

Fundamentalism, Dispensationalism, Zionism, Orthodoxy and Conservatism before WWII

Part 1

De-Institutionalized Belief Systems

- This section address belief systems that by the late 1800's and early 1900's (progressive Era) were in the process of being cancelled institutionally
 - No political presence or representation
 - Rapidly declining hold on educational institutions
 - No significant media representation apart from church periodicals
- Yet these belief systems, which are all entwined and inter-related to varying extents, were broadly representative of society apart from political class
 - This would all be hidden to main stream history and historians
- Dispensationalism –Eschatology system that evolved rapidly in this period
 - By far the most documented and eventually the most geo-politically influential
- Zionism and Christian Zionism
 - Deeply tied to dispensationalism but also politically very significant on its own
- Fundamentalism
 - Originally intended to fight back against Scientific Naturalism and Secular humanism
 - Not as highly documented and effectively merged with dispensationalism by around 1930
 - Also incorporated some cultural elements of northern progressive Protestantism
- Orthodoxy
 - Refers principally to Protestant Orthodoxy which generally faired poorly
- Political Conservatism
 - Died after Grover Cleveland and gradually reformed as opposition to WWI but lacked any significant political influence in either party

Overview of Dispensational Core Beliefs

- Dispensationalist teachings have gone through a number of significant adjustments since their origin in the early 1800's – this is a summary of a few major points
 - These are fairly recognizable to anyone raised in the tradition but not to those who aren't
- *Dispensational vs Covenant Theology*
 - Covenant Theology holds that God has dealt with man throughout history with a series of covenants and this was the predominant belief system in all forms of Christianity prior to Dispensationalism
 - Dispensationalism holds that God has determined multiple (generally seven) dispensations in time
- Millennial Kingdom
 - Dispensationalism maintains that the world was/is moving toward the seven year tribulation that would lead to the return of Christ followed by a 1000 year reign of righteousness on earth
 - Orthodox Protestantism prior to that and Christendom did not believe in a millennial kingdom on earth and the Christ's kingdom was not of this world. Christ's return would lead directly to a final judgment (Amillennialism) (primary ref for contrasting these positions is Rev. 20.3)
- Rapture
 - Dispensationalism looks for a rapture that will remove believers from the earth prior to the time of tribulation. (case for this rest principally on Thessalonians 4 verses 16 and 17)
 - Protestant Orthodoxy does not (This specifically includes Luther and Calvin)
- Dispensationalism prior to recent times also taught that believers should withdraw from positions of authority or influence in society
 - By WWII dispensational teaching were dominant in Evangelical churches
 - Notable exception to the acceptance of Dispensationalism are Lutherans and Church of Christ

Biblical Inerrancy

- All of these socially and religiously conservative beliefs systems and movements were dependent on belief in biblical authority but there were important nuisances
 - Dispensationalism in particular was dependent on a specific form of Biblical literacy that was somewhat different from historical president
 - Required detailed textual analysis to associate Bible accounts with specific historic events
- The systematic theology defending Biblical authority was in time provided by the Princeton Theology which was published in three volumes in 1872-73
 - Princeton was a conservative Presbyterian institution at the time and remained so until the mid 1920's when progressives took over – after that conservative faculty established the Westminster Theological Seminary
 - The historical position, which is best represented by the Westminster Confession, was based principally around internal validation as opposed to external verification
 - Princeton theologian Charles Hodge's position on inspiration was summarized: *"The infallibility and divine authority of the Scriptures are due to the fact that they are the word of God; and they are the word of God because they were given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost"*
 - Confession maintains that only the Witness of the Holy Spirit can convince man of this while the Princeton position maintains that if a writing can be logically shown to be inspired, then it is the Word of God
 - The Princeton position ultimately held that every book and every word was inspired which was based on passages like Jeremiah 1:9 that said God had placed his words in the writer's mouths
- Other statements, such as by the Missouri Synod Lutherans went even further
 - It's noteworthy here that this group at no time in their history adopted dispensationalism

Biblical Inerrancy (cont..)

- This sounded very definitive but quickly created problems
 - Initial challenge was that the Bible contains different types of literature some of which are obviously not intended to be read literally
 - Context information as opposed to message content, also references to other texts
- The Princeton theology generated a good deal of (minor) criticism
 - As the list of issues grew, however, they became too much to just brush off although prior to the newly defined hermeneutic, it would have been much easier for the believer to deem these sorts of generally minor items as not being relevant in the greater context of the message itself
- Subsequent adjustments and explanations created more confusion
 - The vagueness of the Princeton position on interpretation effectively gave a path to pick and choose as to what literalism was applied to
 - Much better and more usable guidance would be developed later supporting the inerrancy position
 - Millenarians built their belief system on this literalistic method of interpretation but it didn't necessarily carry over to other aspects of the Bible, especially the Genesis accounts
- In the end the developing fundamentalist movement had staked their defense of Christianity on 19th century standards of rationality and argumentation. *This would be the hill that the faith would defend or die on*
 - “Verbal and direct inspiration is, therefore, the “Thermopylae” of Biblical and Scriptural faith... No book, No religion” Rev. George S Bishop from The Fundamentals

Historical Perspectives on Prophecy

- Prior to the Reformation academic thought on Eschatology generally seemed to align with St Augustine which was amillennial
 - Augustine theorized that human history did have direction, stages, and purpose but he held that the process was one that would ultimately result in decay
 - Further, that redemption was outside of history and the influence of collective man
 - *Rather than a literal, thousand year reign of peace, the millennial kingdom existed as the spiritual kingdom of God's elect. It flourished as a union of the saints – both living and dead – in the one "City of God", while the groaning creation struggled on as the "City of Man" awaiting the consummation of the ages. In the meantime, God desired His people to seek an eternal, rather than temporal, kingdom.* Religious historian Richard Gamble from *War for Righteousness*
- Following the reformation, some protestant writers and commentators pointed to the reformation as fulfillment of prophecy and associated the Catholic Church with prophetic images relating to Babylon
 - There were then some Catholic (Jesuit) responses placing specific fulfillments of Biblical prophecy into a future time period
 - Many Biblical prophecies can be associated with past events, generally during the early Church time period especially within the first century or can be alternatively projected forward to current or unknown future events.
 - In modern Christianity, those associating prophecy primarily with 1st century events are referred to as "preists" and are a decidedly minority position

Historical Perspectives on Prophecy (cont..)

- Some groups (Puritans) or individuals sought the restoration of Israel as a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy at least as far back as the 1600's and perhaps well prior to that
 - This belief, however, was in the context of Progressive Millennialism where this event would be milestone in perfecting society for the return of Christ
- So while Millennialism in western thought does have a long history it is a discontinuous one
 - The form of Millennialism that has impacted American history, religion, culture, and politics as well as impacted world history in the 20th century originated in Great Britain around 1800 with some Germanic influences and isn't highly dependent on what came before
- The initial event that led to the rise of pre- Millennialism was the French Revolution which brought about a renewed interest in prophecy and the apocalypse
 - events of the 1790's were so shocking, violent, and overtly anti-Christian that many in Europe lost faith in the gradual advancement of collective man just as WWI had a similar effect in America
 - Students of Biblical prophecy were generally convinced that they were watching the fulfillment of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13
 - When French troops under Berthier marched on Rome and sent the Pope into banishment it was generally believed amongst Millennialists that this fulfilled Revelation 13 with that point in time becoming a fixed reference and sort of Rosetta stone for further interpretation of prophecy

British Millenarianism in the early 1800's

- By 1820 there were small but significant premillenarian groups in England and Scotland
 - As opposed to centering on professional clergy, there was a great deal of lay interest
 - Centered on Napoleon III with some applying Daniel 11:30 specifically to the Battle of Aboukir Bay
- Lewis Way
 - Came into large inheritance from unknown source and took over Jewish ministry
 - Former Anglican minister who promoted Protestant Zionism with Jewish restoration
 - established a prophetic interpretation of Revelation 13 linking it in a fixed manner to the French Revolution, by addressing the second coming of Christ and the restoration of the Jews, linked all these events in a definitive timeline paving the way for political Zionism
- Edward Irving
 - During the summer of 1826 Irving translated a work of a Chilean Jesuit named Manuel Lacunza, titled The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty
 - Made a case for the premillennial return of Christ and concluded that the Catholic hierarchy and priesthood were the antichrist
- John Nelson Darby
 - Became the face of the Dispensational movement and leader of the Plymouth Brethren
 - The Plymouth Brethren and Darby in particular would provide the seed for American millennialism with the originators of the American movement all having direct or indirect ties to this group or Darby specifically
 - associated with the Exclusive Brethren that generally didn't recognize other Christian organizations as legitimate – came from elite society and at one time was Anglican minister
 - mixed and cautionary views of him by church leaders of the time like Charles Spurgeon

Jewish Restoration Movement (Zionism)

- Relationship between Jewish restoration movement and its Christian counterpart in terms of a timeline isn't completely clear as events and even people overlap
 - The eventual perceived head of Jewish restoration was Theodore Herzl who, from his own experiences, came to see a separate homeland persecution
 - Decay of the Ottoman Empire and the collapse of the dismembering of two remaining Christian monarchies, the Austrian Hungarian Empire and the Russian Empire, created the opportunity to create a Jewish homeland but determining the Jewish identity is somewhat complicated
- A key question here is who are the Jews and if this is determined by faith or genetics
 - And this isn't a straight forward question to answer
 - The common belief regarding the dispersion of the Jewish people seems to be that they were forcibly exiled from the Holy Land after the destruction of Jerusalem and fall of Masada
 - No such exile occurred however and Josephus stated about $\frac{3}{4}$ of population left prior to that
 - Large Jewish population remained there to the time of Moslem control and even after that
- European Jews are classified as either Sephardim Jews or Ashkenazi Jews
 - Sephardim, who were the largest European Jewish population as late as the 17th century, were living on the Iberian well prior these events
- The origin of Ashkenazi Jews (85% of total population) is an active question
 - One theory is that they developed from migration to Rhineland in 7th century – DNA shows male DNA came largely from middle east and 80% of female DNA is European
 - Alternative theory is that Ashkenazi Jews came from mass conversion in the Caucus area in the 14th century – this also aligns with some DNA and linguistic evidence
 - Most probably both of these are true – Rhineland theory by itself would require 10x birthrate of surrounding populations to account for entire population by itself

The Miller Problem

- The original American Millenarian leader was William Miller who developed his teaching around the same time as his British counterparts with similar beliefs but was not closely or directly linked to them
 - Miller had no inherent interest in this topic as a young person and was largely a skeptic before being converted to Evangelicalism in 1816.
 - He was highly analytical and, working on his own, he developed a system of interpretation that was very similar to his British counterparts that he was largely or entirely unaware of
- By 1834 his message started spreading and he began to present his teaching across New York and New England
 - Along with Rev. Joshua V. Hines they published a vast amount of periodicals and tracts and held large camp meetings. Within 5 years they had built a following of 50,000 people
 - They didn't support the idea of any future prophetic event regarding Israel. Miller said of this topic, "The Jew has had his day"
- Miller didn't establish the exact date until quite close to the (non)event
 - October 21, 1844, would be the day of the "Great Hope."
 - Many Millerites sold their farms and gave away their money and possessions
 - Hundreds gathered on the mountain tops in upstate New York. When Jesus didn't appear in the sky many began wailing and babbling at the "Great Disappointment"
 - In some towns mobs burnt churches where the Millerites had met. In Toronto, several true believers were tarred and feathered
 - From this point forward, Miller was a leper in the Millenarian community

British Millenarianism Comes to America

- Dispensationalism started to coalesce into an organized movement in America in the 1860's building off, not Miller, but the Plymouth Brethren and Darby in particular
 - Darby visited the US and Canada seven times between 1862 and 1877
 - The Brethren made some progress in attracting followers especially around Chicago and most notably from DL Moody's congregation - *The aim of the Brethren is to "gather churches out of churches;"*
- Starting in 1863 the *Prophetic Times* and a related publication, *The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*, became the published voice of dispensationalism or Millenarianism
 - these provide a good record of the movement
 - Editors were geographically all are from the Northeast or upper Midwest but there is fairly even representation amongst major protestant denominations including a couple of Lutherans
- The focus of millenarianism remained very much on Napoleon III who was generally associated with being the antichrist (US Civil War was of no interest)
 - When the French were soundly defeated by the Prussians (Germans) in the Franco-Prussian War of 1871 most dispensationalist commentators had been confidently predicting Napoleon to rout the Prussians and move on to greater victories
 - Napoleon's anticipated role in history's final drama was then gradually passed on to Russia
- Next significant periodical was "*Waymarks in the Wilderness*" which was largely the product of John Inglis
 - He advocated a form of dispensationalism that was very much in keeping with the teachings of the Plymouth Brethren
 - Inglis, like Darby, strongly opposed the teachings of Christian perfectionism associated with the Quakers, Wesleyan Methodists, and the Holiness movement of that time period

British Millenarianism Comes to America (cont..)

- The Millenarian tradition really became established in America from the 1870's to the mid 1890's
 - through the efforts of a few deeply committed believers and advocates using regular conferences along with publications followed by independent Bible schools
 - The conferences originated in 1868 with an informal private meeting in New York organized by men associated with Waymarks in the Wilderness
 - The Niagara Conferences, which were held from 1876 to 1897 (except for 1884), were intended to introduce evangelical protestants to dispensational teachings
 - James Brookes, who was a Presbyterian pastor in the Midwest and was an early advocate of scriptural inerrancy and premillennialism, was the founder and driving force behind the conferences
- Dwight L Moody was a key link between Brooks and Cyrus Scofield
 - Unitarian that later attended a Congregationalist church. He didn't serve in the Union army but acted as a Chaplain and was very involved with the YMCA. Became associated with the Brethren in 1872
- Conference held in New York in 1878 that was intended to create a common millenarian witness against post millennial and non-millennial clergy
 - Of the 122 people who signed the conference call, all but 10 were from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New England – 47 Presbyterians, 26 Baptists, 16 Episcopalians
 - By the 1890's, denomination support continued to erode and the dispensationalist ranks were almost entirely composed of Baptists and Calvinist Presbyterians
 - The Niagara conferences eventually ended due to the deaths of many of the key participants in the 1890's and increasing doctrinal disagreements that split the movement

Cyrus Scofield and the Scofield Bible

- Scofield is the hub around which the modern popularization of dispensational theology turns and he is a mysterious character in many ways
 - born in Michigan in 1843 to a family of English Puritan descent although the family was Episcopalian
 - In 1861 when war broke out he was living with relatives in Lebanon Tennessee and he enlisted in the CSA infantry and fought in several major battles
 - eventually deserted, fled behind Union lines, and took the Union oath of allegiance
 - There is an alternative version of this phase in his life where he served through the end of the war and received the Southern Cross of Honor
- After the war he settled in St Louis where he married a lady from a prominent Catholic family (Leontine Le Beau Cerre) with whom he had two children
 - took up a career in law and politics was elected to the state house in 1871, worked for the election of a US Senator (John Ingalls), and was appointed US district attorney for Kansas all by the age of 29
 - Shortly thereafter, however, he was forced to resign due to a financial scandal
 - Leontine divorced him on the grounds of desertion in 1883. He immediately remarried Hettie Hall von Wartz who later acted as his secretary and editor
 - key person in Scofield's rapid rise was John J. Ingalls (Congregationalist and tied to "Secret Six")
- Scofield professed to have been converted to Evangelicalism in the late 1870's
 - By 1879 was assisting in the St Louis campaign of Dwight L Moody and was secretary of the St Louis YMCA
 - He also was associated with and mentored by James H Brookes
 - In 1883 he was ordained as a Congregational Minister and became the pastor of the First Congregational Church of Dallas

Creating the Scofield Bible

- Association with Congregationalists is interesting in some respects
 - There were virtually no Congregationalist churches in the South, Congregation was affluent and largely from other regions, large number of high ranking Masons, prolonged absences
- Later pastored Moody's Trinitarian Congregational Church in Northfield Massachusetts in 1895 while on prolonged leave of absence from Dallas
 - No indication that Moody and Scofield was close
 - left the Congregational Church in 1914, became a Southern Presbyterian, and Moved to NYC where he founded a Bible school
 - lived on the edge of insolvency until the last few years of his life and well above his known means
- He was admitted to the very exclusive Lotus Club of NY in 1901
 - There is no easy explanation for how Scofield would become associated with this group and his involvement was largely unknown to the fundamentalists and dispensationalist communities until 1942
- The first edition of the Reference Bible was published in 1909 by Oxford University
 - This also isn't easy to explain but was probably made possible by the Lotus Club
 - This Bible has some arguable translations to support his conclusions and was aided by two highly controversial Englishmen named Brooke Westcott and Fenton Hort
 - Westcott and Hort were involved and actually founded two societies dealing with the paranormal and occult (Hermes Club and Ghostly Guild) and their own personal beliefs were rapidly evolving with several sources classifying them as mystics
 - *"The separation of man and work was already beginning, When Dr. James M Gray, speaking at a conference in Eaglesmere, Pennsylvania, announced Scofield's death, he asked the audience present how many had ever heard him speak. Only five or six hands were held up. But when asked how many were users of the Scofield Reference edition of the Bible, "there was a perfect forest of hands!" The man had never been as real as his work" Biographer Ben Canfield*

The Establishment of Fundamentalism

- Fundamentalism lacked creeds, position papers, and, through most of its development, periodicals
 - The first and primary major magazine of Fundamentalism was funded and published by Lyman Stewart. Stewart was co-founder of Union Oil (Unocal, Union 76), co-founder of Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA), founder of Union Rescue Mission in LA
 - Stewart was an enthusiastic dispensationalist but it's not clear to what extent lay fundamentalists really understood and supported dispensationalism
- “The Fundamentalist” featured articles by dispensationalist authors including Scofield and helped to cement the union of the two movements by the 1920's
 - This belief system, however, was largely dropped by the denominational seminaries and other education institutions, many of which had liberalized, while others simply didn't accept some aspects of these teachings
 - The solution for this was to develop a seminary network by growing the concept of the Bible schools that Moody and Scofield had established
- The Dallas Theological Seminary was the first major alternative seminary
 - Many churches especially in the South initially wouldn't hire clergy from dispensationalist schools
 - Lewis Sperry Chafer was the founder and was closely associated with Scofield
 - born in 1871 in Ohio and attended Oberlin College, became Congregational minister and followed Scofield as minister of the Dallas church.
 - People he mentored included Jim Rayburn (Young life Ministries), Kenneth N Taylor (Living Bible author), Howard Hendricks, Charles Ryrie (Ryrie Study Bible), Vernon McGee (well known radio minister), and John Walvoord who followed Chafer as president of Dallas Seminary from 1952 to 1982

Protestant Orthodoxy

- As mainstream Protestant churches continued to drift towards secularization and fundamentalism became more dominant within Evangelical groups Protestant Orthodoxy became more isolated
 - Main groups that didn't adopt Dispensationalism were conservative Lutherans and Church of Christ
- There was a good deal of argumentation that went on between defenders of historical Protestant orthodoxy and dispensationalists in particular
 - This was addressed in that later phases of the conference movement
 - Niagara conferences became less focused on dispensationalism in its later phases and allowed some non-dispensational speaker
- One notable author was Philip Mauro who is probably most cited in this regard
 - He was a former dispensationalist and became a fairly prolific religious author
 - He a well-known attorney specializing in patent law who argued before the Supreme Court and was also associated with Thomas Edison, who was a religious skeptic. Key figure in Scopes trial also
- This is a representative snippet from his book, *Gospel of the Kingdom*
 - *What a slur is this upon the spiritual understanding of the ten thousands of men, "mighty in the Scriptures," whom God gave as teachers to His people during all the Christian centuries before "dispensational truth" (or dispensational error), was discovered! And what an affront to the thousands of men of God of our own day, workmen that need not to be ashamed, who have never accepted the newly invented system! Yet I was among those who eagerly embraced it (upon human authority solely, for there is none other) and who earnestly pressed it upon my fellow Christians"*

Political Conservatism

- While America retained a conservative small government tradition, it was largely lost in the political process through the progressive era
- Coming out of World War I a conservative movement started to take shape made up of opponents of intrusive social legislation and anti-war activists
- Almost all of America's intellectuals enthusiastically supported the war but there were some exceptions
 - Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of *the Nation*, who was the grandson of William Lloyd Garrison and former member of the Anti-Imperialist League
 - Author / Commentator ML Mencken, "The most dangerous man to any government is the man who is able to think things out for himself, without regard to the prevailing superstitions and taboos. Almost inevitably he comes to the conclusion that the government he lives under is dishonest, insane, and intolerable..."
- The war was a great defeat for all those opposed to the war itself and the government takeover of the economy and society that ensued.
 - This gradually formed a diverse coalition of individuals and groups opposed to the fundamental direction of American society
 - Survey from 1930's showed 70% of the population regretted US involvement in WWI
- The "Old Right" was generally disillusioned with the political process but saw the Republican Party of the day as being the greater threat (social engineering)
 - As the New Deal developed, however, progressive Democrats now targeted them with labels like fascist or reactionary
 - Forged an alliance with opponents of the New Deal even though many of these were or had been advocates of cartel capitalism or corporate statism

The Old Right Between the Wars

- The Old Right during this time was made up of Southern Democrats, Western Republicans, Isolationists (party sub groupings were never a majority)
 - In 1937 Conservative Democratic Senator Josiah Bailey of North Carolina co-authored a document titled *"The Conservative Manifesto"*
 - Senator Bailey, who was Southern Baptist and spoke with the style of a Southern Baptist preacher, "Do not do nothing while America drifts down the inevitable gulf of collectivism....."
 - Religiously they tended to be orthodox Protestants – not dispensationalists or fundamentalists and definitely not progressive
- Leading up to WWII, Charles Lindberg was a prominent opponent of US entry into the war and could be considered the main face of the Old Right
 - Historian Charles A. Beard, who was a distinguished educator and writer, was professionally ostracized by liberals, many of them his former students
 - Beard foresaw a *"perpetual war for perpetual peace"*
 - Journalist John T. Flynn, who was originally a liberal supporter of the New Deal but observed the danger of *"creeping socialism"* became a prominent spokesman for the Old Right
 - Other notable people included Joe Kennedy and Herbert Hoover after he was president
- The start of WWII brought an end to the Old Right although they made a comeback for a while after the war
 - The members of the Old Right, while showing great moral courage in the face of overwhelming enemies, were ridiculed and virtually erased from history first by the Left of the 30's and early 40's and then, 20 years later by the New Right and then the neo-conservatives