

The Rise of Unvangelicalism

In 1825, young John Nelson Darby became a curate in the Church of Ireland (Hummel, 2023, p. 19). Centuries before, when King Henry VIII established Anglicanism as the state religion of England, he declared it to be the state religion for the subjugated Irish population as well. Despite efforts by the local English landlord class to impose allegiance to the Anglican Church, the Irish population continued to look to Catholic Rome for their spiritual leadership. This conflicted sense of allegiance became more politically charged in 1801 when the British government declared the formation of the United Kingdom within which Ireland was elevated from formal subservience to a nominal political parity with England and Scotland. This transition to Irish 'citizenship' brought the embarrassment of the longstanding Irish rejection of the Anglican state religion into sharper focus, and the Church of Ireland initiated an 'evangelical' program to convert the general populace. As with a number of the other young Anglican clerics in Ireland at the time, John Nelson Darby was not assigned a parish but rather was sent on horseback across the countryside to convert the local populace away from the papacy (Hummel, 2023, pp. 19-20). Darby resigned his position in the Anglican Church after one year, citing pressure from the clerical hierarchy in demanding that the Irish who converted from Catholicism to Anglicanism must also swear allegiance to the British Crown, a demand that few Irish would willingly accept.

What John Nelson Darby's brief experience as an 'evangelist' apparently did accomplish was to focus his attention upon the key distinctions between the Gospels, formally accepted by both the Catholic and Anglican Churches, and the more specific political demands of each state religion. Throughout the history of Western Christianity, a central function of state religion has been to turn upon its head the assertion by Jesus that "the meek shall inherit the earth". First, the *Sheep/Cattle* were to be convinced that their entrance into Heaven would depend upon their willingness to accept the exploitations that they face during their life on earth. Second, all of society was to be trained to accept the premise that the moral strictures laid out in the Gospels do not apply to the *Best* in the same sense that they apply to the *Cattle*.

The Protestant Reformation and the resultant Wars of Religion created the opportunity for rulers across Western and Central Europe to either maintain the spiritual authority of the papacy or else declare a different form of Christianity as the state religion as King Henry VIII of England had done. While the clerics of the Protestant rulers generally lacked the accepted authority to directly grant admission into Heaven, they were fully empowered to instill into the *Sheep/Cattle* the expectations required for them to be saved.

But what of the Protestant reformers who lacked a suitable royal/noble sponsor? In this circumstance, if a religious leader wished to create a state religion, he would first have to create a state sect. As illustrated by John Calvin, the question of who will and who will not become a citizen in this future state is seen as essentially synonymous with who is and is not among the 'Elect' who are bound for Heaven. While the Leader may take the lead in recognizing who has been infused with the grace of God, this is generally seen as a more shared authority than in the case of the Roman papacy. Within this state sect in which the Elect understand themselves to be the future *Best*, the crucial imperative is to build that future state. Reflecting this fact, morality among Calvinists came to be measured largely in terms of production and material progress.

Yet what of the preacher who sees himself as the leader of a nominally non-political religious sect? As there will be no governmental structure to affirm the dividing line between the Elect and the un-Elect, the starkness of that divide must be more firmly expressed directly within the tenets of that belief. Furthermore, given the assumption that this sect will exist within the body of the larger society, the opportunity is created to devise a 'morality' that does not support but merely feeds off that larger society. The cheaper the 'ticket to Heaven' within the sect, the bigger the market share that the preacher can anticipate. By explicitly transforming the meaning of morality from being a judgment upon the actions that one take toward others to an understanding of morality as the imposition of judgment upon others, the price of that 'ticket to Heaven' can be reduced to little more than the membership dues within the sect. In exchange, the Elect can be assured of their transcendent superiority over the un-Elect both here on earth as well as in the hereafter. On the other hand, such a perspective creates a theological dilemma for anyone who sincerely wishes to see themselves as a Christian. The words of Jesus as recorded in the four Gospels are fundamentally incompatible with such a parasitic view of morality.

These general insights gave rise to the transformative inventions of John Nelson Darby. One of his inventions has become world famous while the other has remained largely clandestine. If the decision for being Elect has been made before one dies, then why should the Elect have to wait until Judgment Day before going to Heaven? For that matter, why should the Elect even need to go through the trauma of death? Recast as a marketing tool for growing a new 'Christian' sect, what could provide a more emotionally appealing sales pitch than the assurance that the faithful will be directly raised bodily into Heaven without ever having to die?

After all, even the Son of God had to suffer and die on the cross before He was raised into Heaven. Maybe He died so that we wouldn't have to. In meeting those marketing requirements, Darby recognized that he would need to redefine the interpretation of "caught up together" from 1 Thessalonians 4:17 to propose that the Elect would be drawn up into Heaven before the beginning of the period of Tribulations. Darby attempted to maintain a superficiality of consistency with the biblical text by insisting that his proposed 'Rapture' event would occur in secret (Ehrman, 2023, pp. 71-72). Since Christ would not be seen on earth by those who were left behind, this wouldn't count as the Second Coming.

The second key concept of Darbyite theology is dispensationalism, the idea that biblical time is divided into discrete eras. Each such era begins with God granting a specific dispensation (set of divine expectations) to a historically different category of 'Chosen' people. Each era would then end with those people having failed at the dispensation that had been offered to them. Although later Darbyites would expand this idea into creating seven distinct biblical eras, for John Nelson Darby there was only one truly crucial division boundary within biblical time, the one that separates 'law' from 'grace'. The politically naïve might immediately conclude that such a division is nothing more than the boundary between the Old and New Testaments. Yet in reality, nothing could be further from the truth. For Darby the crucial event that divides biblical history in two is the ascension of Christ into Heaven. The life of Jesus - His teachings, His spiritual example, even His suffering and death on the cross - all of these are to be understood as a mere appendage to the Laws of Moses, applicable to Jews but spiritually irrelevant to Christians. In Darbyism, the path to Heaven for the Christian is to be found in the writings of the New Testament Epistles, and more specifically only in their discussions of divine grace.

While much of the debate between the Protestant Reformists and the Catholic Counter-Reformists had centered upon the role of grace vs. good works in obtaining salvation, John Nelson Darby carried this argument to its obvious limit. Going beyond either the Catholic Church or the Calvinists, the Darbyite God plays no active role in determining who will or will not go to Heaven. All are offered the opportunity of divine grace, and the receiving of a 'ticket to Heaven' requires nothing more than that individual's commitment to believe that they have received such a ticket. While Darby did write about an expectation for personal piety in the saved Christian, the underlying rejection of any role for conformity to the 'law' in the salvation of a Christian inevitably gave rise to his disciples' advocacy of 'free grace' (Hummel, 2023, p. 11). By this doctrine, if the believer lives their life according to the precepts of the Gospels, then so much the better, but whether or not they do so is irrelevant to their assured place in Heaven. According to the doctrine of Darbyite salvation, it is exclusively the willingness of the 'Christian' to accept the idea that any sin they commit will be forgiven is both necessary and sufficient to insure their eternal life in Heaven.

Via Darby's 'Rapture', the traditional delayed reward concept used to induce the *Cattle* to passively accept their worldly plight has been replaced with a potentially negligible delay with no associated suffering. By the concept of 'free grace', the pangs of moral guilt that the *Best* might feel for their exploitation of the *Cattle* are washed away. It is extraordinary that to this day Darbyism has continued to successfully masquerade behind the pretense of being 'evangelical', that is to say quite literally, one who brings forth the teachings of the Gospels. John Nelson Darby's explicit dismissal of a spiritual and moral role for the Gospels in the life of a 'Christian' is why those who embrace the doctrine of the free grace rapture should be given the title of 'Unvangelical'.

Before considering the more specifically political aspects of Darby's doctrines and their role in transforming the landscape of American religious practice, we must emphasize that the long running controversy regarding the role of grace vs. good works in the doctrine of Christian salvation is principally an artifact of institutional self-interest. As discussed at more length in the main text (Chap 27), soon after Christianity was declared the state religion of the Roman Empire, Pope Damasus I commissioned Jerome of Stridon to translate the Greek New Testament (Septuagint) into Latin. In a number of instances, Jerome's mistranslations gave rise to an enhanced claim of papal authority, none more significant than Jesus' words to Peter in Matthew 16:19. Translation of the Eastern Orthodox Bible into English as yields:

"I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven."

Contrast this to the corresponding text as it has entered into Western Christian tradition through Jerome's translation into Latin (NRSV-CE):

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

With this shift in the word tense applied to the Greek verbs for bound and loosed, the spiritual dynamic of the text, and indeed of the religion as a whole, was fundamentally transformed. Rather than Peter admitting into Heaven those who the Godhead had granted salvation, in the rendering of Jerome, Peter and those who claim to be his spiritual descendants directly determine the fate of human souls. The role of God was thus reduced to that of hospitality host for the guests who the bishops of Rome have sent to Heaven.

Let us compare to a more earthly system of selective admissions. Suppose for the sake of argument that Harvard University were to abandon its legacy admission program so that no longer could any applicant simply assume that they will be admitted. By the admission statistics that Harvard publicly releases, we know that those students who gain admittance have, on average, exceptionally strong academic accomplishments. Does this necessarily imply that an applicant whose high school grades, test scores, and extracurricular activities appear to match the average Harvard admission performance will therefore necessarily be accepted? Yet if 'good works' alone is not sufficient, what about possessing an unwavering faith? What probability of success would you ascribe to the applicant whose personal statement in their application package admits that they failed many of their high school courses and never received a diploma, but they have an unquestioning faith that they truly deserve to be a Harvard student? Regardless of how good an applicant considers their own application to be, the admission decision lies with Harvard.

Focusing exclusively on the role of Christianity in John Nelson Darby's historical theology misses the broader picture that he described. A central principle of Darby's explanation of the Bible was his explicit rejection of the premise that the Church had assumed the spiritual role of 'Israel' in becoming the 'Chosen People' after the crucifixion of Christ. As most definitively argued by Augustine in the early fifth century, the Catholic Church has assumed such a role for itself. In this interpretation, due to the Jews having rejected the coming of their own savior, they have suffered the biblically predicted Tribulations in the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. and the associated diaspora. Drawing upon the biblical perspective provided by the Book of Revelation, in Augustine's scenario, Christianity had entered into the promised millennium under the spiritual leadership of the Catholic Church. During the Protestant Reformation, a number of reformers rejected the assumption that the Western world was currently in the biblical 'millennium' since, by doing so, they undercut the Catholic Church's self-described status as the new 'Israel' in justifying its biblical claim to spiritual legitimacy. Protestant reformers typically saw their own emerging sects as the justified leaders in either a future or a revamped ongoing biblical millennium.

John Nelson Darby took the Israel/Church distinction of the Chosen People to a whole new level (Hummel, 2023, p. 11). Darby insisted that all biblical references to Israel explicitly refer to the Jewish people. The Book of Revelation provides by far the most detailed biblical description of the End-of-Times, and it is commonly understood to be explicitly centered upon events that will unfold in the biblical Israel. From the Darbyite perspective, most, if not all, of Revelation should be treated as being part of the Jewish Bible. The historical picture that Darby had in mind was succinctly summarized in the biblical time chart as drawn by one of his leading disciples Charles Stanley (Hummel, 2023, p. 57). The initial segment of Stanley's biblical timeline simply denotes the past history of Israel. An upright line then marks the ascension of Christ. This is then followed by a closed circle that explicitly denotes the present Christian era. The far side of that circle has another upright line that marks the rapture of those who have joined "the Church of God". Immediately following is the "Judgment". With Christ's Second Coming being indicated by another vertical line, the millennium of His kingdom in power will then unfold (denoted by another circle). After a short time segment that denotes the escape and subsequent defeat of Satan as described in Revelation, eternity will then commence with no Day of Judgment at the End-of-Times. The Tribulations and Armageddon are the "Judgment". Only those who have already been raptured and those who will be allowed to enter into the millennium are not to face extermination. Crucially, every segment of Charley Stanley's biblical time chart, except the circle of the Christian era, bears a dotted underline which explicitly denotes the history of the Jews. The pictorial message is that the life and death of Jesus was the fulfillment of God's dispensation for the Jews, and they had spectacularly failed to recognize Him as their Messiah. As a result, God banished the Jews into the wilderness of their prolonged diaspora as their biblical timeline went into a prolonged hold. The 'stand alone' Christian era will determine which Gentiles embrace the spiritual significance of the Darbyite 'Christ'. The Jews will then be called back from their diaspora. The unbelieving Jews will return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple, and then Satan, the False Prophet, and the Evil Empire will emerge to bring forth suffering in the Tribulations. In response, the "Lord Jesus will come to earth bringing His saints with Him (who were caught up to meet Him in the air), and will execute judgment upon the Beast, the False Prophet, and all Western Powers". "Then Ammon, Moab, Edom and all Eastern nations will be dealt with by the Lord". With this invincible 'Christ' and His Raptured Saints, Armageddon is not seen by the Darbyites as a battle but rather as the extermination of the Gentiles who had failed to enter into the Church of God.

The rapture and the divine retribution are more soothingly described as “Christ coming for His Church” and “Christ coming with His Church” (Hummel, 2023, p. 62). The implication of Darby’s doctrine that the final era of Jewish biblical history would require the mass extermination of all earthly Gentiles by the hands of Christ and His Raptured Saints surely caused some discomfiture. However, over time, the perspective has shifted as to whether the Raptured Saints’ role in exterminating the unbelieving Gentiles should be seen as an inconvenient divine obligation or rather as a key benefit of their having accepted free grace.

After leaving his clerical position in the Anglican Church, Darby moved to England and joined the newly formed sect of the Plymouth Brethren for which he quickly became the leader (Hummel, 2023, p. 21). However, the stridently non-orthodox tenets of Darby’s belief system led to an irredeemable split yielding the smaller group of devoted Exclusive Brethren and the larger group of disaffected members who formed the Open Brethren sect (Hummel, 2023, pp. 24-25). Unlike the Mormons or the Millerites, other Christian sects established at that time which openly celebrated their charismatic leader, the name of John Darby has remained unknown to the general populace largely because his disciples pointedly avoided citing his writings by name but rather chose to claim that their arguments emerge directly from the Scripture and not from “the reasonings and speculations of men” (Hummel, 2023, p. 29).

Mid-nineteenth century Britain marked the blossoming of the cult of Progress with its associated scientific cult of Darwinism. This was hardly fertile ground for Darby’s intensely pessimistic End-of-Times doctrine. In search of a more receptive audience, Darby and a number of his disciples travelled to the United States to spread his doctrine during the mid-1860s as the Civil War progressed toward its end. Over the next decade, Darby would make a total of seven trips to America where the pessimism of his doctrines fit the mood of the post-war society (Hummel, 2023, p. 37). His greatest impact was made in the cities along the border between the North and the South, most particularly in St. Louis. Here the political attitudes both during and after the war were far more mixed than elsewhere in the country. To a degree beyond any other state, throughout much of the war Missouri was plagued by internal warfare between forces that supported the North and those that supported the South. In the immediate aftermath of the war, there was a strong call for ‘reconciliation’ there and in other Northern border states. In practical terms, this effort involved working to emphasize the common bonds that tied together the white populations of both the Northern and Southern states. This sense of rekindled camaraderie quite explicitly rested upon actively de-emphasizing the issues of economic and political rights for the recently freed slave population (Hummel, 2023, pp. 85-94).

One major figure in this regional ‘reconciliation’ movement was the St. Louis Presbyterian minister James Hall Brookes who aggressively embraced the pre-millennial doctrine promoted by Darby and his Exclusive Brethren allies (Hummel, 2023, pp. 51-52). In the hands of Brookes, the Darbyite philosophy of exclusive inclusiveness proved to be highly effective in the political climate of the border states. The extraordinary expansion of government-funded industry during the Civil War had dramatically expanded the wealth and power of the Northeast which quickly evolved into the Gilded Age of post-war America. In this intensifying economic battle, much of the population in the border states increasingly saw themselves politically aligned with the now more impoverished South. While the post-war elite of the Northeast aggressively advanced the post-millennial doctrines that were then in fashion within the British political cult of ‘Progress’, Brookes came to dominate the Darbyite style of the more pessimistic pre-millennialism in the United States for the next three decades (Hummel, 2023, p. 52). Brookes found a valuable ally in Dwight L. Moody, the most famous post-Civil War evangelist in the English-speaking world. While Moody and his disciples did not fully embrace all of the Darbyite faith, he was similarly committed to the cause of regional ‘reconciliation’, the partitioning of society into a Jim Crow social order, and the rapture of the Elect (Hummel, 2023, pp. 39,89-90).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the rhetoric of the less explicitly racist regional ‘reconciliation’ argument had been largely supplanted by the expanding acceptance of Darwinian racial science that provided a much more direct justification for the hardening Jim Crow era. Yet that expansion in Darwinist doctrine provided the political opening for a reincarnation of Darbyite Unvangelicalism. The widespread political controversy regarding whether humans evolved from monkeys was seen by many as the last straw in the long continued discussions over whether science could be seen as compatible with biblical teachings. When coupled with the historical literary criticism of religious writings that was sweeping the academic world at that time, the so-called American Fundamentalist movement emerged in response (Hummel, 2023, p. 160). The unifying doctrine of this movement was that all biblical texts that are not clearly allegorical in character must be taken as the literal Word of God. One of the practical problems with that intellectual approach is that various biblical verses appear to be in contradiction with each other. Coupled to that challenge is the related presumption that all significant moral or spiritual questions should be answered in the literal interpretation of the text. As a result, biblical interpretation becomes more challenging than it might at first appear.

This circumstance created a seemingly golden opportunity for the Darbyite movement. One practical benefit of Darby's dispensationalism principle is that each time segment of the Bible is assumed to address a different population and that God had addressed His message within the biblical text to the issues specifically facing that population. As a result, any apparent contradiction between the verses from different dispensational eras can be dismissed as irrelevant. The leadership of this new phase of Darbyism fell to the perjurer, fraudster, and convicted forger Cyrus I. Scofield (Clark, 2007, pp. 90-91; Sizer, 2004, pp. 74-75). Under the direct personal influence of James Hall Brookes, Scofield transitioned his trade to that of preacher and plagiarist, initially in St. Louis and then later as pastor of the First Congregational Church in Dallas (Hummel, 2023, p. 83). After awarding himself a doctorate in divinity studies (Clark, 2007, p. 91), Scofield moved into a position of leadership among the Darbyites at a time when that sect was attempting to maintain their political alliance with the Fundamentalist followers of Dwight L. Moody.

On a broader scale, there was a distinct political economic dimension to the theological controversies of the day. The brothers Lyman and Milton Stewart, co-founders of the California-based Union Oil, funded the foundation of Biola University (1908) that would become a major center for advancing the cause of dispensationalism. The Lyman brothers also funded the publication of the twelve-volume *Fundamentals* that would serve to be the ultimate expression of the Moody movement (Hummel, 2023, pp. 115-118, 147-148). It would be in the eleventh volume of the *Fundamentals* that Cyrus I. Scofield's essay *The Grace of God* would baldly lay out the assertion that God's "free unadulterated grace" requires nothing but the mental assent of the sinner (Hummel, 2023, p. 148). The Stewart brothers willingness to heavily invest in the political shaping of pre-millennial dispensationalism and biblical Fundamentalism strongly reflected their intense animosity toward their overwhelmingly dominant competitor John D. Rockefeller who drew upon the profits from his mammoth Standard Oil Company to carry out a widely publicized leveraged buyout of the liberal Protestant clerisy as its earlier support base within the American Populist movement was collapsing (Hummel, 2023, p. 116).

While the Darbyite and Moody Fundamentalist sects were united in their opposition to the politically ascendant secular humanism of the day, they were at odds with each other over the proper approach to rendering the correct literal translation of the Bible. Under that political inducement, Scofield set about composing the Scofield Reference Bible (1909). In contrast to John Nelson Darby's original division of the Bible into three distinct dispensations, Scofield's Bible included four more biblical eras within the earliest books of the Old Testament where the presumption of mutual consistency is quite severely tested. Building upon the King James Version, Scofield inserted introductory commentaries at the beginning of many sections of the Bible, along with extensive notes within the body of the biblical text. He also included an extensive system of "chain references" that established specific networks of interpretation between different verses within the Bible (Mangum & Sweetnam, 2009, p. 172). Most politically relevant, these various supplements to the biblical text were visually presented as being part of that biblical text and were treated as such by the Darbyite faithful. The editor of the contemporary *Sunday School Times* wrote that Scofield's Bible was a "God-planned, God-guided, God-energized work" (Sizer, 2004, p. 119). Scofield's 'divinely' inspired rewriting of the Bible is well illustrated by his introductory explanation of the 'true' meaning of the New Testament as highlighted by (Scofield, 1917, p. 989):

"II. The mission of Jesus was, *primarily*, to the Jews ... He was "made under the law" ... III. The *doctrines* of grace are to be sought in the Epistles, not in the Gospels"

Put more baldly, for the Unvangelical 'Christian' it is totally irrelevant whether Jesus or Barabbas was crucified that day, as long as the 'faithful' believe that this crucifixion secured their 'ticket to Heaven'.

This approach to spoon-feeding the 'proper' biblical interpretation in such excruciating detail established a "very successful marketing trend" for presenting Bible study tools (Mangum & Sweetnam, 2009, p. 172). By focusing upon establishing internally consistent explanations across a broad swath of the biblical text, while discretely ignoring the presumably insignificant exceptions, Darbyite dispensationalism came to be portrayed as a robust approach to literal biblical understanding. The Scofield Reference Bible became a smashing success. In less than ten years, a million copies of the Scofield Reference Bible had been sold, an exceptional number for the beginning of the twentieth century. Having been shepherded through its publication at Oxford University Press by its Exclusive Brethren manager Henry Frowde, to this day the Scofield Reference Bible remains the best-selling book in that company's history (Hummel, 2023, p. 134). The Scofield Reference Bible would continue to be a dominant influence within American evangelical congregations well into the 1960s (Ehrman, 2023, p. 68).

Dallas Theological Seminary (founded 1924) became ground zero for propagating Scofield's version of Darbyism and the free grace rapture doctrine (Hummel, 2023, pp. 182-183, 201, 310). The long running dominance of the Dallas Theological Seminary is well illustrated by *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to*

Lordship Salvation (1989) written by its professor of New Testament Zane Hodges which states that any form of active repentance for one's own sins was an insult to the authority of God and "a kind of faith/works synthesis which differs only insignificantly from official Roman Catholic dogma" (Hodges, 1989, p. 20). Thus, only those who sin without remorse can truly be godly. More specifically, with the spiritual value of Jesus Christ being defined exclusively in term of His having died for our sins, the individual who attempts to live without sin is merely attempting to render the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as being meaningless. From the logic expressed by Prof. Hodges, what greater tribute can we pay than to act as the antithesis of Jesus Christ in celebrating our viciousness and cruelty since such acts must serve to enhance the spiritual value of His death. Given the extraordinary political success of this message of Unvangelical (a)moral superiority across the last thirty-five years, can anyone propose a more compelling sign for the coming of the Anti-Christ?

While the Scofield Reference Bible became the primary vehicle by which the 'free grace rapture' concept came to be embedded into the consciousness of American Evangelicalism, within the world of American Fundamentalism the success of his Bible was by no means complete. On the operational side, various aspects of the Darbyite approach to biblical literalism continued to directly conflict with the approach favored by the disciples of Moody. On the more spiritual side, the stark absence of moral expectations for the faithful that characterizes Darbyism remained a major point of contention within the Fundamentalist movement as a whole. Prominent leaders of the Fundamentalist movement, such as William Jennings Bryan, flatly rejected the concept of dispensationalism and the blatant amorality of 'free grace' (Hummel, 2023, p. 167). Across the middle of the twentieth century there was considerable effort to draw upon the emotionally appealing aspects of Darbyite Unvangelicalism while rejecting or neglecting its more problematic aspects. As illustrated by the famed Fundamentalist preacher Billy Graham, the doctrine of the secret Rapture was drawn into the language of American Fundamentalism while the theological implications of that doctrine were significantly downplayed (Hummel, 2023, pp. 228-229).

As more fully described in Daniel G. Hummel's *The Rise and Fall of Dispensationalism* (2023), the era of Darbyite dispensationalism as a systematic formula for the literal interpretation of the Bible largely came to an end by the 1970s. In its place emerged what Hummel has named "pop dispensationalism" which is the 'pure and simple' free grace rapture doctrine largely devoid of any intellectual infrastructure or theological justification. Leading this transition was Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) which, with over 10 million copies sold by the end of the decade, became the leading 'non-fiction' bestseller of the 1970s. Another 18 million copies would be sold by the end of the century. As a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, Lindsey was fully aware of the theological rationalization of 'free grace'. Yet in making the facile availability of 'free grace' the central idea of his book, Lindsey never once included the word 'dispensational' in his commercial product (Hummel, 2023, p. 237). This dramatic commercial success led to a torrent of similar biblical apocalypse-inspired writings such as Zola Levitt and Thomas McCall's *Raptured* (1975) and Chuck Smith's *Snatched Away!* (1976) and *End Times* (1978). Tim LaHaye began his literary career in the apocalypse genre with *The Beginning of the End* (1972) well before his far more successful *Left Behind* series that debuted in 1995. In addition to the more obvious example of Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye and many of less celebrated Armageddon authors have all drawn heavily upon the *Scofield Reference Bible* for their literary portrayals (Mangum & Sweetnam, 2009, p. 218). Having thus seemingly stripped away any scriptural or theological basis for challenge, Unvangelicalism could now take on the world.

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