

Dispensationalism — Impact

"It is doubtful if there has been any other circle of men [dispensationalists] who have done more by their influence in preaching, teaching and writing to promote a love for Bible study, a hunger for the deeper Christian life, a passion for evangelism and zeal for missions in the history of American Christianity."

— George Eldon Ladd, *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 49.

"Against this background of prevailing postmillennialism and a groping search for a more satisfying interpretation of prophecy, it is easy to see how Darbyan futurism possessed such attraction and impelling power. It came with a freshness and vitality which quite captured American Christians. Darby visited America six times between 1859 and 1874 and was warmly welcomed. His system of prophetic interpretation was eagerly adopted, not because of the attractiveness of the details of his system, but because its basic futurism seemed to be a recovery of a sound Biblical prophetic interpretation - which in fact it was - and to give to the doctrine of the Lord's return the importance it deserved. In other words, Darbyism to many Christians meant the rediscovery of the precious Biblical truth of Christ's glorious second coming, even though the basic truth was accompanied by some important details which were not essential to the premillennial return of Christ and which many later came to feel were not in the Word of God. Once more, as in the early church, the return of Christ became a living and vital expectation in the lives of Christian people and in the pulpit ministry of many a preacher. Little wonder that the view has been cherished and defended with such deep emotional overtones. Darbyism in fact restored something precious which had long been lost."

— George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope: A Biblical Study of the Second Advent and the Rapture*, (Grand Rapids, Mich., Eerdmans, 1990), 43.

“At its best, within dispensationalism has always been a dynamic that drives it to be constantly correcting itself in the light of Scripture. . . .Critics of dispensationalism have always found it easier to identify the simplistic approaches of Scofield, to criticize the excesses of Lewis Sperry Chafer, and to poke fun at the charts of Clarence Larkin than to understand and appreciate the self-critical and self-corrective drive that has characterized dispensationalism at a deeper level.”

— Stanley N. Gundry, Foreword to Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, Editors *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1992):11-12.

"For his part, Darby returned, somewhat in the spirit of Luther, to an emphasis on the pure grace of the gospel--in the present (church) age--to be sharply distinguished from the law and from the legalism which he blamed for the sad condition of the state church."

— Earl W. Kennedy, *Prairie Premillennialism: Dutch Calvinist Chiliasm in Iowa 1847-1900, or the Long Shadow of Hendrik Pieter Scholte*, 155.

“Though his name [John N. Darby] is not widely known, and the details of his life are unfamiliar to many, even to many of those whom he influenced the most, he has been one of the most important shapers of evangelical thought throughout the last two hundred years.”

— Mark Sweetnam and Crawford Gribben, J. N. Darby and the Irish Origins of Dispensationalism, *Journal of the Evangelical Theology Society* 52, no. 3 (September 2009): 569. Brackets added by me.

"In America, he had a distinctly unique impact. By emphasizing separation from corrupt ecclesiastical institutions, Darby almost single-handedly influenced what would become the Bible School movement resulting in thousands of local, non-denominational churches. Several times Darby was invited by D. L. Moody to participate in evangelistic and teaching campaigns. While they eventually had a falling out over predestination vs. freewill, Darby being labeled an "extreme Calvinist" by Moody."

— Cf. Turner, *Unknown and Well Known*, 34–35; Weremchuck, *John Nelson Darby*, 143–44.

“Probably no Christian thinker in the last 200 years has so affected the way in which English-speaking Christians view the faith, and yet has received so little recognition of his contribution as John Nelson Darby.”

— Ronald M. Henzel, *Darby, Dualism, and the Decline of Dispensationalism: Reassessing the Nineteenth-Century Roots of a Twentieth-Century Prophetic Movement for the Twenty-First Century*, (Tucson, Arizona: Fenestra Books, 2003), 49.



“My exposure to dispensational premillennialism came during my four years at Dallas Theological Seminary. There I studied under three of the most famous of all dispensational theologians of the twentieth-century: John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, and J. Dwight Pentecost. Make no mistake: these men are among the most godly and gifted evangelicals that I have

known. Their devotion to Christ and their commitment to the infallibility and authority of Scripture are remarkable. My disagreement with their theological convictions should in no way be interpreted as an assault on their Christian character.”

—— Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come, The Amillennial Alternative* (Mentor Imprint of Christian Focus Publications, Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire, IV20 1TW, Scotland, U.K., 2013), 45.

“John Nelson Darby, for example, was a masterfully knowledgeable man, with expertise in languages and an intimate familiarity with the content of the Bible.”

—— John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth and Hyatt, Publishers, Inc., 1991), 69.

“American dispensationalism has been very missions-minded. Scofield founded the Central American Mission, and the faith missions movement, which originated with Hudson Taylor’s China Inland Mission, has been largely dominated by dispensationalists and has operated in accordance with dispensational principles. Operating in a very different manner from denominational mission agencies, faith missions have attracted a largely interdenominational and nondenominational constituency. In a large measure, interdenominational cooperation among members of a mission has been made feasible by the importance attached to agreement on eschatology.”

—— John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth and Hyatt, Publishers, Inc., 1991), 48.

“As the dispensational perspective is being evaluated, it should not be forgotten that covenant theologians and dispensationalists stand side by side in affirming the essentials of the Christian faith. Very often these two groups within Christendom stand alone in opposition to the inroads of modernism, neo-evangelicalism, and emotionalism. Covenant theologians and dispensationalists should hold in highest regard the scholarly and evangelical productivity of one another. It may be hoped that continuing interchange may be based on love and respect.”

—— O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, (Phillipsburg, N.J, Presbyterian And Reformed Pub. Co, 1985), 201-202.