

## E.W. KENYON AND DISPENSATIONALISM

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*Despite extensive research on both the Holiness Movement and on the Plymouth Brethren, little attention has been dedicated to a study of the possible interrelatedness of the two respective movements. This neglect is significant, considering the fact that J.N. Darby's (1800-82) pretribulational, premillennialism has permeated most segments within the Holiness movement. Darby's legacy in this regard also applies to his indirect influence on Pentecostal-charismatic eschatology.*

*However, Darby's pretribulational, premillennialism was anchored in his dispensationalist beliefs. Contrary to what most people actually believe, dispensationalism is not an eschatological position per se, but rather an ecclesiological position, which, in turn, colors one's eschatology. Central to Darby's dispensationalism was his emphasis on the ruined state of the church and his conviction that God did not even want the church restored according to a New Testament pattern. Such a pessimistic view of the destiny of the end time church runs counter to Pentecostalism's (successor of the Holiness movement) Latter Rain motif where Christ is indeed expected to return for a triumphant ecclesia.*

*E.W. Kenyon (1867-1948) was no Pentecostal although he did apply for ordination through the Southern California District of the Assemblies of God around 1925. In his application Kenyon stated that he spoke in tongues and that his teachings were in accordance with those of the Assemblies of God denomination. It is my personal conjecture that Kenyon's application was turned down due to negative references to him in A/G evangelist May Eleanore Frey's letter to General Chairman John William Welch, dated Jan 31, 1925. In addition to accusing him of personal contacts with the Ku Klux Klan, she was 'of one thing positive', that he – in spite of his testimony to the opposite – had not received Pentecostal Spirit baptism.*

*Kenyon has been the object of a certain academic interest and is to be recognized as the theological architect behind the Faith movement. In previous Kenyon studies his historical and theological roots within the Keswickean Higher Life movement have been explored. Some research has even suggested roots within Christian Science and New Thought sources. However, legacy from the Plymouth Brethren has until now not received significant attention.*

*As this paper will document, Kenyon was heavily influenced by dispensational beliefs during the first phase of his ministry. When he wrote his first book in 1916, however, he had largely rejected dispensationalism. Instead we find an emphasis on the distinction between the Old and the New Covenant, respectively. It is the present writer's position that the 'remnants' of dispensationalism still present in Kenyon's published works do not make sense logically, i.e., that they are in mutual conflict with his overall teachings.*

### *Dispensationalism*

Although dispensationalism may be said to have existed in embryo form prior to Darby, it was systematized by him. Darby was an itinerant preacher, visiting the U.S. seven times during 1862-77. During these fifteen years he actually remained seven years within the U.S.<sup>1</sup> His influence has primarily been felt within Fundamentalist and Higher Life circles. An American with sympathies within both camps, Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843-1921), popularized Darby's thoughts, as is evidenced in his *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* (1888) and the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909; revised in 1917). Sandeen says concerning the latter:

The *Scofield Reference Bible* combined an attractive format of typography, paragraphing, notes, and cross references with the theology of Darbyite dispensationalism. The book has thus been subtly but powerfully influential in spreading those views among hundreds of thousands who have regularly read the Bible and who often have been unaware of the distinction between the ancient text and the Scofield interpretation.<sup>2</sup>

A comparison between Darby and Scofield will be undertaken in the following pages.

Darby was born in London, but moved with his family to Ireland where he became an Anglican minister in 1825. His ministerial career was not long-lived, though. In 1828 he published his first tract, "Considerations on the Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ". From now on ecclesiology was his primary concern.

According to Darby's dispensationalism God rules history through two separate people, the Jewish people and the church, respectively – each serving two separate intentions. A dispensation is further characterized by God revealing specific responsibilities or tests (which may differ from one dispensation to another) under which humanity is placed. Most people fail these 'tests' in the outset. A small minority – a 'remnant' in each dispensation, however, comply with the responsibilities under which they are placed and thus avoid God's judgement.

### **Scofield's first and second dispensation**

Prior to the flood under Noah there was no dispensation, Darby claimed. Only after the flood God revealed specific governing principles towards which His people was made responsible to Him in a dispensationalist sense. Of course, specific responsibilities were given to the very first human beings in the Garden of Eden, including judgment acts from God if they did not fulfill their obligations. This time period still did not qualify as dispensation since God's rule was not anchored in a specific individual or institution.

Scofield, on the other hand, considered the first dispensation (*dispensation of innocence*) from the creation of mankind until they were driven out from the Garden of Eden. Scofield's next dispensation (*dispensation of conscience*) lasted from Adam's fall to the Deluge under Noah. Scofield did not presuppose, like Darby did, an administrative center for God's rule in order for a specific time period to qualify as dispensation. As will be evident by the term 'dispensation of conscience', Scofield thought that the first human beings' disobedience towards God during the dispensation of innocence resulted in the creating of an indwelling and experiential ability to distinguish between good and evil. Good under the 'dispensation of conscience' was obedience towards God's revealed will while evil, on the contrary, was disobedience towards the same. Conscience was awakened through this new ability to distinguish.

### **Darby's first and Scofield's third dispensation**

An important Scripture pertaining to Darby's first dispensation (*human government*) is Gen. 9:6 – "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Noah was the 'head' and God's rule on earth was to go through him. "God sets humanity in power with the right of the sword in order that it might rule, and repress and restrain evil upon the earth," writes Darby scholar Larry V. Crutchfield.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately this dispensation (just like the succeeding ones) ended in judgment:

Noah, the head of this new world, failed when he got drunk and lost the respect of his own son who should have been the first to obey. The consequence of Noah's failure was the continuation of evil unrepressed.<sup>4</sup>

God's judgment over this first dispensation was to "confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech" (Ex 10:7). Scofield's third dispensation largely corresponded with Darby's first.

### **Darby's second and Scofield's fourth dispensation**

Darby's second dispensation (the Abrahamic dispensation) did not conflict with the governing principle from the previous dispensation, the latter stating that God ruled the earth representatively. This governing principle, however, was now supplemented with separation from the world. Abraham was told by God to leave family and friends behind in favor of a land that God would show him (Gen. 12:1). Darby said little if anything explicitly concerning which test Abraham allegedly submitted to in this particular dispensation. Nonetheless, he did point out that Abraham exercised a lack of faith towards God when he left the promised land (Canaan) for Egypt in order to avoid famine. Darby also claimed that Abraham failed to live up to the ideals of faith by not trusting that God would take care of him if he admitted to Pharaoh that Sarah was his wife (Gen. 12:10ff).

Scofield's 'dispensation of promise' corresponds with Darby's Abrahamic dispensation. The only thing which was required during this dispensation, Scofield assured, was that Abraham's descendants remain in the promised land.<sup>5</sup> By ignoring God's command, the people missed specific blessings which had previously been given to Abraham, as well. God's judgment in this dispensation was that Israel became slaves under the Egyptians.

### **Darby's third, fourth and fifth dispensation**

Darby researchers are uncertain as to whether his next dispensation, the one succeeding the Abrahamic dispensation, lasted from Moses to Nebuchadnezzar, or whether we are dealing with three separate dispensations within this time period – i.e., Israel under (a) the Law, (b) the Priesthood, and (c) the Kingdom. Israel was by this time God's called and chosen people, under His governing rule exemplified through obedience to the Law. God's blessing over them was now conditioned by their abiding by the Law. Darby had little if anything to say about God's judgment of Israel 'under the Law'. Neither do we get any more insight with reference to the alleged dispensation 'under the Priesthood'. Could it be that the governing principle during this dispensation was that they were to use burning coals from the brazen altar in connection with the sweet incense brought 'before the Lord' on the yearly Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:12)? Was it the breach of this principle (cf. Lev. 10:1) which caused God's judgment over this alleged dispensation? Darby cannot be said to have been any clearer regarding the alleged dispensation 'under the Kingdom'. The main sin, however, seemed to have been idolatry (e.g. king Solomon's assenting to his wife's polytheism). God's judgment was primarily connected with the ten tribes' exile in Assyria and the two tribes' similar destiny in Babylon.

### **Darby's sixth and Scofield's fifth dispensation**

Scofield's 'dispensation of Law' lasted from the initiation of the Law under Moses until Christ's death and resurrection (the time period from then until the Day of Pentecost was probably considered a transition period between two dispensations). Broadly speaking he was in agreement with Darby. God's judgments were related to Israel's captivity under the Assyrians and Babylonians, respectively. The main difference between Darby and Scofield was that the former put in an additional dispensation ('dispensation of the Gentiles') from Nebuchadnezzar's takeover unto our current dispensation. God's glory, which had previously filled the Jerusalem temple, was withdrawn from earth and the Jewish nation temporarily ceased being. God's direct reign also ceased while his indirect reign over Israel was mediated through the Gentiles. The 'dispensation of the Gentiles' started with Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem. Later world dominance was transferred to the Medo Persians who, in turn, had to submit to the Greeks who had to bow down to the Romans. This, Darby claimed, was the main message of the Book of Daniel and partly also of the Book of Revelation. Although Darby did not explicitly say so, it was not improbable that he thought that the Gentile rulers were only authorized to reign in accordance with God's will. Darby had little to say about God's specific governing principles and the corresponding judgments if one disobeyed them during this dispensation. The most important responsibility, which neither Jews nor Gentiles obeyed, was the recognition of Messiah as Son of God and King of the Jews. On the contrary, he was crucified. Darby wrote:

The fourth monarchy [the Roman Empire] consummated its crime at the same instant that the Jews consummated theirs, in being accessory, in the person of Pontius Pilate, to the will of a rebellious nation, by killing Him who was at once the Son of God and King of Israel.<sup>6</sup>

### **Our current dispensation and the coming one**

The next epoch was given various designations by Darby: 'dispensation of the Spirit', 'Christian dispensation', 'present dispensation' and 'Gentile dispensation'. However, in various writings Darby categorically claimed that this time period was *no* dispensation at all. How do we come to grips with such linguistic and logical ambiguity?

Earlier in this paper I referred to the fact that Darby's dispensationalism was basically an ecclesiological position – a dogmatic view of God's people on earth (Israel). What the various dispensations had in common was the fact that God takes out for Himself a specific people, that this people rebels against His governing principles, but that a small remnant remains obedient to Him and therefore constitute His new people in the succeeding dispensation.

Darby further distinguished between Israel as an 'earthly people' and the Christian church as a 'heavenly people'. Since dispensationalism exclusively deals with God's reign *on earth*, it is safe to conclude – to the extent that we refer to the Christian church (as a heavenly people) – that the present, according to Darby, is parenthetical as far as salvation history was concerned. Since the time period did not deal with the Jewish people (God's salvation history with Israel had been temporarily set aside) but with the Christian church, it was not to be considered a dispensation. However, if Israel had recognized Jesus as the Messiah during the end of Darby's sixth dispensation, they would have passed directly into the next dispensation, i.e., the millennial reign of Christ. Darby wrote:

The Church, properly speaking, the body of Christ, is not a dispensation, it does not belong to the earth; but there is an order of things connected with it during its sojourning here below—an order of things whose existence is linked with the Church's responsibility.<sup>7</sup>

Our current time period was referred to as a 'mystery' due to its not being predicted in the Old Testament. The New Testament church as the 'body of Christ' was established on the Day of Pentecost and consisted of Jews and Gentiles. It was primarily in the Pauline epistles that this 'mystery' was unveiled.

In Darby's ecclesiology he distinguished between the 'body of Christ' (the legitimate church) and the 'professing church' ('Christendom'). Even back in New Testament times God's ideal plan for the church was allegedly ruined. According to Darby this tragic event was even predicted by the apostle Paul.<sup>8</sup> Crutchfield suggests that Darby may have meant that "at [the apostle Paul's] death, the church in its earthly character (the 'professing church', 'Christendom') and the Church in its heavenly character (the 'true Church', the 'Body of Christ') would become two distinctly different things."<sup>9</sup>

The church ('body of Christ') according to Darby was meant to give visible expression to who God is. This plan was ruined as the concept of the universal priesthood of all believers was given up in favor of a distinguishing between clergy and laity. Thereby the oneness God intended should rule in the church was destroyed. This was the beginning of an apostasy which would culminate with an end time apostasy characterized by open rebellion towards God. This was unavoidable and even predicted in the New Testament (e.g., Matthew 13, the parable of the wheat and tares). Just as a dispensation could not continue after God's judgment had been spoken over it, so also could not the Christian church be restored according to God's original ideals, namely to be a visible expression of Christ's glory. "A

fallen dispensation," Crutchfield notes, "is never restored, for it is neither in the Father's will nor in humankind's power to effect restoration."<sup>10</sup>

What then did God call the individual believer to if the path towards restoring what had previously been lost had been closed? Darby had nothing positive to say about Christian churches and denominations – 'Christendom'. God's call, he claimed, was to abandon them completely. While the 'professing church' would be judged at Christ's return to earth, Darby claimed that the true believers (both the Christians, i.e., God's 'heavenly people' and the various 'remnants' from the earlier dispensations) prior to this would be raptured from the earth in order to be with Him in heaven. Later they would together with Him partake of the future Kingdom which He would establish on earth in the next dispensation to come.

Scofield, however, did not reflect Darby's ambivalence and had no problems with naming our current time period a 'dispensation'. This dispensation lasted from the death/ressurrection of Christ until His earthly return. God's test within this dispensation had to do with whether one recognized or rejected Christ's redemptive work. Also Scofield expected an end time apostasy: confessing Christians would reject the Deity of Christ and His redemption. However, Scofield could not follow Darby in his one-sided negative evaluation of organized Christian activity identified as "an apostate mass to be abandoned by all true believers."<sup>11</sup>

The first event we could expect in this current dispensation, explained Darby, was the rapture of the true church. The 'dead in Christ', i.e., believing Christians who had died, would be raised to life (the 'first resurrection') and raptured together with all living Christians. Together they constituted the 'Bride of Christ' (and 'Body of Christ'). Immediately thereafter Satan would be cast out of heaven and down to earth (cf. Rev. 12:9). The 'Bride of Christ' would at some specific time prior to the 'Marriage Supper of the Lamb' in heaven have to stand before the 'Judgment Seat of Christ' (cf. Rom. 14; 2 Cor. 5) where all its deeds would be revealed – apparently not in order to condemn but rather in order to unveil God's all-embracing grace both prior to and after one became a true believer.

After Satan is been cast down to earth, he will mobilize both Jews and Gentiles to partake in a massive rebellion against God. A part of this time period – Darby said 3 ½ years and Scofield 7 years – would be characterized by the 'great tribulation'. This period was finalized as Jesus returns to the earth for the second time, this time together with the raptured believers – now in order to judge. This period would be succeeded by a thousand years' reign of peace (the 'millennium') where Satan would be temporarily 'bound'. After the 'millennium' was over, Satan would be loosed and then again mobilize the peoples on earth in rebellion against God.

However, God would intervene and throw Satan into the 'lake of fire'. Then follows a series of judgment acts over the earth's inhabitants, including those who have previously died but are now raised to life (the 'second resurrection'). "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:15)

While Darby claimed that the rapture could take place at any moment, Scofield presupposed an apostasy among the confessing Christians. Except for this and certain other deviations, Scofield's views largely mirrored Darby's.

In the succeeding pages we will give attention to the theological architect of the Faith movement, E.W. Kenyon. To what extent has he received impulses from dispensationalism, and to what extent have these impulses colored his later teachings?

*E.W. Kenyon (1867-1948)*

Kenyon's theological roots were primarily in the Keswick-influenced branch of the American Holiness movement. His earliest publications, though, document a familiarity with the circle of leaders surrounding Darby. For example, in 1902 Kenyon wrote:

The teaching of the [Plymouth Brethren] thru J.N. Darby, C.H.M. [Charles H. Mackintosh], and others is the real foundation of all advanced Bible study. They unfolded the Grace of God, Sonship and Righteousness, in a new way to the searcher. These men loved the Word.<sup>12</sup>

One characteristic of Kenyon's teachings was that he distinguished between what the believer (1) in an objective (or forensic) sense possesses in Christ and what he/she (2) has subjectively appropriated for himself/herself. (Kenyon normally used the two words 'legal' and 'vital' in order to distinguish these.) The first time this linguistic distinction occurs in Kenyon's materials refers to a sermon by Robert Cameron, editor of the *Watchword and Truth* magazine.<sup>13</sup> This sermon was apparently inspired by a preceding article written by an individual identified as a Plymouth brother.<sup>14</sup>

According to Kenyon, it was Calvin who rediscovered the truth concerning the legal side of Redemption, while "Arminias" [*sic!*] received light on 'the vital', and he himself (Kenyon) "[had] both."<sup>15</sup> In another context the Plymouth Brethren are used as an example of current groups over-emphasizing the legal side while the Pentecostals, on the other hand, allegedly over-emphasized their heritage from Arminius.<sup>16</sup> Kenyon further critiqued the Plymouth Brethren, as he did representatives of the Keswick movement, for not recognizing the experiential truth that one's indwelling sin nature was actually destroyed in conversion.<sup>17</sup>



Other passages in Kenyon's writings require greater cautiousness as far as allusion to the Plymouth Brethren are concerned. One example refers to an incident in Nov. 1898 when Kenyon left for Wakefield with a colleague in order to plant a "Church of the Living God,"<sup>18</sup> a seeming dethronement of traditional denominational assemblies. Indeed, one of Kenyon's colleagues, C.E. Dodge, was already pastoring a "Church of God at Danvers." I am quoting from Dale Simmons book *E.W. Kenyon and the Postbellum Pursuit of Peace, Power, and Plenty*:

From these actions, it is clear that at this time, Kenyon's displeasure at organized denominations was leading him to espouse a form of come-outism in which true believers were encouraged to become a part of independent congregations that were not to be organized under any sectarian label. Instead, these bodies were to be called "Churches of the Living God," since that was the only scripturally recognized name for a congregation.<sup>19</sup>

Despite Kenyon's one and only reference to Darby (cf. quote on p. 8), I find no indication that he either had read the latter's literature<sup>20</sup> or was directly influenced by it. Whether Kenyon in his reference to Darby meant to express that he had consulted the latter's materials or only wanted to convey that he knew about Darby and the circle surrounding him, and that he had consulted materials from other individuals within this circle, is impossible to tell.

The point is that Kenyon, at least as early as 1898, taught a form of dispensationalism. This form, however, was clearly patterned after Scofield. "There are periods of time," Kenyon wrote, "during which God deals with men, in a manner peculiar to that particular age, or dispensation, and a clear grasp of these different periods is invaluable."<sup>21</sup> In contradistinction to Darby (and in correspondence with Scofield), Kenyon counted two dispensations prior to the Deluge under Noah, i.e., "human innocence" and "human conscience". Next followed "human efforts" under Noah, "divine promise" under Abraham, "divine law" under Moses, "divine grace" as our current dispensation, and "divine kingdom" referring to the dispensation to come. Each dispensation, Kenyon wrote, "has its lesson and each illustrates a condition of man in his growth toward God or light."<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to note that Kenyon's fifth dispensation, "divine law", lasted "from Sinai to Pentecost", an allusion to his view of the Four Gospels primarily dealing with believing Jews under the Old Covenant. Kenyon followed both Darby and Scofield when he claimed that all dispensations hitherto had ended with and would end with judgement. The judgment over Israel as a nation had its cause in the fact that the Jewish people had rejected Jesus as the Messiah, while the judgement over the 'professing church' (in contradistinction to the 'true church', which would be raptured) was not explained with reference to its cause. It was probably Scofield who had influenced

Kenyon when the latter taught the imminent return of Christ based upon the end time apostasy (which Kenyon thought of himself as being witness to) within organized 'Christendom':

The biggest denomination in America [the Northern Baptist Convention] has become an apostate denomination for they have trampled the Word of God for years. The nearest denomination to God's teachings today is the Presbyterian. I am not a Presbyterian – I am a Baptist. They have gone to the devil but I thank God there are still individuals in the denominations that dare to stand true.<sup>23</sup>

In correspondence with Scofield, Kenyon also seemed to have thought that the apostasy was connected to rejection of the Deity of Jesus, among other things. For this reason the Roman Catholic Church, in contradistinction to the Northern Baptist Convention, had still not experienced the apostasy because they still believed in the Deity of Jesus.<sup>24</sup> Kenyon continued:

Is there a real apostasy now? Yes, for the first time. Four of the great protestant denominations are practically apostate. Their theological institutions dogmatically deny the Virgin birth and the physical resurrection of Jesus, and the verbal inspiration of the Word of God. [...] There must come a with-drawing of the saints of God from these apostate bodies. [...] As we draw nearer to the coming of Christ and the great tribulation, we are going to pass into hard and difficult times, when the body of Christ must be separated from the rest of the professing church; when the true sons and daughters of God will need all the Comfort and consolation they can get from the other members of His body. [...] It is hard for one to say what I am about to say, but I must say it. There isn't a man, as far as we know, either in England or America that has a message for this age. There isn't an outstanding preacher in America today, who is deeply spiritual, and has the message for this age. That message is somewhere.<sup>25</sup>

As a curiosity it should also be mentioned that Kenyon was not only influenced by Scofield, he even thought of himself as being plagiarized by Scofield.<sup>26</sup> However, Kenyon must have rejected most of his dispensationalist beliefs at an early stage. In his first book, *The Father and His Family* (1916),<sup>27</sup> we find few, if any, traces left. While he had claimed in 1898 that "Nothing under the Spirit[']s inspiration] will so open the Word to the hungry student, as this systematic view [i.e., Kenyon's dispensationalist view] of the Word, from Genesis to Revelation,"<sup>28</sup> we instead find in *The Father and His Family* an emphasis on Christ's redemption..

According to Kenyon, God was primarily a father, and it was His longing for real children enjoying a voluntary love relationship with Himself and with each other which motivated His act of creation. Just as God, man also was primarily a spirit being. Through the Fall man's spirit was filled with the devil's nature. Through regeneration, which was made available on the Day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2), the believers were partakers of God's very nature as their sin nature was immediately destroyed.

This implies, as previously documented, that the disciples of Jesus were not regenerate during Jesus walk on earth. They believed on Him as God's Son and as the promised Messiah, but not as future substitutionary sacrifice.<sup>29</sup> They were believing Jews under the Old Covenant. The 'Lord's Prayer', which Jesus taught His disciples to pray, was therefore no 'Christian' prayer, and neither was the Sermon on the Mount directly applicable teachings for believers of the New Covenant. It was the apostle Paul, Kenyon claimed, who much later had the significance of Jesus' redemption and this work's implications for the Christians revealed to him. This revelation was allegedly hidden both in the Four Gospels and in Acts.

In spite of the ideological reason (rejection of dispensationalism in favor of a distinguishing between the Old and New Covenant, respectively, where the latter was initiated on the Day of Pentecost) having been changed, Kenyon had kept Darby and Scofield's hermeneutical approach to the Four Gospels, as is evidenced by the three men's dating the church to its Pentecostal experience in Acts 2. In Kenyon's published writings he mentions dispensationalism only once. This reference hardly makes any sense as far as Darby and Scofield's versions are concerned. The context was a misunderstood critique of the alleged dispensationalists' rejection of the validity of specific Bible promises. These promises related to God's healing intervention as a response to a Christian's faith activation. Kenyon wrote:

The Name [of Jesus] has lost none of its authority; none of its power, and the effort to rob us of some of the major portions of Scripture by a false dispensational division of Scripture fails utterly, for in Paul's ministry with the Gentiles and his epistles to the Gentiles, he gives the Name of Jesus a place that absolutely refutes the entire teaching of those who would put the power of the Name of Jesus over into the kingdom period.<sup>30</sup>

It is important to keep in mind that when Kenyon on a couple of occasions referred to the time period of the New Covenant (lasting from the Day of Pentecost to the rapture of the church) as "the dispensation of the Holy Spirit" and/or as "the dispensation of the recreated human spirit"<sup>31</sup>, he did not think of dispensationalism at all but was distinguishing between the Old and New Covenant, respectively. Kenyon's original view regarding specific tests and responsibilities was not only toned down, but completely gone. Just as was the case within the Holiness movement (and later within the Pentecostal movement), Kenyon assented to Darby and Scofield's *eschatology* (pretribulational premillennialism), but disassociated from dispensationalism's *ecclesiology*.

As already documented, Kenyon's hermeneutical approach to the Four Gospels (versus the Pauline Epistles) was a 'remnant' from the dispensationalist beliefs he held during the 1890s.

However, Kenyon gave this hermeneutical approach an alternative motivation and explanation which is only partly reliable:

In the early days of my ministry, German philosophy gained the ascendancy in many of our theological institutions, and there came a strange new slogan. You heard it continuously - "back to Jesus." It captured my imagination but I didn't know what it meant. Then I heard one of our leaders declare that Paul had altogether too much influence over the Church, and that we are to give up the Pauline Revelation and go "back to Jesus." That was really the beginning of my study of the Pauline revelation.<sup>32</sup>

In his studies, Kenyon continued, he soon discovered that the authors of the Four Gospels, despite their being familiar with the so-called 'Pauline revelation', hardly left any traces of these insights in their own writings. "Then I saw one of the greatest literary miracles of all ages," Kenyon claimed:

The four men who had written these Gospels, had been shut in, as it were, by the Holy Spirit. They had been unable to give their interpretation of the miracles or what the miracles meant. They wrote only what He had permitted, or rather, had inspired them to write.<sup>33</sup>

It is clear that Kenyon attempted to make himself and his teachings somewhat unique. This he did by referring to the entrance of 'modernistic liberalism' in American schools and universities as the point of departure for his original studies. These, in turn, resulted in his hermeneutical distinction between the Four Gospels and the Pauline epistles, a position which must hereby be rejected. Kenyon represented himself as more intellectually sophisticated than was warranted.<sup>34</sup> Evidence of this is seen by his carefully covering up in his published books the traces of who he was indebted to doctrinally. Just as was the case with his predecessors within the Holiness movement, Kenyon also had an eclectic bend. He uncritically borrowed pieces of doctrine from various, and at times mutually conflicting sources. This at times makes it difficult to adequately comprehend his doctrinal concerns. 'Remnants' from the Plymouth Brethren's legacy time and again turn up in his books, as already documented through Kenyon's use of the term 'dispensation' – albeit in a quite different meaning than how Darby and Scofield understood the term.

Kenyon had also kept Scofield's end time apostasy (at least during the late 1920s) although this particular doctrine appeared as a somewhat isolated theme instead of as an extension of Darby and Scofield's ecclesiological position. One is certainly justified in asking why Kenyon discarded dispensationalism and at the same time held on to the doctrine of the end time apostasy when it is clear that this doctrine is an integral part of dispensationalism. Could it be that Kenyon, the eclectic, was in hindsight was incapable of recalling from which systems of thought the various pieces of his own thinking originally belonged? This might

explain why the end time apostasy remained in Kenyon's thinking even at such a late date as the late 1920s. Kenyon even kept the term 'remnant' - albeit not as a designation for the people of God who stayed faithful to God's specific tests and responsibilities during the particular dispensation to which they belonged. Kenyon wrote:

I believe that God planned that we should walk in the fullness of the Divine Life; that we should dare to take our positions as sons and daughters of God, and that the hour is coming before the Lord's return in which a remnant of the body will rise and walk before the Father in the fullness of the New Creation Life.<sup>35</sup>

While the 'remnant' within the dispensationalist system of thought is cast within a *negative* theological framework wherein all dispensations end in judgment, Kenyon anchored his remnant thinking in a *positive* eschatology where Jesus is expected to return for a 'victorious' Church. Previously, Kenyon had assented to partial rapture eschatology, i.e., the concept that only an elite group from among the genuine believers would be raptured to heaven:

I used to think there were certain classes of the children of God who would not be resurrected or translated. I can't believe that anymore. [...] Some teach, and base their teaching on Matthew 25: that only those who have received the Holy Spirit and have spoken in tongues will be taken [raptured]. That is incorrect. [...] I do not believe in a partial rapture.<sup>36</sup>

Could it be that Kenyon's remnant thinking reflected a combination of dispensationalism and partial-rapturism where only the *term* 'remnant' was rooted in dispensationalism and hereby connected to the partial-rapture position – albeit in such a way that the elitist bent exclusively was what Kenyon had kept from partial-rapturism, as the very doctrine itself had been rejected. At the risk of being disrespectful, could we suggest that it is this elitist approach and attitude which is in fact *the* remnant from dispensationalism (and partial-rapturism as well) that Kenyon retained? If so, could we also conclude that Kenyon's overblown sense of his own starring role in the end-times drama, combined with his theological eclecticism, explains why he retained Darby's and Scofield's hermeneutical approach to the *Four Gospels* while clearly rejecting, or simply neglecting, the application and implications of their interpretive schema in all other areas of his teaching?

ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 71.

<sup>2</sup> Sandeen, *ibid.*, 222.

<sup>3</sup> Larry Vance Crutchfield, "The Doctrine of Ages and Dispensations as Found in the Published Works of John Nelson Darby (1800-82)." Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1995, 131.

<sup>4</sup> Crutchfield, *ibid.*, 132.

<sup>5</sup> "And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto A-bīm'e-lēch, king of the Philistines unto Ge'rār. And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of" (Gen 26:1-2).

<sup>6</sup> John Nelson Darby, *The Collected Writings of J.N. Darby*. Vol. 2, 378. Quoted from Crutchfield, *ibid.*, 171.

<sup>7</sup> John Nelson Darby, *Collected Writings of J.N. Darby*. Vol. 4, 238. Quoted from Crutchfield, *ibid.*, 185.

<sup>8</sup> "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Acts 20:29-30.

<sup>9</sup> Crutchfield, *ibid.*, 184.

<sup>10</sup> Crutchfield, *ibid.*, 213.

<sup>11</sup> Crutchfield, *ibid.*, 219.

<sup>12</sup> E.W. Kenyon, "The Decadence of Faith." *Bethel Trumpet* vol. 3 no. 6 (Oct. 1902), 133.

<sup>13</sup> "The Bible Conference." *Bethel Trumpet* vol. 3 no. 4 (June 1902), 120.

<sup>14</sup> "Editorial notes." *Bethel Trumpet* vol. 2 no. 11 (Jan. 1902), 80.

<sup>15</sup> E.W. Kenyon, "Book of Romans Chapter 8:14." Unpublished sermon notes, dated May 8 1928.

<sup>16</sup> E.W. Kenyon, "God's justice." Unpublished sermon notes, dated May 20 1928.

<sup>17</sup> "The Plymouth Brethren teach that when a man accepts Jesus Christ that he receives eternal life and forgiveness of sins, but that the old adamic nature remains in him. They hold that through all the after life there is the struggle between the fallen nature and the new nature. They teach that it is your business to repress the adamic nature and uphold the new nature that is within you. The old Chesic [Keswick] movement which began in England, had in it such men as Andrew Murray, F.B. Meyer, G. Campbell Morgan and Webb Peplow [...] You perhaps can remember when the Chesic [sic!] movement swept over this nation. [...] It was the most healthy movement that ever came. It produced some of the finest men and women, we have many Christians today. I do not know just how far the Plymouth Brethren fellowshiped this movement. They held that the new birth was not a new creation but was the incoming of a new nature." (E.W. Kenyon, "The new birth." Unpublished sermon notes, dated June 17 1928.

<sup>18</sup> C.E.D., "God's work in Wakefield." *Tabernacle Trumpet* vol. 1 no. 3 (Dec. 1898), 35: "Brother Kenyon and myself went before God and took a people out of Wakefield for 'His own name's sake'."

<sup>19</sup> Dale Hawthorne Simmons, *E.W. Kenyon and the Postbellum Pursuit of Peace, Power, and Plenty* (Lanham, Maryland and London: Scarecrow Press, 1997), 25.

<sup>20</sup> "While [Darby] wrote indefatigably, he was indifferent to literary distinction. He was primarily concerned with the glory of Christ not self-aggrandizement. He valued simplicity of thought and understanding above style; consequently many of his sentences are complex and involved, with paragraph contained within paragraph, in an attempt to explain and guard against misunderstanding. Unfortunately, his attempts at clarity only confuses the reader, since his style becomes so abstruse that the reader loses the original thought in the complexity of qualifying phrases." (Clarence B. Bass, *Backgrounds to dispensationalism. Its historical genesis and ecclesiastical implications* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960], 60.

<sup>21</sup> "Dispensational truth." *Tabernacle Trumpet* vol. 1 no. 2 (Nov. 1898), 22.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> E.W. Kenyon, "Has a woman the right to baptize and perform the ordinances of the church?" Unpublished sermon notes, dated August 22 1927. Another, and highly subjective, indication that the apostasy had already begun, Kenyon finds in the fact that those of his Bible school students with background among the Free Will Baptists, were required further studies at Andover Newton Theological School before they could be recognized as ministers within their own denomination. Kenyon's own lack of formal competence even resulted in his not being permitted to hold the graduation sermon. (Simmons, *ibid.*, 39). Kenyon's comments on this are, as follows: "The apostasy is on us. I have suffered and lost everything because of it. When I came to [the West] coast I had no place. I wouldn't bow down. [...] I tried to stem the tide. They would take my students and they would do this: they say: you will have to have six months down at Newton or you can't get a standing in the denomination." (E.W. Kenyon: "Revelation." Lecture 4, unpublished and undated article.) Kenyon's judgment over 'apostate' denominations is not less radical in the light of the following: "Here is a peculiar thing, there has never been a denomination yet, that lost out spiritually and lost its power, and ever regained it in the history of the church." (E.W. Kenyon: "Divorce." Unpublished sermon notes, dated January 21 1926; this sermon was held in Bethel Tempel, Los Angeles.)

<sup>24</sup> "It is not apostate because the Roman Catholic Church believes in the Deity of Jesus. It believes in the apostles Creed." (E.W. Kenyon: "Judgments of Revelation." Unpublished article, dated March 9 1930.) In a different context, though, Kenyon writes: "The fact is, there is a grave question as to whether the Roman Catholic church is a Church, in the divine sense, at all." (E.W. Kenyon: "The Great Apostasy." *The Living Message* vol. 3 no. 5 (May 1930), 25-26.)

<sup>25</sup> Kenyon, "The great apostasy," 26-28. It is natural to interpret Kenyon as saying that *he* was the man with the unique message. Four years earlier he had proclaimed: "I have many letters asking me to head a new denomination, and saying, 'We will all come with you.' I recognized there was one Lord but I could not tell them. They would not understand it. I would say, 'It is not time yet.'" (E.W. Kenyon, "The Lordship of Christ." Unpublished sermon notes, dated December 30 1926.) Also cf. E.W. Kenyon, "S.D. Gordon. A Tribute." Unpublished manuscript: "We are waiting, almost feverishly waiting, for another voice to come out of the darkness and the confusion of this age of self worship. It only requires one man, but we cry 'How long Oh Lord, before our Moses [Kenyon?] will come?' There must be a new message,-an emphasis placed where it has never been placed before."

<sup>26</sup> "There is a seven-fold, God-given test [to measure and try doctrine]. (1 - You will find all truth in germ forms in Genesis. [...] 2 - You will find all New Testament teachings in type in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. [...] 3 - You will find all teachings in the psalmedy [sic!] (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon) especially in Psalms and Job. [...] 4 - All New Testament Truth can be found in the prophets. [...] 5 - That all truths of the gospel that are to be preached in the church are contained in the four books Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. [...] 6 - You will find the entire gospel message in the book of Acts, preached and acted by the apostles. 7 - You will find all the doctrines in Romans, Galatians and Hebrews. [...]) You will find it in Scofield's Bible. He changed the name of it, but he got it from a tract of mine. That was over thirty years ago. (E.W. Kenyon: "The place held by the Word of God in the early church." Unpublished sermon notes, dated May 15 1928.)

<sup>27</sup> "I have been a theologian," Kenyon claims. "I spent years in theology. I am one of the few men who have written a complete theology [*Father and His Family*] independent of the old theologians, but I have given it all up and come back simply to the Word." (E.W. Kenyon: "Righteousness Restored." Dictated article, dated April 6 1934.)

<sup>28</sup> "Dispensational truth." *Tabernacle Trumpet* vol. 1 no. 2 (Nov. 1898), 22.

<sup>29</sup> E.W. Kenyon, *The Two Kinds of Faith* (Seattle, Washington: E.W. Kenyon, 1942), 11-13. Dispensationalists do not reject the validity of Holiness-Pentecostal experiences due to dispensationalism per se, but due to the fact that most of them also are cessationists.

<sup>30</sup> E.W. Kenyon, *The Wonderful Name of Jesus* (Los Angeles, California: Westcoast Publishing Co., 1927), 70-71.

<sup>31</sup> E.W. Kenyon, *The Two Kinds of Life*. 2nd. ed. (Seattle, Washington: E.W. Kenyon, 1943), 103; *idem*, *The Hidden Man of the Heart*. 9th. ed. (Lynnwood, Washington: Kenyon Gospel Publishing Society, 1970), 61. George M. Marsden notes in *Fundamentalism and American Culture. The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 88: "By the 1870s when the dispensationalist movement began to take hold in America, holiness teachers already commonly spoke of "the Dispensation of the SPIRIT.""

<sup>32</sup> E.W. Kenyon, *New Creation Realities* (Seattle, Washington: E.W. Kenyon, 1945), 16.

<sup>33</sup> Kenyon, *ibid.*, 17.



<sup>34</sup> "The great body of the most advanced Bible teachers today, are held in the bondage of Sense knowledge. [...] If we are New Creations created in Christ Jesus, let us ask the Father to set the limits of that New Creation, instead of allowing theologians to do that." (E.W. Kenyon, *In His Presence*. 14 th. ed. [Lynnwood, Washington: Kenyon Gospel Publishing Society, 1969], 23.) "One said who read [Kenyon's book] manuscript, 'That book should be read by the leaders of our Nation.'" (E.W. Kenyon: *What happened from the Cross to the Throne*. [Seattle, Washington: E.W. Kenyon, 1945], 203.) "I don't know of a thing that is of any value to me that I have gotten from any ecclesiastical source." (E.W. Kenyon, "God's justice." Unpublished sermon notes, dated May 20 1928.)

<sup>35</sup> Kenyon, *In His Presence*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> E.W. Kenyon, "The second coming of the Lord." Unpublished sermon notes, dated June 22 1928. I am not necessarily convinced that *Kenyon's* previous partial-rapture position included the view that glossolalia was normative in order to qualify for the rapture. It could very well be that Kenyon himself had rejected partial-rapturism *prior* to the initiation of the Pentecostal movement. His reference to tongues here as mandatory for experiencing the rapture, might be due to the fact that his audience might have been unfamiliar with the partial rapture position dissasociated from the tongues issue. We cannot ascertain whether his association of tongues to partial rapturism was due to (1) an illegitimate identification of partial rapturism and the belief among many Oneness Pentecostals where people were not considered 'saved' unless they spoke in tongues or (2) was an allusion to early Pentecostal belief where glossolalia indeed had an elitic function serving as the sealing of the 'Bride of Christ'.

Dispensationalism is an approach to biblical interpretation which states that God uses different means of working with people (Israel and the Church) during different periods of history.Â Innocence (Genesis 1 -3) - Adam and Eve before they sinned. Conscience (Genesis 3-8) - First sin to the flood. Civil Government (Genesis 9-11) - After the flood, government. Dispensationalism It can be hard to summarize dispensational theology as a whole because in recent years multiple forms of it have developed. In general, there are three main distinctives. First, dispensationalism sees God as structuring His relationship with mankind through several stages of revelation which mark off different dispensations, or stewardship arrangements.Â Second, dispensationalism holds to a literal interpretation of Scripture. This does not deny the existence of figures of speech and non-literal language in the Bible, but rather means that there is a literal meaning behind the figurative passages. Third, as a result of this literal interpretation of Scripture, dispensationalism holds to a distinction between Israel (even believing Israel) and the church.