

Review of “Deceiving and Being Deceived”

By Ben Webb

I was recently asked to review an article entitled Deceiving and Being Deceived, in which Dave MacPherson makes some very serious accusations concerning the integrity of those who have chronicled the history of the pre-trib rapture doctrine. While I cannot attest to the accuracy of Mr. MacPherson's claim that certain historical writings have been misquoted and taken out of context, I do know that Mr. MacPherson is providing erroneous information concerning what most Dispensationalists believe. And since I know these charges concerning our beliefs are incorrect, I strongly suspect that Mr. MacPherson's charges concerning the history of the pre-trib rapture may also be incorrect. In the hope that my review of the article may help others who have similar questions, here is my reply to the lady who sent me the request:

Please rest assured that I am not trying to defend what was written by Morgan Edwards or Pseudo-Ephraem, or the writings of Thomas Ice, John Bray Tim LaHaye, or anyone else mentioned in the article. Nor am I trying to only find fault with the article by Dave MacPherson, who is probably much more educated than I am (I'm not sure if he has a Doctorate or not; but if he does, I would call him Dr. MacPherson out of respect). I am simply giving you my reaction. Although I am a Dispensationalist, I believe I can give you an unbiased viewpoint here.

In order to prove his point, Dave MacPherson must first hold Dispensationalists to a more strict definition than we ourselves do. Among Dispensationalists there is plenty of room for disagreement over the differences that Mr. MacPherson mentions. Even today, many Dispensationalists mix certain historical views and Covenant Theological concepts into their Dispensational teachings. Relatively few are strict "Darbyists" or "Scofieldians", yet that seems to be the standard to which Mr. MacPherson tries to hold us. But since most Dispensationalists do not hold themselves to the strict boundaries set by Darby or Scofield, about the only thing proved by Mr. MacPherson is that neither Morgan Edwards or Pseudo-Ephraem were Darbyists or Scofieldians.

Since the subject line of your e-mail is entitled "ODP Feedback", you are obviously aware that we Dispensationalists do not even agree among ourselves over the exact definition of Dispensationalism. As stated in the Category Description, you should especially notice the following statement:

"While there is no formalized classification structure with exacting definitions, most dispensationalists believe in some or all of seven dispensations, commonly known as

innocence, conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, and kingdom; although a few dispensationalists may recognize more than seven, and some only acknowledge three or four dispensations."

Now - because "there is no formalized classification structure with exacting definitions", I will expand on the rest of the statement: most (but certainly not all) dispensationalists believe in some or all of seven dispensations.....although a few dispensationalists may recognize more than seven (I know of a man who recognizes twelve dispensations; and Finis Dake has been accused of believing in 30 Dispensations), and - please especially note - "some only acknowledge three or four dispensations".

So, I hope you can see that there is ample room for disagreement in the "halls of Dispensationalism". For example, I have a Dake's Annotated Bible, in which Finis Dake (1902-1987) - a Dispensationalist - also includes concepts in his footnotes that mix Historic concepts and Covenant Theological concepts with Dispensationalism.

Plus, numerous Dispensationalists still believe and teach that the 'popery' has been playing the role of the "wicked one" in 2 Thess. 2:8, while "wearing a mask"; yet that is exactly the criticism that Dave MacPherson makes of Morgan Edwards, when he states,

'On p. 20 M.E. wrote that the "wicked one" (II Thess. 2:8) has "hitherto assumed no higher title than 'the vicar general of Christ on earth'" and described "Antichrist" as "popery" and a "succession of persons." (Promoters emphasize M.E.'s comments about the "last" Pope and ignore M.E.'s view that "popery" had "hitherto" (for many centuries) been playing the role of II Thess. 2:8's "wicked one" while wearing a "mask" (as he put it) - a first beast that historicism could easily see during the second beast's reign!)

Likewise, Mr. MacPherson states,

'Since historicism - and not preterism or futurism - is the only one of these three schools which often thinks "years" when reading "days" in the Bible, it isn't surprising to find such year/day historicism in M.E.'

But again, there are also numerous Dispensationalists today who do indeed think "years" when reading "days" in the Bible. Just check out some of the 190 or so Dispensational links I have on my site, and you can see this for yourself.

Next, Dave MacPherson exposes the vain humanity of men such as Thomas Ice, Tim Demy, Darby, Scofield, et al. Yes, these men were (and still are) indeed rascals. Aren't we all. So am I. Which is why we all need a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, there is indeed much misinformation concerning Dispensationalism and the pre-trib rapture doctrine, but it is coming from both sides of the aisle. I have not researched Dave MacPherson's claim that the writings of Morgan Edwards and Pseudo-Ephraem have been misquoted and taken out of context. But based upon the fact that Mr. MacPherson provides erroneous information concerning what Dispensationalists actually believe (again, he must hold us to a more strict definition than we hold ourselves to, in order to make his earlier case), I strongly suspect that Mr. MacPherson has also included erroneous information concerning the writings of Morgan Edwards and Pseudo-Ephraem.

... That is my reaction, and those are my observations. I hope this helps. I do respect Dave MacPherson, and consider him to be a brother in Christ, because he holds to the Five Fundamentals of the Faith. And if you hold to those fundamentals, I also consider you to be my sister in Christ.