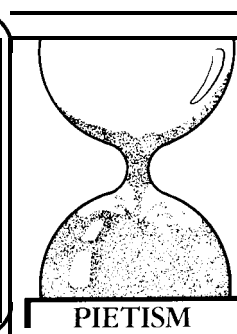


Dispensationalism in Transition

Challenging Traditional Dispensationalism's "Code of Silence"



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DISPENSATIONALISM'S ACHILLES' HEAD (PART TWO)

Comments on Hal Lindsey's *The Road to Holocaust*

by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., Th.D.

This month we conclude our two part survey of Hal Lindsey's critique of Christian Reconstructionism. As one of the most popular dispensationalist writers, he is likely to have more influence than others. His influence is undeserved, for his book is filled with error, as we have been noting.

Argumentation Errors

At one place Lindsey cites 2 Peter 3:3-6, which specifically speaks of those who deny "the promise of his coming." He introduces this text thus: "Peter predicts that there would be false teachers from within the Church (for who else would understand or care about the time of Christ's coming) who would deny that the Lord Jesus' coming is something that is imminent or important."¹ Then after the text he says "the Dominionist teachers certainly *do* deny the imminence of the Lord's coming."² But Peter is speaking of those who question the *fact* of the Lord's coming; he says *nothing* of its "imminence." How can denying the dispensationalist imminence view of the coming fall under Peter's rebuke?

Lindsey warns against "eisegesis" and suggests that such describes "the Dominionist method of interpretation."³ But he operates eisegetically quite frequently! For instance, what of his dealing with a modern scholar's writing? Somehow a quotation by J. L. Neve is supposed to prove the Apostolic Fathers believed in a future Jewish supremacy in the Millennium, Lindsey quotes three paragraphs from Neve and then writes: "Note carefully the following crucial facts from this quote. [T]he early church firmly believed that Israel was yet to be redeemed as a Nation and given her unconditionally promised Messianic Kingdom."⁴ I have read and re-read the Neve quotation given in Lindsey's work and it simply does not make *any* mention of the Jews or of their becoming a redeemed nation at all! Read it yourself.

After analyzing what Lindsey thinks he is reading from Neve, he states: "These six prophetic views caused the early Christians to recognize the Jews as a chosen people with whom God will yet fulfill His promises."⁵ But premillennialist Justin Martyr wrote of Christianity: "even so we, who have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ, are the true Israelitic race."⁶ Alan Patrick Boyd, a dispensationalist has admitted "the majority of the writers/writings in this period

[up to A.D. 165] completely identify Israel with the Church."⁷

Lindsey wrongly states that the Apostolic Fathers "were virtually all literalists."⁸ We have shown that this is simply not so.⁹ Perhaps this is why Lindsey avoids giving examples of the literal hermeneutic of the Apostolic Fathers in his section entitled "The Apostolic Fathers Interpreted Literally."

Lindsey argues that: "Law and Grace are two completely different systems of approaching God. They are antithetical to each other. We must approach God by one or the other, but we can't mix them. If we try to live by any part of the Law system, we are obligated to keep the whole system."¹⁰ But then later he writes: "In all ages men have had to come to God by faith."¹¹ Since he agrees with us that even in the Mosaic era, when Israel was definitely obligated to the Law of God, God was approached only on the basis of faith, then how can he put down the Reconstructionist ethic founded on the Law of God as if it presupposes a *different* approach to God? Besides, the Reconstructionist does *not* put the believer under the Law as a means of salvation, despite his distortion of our views!¹² Interestingly, he proves we are not under the Law of God but under the requirement of walking in the Spirit by quoting Remans 13:8-10¹³ – which cites the Law of God!

Boomerang Arguments

In attempting to prove his literalistic hermeneutic, and particularly the double-reference of prophecy, Lindsey argues: "The most important point of interpretation is that Isaiah predicted events of the First and Second Coming within one sentence without any obvious initial indication that this was the case."¹⁴ Yet later he scoffs at Jordan's dividing Matthew 24 at the transition verses (vv. 34-36) – verses which provide interpretive cues: "Jordan gives no adequate reason for slashing the context right in the middle of a consecutive and homogeneous message."¹⁵

7. Alan Patrick Boyd, "A Dispensational Premillennial Analysis of the Eschatology of the Post-Apostolic Fathers (Until the Death of Justin Martyr)," unpublished masters thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977, p. 47.

8. Lindsey, *Road to Holocaust*, p. 59; see also: pp. 74ff.

9. See Greg L. Bahnsen and Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *House Divided: The Break-up of Dispensational Theology* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), Chapter 15.

10. Lindsey, *Road to Holocaust*, p. 161, cp. p. 173.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 266.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 164: "If these men are this far off on their interpretation of something that is a main theme of the New Testament (i.e., Law vs. Grace), is it any wonder they are so far off on something as complex as Biblical prophecy?" See also p. 173.

13. Lindsey, *Road to Holocaust*, p. 162.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 64. See also: p. 214 on Luke 4:16-20.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

1. Lindsey, *The Road to Holocaust*, p. 231.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 232.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

6. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* 135. See also at chapters 119, 120, 123, 125, 130-131.

How can he rebut Jordan for "slashing the context" of a passage of 51 verses when that is supposed to be "the most important point of interpretation" for prophecy, even in the space of but one verse?

Of Peter's quotation of Joel in Acts 2, Lindsey writes "there is simply no way to be honest with the normal, literal meaning of the passage and say that it was ALL fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, or in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70."¹⁶ We agree! But Peter dogmatically introduces the Joel 2 passage thus: "But this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). Lindsey is right: his interpretive approach ("liberalism") cannot be honestly accepted, because Peter specifically said what Lindsey's hermeneutic will not allow!

Of the Jewish rejection of Christ, Lindsey states: "Those who looked for the coming of the messiah before His First Coming were perplexed as to just how such different themes of prophecy could both be true of the same person."¹⁷ He noted that John the Baptist is evidence of this problem.¹⁸ But then later he derides "theonomics" as "that very system that blinded Israel to their need for a Suffering Savior who would die for their sins."¹⁹ It would seem that Lindsey's statements regarding prophecy would account more for their rejection than "theonomics." This is especially so in light of the evidence in John 6:15, which is suggestive of a premillennial, earthly type kingdom expectation.

Birds of a Feather

In House and Ice's work, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?* they strain hard to associate Reconstructionism with the Manifest Sons of God cult (though Reconstructionists disdain the cult). But it is terribly interesting to whom Lindsey gives an adoring dedication of his book: Col. R. B. Thieme!²⁰ The dedication reads: "To my spiritual father, Col. Robert B. Thieme, Jr., whose systematic teaching of God's word and personal encouragement changed the entire direction of my life. If I have any crowns in heaven, it will be because of him. Thanks, Dad." Now this is most interesting for two reasons: (1) In Thieme's Bereah Church tape ministry a few years back (in the mid 1970s), Thieme publicly dragged Lindsey over the coals and accused him of using Thieme's notes to write *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

(2) Evangelical Christians have been rightly alarmed at Thieme's cult-like ministry.²¹ An excellent Dallas Seminary doctoral dissertation may be consulted for some of the problems associated with Thieme.²² Thieme is notorious for creating his own religious terminology and doctrines, and for calling certain persons and groups "S. O. B.'s" and "bastards" from his pulpit while preaching.²³

Horrendous Charges

The worst case of poisoning the well and the worst

case of misconstrual of a movement I have ever seen is found in Lindsey's work. The title itself is *The Road to Holocaust* and the first two chapters suggest that Reconstructionism is anti-semitic and will lead to killing Jews, in the tradition of Adolf Hitler. He even mentions Hitler by name in this connection – as his first quotation!²⁴

Lindsey specifically puts Reconstructionism in a class with Nazi anti-semitism: "I believe we are witnessing a growing revival of the same false interpretation of prophecy that in the past led to such tragedy for so many centuries by a movement that calls itself either Reconstructionism, Dominionism and/or Kingdom Now."²⁵ It should be noted that he cannot cite *one* sentence from Reconstructionist literature that even remotely appears anti-semitic.

Lindsey charges us with anti-semitism for two reasons, neither of which is valid: (1) Our eschatology denies Israel a *distinct* future *pre-eminence* as a *political entity* over the world in the millennial era.²⁶ (2) The non-dispensational hermeneutic opens the door to a non-literal interpretation of various prophecies.²⁷

He writes: "From these attitudes evolved the idea that they [the Jews] were blind impostors under the curse of God, and unrepentant Christ-killers."²⁸ "It is important to note that the only way the Church could arrive at this view was by interpreting prophecy allegorically. From this error in eschatology (the doctrine of last things or prophecy) to outright anti-Semitism was only a matter of time."²⁹ But this line of reasoning is an absurd *non sequitur* argument.

He horribly misquotes Rushdoony: "Rushdoony adds, 'So central is the law to God, that the demands of the law are fulfilled as the necessary condition of grace.' In other words, we earn grace by keeping the Law."³⁰ This is a fundamental and apparently intentional distortion of Rushdoony, for Rushdoony's quote continues: "and God fulfills the demands of the Law on Jesus Christ."³¹ What Rushdoony is really saying is that for us to receive God's grace, Christ had to suffer the broken law for us! Rushdoony is clear on this fundamental truth of salvation: "Man's *justification* is by the *grace* of God in Jesus Christ."³²

Lindsey mocks Rushdoony and North for their differences one with another and their not being on speaking terms, as if this discounted their ministries.³³ But how is this worse than the fact Lindsey has been married three times?

Conclusion

These few brief comments should illustrate the tremendous problems with Lindsey's superficial analysis of Reconstructionism. He is even less successful than House and Ice in his assault. In all honesty, it seems that the dispensational critiques of Reconstructionist theology are degenerating to a lower level. They have gone from bad (House and Ice) to worse (Hunt) to worst (Lindsey).

16. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

20. He also cites him on pages 130ff.

21. E.g., Stuart Custer, *What's Wrong with the Teachings of R. B. Thieme?* (Greenville, Bob Jones University Press: 1972).

22. Joe L. Wall, "A Critical Examination of the Teachings by R. B. Thieme, Jr., on the Christian Life" (Dallas Theological Seminary: Th. D. Dissertation: 1978). Joe L. Wall is now president of Colorado Christian College.

23. See an article by Denny Rydberg, entitled "SiegHeil Houston" in *The Wittenburg Door* (April, 1977), pp. 22-24.

24. Lindsey, *The Road to Holocaust*, pp. 2-3.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 8.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 9ff, 24, 27.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

31. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 75

32. *Ibid.*, p. 4 (emphases are Rushdoony's).

33. Lindsey, *Road to Holocaust*, p. 159.