

Development or Departure?

By George Zeller

Progressive Dispensationalism, a middle position between Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism, has been described as “The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology.”¹ Concerning the Kingdom, Progressive Dispensationalism seeks to combine two major tenets of two diverse theological systems. It tries to unite into one system the “already” of Covenant Theology (the Kingdom is already here) with the “not yet” of Dispensationalism (the Kingdom is yet future), resulting in a strange hybrid of iron and clay. Rather than a healthy advancement to the development of theology, Progressive Dispensationalism is a major departure from Essential Dispensationalism.

Progressive Dispensationalism is a theological movement in one direction: away from Dispensationalism and toward Covenant Theology. It is not a two-way street where certain Covenant men are moving towards Dispensationalism and where certain Dispensational men are moving towards Covenant Theology, with both groups having a happy rendezvous somewhere in the middle. The Covenant men, for the most part, are not budging. Covenant men are pleased with the movement in their direction, but, in general, their message to the Progressives is this: “You have made wonderful progress, but you certainly have not yet arrived. Keep on coming!” As Charles Ryrie has observed, “Covenant theologians...have openly expressed pleasure that progressives have moved away from normative dispensationalism, though covenant theologians clearly have not moved from the tenets of their position.”² Richard Mouw publicly voiced his delight in the direction of the new movement:

“Dispensationalism is changing...I have read the ‘progressive dispensationalists,’ and as a Reformed thinker, I can only applaud their reformulation of dispensational thought. When the newer dispensationalists reject a uniquely dispensational hermeneutic, when

¹ This is the subtitle of Robert L. Saucy’s book, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).

² Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 162.

they affirm the organic continuities between Israel and the church, when they reduce the number of ‘kingdoms’ referred to in the Bible, I can only say amen.”³

The Progressives are moving away from Dispensationalism, and the extent of this departure will now be considered.

Minor Developments or Major Departures?

Progressive Dispensationalists often argue that Dispensationalism is a theological system that has been gradually developing over the years and that the changes they have suggested are merely positive modifications as their understanding of Scripture has matured. Explaining this aspect of the Progressives’ position, Bateman stated,

Since its early beginnings, however, distinguishing characteristics of dispensationalism have undergone clarification, modification, and change....Blaising describes three periods within dispensationalism when distinguishing characteristics were developed or changed (classical, 1878-1940s; revised, 1950s-1970s; and progressive, 1980s-present).⁴

Are the doctrinal changes proposed by Progressives merely minor developments of Dispensationalism or do they reflect major departures from Dispensationalism? Before answering that question, it is helpful to consider an example of a minor development which took place within Dispensationalism, namely, Clarence Mason’s improvement on Scofield’s definition of a dispensation found in Mason’s booklet *Dispensationalism Made Simple*. Scofield’s definition was good, but Mason’s definition was even better. Scofield defined a dispensation as “a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some *specific* revelation of the will of God.”⁵ Mason defined the term in this way:

The word dispensation means literally a stewardship or administration or economy. Therefore, in its biblical usage, a dispensation is a divinely established stewardship of a particular revelation of God’s mind and will which is instituted in the first instance with a new age, and which brings added responsibility to the whole race of men or that portion of the race to whom the revelation is particularly given by God.

³ Richard J. Mouw, “What the Old Dispensationalists Taught Me,” *Christianity Today*, vol. 39, no. 3, 6 March, 1995, 34.

⁴ Herbert W. Bateman IV, ed. *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism—A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 23.

⁵ See the original *Scofield Reference Bible*. Genesis 1:27, note no. 4.

Associated with the revelation, on the one hand, are promises of reward or blessing for those responding in the obedience of faith while on the other hand there are warnings of judgment upon those who do not respond in the obedience of faith to that particular revelation.

However, though the time period (age) ends, certain principles of the revelation (dispensation or stewardship) are often carried over into succeeding ages, because God's truth does not cease to be truth, and these principles become part of the cumulative body of truth for which man is responsible in the progressive unfolding revelation of God's redemptive purpose. Some of these principles are carried over intact (as, e.g. conscience, human government, Abrahamic covenant) and some are passed on adjusted (law, church) to the age(s) which follow(s).⁶

If Scofield could have read Mason's definition he probably would have thanked him for the improvement. Mason took Scofield's definition, amplified it, added clarity, and avoided certain elements of Scofield's definition which were inadequate or possibly even misleading. Mason built upon the foundation that Scofield laid, added to it, corrected parts of it and ended up with an improved definition.

On the other hand, one might wonder what Scofield would think of the teachings of Progressive Dispensationalism which have mimicked Covenant Theology by blurring the distinctions between Israel and the Church and by intermixing the Church with Israel's Davidic Kingdom program. Would Scofield consider this movement as one being built upon the foundation which he helped to lay, or as being built on some other entirely different foundation?

Some opponents of Essential Dispensationalism argue that Progressive Dispensationalism should not even use the Dispensational label. For example, Keith Mathison, a Postmillennialist and an outspoken critic of Dispensationalism scolds Progressives for calling themselves Dispensationalists:

Progressive dispensationalists have moved closer to Reformed theology on a number of doctrines. They now acknowledge that the kingdom has been inaugurated and that there is a present as well as a future aspect of the kingdom. They have also recognized the two-peoples-of-God theory to be unbiblical, which, ironically, brings us to the negative side of progressive dispensationalism.

If the defining doctrine of dispensationalism is the two-peoples-of-God theory, then to reject that theory is to reject dispensationalism itself. "Progressive

⁶ Clarence E. Mason, Jr., *Dispensationalism Made Simple* (n.p., 1976), 13.

dispensationalism" is therefore both an encouraging trend and a misleading or confusing title....

In view of genuinely positive developments, how problematic is the name "progressive dispensationalism"? Perhaps an illustration will clarify my concern. Suppose I announced that I am a "progressive Baptist." When asked what that means, I explain that I have rejected believer's baptism by immersion only. I now believe that infant baptism is biblical and that the mode of baptism should be sprinkling or pouring. But I claim to be a progressive Baptist. What would a good Baptist tell me? He would remind me that believer's baptism by immersion only is the essence of what it means to be a Baptist.

Similarly, suppose I have become convinced that Jesus will return after the millennium. Would I be honest to describe myself as a "progressive premillennialist." No. Or what if I have abandoned belief in God? Would I be a progressive theist?⁷

Mathison further upbraids Progressives for misleading and taking over the seminaries of Essential Dispensationalists without properly informing donors and students of their doctrinal departure:

The church suffers too much damage when people do not identify what they really believe. For the sake of accuracy, honesty, and understanding, "progressive dispensationalists" should no longer claim to be dispensational. Traditional dispensationalists would likely concur. Do most dispensational laymen realize that the "dispensationalism" now taught in their seminaries is not the dispensationalism they know? As much as I prefer to see Reformed theology taught in these seminaries, if someone is going to teach nondispensationalism in a dispensational seminary, students and donors should at least be aware of the fact.⁸

Mathison's argument against Progressive Dispensationalism has validity.

Thomas Ice, an Essential Dispensationalist, addresses the question of whether Progressive Dispensationalism is a healthy development of Dispensationalism or a radical departure:

If one uses an older form of dispensationalism as a standard, then there would be a reasonable basis to question whether or not Progressive Dispensationalism is really a modified form of dispensationalism or whether or not it is closer to a modified form of Covenant Theology, thus not really dispensationalism at all. One current professor at Dallas Seminary who is strongly opposed to this new formulation of dispensationalism has described the issue to me as follows: One has to decide whether or not Progressive Dispensationalism is merely rearranging the furniture in the room (i.e., development of

⁷ Keith A. Mathison, *Dispensationalism--Rightly Dividing the People of God?* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 1995), 135-136.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 136-137.

dispensationalism) or whether or not they are removing key pieces of furniture (i.e., abandonment of dispensationalism).⁹

Ice's observations are enlightening. What are some of these "key pieces of furniture" which have been removed by Progressive Dispensationalism? The following are three examples of essential dispensational teachings that have been removed and abandoned by Progressive Dispensationalists:

1) Progressives Deny the Concept of Kingdom Postponement.

Dispensationalists teach that the Kingdom, which was described and promised by the Old Testament prophets, was announced and offered to Israel at our Lord's first coming but that due to Israel's rejection of Christ, the Kingdom was postponed and now awaits future fulfillment. John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, and the disciples all proclaimed this message: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:7). The expression "at hand" means near. The King Himself had come to earth, the Kingdom was imminent, and yet the Kingdom offer was *conditional*. It was offered on the condition of *repentance*.

The Jewish people had a wonderful opportunity before them. The long-promised Messiah King had arrived on the scene and the Kingdom was announced as being at hand or near, but the people were also told that *they needed to repent*. Although a minority of Jews did repent and turn to Christ, the great majority did not. The rejection of Christ by the nation Israel and by Israel's leaders is clearly seen in Matthew chapters 11-12. This rejection is tersely summarized in John 1:11, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

The climactic rejection of the Messiah took place when the Jews said to Pilate, "Let Him be crucified" (Matthew 27:21-23). Even worse, the Jews took full responsibility for their actions: "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). God indeed held them responsible

⁹ Thomas Ice, "A Critical Examination of 'Progressive Dispensationalism'—Part 1," *Biblical Perspectives*, vol 5, no. 6 (Biblical Awareness Ministries, Nov-Dec, 1992), 3.

for what they had done: "[Him] ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

The Lord, because of His forbearance and long-suffering, did not judge the nation immediately. In fact, God graciously made known the gospel to the Jew first (Romans 1:16; Acts 2:5; 3:26). It would seem that the Jews should have been the last to hear. In fact, they did not deserve to hear at all, but God in His matchless grace reached out to the nation which had rejected His Son in spite of overwhelming evidence that He was everything He claimed to be. Though a minority of Jews turned to the Savior in genuine repentance, the nation as a whole did not.

Because of Israel's failure to repent (both before and after the cross), **the promised kingdom was postponed.** When Christ comes the second time, Israel will repent and will receive their Messiah, just as Jesus predicted in Matthew 23:39. (Compare also Zechariah 12:10-14). Romans chapter 11 also speaks of Israel's wonderful future. During the interval between Israel's rejection and Israel's future reception of their Messiah, God has been visiting the nations and taking out a people for His Name (Acts 15:14). The result has been the formation of a unique organism comprised of blood-bought children of God, His beloved Body and Bride, who will be trophies of His matchless grace for His glory in all the ages to come (Eph. 2:7; 1 Pet. 2:9).

The concept of postponement is found repeatedly in the sacred history of God's dealings with man.¹⁰ Progressive Dispensationalists totally reject the concept of postponement in

¹⁰ Some examples of postponement in the Biblical record: 1) When Satan fell into sin (Ezekiel 28:15; Isaiah 14:12-14), he was apparently sentenced to the Lake of Fire immediately (see Matthew 25:41), but this sentence would not be executed until thousands of years later (Rev. 20:10). God postponed the execution of Satan's sentence for thousands of years so that He might demonstrate something not only to Satan but to all the angelic hosts. 2) In the days of Joshua, God postponed nightfall to assist His people in battle (Joshua 10). 3) God announced that severe judgment would fall upon the house of Ahab, but when Ahab humbled himself at the end of his life God postponed the judgment for one generation (1 Kings 21:29). 4) God postponed His judgment upon wicked Nineveh for more than 150 years due to the positive response of the people to Jonah's preaching. 5) God postponed Hezekiah's death date by fifteen years (2 Kings 20:1-6). 6) God has promised that Elijah will appear on earth shortly before the Lord Himself returns (Malachi 4:5). A careful study of Matthew 17:10-12 and Matthew 11:14 seems to indicate that if the nation Israel had received Christ at His first coming, then Elijah would have come, but the nation rejected Christ and thus the coming of Elijah was postponed for at least 2000

connection with the Kingdom for two reasons: 1) They deny that there was a conditional offer of the Kingdom and teach instead that the Kingdom being “at hand” indicated a genuine arrival of the Kingdom (in its phase one form); 2) They deny that the Kingdom was postponed due to Israel’s rejection and teach that the Kingdom was inaugurated at Christ’s first coming in spite of Israel’s rejection of Christ. Concerning whether the Kingdom arrived or was postponed, one thing is certain. Even Progressives must agree that the Kingdom described in detail by the Old Testament prophets was not established at Christ’s first coming. Wars did not cease (Isa. 2:4), the Jews were not regathered to their land (Jer. 16:14-15; 23:7-8), the desert did not become fertile (Isa. 35:1-7), and the vicious nature of carnivorous animals was not changed (Isa. 11:6-9), etc. Progressives are thus forced to redefine the Kingdom as something other than the Kingdom long predicted by the prophets, and in doing so they mimic Covenant Theology which has also drastically redefined the Kingdom.

2) Progressives Deny the Parenthetical Nature of the Church.

Saucy, one spokesman of Progressive Dispensationalists, denies the parenthetical nature of the Church age: “The present age is not a historical parenthesis unrelated to the history that precedes and follows it.”¹¹ This is representative of the teaching of other Progressives.

The prophecy found in Daniel 9:24-27 is a key to understanding the parenthetical nature of this present age. Israel’s history from the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the second coming of Messiah is incorporated in the 70 Week prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27. We know that Messiah was **cut off** (referring to His violent death) **after** the 69th week, and we know from the book of Revelation and other Scripture passages that the 70th week is yet future and represents the final seven years before the Messiah returns to the earth. Between the 69th and 70th weeks is a “gap”

years.

¹¹ Saucy, *The Case For Progressive Dispensationalism*, 28.

of nearly 2000 years, during which time God has been building His Church (Matthew 16:18) and “visiting the nations to take out of them a people for His Name” (Acts 15:14).¹²

It is highly significant that this 70-Week prophecy of Daniel, while detailing the history of God’s people—“seventy weeks are determined upon thy people” (Dan. 9:24)—has nothing to say about a period of history which is now known to consist of nearly two millennia. When this remarkable “gap” or “parenthesis” is integrated with Daniel’s great chronological prophecy, the interpreter is forced to distinguish two histories: 1) the stated history of Israel (490 years); 2) the unstated, parenthetical history of the Church (already nearly 2000 years). God has a distinct history or program for Israel as well as a distinct history or program for His Church. The two programs harmonize perfectly but do not interfere one with the other, nor do they overlap in time. The Church age in its entirety falls in the period of time after the conclusion of the 69th week and before the beginning of the 70th week.

Those holding to a position on the Rapture other than Pretribulational (e.g., Mid-Trib, Post-Trib, or Pre-Wrath) are forced to bring the Church into Israel’s Tribulation and thereby mix Church history with Israel’s history. Since Progressives tend to want to merge the Church and Israel together in the same Kingdom program, there is pressure upon them to abandon a pretribulational position, and this departure seems to be happening in some quarters. Saucy states in the preface of his book,

The question of the time of the rapture has not been included in the work. While most dispensationalists probably hold to a pretribulation rapture of the church as being in certain respects more harmonious with dispensationalism in general, many would not desire to make this a determining touchstone of dispensationalism today. For these the broad dispensational interpretation of history does not ultimately stand or fall on the time of the rapture.¹³

Progressive Dispensationalism’s wrong view of the Church will probably, in time, lead to a wrong understanding of the timing of the Rapture. If it is not a problem to mix the Church with

¹² For an interesting book dealing with the parenthetical nature of the Church, written by a pioneer dispensationalist, see Harry Ironside, *The Great Parenthesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1943).

¹³ Saucy, *The Case For Progressive Dispensationalism*, 8-9.

Israel's Kingdom, as Progressives have done, then why would it be a problem to mix the Church with Israel's Tribulation? Blaising and others have already done this, as will be seen later in this chapter. The only "Church" that will exist on earth during the 70th Week is the harlot Church of Revelation 17.

Progressives seek to unite Israel and the Church into one continuous history of the Kingdom in its two stages of "already" and "not yet." Such a concept is difficult to harmonize with Daniel's prophecy and thus Progressives tend to ignore it. In four key Progressive books, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church; Progressive Dispensationalism; The Case For Progressive Dispensationalism;* and *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism,* the Daniel 9:24-27 passage is all but ignored as far as any significant discussion of its key features is concerned.

3) Progressives Deny the Uniqueness of New Testament Mystery Truth.

Several passages within the New Testament Scriptures speak of certain mysteries which had been hidden for ages and generations, locked up in the loving heart of God, and totally unknown to the children of men. Now, in this present age, God has been pleased to reveal these sacred secrets to His saints. These mysteries most often refer to some aspect of distinctive Church truth that relates to the body of Christ and God's great purpose for this present time.

Covenant Theology differs from Dispensationalism by teaching that the New Testament mysteries were partially revealed in the Old Testament, whereas Dispensationalism teaches that these sacred secrets were not revealed at all until this present age. Progressives tend to agree with Covenant Theology on this point and teach that these mysteries were revealed in the Old Testament period to some extent. Some Progressives such as Saucy speak of the mysteries as being **revealed** in the Old Testament but not yet **realized**: Defining the term "mystery," Saucy wrote, "It is hidden and revealed with regard to its realization in God's historical plan of

salvation. It may have been a part of previous prophecy, but it was hidden until the time came for its actualization.”¹⁴

Progressive theologians teach that the term “mystery” does not always involve new revelation. Saucy went so far as to teach that the mystery of Romans 16:25-26 was revealed by God to the Old Testament prophets. He cited verse 26 to show that the mystery was made manifest “by the scriptures of the prophets” which he interpreted as the Old Testament prophets.¹⁵ It is difficult to understand how Progressives and Non-Dispensational interpreters can understand “the scriptures of the prophets” to be a reference to the Old Testament writings, especially after Paul has just stated that the mystery was kept secret in previous ages (Rom. 16:25). That Paul was referring to New Testament prophets is confirmed by Ephesians 3:5 which states that the mystery was not made known unto the sons of men in other ages but is now being revealed to God’s holy apostles and prophets. These are New Testament apostles and prophets, the same men referred to in Ephesians 2:20 (see also 1 Cor. 12:10, 29; Eph. 4:11). Of course, the prophetic writings which most clearly and most fully set forth the mysteries are Paul’s epistles, with Paul being the chief but not the only revelator or spokesman of mystery truth. When it came to mystery truth, the Old Testament prophets were totally in the dark. The only One who knew about the mysteries in the Old Testament period was God Himself. Indeed, in Matthew 13:17 it is said that many prophets and righteous men desired to see these “mysteries” which the Lord was revealing (v.11), but they did not see them at all.

In four passages (Eph. 3:4-5; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:26-27; Rom. 16:25-26) the Apostle Paul has clearly and carefully defined a New Testament “mystery.” The definition that may be derived from these four references is as follows: **A New Testament mystery is that which has been hidden, kept secret, and not made known to men in previous ages but has now been made manifest and revealed and made known in this present age by the New Testament**

¹⁴ Ibid., 151.

¹⁵ Ibid., 149-150.

apostles and prophets. Understood properly, 1 Timothy 3:16 provides the most comprehensive summary of the “mystery” aspects of Church truth that can be found in the New Testament. All six phrases in 1 Timothy 3:16 have “GOD” (or “Christ”) as the subject, but the significance of these phrases has direct bearing and application to the Church (see the context of verse 15 which speaks of the greatness of the Church). Paul presents a series of six parallelisms in which the present tenure and testimony of the Church is analogous to that of our Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh. This analogy is in complete harmony with the very clear statements of John 17:18; 20:21 and Acts 1:1-2, which indicate that our Lord’s witness and ministry on earth were to be continued by a similar ministry on the part of the Church. The incarnation (that God would come in the flesh) cannot be the mystery of 1 Timothy 3:16 because the incarnation was clearly revealed in the Old Testament,¹⁶ but the incarnation as it applies to the Church is a great mystery indeed. Today God is manifesting Himself by means of a BODY on earth, the body of Christ. In and through the Church God delights to manifest His life (Col. 1:27), His wisdom (Eph. 3:9-10), His power (Eph. 3:20), His grace (Eph. 2:7), His truth (1 Tim. 3:15; Phil. 2:15-16), His love (John 17:22-26) and His glory (Eph. 1:6,12,14; 3:21). Just as the Lord ended His earthly ministry at the ascension, so the testimony of believers in this present time will end as the Church is received up into glory at the Rapture.¹⁷ Church truth is so precious to the heart of God, that He obligates His servants to be faithful stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1-2).

¹⁶ Willis Virtue, in a study on the mystery of God in Colossians 2:2, has demonstrated conclusively that the incarnation itself cannot be considered a mystery. Willis W. Virtue, “The Mystery of God in Christ,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 93, No. 371 (July-September, 1936), 336-338.

¹⁷ For a study of 1 Timothy 3:16 as it applies to the Church see The Middletown Bible Church, “The Mystery of Godliness and the Local Assembly of Believers,” [article online] (accessed 21 August 2004) available from <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/lochurch/mystery.htm>. A more exhaustive, unpublished study on *The Mystery of Godliness* (98 pages) is available from George Zeller, 349 East Street, Middletown, CT 06457.

Progressives, in minimizing the distinctiveness of Church truth, have of necessity broadened the definition of a New Testament mystery, even to the point of making it something which God revealed to His Old Testament prophets.

Vital Distinctions Between Israel and the Church

The following distinctions, illustrated in chart form, are based on the clear teachings of the Scriptures when interpreted in their plain, normal, literal sense. Some of these distinctions are thankfully acknowledged by Progressives; others are not. A departure from the Essential Dispensational position will take place if these vital distinctions are not maintained.

A Comparison and Contrast Between Israel and the Church	
Israel	The Church
Israel is a nation chosen by God and sustained by covenant promises (Deut. 7:6-9). Not all individuals in this chosen nation are saved (Rom. 9:6; 11:28).	The Church is a called out assembly of believers who have been baptized into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Every member of the body of Christ is saved, though there are multitudes of professing Christians who may not be saved (2 Tim. 2:19).
Israel traces its origin to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Jacob being the father of the twelve tribes).	The Church traces its origin to the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) when believers were first placed into the body of Christ.
In God's program for Israel, His witnesses comprised a nation (Isaiah 43:10).	In God's program for the Church, His witnesses are among all nations (Acts 1:8).
God's program for Israel centered in Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37) and will again center in Jerusalem during the Tribulation (Matt. 24:15-20) and during the Millennium (Isa. 2:1-5).	God's program for His Church began in Jerusalem and extended to the uttermost parts of the earth (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). The Church is identified with the risen Christ, not with any earthly city.
The hope and expectancy of Israel was earthly, centering in the establishment of the Kingdom of the Messiah foretold by the prophets (Jer. 23:5-8; Isa. 2:1-5; 11:1-16).	The hope and expectancy of the Church is heavenly, centering in the glorious appearing of Christ to take His people to heaven (John 14:1-3; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:1-4; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).
God's purpose and program for Israel was revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures.	God's purpose and program for the Church was not revealed in the Old Testament, but was revealed by the New Testament apostles and prophets (Eph. 3:5).
Israel's history which is in view in Daniel 9:24 (the 70 weeks or 490 years) involved animal sacrifices. The last 7 of the 490 years involves the future Tribulation which will also involve	The Church's history does not involve animal sacrifices. Messiah's sacrifice is commemorated by means of the Lord's Table.

animal sacrifices during the first three and a half years (Dan. 9:27). Israel's millennial worship will also involve animal sacrifices (Ezek. 43:27).	
Israel's history which is in view in Daniel 9:24 (the 490 years including also the Tribulation) involves a temple in Jerusalem. The same will be true in the Millennium (Ezek. chapters 40-48).	During most of the Church age there is no Jewish temple in Jerusalem. In this age God manifests His glory in His believers, both individually and collectively, designating them as His temple (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19-20; Eph. 2:21-22). This is accomplished by the indwelling ministry of God the Holy Spirit.
Israel's history which is in view in Daniel 9:24 (the 490 years) involves a priesthood limited to the sons of Aaron, and excluding most Israelites. The same applies to the Millennium when Zadokian priests (also sons of Aaron) will serve in the temple (Ezek. 40:46; 43:19; 44:15).	During the Church age every true believer is a priest and able to offer spiritual sacrifices to the Lord (Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6). Whereas Israel had a priesthood, the Church <i>is</i> a priesthood.
Israel's history which is in view in Daniel 9:24 (the 490 years) will terminate with the coming of the Messiah to the earth to establish His Kingdom reign.	The Church's history will end at the Rapture of the Church when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in (1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rom. 11:25).
During Israel's history (the 490 years of Daniel 9:24 which also includes the Tribulation) the ethnic makeup of the world is bipartite: Jews and Gentiles. This division of all people into Jews and Gentiles will also apply to those in the Millennial Kingdom in natural bodies.	During the Church age from Pentecost to the Rapture the ethnic makeup of the world is tripartite: Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God (1 Cor. 10:32), the Church being composed of saved Jews and Gentiles united together in one Body (Eph. 2:15; 3:6).
During Israel's history, from Sinai to the Millennial Kingdom (excluding the Church age), Israel's role in the world will be characterized by PRIORITY [that is, they will have a leading role as God's chosen people]—see Deut. 4:6-8; Isa. 43:10; Matt. 10:5-6; Zech. 8:23.	During the Church age, Israel's role in the world will be characterized by EQUALITY—Jew and Gentiles united together in one body to bear testimony to a risen Christ (Col. 3:11; Gal. 3:28).
Male Jews were circumcised as a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. Believing Jews were circumcised in the heart (Jer. 4:4).	Believers of this age enjoy an internal circumcision not made with hands (Col. 2:11; Phil. 3:3). Physical circumcision is not required.
Israel was under the law of Moses as a rule of life.	The Church is under the “new creature” rule (Gal. 6:15-16).
Unbelieving Jews were physical children of Abraham and spiritual children of the devil (John 8:37-44).	Every believer in Christ (every true member of the Church, whether Jew or Gentile) is a child of Abraham and a child of God (Rom. 4:11-12; Gal. 3:26-29). This statement does not mean that Church age believers are Israelites.
Israel was to observe the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:8). Sabbath observance will also take place in the Tribulation (Matt. 24:20) and in the	The Church is to be diligent and make every effort to enter into God's rest (Heb. 4:9-11). This is a daily duty.

Millennium (Ezek. 46:1,3).	
Membership into the Jewish nation was by birth or by becoming a proselyte (a convert to Judaism).	Membership into the Church is by the new birth accomplished by the baptizing ministry of God (1 Cor. 12:13).
Believing Jews prior to Pentecost, believing Jews during the tribulation, and believing Jews during the Kingdom reign of Christ are not members of the body of Christ.	Believing Jews and Gentiles from Pentecost to the Rapture are members of the body of Christ.
Israel's place of worship centered in Jerusalem (Dan. 6:10; John 4:20) and this will also be true in the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27) and in the Millennium (Isa. 2:1-5).	The Church's place of worship is "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name" (Matt. 18:20; John 4:21-24). Christ is in the midst of His Churches (Rev. 1:13, 20).
Israel is likened to the wife of Jehovah, often an unfaithful wife (Hosea).	The Church is the beloved Bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7-8) to be one day presented blameless and spotless (Eph. 5:27).

18

1920ctrinal Integrity

Progressive Dispensationalism is adhered to and propagated by a significant number of professors at Dallas Theological Seminary, especially by men in the theology department. Is this new position in harmony with the time-honored doctrinal statement of Dallas Theological Seminary? Based on his writings, it is certain that Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founder of Dallas Seminary, was not in harmony with Progressive Dispensationalism, and neither was John Walvoord. Charles Ryrie, another member of the "old guard" at Dallas, has published his strong opposition to Progressive Dispensationalism, as has Robert Lightner.²¹

The Dallas Seminary's statement of faith contains two sections which address the issues which lie at the heart of Dispensationalism:

We believe that three of these dispensations or rules of life are the subject of extended revelation in the Scriptures, viz., the dispensation of the Mosaic law, the present dispensation of grace, and the future dispensation of the millennial kingdom. **We believe that these are distinct and are not to be intermingled or confused, as they are chronologically successive** (emphasis mine).²²

¹⁸ In this chart the term "Church" refers the true Church made up on born again believers, and does not include mere professing Christians who do not have the life of God (1 John 5:12).

¹⁹ The Middletown Bible Church, "What is the Believer's Rule of Life?" [article online] (accessed 23 August 2004) available from <http://www.middletownbiblechurch\doctrine\rulelife.htm>

²⁰ The Middletown Bible Church, "How is the Term 'Israel' Used in the New Testament?" [article online] (accessed 21 August 2004) available from <http://www.middletownbiblechurch\reformed\israelaf.htm>

²¹ Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 161-181 and Robert Lightner, "Progressive Dispensationalism," *The Conservative Theological Journal*, (April 2000), 46-64.

²² *Bulletin of Dallas Theological Seminary 1970-1971*, "Article V, The Dispensations," 146.

“We believe that all who are united to the risen and ascended Son of God are members of the Church which is the Body and Bride of Christ, which began at Pentecost **and is completely distinct from Israel** (emphasis mine).”²³

The leaders of Dallas Seminary have sanctioned Progressive Dispensationalism as being compatible with the doctrinal statement. They have officially made it clear that both types of Dispensationalism fall within the bounds of its doctrinal statement. Apparently the professors who hold to the new brand of Dispensationalism believe that they are in harmony with the doctrinal statement.²⁴

If the Dallas Seminary doctrinal statement is taken at face value and then compared with the teachings of Progressive Dispensationalism, there appears to be a significant conflict.

The Dallas Seminary Statement of Faith:	The Teachings of Progressive Dispensationalists:
<p>We believe that three of these dispensations or rules of life are the subject of extended revelation in the Scriptures, viz., the dispensation of the Mosaic law, the present dispensation of grace, and the future dispensation of the millennial kingdom. <u>We believe that these are distinct and are not to be intermingled or confused, as they are chronologically successive</u> (emphasis mine).”</p>	<p>“It [Progressive Dispensationalism] sees the program of God as unified <i>within</i> history, in agreement with non-dispensationalists, and it denies a radical discontinuity between the present church age and the messianic kingdom promises.”</p>
<p>“We believe that all who are united to the risen and ascended Son of God are members of the Church which is the Body and Bride of Christ, which began at Pentecost <u>and is completely distinct from Israel</u> (emphasis mine).”</p>	<p>“Instead of asserting a radical dichotomy of purpose and destiny, they [Progressives] see both Israel and the church as belonging to the one people of God and serving one historical purpose.”</p>
	<p>“The church is not totally distinct from Israel.”</p>
	<p>“The old sharp distinction between Israel and the church begins to become somewhat blurred.”</p>
	<p>“Dispensationalists are reexamining the meaning of dispensationalism...Subsequent discussion has come to focus on what was thought to be the central feature of that essence, ‘the distinction between Israel and the church.’ Over the past several years, however, a number of dispensationalists have questioned (1) whether the way in which this distinction has been stated accurately reflects the relationship between Israel and the church in biblical theology, and (2) whether this distinction properly defines dispensationalism.”</p>

²³ Ibid., “Article V, The Church A Unity of Believers,” 151.

²⁴ In personal correspondence with the author, Dr. Darrell Bock stated that he takes the doctrinal statement very seriously and affirms it with his signature on a contract each year. There is no reason to doubt his sincerity.

²⁵26272829 essence of dispensationalism (*sine qua non*), defined by Charles Ryrie, involves the clear distinction between Israel and the Church, a distinction which is reflected in the Dallas Seminary doctrinal statement: "...The Church which is the Body and Bride of Christ, which began at Pentecost...is completely distinct from Israel." Dallas Seminary Progressives have made every effort to distance themselves from Ryrie's definition, while at the same time they profess to be in harmony with the doctrinal statement. How can they have it both ways?

Addressing the issue of how the Church relates to the Kingdom, Ryrie wrote that Progressives teach "that Christ is already reigning in heaven on the throne of David, thus merging the Church with a present phase of the already, inaugurated Davidic Covenant and Kingdom."³⁰ Therefore, according to Progressives, the Church and the Kingdom are not "chronologically successive," but chronologically simultaneous, contradicting the Dallas doctrinal statement. According to the Progressive Dispensational teaching, the "already" Kingdom is synonymous with the present Church age, not successive as the doctrinal statement affirms. If a person believes that the Church is phase one of the Kingdom, then how could this person give his hearty agreement to a statement which states that the Church (dispensation of grace) and the Kingdom must not be "intermingled"?

Dr. Robert Lightner, who has taught theology for many years at Dallas, believes that the teaching of Progressive Dispensationalism is a serious violation of the Dallas Theological Seminary doctrinal statement. In a journal article he wrote:

The DTS's doctrinal statement is crystal clear in stating that there are three absolutely indispensable critical dispensations: law, grace or Church, and Kingdom, and it says, the three must *never* be intermingled. They remain totally distinct. Do the progressives keep

²⁵ Saucy, *The Case For Progressive Dispensationalism*, 27.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

²⁸ Kenneth L. Barker, "The Scope and Center of Old and New Testament Theology and Hope, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church—The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 303.

²⁹ Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church—The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 377.

³⁰ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 164.

the Church and the Kingdom totally distinct? I should say not; they combine the two. That's a flagrant violation of the DTS Doctrinal Statement.³¹

In considering a statement of faith, it is important to understand what meaning was intended by the original framers of the statement. Certainly the framers of the Constitution would be shocked if they knew how their document has been drastically reinterpreted in our day, in a manner far removed from its original intent. Since the founders of Dallas Seminary were not Progressive Dispensationalists, and since today their teachings are being strongly criticized by Progressive Dispensationalists, then by what logical consistency can it be argued that the doctrinal statement should be stretched beyond its original intent to allow for a position which is hostile to the dispensational views held by the founders of the Seminary? Dispensationalism is not some insignificant doctrine which the Dallas Seminary professors profess to adhere to, but it is one of the key doctrines which have distinguished Dallas Seminary from most other seminaries. Dallas Seminary had been the bastion of Essential Dispensationalism for decades.

If the Dallas Progressive Dispensationalists were to frame a doctrinal statement clearly stating their position on the relationship between Israel, the Church and the Kingdom, would they arrive at a statement that even remotely resembles the Dallas Statement? Would they compose a statement which says that the three key dispensations are distinct and are not to be intermingled or confused, being chronologically successive? Would they frame a statement which says that the Church is "completely distinct from Israel"? Highly improbable! And yet they seem to have no problem signing such a statement with their wholehearted agreement.

Norman L. Geisler has made the following keen observation regarding doctrinal integrity: "This is precisely how denominations go liberal, namely, when their doctrinal statements are stretched beyond their original meaning to accommodate new doctrinal deviations....It is a sad day indeed when we allow the original meaning of our doctrines to be

³¹ Lightner, "Progressive Dispensationalism," 57.

changed.”³² This statement by Geisler is not cited to insinuate that the Progressives are liberals, but rather to point out the problems of taking a doctrinal statement and re-interpreting it in a way that fails to do justice to the original meaning and original intent of the men who wrote it.³³

Why is doctrinal integrity important? As we have previously noted, Non-dispensationalist Keith Mathison, in referring to Progressive Dispensationalism, gets to the heart of the issue:

Do most dispensational laymen realize that the "dispensationalism" now taught in their seminaries is not the dispensationalism they know? As much as I prefer to see Reformed theology taught in these seminaries, if someone is going to teach nondispensationalism in a dispensational seminary, students and donors should at least be aware of the fact.³⁴

It is deceptive to profess to adhere to a doctrinal statement formulated by Dispensationalists of the old school while at the same time vigorously and publicly criticizing these same men and the Dispensationalism which they espoused. Such a departure from Dispensationalism should not be masked.

Neo-Evangelicalism Traits Found Among Progressive Dispensationalists

One of the early documents of Neo-Evangelicalism, which served to bring the movement into prominence, was an article that appeared in *Christian Life* (March 1956) entitled, “Is Evangelical Theology Changing?”³⁵ This article (referred to below as IETC) outlined eight characteristics of a new kind of evangelicalism which became known as New or Neo-

³² Norman L. Geisler wrote these words in an open letter entitled, “Why I Left the Evangelical Free Church Ministerial,” 5 July 1988. The issue at question was the bodily resurrection of Christ.

³³ The Independent Fundamental Churches of America faced a similar struggle with doctrinal integrity 1991. The IFCA has a very clear statement on the eternal Sonship of Christ: “We believe in one Triune God, **eternally existing in three persons**—Father, Son and Holy Spirit....We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, **the eternal Son of God**, became man, without ceasing to be God.” However, the IFCA leadership allowed a man to be a member of the IFCA who taught that Christ became the Son of God at the time of the incarnation. How did the IFCA justify allowing such a clear contradiction? If Christ is the eternal Son of God then how could one affirm that His Sonship did not begin until Bethlehem? The answer received from the IFCA leadership was that it is necessary to allow for “interpretive freedom.” They wanted to be able to freely interpret the doctrinal statement in such a way that both positions were allowed and tolerated. In essence, they allowed an influential man to be a member of their fellowship who did not really hold to the clearly stated position of the IFCA, even though he signed the statement. Thankfully, the man holding to this “incarnational Sonship” view reversed his position about eight years later (1999) and now confesses that Christ is the eternal Son of God.

³⁴ Mathison, *Dispensationalism*, 136-137.

³⁵ “Is Evangelical Theology Changing?” *Christian Life*, March, 1956. Numerous men contributed to this article.

Evangelicalism. Some of these characteristics, among others, will be quoted below to illustrate that some of the same trends which marked the beginning of the Neo-Evangelical movement are taking place today within “Neo-Dispensationalism.” These are troubling trends. Consider the following comparisons between Neo-Evangelicalism and Progressive Dispensationalism:

1) An Emphasis Upon Dialogue: “A growing willingness of evangelical theologians to converse with liberal theologians.....an evangelical can profitably engage in an exchange of ideas with men who are not evangelicals” (IETC). Just as Neo-Evangelicals commonly engage in dialogue with Neo-Orthodox men or with others far removed from the Bible-believing camp, so Neo-Dispensationalists dialogue with Covenant men and with others far removed from the Dispensational camp because they believe engaging in an exchange of ideas with men who are not Dispensational is profitable. An example of this interest is stated in a book by Blaising and Bock who wrote: “This book has three purposes: [the second of which is] to foster genuine dialogue with nondispensational thinkers.”³⁶ Supporting the same view, Saucy writes of “an increasing dialogue between dispensationalists and those from non-dispensational traditions. One senses a new openness to listen and learn from one another,”³⁷ and Kenneth Barker writes, “I reiterate my call for more dialogue and discussion.”³⁸

The greatest need of the Church today is to listen to God in His Word and to eagerly receive Biblical truth into our hearts, not to dialogue with representatives from divergent theological positions. Ice observes, “[The Niagara Bible Conference] used as its standard for resolving differences an appeal to the Bible, while PD seems to place great weight upon theological dialogue between opposing theological systems.”³⁹

³⁶ Blaising and Bock, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, Book cover.

³⁷ Saucy, *The Case For Progressive Dispensationalism*, 8.

³⁸ Kenneth L. Barker, “The Scope and Center of Old and New Testament Theology and Hope, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church—The Search for Definition*, 304.

³⁹ Ice, “A Critical Examination of ‘Progressive Dispensationalism’—Part 1,” 5.

2) “A willingness to re-examine beliefs concerning the work of the Holy Spirit” (IETC).

While Progressives are generally sound in their teaching on the Holy Spirit, there is one area of concern which involves the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit. Essential Dispensationalists have consistently taught that the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit results in believers being placed into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), which is His Church (Col. 1:18), comprised of those who have trusted Christ from Pentecost to the Rapture. No Essential Dispensationalist would teach that a tribulation saint has been baptized into the Body of Christ and is a member of Christ’s Church, but Progressive Craig Blaising wrote, “Progressive dispensationalists see these ‘saints’ [tribulation saints] as part of the body of Christ, thus a part of the Church as it is defined in the New Testament. However, they also affirm a Pretribulation rapture on the basis of 1 Thessalonians 4-5.”⁴⁰ Progressive Dispensationalists, if they embrace Blaising’s view, can thus apparently hold to two amazing and somewhat contradictory tenets: 1) The Church will be raptured before the Tribulation (as most Progressives, including Blaising, profess to believe); 2) The Church, or at least a part of the Church, will go through the Tribulation. In answer to the question, “Will the Church go through the tribulation?” their answer is both yes and no.

3) A Wavering on Certain Prophetic Issues: “A more tolerant attitude toward varying views on eschatology...some are saying that the Bible doesn’t teach that the church will escape the tribulation” (IETC). As Neo-Evangelicals gradually abandoned the Pretribulation Rapture, so Progressives appear to be headed in the same direction. Blaising now teaches that tribulation saints are members of the Church. Since Neo-Dispensationalists share such close affinity with George Ladd on many of his Kingdom views, is it possible that they will also, in time, adopt his Post-Tribulation views as well? Most Progressives are very reluctant to discuss matters such as the timing of the Rapture and Daniel’s Seventy-Week prophecy, and when

⁴⁰ Darrell Bock, ed., *Three Views of the Millennium and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 210.

doctrines are not defended, in time they are abandoned. Another concern, with respect to prophetic issues, is the Progressives' teaching that Christ is today occupying the Throne of David, when the consistent testimony of the Scriptures is that David's throne was located in Jerusalem, not in the Third Heaven, and that Christ will not sit upon this throne until His millennial reign (cf. Psalm 110:1; Heb. 10:13).⁴¹

4) “An increasing emphasis on scholarship” (IETC). Even though there is nothing wrong with solid, Biblical scholarship that exalts Christ and honors His Word, Progressive Dispensationalists, in their books, are enamored by Covenant and non-Dispensational scholarship and highly critical of Dispensational scholarship. A *Christianity Today* article states,

“Progressive dispensationalism wants to find common ground with nondispensationalists. Saucy, Blaising, and Bock are thoroughly conversant with the writings of the major biblical scholars of today. For example, Saucy's section on the kingdom of God goes out of its way to avoid quoting the dispensationalist ‘old guard,’ while quoting at length from standard New Testament scholars in 96 exhaustive footnotes, dispensational heavyweights Lewis Sperry Chafer and John Walvoord do not appear once, whereas Ridderbos, Ladd, Perrin, Cranfield, Barrett, and even O.T. Allis are extensively—and favorably—quoted.”⁴²

Both Neo-Evangelicals and Neo-Dispensationalists have questionable friends. Neo-evangelicals are highly critical of fundamentalists but reach out “in love” to those of questionable and divergent theological positions. In the same manner, Progressives strongly criticize and shun Essential Dispensationalists but seek to embrace Covenant theologians and other non-Dispensationalists. A person is known by his friends.

5) A Very Critical Attitude toward Dispensationalism: “A shift away from so-called extreme dispensationalism...The trend today is away from dispensationalism—away from

⁴¹ For further study see The Middletown Bible Church, “When and Where Does Christ Sit on the Throne of David?” [article online] (accessed 20 August 2004) available from <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/dispens/davidthr.htm>

⁴² “Dispensationalisms of the Third Kind,” *Christianity Today*, 12 September 1994, 28.

the Scofield notes” (IETC). What was true of Neo-Evangelicals in 1956 is true of Progressives today. They are continuing the trend away from dispensationalism—away from Darby/Kelly/Mackintosh, away from Scofield, away from Chafer, away from Walvoord, away from Ryrie. What is evolving is a new Dispensationalism which, according to non-dispensationalist Keith Mathison and others, should not even be called Dispensational.⁴³

6) An Emphasis Upon Social Action as Crucial to the Mission of the Church: “A more definite recognition of social responsibility...we must make evangelicalism more relevant to the political and sociological realities of our time” (IETC). Progressive Dispensationalists share the Neo-Evangelical passion to change and improve society, but perhaps for different reasons. Because Progressives believe the Church is phase one of the Kingdom, it follows logically that the Church has a responsibility to society to make it more Kingdom-like. Contrarily, Essential Dispensationalists have long recognized that present society bears no resemblance to the righteousness and justice that will characterize the Kingdom, and that man, by his own efforts, will never bring about Kingdom conditions. Only the omnipotent Messiah will accomplish that.

Christianity Today addressed the issue, “On the basis of a solid theological rationale, social and political concerns are now finding their way into [Progressive] dispensationalism’s take on the life of the church.”⁴⁴ Essential Dispensationalists have long maintained that while believers are the salt of the earth and will influence society by godly living, the main mission of the Church is to preach the gospel to every creature and fulfill our Lord’s great commission,

⁴³ Mathison, *Dispensationalism--Rightly Dividing the People of God?* 135-137.

⁴⁴ “Dispensationalisms of the Third Kind,” *Christianity Today*, 12 September 1994, 28.

which says nothing of bettering society.⁴⁵ God’s commission for the Church today has nothing to do with “social redemption.”⁴⁶

7) A Questioning of Basic Issues Pertaining to the Bible: “A re-opening of the subject of biblical inspiration....the whole subject of biblical inspiration needs reinvestigation” (IETC). Neo-Evangelicals re-opened the subject of Biblical inerrancy, whereas Progressive Dispensationalists have re-opened the subject of Biblical interpretation, especially regarding the validity of the literal interpretation of Scriptures as defined by Essential Dispensationalists.⁴⁷ Blaising comments, “Consistent literal exegesis is inadequate to describe the essential distinctive of dispensationalism.”⁴⁸ Ryrie wrote that Progressives have introduced “complementary hermeneutics” allowing “the New Testament to introduce changes and additions to Old Testament revelation.”⁴⁹

8) An Emphasis on Unity at the Expense of Doctrine. According to Ice, “Progressive Dispensationalism’s unity is based upon an inclusive, ‘don’t-let-doctrinal-differences-stand-in-our-way’ kind of unity.”⁵⁰ Addressing the issue of unity, Blaising and Bock wrote, “This work indicates where many dispensationalists are today, while recognizing that it is part of a larger theological community that is the body of Christ. Our discussion should continue, but not at the

⁴⁵ For the Essential Dispensational position see Charles C. Ryrie, *What You Should Know About Social Responsibility* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1982).

⁴⁶ Fred Moritz, Executive Director of Baptist World Mission, has evaluated the social emphasis of Progressive Dispensationalism in his unpublished paper, *Progressive Dispensationalism—An Evaluation*, available from Baptist World Mission, P.O. Box 1463, Decatur, AL 35602.

⁴⁷ The Middletown Bible Church, “Do I Interpret the Bible Literally? Seven Tests To See If I Really Do,” [article online] (accessed 20 August 2004) available from <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/dispens/literal.htm>

⁴⁸ Craig A. Blaising, “Developing Dispensationalism,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 145, no. 579, July-September, 1988, 272.

⁴⁹ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 162.

⁵⁰ Ice, “A Critical Examination of ‘Progressive Dispensationalism’—Part 1,” 5.

expense of our unity.”⁵¹ True Christian unity must be based on a common understanding and practice of God’s truth (Eph. 4:13-15).

9) A Willingness to Compromise. Miles Stanford observed,

“NEO-EVANGELICALISM is a compromise toward Liberalism. Its progenitors were Dr. Carl F.H. Henry, Dr. Edward J. Carnell, and Dr. Harold J. Ockenga. It was spawned in the barren milieu of Fuller Seminary. NEO-DISPENSATIONALISM is a compromise toward Covenantism. Its progenitors are Dr. Craig A. Blaising, Dr. Darrell Bock and in absentia, Dr. Robert Saucy. It was spawned in the Chaferless milieu of Dallas Theological Seminary.”⁵²

Progressive Dispensationalism is compromised by the un-Biblical blurring of many essential distinctions between the Israel, the Church and the Kingdom, involving an unfortunate giant step in the direction of Covenant Theology. Progressive Dispensationalism is not a healthy development of Essential Dispensationalism, but a major departure from it. May we believers heed Paul’s admonition: “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1).

George Zeller, Assistant to the Pastor, Middletown Bible Church (349 East St., Middletown, CT 06457), Tel- (860) 346-0907

⁵¹ Blaising and Bock, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 394.

⁵² See Miles J. Stanford, “Neo-Dispensationalism,” [article online] (accessed 20 August 2004) available from <http://www.withchrist.org/MJS/neodisp.htm>