timing of the Rapture are defined as post-tribulation, mid-tribulation and pre-tribulation.

After explaining that he has prayed for objectivity, Lindsey proceeds to discuss the merits of each position with respect to his understanding of the biblical record. The actual fact of the Rapture, as a physical, temporal, instantaneous event is never in question. He is also careful to note that all three positions are premillennial, and in that respect it must be disquieting to have such divergence within the fold of the true believers. In the process of defending premillennialism, he does take a few pages to discount both amillennialism and postmillennialism as he did in The Late Great Planet Earth and in Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth.

Lindsey admits that the Bible does not clearly offer a single verse to substantiate any one of the three positions.⁵⁸ Apparently God deliberately made this issue difficult to settle so as to test the endurance and faithfulness of the true believers, or so Lindsey speculates.

Before deciding for one of these three choices Lindsey delineates the nature of the Rapture. He points out that it is a mystery. It means no death. It is open to all. It is a transformation of our mortality to immortality. Finally it is an instantaneous, visible, physical, face to face reunion with Jesus and our loved ones.⁵⁹

After these lengthy preliminary points Lindsey comes to the primary concern in the text. He proceeds to disagree with the post-tribulation and mid-tribulation positions. He will use the periodization of dispensationalism and its distinction of the dual purpose of God for the people of Israel and for the church. He spends several chapters outlining these dispensational arguments. This is the only place in all his writing where Lindsey overtly identifies his dispensational heritage or even mentions the word. In his definitions of dispensationalism he does not stray very much from the ideas incorporated by I.C. Scofield in his translation of the Bible published first in 1909. Lindsey's basic argument against mid- and post-tribulationists comes from the dispensational distinction between Israel and the church. He begins by using Paul. The great apostle states that there are neither Jews nor gentiles in the church. Furthermore, the biblical prophecies state that God works specifically with the Jews during the Tribulation. Lindsey concludes that the lack of distinction in the church between Jew and gentile

confirms that the church could not still be on earth during the time of Tribulation since God is working only with the Jews. Lindsey states:

In fact 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 on earth at the same time during the seven year Tribulation.⁶⁰

Furthermore the mid- and post-tribulation positions are forced to telescope all the many catastrophes predicted in Revelation into a very brief period of time since the church must be raptured before Jesus returns for the second time. As Lindsey states: "There is no way to cram all of the Divine wrath into the last few moments of the Tribulation."⁶¹

The remainder of the book is a re-affirmation of his personal belief in the pre-tribulationist position which he claims "answers all the scriptures on the subject in the most consistent and harmonious way."⁶² He makes a short digression to examine what has become revered in dispensational circles as the original illuminating event through which Nelson Darby discovered the idea of the Rapture, i.e., the trance of a Scottish maid named Margaret MacDonald. Interesting though she may be, Margaret is discounted as a partial Rapturist and post-tribulationist.⁶³

Lindsey concludes the book on a dispensationally hopeful note.

Although I grieve over the lost world that

is headed toward catastrophe the hope of the Rapture keeps me from despair in the midst of ever-worsening world conditions.⁶⁴

The Rapture is a unique book in its explanation of dispensational theory, in its technical argument against what must be considered strong enough threats to warrant a full book rebuttal, and in its explanation of the origins and nature of the idea of the Rapture. With respect to this final point, it may be possible that the idea of the Rapture had become popular among people who did not understand all the implications of Lindsey's system, and he was simply setting the record straight for these followers. The book gives the impression of being an in-house text aimed at misguided premillennialists or unthinking 'rapturites.' It is difficult to imagine that its central focus would appeal to a very wide readership.

9. Hal Lindsey, A Prophetical Walk through the Holy Land, Eugene Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1983.

A Prophetical Walk through the Holy Land is a glossy, photographically impressive, coffee table book which presents Lindsey's basic theories in a new format using fresh supporting evidence from archaeology and geography.

The form of the book is disarming since it looks like a very traditional photo presentation of Jerusalem, the kind that might be found in the library of any world traveler. A quick glance would leave one with the impression of

the beauty of Palestine and the mystery of Jerusalem, but on careful study, one realizes that the whole book is moving toward Lindsey's dispensational conclusions of the Rapture and the seven year Tribulation. The eight pages of glossy coloured maps which indicate the troop movements in the war of Armageddon are in stark contrast to the traditionally relaxing and idle format of the usual coffee table book.

Besides the format, there is no doubt that the photography is very useful in promoting Lindsey's dispensationalism. Armageddon is no longer an idea or a frightening image. It's a place, a real valley. The pictures of the ports where the Russian amphibious assaults will be launched somehow make the prophecy of Gog and Magog (the Kings of the North mentioned in Daniel and today often associated with Russia) more plausible. Visions of the upper room with a tongue of fire over Lindsey's head (even if it is a hoax of trick photography) lends to the author a semblance of authority. Though none of these photographs proves the dispensational theory, they give a touch of reality and urgency to the author's message about the coming Tribulation.

There are two arguments in this book which have not been presented before. The first is a minor point. Lindsey identifies the ancient city of Petra as the location to

which Israelites will flee for security in the middle of the Tribulation. When the Anti-Christ embodies the "desolation of abomination" in a rebuilt temple, the faithful Israelites who

trust in the prophetic scriptures will heed the warning and immediately flee to Petra. It is the only place in the entire region that is secure and large enough with facilities to sustain them for an extended period of time.⁶⁵

The second new revelation in this text is a major archaeological discovery which is delighting dispensationalists around the world. According to Lindsey, Dr. Asher Kaufman has proven that the ancient temple could be rebuilt on the temple mount in its exact location without touching the Dome of the Rock.⁶⁶ This would mean that the rebuilding of the Temple, which is an essential ingredient in the dispensational theory, could proceed without delay or hindrance to the Dome of the Rock. Giving four fresh pieces of evidence to support his claim about the new location of the temple Lindsey concludes:

All of these things are tremendously exciting to those who know Bible prophecy. We are literally in the very last days of the Church Age. The temple will be rebuilt soon.⁶⁷

This book ends with Lindsey's familiar call to accept Jesus. He pleads: "Don't put it off . . . you may be playing Russian roulette with eternity. I hope to see you on that great day which is not far off."⁶⁸

The book abounds in a romantic fascination with

all things military, especially the Israeli air force. This interest in military strategy and imagery is carried forward into his next book, entitled Combat Faith.

A Prophetical Walk through the Holy Land is not without its sensational commentary on the life of Jesus. One example is Lindsey's claim that proper reading of the original Greek text of John 18:3-6 points to a great show of Divine power when, while in the garden betrayal scene, Jesus responds to the Roman soldier who asks him his identity. According to the gospel of John, Jesus replies: "I am." Lindsey becomes melodramatic when describing the result of this utterance by Jesus. "The instant that He uttered "I AM" (or Yahweh in Hebrew) such power was released that every man in the garden was knocked off his feet and flung backward. Just picture this scene. Hundreds of soldiers and officers knocked on their backs by an invisible release of divine power."⁷⁰ No doubt, such a story has great effect when Lindsey tells it on one of his guided tours through the ancient fig trees of the garden.

While capturing the basic ideas and concepts of dispensationalism, the book gives the dispensational cause a sense of veracity and authority that it never enjoyed through Lindsey's other writings.

10. Hal, Lindsey, Combat Faith, New York: Bantam Books, 1986.

Lindsey's most recent book may take its title from the last paragraph of The Rapture in which he spoke of the Rapture giving him "combat knowledge of the Bible so as to win as many to Christ as possible before it's too late."⁷¹ The idea of "combat" faith may also arise from Lindsey's fascination with military images⁷² or it may be a well-used homiletical device.

Lindsey begins this text by explaining that he believes the true church will undergo persecutions before the Rapture comes. This is already the case, according to Lindsey, in eastern block countries, and he predicts it will soon be true for American churches as well. The persecution is identified as the devil's work, and the agent for the devil's work is what Lindsey refers to as the 'New Age Movement.' This movement is not unlike the ideas that Lindsey has outlined before. To the old list of Eastern religions and yoga, the author adds the holistic medicine movement. This New Age Movement, which is typified by a liberally lax moral stance, will be used by Satan to persecute the American church. Given the coming persecution, Lindsey proposes to write a book that will explain the nature of faith which will be needed to see the believer through the trials that are imminent. This "combat faith" will help the faithful "learn to believe the promises of God in spite of our feelings, emotions or

circumstances. It is a faith that has been trained in the crucible of the trials of life so that it keeps on believing when the going gets tough."⁷³

It is from this concern about persecution and the need for combat faith that the book branches off into several new areas for Lindsey. It deals with the problem of suffering and the issues of patience in adversity, works righteousness, the incarnation and the doctrine of providence. The most notable aspect of these new subjects is his reflection on the need for patience in suffering.

In reflection on suffering, Lindsey asks, "Why do Christians have trials?"⁷⁴ In answer he provides fairly typical responses. Trials are given to the believer to build faith,⁷⁵ to push the believer to grow,⁷⁶ to teach obedience and discipline which will turn to a blessing when the believer confesses his or her sins,⁷⁷ to prevent the believer from falling into sin,⁷⁸ to help the believer to comfort others through their common experience of suffering,⁷⁹ to point to the power of Christ working through the believer⁸⁰ and to glorify God.⁸¹ Lindsey does not really deal with the suffering of the innocent. He sidesteps the question of Job by using the concept of patience only as an example for other believers, rather than as the basis for theological inquiry into the nature of evil in the world.

In this book Lindsey must feel the need to respond to the reality that the outside limits of his predictions are approaching. The Rapture hasn't arrived, and even though he has been careful to avoid a specific date, the time is dragging on longer than his earlier predictions implied it would. The longer the wait, the more the need for patience (a lesson learned by the apostolic church). A particular patience through adversity is needed since more "true believers" are suffering illness and death. Lindsey responds to these concerns by sounding the call to arms in the "great spiritual war"⁸² that the waiting has imposed upon his followers. It takes a special faith to remain expectant and active in this trying period. The challenge is to continue to believe in the promises of God even when these promises⁸³ are slow in coming. To wait expectantly and faithfully one wants to gain "God's rest" according to Lindsey.

. . . if you learn to fly through the storms of life by God's instruments, His promises, you will crack the faith barrier and soar into that most incredible of all human experiences-- God's rest.⁸⁴

This "God's rest" is the assured inner peace by which the true believer lives during the long wait for the Rapture, and as an image, it embodies the central message of the book.

In Combat Faith there is a clear definition and discussion of providence and since this was dealt with in the body of the dissertation there is no need to repeat

the analysis here. It only needs to be noted that Lindsey's use of providence rejects utterly any possibility of chance within the life of a believer who trusts God.⁸⁵ Providence is equated with Divinely inspired and manipulated events which look on the surface to be unbelievable coincidence. For instance, the care of the baby Moses by Pharaoh's daughter is used as an example of divine providence.⁸⁶ Moreover, providence is never invoked by Lindsey as the force behind Divine judgment. It brings only good news, and it blesses only the true believers.

The book ends by encouraging the believer to gain the patience which will merit the various promised heavenly crowns and the beautiful immortal gown.⁸⁷

It is interesting to note that, apart from a passing mention of Canada in The Late Great Planet Earth, Combat Faith is Lindsey's only book which talks about this country. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on one's political persuasion, he speaks of Canada within the context of a confrontation with "hostile communist students" at Simon Fraser University. As hostile and cold as this land must appear on first glance, it can't be all that bad. According to the story, the leader of the local Communist Party was the first to accept Jesus because of Lindsey's preaching.⁸⁸

Notes:

1 To understand the importance of The Late Great Planet Earth it is interesting to note that in comparison to Lindsey's 20 million copy best-seller, the most popular album of any rock group (Yellow Submarine produced by the rock band the Beatles) sold only 16 million copies.

2 Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth (New York: Bantam Press, 1973), p. vii.

3 Lindsey, Late Great, p. viii.

4 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 43.

5 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 176.

6 See Hal Lindsey, There's A New World Coming (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1973), p. 176. When referring to the ten nation confederacy Lindsey maintains that God wants there to be at least ten. See also The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon (New York: Bantam Books, 1980). "It is possible that more than ten nations could at one point be admitted. But in the final stages it will number 10" (p. 104).

7 Hal Lindsey, with C.C. Carlson, Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth (New York: Bantam Books, 1973), p. xi.

8 Lindsey, Satan, p. xi.

9 Lindsey, Satan, pp. 27ff.

10 Lindsey, Satan, p. 87.

11 Lindsey, Satan, pp. 119ff.

12 Lindsey, Satan, p. 131.

13 Hal Lindsey, There's a New World Coming (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1973), p. 1. This is actually the subtitle of the book.

14 Lindsey, New World, p. 7.

15 Lindsey, New World, p. 7.

16 Lindsey, New World, p. 92.

17 Lindsey, New World, p. 286.

18 Lindsey, New World, p. 288.

19 Hal Lindsey, The Liberation of Planet Earth (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), p. xiv.

20 Lindsey, Liberation, p. 25.

21 Hal Lindsey, Combat Faith (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), pp. 170ff.

22 Lindsey, Liberation, p. 29.

23 Lindsey, Liberation, pp. 37-42.

24 Lindsey, Liberation, pp. 47-48.

25 Lindsey, Liberation, pp. 55-60.

26 Lindsey, Liberation, pp. 139-140.

27 Lindsey, Liberation, p. 218.

28 Lindsey, Liberation, p. 69.

29 Douglas Frank, Less Than Conquerors (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986). Frank explains that Nathaniel Taylor, the founder of the New Haven Theology, "was alarmed by Calvin's implication that human depravity so blinds the mind and the will that the exhortations of the revivalists cannot be considered a certain and predictable means of bringing the sinner back to God" (p. 21). Consequently Taylor domesticated God and gave to revivalism and therefore to dispensationalism "a theology stripped for action" (p. 16).

30 Hal Lindsey, The Terminal Generation (New York: Bantam Books, 1977), p. ix.

31 Lindsey, Terminal, pp. ix-x.

32 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 39.

33 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 105.

34 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 111.

35 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 116.

36 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 185.

37 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 185.

38 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 188.

39 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 195. Lindsey tells a story which must be sermon material because it shows up again in his most recent work, Combat Faith (p. 196). A man in a

wheelchair, who has no arms or legs finds "beautiful joy" in Lindsey's assurance that the Rapture will give him new limbs in his "resurrection body."

40 Lindsey, Terminal, p. 204.

41 Lindsey, Countdown, p. xii.

42 Lindsey, Countdown, p. 7.

43 Lindsey, Countdown, p. 8.

44 Lindsey, Countdown, p. 20. Since Lindsey reads Jesus' words in Matthew 24:8 as "birth pains," it is not the pain or "sign" which is important so much as the increasing frequency of catastrophes because the birth of the new age comes when the birth pains or signs become more frequent.

45 Lindsey, Countdown, p. 131.

46 Lindsey, Countdown, p. 150.

47 Lindsey, Countdown, p. 141.

48 Lindsey, Countdown, pp. 141-142.

49 Lindsey, Countdown, p. 157.

50 Lindsey, Countdown, p. 158.

51 Hal Lindsey, The Promise (Eugene, Orgeon: Harvest House Publishers, 1982), p. 9.

52 Lindsey, Promise, p. 29.

53 Lindsey, Promise, p. 207.

54 Lindsey, Promise, p. 205.

55 Lindsey, Promise, p. 195.

56 Hal Lindsey, The Rapture, Truth or Consequences (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), p. 2.

57 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 23. This point was also the cause for concern and an actual rupture in the ranks of the dispensationalists in 1901. The controversy over the timing of the Rapture basically ended the famous Niagara Bible Conferences. See E. Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 213ff.

58 Lindsey, Rapture. Defending his own position, Lindsey claims "The truth of the matter is that neither a post-, mid-nor pre-Tribulationist can point to any single

verse that clearly says the Rapture will occur before, in the middle of or after the Tribulation" (p. 32).

59 Lindsey, Rapture. There is clearly a good side to believing in the Rapture. "The truly electrifying fact is that many of you who are reading this will experience this mystery. You will never know what it is to die physically" (pp. 38ff). This was clearly a facet of dispensationalism which appealed to its earliest American leader James H. Brookes who apparently had an inordinate fear of death.

60 Lindsey, Rapture, pp. 69-70.

61 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 100.

62 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 174.

63 Lindsey, Rapture, pp. 169-72.

64 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 176.

65 Hal Lindsey, A Prophetical Walk through the Holy Land (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1983), p. 167.

66 Lindsey, Prophetical, pp. 66ff. Lindsey quotes Kaufman's article in Biblical Archaeological Review, March/April 1983. The basic premise of this article is that the Holy of Holies was built over the Dome of the Tablets and not the Dome of the Rock. This places the entire structure 26 meters to the north of the Dome of the Rock which allows for a Jewish temple to be rebuilt without touching the existing ancient mosque on that site.

67 Lindsey, Prophetical, p. 75. It should be noted that there is presently a Temple Foundation which is raising funds for the express purpose of rebuilding the Temple.

68 Lindsey, Prophetical, p. 198.

69 The book contains many pictures of fighter jets including the opening photo of Israeli fighters flying over the Dome of the Rock.

70 Lindsey, Prophetical, p. 108.

71 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 176.

72 Lindsey, Prophetical, pp. 165ff. Lindsey refers to Paul's armour imagery in an expanded form.

73 Lindsey, Combat, p. 20.

74 Lindsey, Combat, p. 192.

- 75 Lindsey, Combat, p. 207.
- 76 Lindsey, Combat. He writes: "certain trials are necessary to produce growth and proven character" (p. 209).
- 77 Lindsey, Combat, p. 209.
- 78 Lindsey, Combat. Lindsey states: "I have disciplined so many super-talented young men who could have been drawn astray by the things of this world if the Lord had not gotten their attention through trials" p. 211).
- 79 Lindsey, Combat, p. 211.
- 80 Lindsey, Combat, p. 212.
- 81 Lindsey, Combat, p. 213.
- 82 Lindsey, Combat, p. 42.
- 83 Lindsey, Combat, p. 41. According to Lindsey there are over 7000 such promises in the biblical record.
- 84 Lindsey, Combat, p. 33.
- 85 Lindsey, Combat. Lindsey affirms: "God never allows anything to happen in a believer's life by accident. If we trust him, everything will work together for our good" (p. 71).
- 86 Lindsey, Combat, p. 51.
- 87 Lindsey, Combat, pp. 230ff. According to Lindsey's commentary on Revelation, (New World, p.69) there are actually four heavenly crowns available to the faithful depending upon their activity in this life.
- 88 Lindsey, Combat, p. 145.

APPENDIX THREE:

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE LAST DAYS:

-according to Hal Lindsey's Writings

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE LAST DAYS:

-according to Hal Lindsey's Writings

The following chronology of biblical prophecies which tells of the events leading up to the second coming of Christ including the Rapture and the Great Tribulation, is taken primarily from Lindsey's book, The Rapture. There are a few references to other works, particularly his commentary on Revelation, There's a New World Coming. Biblical references are given for each stage in the progression of events whenever Lindsey makes explicit his source for a prediction.

1. In the prophet Daniel's writings there is a countdown to the second coming of Christ and the new Kingdom. Daniel predicts that it will happen in 490 years. According to Lindsey, the providentially ordered stop-watch began ticking off these 490 years beginning in 444 B.C.E. when the Jews were officially allowed by Artaxerxes Longimanus of Persia to return to Palestine to rebuild Jerusalem¹ (Dan. 9:24-27).

2. Exactly 483 years later, Jesus allowed himself to be proclaimed the Messiah during his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.²

3. The Messiah is crucified. Lindsey states that "Israel failed to accept her Messiah and instead 'cut him off' by crucifying him. At this juncture God stopped the countdown seven years short of its completion."³

4. During the time between the interruption of the countdown to the new Kingdom and its resumption, "God turned his focus to the Gentiles and created the church."⁴ This interruption of grace, the sixth dispensation, is called "The Great Parenthesis" and essentially it ends with the Rapture.⁵

5. During the period leading up to the final seven years left on the divine time-clock, plagues, famines, earthquakes, wars, and revolutions will increase in number, and the occult, false prophets and astrologers will grow in popularity. The actual events are not as important as their increasing frequency. This is to fulfill the prophecies of Jesus in Matthew 24:8 which end with: "All these things are the beginning of the birth pains"⁶ (Lindsey's translation). As in any birth process, the increase in the frequency of the pains foretells of the coming new birth, i.e., the new Kingdom of God.⁷

6. A leader of great eminence, who will have charismatic appeal, and who will also have survived a bullet wound to the head⁸ (Rev. 3: 2-3), will solve all the major problems of the world and thereby gain tremendous public support. Using his natural charisma and vast popularity, this leader will bring under his power the European Economic Community and turn it into a ten nation confederacy which will eventually bring all of the free nations under its power (Rev. 13:4, Dan. 8:25, 1 Thes. 5:3).

1 7. The Rapture (Lindsey sometimes calls this event "the great snatch") takes place, and all the true believers from all generations who have lived since the Ascension of Christ will rise instantaneously, physically, personally and visibly into the clouds to be with Christ (1 Thes. 4:15-18). Those believers who are alive when the Rapture takes place will be reunited with their loved ones who were also raptured. All of these mortals are given perfect, immortal bodies and they will rise with Christ into heaven where they shall give praise to God and wait for the Great Tribulation to be accomplished (Rev. 4:2-3).

8. The great charismatic leader (who turns out to be the Anti-christ of Revelation 13 and whom Lindsey calls the "Roman Dictator" and the "Future Führer") is alive right now, according to Lindsey.⁹ This great leader will sign an accord with Israel, and this event will begin the seven year Tribulation. Now the last seven years of Daniel's 490 years will be lived out with the culmination of these years resulting in Christ's return and the establishment of the 1000 year kingdom.

9. The temple is rebuilt and the old sacrificial services are resumed according to Mosaic law (Dan. 9:27), and at this time a False Jewish Prophet will arise in Israel (Rev. 13:11-17).

10. The temple is required so that the Roman leader can betray Israel and set up the Abomination of

Desolation in the Temple (Dan 9:27). At this event the Roman Dictator declares himself to be God, and therefore, he reveals himself to be the Anti-Christ.

11. Since the Church has been raptured, God's focus is again upon the Jews. (The Church is never mentioned in Revelation chapters 6 through 8 and this is Lindsey's proof that it is not on earth at the time of the Tribulation.)

12. Those Jewish believers who fear the Anti-Christ and who see the error of their ways in not accepting Jesus as the Messiah will turn to Him and flee the city of Jerusalem. They will seek security in the ancient city of Petra in which they will be safe during the coming destruction of the Tribulation (Rev. 12:13-16).¹⁰

13. 144,000 Jewish Christians (Rev.7) "miraculously brought to faith in their true messiah,"¹¹ and opposing the Anti-Christ, will go out to evangelize the world. Their evangelical success will be great. "In the seven years left to them, they'll evangelize the whole world. No one had done that yet."¹² Lindsey calls these evangelists "144,000 Billy Grahams."¹³

14. Meanwhile two other prophets (Rev. 11: 3-13) will return to Jerusalem to witness to the Israelites. Lindsey believes these two will be none other than Moses and Elijah.¹⁴ They will shake up not only Israel, but the world for 1260 days, or the first three and one half

years of the tribulation.¹⁵ Apparently the world at large will hate their message of warning and criticism because all people will rejoice at their deaths.¹⁶

THE SEVEN SEALS OF REVELATION (Lindsey's predictions follow the seven-fold symbolism found in the Book of Revelation, chapter 6ff. Thus, his eschatological configuration develops actual historical events to correspond with the seven seals, trumpets and bowls of Divine wrath which are depicted in John's dream.)

15. The Anti-Christ brings the entire free world under his economic and political control (Rev. 6:1-2, Dan. 8:23-25). The ancient city of Babylon becomes the centre for a world religion, probably astrology.

16. The First Seal: The true believers will be persecuted and millions who resist worship of the Anti-Christ will be massacred. These resisters will become hunted people (Rev. 17:14, Mat. 24:9-14).

17. The Second Seal: The War of Armageddon begins with the Arab nations attacking the State of Israel (Dan. 11:40). The dispute will begin over Jerusalem (Zech. 12:2-3) and the Russians will join the Arab attack (Ezek. 38:8-11, Dan. 11:40-41). Once the Russians have occupied Palestine, their army will doublecross the Arabs and overrun Egypt on its way to an attempted conquest of Africa (Dan. 11: 42-43).

18. While in Africa, the Russian leadership hears about a massive army of 200,000,000 soldiers of Eastern Asian countries (primarily Mainland China's Army) forming at the Euphrates River (Dan. 11:14, Rev. 16:12). At roughly the same time they will also discover that the armies of the ten nation confederacy are mobilizing.

19. The Third Seal: It opens (Rev. 6:5-6) and spells the beginning of economic disasters. Lindsey predicts that after "war breaks out in the Middle East, oil from the Persian Gulf will be halted and world-wide economic chaos will set in."¹⁷

20. The Fourth Seal: It foretells (Rev. 6:7-8) the death of a quarter of the world's population through famine, epidemics, war and the breakdown of society.

21. The Fifth Seal: The wholesale massacre of the remaining believers begins with the opening of the fifth seal. Those believers who are not marked with the sign of the beast, i.e., 666 (Rev. 13:5-7), will be exposed. These numbers, which will be given out to control all economic and social functions, will mark off those who are faithful to the Anti-Christ. Without this number, the true believers will not be able to buy or sell anything nor will they be given work.¹⁸

22. The Sixth Seal: It is the signal that nuclear war is beginning. Up until this time all the battles of the war of Armageddon have been carried out with

conventional weapons, according to Lindsey.¹⁹

23. The Seventh Seal: Before the seventh seal is opened God pauses long enough in the dispensing of calamities for the unbelievers to repent. Since they are unwilling to repent, the seventh seal opens, and it reveals seven Trumpet judgments (Rev. 8:1-12).

THE SEVEN TRUMPET JUDGMENTS:

24. The First Trumpet Judgment (Rev. 8:7) is the burning of one third of the earth's surface. Lindsey speculates that these fires may be from the nuclear exchange which took place because of the nuclear attacks of the six seal.²⁰

25. The Second Trumpet Judgment heralds the destruction of one third of the world's ships and life in the sea. Lindsey points out that John's image in Revelation 8:8-9 is an excellent first century description of a 20th century hydrogen bomb explosion.²¹

26. The Third Trumpet Judgment destroys one third of the fresh water. This could be caused, according to Lindsey, by another nuclear exchange.²²

27. The Fourth Trumpet Judgment witnesses the reduction of the light from the sun and moon by one third (Rev. 8:12) as a result of "the debris spread into the upper atmosphere by the blast of hundreds of nuclear

warheads."²³

28. The Fifth Trumpet Judgment brings about terrible plagues upon the remainder of the people on the earth. The nature of these diseases is uncertain but it will be so horrific that those who are afflicted would rather die than suffer it. Lindsey suggests that it could be chemical warfare.²⁴

29. At the sound of the Sixth Trumpet Judgment the 200,000,000 soldiers of the Eastern nations will cross the Euphrates River and advance upon the Russians (Rev. 9:13-14). "As they move toward the Middle East, they wipe out one third of the earth's population. They do this with fire and brimstone which again seems to indicate a massive use of nuclear weapons (Rev. 9:15-18)."²⁵

30. The Seventh Trumpet Judgment is sounded in heaven, and Jesus claims title deed of the earth. During the break in the destruction, humanity is given another chance to repent.²⁶ The city of Babylon, with its religion of astrology, is destroyed by the Anti-Christ (Rev. 17:16-18). At the same time there will take place two reapings. The first will be the reaping of the remaining believers, and the second will gather those to be destroyed in the coming great battle of Armageddon which centres on Jerusalem. These reapings essentially divide the "sheep from the goats." As Lindsey puts it: "At this point the

eternal destiny of every living human being will already be determined by his own choice."²⁷ The seventh trumpet blows and it reveals seven bowls of God's wrath (Rev. 15-17).

THE SEVEN BOWLS OF GOD'S WRATH

31. The First Bowl "brings cancer upon all those who have the 666 mark on them."²⁸ This could be a result of nuclear radiation.

32. The Second Bowl turns the sea to blood and every living thing in the ocean dies.²⁹

33. The Third Bowl causes the fresh water to suffer the same fate as the salt water.

34. The sun's rays intensify with the fourth bowl. "This would happen when the ozone layer of the upper atmosphere is damaged by the nuclear warfare."³⁰

35. With the Fifth Bowl a great darkness settles upon the throne of the Anti-Christ.

36. The Sixth Bowl signals that the final battle of Armageddon is to begin. By this time the Arab and Russian armies have been utterly destroyed (Ezek. 39:1-6, Dan. 11:45). The great suicidal battle is between the 200 million Chinese and the armies of the Anti-Christ.³¹

37. The Seventh Bowl causes a great earthquake to occur which destroys all the cities of the gentile world.

38. Shortly after the seventh bowl the personal, awesome return of the Messiah begins. Lindsey gives these characteristics of Christ's return: 1) it will be instantaneous; 2) it will be visible; 3) it will be filled with power and glory.³²

39. The forces of east and west will join to confront the Messiah. The remaining soldiers, nations and leaders "demonstrating hardened hearts beyond comprehension, . . . join forces and attack the Lord himself."³³

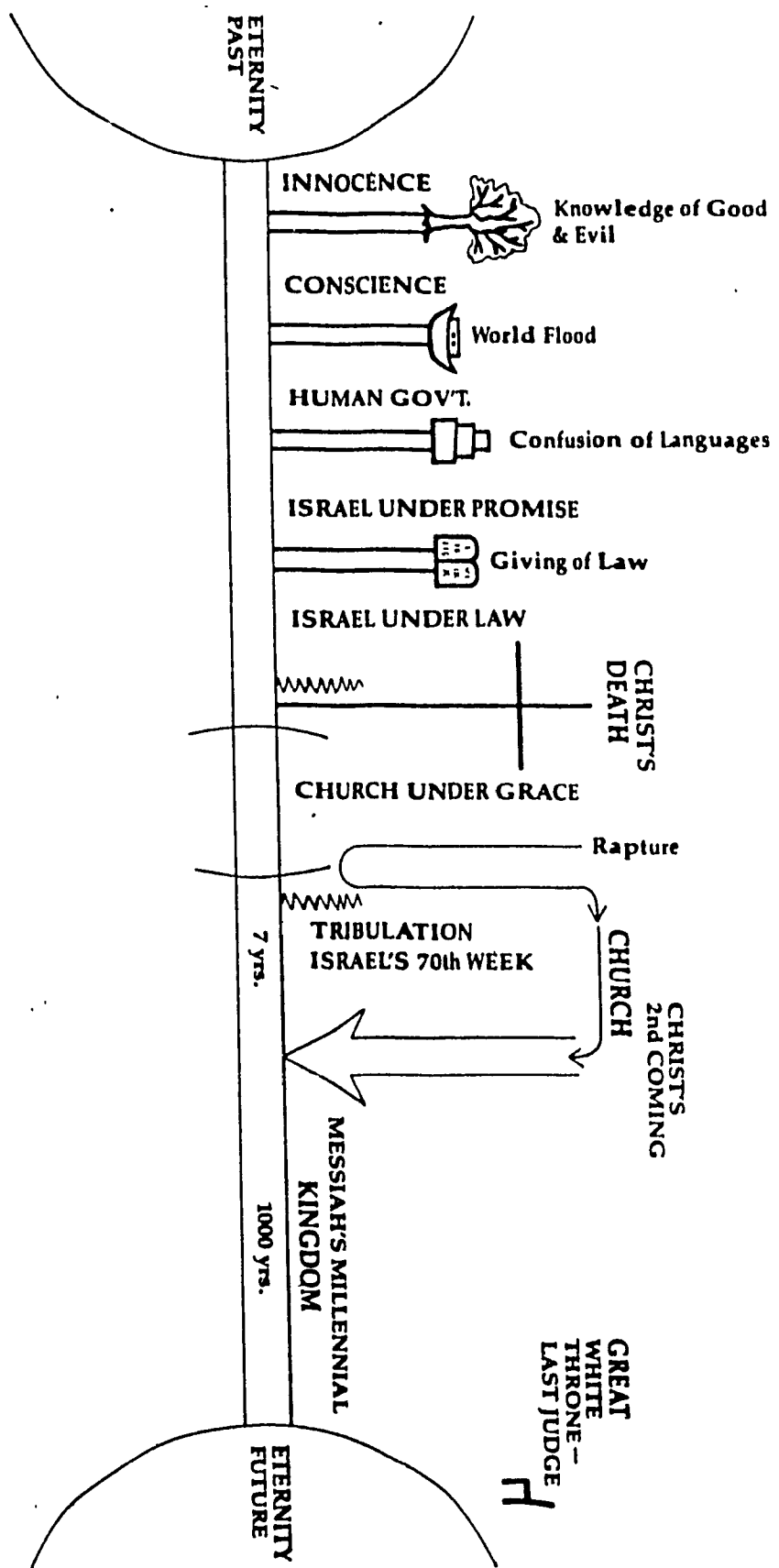
40. The Messiah utterly destroys the combined forces of earthly armies through the help of his raptured saints. According to Lindsey's calculations there would be about 50 million inhabitants left on earth after the final battle.³⁴

41. The Anti-Christ and the False Prophet are thrown into the lake of fire and Satan is bound. At this point the 1000 year Kingdom will begin upon the restored earth.

42. At the end of the 1000 years of Christ's reign Satan rebels for a brief period but is defeated and thrown into the lake of fire. At this time there is a general resurrection, a final judgement and eternal life begins in the New Jerusalem.³⁵

The following four pages are graphic illustrations of the above chronological explanation. The first is taken from Hal Lindsey's book: The Rapture.³⁶ The second is copied from the Eerdmans Handbook to Christianity in America.³⁷ The third illustration is found in the text written by George Marsden entitled Fundamentalism and American Culture.³⁸ The final picture is also found in Marsden's work.³⁹

**GOD'S OUTLINE OF HISTORY
OR DISPENSATIONS**



SATAN

'THE GOD OF THIS AGE'

2 COR 4 + (MARGIN)

'THIRD HEAVEN'

SATAN'S KINGDOM

MATT 12:24-30

'SECOND HEAVEN'

EVIL POWERS - IN THE -

'HEAVENLY PLACES'

EPH 6:11-12

'ATMOSPHERIC HEAVENS'

PARADISE WAS A TYPE OF SATAN
SATAN WAS BEHIND PARADISE'S PLACINGS
LUK 1:10-13

THE PRESENT

'DEMON POSSESSION'

LUKE 8:26-36 MATT 4:24 ACTS 19:14-17

'Seducing SPIRITS'

1 TIM 4:1-3

CHRIST'S DAY

WILDERNESS TEMPTATION

MATT 4:1-11

GRAVE

PARADISE

THE ABODE OF THE SOULS
OF THE RIGHTEOUS DEAD
UNTIL CHRIST'S RESURRECTION
IT IS NOW EMPTY

REV 20:1-3

HELL

THE ABODE OF THE
SOULS OF THE WICKED DEAD
LUKE 16:26-28

THE UNDERWORLD

ABYSS
THE BOTTOMLESS PIT

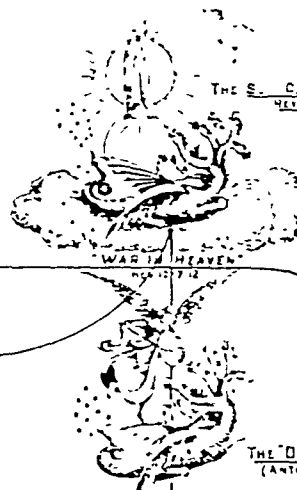
HEB 9:1-12

'THE

FALLEN ANGELS

JUDE 6-7

'TARTARUS'



THE 'CLOTHED' WOMAN

REV 12:1-5

WAR IN HEAVEN

THE 'DRAGON'

(ANTI-CHRIST)

THE DRAGON CAST OUT
THE HEAVENS CLEANSED

THE HEAVENS CLEAN

DISPENSATION

THE SATANIC TRINITY

THE 'BEAST'

(ANTI-CHRIST)

THE 'FALSE PROPHET'

(ANTI-CHRIST)

THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

DAN 12:1 MATT 24:21

SATAN BOUND

REV 20:1-3

SATAN LOOSED

REV 20:7-8

GRAVE

JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS

MATT 25:31-46

THE MILLENNIUM

MILLENNIAL KINGDOM
— OF —
CHRIST

THE 'SHEEP'
— OR —
GENTILE NATIONS IN BLESSING

SATAN'S DOOM

REV 19:20

FALLEN ANGELS TO JUDGMENT

THE 'SHEEP' TO

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THE WICKED DEAD TO JUDGMENT
THE WICKED DEAD TO JUDGMENT
THE WICKED DEAD TO JUDGMENT

437

DANIEL'S "SEVENTY WEEKS"

DAN.9:24-27

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks:

26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself:

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

THE PRESENT DISPENSATION OF "THE CHURCH" WAS NOT REVEALED TO DANIEL

DANIEL'S "SIXTY NINE" WEEKS

DANIEL'S SEVENTIETH WEEK

B.C. 445
7-WEEKS
49-YEARS
TO THE
REBUILDING
OF JERUSALEM
NEH.3-6.
the street shall be
built again, and the wall, even in
troublesome times.

62-WEEKS
434-YEARS
TO "MESSIAH THE PRINCE"
DAN.9:25-26, ZECH. 9:9. MATT 21:1-11



DESTRUCTION
OF JERUSALEM
A.D. 70

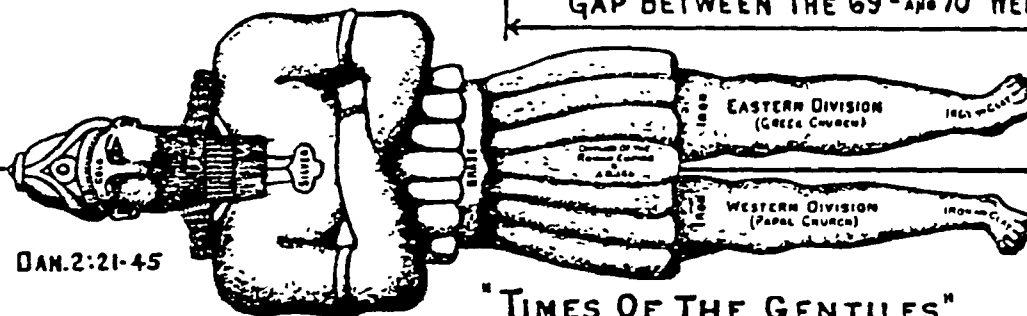
and the people of
the prince that shall come shall de-
stroy the city and the sanctuary;
and the end thereof shall be with a
flood, and unto the end of the war
desolations are determined.

GAP BETWEEN THE 69TH AND 70TH WEEK

MIDDLE OF THE WEEK
3 1/2-YEARS
TIME-TIMES-A HALF
42-MONTHS
1260 DAYS

B.C. 606

DAN.2:21-45



"TIMES OF THE GENTILES"
LUKE 21:24

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THE REVELATION

1 THESS. 1:7-10. REV. 19:11-21

ZECH. 14:4

11/25/19

DANIEL AND REVELATION COMPARED

THE RAPTURE
1 THESS 4:17



THE GLORIFIED CHURCH
WITH THE LORD
1 COR 14:34

THE MARRIAGE
OF THE LAMB
REV 19:7-9



THE REVELATION
ATMOS 1:1-3



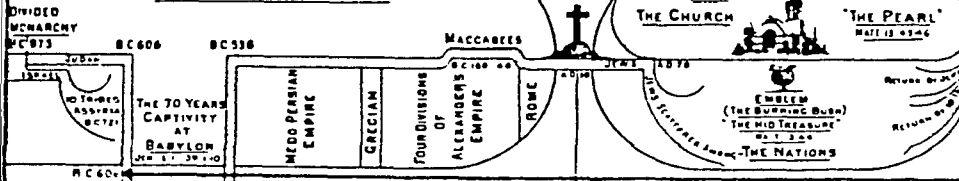
THE GREAT WHITE THRONE
JUDGMENT
REV 20:11-15

1. THE VISION	2. THE THINGS WHICH ARE
THE SEVEN CHURCHES	CHAPS 1-16
EPHESUS	1
SMYRNA	2
PERGAMOS	3
THYATIRA	4
SARDIS	5
PHILADELPHIA	6
LAODICEA	7

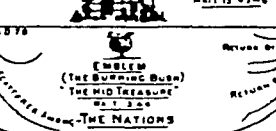
BOOK OF REVELATION

3. THE THINGS WHICH SHALL BE HEREFTER	4. THE THINGS WHICH SHALL BE HEREFTER
THE SEVEN SEALS	THE SEVEN TRUMPETS
WHITE HORSE	1
RED HORSE	2
PALE HORSE	3
BLACK HORSE	4
SILVER HORSE	5
THE SEVEN VIALS	6
THE SEVEN THINGS	7
THE SEVEN DOOMS	8
THE SEVEN NEW THINGS	9

"LAW" JEWISH DISPENSATION



"GRACE"
THE CHURCH
THE PEARL
MAT 13:45-46



THE GREAT INTERVAL
LUKE 21:24

THE GREAT INTERVAL
WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN BETWEEN THE TWO DISPENSATIONS
(THE CHURCH DISPENSATION) WAS NOT REVEALED TO DANIEL

EASTERN DIVISION
(GREEN CHURCH)

WESTERN DIVISION
(PAPAL CHURCH)

ROMAN EMPIRE

FOURTH WILD BEAST
DAN 7:19

ANTI-CHRIST

THE KING OF THE NORTH

THE GREAT INTERVAL

THE GREAT INTERVAL

THE GREAT INTERVAL

THE GREAT INTERVAL

THE GREAT INTERVAL

THE GREAT INTERVAL

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THE GREAT INTERVAL

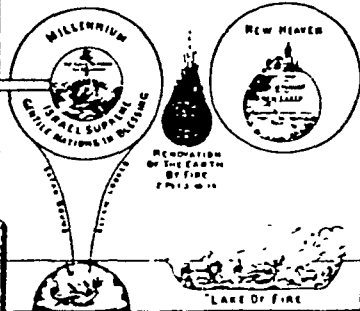
THE GREAT INTERVAL

BOOK OF DANIEL

DANIEL'S VISION
OF THE
"END TIME"

DANIEL'S SEALED BOOK
DAN 12:4

THE BOOK THAT DANIEL WAS TOLD TO SEAL UP WAS DESCRIPTIVE
OF THE "END TIME" ON EARTH AND THUS RUNS PARALLEL WITH THE SEVEN SEALED BOOKS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION



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Notes:

- 1 Hal Lindsey, The Rapture (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), p. 2.
- 2 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 3.
- 3 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 3.
- 4 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 3.
- 5 Lindsey, Rapture, pp. 69ff.
- 6 Hal Lindsey, The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), p. 19.
- 7 Lindsey, Countdown. He writes: "Only when these birth pains, become more frequent and more intense would we know that the final days of our suffering--and the birth of a new world--were upon us" (p. 20).
- 8 Hal Lindsey, There's a New World Coming (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1973). Full details of this wound are given on pages 172ff.
- 9 Lindsey, New World, p. 171.
- 10 Hal Lindsey, A Prophetical Walk through the Holy Land (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1983). Lindsey affirms that "Jesus will super-naturally protect those who cling to his word. I believe Petra will be the place of that protection" (p. 167).
- 11 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 7.
- 12 Lindsey, New World, p. 83.
- 13 Lindsey, New World, p. 111. This idea is also found in Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), p. 99.
- 14 Lindsey, New World, p. 152.
- 15 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 7.
- 16 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 7.
- 17 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 11.
- 18 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 11.
- 19 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 12.

- 20 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 13.
- 21 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 13.
- 22 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 13.
- 23 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 13.
- 24 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 13.
- 25 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 14.
- 26 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 15.
- 27 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 16.
- 28 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 16.
- 29 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 16.
- 30 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 16.
- 31 For battle maps see A Prophetical Walk through the Holy Land, pp. 186ff.
- 32 Lindsey, Rapture, pp. 17-18.
- 33 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 18.
- 34 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 20.
- 35 In Lindsey's commentary on Revelation there is a discussion of this new Jerusalem, but it does not play a very large part in his other books.
- 36 Lindsey, Rapture, p. 67.
- 37 Eerdmans Handbook to Christianity in America, ed. by Mark Noll and Nutha Hatch (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 329-330.
- 38 George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture (New York: Oxford Press, 1980), p. 53.
- 39 Marsden, Fundamentalism, pp. 58-59.

APPENDIX FOUR:

THE 1878 NIAGARA CREED*

-written by James Hall Brookes

The 1878 Niagara Creed:

So many in the latter times have departed from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; so many have turned away their ears from the truth and turned unto fables; so many are busily enagaged in scattering broadcast the seeds of fatal error, directly affecting the honor of our Lord and the destiny of the soul, we are constrained by fidelity to him to make the following declaration of our doctrinal belief and to present it as the bond of union with those who wish to be connected with the Niagara Bible Conference.

I

We believe "that all scripture is given by inspiration of God" by which we understand the whole of the book called the Bible; nor do we take the statement in the sense in which it is sometimes foolishly said that works of human genius are inspired, but in the sense that the Holy Ghost gave the very words of the sacred writings to holy men of Old; and that His Divine inspiration is not in different degrees, but extends equally and fully to all parts of these writings, historical, poetical, doctrinal and prophetical and to the smallest word, and inflection of a word, provided such word is found in the original manuscripts: 2 Tim. 3:16,17: 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 2:13; Mark 12:26,36: 13:11: Acts 1:16; 2:4.

II

We believe that the Godhead eternally exists in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and that these three are one God, having precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections, and worthy of precisely the same homage, confidence and obedience; Mark 12:29; John 1:1-4; Matt. 28:19,20; Acts 5:3,4; 2 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 1:1-2; Rev. 1:4-6.

III

We believe that man, originally created in the image and after the likeness of God, fell from his high and holy estate by eating the forbidden fruit, and as the consequence of his disobedience the threatened penalty of death was then and there inflicted, so that his moral nature was not only grievously injured by the fall, but he totally lost all spiritual life, becoming dead in trespasses and sins and subject to the power of the devil: Gen. 1:26; 2:17; John 5:40; 6:53; Eph. 2:1-3; Tim. 5:6; 1 John 3:8.

IV

We believe that this spiritual death, or total corruption of human nature, has been transmitted to the entire race of man, the man Christ Jesus alone excepted; and hence that every child of Adam is born into the world with a nature which only possesses no spark of Divine life, but is essentially and unchangeably bad, being in enmity against God and incapable by any educational

process whatever of subjection to His law: Gen. 6:5; Psa. 14:1-3; 51:5; Jer. 17:9; John 3:6; Rom. 5:12-19; 8:6,7.

V

We believe that, owing to this universal depravity and death in sin, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless born again; and that no degree of reformation however great, no attainment in morality however high, no culture however attractive, no humanitarianism and philanthropic schemes and societies however useful, no baptism or ordinance however administered, can help the sinner to take one step toward heaven; but a new nature imparted from above, a new life implanted by the Holy Ghost through the Word, is absolutely essential to salvation: Isa. 64:6; John 3:5,18; Gal. 6:15; Phil. 3:4-9; Tit. 3:5; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23.

VI

We believe that our redemption has been accomplished solely by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was made to be sin, and made a curse for us, dying in our room and stead; and that no repentance, no feeling, no faith, no good resolutions, no sincere efforts, no submission to the rules and regulations of any church, or of all the churches that have existed since the days of the Apostles, can add in the very least to the value of that precious blood, or to the merit of that finished work, wrought for us by Him who united in His person true and proper divinity with perfect sinless humanity: Lev. 17:11;

Matt. 26:28; Rom. 5:6-9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18,19.

VII

We believe that Christ in the fulness of the blessings He has secured by His obedience unto death, is received by faith alone, and that the moment we trust in Him as our Saviour we pass out of death into everlasting life, being justified from all things, accepted before the Father according to the measure of His acceptance, loved as He is loved and having His place and portion, as linked to Him, and one with him forever: John 5:24; 17:23; Acts 13:39; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:4-6, 13: 1 John 4:17; 1:11,12.

VIII

We believe that it is the privilege, not only of some, but of all who are born again by the Spirit through faith in Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, to be assured of their salvation from the very day they take Him to be their Saviour; and that this assurance is not founded upon fancied discovery of their own worthiness, but wholly upon the testimony of God in His written Word, exciting within His children filial love, gratitude, and obedience: Luke 10:20; 12:32; John 6:47; Rom. 8:33-39; 2 Cor. 5:1,6-8; 2 Tim. 1:12; 1 John 5:13

IX

We believe that all the scriptures from the first to the last centre about our Lord Jesus Christ, in his person and work, in His first and second coming: and hence

that no chapter even of the Old Testament is properly read or understood until it leads to Him; and moreover that all the scriptures from the first to last, including every chapter even of the Old Testament, were designed for our practical instruction: Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Acts 17:2,3; 18:28; 26:22,23; 28:23; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11.

X

We believe that the Church is composed of all who are united by the Holy Spirit to the risen and ascended Son of God, that by the same Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, and thus being members one of another, we are responsible to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, rising above all sectarian prejudices and denominational bigotry and loving one another with a pure heart fervently: Matt. 16:16-18; Acts 2:32-47; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:20-23; 4:3-10; Col. 3:14,15.

XI

We believe that the Holy Spirit, not as an influence, but as a Divine Person, the source and power of all acceptable worship and service, is our abiding Comforter and Helper, that He never takes His departure from the Church, nor from the feeblest of the saints, but is ever present to testify of Christ, seeking to occupy us with Him, and not with ourselves nor with our experiences: John 7:38,39; 14:16; 15:26; 16:14,14; Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:9; Phil. 3:3

XII

We believe that we are called with a holy calling to walk, not after the flesh but after the Spirit, and so to live in the Spirit that we should not fulfill the lusts of the flesh; but the flesh being still in us to the end of our earthly pilgrimage needs to be kept constantly in subjection to Christ, or it will surely manifest its presence to the dishonour of His name: Rom. 8:12, 13; 14:14; Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:1-10; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9.

XIII

We believe that the souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation do at death immediately pass into His presence and there remain in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the body at His coming, when soul and body reunited shall be associated with Him forever in the glory; but the souls of the unbelievers remain after death in conscious misery until the final judgment of the great white throne at the close of the millennium when soul and body reunited shall be cast into the lake of fire, not to be annihilated but to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power: Luke 16:19-26; 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 2 Thes. 1:7-9; Jude 6:7; Rev. 20:11-15.

XIV

1 We believe that the world will not be converted during the present dispensation but is fast ripening for judgment, while there will be a fearful apostasy in the professing Christian body; and hence that the Lord Jesus will come in person to introduce the millennial age, when Israel shall be restored to their own land and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord; and that this personal and premillennial advent is the blessed hope set before us in the Gospel for which we should be constantly looking: Luke 12:35-40; 17:26-30; 18:8; Acts 15:14-17; 2 Thes. 2:3-8; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Tit. 2:11-15.

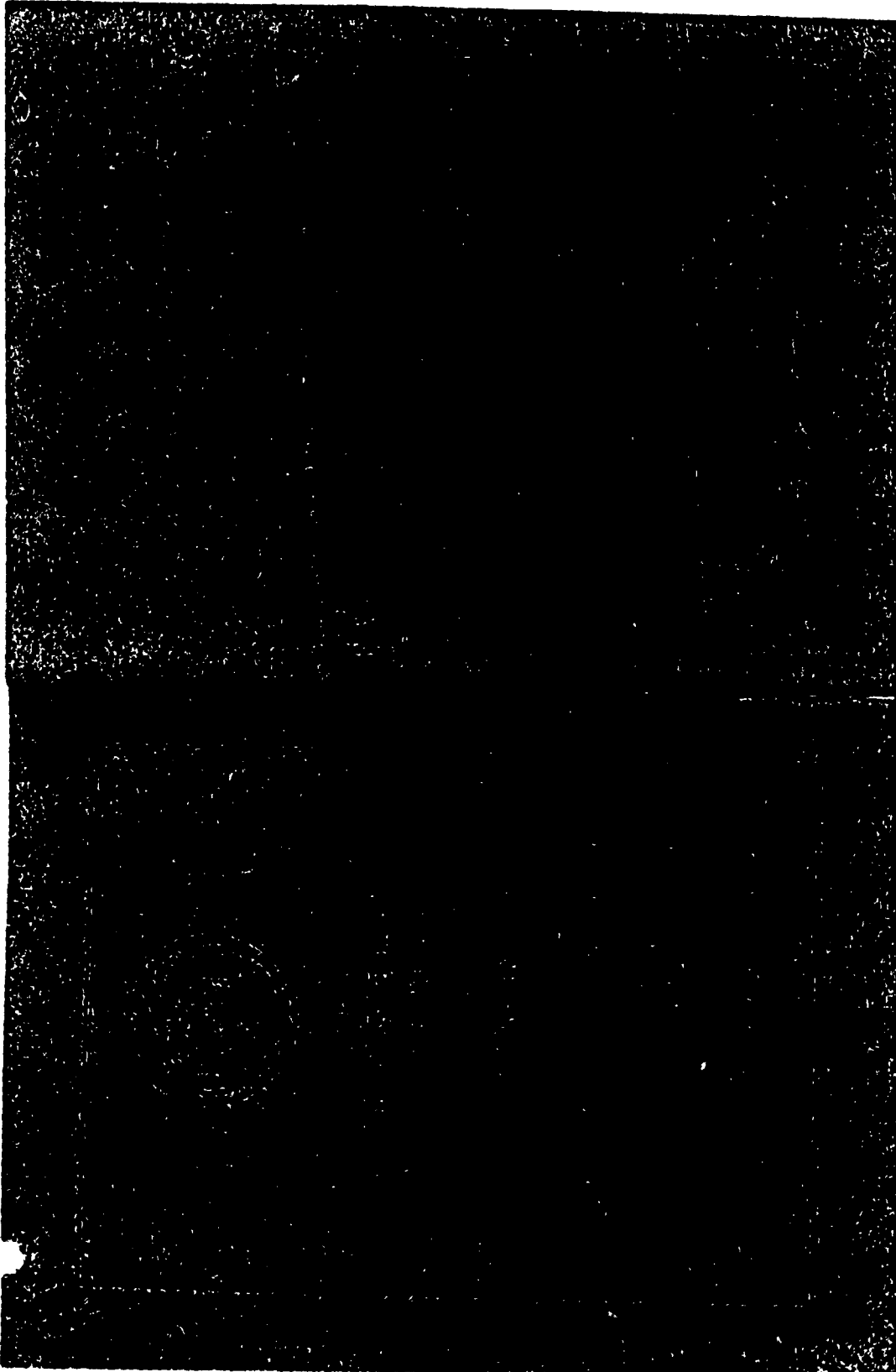
* This creed is quoted in E.Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970), p.273-277. He quotes it from The Fundamentals of the Faith as Expressed in the Articles of Belief of the Niagara Bible Conference (Chicago: Great Commission Prayer League, no date.)

APPENDIX FIVE:

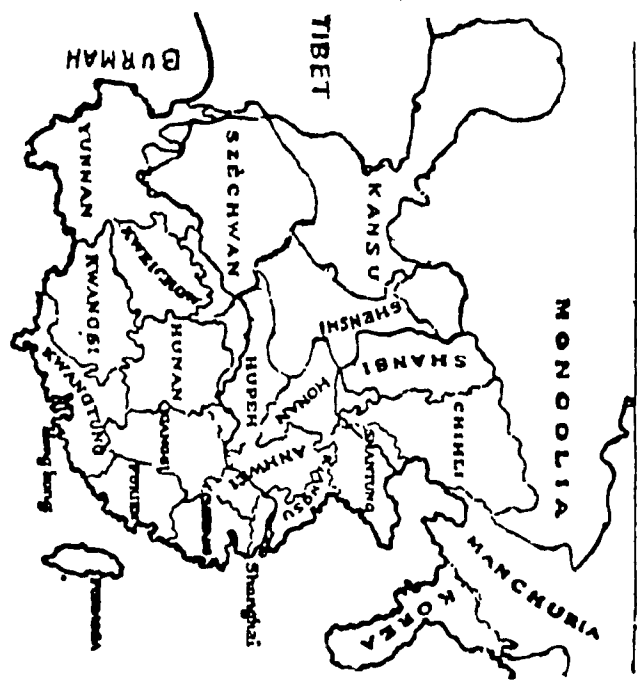
REPORT OF THE MILTON STEWART EVANGELISTIC BAND

Report of the Milton Stewart Evangelistic Band:

The following report, written by the Reverend James Cunningham, illustrates the activity of a missionary working for the China Inland Mission which was influenced by dispensational thinking. The theme of the shortness of time is one evidence of its dispensational presupposition. The reader is also directed to study the last paragraph of the report for further indications of the dispensational spirit. In this section, the writer thanks W.E. Blackstone for his support.



CHINA FOR CHRIST



Milton Stewart



Evangelist Band

REPORT
of the
MILTON STEWART EVANGELISTIC BAND
1924

FOREWORD

We offer our humble praise to Almighty God for being privileged to hand in this report of the Evangelistic Work in connection with the Milton Stewart Fund. "The Lord of the harvest" has wrought with His Servants, enabling them, during a year of exceptional trial and difficulty, to continue steadily ploughing in hope, and has graciously rewarded their patient and strenuous toil with an encouraging harvest. To Him be all the glory.

While friends join us in praise to God for blessings of the past, this report will also remind them of the need for constant prayer in the present, that the work of God may be sustained in these days of great difficulty.

OUR MEN AND METHODS

The Cross is still the same test of discipleship today as it ever was,—“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow Me.” The Cross, for the true follower of the Christ, is neither a relic nor an ornament, but something as ugly, and bitter, and hard, and unjust as it was for his Master. The imperious demands of active service are known to all. When a man has joined the Colours every interest of his life is subordinated to the claims of King and country. Henceforth his motto is, “I serve.” This devotion to service was conspicuous in the life of the Apostle Paul, that “good soldier of Jesus Christ,” who had been “entrusted with the Gospel.” In the discharge of his commission he was prepared to die, counting not his life “of any account” in comparison with accomplishing “the ministry which he had received from the Lord Jesus.”

Yet this valiant soldier of the Cross, who suffered himself and exhorted others to “suffer hardship with the Gospel” was no independent warrior. On few things did he set greater store than on “fellowship in the furtherance of the Gospel.” Did he speak of his comrades in arms, they were his ‘fellow-soldiers,’ ‘fellow-prisoners,’ ‘fellow-servants,’ ‘fellow-citizens,’ and fellow-workers,” with whom he was united in “the bonds of the Gospel,” ‘to die together or to live together.’

Into this same fellowship have we been called and we do count it a privilege indeed that we are co-workers with Christ and fellow-workers with the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

We heard Christ’s invitation—“come unto me,” we have also heard His Command—“go ye into all the world.” Sent by God “God sent a man” is the Psalmist’s claim for Joseph. Jeremiah was sent on an errand and he was commanded to speak. “There was a man sent from God” is the Evangelist’s striking introduction of John the Baptist. To be God-sent is the greatest claim mortal can ever make. “The God of your

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fathers hath sent me," said Moses. Christ claims the impressive title—"He whom God hath sent." Few words, if any, were more frequently upon the lips of Christ than this word "sent." It was the measure of His commission to His disciples, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Then He called them "Apostles"—God's sent ones. Those whom God sends He prepares. To Moses was granted the vision of the Burning Bush, to Isaiah the Throne high and lifted up, and to Paul the sight of Christ Himself. God's commission to His ambassadors was confirmed by signs and wonders.

Believingly, humbly yet assuredly, that we also are in the succession of the apostles and prophets called and sent of God to proclaim His Gospel to the millions of China, we, too, in these days of trial and commotion, take courage from the fact that we are on GOD'S errand.

We have twelve men in our Evangelistic Band,—men with a method and a message to reach their fellow-countrymen. They are earnest and enthusiastic in "the work of the Gospel." The oldest member of the Band is 64 years of age and the youngest 24. Nearly all the men have had some High-School, and all of them have had some Theological training. They were in various vocations before being called into "the work of the Gospel." One was a soldier, another a doctor, old Mr. Tai—64 years of age—was a school-teacher.

We never go into a district unless we are invited, then there must be a good deal of prayer before we go. We generally remain in a district two months, going where the local people think we can be of most help. We try to keep regular hours in the work of the day. Breakfast at 8 o'clock, Prayers at 8.30 at which I generally give the men a little homiletical talk. All forenoon we go on the streets with our Bible-Portions and Tracts. Afternoon and evening we have the Gospel services at which the Gospel is preached. Open-air meetings feature largely in our work. But we are chiefly a team of gospel evangelists. In the day time we distribute the Word, and in the evening we preach the Word.

OUR TASK

The responsibility of going around preaching the Gospel with twelve Chinese Evangelists as co-workers, is tremendous. Yet without any realisation of this responsibility, it is more than likely that we would be very ineffective Christian workers. This tremendous responsibility proves a dynamic indeed, and bestirs us to seek and find, and so become fitted for the performance of our duty—the solemn yet blessed duty of saving men.

In a sense we are Specialists, so we must be Special men with a Special Message. There are one or two things which are absolutely indispensable for the work of soul winning. To put it briefly, we may say that the one task we are called upon to accomplish is to convict men of sin and then to convince them of the love of God in Christ.

Activity and enterprise are regarded as the main essentials for success in the Kingdom of God, and yet we are forced to admit that the one supreme and all-absorbing essential for success in this sacred, terrible and yet blessed work of evangelism, is the Holy Ghost. Without Him we have naught. He alone convicts of sin. He alone can reveal Christ and His atoning Sacrifice. He alone is the mighty, convincing, converting power of God. No amount of effort on our part will avail unless our methods and messages are full of the Holy Ghost.

We may preach like angels, but unless we have had a deep conviction of sin ourselves we shall never produce it in others. Unless we are witnesses of His love we shall never be able to communicate that precious legacy of our dying Lord to those who are in need.

Our business is to open the eyes of the blind, hence our first task is to get men awakened, i.e. made conscious of sin and their need of a Saviour. Desires are to be awakened, the understanding enlightened, the will converted, the conscience purified, and the affections renewed. We have been entrusted with a wonderful commission. How can we succeed? Will not our bungling hands, our ruthless touch,

our mistaken judgments, cause us to fail? What lies behind the Evangelists great success? Here is the soul winners great secret—the arm behind the sword, the brain behind the pen—the heart behind the hand—the love behind the message,—these are the forces that wound and win and speak and save. And for the production of these spiritual forces, the Holy Spirit of the Living God alone avails.

The hall mark of an earnest preacher in heathen China is his ability to know just how much content it is necessary to put into the mind of the enquirer before it can be used as a lever to move the heart: or in other words, to know the secret of enlightening an awakened conscience and doing it without delay. After several years experience I have found that it is possible to lead men and women to Christ far more quickly than is supposed practicable by many. It is generally believed that a long period of instruction is necessary in heathen countries before we can urge men to be saved. I feel confident that this was not the way of the Master, nor of Apostolic Christianity. Our great task is to turn men from darkness to light to turn men from dumb idols to the living God, and cause them to be saved at once.

I admit this task is not an easy one in China. There is not even a theoretical knowledge of God, and hence none of sin and its deepest meaning. The knowledge of vice and crime there may be but of sin against a Holy God, none whatever. The words—"forgiveness," "pardon," "justification," are idle sounds. They have no content and no meaning. In a country like China where Idolatry is "swept and garnished," if not considerably embellished, and where other vices are so flagrant, it would seem as though Heathenism were only an incident in the situation. I do not overlook all these difficulties but I do believe, and could give you many blessed instances of an immediate enlightening of awakened souls, though knowing only the barest elements of the Christian faith. I continually tell my men that time is short and to realise that their chief task is to work for Christ and with Christ and to lead men to Christ. May God help us to guard our trust and fulfil our task.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Fourteen years have elapsed since the Revolution in China overthrew the Manchu Dynasty and established a Republic. Instead of better conditions the land has lapsed into a deplorable state of lawlessness. The north and south are still divided, the Provinces are estranged by contending for their own rather than the nation's good. Such Government as there is, is largely in the hands of the Militarists. The soldiery is unpaid, looting is becoming more frequent, brigandage is a common evil, opium cultivation is officially permitted and even encouraged, while famine and flood with all their attendant horrors, have afflicted millions of the people. "China," to quote one of her own officials, "resembles a ship in a storm with the passengers fighting each other for personal advantage."

With such unpromising conditions in the field, the Christian Worker has often been tempted to wonder whether a spiritual famine has not stricken the whole earth and whether there could still be seed for the sower and bread for the eater. Thank God, hope still beats high within the Christian's heart, and in the face of every discouragement he has not ceased to keep his hand to the plough and also to find that the golden sheaves for threshing and the goodly grain for gathering into God's garner have not failed. Though trembling faith has at times been nearly turned to fear, the promise still stands that he who goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Notwithstanding the difficult political conditions in China, the widespread unrest and disorder under which the work of sowing the Gospel-seed has been carried on, God has sent His plentiful rain into the furrows, and the spiritual harvest which has been reaped as a result is very encouraging. While it need hardly be said, there have never been lacking experiences which disappoint, there is present that encouragement which comes from the sound of abundance of rain. Seed-time and harvest shall not cease. We are still bidden to

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plough in hope and to sow beside all waters, trusting to Him Who alone can give the increase.

From the varied activities of our twelve men engaged in "God's errand" this past year, it is only possible to make reference to a few selected incidents. Times of rich blessing and revival were graciously granted on our trip into the Luchowfu District and again into the Hsuehchowfu District. Certainly the Hsuehchowfu District has not looked like a promising field during recent years, considering the distress of civil war, brigandage, flood, and famine, but our faithful Sowers toiled on and in their toil rejoiced, and the "harvest-home" has not failed.

It is only God who can command the light to shine out of darkness and make life leap forth in the midst of death and decay, and thus He has done through the Band's work this past year.

If arithmetic is to be the measure of progress, who will find for us a table for acts of mercy, and words and deeds of truth? If only we had a register to record conversions, deepening character, growing knowledge, faith, Christlikeness! Or a balance-sheet, with columns on one side for indifference to the Gospel, for cruelty, superstition, suspicion, for drunkenness and wantonness, and on the other side, for acceptance of the claims of Christ, for reasonable confidence, for progress in Grace and Truth; then, I think, our hearts will rejoice over this report. Though no summary can adequately convey the work accomplished by the Band this past year, a few facts culled from the year's experiences will help us in our song of Thanksgiving and will remind us that the "Gospel is still the power of God unto Salvation."

WHAT GOD HATH WROUGHT.

The year 1924 was a very busy one indeed. When the year came in we were away up in the north west corner of Kiangsu province. We arrived in the city of Fengyang on December 26th at the invitation of the Northern Presbyterian Mission. We could only give them help for six weeks before Chinese New-Year so we decided to go round four of their most needy Outstations. The first place visited was Fengyang, a large city eighteen miles west of the railway. The local Evangelist did not give us much cause for enthusiasm with the story he told us on arrival at his Church. I got my men together and told them it was up to us to improve things in this Church and city. We tackled that city with a grim determination and when we left we had that feeling of "something accomplished, something done." We sold over 4000 Gospel portions and distributed over 5000 Tracts. Then we had the joy of adding quite a number to those who search after Truth and Righteousness.

From Fengyang we moved in a north easterly direction to the city of Pengpu. This made our third visit to Pengpu so it was like going back to old camping ground. Ten years ago there was just a mud hut or two where Pengpu now stands. It is truly a mushroom city and it continues to grow. It is the headquarters of the Military Governor for Anhwei province, consequently three fourths of the population are soldiers, the other fourth is made up with harlots and hotel keepers. Pengpu is truly a cesspool of iniquity, a modern Sodom, and I marvel more and more at the long suffering patience of God in allowing such a city to exist. We sold Gospel portions like hot cakes, and our Tracts were eagerly received and read. We sold over 6000 Gospel portions and distributed over 10,000 Tracts. In the Afternoons and Evenings we preached the Gospel in the local Church and it was packed on each occasion. In the Evenings we had to close the doors, some of the Band men preached inside and the rest preached to those who were outside. During the nine

days we were in that city, over 200 names were handed in by those who desired to know more about the Gospel.

The next city to be visited was Linghwaikwan, forty miles further south and here we followed our usual program,—going on the streets in the Forenoons with our Books and Tracts, and in the Afternoons and Evenings holding meetings. Old Pastor Lee was certainly very glad to see us and grateful for helping him in his difficult task. It is very hard for us to enter into real heart sympathy and to fully realise the tremendous responsibilities some of these old Pastors have in their work. I saw in Pastor Lee a man who knew where to look for strength. My men were a real help to the old man as we continued with him for ten days. We crowded each day with hard work, teaching, preaching and distributing God's Word. Just as one works long and patiently over a drowning man to resuscitate life, so we worked patiently with a very wealthy merchant in that city, and we believe he was led to the "Light of the world." Over 5000 Gospel portions were sold and nearly 7000 Tracts distributed.

Our next "jumping off place" was Chang-Pah-Ling, a place noted as being the lair of several bands of robbers. I was warned not to take my men into that city, but after a good deal of thought and prayer we decided to go, trusting wholly in God for protection. God's arm is still the same length, it can still protect and save. One day I took some Tracts, some Gospel portions and one of my men with me and we went right into one of the robber's camps. We preached the same Gospel; a Saviour of robbers as well as a Saviour of scholars. Those hardened men were touched with our Gospel and boldness of speech. Over 3000 Gospel portions were sold and 6000 Tracts distributed.

From this city we returned home to Nanking to rest and have our Chinese New Year holidays. We had been out six weeks, and returned full of praise to God.

February 13th, after having been home a fortnight, we started out on another trip. This trip was taken at the invitation of the Southern Presbyterian Mission, and they wanted

us to go into what is known as the Chu-kiang-Tanyang field, a large territory to the east and north east of the city of Chinkiang. They asked us to go round eight of their most needy outstations and then come back into the city of Chinkiang to conduct campaigns in their city churches. In order to cover such a large territory I had to divide my men up into three small groups and send them around the various places. The whole Band went to the cities of Penniu, Tanyang and Hsinfeng, so I will report the work done in those cities as well as the campaigns in the Chinkiang city Churches.

Penniu was the "first port of call." The word Penniu means a rampant cow. Not a very large town but a very prosperous one, situated on the railway about halfway between Nanking and Shanghai. I have to confess that the local Pastor discouraged us as soon as we arrived in that town. When he told us the condition of the Church, and also that one of the Teachers in the School had gone astray in a rather serious manner. The Evil One is certainly very busy, always after our best young men and women. I told my men that one of the local Teachers had made a moral mistake and that we had better tell the people that the Devil is always busy trying to spoil the work of the Christian Church. We spent eight days in Penniu and I am afraid that we left with rather heavy hearts. We didn't seem to accomplish very much. Of course we sold plenty of Gospel portions and distributed lots of Tracts, but there wasn't a very ready response to our Gospel message. Perhaps the fault was with us, or may be with the circumstances with which we had to contend. The work of the Itinerant Preacher is by no means an easy one. He has to keep himself in good condition physically and spiritually. Then he has to meet with all kinds and conditions of men and circumstances. Moreover he is very often a much criticised man, but if he is faithful in his life and message then he need have no fear.

From Penniu we moved on to Tanyang and the men did good work in Tanyang. It is a fairly large city, famous for its silk. There are two Missions at work in Tanyang—

Persbyterians and Methodists so we gave help to both. About 3000 Gospel portions were sold and 4500 Tracts distributed.

The next place on the schedule was Hsinfeng and old Pastor Yin received us right royally. He had made every preparation for us materially and spiritually. We found this dear old man just as keen as we were on winning souls. At night we crowded the Church out and I found the old man running round the neighbours borrowing benches and chairs. We do thank God for some of those old men, men of the old school but men with a purpose and men with a message. We give much praise to old Pastor Yin for the success of the meetings in Hsinfeng. Quite a number of names were handed in by those who wished to know more about the truth.

From Hsinfeng we went to quite a number of villages along the Banks of the Yang-Tsi river. I divided the men up into three groups and sent them out to all those villages. We go out into those villages with our Books and Tracts and we say a word here and there and leave the results with God. Not that we do not press for results but the work is God's and we know that He will accomplish that which pleaseth Him.

At a given date we all gathered together again and then went up to the city of Chinkiang for a two-week campaign in all their Churches. The Baptists, Persbyterians and China Inland Mission have all work in Chinkiang so we gave help to all of them. We gave most help to the Persbyterians as we were there at their invitation. I am afraid I cannot fully record all that was accomplished but it was a season of great joy and fruitfulness. Many, very many were led to the Lord and new interest in the Gospel was created. To God alone, who is worthy, be all the praise and glory. We returned home to Nanking April 8th, after being out nearly two months.

April 14th saw us again "on the road." We are commanded to work while it is day and surely this is the day of opportunity. The open door is very inviting so we must needs enter in. The exigency of the work forbids our re-

Band at Work



maining at home very long at a time. This is rather a hardship to our home folks, but God more than compensates.

A great many Missionaries like us to go into their field in the Spring, consequently we can never accept all the invitations we receive for work in the Spring months. The Spring of 1924 we received no fewer than five different invitations to different fields. I accepted the first two invitations. I sent my men away up into Anhwei while I went much farther afield. I took one man with me and went to the two provinces of Hupeli and Kiangsi. I was going to speak mostly at Conferences while my men were to continue their usual work of Evangelism in the Province of Anhwei. I obtained the help of a Missionary to accompany the men.

They went away up into the field known as the Luchow fu field. It is worked by the Christian Mission. Luchow fu is a very historic city. It has produced more great men,—that is Leaders of Chinese politics, than any other city in China. The famous Li Hong-chang was born in that city, the present Leader of China was born there, the famous Christian General Feng Yu-hsiang was born near there. Luchow fu is a great centre of education. There are no fewer than six Normal Schools in the city. The men had the privilege of preaching in the sixth Normal School, and a great number of Scholars from the other school came to hear. Quite a work of Grace was done among those scholars and not a few decided for Christ.

From Luchow fu the men went on to Tienpu, Liangyuen and Sanho. They stopped about two weeks at Sanho to revive a dying Church. The word Sanho means three rivers, and the town is situated right at the junction of those three rivers. It is a large and prosperous town, but it is also a bad one. The first few nights the men met with fierce opposition from a rather strange source. The first night or two bad women filled the Church and their purpose was certainly a very base one. Not until the fourth night were the men conscious that showers of blessing were about to fall, then for the remaining nights God carried the meetings along on the flood tide of blessing. Very many were turned to the Lord in that place.

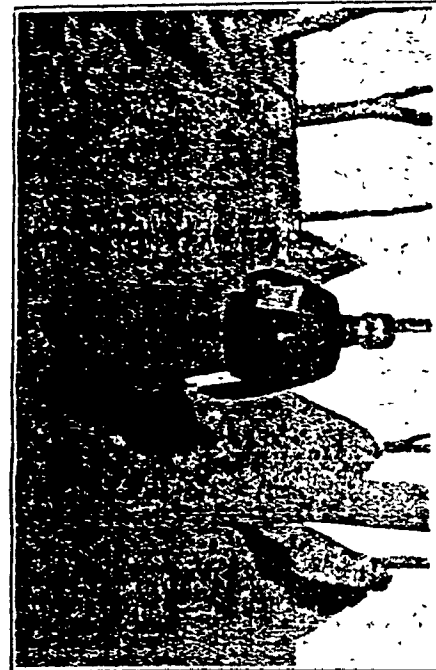
and the whole town was roused with the Gospel. The men sold nearly 6000 Gospel portions and distributed 10,000 Tracts in that place.

While the men were out on that campaign I, with one member of the Band, went away up into Hupeh to speak at some Conferences. The first place I went to was Konglorg where a weeks meetings were arranged for Christians only. Then my next place was Hwangmei where a large district Conference was arranged. We gave help for ten days. I spoke every afternoon on Evangelism. All the Pastors were gathered at that Conference as well as the Bible Women and Colporteurs. Nearly two hundred were in attendance at the Conference. From Hwangmei I went on to Kiukiang and was again engaged in somewhat similar work. Our Pastors certainly do need reviving from time to time, they fail to keep on the stretch. I often think that so little real soul saving work is done in China is because our Pastors get out of training, they do not keep up to scratch. The healthy Church is where the Pastor is on the mark every time and alive to his responsibilities.

We all returned home June 10th. It was fairly hot when we returned, and glad we were to get back and have a rest. I had to get busy with preparations for Kuling.

During the months of July and August and part of September, the men had lighter work to do. Nearly all the men attended the Summer School Course for seven weeks in connection with the Nanking University. This is a very good Bible Course and helped the men quite a good deal. All of them with only two exceptions took the Diploma. Two of the men were up on Kuling with me, while a few of the men took preaching engagements here in our home city—Nanking. During those two and a half months I was up on Kuling looking after the Conference.

September 12th, we all gathered together again, refreshed in body and mind, and ready for the Autumn and winter work. We were all fit and thankful. During the latter part of September we did a little work in the city of Nanking helping the Local Pastors.



Oldest Member of Band

Part of August, all September and October there was war between the Provinces of Kiangsu and Chekiang. This made it very difficult to know what was the best thing to do. I didn't like to send the men far afield with such conditions prevailing at home, so I decided to have a consultation with a few Missionaries in Nanking to talk over plans to have my men work all around the city of Nanking especially among the soldiers. Soldiers were stationed all around Nanking so it was a good opportunity to reach them with the Gospel message. My men went into soldiers camps with thousands of Gospel portions and Tracts and they were eagerly taken up. About 20,000 Gospel portions were sold among the soldiers. We are very apt to curse and kick the poor Chinese soldier and to forget that he is a creature of circumstances. He is simply a follower of selfish leaders. A great many of the high military leaders are despotical bullies. They are not in the army as real soldiers but for the sake of getting rich quick. They use the poor soldier as a means to an end, and the poor soldier lives a wretched life. A great many are forced into being robbers and opium fiends.

All September and October we spent with the soldiers preaching the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. We found it no easy task as it is sometimes difficult to really know if the Gospel is getting into his heart. We found a large number to have an outward show of religion which is merely lip talk. But we had evident tokens of the Lord's presence with us as we worked among those coarse, down-trodden, and sin-soaked men. Quite a number professed conversion and during the two months we tried to lead them on in the Christian life. For nearly three weeks I was in the chief camp working with the soldiers. Some times I went right into the trenches and had real happy times with the soldiers. I often used to ask them why they fight each other, and I always received the answer—"we don't want to fight each other but we have to." On several occasions I actually saw them pointing their rifles in the air rather than at their supposed enemies.

Poor old China! How my heart bleeds for her she certainly resembles a ship in a storm with the passengers

fighting for their own personal advantage. It is so easy to become pessimistic and discouraged with all this fighting going on. The thought often arises in one's mind "is it worth while?" We do thank God for the encouragement He gives with the sound of an abundance of rain. Were we to look at outward circumstances then we would be most miserable, but we see the great needy field. We see a nation in pain, struggling upward with her own puny efforts. We do hope and pray that a new China is in the making and that all this fighting is but the birth throes of a new nation.

At the end of October I gathered all the men in my home and listened to their various reports. They certainly were varied. Some of the men reported a good reception to the Gospel message, while others said they could hardly get a hearing. I was always well received by the soldiers and their officers. We preached the Gospel, we scattered the good seed. God will surely reap a harvest.

November 3rd, bright and early, we started off on the 1st trip of the year. It was a long trip and we went afar afield. We started off with 16,000 Scripture portions and over 20,000 Tracts, and with high hopes. We were invited into a field that is very little traversed by Missionaries, we went into that section of Kiangsu which borders on the Yellow sea. Mr. Saunders of the China Inland Mission and Mr. Harnsberger of the Presbyterian Mission asked us to go all over their fields, and we tried to cover every city, town and village in that stretch of territory. As that part of China is largely intersected by canals we decided to hire two boats and go from place to place on those boats. We found the plan worked admirably. I really cannot enumerate all towns and villages visited. Often we came to a village where there were no Christians and no one to tell them of Christ and His Gospel so we just remained there for a few days, then passed on to the next place. We came one day to a large market town on one canal,—a place called Santeo, and not a Christian in the place. We spent eight days there preaching the Gospel at busy street corners. We had the joy of leading a School Teacher in the place to Christ. No small commotion was

aroused by our presence in that town. every day we formed up in procession style and marched through the streets singing and preaching.

We had wonderful times of blessing in most of the places we stopped at, but particularly in the cities of Taichow, Keoan and Taishing. We remained ten days in the city of Taichow and a real time of blessing it was. Quite a large number of the boys and girls from the schools decided for Christ. Then at the evening Gospel service many more handed in their names. God's arm was truly outstretched in saving souls.

Then we moved on to the city of Keoan and here again we experienced the Lord's presence in a very marked way. We had to conduct an overflow service, and at the regular closing time we could not get the people to go home. They sat right on in the Church, and more men had to preach to them. This happened night after night for eight nights. I hesitate to make known results but many were led to see in Christ their Saviour.

The last place to be visited was Taishing. Again God stooped to honour His servants. Times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord were surely given to us. We give Him all the praise and the glory. We conducted meetings at three places twice each day that is each day we had six meetings. Not only so but people came to the Inn where we were living and wanted our Books and Tracts and we give them the Gospel again. One thing which featured very much in all places we visited was the readiness of the people to stop at the street corners and listen to us preach the Gospel. Throughout the whole campaign we conducted numberless open air meetings. In several of the cities visited we went into the guildhalls and preached the Gospel.

All together eighteen cities and towns were visited and I really do not know how many villages, perhaps about thirty. Never before have we put on such a large and successful campaign.

18,000 Books were sold and 23,000 Tracts distributed.

What shall we say unto the Lord for the great privilege

given to us, we praise Him and ask Him to bless the seed, sown, and cause it to bring forth fruit unto eternal life.

We were out altogether seventy three days, and they were days of much blessing. We returned home full of thanks to God. We had very good weather all the time we were out.

The China Inland Mission and the Presbyterian Mission have since sent us letters of thanks and they ask us to come back into the district next year. If we have no engagement at that time then we will go. Please pray for the success of "The Milton Stewart Evangelistic Band."

General Summary of the Work for 1924.

We finish this report much the same as we commenced it—ascribing to God all the praise for what He hath wrought.

During the past year we have been round the following six provinces,—Anhwei, Kiangsu, Kiangsi, Hupeh, Honan, and Shantung, with our Evangelistic Band. We have worked in 14 Central Stations and 105 Outstations. In the course of the year we have been working in connection with 7 different Missions. 86,000 Gospel portions were sold, and 123,000 Tracts were distributed. Over 1800 Gospel posters were distributed among shopkeepers, or posted on walls. In every Outstation visited we made an effort to leave a Gospel portion and a Tract in each home. During the year 342 meetings were held, at which the Gospel was preached. All these meetings were held in Churches, Halls, or Schools. I failed to keep tab of all the open air meetings held, but I think it would be a moderate estimate to say that well over four hundred meetings were conducted at street corners or in busy market places. I hesitate to publish results of the efforts put forth. We sow and we scatter and we ask God to give and bless results. Let us pray that the Lord of the Harvest will water the precious seed sown, and that it may bring forth fruit unto life eternal. We plant and we water but let us look to God to give the increase.

To Him, who alone is worthy, be all the Praise and Glory.

I cannot close this report without a word of thanks to those who have helped us in this great and glorious work. We are extremely grateful to God for the late Mr. Milton Stewart, whose love and liberality made possible the work of the Evangelistic Band. It can be truly said of Mr. Milton Stewart, although he now rests from his labours, that his works follow after him. Many from China shall rise up and call him blessed. We are also grateful to Mr. W. E. Blackstone for listening to our every need and keeping us supplied with money from the Fund. Then we thank the Friends in the Shanghai Office for keeping us supplied with literature. We say THANKS to all who have helped us in spreading the Good-News concerning Christ.

Respectfully submitted

James. D. Cunningham.

(Superintendent of Band)

APPENDIX SIX:

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DISPENSATIONALISM OF W.E.
BLACKSTONE AND HAL LINDSEY

A Comparative Analysis the Dispensationalism of W.E. Blackstone and Hal Lindsey:

Introduction:

It has been demonstrated that dispensationalism gained notoriety at the turn of the century as an anti-modernist reaction. Is this reactionary quality the basis of its popularity at the end of the twentieth century? Could it be argued that Lindsey's books are widely read on account of his critique of modern principles and values? Is Lindsey reciting the ideas of previous dispensationalists, or is he articulating a perspective which has unique significance for the people of a nuclear context?

In response to these questions, this appendix will offer a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences between a late nineteenth century dispensationalist, William E. Blackstone and Hal Lindsey, who may be regarded as Blackstone's late twentieth century counterpart. The aim of such a comparison is to ascertain whether it is possible to detect a continuity of thought, including biblical predictions and political alignments, in the history of American dispensationalism. The comparison ought also to make it possible to determine whether the wide appeal that Lindsey's writings enjoy in the nuclear age is related to his unique deployment of dispensationalist concepts or because of some other contextual consideration.

The two authors are well suited to a comparative analysis. Besides their common belief in Darby's system of dispensations, there is an intriguing similarity in the success of their respective publications. Each author enjoyed wide-spread literary ascendancy as both their books went through numerous publications. Moreover, Lindsey and Blackstone share a certain solitary position within the dispensational movement itself. Blackstone was a relentless worker for the cause of biblical prophecy and the restoration of the Jews to Palestine, but he is rarely listed among the ranks of Bible conference speakers or preachers. Nor is he found as a contributor to dispensational pamphlets and tracts. Lindsey has had a similar career. He conducts his own speaking tours and study sessions, but he is not, apparently, involved with the other fundamentalists in their evangelistic work. He is the most famous dispensational writer of the last two decades, and yet he is seldom quoted by other evangelists who accept dispensational ideas. A final reason for aptness of this comparison is that both Blackstone and Lindsey received the support and patronage of high ranking politicians. Blackstone marshaled quite an impressive array of American political leaders for his memorial to have Palestine restored to the Jews. In a like fashion Lindsey, according to his own writings, has spoken to leaders at the Pentagon, the American War College and other secret agencies of the government.¹ President Reagan has read Lindsey's work,

and, according to Grace Halsell, while he was Governor of California he was so impressed with Lindsey's themes that he spoke of it often and was reportedly intrigued with the topic of Armageddon and the American role in the dispensational vision.²

There are four basic categories of comparison between Lindsey and Blackstone by which to ascertain the extent of the continuity and discontinuity between a pre-Hiroshima and post-Hiroshima variety of dispensationalism. First, a comparison of their respective use of dispensational concepts will indicate if there has been any movement in the basic theory. Second, an analysis of both authors' biblical hermeneutic will contrast their interpretation of the Bible's authority and purpose. Third, an examination of their attitudes towards the world; and fourth, a study of their approach to evangelism will indicate whether the different historical contexts have altered the focus of dispensational scenarios for the eschaton. For the purposes of this comparison Lindsey's most famous work, The Late Great Planet Earth, will be set beside Blackstone's classic, Jesus is Coming.

1. The Use of Dispensational Concepts in the Writing of Lindsey and Blackstone:

Even though separated by one hundred years, both authors present their readers with an amazingly similar series of dispensational concepts. Blackstone and Lindsey both profess to adhere to the principles of dispensational

thought, such as (1) the theory of the instantaneous Rapture; (2) the division of human history into seven dispensations; (3) the distinction within God's providence between the Divine purpose for Israel and the Church; and (4) the necessity of certain historical events leading up to the Great Tribulation. A brief survey of the manner in which each uses these concepts will demonstrate the extent to which the dispensational ideas have not essentially been altered by the passage of time.

In their respective writings, Blackstone and Lindsey feature the mysterious Rapture theory as a central theme. Blackstone predicted that in this event the "church is caught up to meet Christ in the air before the tribulation,"³ and that it will occur at any moment. Lindsey refers to the fact that Jesus is coming for the 'true' believers, and while this is a slightly different formula from Blackstone's raptured church, there is no real significance to Lindsey's alteration.⁴ In keeping with Darby's ecclesiology, both authors consider that the Rapture is available only to those who truly turn from their wicked ways and believe in Jesus Christ.

The concept of the Rapture provides each writer with an opportunity for literary eloquence. The joy and the hope that this event holds leads Lindsey to exclaim that

there will be those who will be transported into a glorious place more beautiful, more awesome that we can possibly comprehend. Earth and all its thrills,

excitement and pleasures will be nothing in contrast to this great event.⁵

Blackstone was even more evocative and poetic when he wrote of Christ's embrace and the sweetness of the moment of Rapture.

Then shall the Church experience the rest of love--the fullness of communion--the rapture of her Lord's embrace and be satisfied in the sweetness of his love.⁶

In both texts the escape from death promised by the Rapture is the most prominent point. The Rapture will mean freedom from physical death for all those who believe. Blackstone devoted a whole chapter to explaining that "His coming Does not Mean Death."⁷ Lindsey proclaims that there is one generation which will "be removed from the earth before the Great Tribulation."⁸ Even though they lived a century apart, both Lindsey and Blackstone intimated in their writings that theirs would be the generation to be freed from death.

Besides the doctrine of the Rapture, both books support the theory of successive biblical dispensations and the interpretation of human history which this theory implies. In Jesus is Coming, Blackstone delineated seven dispensations, and while he ventured different and perhaps more poetic names for these dispensations, they were basically the standard dispensations outlined later by Scofield and repeated by Lindsey.⁹ Moreover, Blackstone's choice of texts, which corresponded with the passing from one dispensation to another, was almost exactly the same as

Lindsey's.

In keeping with the theory of biblical dispensations, both authors make a clear distinction between God's purpose for the people of Israel and God's purpose for the true Church. Lindsey states that because the Jews failed to evangelize the world in the time of their five dispensations,¹⁰ God has focused Divine providence on the 'true' church as the instrument for evangelism. First there is a great distinction between God's purpose for the nation of Israel and His purpose for the church which is His main program today.¹¹

For his part, Blackstone was not alive to see the restoration of the State of Israel, but this did not deter him from describing the double thrust in God's providence. Using 1 Corinthians 10:32 as a text, he maintains, "There are special blessings for the Church and special blessings for Israel."¹²

According to dispensational theory, God's two purposes will be fulfilled on earth according to a particular pattern of events predicted in the Bible. Both Lindsey and Blackstone argued that these specific historical events must occur if this dispensation of 'grace' is to come to a close. Blackstone insisted upon the establishment of the State of Israel as one necessary event.¹³ In Blackstone's thought the establishment of the State of Israel was, however, still a dream; with Lindsey it has become an

historical fact. He therefore uses it as evidence of the truth of his predictions, but adds that the rebuilding of the Temple is the second event which must take place before the Tribulation can begin.¹⁴ There is, therefore, some discrepancy between these two authors regarding the actual signs which signal the coming of Jesus.

Apart from these two major events Blackstone was, and Lindsey still is, tentative about predicting the actual timing of the final events foretold by their interpretation of prophecy. Though the exact timing was unknown,¹⁵ each text contained a list of signs which forewarn of the imminent close of the age. Blackstone's catalogue included Christian apostasy, political-military preparations, the rise of the labour movement, the popularity of 'dark' spiritualism and--oddly enough since Blackstone laboured strenuously for the establishment of the state of Israel--Zionism. Blackstone alluded to a mysterious, explosive force which is a preparation for the final days. He hinted that possibly "the recently vented oil and gases of the earth are a preparation for some mighty conflagration to be aided by newly manifested heat and electrical forces from the sun."¹⁶

Lindsey's list is divided into those events which illustrate the growing apostasy of the church and those which are politically ominous. The general decline of morals and the rise of crime and drug use are some

indicators of the 'end times.' Lindsey predicts that a nuclear bomb will be exploded somewhere before the final war of Armageddon begins. It is in this catalogue of events leading to the Tribulation that the uniqueness of Lindsey's work begins to appear. Whereas Blackstone was vague regarding the means by which God would initiate the Tribulation, Lindsey is explicit. The confusion and uncertainty of dispensational scenarios has been resolved by the invention of nuclear weapons. Moreover, the destructiveness of nuclear technology corroborates the dispensational reading of Revelation and lends a great deal of authority to Lindsey's dispensational eschatology--the sort of authority that Blackstone could never achieve. Both writers interpret the final book of the Bible as saying that God would visit a Great Tribulation upon the earth; Blackstone, however, was not specific, stating only that in the age when he was writing "there is no hope, then, for the world, but in the coming of Christ the King."¹⁷ Lindsey, on the other hand is quite graphic when he predicted that the Tribulation would "plunge the whole world into a war so utterly destructive, that only the personal return of Jesus Christ himself would prevent the total annihilation of all life."¹⁸ This war would most likely be initiated when God allows "the various countries to launch a nuclear exchange of ballistic missiles upon each other."¹⁹

In summary, Blackstone and Lindsey have a great deal

in common in their use of dispensational theories, even to the point where they employ almost identical phraseology and vocabulary. One distinction between the two is that Blackstone was more poetic and explicit about his dispensational theories while Lindsey is prone to be more analytical, concrete and sensationalist about the events of the 'last days.' Lindsey draws more direct equations between biblical prophecies and contemporary events and political movements. This might suggest that Lindsey is more concerned with the compelling veracity of his biblical predictions than Blackstone. It might also be surmised that Blackstone was closer to the oral tradition of revivalism, and his language and purpose were directed by the central appeal to convert, while Lindsey's writings are oriented by the need to detect direction and purpose within present historical events.

2. The Common Biblical Hermeneutic:

Even though both authors believe in the inerrancy of scripture, Blackstone was not doctrinaire about the biblical authority of his dispensational ideas.²⁰ He established that the Bible is an 'open book' of prophecy by devoting an entire chapter to the thesis that the Bible must be read in a simple literal way. If Jesus fulfilled literally the prophecies of his first coming, Blackstone insisted that readers should not reject a literal interpretation of the second, imminent coming.²¹ In contrast to this reasoned approach, Lindsey appears more

strident and polemical in claiming that his predictions come straight from the Bible, a source which he regards as being absolutely trustworthy and authoritative as a source of predictions concerning the future.²² Lindsey begins his text with a discourse on the historical accuracy of biblical prophecy as the foundation for his other dispensational concepts. Such an emphasis may indicate that biblical authority is not a presupposition in Lindsey's context while it was in Blackstone's. Lindsey's concern about the accuracy of the scriptures may also indicate that he is more preoccupied with foretelling future events than was the earlier writer. Lindsey's careful co-ordination of biblical image and concrete event marks a pronounced shift from Blackstone. Whereas the nineteenth century writer was willing to be suggestive, the twentieth century author strives for exactitude. Again, this may be a contextual difference, to be explained on the basis of differing life styles, mentalities and historical realities, but it could also be supposed that Lindsey is more absorbed by the desire to uncover a mysterious plan working within current events.

Blackstone manifested a maturity and depth in his deployment of Biblical passages which Lindsey lacks. Throughout Jesus is Coming, there are footnotes citing biblical references for all his predictions. Thus, in some places, his text contains more scriptural footnotes than commentary. In contrast, Lindsey rarely quotes an entire passage within the body of his work. He does often

include the textual references after a paraphrase of the biblical prophecy in question, but this practice leaves the reader with a diminished appreciation of the actual wording of the biblical record and is therefore open to greater distortion.

3. **Dispensational Attitudes towards the World in Each Author:** -----

Since they employ the same common-sense hermeneutic of inerrancy, it is not surprising that Blackstone had a similar attitude towards the world as Lindsey maintains. The affirmation of historical dispensations which progress through history because of human faithlessness in relation to God's covenants coloured Blackstone's pessimistic view of human society as it does Lindsey's. Each author in his own time found many reasons to look upon his age as the one which was descending towards the final Tribulation.

Blackstone warned that the true Christian must not love the world because "this wicked world, which is so radically opposed to God and under the present control of his arch enemy, is not growing better."²³ According to the earlier dispensationalist, the new scientific 'atheists' are "as surely in the service of Satan as the thief in the night."²⁴ While he admits that one scourge, slavery, may have been abolished, Blackstone nonetheless prophesied that a great evil was growing in the world and its unmistakable presence had three shapes. "Communism, socialism and

nihilism are lifting their godless headless forms."²⁵ Oppressing monopolies, systematic speculation, trial by jury, wars, and the fact that the British were forcing drugs upon the Chinese were further signs of the decline of the social order.²⁶ Lindsey begins his book with a slightly different emphasis by posing the question of purpose and focusing on the issue that the world is looking for answers, solid answers, to many great problems. Up to this point no scientific, academic or political leaders have given adequate answers to the questions facing the world.²⁷ Therefore, Lindsey concludes that this generation is witnessing the decline of world conditions towards the prophesied Armageddon. As evidence of this decline, Lindsey enumerates many factors. Christian denominations are losing members while ministers willfully disregard the truths of the Bible, relying upon "social action gimmicks" instead of trusting in God.²⁸ Lindsey believes that the moral decay of this age, coupled with substance abuse by the young, are signs of the imminent destruction. The weakening of the national economy by communist subversion, student rebellions²⁹ and the erosion of the strength of the American military further indicate that this age is declining rapidly. Lindsey confesses that the lack of courageous leadership which would use American military forces properly has been one more reason to believe the Tribulation is near.³⁰ Finally, he suggests that the popularity of astrology and other religions is a sign of the devil's work which the scriptures predicted would

increase just prior to the days of Armageddon.

In spite of these dire predictions, each text concludes with a call to remain steadfast and hopeful since all true believers will be saved from the chaos of the Tribulation which is fast approaching. In his final paragraph Blackstone wrote:

It is probable that "the times of the gentiles" are nearing their end and that the nations are soon to plunge into the mighty whirl of events connected with Israel's godless gathering, . . . that awful time of tribulation, like which there has been none in the past, nor shall be in the future. But we, brethren, are not of the night. We are to watch and pray always that we may escape all these things that shall come to pass and stand before the Son of Man.³¹

Lindsey ends his book with a similar plea.

As we see the world becoming more chaotic, we can be steadfast and immovable because we know where its going and where we are going. We know that Christ will protect us until His purpose is finished and then he will take us to be with Himself.³²

4. The Evangelistic Energy of the Two Authors:

Neither man has doubts concerning what the believer must do in the midst of this decadent situation. The "time is short,"³³ and all effort should be spent in trying to reach as many of one's friends and family as possible before it is too late.³⁴

Besides these closing exhortations to evangelize, each text incorporates, interspersed with predictions, many appeals to accept Jesus. Blackstone was clearly

more overtly concerned with the conversion of souls than is Lindsey. In the first chapter of Jesus is Coming, he preached to both the non-Christian and the Christian. His message to the former generally assumes the form of an entreaty.

We, then, as ambassadors for Christ, beseech you: be ye reconciled to God, now, in the accepted time, in the day of salvation. Do let us entreat you to repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and that you may turn to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from Heaven and be unblameable at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.³⁵

With Christians, Blackstone's approach is exhortational.

Jesus is coming, therefore mortify your members which are upon earth, that you may appear with Him in glory. Strive and pray for purity of heart that you may "be like Him and see Him as He is" Search the Word, that you may be sanctified and cleansed thereby, and that your whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.³⁶

Lindsey is, perhaps, less rhetorical, and he makes no distinction between believer and non-believer. His evangelism is direct and often blunt.

As you read this book you may have reached the point where you recognize your inability to live in a way that would cause God to accept you. If this is the case, you may speak to God right now and accept the gift of Christ's forgiveness. Its so simple. Ask Christ to come into your life and make your life pleasing to God by his power. We have found the results to be certain and exciting in our lives.³⁷

It could be argued that Blackstone's greater concentration on evangelism indicates that he had a stronger

Christology than Lindsey. The latter seems more concerned with the coming Rapture than conversion. In spite of this difference, the striking imagery of the Rapture, which will sweep away all the true believers leaving the others behind to suffer the torments of the Tribulation, is powerful. Blackstone began his book with a foreboding question.

Would you be found of Him in peace? Or would you be left behind to endure the terrible things which shall come upon the world, while the church is with Christ in the air.³⁸

Lindsey regularly uses the imminence of the Rapture to advantage in his evangelism, and characteristically adds a personal appeal.

We have seen how current events are fitting together simultaneously into the precise pattern of predicted events. . . . It's happening. God is putting it all together. God may have His meaning for the "now generation" which will have a greater effect on mankind than anything since Genesis 1. Will you be ready if we are to be a part of the prophetic "now generation?"³⁹

The notion that one's participation in the Rapture is a personal choice⁴⁰ gives an added intensity to traditional evangelistic writing. Friendships, families, even marriages could be broken on the day when Jesus comes for the believers. Not only does one not want to be left behind, but one does not want to be separated from one's loved ones at this 'most glorious' event. Thus, Blackstone challenged his readers to work to save their friends and family from the terrible holocaust of the

Tribulation.

Some object that they have so many unsaved friends, they cannot wish Jesus to come. Work hard then for we read "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me" and whosoever will, may come. Knowing the terror (fear) of the Lord, let us persuade men.⁴¹

Lindsey uses an illustration to show how dreadful it would be if one were to leave a loved one behind. Imagining that the Rapture had happened he portrays a minister preaching to his congregation and the minister laments:

You really want to know what I think? I think all that talk about the Rapture and going to meet Christ in the air wasn't crazy after all. I don't know about you, brother, but I'm going to find myself a Bible and read all those verses my wife underlined. I wouldn't listen to her while she was here, and now she's--I don't know where she is.⁴²

The evangelistic mission in the world is the central activity of the believers who wait for Christ to return. Blackstone was more explicit and insistent that his readers should be concerned for this task. Now is not the time to relax or become apathetic. Now is the time for action, since the battle has not yet been totally lost in this world.

Then arouse, ye comrades, and let us obey our marching orders until we hear the welcome "well done" when the "ambassadors are home".⁴³

5. Summary:

This comparison of two dispensational authors

enables us to observe that while dispensational ideas have not changed radically in one hundred years there are some instructive differences between the two authors. Firstly, Lindsey's designation of nuclear weapons as the means for the Tribulation clarify what had been a conspicuous uncertainty in earlier dispensational scenarios of the war of Armageddon. In some respects this may make Lindsey's dispensationalism more credible than Blackstone's. In the second place, while Blackstone is very much preoccupied with evangelism, Lindsey's priority appears to be prediction of future events through a juxtaposition of biblical images and current social and political circumstances. Could this variation be a reflection of the very distinct contexts to which each author addresses his concerns? Blackstone spoke to an age still fundamentally concerned about eternal salvation while Lindsey faces a corporate anxiety--an anxiety of "meaninglessness" (Tillich) which grips whole nations and peoples. Finally, it appears that the clarity given to the dispensational theories by the Cold War mentality and the potential use of nuclear weapons has convinced Lindsey, more than Blackstone, that Jesus could really be 'coming soon.' Hence, he expends more energy trying to convince others of the truth of his predictions than the nineteenth century writer. It appears that Lindsey's writings are less informed by both biblical and Christological considerations.

Notes:

¹ Lindsey, Countdown. Lindsey explains in the introduction to this book that he was interviewed by a government agency whose task was top secret. He writes: "When I ended my talk, I learned that my audience was part of an elite group charged with an awesome responsibility. Their job--I cannot reveal who they worked for--was to gather the latest military intelligence on every nation's war making potential . . ." (p. 6).

² Halsell. Halsell points out that Reagan was fascinated by the ideas of Lindsey's writing and especially regarding the upcoming "final" war. She writes: "At a 1971 dinner in Sacramento, California, where Reagan, then governor, and Mills (James Mills, former president pro tem of the California State senate) were being honoured. Reagan suddenly began talking to Mills, seated at his side, about biblical prophecy and about the certainty of our fighting against the Soviet Union . . . in a last great apocalyptic war. . . . The record shows that Reagan, over many years, has made many similar statements regarding our fighting against satanic forces in a nuclear Armageddon. Research scholar Larry Jones of New York and Andrew Lang of the ecumenical Christic Institute of Washington, D.C. say their studies convince them that Reagan had in the past accepted a biblical interpretation of prophecy, holding that a nuclear Armageddon is inevitable and that as late as 1986 he may have continued to hold such a conviction" (pp. 5-6).

³ Blackstone, p. 75.

⁴ While Lindsey speaks of the "true believer" being saved in the Rapture, he also speaks of the "true church" and essentially they are the same thing. Those who will be raptured represent the only true church on earth at the present time.

⁵ Lindsey, Late Great, p. 126.

⁶ Blackstone, p. 205.

⁷ Blackstone, pp. 26ff.

⁸ Lindsey, Late Great, p. 127.

⁹ Blackstone, pp. 222-223. His catalogue of dispensations compare with Lindsey's in the following way: 1. "Innocence" (the garden) Both men speak of the first dispensation as "Innocence." 2. "Antediluvian" is Blackstone's term for the second dispensation while Lindsey speaks about "human conscience." 3 The third dispensation is, according to Blackstone, "Postdiluvian." Lindsey uses

the term "civil government." Unlike Lindsey, Blackstone ends this period with the destruction of Sodom. 4. Blackstone's fourth dispensation is "Patriarchal." Lindsey uses the term "Promise." 5. The fifth dispensation in Blackstone's book is "Israelitish." Lindsey speaks about "the law." Blackstone begins this dispensation with the crossing of the Red Sea while Lindsey uses the Sinai experience. 6. "Mystery" is Blackstone's word for the sixth dispensation, and Lindsey speaks of the "Church Dispensation." 7. "Manifestation" is the name of Blackstone's seventh age, and Lindsey uses the term "Kingdom."

¹⁰ Lindsey, Late Great. Lindsey argues that the failure of the Jews to evangelize the world was one of the Jews' "greatest failures" (p. 131).

¹¹ Lindsey, Late Great, p. 131.

¹² Blackstone, p. 172.

¹³ Blackstone, pp. 162ff. Blackstone devotes a whole chapter to the theme of the restoration of the State of Israel. Further on, he states clearly: "Two events must precede the Revelation which will indicate its proximity, to-wit: the restoration (partial at least) of Israel and the rise of the Antichrist" (p. 208).

¹⁴ Lindsey employs such passages as Dan: 9:2-7 and Rev. 13: 11-17 in order to argue that the building of the Temple marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation. See Appendix Three for reference to its place in the series of events leading up to the battle of Armageddon.

¹⁵ Blackstone, pp. 207ff. He reminds the reader that it must be distinctly remembered that we have no date for the Rapture. Lindsey, Late Great. He is more explicit about the Rapture. It will happen on "a day that only God knows" (p. 126).

¹⁶ Blackstone, p. 230.

¹⁷ Blackstone, p. 149.

¹⁸ Lindsey, Late Great, p. 136.

¹⁹ Lindsey, Late Great, p. 150.

²⁰ Blackstone. He states at the beginning of his work: "We would not be dogmatic concerning the order of events which cluster about our Lord's return" (p. 5).

²¹ Blackstone, pp. 20ff. Blackstone has a complete chapter devoted to the literal interpretation of scripture.

²² Lindsey, Late Great. Lindsey affirms that

"compared to the speculation of most that is prophetic today, the Bible contains clear and unmistakable prophetic signs" (p. 7).

23 Blackstone, p. 148.

24 Blackstone, p. 150.

25 Blackstone, p. 150.

26 Blackstone, pp. 150-151.

27 Lindsey, Late Great, pp. vii-viii.

28 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 171.

29 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 173.

30 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 173.

31 Blackstone, p. 241.

32 Lindsey, Late Great, pp. 176-177.

33 Blackstone. He argues that the time is ripe for one final great evangelistic effort. "Let us engage with all of our minds and prayers and our might in this world-wide mission work" (p. 243).

34 Lindsey, Late Great. He writes: "So let us seek to reach our families, our friends and our acquaintances with the Gospel with all the strength He gives us" (p. 177).

35 Blackstone, pp. 13-14.

36 Blackstone, pp. 14-15.

37 Lindsey, Late Great, pp. 68-69.

38 Blackstone, p. 13.

39 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 69.

40 Lindsey, Late Great. He explains that the Rapture is a personal choice. He writes: "It may come as a surprise to you, but the decision concerning your presence during this last seven-year period in history is entirely up to you" (pp. 126-127).

41 Blackstone, p. 119.

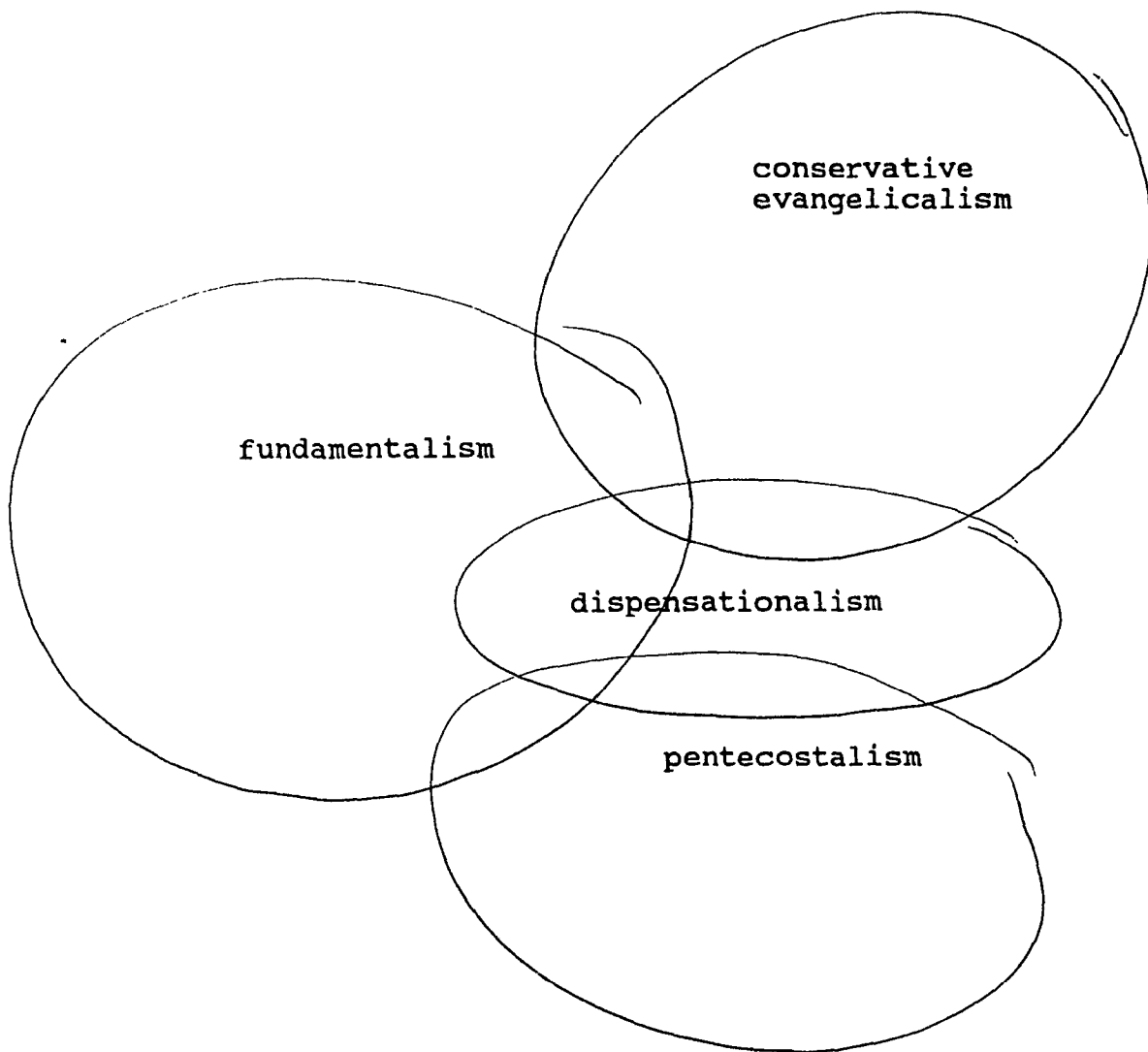
42 Lindsey, Late Great, p. 125.

43 Blackstone, p. 244.

APPENDIX #7:

A VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT IN
AMERICA:

A Visual Representation of the Religious Right in America:



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