

The Rapid Rise of Futurism – and Dispensationalism based on it

At the time of the Reformation, Catholic theologians were looking for a way to deflect the Protestant conclusions that the Papacy historically fulfilled the signs of the Antichrist. One way of doing this was to contend that the Antichrist should be understood not as a historical figure, but as a future one, not yet on earth. “Futurism” was the basic idea the Catholics advanced. It is an idea that eventually caught on among Protestants.

Francisco Ribera (1537-1591) wrote a commentary on Revelation in 1585. It advocated futurism. **Manuel De Lacunza** (1731- 1801), a Jesuit from Chile, wrote a treatise (with a Jewish penname in effort to gain wider acceptance among Protestants) that also reflected futurism.

Edward Irving (1792-1834), Scottish clergyman (Pentecostal) translated & added discourse to Lacunza’s work. **Margaret McDonald**, through visions in early 1830s (at approximate age 15) had the idea of a “secret rapture” of believers prior to appearance of Antichrist. The idea was promoted by her pastor, Edward Irving. **Samuel R. Maitland** (1792-1866) used his influence as librarian to Archbishop of Canterbury to promote futurism blended with dispensationalism.

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) visited Margaret McDonald & Edward Irving, accepted both futurism and secret rapture concepts, systematized dispensational thought and brought it to America with some success. **Cyrus Ingerson Scofield** (1843-1921), greatly influenced by writings of Darby, incorporated Futurist notes into his **Scofield Reference Bible** (first published in 1909). Through this Bible Futurism gained acceptance into many Christian homes and many Protestant Bible schools. Today, major Protestant organizations endorse Futurism & Dispensationalism:

- **Dallas Theological Seminary** (via Lewish Sperry Chafer (1871-1952) and alumni: John Walvoord, Chuck Swindoll, Charles C. Ryrie, Hal Lindsey, Kenneth Taylor, Thomas Ice [with Tim LaHaye])
- **Moody Bible Institute** in Chicago, largely because Scofield was converted through D.L. Moody and preached at Moody’s funeral in 1899, began to use CI Scofield’s Bible Correspondence Course about 1914. **Moody Press** began to publish Assemblies of God Sunday School material in 1914 & brought futurism & rapture theology to Pentecostals. They also publish the Ryrie Study Bible. Jerry Jenkins (co-author of Left Behind series) is former vice president at Moody and editor of Moody Magazine.
- **Western Theological Seminary** (Reformed Church in America, Holland, MI), Alma Mater of Tim LaHaye
- **Tim LaHaye School of Prophecy** (opened January 2002) on campus of Liberty University (Jerry Falwell, Chancellor)
- **Trinity Broadcasting** (probably the largest Christian TV Broadcasting Network; Cf. Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson) regularly airs and publicizes movies with secret rapture and futurism ideas. **Family Radio** (Cf. Harold Camping)
- **Jack Van Impe Ministries** (Jack claims God himself showed him the error of previous interpreters and explained Revelation to him) with four-part Apocalypse movie series plus TV program.
- **Jerry Falwell Ministries (& Liberty University), John Hagee Ministries, John Ankerberg (Ankerberg Theological Research Institute), etc.**