

The World Is About to End

The Impact of this Apocalyptic Belief on History Class 2

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What We Will Cover Today

- Reaction to the delayed Second Coming
- The Antichrist
 - Origins of the concept
 - Joachim of Fiore
 - How belief in this entity impacted history
 - John Nelson Darby
 - The Rapture
 - The Role of the Jews in the End Times
 - Hal Lindsay

He Didn't Come

- As decades and then centuries passed, the Church had to confront the fact that Second Coming had not occurred
- This was done in three ways
 - In the later books of the New Testament – by pointing out certain prerequisites that had to occur beforehand and that no one knows the day or the hour
 - The Church Fathers – by adopting an allegorical view of Scripture and contending that the Millennium began with the advent of Christ
 - Augustine – by interpreting history as a struggle between two cities – the city of God and the city of Man – that will continue until the Last Judgment

The Decline of Apocalyptic Millennialism

- What St. Augustine and the Church Fathers did was distance Catholic thought from any literalist interpretation of end-times prophecy and from notions of an earthly millennium
- However, apocalyptic thinking survived in the popular religious culture and in the religious underground
 - It would come to the surface again in the Middle Ages as Medieval society came under a variety of stresses

The Antichrist and his Impact

Origins of the Antichrist Concept - 1

- The origin of the Antichrist concept was linked to the belief that Jesus of Nazareth was the messiah, Son of God, and that he would return
 - Jesus, however, was not the kind of messiah expected by Second Temple Judaism
 - Just as he had experienced opposition in his initial coming, so it was expected that he would experience opposition on his return

Origins of the Antichrist Concept - 2

- John in his first epistle refers to the Antichrist – the Enemy of Christ – and states that many antichrists have already come (1 John 2:18)
- Paul in 2 Thessalonians refers to the Wicked One who will falsely claim to be God
- The Book of Revelation refers to a “red dragon with seven heads and ten horns” (Rev 12:3), a “beast coming out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns” (Rev 13:1), and the “beast coming up out of the earth”(Rev 13:11)

Origins of the Antichrist Concept - 3

- In describing the beast whose number was 666, most biblical scholars think that John of Patmos had the Emperor Nero (reigned from 54 to 68 CE) in mind
 - Nero was the first emperor to persecute the Christians
 - Nero claimed divine status
 - Historians have seen Nero as a paradigm of megalomania, evil, and cruelty
 - The circumstances of Nero's death were so mysterious that they gave rise to the legend that he would come back from the dead
 - John of Patmos uses this legend to describe the beast from the sea with ten horns and seven heads, one of which seemed fatally wounded , but which had healed

Dilemmas Posed by the Antichrist

- Was he one or many?
- Was he a false teacher, a false prophet, an evil tyrant, a cunning hypocrite who deceives and corrupts, or a megalomaniac who believed he was God? Or a combination of some or all of these traits?
- Was he Satan incarnate or merely a very evil human?
- When would he appear?
- What conditions have to be met (and what restraints have to be removed) before he can appear?
- Are all those who bear the “Mark of the Beast” his condemned followers?

Three Impacts on the Antichrist Legend

- First, the Rise of Islam
 - Christians saw Islam not as a new religion but as a Christian heresy
 - Led many Christians to see Mohammed as the Antichrist
- Second, the Papal Reform Movement
 - In seeking to restore the Church to its original purity and purpose, reform gave rise to apocalyptic expectations
- Third, the Impact of Joachim of Fiore

Joachim of Fiore

Background

- Born in 1135 in Calabria, Italy – son of a notary at the court of the Norman king of Sicily
- Educated to serve as a court official
- Decided to become a monk and later founded a monastery in Calabria
- In 1183, wrote 3 books – *Liber, Concordiae*, and *Exposito in Apocalypsim*
- Died 1202

Joachim's Innovations

- Unlike St Augustine, he saw the Book of Revelation as prophecies of specific people and events in the real world
- He saw all of history as contained in the Bible in some way
- He saw everything in the Old Testament as having a parallel person or event in the New
 - Thus everything in the Old Testament was also a secret sign pointing forward to a future happening in the New Dispensation

Concept of the Three Ages

- Saw human history as divided into 3 ages – each corresponding to a person of the Trinity
 - Age of the Father – the era of the Old Testament which ended with the incarnation of Jesus
 - Age of the Son – the era of the New Testament which will end with the coming of the Antichrist which Joachim predicted would occur in 1260
 - Age of the Holy Spirit – the era to come in which a renewed Church would usher in a new golden age

How the Ages Relate to Each Other

- Joachim characterized the relationship between the three Ages as:
 - Starlight, Moonlight, Full Daylight
 - Age of Children, Age of Youth, Age of the Elderly
- The Third Age was yet to come
- The transition to the Third Age would not necessarily be peaceful since the Antichrist is involved and needed to be overcome
- In this Third Age, there would be no need of an organized church, intermediary priests, or the state

How the Ages Relate to Each Other

- The Antichrist would model himself on Jesus, taking both priestly and kingly form
 - This led to the notion that the Pope could be the Antichrist
 - The fact that the Antichrist would also be a king meant that political reconstruction was a necessary prerequisite to the Third Age
- The Third Age would be based on new social and political structures with monastic communities being a model

Corollary of Joachim's Concepts

- There was in this Three Age progression, a concept of progress
 - I.e. The Golden Age is yet to come
- Both a pope and an emperor could be the Antichrist
- The Millennium would occur after the appearance of the Antichrist

Joachim's Impact - 1

- Joachim placed the concept of a Third Age into European consciousness
- Religious and political radicals found Joachim's predictions of a new Age highly congenial and used them to criticize both the papacy's and Church's worldliness and the European socio-political order
- Joachim connected apocalyptic change and political reconstruction

Joachim's Impact - 2

- Joachim's image of an order of spiritual men living a life of communal holiness in the Third Age proved irresistible to those who felt the Church should return to the Church depicted in the first chapters of the Book of Acts
- Joachim gave rise to one of the Christian apocalypticists' favorite pastimes – identifying the Antichrist

The Pope Becomes Antichrist

- The conflicts between Pope and Holy Roman Emperor led people on each side to label their opponents as “Antichrist”
- The events surrounding the resignation of Pope Celestine V and the election of Boniface VIII led Boniface’s enemies to identify him and his successor, Benedict XI, as Antichrists
- The Great Schism (lasting from 1378 to 1417) made it popular to identify at least one of the two (and at one time three) claimants to the papacy as an Antichrist

Wycliffe and Hus -1

- The sorry state of the Church in the 14th century plus the Great Schism led John Wycliffe to distinguish between the invisible church of the saved and the visible church of the present
 - Wycliffe saw both papal claimants as Antichrist
- To Wycliffe, the visible church was clearly opposed to Scripture and had lost all authority
 - Thus the conflict between Christ and Antichrist as a conflict between the Bible and the pretensions of the Church hierarchy

Wycliffe and Hus - 2

- Wycliffe's ideas proved very popular in Prague and strongly influenced Jan Hus and others
 - They contrasted the poor and humble Christ and the Apostles with the wealth and power of the contending claimants to the papacy
- When the Council of Constance condemned Hus as a heretic and had him executed, the result was revolutionary revolt in Bohemia

The Protestants

- In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther asserted: “The papacy is indeed nothing but the kingdom of Babylon and of the true Antichrist.”
- The Radical Reformers agreed with Luther that the papacy was the Antichrist, but many of the radicals became convinced that Luther and his followers were also in Antichrist’s camp
 - Hence, many of the radicals favored social and political revolution as well as religious reformation
 - Many also had an apocalyptic worldview which saw the Second Coming as near

Anglicans, Puritans, & Antichrist - 1

- Henry VIII broke with Rome but not with Catholic beliefs
- Under his son, Edward VI (ruled 1547-1553), Protestant beliefs began to take root in England
 - His reforms sowed the seeds of the later division between the established state Anglican Church, under the control of the Crown, and the more radical Puritans who wanted to purify the Church of its remaining Catholic practices and beliefs

Anglicans, Puritans, & Antichrist - 2

- After a Catholic reaction under Mary Tudor (reigned 1553-1558), an Anglican Church under the control of the Crown was reestablished
- In seeking to wean the English away from Catholicism, both Anglican bishops and Puritan divines were quick to denounce the papacy as Antichrist

Anglicans, Puritans, & Antichrist - 3

- The Puritans believed the Church of England had not gone far enough in its reform and therefore was to be identified with “Laodicea the lukewarm” (Revelation 3:14-19)
- The Separatists, who rejected the Church of England, saw the office of bishop itself as evidence that the Church of England remained part of Babylon
 - Separatist divines such as Robert Browne claimed that Puritan ministers who received ordination from bishops bore the mark of the Beast

The English Revolution

- When major political disputes between King and Parliament became intertwined with religious repression and the view that King and Anglican Church were part of the realm of Antichrist, the result was revolution
- With the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642, view equating the Church hierarchy with the Antichrist became part of the ideology of the Parliamentary armies

The American Revolution

- Anti-British pamphleteers used Antichrist imagery in support of American independence
 - King George III and Lord North were denounced as Antichrist
 - The Stamp Act which required that all papers and publications bear a tax stamp bearing the King's name and image was equated with Satan's command that mankind display the Mark of the Beast
 - The Quebec Act which both recognized the Catholic Church and extended the boundaries of Canada at the expense of the thirteen colonies.

Out of the Mainstream

- In Europe after the English Revolution and in America after the American Revolution, the concept of the personal Antichrist fell out of intellectual favor, for several reasons
 - Intellectual Implosion from Overuse
 - Restoration of the English monarchy and episcopacy
 - Attacks of the Jesuits on the concept of a present-day Antichrist
 - The impact of the Enlightenment critique of Christianity

The French Revolution

- Initially, Protestant apocalyptic thinkers saw the French Revolution as an indication that the destruction of the Antichrist papacy was imminent
- Later, it turned hostile as the Jacobins' hostility to Christianity became evident
- The French Revolution led many to identify Antichrist not with a specific individual but with an emerging spirit of apostasy from traditional Christianity and political-social radicalism

19th & 20th Centuries

- In the 19th and 20th centuries, three trends relating to Apocalypticism and the Antichrist occurred:
 - The emergence of Premillennial Dispensationalism as espoused by John Nelson Darby and his followers
 - The emergence of a Secularized Apocalypticism
 - The emergence of Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic apocalypticisms

John Nelson Darby

Biographical Facts - 1

- Born 18 November 1800
- Graduated from Trinity College, Dublin in 1819
- Ordained as a priest in 1826 in the established Church of Ireland
- In 1827, he fell from a horse and was seriously injured
 - During his convalescence, his readings convinced him to eventually abandon the Church of Ireland and join the Plymouth Brethren

Biographical Facts - 2

- Saw the telegraph as a sign that the end of the world was approaching
- In the 1830s and 1840s, he began formulating and preaching his doctrine of premillennial dispensationalism
- Between 1862 and 1877, he made 5 missionary journeys to North America
- Died 29 April 1882

History's Dispensations

- Darby saw world history as characterized by different eras or dispensations:
 - The Garden of Eden
 - The Fall to Noah's Flood
 - The Flood to the Tower of Babel
 - Abraham to Moses and the Exodus
 - Moses to Jesus
 - The Time of Christ or the Church Age – the current dispensation
 - The Tribulation and the Second Coming

Notes on the Dispensations

- In each of these dispensations, God dealt differently with mankind and in each the means of salvation differed
- While the Bible has much to say about past and future dispensations, it is silent on the present one – the Church Age
- The next dispensation will begin with the Rapture when all saved believers are removed from the earth

Significance of the Rapture

- The Rapture will start the end time clock ticking
- It will be followed in quick order by the Antichrist, the tribulation, Armageddon, the millennium, Satan's return & final defeat, the resurrection of the dead, and the Last Judgment

What Was New About Darby

- Unlike previous end-times prophecy writers, Darby assigned a distinct end-times role to the Jews and saw God as establishing two biblical tracks – one for the Jews and one for the Gentiles
- Darby saw the Bible as predicting both the reestablishment of a Jewish state in their ancient homeland and the rebuilding of the Temple

Darby and the Antichrist

- Darby saw the Antichrist as a key mover in the events leading to the establishment of Christ's thousand-year rule
- The defeat of Antichrist in the Battle of Armageddon would lead to Christ's millennial reign
- At the end of the millennium, Satan would be released from Hell, there would be a final battle and Satan would be defeated
- This would be followed by the resurrection of the dead and the Last Judgment

The Spread of Darby's ideas

- Two major forces in the spreading of Darby's ideas were the evangelist Dwight L. Moody and the biblical commentator Cyrus Schofield
 - Moody (1837-1899) promoted Premillennial Dispensationalism via his preaching, his Bible institute, and conferences at his Mt Hermon-Northfield School
 - Schofield (1843-1921) produced a famed Reference Bible with commentary that popularized Darby's ideas

The Spread of Darby's Ideas - 2

- In the later 20th century, many writers and televangelists helped popularize Darby's ideas and bring them into the American cultural mainstream
 - Writers such as Hal Lindsay, John Walvoord, and Edgar Whisenant
 - Televangelists such as Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Jack Van Impe, Oral Roberts & Jimmy Swaggert

Hal Lindsay - 1

- Lindsay took Darby's ideas and put them into very modern dress
- In his work *The Apocalypse Code*, Lindsay depicts John of Patmos as a time traveler from the 1st to the 21st century
 - To Lindsay, John witnesses 21st century events with 1st century experiences
- Like Darby, Lindsay saw certain prerequisites as necessary before Christ's return.
 - Unlike Darby, he sees these prerequisites as having largely been met

Hal Lindsay - 2

- Lindsay sees the white horseman of the Apocalypse as the Antichrist
 - The Antichrist will be a European ruling over a revived Roman Empire in the form of a 10-nation European confederacy
- After the Rapture, the red horseman will unleash large-scale war which the Antichrist ends with a 3 ½ year pseudo-peace

Hal Lindsay - 3

- At the end of the 3 ½ year period, the Antichrist will enter the Holy of Holies of the rebuilt Jerusalem Temple and proclaim himself to be God
- At this point, the red horseman will unleash an invasion of Israel led by Russia and including Iran, the Arab world, and China
- The war will lead to massive famines and plagues
 - It will also lead to large-scale ecological destruction

Hal Lindsay - 4

- In addition to the beast from the Sea (who Lindsay sees as the Antichrist), he also refers to the beast from the Land (who Lindsay sees as the False Prophet)
- According to Lindsay:
 - The False Prophet will perfect a way to expose everyone who believes in Jesus Christ
 - Everyone who refuses the Mark of the Beast will be cut off from economic survival
 - In the age of the computer, this will be an easy task

A Side Note

- The linkage that prophecy believers see between the Mark of the Beast and both the computer and the all-encompassing state has made these people very suspicious of:
 - Large-scale computerization
 - Many of them see bar codes, credit cards, and on-line financial transactions as steps making it possible for the future Antichrist and False Prophet to impose the Mark of the Beast
 - Any trends toward world governance and a new world order
 - This is especially true of environmentalism, which Lindsay sees as the means by which the new world order can destroy the national sovereign state and achieve world governance

Hal Lindsay - 5

- Lindsay sees Revelation chapters 17 & 18 as predicting the emergence of both a false religious system and a revived Roman-European empire which will be headed by the Antichrist
 - Citing the Book of Revelation, Lindsay argues that the seven heads of the beast represent seven kingdoms: five have fallen, one is, and one is yet to come – This is the revived Roman Empire

Hal Lindsay - 6

- After ruling for 3 ½ years as God, He and his capital city, Rome, is destroyed by the one true God
- This will be followed by a world war with nuclear weapons in which life in the oceans is extinguished, all fresh water polluted, and the ozone layer destroyed
 - The war will conclude with the Battle of Armageddon with the forces of the West destroying those of Russia, the Arabs, and the Chinese

Hal Lindsay - 7

- Those who are raptured will get to enjoy life in the New Jerusalem with new spiritual bodies
- Those living in the earthly New Jerusalem will have improved human bodies, with greatly extended life expectancies
- This New Jerusalem will last for a 1,000 years after which Satan will loosed, defeated, and the Last Judgment will occur.

The Implications of Lindsay and the Prophecy Believers - 1

- Darby's, Schofield's, and Lindsay's anticipation of a coming superstate ruled by the Antichrist has pushed prophecy believers to the political right as has their view that the world is in decline as the End-Times approach
 - This makes them sympathetic to both Libertarianism in the economic sphere and the traditional moralism of the Christian Right
 - It also leads them to see reform efforts as either useless, misguided, or as preparations for an Antichrist world

The Implications of Lindsay and the Prophecy Believers - 2

- The linkage that prophecy believers see between the Mark of the Beast and both the computer and the all-encompassing state has made these people very suspicious of:
 - Large-scale computerization
 - Many of them see bar codes, credit cards, and on-line financial transactions as steps making it possible for the future Antichrist and False Prophet to impose the Mark of the Beast
 - Any trends toward world governance and a new world order

The Implications of Lindsay and the Prophecy Believers - 3

- Lindsay and other prophecy believers see Israel's founding, its recapture of Jerusalem's Old City, Jewish settlements on the West Bank, and the rebuilding of the Temple as steps in God's plan
 - Consequently, they support Israeli hardliners on issues of the settlements
 - They see the Islamic world as an Antichrist world which will be harshly judged by God

The Secularization of Apocalypticism

Apocalypticism without God

Two Types of Secular Apocalypticism

- Secular Apocalypticism was to appear in two different versions
 - The first was a secularized version of the basic Judeo-Christian narrative
 - The Millennial Kingdom becomes the revolutionary paradise
 - The second was the notion that man or a cosmic catastrophe could destroy the Earth and that would be it
- We will discuss each in turn

A Note About Secularization

Remote Origins of Secularization

- Secularization had its beginnings in the fact that Medieval (and also Modern) Christianity has what I call “paradigm alienation and leakage points” that constitute a source of alienation, disillusion, stress, and rejection
- These alienation and leakage points lead to what Conor Cruise O’Brien called “decrystalization”
 - Beliefs, values, and institutions formerly viewed with awe, pride, reverence, and love now become objects of derision, embarrassment, and hatred

Paradigm Alienation Points

- Paradigm alienation points included
 - The inevitable contrast between its idealized beginnings depicted in Scripture and its current realities
 - Papal Supremacy
 - Stress on doctrinal orthodoxy
 - Prohibition of Usury
 - The unscientific “common sense” world-view depicted in Scripture

Three Major Factors

- Secularization was also promoted by the following three factors
 - The Invention of printing
 - European Expansion
 - The development of modern science and technology
- The interaction of these factors gave rise to the concept of Progress
 - This concept in turn affected how science viewed its own history

A New Wine in an Old Bottle

- As secularism and naturalism became the intellectual norm, the concept of a personal Antichrist as a major source of evil in the world mutated into conspiracism:
- Conspiracism – the idea that unhappy events or conditions in this world are the results of an evil conspiracy seeking either power or some evil end

The French Revolution and Conspiricism

- The French Revolution posed problems for both its opponents and its supporters
 - The supporters of the *Ancien Regime* had to account for the fall of a divinely-sanctioned system to unruly mobs
 - The supporters of the Revolution in turn had to confront a supreme example of good intentions gone awry

The French Revolution and Conspiricism - 2

- What supposedly solved the problem for both groups was the concept of an evil conspiracy
 - For the supporters of the *Ancien Regime*, the Revolution was the result of a conspiracy of Freemasons, Philosophes, Illuminati, and Jews
 - For the supporters of the Revolution, the failure of the Revolution to achieve its libertarian and egalitarian goals was the result of either a conspiracy of reactionary elements OR of a bourgeoisie which opposed egalitarianism

The French Revolution and Conspiricism - 3

- Throughout history, some Christian theorists of the End Times maintained that either the Antichrist or the False Prophet would be a Jew, but this was a minority view
- Both the supporters and opponents of the French Revolution , however, were to see Jews as key players in revolutionary conspiracies
 - As a result, in the 19th century, Anti-Semitism was to become a component of both Right-wing and Left-wing conspiricism

A New Historical Narrative

- Along with secularization and the concept of Progress , there also came a new secularized version of the Jewish-Christian concept of history
- In this concept, the concepts of a Garden of Eden, the fall of man, human struggle in a vale of tears, a time of tribulation and judgment, and, finally, a new idealized order of things are preserved but in a totally new dress

Schema - 1

Jewish	Christian	Marxist
Garden of Eden	Garden of Eden	Primitive Communism
Punishment by God	Alienation from God	Oppression, Class War
Pagan oppression	Roman persecution	Capitalist society
The Chosen People	The Church	The Proletariat

Schema - 2

Jewish (cont)	Christian (cont)	Marxist (cont)
The Last Days	The Last Days	Final stage of Capitalism & Imperialism
The Last Battle	The Second Coming	The Communist Revolution
The Messianic Kingdom	The Millennium	The Dictatorship of the Proletariat
	The Kingdom of God, following the final battle with Satan	Communism, following the end of class war and the withering away of the state

Private Property as Original Sin

- Starting with Jean Jacques Rousseau, the concept of the institution of private property replaced the concept of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit as the source of man's woes
- This idea would be picked up by Marx, Engels, and others

Antichrist in a New Guise

- As the 19th & 20th centuries progressed, a secularized concept of the Antichrist(s) became popular
 - For the Nazis, the Antichrist(s) were the Jews
 - For the Communists, the Antichrist(s) were the bourgeoisie and the imperialists
 - For the Anarchists and Syndicalists, the Antichrist was the State

The Revolution as Armageddon

- For the Communists, the Revolution and the following dictatorship of the proletariat was the analog of the Time of Tribulation
- The dictatorship of the proletariat would be followed by a Communist society governed by the maxim “from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs”