CLOSING A “THEOLOGICAL LOOPHOLE”
A DEFENSE OF TRADITIONAL DISPENSATIONALISM’S
VIEW OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

From the White House\(^1\) to the Congress,\(^2\) from the pulpit\(^3\) to the Tea Party,\(^4\) the

political influence of religious conservatives, many of whom are dispensationalists, has been,

\(^1\) “Pat Robertson’s resignation this month as president of the Christian Coalition
   For the first time since religious conservatives became a modern political movement,
   the president of the United States has become the movement’s de facto leader—a status even
   Ronald Reagan, though admired by religious conservatives, never earned. Christian
   publications, radio and television shower Bush with praise, while preachers from the pulpit
   treat his leadership as an act of providence. A procession of religious leaders who have met
   with him testify to his faith, while Web [sic] sites encourage people to fast and pray for the
   president.” Dana Milbank, “Religious Right Finds Its Center in Oval Office,” *The

\(^2\) “On July 16, I attended Christians United for Israel’s annual Washington-Israel
   Summit. Founded by San Antonio-based megachurch pastor John Hagee, CUFI has added
   the grassroots muscle of the Christian right to the already potent Israel lobby. Hagee and his
   minions have forged close ties with the Bush White House and members of Congress from
   and the expansion of Israeli territory, CUFI has found unwavering encouragement from
   traditional pro-Israel groups like AIPAC and elements of the Israeli government.
   But CUFI has an ulterior agenda: its support for Israel derives from the belief of
   Hagee and his flock that Jesus will return to Jerusalem after the battle of Armageddon and
   cleanse the earth of evil. In the end, all the non-believers - Jews, Muslims, Hindus, mainline
   Christians, etc. - must convert or suffer the torture of eternal damnation. Over a dozen CUFI
   members eagerly revealed to me their excitement at the prospect of Armageddon occurring
   tomorrow. Among the rapture ready was Republican Former House Majority Leader Tom
   DeLay. None of this seemed to matter to Lieberman, who delivered a long sermon hailing
   Hagee as nothing less than a modern Moses. Lieberman went on to describe Hagee’s
   flock as ‘even greater than the multitude Moses commanded.’” Max Blumenthal, “Rapture
   http://www.huffingtonpost.com/max-blumenthal/rapture-ready-the-unautho_b_57826.html
   (accessed June 14, 2012).
and continues to be, considerable. Supporting fiscal restraint,\(^5\) strong national defense and social conservatism (sometimes called the “three-legged stool”),\(^6\) religious conservatives

\(^3\) “This weekend, hundreds of pastors, including some of the nation’s evangelical leaders, will climb into their pulpits to preach about American politics, flouting a decades-old law that prohibits tax-exempt churches and other charities from campaigning on election issues. The sermons, on what is called Pulpit Freedom Sunday, essentially represent a form of biblical bait, an effort by some churches to goad the Internal Revenue Service into court battles over the divide between religion and politics.

“There should be no government intrusion in the pulpit,” said the Rev. James Garlow, senior pastor at Skyline Church in La Mesa, Calif., who led preachers in the battle to pass California’s Proposition 8, which banned same-sex marriage. “The freedom of speech and the freedom of religion promised under the First Amendment means pastors have full authority to say what they want to say.” Mr. Garlow said he planned to inveigh against same-sex marriage, abortion and other touchstone issues that social conservatives oppose, and some ministers may be ready to encourage parishioners to vote only for those candidates who adhere to the same views or values.


\(^4\) “Evangelicals, and more generally the Religious Right, are disproportionately present among the Tea Party voters…. [I]n their pro-Zionist politics, Evangelical Protestants match if not exceed in their fervor even the neocons and (if humanly possible) the Wall Street Journal. Evangelicals are perpetually behind the Israeli Right, and even if they elicit undisguised contempt from their allies, the American Israeli lobby and its Middle Eastern agenda can depend on their unqualified support.” Paul Gottfried, “What Drives the Religious Right,” \textit{The American Conservative} (2011). http://www.theamericanconservative.com/who-misleads-the-religious-right/ (accessed June 14, 2012).

\(^5\) “Fiscal restraint” is notoriously difficult to define, but generally refers to a commitment to free-market economics, limited government spending and taxation, as well as an understanding of what motivates people to certain actions and not others. Concerning this last point, Smith writes, “It’s the day I discovered that economics is not just about math; it’s about motivation. Debits, credits, ledgers, and spreadsheets matter, but so do determination and leadership. Sound, moral economic policy must take the foibles and folly of a fallen human nature into account, and must have human dignity—an understanding that we are all made in the image of God—as its goal.” Warren Cole Smith, “The Day I Became a Fiscal Conservative,” \textit{World Magazine} (2012). http://online.worldmag.com/2012/01/10/the-day-i-became-a-fiscal-conservative/ (accessed June 15, 2012).
“make up almost a third of the total electorate, and four out of five of them vote Republican.”

In addition to the “three-legged stool,” unwavering support for the nation of Israel also characterizes the Christian Right. While it remains true that politicians from both the left and the right loudly trumpet their support for Israel, Gallup maintains that Republican support for Israel is 25 points higher than Democrat support “with liberals the least supportive of Israel of any group Gallup measured.”

While some have maintained, “The Christian right stands with Israel because Israel stands for the same values we cherish so deeply—democracy, freedom, and sovereignty,” it remains evident that, for some at least, support for Israel is theologically driven. When

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8 “America’s love for Israel is so strong that politicians on the left and right go out of their way to offer verbal support for Israel. President Obama has said that, ‘The United States is going to be unwavering in its support of Israel’s security.’” Jordan Sekulow, “Why Christian Conservatives Are Israel’s Ambassadors,” The Washington Post (2010). http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/Jordan_Sekulow/2010/10/why_christian_conservatives_are_israels_ambassadors.html (accessed June 15, 2012).

9 “Republicans continue to be Israel’s strongest U.S. supporters: 80% sympathize more with the Israelis in the conflict, substantially higher than the 57% of independents and Democrats sharing this view. A similar pattern is seen by political ideology, ranging from 74% among conservatives to 49% among liberals -- with liberals the least supportive of Israel of any group Gallup measured.” Lydia Saad, “Americans Maintain Broad Support for Israel,” Gallup Politics (2011). http://www.gallup.com/poll/146408/americans-maintain-broad-support-israel.aspx (accessed June 15, 2012).

10 Sekulow, “Christian Conservatives”. 
President Obama stated that Israel should return to its pre-1967 borders, “Congresswoman Michelle Bachmann said that America would be ‘cursed’ by God if it ‘rejected’ Israel. A critical Sarah Palin even advised Obama to read the Old Testament.”

This unquestioning support for Israel is so strong that it trumps other theological issues religious conservatives would otherwise hold inviolable. This has caused some to question whether or not religious conservatives are indeed as religiously motivated as they claim. Gottfried observes:

But I do not ascribe the zeal of the Evangelicals to their Protestant Christianity or to their lack of a natural law tradition, pace Darryl Hart, who has been arguing this point for years. Like their hero George W. Bush, the members of the Religious Right whom I’ve known are intellectually lazy. They prefer sloganeering to thinking. In this way they’re like the Republicans I’ve encountered, people who recite party lines and who cheer for those carrying the proper party label. I’m also not sure that their anti-abortion enthusiasm is as great as Michael suggests. Pat Robertson touted Giuliani as a presidential candidate on his television program, despite Giuliani’s enthusiastic advocacy of a pro-choice position throughout his career. Robertson liked Giuliani because he was good on Israel. Leaders of the Religious Right have also had many nice things to say about Joe Lieberman, whose Zionism and advocacy of foreign wars seem to trump his support for third-term abortion. Bill Bennett backed Lieberman for president in 2008, without forfeiting (as far as I know) his credentials as an opponent of abortion beloved to the Religious Right.

Some might be tempted to agree with Gottfried that the claimed religious motivation of the Christian right is an argument of convenience. Others might dismiss Gottfried’s observation by recalling that politics does indeed make strange bedfellows. On the other hand, Gottfried’s example could point to a hierarchy of religious truth that makes such alliances palatable. The theory behind such graded absolutism may be unknown to the

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12 Gottfried, “Religious Right”.

13 Graded Absolutism is the ethical theory that holds that “when two or more universal ethical norms come into unavoidable conflict, our nonculpable duty is to follow the
practitioners, but the practical ramifications of the theory are undoubtedly well known by those in the political arena.

All of this evidence points to a church that is politically and socially engaged. Organizing to oppose the normalization of biblically-defined sin, believers fight against abortion, homosexuality, and prostitution. Not content with mere opposition, they establish pregnancy resource centers, rally for Israel, hold voter registration drives, and generally press their agenda through grass-roots activism. Much of this activism occurs from a wide-range of Christian traditions. Roman Catholics, for example, have been at the forefront of the pro-life movement. Still, while there may be others who have a theological motive for supporting the state of Israel, the theological system most vocal in its understanding of a prophetic plan—and therefore a present purpose—for Israel is dispensationalism. Believing the Bible to teach a continuous divine love for the Jews and a pre-ordained physical restoration of Israel’s promised kingdom, dispensationalists have been driven by their theology to specific political and social attitudes and actions. This being said, some, indeed many, have argued that dispensationalists are not politically and socially active enough or at least are not engaged in the right areas.

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higher one.” Norman L. Geisler, Christian Ethics: Options and Issues (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 312. Hodge argues for this ethical viewpoint in his discussion of the ninth commandment. “The obligation to speak the truth is a very solemn one; and when the choice is left a man to tell a lie or lose his money, he had better let his money go. On the other hand, if a mother sees a murderer in pursuit of her child, she has a perfect right to mislead him by any means in her power; because the general obligation to speak the truth is merged or lost, for the time being, in the higher obligation. This principle is not invalidated by its possible or actual abuse…. It is a dictate even of the natural conscience. It is evidently right to inflict pain in order to save life. It is right to subject travellers to quarantine, although it may grievously interfere with their wishes or interests, to save a city from pestilence. The principle itself is clearly inculcated by our Lord when He said, ‘I will have mercy and not sacrifice;’ and when He taught that it was right to violate the Sabbath in order to save the life of an ox, or even to prevent its suffering.” Charles Hodge, Soteriology, 3 vols., Systematic Theology, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 442.
Understanding a theological motivation for certain Christians to believe and act in political and social ways raises a natural question: If a certain theology *encourages* one sort of political/social action, could it be that this same theology *discourages* other sorts of political/social action? More to the point, if accepting traditional dispensationalism\(^{14}\) (TD) leads one to political action in support of Israel, could it be that TD could dissuade one from engaging other societal ills?

Some would answer with an unqualified yes. Traditional dispensationalism as a system discourages its adherents from combating causes such as political injustice, racial tensions and widespread world poverty.

*An Uneasy Conscience*

As early as 1947 Carl F. H. Henry, in his influential *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*,\(^{15}\) argues for a reconsidered understanding of the kingdom for the express purpose of ethical and social reform.

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\(^{15}\) Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947). It should be noted that the term “fundamentalist” in Henry’s understanding is not the same as the (unfortunately negative) stereotypical image popular
Henry’s primary concern is that organized Christianity is so fractured along theological lines that it can not speak with one voice regarding the vital ethical and political issues facing the bulk of humanity—issues like the Cold War, the nuclear brinkmanship practiced by the superpowers, labor/management strife, global poverty and famine, and racial hatred and discrimination to name a few. Rather than apply itself to social and political engagement, the church is immersed in fraternal debates that deal with secondary issues at best and trivial issues at worst.\(^\text{16}\)

The real tragedy, according to Henry, is that few of these theological divisions are primary to the essence of Christianity:

What concerns me more is that we have needlessly invited criticism and even ridicule, by a tendency in some quarters to parade secondary and sometimes even obscure aspects of our position as necessary frontal phases of our view.… \([\text{I}]t\) is needful that we come to a clear distinction, as evangelicals, between those basic doctrines on which we unite in a supernaturalistic world and life view and the area of differences on which we are not in agreement while yet standing true to the essence of Biblical Christianity.\(^\text{17}\)

Not only does fundamentalism fail to speak with one voice, at least in Henry’s appraisal, it rarely speaks at all. In Henry’s scathing assessment, “Fundamentalism is the modern priest and Levite, by-passing suffering humanity.”\(^\text{18}\) He proclaims that “evangelical social action has been spotty and usually of the emergency type,” with the result that today. When he uses this term, it is synonymous with “evangelical,” meaning not modernist or liberal—one who still subscribes to the fundamentals of the historic faith.

\(^{16}\) “In one of the large Christian colleges, a chapel speaker recently expressed amazement that the campus newspaper could devote so much space to the all-important problem of whether it is right to play ‘rook,’ [sic] while the nations of the world are playing with fire.” Ibid., 7.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., xvi-xvii.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 2.
“Fundamentalist opposition to societal ills has been more vocal than actual.”\textsuperscript{19} What is needed, he said, was a “progressive Fundamentalism with a social message.”\textsuperscript{20}

Henry insists that the root of this ethical and social crisis is primarily theological. While applauding the fundamentalist’s militant opposition to sin (as opposed to the modernist’s belief in the inherent goodness of humanity), he notes that such opposition is almost exclusively directed at “individual sin rather than social evil,”\textsuperscript{21} so that “a predominant trait, in most Fundamentalist preaching, is [a] reluctance to come to grips with social evils.”\textsuperscript{22}

While this critique is leveled at fundamentalism as a whole, a larger theological hurdle exists for two particular segments of fundamentalism:

The problem is even more complicated for the premillennialist and amillennialist. They are convinced not only that non-evangelicals cannot bring in the perfect social order in their methodological context, but also that the evangelicals will not bring it in by their proclamation of the Gospel. This latter conviction is grounded in the belief that the inauguration of the kingdom awaits the second advent of Christ in His visible return. The amillennialist does not believe in a thousand-year earthly reign, but he shares the despair over the present social order apart from Christ.\textsuperscript{23}

Even though Henry includes amillennialism in his assessment of what may be called eschatological pessimism, his main frustration is directed at premillennialists in general and dispensationalists in particular:\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., xx.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{24} While virtually all theologians would agree that dispensationalism is a subset of premillennialism, finding working definitions for either word that would satisfy everyone is
But even more serious was the fact that some Fundamentalist workers substituted a familiarity with the prophetic teaching of the Bible for an aggressive effort to proclaim Christ as the potent answer to the dissolution of world culture. As a consequence, they trained enlightened spectators, rather than empowered ambassadors. Prophetic conference, rather than Pentecostal challenge, was their forte.25

This natural pessimism regarding the ultimate effectiveness of social change coupled with a visceral rejection of modernism’s social gospel results in a theological outlook that denounces as futile and deceptive any significant world-change prior to Christ’s return. Thus, fundamentalists “redoubled their efforts to rescue the minority from an increasingly hostile environment.”26 Therefore, if any movement is to be made with regard to fundamentalist engagement with society, it would have to be primarily a theological movement.

It is important to note that Henry is not advocating a change in the essentials of the faith. He strongly considers these non-negotiable. Instead, he seeks a re-examination of what he considers peripheral matters that impede the more important work of being salt and light. Thus, while he considers orthodoxy paramount, he views orthopraxis as the true measure of correct theology. “A Fundamentalism from which such a passion is absent becomes an inessentialism. Here, if anywhere, the test of ‘negative pragmatism’ appears appropriate indeed. If Fundamentalism ceases to ‘work,’ we have imported into it elements which violate

an elusive task. Broadly speaking, premillennialism holds that Christ will bodily return to earth to judge the inhabitants of this earth and establish his righteous world-wide kingdom. Traditional dispensationalism (progressive dispensationalism had not developed at this time) goes further and holds to a distinction between Israel and the church and a pretribulation Rapture of the saints.


26 Ibid., 23.
the innermost essence of Christianity.” 27 In other words, right thinking will inevitably bring about right behavior—any doctrine that does not produce correct behavior cannot be correct theology. 28

In Henry’s view, the principal doctrine that needs re-thinking is the doctrine of the kingdom. As might be expected from Henry’s statement above, the premillennialist’s and amillennialist’s pessimism regarding the future is the root of fundamentalist inaction. Therefore a new understanding of the kingdom is vital to enable the church to be about its task. “[I]t is within the province of this volume to urge upon evangelicals the necessity for a deliberate restudy of the whole kingdom question, that the great evangelical agreements may be set effectively over against the modern mind, with the least dissipation of energy on secondary issues.” 29

27 Ibid., 56-57. “Negative Pragmatism” asserts that unless something works, it cannot be true.

28 It should be noted in passing that there is a fatal flaw in this line of thinking. A commitment to Sola Scriptura demands that one judge every aspect of life according to the written Word. It is Scripture that determines what is correct thinking as well as correct behavior. Yet, in this case, Henry seems to get the cart before the horse. He assumes political and social goals and then objects to those doctrines that are inconvenient to reaching those goals. One suspects that he would vigorously protest such an assessment as an over-simplification. No doubt he would argue that the ends for which he presses are biblical imperatives. Nevertheless, he does not provide the biblical mandate for the political and social action he advocates and one wonders how easy it would be to arrive at his predetermined conclusions from a strictly biblical argument. This is not to say that an argument for responsibility cannot be made. This is merely an acknowledgement that, very often, those things that are simply assumed contain fundamental errors. It is not surprising therefore to discover that not everyone has shared Henry’s vision of the church’s mission. This author’s grandfather—a fundamentalist/ dispensationalist pastor—regularly quoted the maxim “Christ called us to catch fish, not clean up the pond.”

29 Henry, Uneasy Conscience, 46.
Since it was Henry’s goal to unite, not divide fundamentalism further, he argues for a compromise position concerning the kingdom. It is evidently his thought that, seeing the kingdom as a non-essential that should not divide, such a compromise was not only possible but necessary. Henry opined:

[T]he burden of these articles is not to press a personal kingdom viewpoint, but rather to promote an evangelical conviction that nothing is so essential among Fundamentalist essentials as a world-relevance for the Gospel. Whatever in our kingdom views undercuts that relevance destroys the essential character of Christianity as such.\(^{30}\)

Henry rejects coming up with any new theory regarding the kingdom, stating that such “exegetical novelty so late in church history may well be suspect.”\(^{31}\) Indeed, he is quick to state, “The problem of Fundamentalism then is basically not one of finding a valid message, but rather of giving the redemptive word a proper temporal focus.” By this he meant that God works not only in superhistory (i.e. eternity), but also in the history of right now.\(^{32}\) As an alternative, he advocates a position to which non-dispersational premillennialism and amillennialism already subscribed:

In non-dispersational Fundamentalism, amillennialists and pre-millennialists agree that the kingdom whether earthly or heavenly will be set up not by the flashed sword of Gideon but by the advent of Christ, though a real spiritual reign is insisted upon in Christ’s present relationship to the church. In dispensational Fundamentalism, the

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 48.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 47.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 62. “Perhaps this picture of Jesus standing at the tomb of our disintegrating renaissance culture can be emphasized by an allegory built on the raising of Lazarus. When death overtook Lazarus, and plunged his survivors into grief, Jesus came with assurance that ‘thy brother shall rise again.’ Martha replied, ‘I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.’ (John 11:24; emphasis his). Such Fundamentalism as reduces God’s role in history largely to a preparation for future judgment may well pause at the tomb of Lazarus. There Jesus cried out, ‘I am the resurrection and the life … Lazarus, come forth!’” Ibid.
keynote of the postponement theory is “no kingdom now, but rather a future kingdom.”

Thus, Henry proposes an already/not yet understanding of the kingdom to provide the necessary focus for cultural engagement:

No study of the kingdom teaching of Jesus is adequate unless it recognizes His implication both that the kingdom is here, and that it is not here. This does not imply an ultimate paradox, but rather stresses that the kingdom exists in incomplete realization…. The extent to which man centers his life and energy in the redemptive King now determines the extent of the divine kingdom in the present age.

The Young Evangelicals

Of course, Henry is not alone in his understanding of dispensationalism in particular and fundamentalism in general. Even though Quebedeaux spends most of his time taking aim at “establishment evangelicalism,” it is dispensationalism in particular that receives his

33 Ibid., 42.

34 Ibid., 48-50.

35 Richard Quebedeaux was the primary spokesman for the “young evangelicals” of the mid-1970’s. Ryrie notes the irony of these “young evangelicals” leveling the same criticisms at evangelicalism that evangelicalism aimed at fundamentalism. “When new evangelicalism set forth its manifesto, one of its main concerns was to do something about the social implications of the gospel which, in the opinion of the new evangelicals, fundamentalists had abandoned. Now a generation later, there has appeared the unbelievable spectacle of another group pushing aside the new evangelicals (actually the old new evangelicals) and insisting that they are the true new evangelicals. And so, what was new evangelicalism from the late 1940s through the 1960s is now being called in the 1970s the ‘establishment evangelicalism’: it has been supplanted by the self-proclaimed young evangelicals who, according to their own publicity, are the only ones who have a genuine social concern.” Charles Ryrie, “Perspectives on Social Ethics Part I: Theological Perspectives on Social Ethics,” Bibliotheca sacra 134, no. 533 (1977): 33-34.

36 “[W]e have found social concern among Establishment Evangelicals to be often merely an offering of pious words rather than a demonstration of prophetic action. Hence, if we are looking for a powerful expression of spiritual renewal in Orthodox Christianity—one genuinely committed to reconciliation and active faith in a secular society—we shall have to
most unflattering appraisal.\textsuperscript{37} He contends that the personal ethics of dispensationalists have “nothing to do with how a committed Christian treats other people as persons created in the image of God and for whom Christ died. And human love—not to mention Christ’s love—appears to have no real importance in that school of thought.”\textsuperscript{38} Not only so, but he flatly asserts that in dispensationalism “there is no social ethic.”\textsuperscript{39}

For Quebedeaux, this is a theological problem. “The unyielding Dispensational view of the present human situation … deprives it of a meaningful social ethic.”\textsuperscript{40}

Not only is there no social ethic, there is no room for political activity either:

[I]n the context of Dispensational ideology, politics is a losing battle. No matter what specific political or social gains Separatist Fundamentalists might achieve by their noisy efforts, the decadence characteristic of the Last Days must get worse until the rapture, when the saved will finally be removed from this ever more sinful world. That is the message inherent in Dispensationalism….\textsuperscript{41}

This is not to say that political action is not found in some strains of fundamentalism. Quebedeaux discusses at length the anti-communism of Billy James Hargis and Carl

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\textsuperscript{37} It should be noted that Quebedeaux seems to equate dispensationalists with fundamentalists, which he divides into the categories of “Separatist” and “Open.” The difference between these two groups, however, is only one of degree, not of kind. He concedes that Open Fundamentalism is a “more modest expression” of fundamentalism than is the Separatist variety. Ibid., 27. Unlike Separatist fundamentalism, the Open school is “not inherently anti-intellectual, it is … quite often willing to engage in dialogue with other Orthodox schools of thought, … and is capable of some measure of self-criticism.” Ibid., 26. Still, it is the dispensationalism of both forms of fundamentalism that deprives them of a “meaningful social ethic.” Ibid., 28.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 22.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 21-22.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid. Emphasis original.
McIntire. Still, the fierce anti-communism and social conservatism of “separatist” fundamentalism is a result of their heritage, not their theology. For these dispensationalists, “theology is, practically speaking, less important than conservative political action.”

This being said, the systemic problem in fundamentalism may be traced back to the theological tenets of dispensationalism. Waiting for Christ to establish his kingdom on earth has the practical effect of denying the lordship of Christ in the present. According to Quebedeaux, for dispensationalists, “Jesus will have to wait to be Lord.”

Closing a “Theological Loophole”

Not everyone who finds fault with the social ethics of dispensationalism believes that the (alleged) neglect is an inevitable result of TD’s theological framework. Pyne, for example, accepts that social disengagement is not demanded by dispensationalism. Nevertheless, he maintains that dispensationalism provides a “theological loophole for those whose understanding of social ethics had been thrown out of balance by sin, controversy and culture.” As an example of the “loophole” in practice, Pyne relates a personal interaction he contends is a natural result of TD:

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42 Ibid., 22-25.

43 Ibid., 21.

44 Ibid.

45 Robert A. Pyne, “The New Man in an Immoral Society: Expectations between the Times,” in Evangelical Theological Society Dispensational Study Group (Santa Clara, Calif.: 1997), 10. This unpublished paper should not be confused with Pyne’s published article in BSac 154 (Jul-Sep 1997) by the same name. That article is primarily concerned with the contribution of Reinhold Niebuhr to the church’s role in societal change.
Several months ago I found myself in a conversation with a student about the church’s responsibility to the poor. I had said something in class about having an obligation to serve the needy, and this fellow challenged me afterward to prove my point from Scripture. I started with Galatians 2:10, but he said that Paul’s words about “remembering the poor” only applied to those suffering in the Jerusalem church. I tried the book of Amos, but he said that was an Old Testament text that didn’t apply to the church. He said that Psalm 72 and Matthew 6 provide instruction concerning the millennium, and that Matthew 25 describes standards for those who have gone through the Tribulation. He said that Acts 4 merely reported (but did not endorse) the Jerusalem church’s temporary practice of communal living, while James 2 was directed toward Hebrew Christians. I tried 1 John 3, but he was quick to point out that the apostle only calls us to love one another, not to love those who are in the world, and I finally said, “I’m not sure you and I are reading the same Bible.” He was no longer convinced I was really a dispensationalist, but I had a bigger concern than that. I was no longer convinced he was really a Christian.46

Unfortunately, Pyne never goes on to defend his use of Scripture or challenge his student’s exegesis, but merely discusses dispensationalism’s “bad reputation.”47 Of course, it should quickly be noted that claiming a certain theological position without the benefit of exegesis is not unique to Pyne. As has been noted earlier, C. F. H. Henry takes a similar approach. It should also be noted that all such personal experiences should be taken cum grano as Newton’s third law tends to be true of anecdotal evidence as well as motion. When one story is told, an equal and opposite tale is not far away.48 Nevertheless, it appears that it

46 Ibid., 1.

47 Stallard responds to Pyne in Mike Stallard, “An Essentialist Response to Robert A. Pyne’s ‘The New Man in an Immoral Society: Expectations between the Times’,” in Evangelical Theological Society Dispensational Study Group (Santa Clara, Calif.: 1997). In addition to answering Pyne’s concerns, he addresses a way forward with regard to social ethics. Stallard’s arguments will be considered in depth later in this dissertation.

48 Reformed theologian Richard Mouw also finds a fundamental defect with dispensationalism, but finds a different reality with regard to praxis than Pyne. He writes, “The dispensationalist perspective undercut Christian social concerns; but long before I had ever heard of Mother Teresa, I saw dispensationalists lovingly embrace the homeless in rescue missions. Whatever the defects of the older dispensationalism as a theological perspective, it embodied a spirituality that produced some of the most Christlike human beings I have ever known.” Richard J. Mouw, “What the Old Dispensationalists Taught Me,” Christianity Today 39, no. 3 (1995): 34.
is this student’s acceptance of Ryrie’s *sine qua non*\(^\text{49}\) — in particular his understanding of literal hermeneutics and the distinction between Israel and the church — that leads him to his understanding of the church’s social responsibility.

In response to this loophole, there has arisen within dispensationalism a movement whose stated goals include closing the (theological) loophole that inhibits correct social and political behavior in traditional dispensationalism.\(^\text{50}\) Since its inception,\(^\text{51}\) progressive dispensationalism (PD) has argued for a “broader concept of redemption,” a redemption that is “holistic.”\(^\text{52}\) This means that the promise of salvation and blessing of the nations—as opposed to just the salvation of Israel—extends the reach of salvation into “political and national dimensions.”\(^\text{53}\) Therefore, the present role of the church includes being a “witness to and advocate for social and political righteousness.”\(^\text{54}\)

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\(^\text{50}\) Pyne, 10. “In recent years progressive dispensationalists have attempted to close that loophole. By suggesting that the church is an inaugurated expression of the kingdom of God, one that consists of both Jews and Gentiles, progressive dispensationalists have argued that it should provide a model of reconciliation for the rest of the world.” Ibid.


\(^\text{52}\) Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, “Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: Assessment and Dialogue,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 382.

\(^\text{53}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{54}\) Ibid.
Carroll argues that the “social ethics vacuum of classic dispensationalism” has brought about the reconsideration of “the reality of the presence of the kingdom of God today.”\(^{55}\) This “reality of the presence of the kingdom” reverberates with ethical and socio-political repercussions. Indeed, it is the presence of Christ reigning currently over an inaugurated kingdom that seems to be the basis for closing the theological loophole.

Similarly, central to Bock’s understanding of the gospel is the announcement of Christ as king. He contends one of the “major burdens” of the Apostle Luke is “to show how the Davidic ruler comes to have such comprehensive authority over all humans.”\(^ {56}\) The kingdom over which Christ rules “comes in two stages: one present and the rest in the future.”\(^ {57}\) In its present stage, the kingdom “manifest[s] itself in the church,”\(^ {58}\) which is where God is active through Christ, manifesting his transforming power…. In the church one is to see God overcoming the forces of evil and the enemy.”\(^ {59}\) The church performs this role by being a model for the culture:

\(^{55}\) M. Daniel Carroll R., “Broadening Horizons, Redirecting Focus: A Response to Robert Pyne on Progressive Dispensationalism and Social Ethics,” in *Evangelical Theological Society Dispensational Study Group* (Santa Clara, Calif.: 1997), 5. “I would classify myself, I guess, among those who are called ‘progressive dispensationalists,’ yet I have not been very much involved in some of the internal debates going on with this theological tradition.” Ibid., 1.


\(^{57}\) Ibid., 1418.

\(^{58}\) “[I]t is clear that the kingdom is not merely the church, for the church is but a part of the total kingdom program. The church shares in aspects of what the kingdom is, but the kingdom program is larger than that of the church. The church is in the kingdom, but it is not the kingdom. Given the need for personal response in order to enter the kingdom, it is also clear that the kingdom is not equal to society at large.” Ibid., 1418-19.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 1418.
The church is to be an illustration, an audiovisual, of the presence and out-working of God’s love and compassion (Eph 3:14-19). This should be especially manifest in the way believers interact with each other, as well as how they concretely show love for their neighbors, whoever they may be (Gal 5:1–6:10; Luke 10:25–37; John 13–17).  

Bock recognizes that the ministry of the church is multifaceted. While some in the church may be engaged with directly presenting the gospel message, “[o]thers may seek to reach out to those who are hurting or starving. In doing so, they may call attention to sinful structures by which sinful men reflect hatred for others and inflict abuse on others.” While the ultimate victory of Christ and his kingdom is assured (in its consummated state), Bock offers no guarantee of success in the present. He correctly notes that faithfulness, not success, is what God commands:

> For those who argue that such attempts are destined to fail and therefore should be abandoned as pointless, it is to be noted that Christ offered the message of hope, even to those He knew would refuse it. Service need not require that the church always be successful in these attempts. Instead faithfulness calls for the church to engage in such work with the hope that some will respond to it and with the knowledge that righteous service is due God even if no one responds.

Understanding the present form of the kingdom in a similar way, Blaising argues that the comprehensive claims of Christ are not limited to merely personal relationships, but expand to social and political relationships as well. Blaising declares, “Christ intends to redeem humankind socially as well as individually. The social redemption of humanity begins in the church.” Thus the church is to exercise a radical role in society because “we

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61 Ibid., 457.
62 Ibid., 457, n. 28.
are called first to conversion in ourselves, not just individually but socially and politically."\(^{64}\)

External social ministry and the political work of the church go hand in hand as part of the call to Christ.\(^{65}\) In practical terms, this means, “the church should exercise its responsibility along with worldly citizens in the legislation, execution, and adjudication of law.”\(^{66}\)

It seems evident that accepting an already/not yet understanding of the kingdom has larger implications for theology than merely eschatology or even ecclesiology. It goes to the very heart of personal, corporate, and political ethics. Moore correctly concludes, “An evangelical exploration of the present/future kingship of Christ is by its very nature a consideration of political theory since the social and political element is interwoven with biblical Christology.”\(^{67}\)

Proposal

As has been seen above, many have commented on the alleged ethical discrepancies inherent in dispensationalism as a system. But to this date there has been no full-length treatment of the social/political ethics of TD.\(^{68}\) This dissertation aims to fill that gap.

\(^{64}\) Ibid.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 289.

\(^{66}\) Ibid.


\(^{68}\) There have been works that examine one element of traditional dispensationalism’s social ethic. Chenault’s work on the Sermon on the Mount is an example. In it he examines the social ethic surrounding Matthew 5-7, but largely ignores dispensationalism’s use of the OT law or its understanding of social action in Philemon, for example. Will Chenault, “Dispensationalism and Social Concern: An Evaluation of Dispensationalism, the Sermon on the Mount, and Social Ethics” (Th.M thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2003).
Specifically this work will investigate and defend the view of TD regarding social and political action by the church.

Methodology

Schools of thought are usually mentioned in the singular. One speaks of “reformed theology,” rarely of “reformed theologies.” This is because proponents of a particular position usually have the core elements of that viewpoint in common. Still, it is seldom that one person speaks for an entire school of thought, particularly one that spans many generations. Adherents of a particular theology, even acknowledged spokesmen for that theology, rarely speak with one voice on all issues. There are variations, shades of meaning—even disagreements among those who would claim the same name. So when one speaks of “dispensationalism,” for example, it is understood that comments concerning this system of thought are, of necessity, generalized. Therefore, the only way to speak of TD’s view on anything is to review the writings of numerous individuals in order to identify commonalities and disagreements.

Before beginning an investigation of this type, it is helpful to remember Wecter’s counsel to the one who would chronicle history:

On the basis of sound inquiry and reasoned belief he should form those value judgments from which no historian worth his salt must flinch. We simply demand that he treat the material fairly, give an accounting for the generalizations he draws, and, while playing his thesis to win, never stack the cards.69

While the admonition to “never stack the cards” is solid advice in any investigative work, the caution is particularly applicable when summarizing a theological tradition such as

dispensationalism. To avoid any such sleight of hand and to give “an accounting for the generalizations” necessary in such work, two criteria will be used in selecting those non-progressive dispensationalists who will serve as models of the tradition.

First, each person must be part of a representative sample. Clearly it is impossible to perform an exhaustive review of every book, pamphlet, article, or sermon written by dispensationalists in the last 200 years. An exhaustive treatment of even one major figure would warrant a dissertation by itself. Instead, one must research those principal characters that would be considered in the mainstream of the movement. This means this work shall consider those whose writings were primarily exegetical and theological, whose works were—and continue to be—influential, and whose contribution to dispensationalism is not limited to a single topic. Thus, by way of example, colorful characters like Carl McIntire (who specialized in current events and anti-communism) and F. W. Grant (whose Numerical Bible gave exegetical significance to individual numbers) will be excluded.

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70 This requirement is critical to the argument of this dissertation. What is being examined is dispensationalism as a system. What is not under consideration is how dispensationalists have actually behaved. This being said, exegetical works written for a lay audience will be included, for as long as the truth expressed is from God’s Word, the complexity of the concepts or the majesty of the style are inconsequential.


72 Grant’s thesis is that the Bible has an identifiable numerical structure that aids in interpretation and was superimposed upon the writing and compiling of the canon so that even the order of the books is significant. A typical example of his exegesis follows: “But [the NT] is also a fifth Pentateuch, the Old Testament being made up of four Pentateuchs, as we have elsewhere seen. Nor is this number 5 in contradiction to the other number which it bears: for every 5 is also a two: it is made up of two numbers 4+1, and these two are in perfect contrast with one another, though coming thus together. Four is the number of frailty—of the creature. One is the number of strength and of God. Five brings these together in itself, and is the number of Immanuel therefore—‘God with us.’ This is surely the very meaning of the new covenant: ‘I will be their God;’ and our Immanuel, Jesus, is the personal
It should also be noted that the lives and deeds of those being investigated shall not be wholly ignored, but such examination will be limited to those areas where their actions shed particular and singular light on their theology. In other words, those character traits that uniquely illuminate their theology will receive passing mention but this paper will not provide a complete biographical sketch. While this may at first blush appear peculiar (after all, the topic under consideration concerns how one should live), the rationale behind this decision is quite simple. Even the most casual observer of Christianity realizes that there is (all too often) a disconnect between what one believes and how one behaves. At the most basic level, this disconnect may be seen every time a believer sins.\textsuperscript{73} Understanding this basic element of humanity’s fallen nature, it seems evident that \textit{the logical conclusions of a system of thought may not be determined solely by the actions of those that subscribe to that system.} Put another way, it is possible—even likely—that the explicit teachings and ramifications of TD are not consistently or faithfully portrayed in the lives of its teachers.\textsuperscript{74} This is not to say that much of the time one could not find examples of TD theology in action in the fulfillment of it. He is the ‘Mediator of the new covenant,’ the Reconciler of God and man. Thus, as a fifth Pentateuch, the New Testament is perfectly in agreement with its character as the second part of Scripture. The numbers two and five both speak of Jesus, and as no other numbers do. It is no wonder that here they should come together. For Scripture has its own arithmetic as Nature has; and nothing that is, save man, can be ever wanting in its Maker’s praise.” F. W. Grant, \textit{The Gospels, The Numerical Bible Being a Revised Translation of the Holy Scriptures with Expository Notes: Arranged, Divided, and Briefly Characterized According to the Principles of Their Numerical Structure} (New York: Loizeaux Brother, 1899), 9.

\textsuperscript{73} The Apostle Paul states as much in Romans 7:15-16: “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.”

\textsuperscript{74} A worldly example of this principle may be seen in the way political conservatives actually in office have adapted the conservatism of Russell Kirk or William F. Buckley III.
biographies of these men. Those examples that are particularly telling will be reviewed. Still, there will always be the one individual on the fringe to which critics will point. Not only so, but even in the best of lives there will be the weak moment, the cultural accommodation, the tyranny of the immediate that will cause one to act inconsistently with his beliefs. It seems, therefore, that the wisest course of action would be to rely on the explicit statements of these men to discover those social and political inferences that stem from TD as a system, and to only reference in passing those actions that draw special attention to their teaching.

Second, persons selected should exhibit the twin traits of historical continuity and historical diversity. Since dispensationalism is a movement with an identifiable history, there has been a certain amount of “passing the baton.” Tracing the lineage (so to speak) of dispensationalism should highlight any lasting doctrinal development that has taken place in the area of social and political ethics. Similarly, restricting the investigation to contemporaneous individuals will most likely amplify those peculiarities that may exist due to current events or the mood of the day.

This rationale of “passing the baton” excludes men like Arno C. Gaebelein. It is true that “[h]is association with Scofield in conferences and in the editing of the Scofield Reference Bible … point to the significant place Gaebelein possessed in the development of the dispensational movement in America.” Nevertheless he possessed some hermeneutical peculiarities, such as his apparent dependency on Grant’s Numerical Bible and his...
acceptance of two major hermeneutical rules (literal and dispensational). As a result, while many of his conclusions would be considered inside the historical mainstream of dispensationalism, his overall contribution to theological or hermeneutical method is slight. Put another way, since few in following generations adopted his unique hermeneutics, there seems to be no major figure in dispensationalism to whom he passed his baton. Lest one think this requirement for “passing the baton” is a convenient way to exclude those whose views may be troublesome to explain, this requirement also excludes Émile Guers, an important figure in the history of dispensationalism.

Passages were to be interpreted in the light of unfolding patterns or themes within the progress of revelation given in the entire canon of Scripture.

Within this general outlook, three specific approaches were identified. First, a dispensational-theological hermeneutic operated when the distinction between Israel and the church was used as a hermeneutical switch to decide the meaning of a passage. Second, a dispensational-typological hermeneutic was used to allow a prophetic secondary meaning for the text in light of the distinction between Israel and the church. Third, a dispensational-applicatory hermeneutic allowed application of a secondary meaning for a text without typology in the light of the same distinction.” Ibid., 345-46. While it may be remarked that other dispensationalists of his day used non-literal hermeneutics to a greater extent than might be customary today, Stallard responds with a caution. “A preliminary comparison of Gaebelein’s use of typology with the commentaries of other dispensationalists near his time period (e.g., William Kelly, H. A. Ironside, W. H. Griffith Thomas, William L. Pettingill, and E. Schuyler English) reveals that his practice in that area was generally not followed with the same intensity.” Ibid., 363.

Ibid., 356.

“Gaebelein freely spiritualized historical texts to produce the same conclusions arrived at in literal interpretation of prophecy.” Ibid., 358.

“… Gaebelein did little to formulate new directions in dispensational theology. In fact, many aspects of his theology have had apparently insignificant impact in terms of any lasting change. For example, the broad use of typology is rarely seen today in dispensationalists’ writings.” Ibid., 351.

While this is true, it should quickly be noted that many have agreed with his conclusions, albeit for different reasons.
Émile Guers (1794-1882) was a contemporary of Darby (1800-1882) and evidently greatly influenced by his teaching. His value in dispensational historical studies lies in part with his published principles guiding prophetic study. He championed the principles of literalism, a distinction between Israel and the church, and the value of the word “day”

81 “The second factor for the development of Guers’ essay is the direct influence of Darby. It seems that both Darby and Guers underwent similar spiritual pilgrimages in eschatology and ecclesiology. Both clarified ecclesiastical notions that led to a separatist position with respect to the established church. The significance of the 1831 date which Guers gave coupled with Darby’s own development reminds one of the Powerscourt Conferences which began in October of that year. There is no evidence that Guers ever attended the conferences. However, there can be no doubt that he was aware of the debates. The main topic of the restoration of Israel, the many detailed analyses concerning the personal Antichrist, interpretations of the book of Daniel, and the Second Coming of Christ, which fill the pages of La Future D’Israël, matched the topics discussed at the conferences during the 1830s. That Guers’ assembly had contacts with that part of Ireland is proven by the fact that one of the pastors of the Bourg-de-Four assembly named Henri Pyt represented the work in Dublin and throughout northern Ireland a year before the conferences were first held. In addition, Guers demonstrated Brethren associations with an acceptance of the Darbyite view of the coming of Christ in two stages.

The final proof of Guers’ Darbyite heritage is provided by a contemporary enemy of the Brethren movement. H. de Goltz, writing critically of the separatist movement (including Guers’ church, Darbyism, Irvingism, and others), testified to the direct connection between Darby and Guers. The Bourg-de-Four assembly in Geneva was, according to H. de Goltz, closely aligned with the Plymouth Brethren by 1835. In fact, Darby made an extended visit to Geneva in the autumn of 1837 and was warmly received by the Bourg-de-Four brethren. Thus, the process of thinking about millennial questions which Guers said began in 1831 and was finalized six or seven years later was apparently consummated at the time of Darby’s visit to Geneva. In short, Guers was a direct disciple of Darby. Mike Stallard, “Émile Guers: An Early Darbyite Response to Irvingism and a Precursor to Charles Ryrie,” in Pretrib Study Group (Ft. Worth, Texas: 1997), http://our-hope.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/EmileGuers.pdf (accessed June 17, 2014).

82 “In speaking thus, we do not mean to say that what is manifestly figurative is to be taken to the letter. Again we simply say that a literal interpretation, when it does not interfere with the Bible, nor common sense, is the safest. We say that when a passage expresses figuratively, or in a symbol, a fact which the context, or parallel passages, expresses literally, the literal passage ought to explain the symbolic passage. Simple, ordinary, positive language always surpasses metaphorical language...” Émile Guers, Israel in the Last Days of the Present Economy; or, an Essay on the Coming Restoration of This People, trans., Rev. Aubrey C. Price (London: Wertheim, Macintosh, and Hunt, 1855), 18.
in prophecy.\textsuperscript{84} The first two principles (the third being merely an extension of the first)\textsuperscript{85} prefigure Ryrie’s \emph{sine qua non},\textsuperscript{86} which many consider to be the touchstone of TD. In that respect Émile Guers blunts the charge leveled by PD that Ryrie’s \emph{sine qua non} is a recent development.\textsuperscript{87} As a result:

Guers and other dispensational writers must be examined with reference to continuity. An essentialist approach to dispensationalism cannot be abandoned simply on the basis that there are elements of discontinuity within the tradition. Guers especially

\begin{quote}
Guers’ third and last principle is the “[l]iteral value of the word \textit{day} in prophecy. … The word \textit{day} in prophecy, when it does not mean the day of the Lord, designates exactly a natural day of twenty-four hours; the system which assigns to this word the absolute value of a year does not seem to us to be proved.” Ibid., 37.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Guers admits this. “This principle, whose development is easier and shorter that the two preceding, is at the foundation only a consequence, an application of literalism.” Ibid.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\emph{Sine qua non} is a Latin phrase which strictly translated means “without which none,” and is used to refer to the essential element or elements of something. Thus, according to Ryrie, the \emph{sine qua non} of dispensationalism are those elements without which dispensationalism could not exist as a coherent theological system. According to Ryrie, these essentials are: (1) A distinction between Israel and the Church, (2) the use of a consistent literal hermeneutic, and (3) a doxological purpose of history. Ryrie, \textit{Dispensationalism}, 38-41.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
“However, as already noted, while there is no question that the elements of the proposed \emph{sine qua non} are \emph{related} to traditional views and practice, nevertheless one must regard them as modifications and reformulations, whether small or great, that were part of the changes taking place. They were in fact the central tenets of a \textit{new} dispensationalism. But when that which is in fact new is presented and accepted as if it had always been the case, the result is not only historical confusion but a conceptual naïveté that resists both the idea and the fact of further development in the tradition.” Craig A. Blaising, “Dispensationalism: The Search for Definition,” in \textit{Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church}, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 29.
\end{quote}
shows that Ryrie’s later formulation is not simply a reaction to his own contemporary circumstances.\textsuperscript{88}  

The continuity that Guers provides also justifies the inclusion of Ryrie and other “essentialist” dispensationalists alongside the “Scofieldian” dispensationalists\textsuperscript{89} in this study. Guers shows a consistent tradition that argues against the attempted division of dispensationalism argued by Bock and Blaising.\textsuperscript{90} Guers shows that there are not two different kinds of dispensationalism under review, but a consistent tradition that has hermeneutical continuity. Ryrie’s \textit{sine qua non} is not merely “related to traditional views and practice,”\textsuperscript{91} but expresses unity with that tradition, at least on the first two points.

Notwithstanding his importance in the history of dispensationalism, it remains unclear that Guers passed his teaching on to another notable figure. He stands important, but alone in the history of dispensationalism. While there is an obvious similarity between Guers and Ryrie, there is no link between these two figures that this author can find. Likewise, there is no prominent figure in TD who adopted Guers’ third principle. Therefore, he will be excluded from this study.

With these considerations in mind, the following dispensationalists will be reviewed to determine non-progressive dispensationalism’s view toward social and political ethics:

\textsuperscript{88} Stallard, “Émile Guers,” 15.

\textsuperscript{89} See note 14 for an explanation of these terms.


\textsuperscript{91} Blaising, 29.
J. N. Darby,⁹² C. I. Scofield,⁹³ L. S. Chafer, Harry Ironside, John Walvoord, Alva J. McClain, Charles Ryrie,⁹⁴ and Michael Stallard.⁹⁵

A careful review of this list shows four men who are (roughly) contemporaries—Chafer (1871-1952) and Ironside (1876-1951); Walvoord (1910-2002) and McClain (1888-1968)—even though this runs the risk of weighting the contribution of this time period (along with amplifying those peculiarities that may exist due to current events or the mood of the day, as mentioned above) more heavily than others. Still, considering the diversity of

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⁹² While not as well known as others outside of dispensational circles, Darby’s selection for study is obvious. “Acknowledged father of modern dispensational premillennialism, Darby is remembered especially for his recalling the church to expectancy for its rapture at the return of the Lord before Daniel’s Seventieth Week.” Floyd Elmore, “Darby, John Nelson,” in *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, ed. Mal Couch (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 83.

⁹³ Author of the Scofield Reference Bible, C. I. Scofield’s contribution “to the development of the evangelical fundamentalist movement in the twentieth century has been enormous, particularly as it relates to premillennial dispensationalism.” John Hannah, “Scofield, Cyrus Ingerson,” in *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, ed. Mal Couch (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 391. It is impossible to conceive of a serious review of historical dispensational theology (as a whole) with his inclusion.

⁹⁴ Author of the *Ryrie Study Bible*, Ryrie’s attempt to codify the essentials of dispensationalism in his *sine qua non* (see note 86) have been largely accepted within TD, although recently challenged by PD (see note 87). “The importance of this work for the self-understanding of late twentieth-century dispensationalism cannot be overstated.” Blaising, “The Search for Definition,” 23. “Dr. Ryrie’s writings have consistently been on the theological cutting edge, addressing the critical issues of the day and speaking on behalf of dispensational premillennialism.” Paul P. Enns, “Ryrie, Charles C.,” in *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, ed. Mal Couch (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 385. Again, no serious study of historical dispensationalism would be complete without an investigation of Ryrie’s contribution.

⁹⁵ While Stallard has not written extensively in the area of social and political ethics, his response to Pyne’s critique of TD is worthy of consideration since it answers many of the charges leveled at TD. Additionally, his qualifications as a contemporary traditional dispensational theologian mark him among the few that can speak for the current generation regarding the topic at hand.
ministry and impact represented by these men, a review of them individually seems warranted. Comparing Chafer and Ironside illustrates this point and the need for diversity.

Admittedly there are similarities between Chafer and Ironside. Both were at one time pastors, both were exceptionally active in the Bible conference movement and both men taught in higher education. Nevertheless, it is what these men are remembered for, as well as who influenced them, that makes them unique.

Chafer learned his theology almost exclusively through his close association with C. I. Scofield. Evidently a gifted preacher in his own right, he traveled with Scofield extensively, being his obvious heir apparent. Still, Chafer is not remembered for his preaching ministry. Chafer’s enduring legacy is the way he established the collaborative dispensationalism of the Bible conference movement in both higher education and theology. When Chafer founded Dallas Theological Seminary, “it represented an extension of the


97 “In essence, Chafer’s contribution to the ongoing life of the church can be seen as the broadening and deepening of the Bible conference movement.” See Hannah, “Chafer,” 69.

98 “Ironside’s traveling ministry included Bible conferences and seriatim teaching at institutions across the United States such as Moody Bible Institute and the Evangelical College (now Dallas Theological Seminary).” Stallard, “Ironside,” 183.


100 Originally called the Evangelical Theological College, the seminary was founded in cooperation with W. H. Griffith Thomas, who died before classes could begin. See Lonnie
Bible-conference emphases at the post-graduate level of education, just as the Bible institutes extended them at the under-graduate level.\textsuperscript{101} Similarly, “Chafer systematized [the Bible conference movement’s] unique theological emphasis with the publication of his \textit{Systematic Theology} (8 vols.) in 1948, the first major attempt to set forth the teaching of dispensational premillennialism within the rubric of traditional systematics.”\textsuperscript{102} Thus, even though Chafer began as a preacher, his primary contribution to dispensationalism was through higher education.

In contrast, the casual student may not even be aware that Ironside ever taught in the classroom. He is remembered for the numerous books that sprang from his preaching:

The greatest legacy of H. A. Ironside is the voluminous collection of writings that he left. He wrote over sixty books, along with numerous pamphlets and articles. His style is characterized by (1) devotional exposition, (2) the simple outline of complicated issues, (3) a creative ability to provide fresh working and illustrations aimed at warming the heart and changing the life, and (4) a continuation of the heritage of simple Bible readings that were emphasized in the Niagara Bible Conferences in the late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{103}

The comparison between a seminary professor who wrote on systematic theology for those engaged in ministry and a pastor whose books were meant for the person in the pew sheds light on the continuity of the message. Put another way, did what was taught as “official” dispensationalism (taught by both men in their seminary classes) work its way down to the layman intact, or was instruction on social responsibility modified or adapted to suit the different audience?

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\textsuperscript{101} Hannah, “Chafer, Lewis Sperry,” 69.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 69-70.

\textsuperscript{103} Stallard, “Ironside,” 184.
This being said, perhaps more important than the contrasts between their ministries was the source of their dispensational education. As has been noted, C. I. Scofield heavily influenced Chafer’s understanding of the Bible in general and dispensationalism in particular. Ironside, in contrast, acquired his dispensationalism from his association with the Brethren.¹⁰⁴

After leaving the Salvation Army and their failed understanding of practical holiness:¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ "It does not come within the scope or purpose of this volume to discuss the Movement, which began in the early Nineteenth Century in Dublin, Ireland, to be followed shortly by similar spontaneous meetings in Plymouth (from which came the name, Plymouth Brethren, by which the movement is generally known is derived), Bristol, and London, England." E. Schuyler English, H. A. Ironside: Ordained of the Lord (New York: Loizeaux Bros., 1946), 83 n. *

¹⁰⁵ One cannot help but notice the similarities between Ironside in the Salvation Army and Luther in the Roman Catholic Church. Each worked unceasingly for a goal they could not attain: Ironside striving for “complete” sanctification and security of salvation, Luther working simply for salvation itself.

A young woman, dying of tuberculosis, came to Ironside because she had observed his life and believed that he had been “fully sanctified.” She wanted the secret to it so she could die in peace. This shocked Ironside because he had been eyeing her and had determined that she was “fully sanctified” and possessed what he could not attain. English describes the scene:

“For a moment they were both silent, and then, affected at the same instant with the absurdity of the situation, despite its pathos, together they burst into almost delirious laughter and tears.

“Whatever is the matter with us all?” Harry asked. “No one on earth denies himself for Christ more than we in the Army do. We suffer, and starve, and wear ourselves out endeavoring to do the will of God. Yet with all this we have no lasting peace.” Ibid., 76.

Luther, reflecting upon his early years as a monk, expressed a similar emotion.

“I was a good monk, and I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery it was I. All my brothers in the monastery who knew me will bear me out. If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other work.” Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (Nashville: Abington, 1978), 34.

When one compares the fruit of both Ironside’s labors and Luther’s, the futility of works as a means of acceptance with God becomes manifest.
To make the way easier for the almost penniless young man, Mr. Montgomery gave him living quarters in one of his hotels and free access to his own splendid library. And here, for a period of six months, Harry reveled in writings which were new to him, and which opened up the Word of God in a fresh way. He pored over the works of J. N. Darby, J. G. Bellett, C. H. MacIntosh (C.H.M.), William Kelly, and others.\footnote{English, \textit{Ironsides}, 81.}

Here is the root of Ironside’s dispensationalism.

At once it is conceded that there must have been considerable cross-pollination between the Chafer and Ironside. It seems inconceivable that these two men did not enter into conversation when Ironside taught at Dallas Theological Seminary.\footnote{See note 98.} Still, there seems to have emerged two extremely similar yet distinct threads within TD. By reviewing Walvoord\footnote{As Chafer learned his dispensationalism at the feet of Scofield, so Walvoord learned his at the feet of Chafer. He earned a bachelor’s and master’s of theology (Th.B, Th.M) and doctorate in theology (Th.D) from Dallas Theological Seminary when Chafer was both president and professor. “About Dr. John Walvoord,” Walvoord.com, http://www.walvoord.com/about-dr-john-walvoord (accessed February 20, 2013).} and McClain’s\footnote{McClain represents the Brethren position. He was the first president of Grace Theological Seminary, which was (and still is) affiliated with the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches. “History of Grace,” Grace College and Seminary, http://www.grace.edu/about/our-story/history-grace (accessed February 20, 2013).} understanding of the “mysteries” of the kingdom, one sees at least one point of variance.

Walvoord maintained that the “mystery” of Matthew 13 and Mark 4 concerned a form of the kingdom not previously revealed. The mystery refers to a form of the kingdom, which is the church. Thus, there is a form of the kingdom now, but it is spiritual (as opposed to physical) in nature.\footnote{“In Mark 4:11, 26, 30 Mark used parallel references to the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven expounded in Matthew 13. This refers to the spiritual form of the kingdom which exists in the present age. The details of the kingdom are referred to as...}
McClain sees it differently. He agrees that the parable of the soils refers to the present age.\(^{111}\) He also agrees on the definition of “mystery.”\(^ {112}\) He differs, however, on the identification of the “mystery.” McClain contends that the “mystery” has to do with “an interregnum”\(^ {113}\) which is to follow the arrival of the King and continue until His second coming.\(^ {114}\) During the interregnum “our Lord is creating and developing a body called ‘children [lit. sons] of the kingdom’ (vs. 38). And this age will be brought to a close when the Son of man comes to establish His Kingdom on earth…”\(^ {115}\) Thus, there is no mystery form of the kingdom now. The kingdom will be inaugurated and consummated at the same time.\(^ {116}\)

This divergence of interpretation leads one to ask if the presence (or absence) of a spiritual form of the kingdom in the present age affects one’s social ethics. Put another way, this investigation is attempting to discover if the charge of a “loophole” in dispensational “mysteries” because this form of the kingdom was not predicted in the Old Testament.” John F. Wavoord, “The Kingdom of God in the New Testament,” *Bibliothea Sacra* 139, no. 556 (1982): 300.

\(^{111}\) “This parable speaks of a seed-sowing, a period of growth, and a harvest. The harvest is definitely set at ‘the end of the age’ (vs. 39, lit.), or ‘the end of this age’ (vs. 40, lit.). The period of sowing and growth, therefore, must be the present age,….” Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God as Set Forth in the Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1950), 325.

\(^{112}\) “It refers to that which is hidden and secret, what can be known only to those who are specially initiated or taught. The word does not necessarily mean something incomprehensible to the human mind, but rather that which has hitherto been unrevealed.” Ibid., 324.

\(^{113}\) An interregnum is a time between the successive reigns in a kingdom.

\(^{114}\) McClain, *Greatness of the Kingdom*, 325.

\(^{115}\) Ibid.

\(^{116}\) “Thus, after the interregnum caused by Israel’s rejection of her Kingdom, the Kingdom will finally come, in full accordance with Old Testament prophecy.” Ibid.
theology is applicable to a) all of dispensationalism, b) part of dispensationalism, or c) none of the above.

Chapter Contents

This dissertation will attempt to document how TD’s teaching on political and social ethics has evolved through time, beginning with an examination of those teachings in the second chapter. As far as is possible, the original authors will make their case in their own words. It is expected that significant similarities will be seen alongside variances of application. This chapter will conclude with a review of those areas of agreement and disagreement.

The third chapter will explore the modern dispensational alternative to TD with an emphasis on its ethical claims and proposals. Specifically, this chapter will review PD’s solution to the “theological loophole.” This will require a brief review of the theological underpinnings of the system. Again, proponents of this system will be allowed to make their case in their own words as much as possible. The PD alternative to TD will be used to highlight differences between the two approaches and, therefore, will be largely without critique.

The fourth chapter will provide an exegetical look at the major biblical passages often cited in discussions of political and social ethics, as well as others germane to the topic. It is anticipated that passages such as the Sermon on the Mount, Romans 13, Philemon, portions of the Law, the Wisdom literature, and the Prophets, among others, will be examined. Of particular interest in this chapter will be an investigation of God’s commands to the church. Instead of assuming a social responsibility for the church—and therefore merely assuming
that Darby is wrong, for example—special care will be given to exegesis in an historical, grammatical framework to discover what is (and is not) included in the church’s mission.

Finally, the last chapter will lay out whatever conclusions seem warranted and list those areas that need further investigation.
CHAPTER 2
TD & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

This chapter will investigate the writings of the selected sample, arranged by author. A brief review of their lives may be included if such a review assists in obtaining a more comprehensive picture of the subject’s social ethic.

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

John Nelson Darby was “[a]n early leader of the Plymouth Brethren and the developer of dispensational premillennialism.” As a result, he rightly receives primacy of place in this study.

Selected Biographical Sketch

The youngest son of John Darby of Leap Castle, King’s County, Ireland, John Nelson Darby was born at his father’s house in London on November 18, 1800. Though his


\[\text{\textsuperscript{118}}\] When included, these biographical sketches are “selected” in that it they are not intended to be a complete account of the individual’s life, but are instead meant to highlight those aspects of the subject’s life that may account for his theological method and outlook. Darby’s biographical sketch is longer than any other due to the particular uniqueness of his habits and how manifestly his habits express his theology.

family had been associated with Ireland since before the Reformation, his early years were spent in London, attending Westminster School. These years were uneventful save for the untimely death of his mother, which made a lasting impression upon the boy.\textsuperscript{120} He matriculated at Trinity College, Dublin at age fifteen. At nineteen he graduated as a Classical Gold Medalist.\textsuperscript{121}

While at Trinity, Darby came under the influence of a godly man who had a keen interest in Jewish evangelism and the prophecies of the OT.\textsuperscript{122} “The innovative and fervent-

\textsuperscript{120} Turner recounts the common view of Darby’s mother: “[I]n spite of a stormy ecclesiastical career, the tender memory which he cherished in his heart of her sometimes found expression on unexpected occasions. When fifty years of age, he writes of her as follows: ‘I have long, I suppose, looked at the portrait of my mother, who watched over my tender years with the care which only a mother knows how to bestow. I can just form some imperfect thought of her looks, for I was early bereft of her; but her eye fixed upon me that tender love which had me for its heart’s object—which could win when I could know little else—which had my confidence before I knew what confidence was—by which I learnt to love, because I felt I was loved, was the object of that love which had its joy in serving me—which I took for granted must be; for I had never known aught else. All that which I had learnt, but which was treasured in my heart and formed part of my nature, was linked with the features which hung before my gaze. That was my mother’s picture. It recalled her, no longer sensibly present, to my heart.”” Turner, \textit{Darby}, 15. Weremchuk presents a different account. He maintains that Darby’s mother died in 1847 at the age of 90, when Darby was 47 years old. He contends that Turner’s quotation from Darby that he was “early bereft” of his mother is ambiguous. Weremchuk alleges that Darby’s parents were separated while the youngest boy was still small, and that John Nelson never saw his mother again. Max S. Weremchuk, \textit{John Nelson Darby} (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Bros., 1992), 28. Darby’s father passed away in 1834, but Darby didn’t attend the funeral due to his strong position against the clergy, who were present at the funeral. Ibid. While Weremchuk provides persuasive evidence for his theory, nothing he presents adequately explains why Darby would have spoken so wistfully of his mother when it is conceivable that he could have located and visited her while she was still alive.

\textsuperscript{121} Turner, \textit{Darby}, 15.

spirited Dean Richard Graves was promoted to Regius Professor of Divinity at Trinity College in 1815 to try to turn things around.”

Prior to Grave’s arrival, the spiritual tenor of the college was at an all-time low. To combat this spiritual lethargy, Graves began instituting changes to the curricula including a mandatory one year study of divinity before taking Holy Orders. “[I]t might be deduced that Darby, who was ordained a priest in 1826, had met the ‘year’s course of Divinity Lectures’ requirement.”

Graves was evidently a dynamic preacher and loving professor, taking a genuine interest in both the spiritual and physical welfare of his students. Consequently he became a favorite at the college. “Graves exemplified missionary zeal without political considerations for the conversion of Irish Catholics. In these respects, Darby was a model disciple of his teacher, whose example of devotion in evangelistic ministry he followed.”

Graves also was keenly interested in prophecy, as was much of the British Empire at that time. Graves subscribed to what might be called a “futuristic postmillennialism.”

123 Ibid., 54.

124 Ibid., 55. Weremchuk disagrees. “J. N. Darby had not studied theology at Trinity College, and there is not the least ground for assuming that he did so between the time of his being called to the Chancery Bar in 1822 and his ordination in 1825.” Weremchuk, Darby, 39.

125 Elmore, “Two Peoples,” 56.

126 Ibid., 56-57.

127 “The eschatological climate of 1827-33 previously surveyed revealed that Darby arrived at his new synthesis in a time of heightened millennial expectations in the British empire. The French Revolution, and especially the Napoleonic wars, had stimulated speculation among premillennialists about the exact time of the coming of Christ. Ibid., 62.

128 Ibid., 66.
The elements of Graves’ postmillennial scheme assume a literal approach to the interpretation of Scripture. Unfulfilled prophecies must yet be fulfilled. He used Isa 11:11 (“the second time to recover the remnant of his people”) as a key support in his plea for Jewish evangelism. Even the 1260 days, which for him were years, is still literally applied, for there will be 1260 real years which will come to a close before the Jews convert in mass and the millennial age dawns.\footnote{129}{Ibid.}

Thus it seems reasonable to speculate that Darby didn’t come up with his prophetic outlook from scratch, but learned some of the fundamental principles—a literal hermeneutic for example—while at Trinity.\footnote{130}{One must not wonder at the fact that Darby departed from Graves’ postmillennialism if he was indeed heavily influenced by him. Darby rejected, for example, the Arminianism of Graves and remained a moderate Calvinist. Ibid., 56. As many college professors will attest, one may influence a student’s thinking while still having that student reject the professor’s theology.} Yet Darby’s spiritual awakening did not occur while at Trinity. Despite the preaching of Graves and the study of the Scriptures, Darby was still lost.

It was while he was in law school, at the age of 21, that Darby was converted.\footnote{131}{Weremchuk, *Darby*, 33. This age is not universally accepted. Turner, *Darby*, 16.} He was studying to be a barrister and came to Christ as a result, at least in part, of reading Cicero’s *Offices*. He later wrote of this under the title, “The Irrationalism of Infidelity: How Far Can God Be Known?”\footnote{132}{“I remember (for I also have had my ‘phases of faith’) when first awakened to serious and, in some measure, continued moral thought, I was reading, partly through desire of knowledge, partly alas! through the vanity which likes to possess it, Cicero’s ‘Offices,’ and I came to the passage, nearly the only one which remains to me unobliterated by an active life, ‘subjecta veritas quasi materia,’ that is, ‘truth subjected as a material’ to the mind. I said to myself (or rather the divine truth flashed across my mind), ‘This cannot be in the case of God, for my mind must be superior to the matter which is subjected to its operations; if it be, that which is so is not God. Faith alone can put Him in His place, which, if He be God, must be above me, as much as God must be above man.’” J. N. Darby, *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, ed. William Kelly, 34 vols. (Oak Park, Ill.: Bible Truth Publishers, n.d.), 6:27-28.}
Darby was admitted to the Irish Chancery Bar three years after graduation from Trinity. To the great disappointment of many, he left the bar and was “ordained as a deacon in 1825 and as a priest in the Church of England in 1826.” While this change in direction may appear sudden, it was anything but. Darby “underwent much spiritual exercise” for approximately seven years after his conversion. It was this inner struggle that caused him to seek holy orders. “He became ordained in the hope of finding inner peace and not because he already possessed it.” During this time of spiritual doubt and despair, Darby would develop habits that would remain with him the rest of his life.

133 Darby graduated July 10, 1819 and was called to the Irish Bar on January 21, 1822. Weremchuk, Darby, 31-32.

134 Darby’s rejection of the Bar for an ecclesiastical calling was a particular disappointment to “his brother-in-law, the Lord Chief Justice of Ireland (then Sergeant Pennefather), who hoped not only for his rise to the highest honours in the profession, but that his penetrating and generalizing genius would have done much to reduce the legal chaos to order.” Turner, Darby, 15-16.

135 Elmore, “Darby,” 82.

136 Weremchuk describes this period in Darby’s life. “During these years universal sorrow and sin pressed upon his spirit. Darby’s conversion took place, as he himself testified, through the reading of God’s Word alone and not with the help of man. He felt that Christ was the only Savior, but was not able to say that he possessed Him, or that he was saved by Him. He looked for proofs of regeneration in himself, something that can never give peace, and rested in the hope of Christ’s work, but not in faith. He spent his time in fasting, praying, and giving alms. On Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays he would eat nothing at all until evening, and then only a little bread, or nothing. If he could fast three days, he though he could fast four; if four, then five; if five, better still six; and if six, then seven.” Weremchuk, Darby, 34. Only the Word of God upheld Darby during this time of spiritual grief. “Speaking to the late Mr. William Kelly many years after on the subject of the possibility of real conversion before the peace of conversion, Mr. Darby said that for these seven years he practically lived in the 88th Psalm, his only ray of light being in the opening words, ‘O Lord God of my salvation.’” Turner, Darby, 16.

137 Weremchuk, Darby, 37.

138 Ibid.
Archbishop Magee assigned the young Darby to a “large and straggling parish in County Wicklow.” Darby threw himself into this work even though, or more likely because, he was not initially assured of his position before God. He lived in a peasant hut near the school where he preached. Every evening he could be seen travelling to and from the cabins of the notoriously poor Irish Catholics in his parish. Traveling sometimes on horseback, other times on foot, he climbed the mountains and tramped through bogs in order to make his calls. He ate only what he was offered. Much of this food was tasteless and indigestible. The combination of strenuous exercise, little sleep (he rarely returned home before midnight), and poor nutrition combined to cause his body to waste away. His appearance, godly character, and almsgiving served to endear him to his parishioners, as he

139 Turner, Darby, 16.

140 For a description of his spiritual labors both before and during the early period of this ministry, see note 136.

141 This account of the conditions of Darby’s ministry are taken entirely from Turner, Darby, 16.

142 This work ethic stayed with him throughout his life. “[H]e was habitually a hard worker, from early morn devoted to his own reading the Word and prayer; but even when most busily engaged, he as the rule reserved the afternoons for visiting the poor and the sick, his evening for public prayer, fellowship, or ministry.” Ibid., 53-54. That Darby’s prose is regularly difficult to comprehend is an offshoot of his work ethic. “[H]e wrote rapidly, as thoughts arose in his spirit, and often with scarcely a word changed. He delighted in a concatenated sentence, sometimes with parenthesis within parenthesis, to express the truth fully, and with guards against misconception. An early riser and indefatigable worker, he yet had not time to express his mind as briefly and clearly as he could wish. ‘You write to be read and understood,’ he once said playfully to me; ‘I only think on paper.’ This made his writings, to the uninitiated, anything but pleasant reading, and to a hasty glance almost unintelligible; so that many, even among highly educated believers, turned away, because of their inability to penetrate sentences so involved.” Ibid., 48-49.
appeared to them to be similar to a “monk of LaTrappe.” This endeared him to those who heard him, but his labors brought little peace to his soul:

...but going from cabin to cabin to speak of Christ, and with souls, these thoughts sprang up, and if I thought to quote a text to myself it seemed a shadow and not real. I ought never to have been there. I was not set free according to Romans viii. 144

I preached nothing but Christ and had not peace, and had no business to be in any public ministry. 145

Not content with merely ministering to those of the parish, he became particularly active in the Home Missions of the church, evangelizing the large Roman Catholic population:

He was earnest and diligent in his ministrations, strict in his personal walk and churchmanship, endeared to the poor by his devotedness, and exercised a generally


145 Ibid., 2:376. This reminiscence is found in the context of going about the work of ministry too soon, a problem, Darby notes, which is particularly evident in the United States. “The notion of work as pressed by Moody, etc., I believe to be a most mischievous one. That they who are called to it should work devotedly is all clear; that if any one knows to do good, and does not do it, it is sin, is equally clear. We have all to serve. But people are set to work, when they ought, as new-born babes, to be receiving milk for themselves. The consequence is that they are full of themselves, light ill their way of working, and Christ’s name is dishonoured. In the States generally they have no idea of getting peace but by working, and where sincere in this case dare not stop; with the rest it is a flighty self-sufficient forwardness. The revival work with everybody has nine-tenths of it everywhere come to nothing. ... Working is all right when it is with Christ, and serious, when a person is led of the Spirit of God to it, but setting to work is another thing. The whole tone of Christianity suffers by it. I have said to them, I have worked unceasingly forty-nine years. I was set to it as positive ministry four years before: I preached nothing but Christ, and had not peace, and had no business to be in any public ministry. The whole system is a mischievous mistake: it has in the States done immense mischief.” (emphasis added) Ibid., 2:375-76.
beneficial influence over the whole locality, where he spent his patrimony in schools and charity.\footnote{Weremchuk, \textit{Darby}, 42-43. This is in stark contrast to the typical churchman of his day. “The clergy were, as a whole, careless in giving out the bread of life to the flocks who had been committed to their care and keeping. At best they preached a carnal and soul-benumbing morality, and trafficked with the souls of men by receiving money for discharging the pastoral office in parishes where they did not so much as look on the faces of the people more than once a year. “The typical clergyman had no great aims or theological enthusiasm. He felt no serious alarms about the souls of the people who made up his parish, and would have considered it a waste of time to speak in a doctrinal and awakening manner to these simple folk. He would have agreed that the only healthy effects of religion possible in the minds of such people were certain dim but strong emotions, which spread themselves out as sanctifying influences over family affections and neighborly duties. He thought that the custom of baptism was more important than its doctrine, and that the religious benefits which the peasant received from the church were but slightly dependent on a clear understanding of the liturgy or the sermon. The average rector could have been called anything but an earnest man. He was more fond of church history than he was of divinity. He was neither laborious, nor self-denying, nor very liberal in almsgiving, and his theology was evidently lax.” Turner, \textit{Darby}, 16.}

Darby states that, “at that time the Roman Catholics were becoming Protestant at the rate of 600 to 800 a week.”\footnote{Darby, \textit{Collected Writings}, 1:1. Turner states Darby “became specially active in the Home Mission of that day, which was greatly blessed in the conversion of Roman Catholics (at one time five hundred in a week) all over Ireland.” Turner, \textit{Darby}, 17.}

The response of the established church to this awakening was cold. In particular, Archbishop Magee was concerned with so many former Irish Catholics coming into the church. He insisted upon maintaining the relationship between church and state, an arrangement that he evidently felt threatened:

This time Magee spoke strongly against the Roman Catholic system, and in favor of the Church of England and Ireland, praising it especially for its loyalty to the state. He saw the church and the state as two aspects of the same Christian community, harmonized in the acknowledgment of the king as the supreme sovereign within the realm.\footnote{Weremchuk, \textit{Darby}, 44.}
As a result, the Archbishop “imposed, within the limits of his jurisdiction, the oaths of allegiance (to the British crown) and supremacy,” acknowledging the King of England to be head of the church. This requirement changed the issue, in the minds of the Irish Catholics, from a choice between the Pope and Christ, to a choice between the Pope and the King. As a result of the loyalty oaths, “the work everywhere instantly ceased.”

In response, Darby wrote a private letter to the Archbishop and to the clergy who supported his decision. In this letter (published thirty-eight years later), one finds in embryonic form the central interpretive motif for Darby:

> What is the Church of Christ in its purpose and perfection? … It is a congregation of souls redeemed out of ‘this naughty world’ [sic] by God manifest in the flesh, a people purified to Himself by Christ, purified in the heart by faith, knit together, by the bond of this common faith in Him, to Him their Head sitting at the right hand of the Father, having consequently their conversation (commonwealth) in heaven, from whence they look for the Saviour, the Lord of glory; Phil. 3:20. As a body, therefore, they belong to heaven; there is their portion in the restitution of all things, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. On earth they are, as a people, necessarily subordinate; they are nothing and nobody; their King is in heaven, their interests and constitution heavenly. … As such, consequently, they have no

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150 “In one sense the former part of this may be true, but, on the principles of the Charge, is a mere substitution of the civil Sovereign for the Pope, such as Henry VIII introduced, and which made the German Protestants refuse to ally themselves with him.” Ibid., 1:8

151 Ibid., 1:1.

152 “All the actors are passed, everything is changed, so that there is no indiscretion in publishing it now.” Ibid.

153 The central interpretive motif will not be listed for every author under consideration. It will only be listed if it has direct bearing on the subject of social ethics. For example, the central interpretive motif for Lewis Sperry Chafer is grace. (See Bruce A. Baker, “The Theological Method of Lewis Sperry Chafer,” *The Journal of Ministry & Theology* 5, no. 1 (2001).) Still, while Chafer possesses a social ethic and this motif influences that ethic, it is not brought directly to bear upon the subject.
power. The result is, that they are formed into a spiritual community; they are raised, by their Head and centre and source of hope and object of allegiance being in heaven, to be heavenly. They are delivered in spirit out of this present evil world, and become heavenly, spiritual, in their connections, interests, thoughts, and prospects…. 

This concept of the church as a heavenly (as opposed to an earthly) body is central to Darby’s social ethic and will be explored in greater depth below.

During this controversy, Darby was thrown by his horse into a doorpost. His injuries were primarily to his foot and were severe enough that he had to retire to Dublin for proper care and treatment. It was during Darby’s recuperation that he finally found the peace and rest that he had sought in vain through his strenuous labors:

I may add as that which led to this (I mean as to the truth itself in my own soul), that, after I had been converted six or seven years, I learned by divine teaching what the Lord says in John 14, "In that day ye shall know . . . that ye are in me, and I in you" - that I was one with Christ before God, and I found peace, and I have never, with many shortcomings, lost it since. The same truth brought me out of the Establishment. I saw that the true church was composed of those who were thus united to Christ; I may add, it led me to wait for God's Son from heaven; for if I was sitting in heavenly places in Him, what was I waiting for but that He should come and take me there?

That is not to say this was an easy time for Darby. Indeed, he “passed through the deepest possible exercise as to the authority of the word.” Thus Darby moved his trust from the church and the world, to the Bible. Commenting on this time he wrote:

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156 Turner, *Darby*, 17.


158 “As I have spoken of myself (always a hazardous thing), I add that at the same period in which I was brought to liberty and to believe, with divinely given faith, in the
I am daily more struck with the connection of the great principles on which my mind was exercised by and with God, when I found salvation and peace, and the questions agitated and agitating the world at the present day: the absolute, divine authority and certainty of the Word, as a divine link between us and God, if everything (church and world) went; personal assurance of salvation in a new condition by being in Christ; the church as His body; Christ coming to receive us to Himself; and collaterally with that, the setting up of a new earthly dispensation, from Isaiah 32 (more particularly the end); all this was when laid aside at E.P.'s in 1827; the house character of the assembly on earth (not the fact of the presence of the Spirit) was subsequently. It was a vague fact which received form in my mind long after, that there must be a wholly new order of things, if God was to have His way, and the craving of the heart after it I had felt long before; but the church and redemption I did not know till the time I have spoken of; but eight years before, universal sorrow and sin pressed upon my spirit. I did not think to say so much of myself; but it is all well. The truth remains the truth, and it is on that we have to go; but the Lord's dealings with the soul, connected with the use of truth, have to be noted.\(^\text{160}\)

During these three months, our sovereign God set free the struggling Darby. He was never the same afterward.

\textit{Darby and the Poor}

One cannot adequately understand Darby unless one recognizes how different he was from (nearly) everyone else, both then and now. Darby cared little for the things of this world. Refusing to be concerned with reputation or status caused him to be sainted by his presence of the Holy Spirit, I passed through the deepest possible exercise as to the authority of the word: whether if the world and the Church (that is, as an external thing, for it yet had certain traditional power over me as such) disappeared and were annihilated, and the word of God alone remained as an invisible thread over the abyss, my soul would trust in it. After deep exercise of soul I was brought by grace to feel I could entirely. I never found it fail me since. I have often failed; but I never found it failed me.” Ibid., 1:38.

\(^{159}\) Edward Pennefather was J. N. D.’s brother-in-law. He recuperated from his foot injury at Edward’s house in Dublin.

admirers and vilified by his detractors. “Darby was a man just like us. To present him as faultless would be nonsense. He did have faults, shortcomings, and weaknesses. But it was his greatness that gave prominence to his weaknesses.” Yet even his detractors (and they are legion), are forced to recognize the uniqueness of his qualities:

I have often heard people who were not blind to Darby’s faults say with immense emphasis, “He was a great man.” If a magnanimous simplicity makes a man great, they were right. He might be a scholar, but he wore none of a scholar’s trappings; he might be supreme in his own little world, but his habitual bearing showed no trace of self-consciousness. To his social inferiors and to young men he was genial and hearty, and he kept his well-known brusquerie for more influential people, and especially for his sycophants—who were many. If he was ruthless in his ecclesiastical conflicts, he had at other times a singularly kindly and sympathetic nature. In the act of addressing a meeting he would roll up his greatcoat as a pillow for a sleeping child whose uncomfortable attitude had struck him. I have heard that, on one of his numerous voyages, he might have been seen pacing the deck all night with a restless child in his arms, in order to afford the worn-out mother an opportunity of rest; and I doubt whether many children were more tenderly nursed that night. The incident is the more interesting for the fact that Darby was never married. Was it the breaking forth of this tenderness, deep-hidden in his lonely heart, that bound men to him in so pathetic a fidelity of devotion?

161 “Many of Darby’s critics, past and present, have described him as being jealous of his ecclesiastical authority. They have portrayed him as antagonistic, tyrannical, dominee ring, arrogant, vain, peremptory and haughty. They have said he used his friends to further his personal ambitions.” Weremchuk, Darby, 139.

162 Ibid.

163 In a textbook example of damning by faint praise, Neatby defends his History of the Plymouth Brethren with these words: “And it was Darby’s supreme misfortune that his single vice, by the irony of circumstances, had perhaps more to do than all his virtues with fixing the character of his life’s work. This threatens to result in the evil that he did living after him, and the good being interred with his bones; and the present writer would be thankful if this work should in some measure serve as a humble obstruction to such an injustice.” William Blair Neatby, “A History of the Plymouth Brethren,” (n.p., 1901). https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/11972135/a-history-of-the-plymouth-brethren-by-william-blair-neatby (accessed June 24, 2014), 150.

164 Ibid., 96.
It is beyond the scope of this work to paint the full canvas of Darby’s character.\textsuperscript{165} Instead, this work will examine just one aspect of his personality that contributes directly to one’s understanding of his social ethic.

Remembering that Darby had been reared in a wealthy family, one can only look to his conversion for his attitude towards the poor. Darby wrote, “I love the poor, I have no distrust of them; I live by far the most of my time amongst them, and gladly.”\textsuperscript{166} While rich and poor alike have the same sin nature, the difference in their circumstance causes them to react differently to conflict between Christ and the world:

I see looseness is an easy road, but I prefer following Christ. And I see very clearly here that gentlefolks who want an easy berth would prefer Bethesda for unholy reasons. Perhaps God in the present state of the church would give them an easy path, half-way with the world. They have their own cross there for their class, and they are not capable of more. Christ preferred the poor; ever since I have been converted so have I. Let those who like society better have it. If I ever get into it, and it has crossed my path in London, I return sick at heart. I go to the poor; I find the same evil nature as in the rich, but I find this difference: the rich, and those who keep their comforts and their society, judge and measure how much of Christ they can take and keep without committing themselves; the poor, how much of Christ they can have to comfort them in their sorrows. That, unworthy as I am, is where I am at home and happy. I think I am intellectual enough, and my mind - though my education was in my judgment not well directed, save by God - cultivated enough to enjoy cultivated society. I have none of it, but I prefer the cross.\textsuperscript{167}


\textsuperscript{166} Darby, \textit{Collected Writings}, 10:277. “When first I began such a life, I was to nature felt a certain satisfaction in the intercourse of educated persons: it was natural. I avow that, if I find a person spiritually minded and full of Christ, from habit as well as principle, I had rather have him than the most elevated or the most educated: the rest is all alike to me. The latter are apt to spare themselves, to screen themselves, to get on in society; they want a fence round them. I would rather, in general, have a poor man’s judgment of right and wrong than another’s....” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{167} Darby, \textit{Letters}, 1:205.
As a result of Darby’s rejection of the world and embrace of the poor, he was regularly taken as poor himself. It was reported that “a person in Limerick offered him a halfpenny, mistaking him for a beggar: and if not true, the story was yet well invented.” At another time, Darby visited a brother who owned a factory in Switzerland. The brother regularly offered to the poor and to the stranger some food and a place to rest. Instead of using the front door to the factory, Darby slipped in the back door where the poor entered. The factory staff took him as one of the many poor and treated him like the rest. After eating, he went on his way.

Darby’s compassion for the poor was so great it grieved him when they were absent. On one occasion, William Kelly and J. N. Darby were invited to a sister’s home for Bible study. Upon entering the residence, Darby was extremely disappointed to see that only those of the better class were in attendance. His spirit was so grieved that, when asked to return thanks, he asked Kelly pray in his place. Kelly states, “…he begged me to do so, meaning it as a quiet sign that he was displeased.” Darby felt that restricting the meeting to the well-off was incompatible with the mind of Christ “since she had not given the more lowly saints an opportunity for hearing the Word.”

One aspect of Darby’s character often overlooked was his abundance of tact. In the previously-related incident, Darby disapproved to the point of refusing to pray yet he didn’t chide the woman responsible for his grief. Neatby provides a classic example of this virtue:

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169 Weremchuk, *Darby*, 151.

170 Turner, *Darby*, 50.

171 Weremchuk, *Darby*, 150.
Another story, which I can relate with equal confidence, illustrates not only this fine simplicity of character, but also the readiness of resource by which he was no less distinguished. He had arrived at the railway station of a Continental town where he was expected to make some little stay, and found himself, as he stepped from the train, face to face with a formidable contingent of the local Brethren. Several ladies of good position were there, all zealous for the honour of becoming his host. Here was a delicate situation, but Solomon could not have been more equal to it. “Qui est-ce qui loge les frères?” said Darby. All eyes turned upon a very humble-looking brother, who had hitherto kept modestly in the background. Darby immediately went up to him, saying, “Je logerai où logent les frères.” And the entertainer of obscure itinerants became the host of the great man himself.

What Darby demanded of others he practiced himself. Kelly spoke of Darby’s “wonderful generosity,” and Philpot stated he was “generous to the wasting of his substance.” One reason he was free to give so many alms was his habit of denying himself:

But his clothes were plain, and he wore them to shabbiness, though punctiliously clean in his person, which dressy people are not always. In Limerick, once, kind friends took advantage of his sleep to replace the old with new, which he put on without a word, as the story went.

It may be safely stated that the modern world has not seen another like Darby. Certainly there have undoubtedly been some who embodied the self-sacrifice and embrace of the poor as did Darby. But such is modern life that these few nearly always labor in obscurity. Likewise, there may be some who have moved large numbers of believers in a...

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172 "Who [generally] puts up the [ministering] brothers?"

173 “I will stay where the [ministering] brothers are in the habit of staying.”

174 Neatby, History, 97.

175 Turner, Darby, 34.

176 Ibid., 30.

177 Ibid., 54.
sustained and necessary correction. Yet one must think hard for someone the like of Darby, who did both. As Neatby reluctantly concedes, “He was a great man.”178

Darby’s Theology

What follows is not a complete review of Darby’s theology. As J. N. D. wrote voluminously on a wide array of topics, an entire dissertation would not be up to the task. Instead, this review will restrict itself to those areas that have direct bearing on social ethics.

The Heavenly/Earthly Dichotomy

As the “father of modern dispensational premillennialism,”179 it should be expected that any examination of his writing should find, at least in nascent form, 1) the general framework of dispensationalism, 2) reoccurring themes important to the movement, and 3) the seeds of ideas which would be developed by later dispensationalists. Thus, one should be able to find the general principles used in growing a theology of social ethics even if those ideas are mere seedlings.

While it would be unacceptably anachronistic to search for Ryrie’s sine qua non in Darby, it seems fair to ask if Darby himself held to any essentials, as such foundational truths would (presumably) influence every other aspect of his thought. While he does not express his ideas in the same language as Ryrie, he does provide a clue as to what he considers indispensable in dispensational theology:

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178 Neatby, History, 96.
179 Elmore, “Darby,” 83
If the reader has laid hold of the truth, clearly proved from Scripture, that there is a distinct Jewish remnant at the end, with Jewish hopes given of God, and a Jewish character, that the church has its own and peculiar association with Christ, as the body with its own Head, called into union by the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven; if we have see that we shall not abide down here till Christ appears, since it is positively declared — revealed — that we shall appear with Him when He appears, he will have got hold of clear land marks which will guide him safely through details, in the discovery and order of which patience will surely be needed; but through the knowledge of these land-marks, the details will not take him out of the main road, will never enfeeble divine relationship, upon which the holiest and most precious affections are necessarily dependent, and in which, indeed they have their origin. It is, indeed, this last consideration which makes these subjects so vital and important to my mind. 180

Thus, if one were to list the essentials or “clear land marks” which guide the student “safely through the details,” one would have to list the following: 1) ethnic Israel preserved to the end, 2) the promises of the Old Testament still valid for ethnic Israel, 3) ethnic Israel being distinct from the Gentiles, 4) the church as distinct from Israel, 5) the church being related to Christ in a way that is unique, 6) the church as unified by the Holy Spirit which has come down from heaven, and 7) a pre-tribulational rapture of the church.

After this list of “landmarks,” however, is a statement that provides the key to understanding Darby’s thought regarding personal piety. “All right affections depend on divinely constituted relationships, and cannot exist out of them.” 181 Indeed the importance of the “land marks” is that they will “never enfeeble divine relationship, upon which the holiest and most precious affections are necessarily dependent…” 182 In fact, it is these relationships—the sinner to Christ, the believer to the Spirit, the church to Christ, the nations to God, the Jews to the land of promise, among others—that seem to govern every aspect of

180 Darby, Collected Writings, 11:163-64.
181 Ibid., 11:164.
182 Ibid.
Darby’s thought. Yet two of these relationships seem primary with regard to social ethics: the relationship of Israel to the earth and the relationship of the church to heaven:

There are two great subjects which occupy the sphere of millennial prophecy and testimony: the church and its glory in Christ; and the Jews and their glory as a redeemed nation in Christ: the heavenly people and the earthly people; the habitation and scene of the glory of the one being the heavens; of the other, the earth. Christ shall display His glory in the one according to that which is celestial; in the other, according to that which is terrestrial--Himself the Son, the image and glory of God, the centre and sun of them both.\(^{183}\)

This statement, as much as any, accurately portrays Darby’s understanding of the distinction between Israel and the church. Israel is an earthly people with earthly glory, while the church is a heavenly people with heavenly glory. Thus the promises for both Israel and the church are quite different.

But if one tries to push the heavenly/earthly dichotomy too far, one ends up misrepresenting Darby. While Darby did view the church as primarily a heavenly people, he recognized that, at least for the present, they were earthly as well. As a result he tended to emphasize the visible nature of the church over the invisible. Therefore, he had no trouble speaking of the earthly existence and purpose of God in the church: \(^{184}\)

Not only this, but in making Christ “the centre and sun of them both,” he incorporated into his theology the truths of Ephesians 1:9-10 —

And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment — to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. \(^{185}\)

\(^{183}\) Ibid., 2:122.

\(^{184}\) The earthly existence of the church will be taken up in the section “On Ministry.”

\(^{185}\) Unless otherwise noted, All Scripture citations are taken from the New International Version, 1984.
Understanding the importance of Ephesians 1 to Darby is essential to understanding his conception of the church.

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. Our calling is on high. Events are on earth. Prophecy does not relate to heaven. The Christian’s hope is not a prophetic subject at all. It is the promise that Christ will come and receive him to Himself, that where He is the Christian may be also.\(^\text{186}\)

It is this transcendental distinction between Israel and the church that is the foundation for Darby’s social ethic.

On Ministry

Since the church is a heavenly people with a “calling … on high,” events on earth do not enter into the believer’s calling. Of course in saying this, Darby is not implying that the believer is to withdraw from all the world’s interaction in a sort of stoic detachment. Nowhere does Darby approve of neglecting proper duties such as the feeding one’s family or the necessity of profitable labor, for example. On the contrary, he writes:

Now comes in the responsibility of the Christian. True responsibility flows from the place we are in—not as having to get into the place, but as being in it. Seeing our place we can learn what our responsibilities are; else we never can assume responsibility. You are not responsible to me as children or servants, because you are not my children or my servants. If you were my servant, your duties and responsibilities would flow from your being so.\(^\text{187}\)

Instead, Darby considers the believer to have a “duty to God in subservience to men”\(^\text{188}\) that is accomplished on this earth, despite it having a heavenly origin and empowerment. This

\(^{186}\) Darby, *Collected Writings*, 11:156.

\(^{187}\) Ibid., 32:239.

\(^{188}\) Ibid., 1:53.
duty Darby calls “ministry,” which he defines as “the activity of the love of God in delivering souls from ruin and from sin, and in drawing them to Himself.” Using this definition, it becomes clear that some aspects of the Christian life that are commonly considered to be the task of the believer are not part of his calling. Worship, for example, is not ministry in Darby’s view.

When God views the world, he sees men as wicked, miserable, rebellious, and lost. Nevertheless, he also sees them:

…according to His infinite compassions; He only notices the wretchedness of man to bear witness to him of His own pity. He beholds and comes to call men by Jesus; that they may enjoy in Him, and through Him, deliverance and salvation, with His favour and His blessing.

While it is God who does the calling, he has committed “to man the word of reconciliation.”

It should be quickly noted that Darby does not limit ministry just to evangelism. Rather, he sees two activities in ministry: “the free activity of the love, which impels to call souls to Christ” and “the service of love which is unwearied in its efforts to edify them when called.” Both aspects of ministry are to be accomplished through the gifting and power of

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189 Darby is careful to distinguish between the priesthood of the Law (Jewish dispensation) and the ministry of the Christian. The Jews had “a priesthood, to maintain the relations which existed between this people and their God…” while “by ministry Christianity seeks in this world worshippers of the Father.” Ibid., 1:208.

190 Ibid.

191 “The worship of God is not ministry; it is the expression of the heart of the children before their Father in heaven….” Ibid.

192 Ibid.

193 Ibid. (2 Cor 5:19 KJV)

194 Ibid.
the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{195} Nevertheless, both activities are examples of the love of God toward lost humanity, and the love of the believer towards God.\textsuperscript{196}

At this point one should pause and notice the impact of Darby’s earthly/heavenly dichotomy on his understanding of ministry. First, Darby’s view of ministry is completely theocentric. \textit{God} is the actor in every aspect of it. \textit{He} is the one who sees the lost condition of man. \textit{He} provides the sacrifice necessary to redeem humanity. It is \textit{his} message of reconciliation that was given to the church. \textit{He} is the one that provides gifts and power to the church in order to carry out the ministry that \textit{he} desires. And it is because of the believer’s love for God that he is motivated to serve God in delivering that message. In fact, Darby is emphatic in stating, “the [visible] church cannot be a source of ministry,” since ministry is an “expression of the power of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{197}

Second, since it is God who is the prime mover in every aspect of this activity, this ministry reflects the character of God. For example, this ministry is an example of God’s sovereignty.\textsuperscript{198} Therefore, this ministry “excludes the choice of man”\textsuperscript{199} with regard to the extent of ministry or the gifts required to carry it out. It deals only with the ministry of

\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 1:218.

\textsuperscript{196} “We thus see, that the principle of ministry is the active energy of love, of grace, flowing from the faith by which we know God. To touch this is to overthrow the whole in its fundamental principle. In its essence, ministry flows from individual knowledge of the Master’s character. Grace known and strongly felt becomes active grace in our hearts—the only true, the only possible source, in the nature of things, of a ministry according to God.” Ibid., 1:210.

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., 1:219.

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., 1:218.

\textsuperscript{199} Ibid.
reconciliation, whether it is calling the lost to salvation or edifying those already saved. Anyone who would change the scope of ministry or his or her place in it “is opposing this sovereignty.”

This ministry is also a ministry of love, just as God himself is love. It is God’s love for mankind that is its message, and love for God that is its motivation. Those who would declare such a ministry “unloving” due to its limited scope would be incorrect, in Darby’s view. He would undoubtedly argue that the most loving act a believer could bestow upon a lost soul is to share with him the message of reconciliation. Any other activity would be infinitely inferior in worth since the condition of the soul is eternal while every other aspect of his being is temporary.

Finally, even though this is a ministry performed on earth, it is essentially a heavenly ministry. If one defines “heaven” as “the abode of God,” then it is difficult to find an earthly component to this ministry other than the location of those ministering and those being ministered to. Therefore, this concept of ministry is in agreement with Darby’s earthly/heavenly dichotomy. In fact, it seems to be demanded by it.

On Democracy

The earthly/heavenly dichotomy also influences Darby’s understanding of political and social action. Israel’s sphere is the earth. The church’s sphere is heaven. As a result of this ontological distinction, the church leaves its true realm when dealing with the governments of earth:

\[200\] Ibid.
I need hardly assure your readers that I have no desire that they should meddle in politics; I do not do so myself, nor do I think that a Christian ought. He believes that God governs, and governs with a view to the glory of Christ, and that He will infallibly bring about His purposes. But it seems to me to be well that Christians should apprehend what they have to look for, and be prepared for it, if the Lord tarry. Did it not concern them religiously, you would have no word from me on such subjects.\textsuperscript{201}

Parties are all alike to me; they are all alike guilty, and have all alike had their part in what is going on. … We must remember that politicians have no idea of principles, but only of existing influences to which they must be subject. … I take no side with any party—\textsuperscript{202} I distrust the all …

Darby seems to prefer monarchy as a form of government for he speaks disparagingly of democracy. He recounts the history of the generally poor state of religion in England under the title, “Progress of Democratic Power and Its Effect on the Moral State of England.”\textsuperscript{203} In this essay, he calls the Duke of Wellington a “most short-sighted man” for helping pass the Catholic Emancipation bill.\textsuperscript{204} This bill “admitted some sixty or seventy violent democrats into the House,”\textsuperscript{205} and fundamentally changed the English political structure:

That bill was a revolution. That is, it was not an admission of excluded influences into existing institutions, but a total change in the institutions themselves. Democracy became ascendant, and possessed the power. The Lord’s House became insignificant, and populous boroughs acquired the power once wielded by the land. Old habits

\textsuperscript{201} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{202} The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), s.v. “Heaven.”

\textsuperscript{203} Ibid., 32:242.

\textsuperscript{204} Darby, Collected Writings, 32:333. The Reform Bill of 1832 was the first of several bills that “expanded the electorate for the House of Commons.” It “primarily served to transfer voting privileges from the small boroughs controlled by the nobility and gentry to the heavily populated industrial towns.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 32:333-336.
modified the effect, but every one knows that this is what took place. The ancient institutions of the country were in principle overturned.\textsuperscript{206}

As a result of this political upheaval, the population of the towns increased. With the growth of towns came the growth of dissent, “which predominates in the great towns.”\textsuperscript{207} This, in cooperation with an educational system that “ministered immensely to general infidelity, Satan in that being let loose in that respect,”\textsuperscript{208} caused the clergy to be thrown into either “popery” or infidelity.\textsuperscript{209} Without the check of the country gentry in the House of Lords, “infidel notions acquired a powerful influence over the mental activity of the country, and exercised a very great power in the governing body, the House of Commons.”\textsuperscript{210} Consequently, “Morally speaking, the Protestant church was gone, and rationalism and popery, in principle, divided the nation.”\textsuperscript{211}

One might wonder why Darby, who usually took no mind to matters of politics, was so incensed by the rise of democracy. The answer is found in his understanding of the mind of the poor:

But my object is to notice the effect on the state of society. God cares for the poor. But the poor have ceased to be so in the scriptural sense of the word. They are masters. The effect on the masses and on the active minds of the country will be infidelity, exalting man. Even popular religious preaching will take this character. It will keep up the name of Christian, but will exalt man in its statements, not Christ - despising government, says the apostle, presumptuous, self-willed, not afraid to speak

\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., 32:333.


\textsuperscript{208} Darby, \textit{Collected Writings}, 32:334.

\textsuperscript{209} Enlightenment Rationalism is the infidelity of which Darby speaks.

\textsuperscript{210} Darby, \textit{Collected Writings}, 32:334.

\textsuperscript{211} Ibid.
evil of dignities. Human reason, not God, will be the arbiter of good and evil. What already prevails so largely, will be open to a vast party in the country. The will of the people, confidence in man, his rights, his general perfectibility, will be the banner of all this class.\textsuperscript{212}

After this historical review, Darby proceeds to make several predictions concerning the political future. While a few of his predictions did not come to pass (\emph{Deo gratias}), most have in one form or another, and several are eerily correct. What is important to note, however, is not the accuracy of his statements, but that Darby considers these predictions to be the natural outcome of democracy. Thus, if Darby was correct, one would expect to see these same trends in the United States.\textsuperscript{213}

The poor will cease to be, biblically speaking.\textsuperscript{214} As mentioned above, this will bring about the exaltation of man, his perfectibility, and his rights. Human reason will be the “arbiter of good and evil.”\textsuperscript{215} People will begin to despise government and not be afraid to speak ill of the governing authorities.\textsuperscript{216}

\textsuperscript{212} Ibid., 32:334-35.

\textsuperscript{213} While the US and the UK have a shared history, there are significant cultural differences between these two nations, such as our historical attitudes towards royalty and aristocracy. Still, Darby observed “the love of something aristocratic is inherent in the human mind,” so that “In New York, liveries and amorial bearings are coming in, and carefully studied genealogies where there are any.” Ibid., 32:336.

\textsuperscript{214} Biblically, the poor are those who have “little or nothing in the way of wealth, goods, or means of subsistence.” \textit{The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), s.v. “Poor.” This prediction has come true, at least in the United States. In 2012 Fox News reporter John Stossel “interviewed several people at a food pantry who told him that they had amenities like televisions, video game machines, cell phones and air conditioners.” He reported that “to be poor in America is to live a life better than most have lived through history,” and that the Census Bureau concluded “the poorest fifth of Americans are not 17 percent richer than they were in 1967.” Noah Rothman, “John Stossel on the Poor: America’s Poor ‘Live Better Than Most Have Lived through History.’,” Mediaite.com, http://www.mediaite.com/tv/john-stossel-on-the-poor-americas-poor-live-better-than-most-have-lived-through-history/ (accessed July 7, 2014).

\textsuperscript{215} Darby, \textit{Collected Writings}, 32:334.
Protestantism will not cease, but will become increasingly infidel, as the popular will (which is really “infidel radicalism.”)\textsuperscript{217} becomes ascendant. The religious violence that rocked Great Britain so often in the past will cease, as no one will have the courage to “resist the course of events.”\textsuperscript{218} This lack of courage will cause infidelity, not Protestantism, to become the main opposition to the growth of Roman Catholicism.\textsuperscript{219}

A great and rapid centralization of government will occur since it will be impossible for localities to resist the “multitudinous self-will”\textsuperscript{220} of the populace and a descent into anarchy. This centralization of power will result in a proportional loss of personal liberty.\textsuperscript{221} This loss of personal liberty will result in the loss of personal fortitude and resolve. “Individual personal independence of character will disappear almost entirely.”\textsuperscript{222}

\textsuperscript{216}Ibid. Disregard of the command to give honor and submission (not mere obedience) to the governing authorities (Rom 13:1-2, 7) in the North American church is now rampant. Public officials, who have been placed in their positions of authority by God, are routinely vilified, demeaned, and disrespected. This practice is so commonplace that to refuse to engage in such disobedience causes wonderment.

\textsuperscript{217}Ibid., 32:335.

\textsuperscript{218}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{219}Ibid., 32:336.

\textsuperscript{220}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{221}Ibid. According to Darby, the increase of centralized power will be the first move towards “despotism.” Ibid. According to a recent Gallup Poll, the American populace’s “satisfaction with the freedom to choose what they do with their lives” has been steadily declining. The United States now ranks 36\textsuperscript{th} in the ranking of 120 countries surveyed. According to Gallup, this decline “correlates with perceptions of corruption in Nation Government.” Jon Clifton, “Americans Less Satisfied with Freedom,” Gallup World, http://www.gallup.com/poll/172019/americans-less-satisfied-freedom.aspx (accessed July 7, 2014).

\textsuperscript{222}Darby, Collected Writings, 32:336.
It is important to note that these predictions of the results of democracy were not intended to be a call to arms. On the contrary, they were merely a warning of what believers were likely to face.

On Christian Political Action

Darby speaks of the “world” as a “system in which men seek honor one of another, and not the honor which cometh from God only.”\textsuperscript{223} “It is a vast system, grown up after man had departed from God, of which Satan is actually, though not by right of course, the god and the prince.”\textsuperscript{224} “The world in its origin, is a system sprung up from man's disobedience and departure from God, and which has turned God out of it as far as it could when He came into it in mercy.”\textsuperscript{225} Such an unflattering appraisal prompts one to ask if there is any hope for this world. Darby’s answer is no:

What, then, is its end? Judgment, speedy judgment. Of the day and the hour, no man knows: it comes as a thief in the night. The world will not get really better. The thoughts men have of its doing so are one of the worst expressions of its evil confidence in man, man's development, man's energies.\textsuperscript{226}

While it is true that mankind is progressing technologically economically, the true measurement of progress is the moral state of the world:

Men have telegraphs, railroads, Armstrong guns, and iron-clads; but I hardly know in what respect they are the happier for it. It is a question if they have not excited the passions more than they have satisfied them. Children are not more obedient, families not more united, servants not more honest and respectful, masters not kinder, wives

\textsuperscript{223} Ibid., 34:112.

\textsuperscript{224} Ibid., 34:111.

\textsuperscript{225} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{226} Ibid., 34:115.
not more faithful. Morally speaking, I do not see what the world has gained. It thinks better of itself, and vaunts its powers: I do not know that this is any advance.\textsuperscript{227}

Certainly “Christianity, as light come into the world, has made a difference.”\textsuperscript{228} But that difference has not fundamentally changed the world or its system. As a citizen of heaven, with heavenly promises, Darby is insistent that the consistent Christian not get embroiled in the affairs of this world:

\begin{quote}
I have nothing to do with these things, and never intend to have to do with them. The world goes its way; and I am not of it. The allegations of Christians about it I have to say to, and I do not accept them, or the accommodating Christianity to what is called progress; only I think the Christian has to form his own ways, and not to expect to mend the world. I see no moral gain in its progress.\textsuperscript{229}
\end{quote}

In fact, Darby is so adamant about remaining separate from this world that he states that a bill before the House of Commons—a bill he very much opposes because if its affect on the poor\textsuperscript{230}—would not cause him to exercise his vote even if he belonged to that

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid., 34:110.
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid., 10:278-79.
\textsuperscript{230} “If I had been in Parliament when a proposition was made to shut up the London parks on Sunday (that is, the foot gates, leaving the carriage gates perhaps open for the sick) I should have moved as an amendment (did I meddle with such things) to shut the carriage gates and open the foot ones — the rich could go out every day, and if sick could drive elsewhere. That a poor man, the one day he has with his family, should be able to breathe, I delight in; I rejoice to see the affections of a father cultivated in kindness to his children, and both happy together; and if the Lord’s day gives him the opportunity, the Lord’s day is a true blessing.

The poor, every one labouring during the week, should insist on the Sabbath: it is essentially his own day. … As to excursions, they are a thorough curse to all engaged in them. I cannot help them; I leave them there. But as to Sunday trains, I do not believe they are for sober reasons to meet cases of necessity and mercy, as men speak; they are to make money. If it be alleged that the requirements of society oblige it, what are the requirements of society but haste to be rich, and an imperious claiming of the right to have one’s own way? I understand very well that railroads, monopolizing the roads, there is a kind of supposed obligation to meet the case of those who could have travelled at any rate. But if obliged, they
chamber. In fact, Darby was opposed to voting by the believer even in general elections, for they entangle the believer in an activity that identifies him or her with the satanic system of this world:

> It seems to me so simple that the Christian, not being at all of this world, but united to Him who died and rose again, has no business to mix himself up with the most declared activity of the world, by an act which affirms his existence as belonging to the world, and his identification with the entire system which the Lord is about to judge; that I think the truth has only to be presented in order to be acknowledged by those who have understood their position; so much the more that these events place the world more manifestly (not more really) on its own ground, but more really near the great catastrophe which is about to fall upon those who rise up against God. Oh how my soul longs that His people should be separated to Him, and even with understanding of what is awaiting the world, and still more of what they ought continually to await themselves!

This does not imply that the Christian is to be ignorant of the political happenings of this world. But the events of this world system should not occupy his thoughts or his desires so that Christ is no longer the supreme object of his affections. “The Christian takes cognizance of the events which are taking place, as a testimony to the one who understands; but his thought, his desire, his portion, is much more within the sanctuary than all that.”

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231 “For the same reason I avow, if my vote decided it, and happily for me I have none, and would not have or use one, not a train should run on the Lord’s day” (emphasis added). Ibid.


234 Ibid., 1:130.
But one may ask, “What about evil government that oppresses the poor and promotes injustice? What of issues of life and death, such as war? Surely the believer is expected to try and restrain evil:”

The Christian is to be subject to such authority - the Queen of England or a Turk, wherever it is. It may not be righteousness. I do not look for righteousness but at the right hand of God - Christ. I do not mean it ought not to be, but I do not expect it. My business is to walk as a Christian, and shew the character of Christ, not to set the world right; when Christ comes He will do that, for He will take it into His hand. If I could only set myself and other Christian right, that would be the thing. The Christian should be the perfect presentation of the character of Christ in the world that has turned Him out. We are the living witnesses of what we are enjoying of the Christ they will not have. The world is under judgment, but in grace God has not executed it; He is sending out His gospel.

Admittedly, this sounds foreign to modern ears. Still, Darby’s main point is difficult to refute. True, one may graciously influence the world around us. The believer is to “let his light shine, and the testimony of what his principles are be so distinct and positive that they ‘see your good works.’” Nevertheless, using the world system in general and in politics in particular to remove injustice or improve morality logically implies a non-Christian truth:

There is something in the world system that can make the world a better place:

If I am to set the world right I must join with the world, and cannot have any principles but theirs. Then I must give up Christianity: for they have none to be governed by. … If [the Christian] joins with an infidel he owns infidelity can set the world right.

One may argue that, while the world certainly will not be made right until Christ comes, cannot the world at least be made better? Wasn’t the world better by the removal of National Socialism in Germany? Wasn’t the world made better by the abolition of slavery in

235 Darby, Collected Writings, 34:478.

236 Ibid., 34:479.

237 Ibid.
England and the United States? The answer to these questions hinges on how one defines “better.” If Darby is correct in stating that there is nothing good in the world system, then it would seem that “better” often means exchanging one set of sins for another.

That this runs contrary to our hearts, Darby acknowledges. Yet he will not back away from his position of leaving the governance of this world to God:

If I can relieve bodily wants as a Christian I am bound to do it, or prevent one beating another if I can do it by kindness; but I am to leave the world alone. It is hard to do it; in our hearts we do not like it. Suppose a war is going on, we wish success to one side; it was all settled before you ever heard it. There is a hard-hearted emperor wishing Rome had one neck that he might cut it off, or setting the city on fire, and then accusing the Christians of it; well you must be subject – “The powers that be are ordained of God.”

Thus, if there is a revolution in a nation and a new government comes to power, the believer must be submissive to the new government as before, since this act of revolution was ordained by God. Darby insists that getting involved in the affairs of this world causes one to “compromise Christianity, instead of maintaining its testimony.” He finds biblical justification of his view in Col 3:22:

“Servant” here is slave, and nothing but sin brought in slaves. There would never have been such a thing if sin had not been there; but the apostle does not meddle with it. He does not say he approves of it, but he leaves the government of the world just where it is.

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238 Ibid.

239 Ibid.

240 Ibid., 34:480.

241 “Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.”

Darby also finds justification in Paul’s delicate handling of the runaway slave Onesimus.

Even though Darby finds slavery an evil brought about by sin, Paul exercises restraint:

…Paul sends the runaway Onesimus back to his master. He expects Philemon to set him free, and speaks very touchingly – “I beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” But he would do nothing “without thy mind,” “knowing thou wilt do more than I say.” He expects grace; but he leaves the thing where he finds it.

Thus Darby’s view of political action is that there should be none. As God has ordained the powers that be, the believer should submit to whatever authority God has ordained, regardless of how that power came to be. To join with the world system (in this case politics) to better the world is to believe that the evil world system has the ability to mend itself. As a result, any political action—even voting—entangles the believer in the satanic system of this world and compromises his or her Christian testimony.

At this point, someone might argue that the believer has the right to vote in this country and therefore is bound to exercise it. Darby will have none of this:

Remark here, that the obedient side comes first in everything. It is the natural thing the Christian gets into. He is “sanctified unto obedience.” He never gets out of it; he fails in it, of course. The Lord says, “As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.” The apostles never said, what often jars on one, I have a right to do so-and-so. It is, “We ought to obey God rather than man.” If man hinders me from obeying God, it is wrong. But it is not, I have a right, but I must “obey God rather than man.”

Instead, believers are to devote themselves to prayer. This is the only avenue to peace in a wicked world. Commenting on Phil 4:2, Darby explains:

There is the positive direct intervention of God, everything working together for good; and by prayer our hearts get through grace in connection with this overruling

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243 Darby quotes from Phlm 9, 14, and 21 respectively.

244 Darby, Collected Writings, 34:479.

245 Ibid.
power of God, whether to stop some mischief Satan is doing, or to open a door of utterance. “We will give ourselves to prayer, and the ministry of the word” - not the ministry of the word and prayer. Whatever the subject of prayer is, there is continually bringing in God, so that the heart is with God. If I am entirely dependent on Him, living in Him, and His word living in me to direct my thoughts, I am sure to get what I ask. Then there is most gracious dealing with regard to my requests - “Be careful for nothing.” “Make known your requests to God.” It does not follow that they are right; but do not brood over anything, bring it to God. Perhaps He may say He cannot grant it; as when Paul asks for the thorn to be taken away, He says, I have given it to you for a purpose; I am not going to take it away. And the power of Christ rested on him through the very thing that had broken him down. So the peace of God keeps my heart.246

Thus one may conclude the way of peace is not political action or social intervention by the church. Such actions are futile and ultimately end in failure. It is trusting in the governance of God in this world which allows a believer peace.

Summary of Darby’s social ethic

To argue that Darby has no social ethic merely because he eschews political action is to assume an outcome before investigation. The fact is Darby had a well-developed social ethic, even though it looks different than modern Christianity is used to.

Darby’s social ethic was highly individualistic. Personally he favored the poor over the rich. Whenever possible, he desired the company of the poor and was never ashamed to be numbered among them. He was distressed when he was lead into a meeting when the poor were excluded. “God cares for the poor,” he wrote.247 Therefore the believer should care for the poor. But he believed this care was to be an expression of the individual taking on the mind of Christ, rather than a corporate act of the church.

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246 Ibid., 34:480.

247 Ibid., 32:334.
This author expected to see Darby’s social ethic heavily influenced by his earthly/heavenly dichotomy. While such an influence is certainly present, upon investigation it appears that it is God’s governance of this world that is the prime mover of his value system. God has ordained the powers that be. Therefore, the believer need not entangle himself in the world since the Almighty has already ordained the outcome.

Similarly, the world is a system with Satan as its prince. To use the world system to improve the world is to move into his realm. “If [the Christian] joins with an infidel he owns infidelity can set the world right.”248 As a result, it is impossible for the believer to engage in political action without compromising his Christian testimony. Even voting is condemned by Darby on these grounds.

What then is the believer to do in reaction to social ills? First, the believer is called to provide a heavenly love towards all. As a result, the believer should stop injustice if he or she may do so with kindness. While not specifically mentioned, the whole of his writings seems to infer that such love may take the form of orphanages and hospitals in the form of evangelistic missions. Such activities swell from a heart of love in the believer, not from joining with the world system. Any expression of love for the world of people Darby commends. It is the world system that Darby is eager not to join or try to improve. Within the world system, the injustices of the world are God’s concern.

Second, the believer is tasked with the twin duties of evangelism and prayer. Evangelism directed earthward toward the lost surrounding the believer. He defines ministry as “the activity of the love of God in delivering souls from ruin and from sin, and in drawing

248 Ibid., 34:479.
them to Himself.” The ultimate expression of love is to draw people to the cross for salvation through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is heavenward and directed toward God to act in this world. If one is going to stop the activities of Satan, rather than political actions, the believer must be devoted to prayer. Commenting on Phil 4:2, Darby explains:

There is the positive direct intervention of God, everything working together for good; and by prayer our hearts get through grace in connection with this overruling power of God, whether to stop some mischief Satan is doing, or to open a door of utterance. “We will give ourselves to prayer, and the ministry of the word” - not the ministry of the word and prayer. Whatever the subject of prayer is, there is continually bringing in God, so that the heart is with God. If I am entirely dependent on Him, living in Him, and His word living in me to direct my thoughts, I am sure to get what I ask. Then there is most gracious dealing with regard to my requests – “Be careful for nothing.” “Make known your requests to God.” It does not follow that they are right; but do not brood over anything, bring it to God. Perhaps He may say He cannot grant it; as when Paul asks for the thorn to be taken away, He says, I have given it to you for a purpose; I am not going to take it away. And the power of Christ rested on him through the very thing that had broken him down. So the peace of God keeps my heart.

One cannot help but wonder at the scathing rebuke Darby would have leveled at 21st century North American evangelicalism. As a result of its view of political responsibility, specifically that it is the duty of the Christian to be politically active in order to restrain evil, it seems evident to this author that the North American church has become Christian Agonistes. With the release of the latest executive order, Supreme Court decision or even poll numbers, alarums and excursions are heard as every appeal letter, each more breathless than the last, issues dire warnings that threaten doom unless the reader sends a check now.

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249 Ibid., 1:208.

250 Ibid., 34:480.
One must wonder what would be the result if the same amount of money and energy were directed towards preaching the gospel.\textsuperscript{251}

In the end, there is much to commend Darby’s social ethic. It is thoroughly biblical. It acts upon the sovereignty of God as expressed in Scripture. There is also the benefit of providing peace to troubled believers.

It is important to note that it is not necessary to buy into every aspect of his system to appreciate the scheme as a whole. One may take the underlying principles of this system and still provide some modifications to the particulars.

Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843-1921)

As with Darby, a brief biographical sketch of Scofield’s life will prove helpful in understanding his social ethic. Unfortunately, considerable controversy concerning the details of Scofield’s life has made it necessary to include a justification regarding sources and method.

Unlike Darby, whose historical importance, voluminous writings, and force of personality have produced an abundance of source material, trying to compile a biographical sketch of Scofield is considerably more problematic. The primary difficulty is “the lack of reliable source material.”\textsuperscript{252}

\textsuperscript{251} Not long ago, this author presented one or two of these truths to a women’s luncheon. After the presentation was complete, one woman approached and said if this were true it would destroy her whole ministry. Upon query of what she considered “ministry,” it was discovered that the whole of her energies for Christ were directed toward researching Republican candidates at all levels of the ticket and then instructing her followers for whom to vote.

Additionally, the biographies that have been written tend to fall into two opposite and frustrating categories. In the first category is Trumbull’s *The Life Story of C. I. Scofield.* It has the benefit of being written during Scofield’s life and therefore has access to original source material and Scofield himself, a virtue that should not be downplayed. Still, Trumbull’s work is best described as a hagiography. Motivated no doubt by love, Trumbull omits material that would cast his subject in a negative light, and is therefore not wholly trustworthy to provide a complete picture. This in no way impugns the truthfulness of Trumbull’s account. It is merely an acknowledgement not all relevant material has made it into his portrayal of events.

At the other end of the spectrum are scurrilous works that, for lack of a *mot juste,* might be called “hit pieces.” Into this category fall Canfield’s *The Incredible Scofield and His Book* and Lutzweiler’s *The Praise of Folly: The Enigmatic Life & Theology of C. I. Scofield.* Each of these volumes endeavors to prove dispensationalism false by casting aspersions on the man most notable for popularizing the system in North America. While

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254 Trumbull fails to mention, for example, Scofield’s divorce from his first wife or the shroud of suspicion surrounding his resignation from the Office of Kansas District Attorney. John Hannah, “Scofield, Cyrus Ingerson,” in *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology,* ed. Mal Couch (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 389-90.

255 An extensive search has yielded no antonym for *hagiography.*


they fill in what Trumbull has overlooked, their obvious desire to portray Scofield in the worst possible light casts doubt on the reliability of their information. Mangum describes Canfield as a “Scofield detractor” and observes that Canfield’s purpose was to unearth secrets and bring the dirt to the surface.258 “Notable for the extensiveness of [his] research, [Canfield’s] approach is like that of a private investigator charged with collecting evidence against a suspected felon—no rumor is deemed unworthy for consideration as potential fact, no motive of Scofield’s heart deemed incapable of being impugned.”259 Lutzweiler’s book is no better. He speaks of the “redoubtable Joseph C. Canfield”260 on the one hand and C. I. Scofield “and his co-conspirators John Nelson Darby and Arno C. Gaeblein”261 on the other.

One happy exception to this trend is an M.A. thesis by William Be Vier.262 Part of what makes Be Vier’s thesis so interesting is that he was not, as one would expect, a theology major. Be Vier’s degree is in history. That he was writing to fulfill the requirements of this academic discipline explains the meticulous research from original sources that provide the bulk of his paper.

Recognizing Trumbull’s shortcomings, Be Vier nevertheless accepts his account as reliable, seeing how Scofield himself approved it. While this will never satisfy conspiracy theorists that assume a cover-up, simple Christian love demands that one believe Trumbull’s


259 Ibid., 7.

260 Lutzweiler, Enigmatic Life, iv.

261 Ibid., iii.

262 Be Vier, “Biographical Sketch.” Another reliable source, albeit shorter, is Hannah’s entry in The Dictionary of Premillennial Theology.
(and thus, by proxy, Scofield’s) account, unless compelling evidence to the contrary is produced. Additionally, Be Vier’s research into contemporaneous newspaper accounts, government records, and the like, provides ample evidence to justify Be Vier’s conclusions.

As an aside, Be Vier’s research routinely answers the criticisms of Canfield and Lutzweiler. For example, Canfield quotes an article dated Aug 27, 1881 from the *Daily Capital*, a Topeka newspaper, highly critical of Scofield:

> Cyrus I. Schofield [sic], formerly of Kansas, late lawyer, politician and shyster generally, has come to the surface again, and promises once more to gather around himself that halo of notoriety that has made him so prominent in the past. The last personal knowledge that Kansans have had of this peer among scalawags, was when about four years ago, after a series of forgeries and confidence games he left the state and a destitute family and took refuge in Canada. For a time he kept undercover, nothing being heard of him until within the past two years when he turned up in St. Louis, where he had a wealthy widowed sister living who has generally come to the front and squared up Cyrus’ little follies and foibles by paying good round sums of money. Within the past year, however, Cyrus committed a series of St. Louis forgeries that could not be settled so easily, and the erratic young gentleman was compelled to linger in the St. Louis jail for a period of six months.263

According to Be Vier, this article “contains obvious errors of fact.”264 For example, the article states that the last knowledge Kansans had of Scofield was four years previous in 1877. But the St. Louis *City Directory* for that year reports that Scofield was a practicing lawyer with an office and residence within the city.265 There is no record of his going to Canada266 nor is there any evidence that he spent time in jail.267 Finally, the likelihood of...

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264 Be Vier “Biographical Sketch,” 29.

265 “The St. Louis *City Directory* for 1877 has the entry ‘Scofield, Cyrus I., Lawyer, 206 North 8th street. Residence, 3029 Dickson.’” Ibid., 22.

266 Ibid., 29.
Mrs. Leontine Cerre Scofield, who hailed from a wealthy family and who was at this time the public librarian of Atchison, Kansas, ever being “destitute” is “hard to imagine.”

At the end of the day, Magnum’s synopsis of Scofield’s life describes Scofield prior to his conversion the best: “The truth is Scofield was an effective minister of the gospel, but he had a past. He was converted midway through his adult life, and only after hitting bottom. And to hit bottom, he had to fall quite a long way.”

As stated above, it is beyond the scope if this work to engage in a detailed examination of Scofield’s life. Since much of Scofield’s early life is shrouded in controversy and does little to shed light on his social ethic, only a few selected scenes from his conversion forward will be discussed.

Selected Biographical Sketch

In the period between 1865 and 1879, Scofield led an intense life of (often bitter) courtroom battles and politics and lived the life common to those arenas. “He drank as he

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267 “A recent search of court records in St. Louis by the reference librarian of the Missouri Historical Society ‘located nothing on Scofield’s reputed jail sentence.’” Ibid., 30.

268 Ibid., 9.

269 Ibid., 23.

270 Ibid., 29.

pleased, and, like most men who drink ‘in moderation,’ he soon drank too much.”

Scofield recounts that during this time “the habit of drink…became fastened upon me.”

One day, while in his law office, a friend—Thomas McPheeters—asked Scofield why he wasn’t a Christian. Scofield responded that he was a hard drinker and that he remembered “something about drunkards having no place in heaven.” Not satisfied with this evasion, McPeeters pulled out a pocket Testament and “read passage after passage from the precious Good News, plainly telling his friend how to be saved.” The result of this bold presentation of the Gospel was that C. I. Scofield knelt on the office floor with his friend and trusted Christ as his Savior.

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272 Trumbull, Life Story, 25.

273 Ibid., 26.

274 Ibid.

275 Ibid. Scofield’s testimony concerning his conversion is such a marvelous example of God’s grace towards sinners, that it is recounted here in full.

“Great opportunities had indeed been given me, and for years I made them my own. But slowly, insidiously, the all but universal habit of drink in the society and among the men of my time overmastered me. It was not a victor in the battle of life—though victories had come to him—but a ruined and hopeless man who, despite all his struggles, was fast bound in chains of his own forging. He had no thought of Christ other than a vague respect, the survival of a family influence. There was no hope that in a church some time he might hear and believe the Gospel, for he never went to church.

“And then Jesus Christ took up the case. Men were beginning to turn away from him (Scofield), but the Lord of glory sought him. Through Thomas McPheeters, a joyous, hopeful soul, Jesus Christ offered Himself to that wreck.

“It was a Bible conversion. From a worn pocket Testament McPheeters read to me the great Gospel passages, the great deliverance passages, John 3:16; 6:47; 10:28; Acts 13:38, 39, and the like. And when I asked, like the Philippian jailer of old, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ he just read them again, and we knelt, and I received Jesus Christ as my Saviour. And—oh! Trumbull, put it into the story, put it big and plain: instantly the chains were broken never to be forged again—the passion for drink was taken away. Put it ‘Instantly,’ dear Trumbull. Make it plain. Don’t say: ‘He strove with his drink-sin and came off victor.’ He did nothing of the kind. Divine power did it, wholly of grace. To Christ be all the glory.”

Ibid., 30-31.
McPheeters, the son of a well-known Southern Presbyterian minister in the city, was well connected in Christian circles and soon introduced Scofield to Dr. James Brookes, pastor of Washington and Compton Avenue Presbyterian Church. Brookes evidently took an interest in Scofield and tutored him regularly in his home. While there is some question regarding where Scofield learned his dispensationalism, it seems beyond question that a primary influence was Brookes. Trumbull writes:

There were probably few if any men of the last fifty years in North America who did as much to influence and guide the Bible study and Christian life of the sound Christian leaders of our generation as James H. Brookes. He was peculiarly blessed of God in making plain dispensational truth and the great fundamentals of the prophetic study of God’s Word.

James Brookes was the primary founder and president of the Niagara Bible Conference, which promoted dispensationalism across the United States. He spoke of the

276 Ibid., 25.
278 Trumbull, Life Story, 34.
279 Ibid., 35. Regarding Brookes, Scofield wrote, “James H. Brookes was the greatest Bible student I have ever known. His great strength lay in the fact that he held truth in balance—he always balanced whatever truth he was giving by some other truth; that is, whether he mentioned the other truth or not, he held it at least in his mind over against the truth that he was giving, and thus was kept from unbalanced or false emphasis.

“Dr. Brookes was an amazing blessing to me, but never more than in telling me this: ‘There is no such thing in the Bible as an abstract proposition. Everything in the Bible is meant to be turned into life. It must first of all be grounded in doctrine. There is such a thing as experience which is real but which is not founded on Scripture; then it becomes either fanatical or a discouragement. Therefore, we are always to interpret experience by Scripture—never Scripture by experience. There is always in Scripture a doctrinal basis, and there is always in Scripture an account of an experience based on that doctrine; and this account is perfectly accurate because it is inspired.’” Ibid., 35-36.
Brethren with admiration and Darby “preached in his church in St. Louis at various times.”

Therefore, many have concluded a direct connection between Darby and Scofield via the tutoring of Brookes. For example, Allis writes that Scofield’s dispensationalism “can be traced back directly” to Darby and the Brethren. Carnell, in an effort to dismiss dispensationalism as a fringe group, writes, “Dispensationalism was formulated by one of the nineteenth-century separatist movements, the Plymouth Brethren.” Similarly, Fuller, Bass, and Gerstner assert Darby’s strong influence over Scofield.

More recently, proponents of dispensationalism—particularly those Bock labels “essentialist”—“are inclined to distance themselves from Darby in the interest of escaping

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286 See note 14.
the charges of recency and divisiveness.”

Ryrie, commenting on Darby’s dispensational scheme and philosophy, writes:

Only one comment is necessary concerning Darby’s teachings—it was obviously not the pattern Scofield followed. … Although we cannot minimize the wide influence of Darby, the glib statement that dispensationalism originated with Darby, whose system was taken over and popularized by Scofield, is not historically accurate.”

Still, Ryrie agrees with Bass’ conclusion regarding Darby’s influence on dispensationalism taken as a whole:

Even a casual reading of Darby’s prophetic interpretations reveals how deeply contemporary dispensationalism is rooted in them. This is not to say that they are identical in all details, or that there has been no further development since Darby’s time. But the basic elements, and the hermeneutical pattern, of Darby’s eschatology persist unchanged in contemporary dispensationalism.

Keeping this in mind, it should come as no surprise that Scofield’s social ethic is surprisingly similar to Darby. One may argue that Scofield learned his social ethic from Darby via Brookes (or Isaac Watts, or Walter Scott, or someone else). Or one may

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289 Ryrie, Dispensationalism, 69.


291 Bass, Backgrounds, 128.

292 “If Scofield parroted anybody’s scheme it was Watt’s, not Darby’s.” Ryrie, Dispensationalism, 69.
conclude that Scofield’s social ethic is a result of his dispensational hermeneutical approach. Regardless of how he arrived at his conclusions, Scofield’s social ethic essentially mirrors Darby.

Scofield’s Social Ethic

The “social disengagement” often attributed to dispensationalism is actually an integral part of Scofield’s social ethic. Rather than simply assuming guilt, however, one must ask on what principles are Scofield’s conclusions founded and are those principles valid. The following discussion will focus on Scofield’s understanding of the church and its mission.

Scofield and Evangelism

For several successive years while at the Niagara Bible Conference, Scofield had the privilege of spending time with Hudson Taylor, founder and director of the China Inland Mission. As a result of these interactions, Scofield began to take a serious interest in foreign missions. Taking Acts 1:8 to be the divinely-ordained plan, Scofield decided Dallas was his Jerusalem. Searching for the nearest unevangelized area, he settled on Central America. After approaching various mission boards about the possibility of opening a

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293 “This writer maintains that a connection between Scofield and Darby is to be found in Walter Scott.” MacLeod, “Walter Scott,” 158.

294 Trumbull, Life Story, 68.

295 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

296 Trumbull, Life Story, 70. Scofield originally considered Mexico, but moved further outward when he discovered that there were already seven strong denominations working in that country. Ibid.
work in the region and being rebuffed by all, Scofield (after consultation with his church, the First Congregational Church of Dallas) organized the Central American Mission.

The organization of this mission provides an insightful clue into the mind of Scofield and his view of social ethics. The details of the mission were to be conducted on the following basis:

The Mission is interdenominational. It does not seek to reproduce on mission grounds the divisions of Protestantism: Evangelical—it holds to the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Evangelistic—it believes that the evangelization of the world, not its civilization, is the true work of the church.”

By “civilization” Scofield meant the reformation of existing social and governmental forms. In other words, he would leave the world as he found it and concentrate on the salvation of souls.

Scofield readily admits that Christianity introduced into a society has beneficial results. Indeed, these favorable consequences are so evident they have all too often become the motivation for missions. Yet these are “incidentals” to the true mission of the church.

More and more the motive in service comes to be purely humanitarian. The Gospel must be preached and missions maintained that humanity, which is in sore distress with the consequences of sin, may “have the benefits of Christian civilization.” Oppression is everywhere, disease, ignorance and degradation, and the Gospel emancipates, heals, enlightens and uplifts. “Earth,” we say, “needs a better ideal, a loftier ethic.” The human mind lies fallow, it must be broken up that better seed may grow. The millions of heathendom are enslaved to superstition and ignorance, and the

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297 Ibid., 72.

298 C. I. Scofield, Prophecy Made Plain (New York: Gospel Publishing House, n.d.), 25, in Logos Bible Software. “It appears that the sick in Jerusalem were healed when the shadow of Peter fell upon them as he walked the streets, but Peter, my friends, was not walking the streets for the purpose of casting that beneficent shadow; he was going and coming in the work of his apostleship. Suppose he had turned aside to this business of shadow making? Who doubts that very speedily the shadow would have lost its power?” Ibid., 25.
Gospel must be preached because where the Gospel goes these things diminish or vanish.  

Scofield’s concern is that the humanitarian motive is short-lived. “We do not care intensely any more about the girl babies suffocated in the mud of the Ganges, the childwidow, sorrowful under her palm tree, or the procession staggering on to the grave of the drunkard.”  

Appealing to 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Scofield pleads for a more theocentric motivation:

“Might it not be worth while once more to think of God in all this; of His rights in every human being—rights outraged by all this sin and shame? Might it not be worth trying, at least, to reestablish as a motive the exaltation of the Lord in this world? Might it not be well to begin again to look upon sin not merely, nor primarily, as something which is hurtful to man, but an insult to God?”

Still, while part of the church’s failure in missions is a misconception concerning the nature of sin, the main problem is one of mistaken identity. The church has forgotten that her calling and her promises are heavenly, not earthly. The church has a definite mission that is “limited in its purpose and scope,” and an “appointed pathway of separation, holiness, heavenliness and testimony to an absent but coming Christ.” The one commission she has received is to “go into all the world and...

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300 Ibid., 125-26.

301 “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

302 Scofield, No Room, 126-27.

303 Ibid., 127.

304 Scofield, Prophecy Made Plain, 38.
preach the gospel to every creature.”

In short, the “simplicity” of the church’s mission is “the evangelization of the world.”

Therefore, the church should “leave the civilizing of the world to be the incidental effect of the presence there of the gospel of Christ,” commit its time, strength, money and days “to the mission distinctively committed to the church, namely: to make Christ known ‘to every creature.’”

This being said, while Scofield was opposed to the reformation of society as a goal, he was not opposed to social action, especially when the goal was evangelism. He admitted that the law of love might compel actions that appear similar to social reform.

The World of Men vs. The World as a System

Scofield was opposed to “a mere mechanical separation from the world.” The distinction between the world of men as the object of God’s redemptive love, and the world as a system which is “organized under Satan in its forms social, political and commercial” must not be forgotten. The believer’s attitude toward each must reflect that of the Lord Jesus and the apostles:

With these general principles to guide one, it seems clear that the Christian could take little part, if any, in schemes for the improvement of the unregenerate world. The whole scene is one awaiting judgment; but as our Lord met throngs of

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305 Ibid., 38.
306 Ibid., 41.
307 Ibid.
308 Ibid.
309 C. I. Scofield, Dr. C. I. Scofield’s Question Box (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1917), 35, in Logos Bible Software.
310 Ibid.
people, He healed the sick and fed the hungry without asking whether they believed on Him or not. In other words, He did works of mercy.\textsuperscript{311}

As a result, “our relation to everything is dominated by the law of love and of loving service.”\textsuperscript{312} Whatever a believer may do to benefit men and keep them from harm, the believer should gladly do. Scofield admits that occasionally questions regarding the application of these principles will arise that defy easy answers. Still, with prayer and the direction of the Holy Spirit, one may “keep in the pathway.”\textsuperscript{313}

By way of example, Scofield contends that the licensing of taverns in a village provides a case study that is “very simple.”\textsuperscript{314} Just as one would erect a fence to prevent a blind horse from falling into a pit, “how much more should we lend a hand to put up a fence between the youth of a village and the open bar-room.”\textsuperscript{315} In this instance, it is love, not the demands of citizenship, political movements or reform campaigns that dictates the conduct of the believer.\textsuperscript{316} A concrete example of this principle is found in Scofield’s early days after his conversion.

East St. Louis, IL was the “bridgehead” for many trains waiting their turn to cross the Mississippi into St. Louis proper. The railroad men would routinely loaf around the bars that frequented the area in order to keep warm while waiting for their turn to cross. Scofield, after

\footnotesize
311 Ibid.
312 Ibid., 36.
313 Ibid.
314 Ibid., 35.
315 Ibid.
316 Ibid.
some successful attempts at evangelism amongst the railroad workers,\textsuperscript{317} saw the need for a building where the men could keep warm and write letters without the necessity of spending time in the saloons. He brought this suggestion to the railroad companies who saw the wisdom of this suggestion and acted upon it. The result was that a railroad Y.M.C.A. building was erected,\textsuperscript{318} and Scofield’s ministry to the railroad men and their families flourished.\textsuperscript{319}

The Heavenly/Earthly Dichotomy

The error of the church is that she has endeavored “to take from Israel her promises of earthly glory, and appropriate them over into this church period.”\textsuperscript{320} “It is not so much wealth, luxury, power, pomp, and pride that have served to deflect the church from her appointed course, as the notion, founded upon Israelitish promises, that the church is of the world, and that therefore, her mission is to improve this world.”\textsuperscript{321}

\textsuperscript{317} Scofield’s early attempts at evangelism among these men met with little success until he befriended a railroad conductor who was sick. “He saw to it that the sick man had a good doctor, and whatever else was needed. This Jim Turner, a freight conductor, not only found his health under Scofield’s loving ministry, but he found his Saviour also. Then he went back to the tracks with his new friend Scofield; he would stand alongside and shout out a testimony for Christ, telling his railroad pals that they must listen to the man who had come to bring them a message. Things went better now, and Jim himself was soon made a railroad Y. M. C. A. secretary—a novelty for those days.” Trumbull, \textit{Life Story}, 38-39.

\textsuperscript{318} Scofield was introduced to the Y.M.C.A through Walter C. Douglas, secretary of the St. Louis chapter of the Y.M.C.A. and associate of Thomas McPheeters. It was through Douglas that Scofield came under the tutelage of James Brookes. Scofield quick became involved in Y.M.C.A work as a result. Ibid., 35.

\textsuperscript{319} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{320} Scofield, \textit{Prophecy Made Plain}, 41.

\textsuperscript{321} Ibid., 38.
It may safely be said that the Judaizing of the Church has done more to hinder her progress, pervert her mission, and destroy her spirituality, than all other causes combined. Instead of pursuing her appointed path of separation, persecution, world-hatred, poverty, and non-resistance, she has used Jewish Scripture to justify her in lowering her purpose to the civilization of the world, the acquisition of wealth, the use of an imposing ritual, the erection of magnificent churches, the invocation of God’s blessing upon the conflicts of armies, and the division of an equal brotherhood into “clergy” and “laity.”

Following Darby, Scofield maintains that the promises given to Israel and to the church are in absolute contrast to each other. Israel is an earthly people while the church is a heavenly people. The separate promises to each are “impossible to mingle:”

The Jew was promised an earthly inheritance, earthly wealth, earthly honor, earthly power. The church is promised no such thing, but is pointed always to heaven as the place where she is to receive her rest and her reward.

The promise to the church is a promise of persecution, if faithful in this world, but a promise of a great inheritance and reward hereafter. In the meantime, she is to be a pilgrim body, passing through this scene, but not abiding here.

When the church tries to set this world in order through education or reformation, she leaves behind her mission and takes upon herself the assignment given to “a restored and converted Israel” in the next dispensation. Therefore Scofield’s plea is “let us leave the government of the world till the King comes.”

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322 Ibid. One cannot help but hear the echo of Darby in Scofield’s assessment of the church, especially in his opposition to a division between clergy and laity.


325 Ibid.

326 Ibid., 41.
Summary of Scofield’s Social Ethic

As with Darby, it is incorrect to assert that Scofield has no social ethic merely because his ethic does not conform to the contemporary ideal. Clearly Scofield believes in the engagement of social ills, though the motivation is one of love, not some misguided notion of the church’s mission nor of the ultimate success of world transformation. Instead it is the preaching of the gospel that is the church’s mission. The application of the gospel message may have, and most likely will have, beneficial effects on societal ills. Nevertheless, the heavenly character of the church compels her to have as her primary motivation the preaching of the gospel:

The church has but one mission, defined in Luke 24:47, 48; Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 1:8; and the church works most powerfully toward the solution of social problems not by turning reformer, but by preaching the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. When Christ was on earth all the social problems—slavery, intemperance, prostitution, unequal distribution of wealth, oppression of the weak by the strong—were at their worst. To cure them He put into the world one message—the gospel, one means—regeneration, one agency,—the Holy Spirit in the church. The best help a pastor can bring to the social problems of his community is to humble himself before God, forsake his sins, receive the filling with the Holy Spirit, and preach a pure gospel in tender love.327

327 Scofield, Dr. C. I. Scofield’s Question Box, 36.
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