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Review: The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology

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coexistence with others and the rest of God's creatures (pp. 64, 125). Migliore regards the atonement as the basis for the forgiveness, liberation and reconciliation of individuals, society and all creation.

While not discounting traditional understanding of revelation, Migliore says that the most adequate model involves interpersonal knowledge. Revelation is completed only as it is embraced by faith and lived out in the Christian community. Revelation is not merely the equivalent of a book or a system of doctrines. It is God's self-disclosure not only through the witness of Scripture and the person of Christ but also through the testimony of the community of faith (p. 38).

Migliore does not minimize the seriousness of sin, defining it first as rejecting God and absolutizing ourselves. Yet he expands sin beyond the idea of pride to include the exploitation of third-world peoples, the oppression of women, and the plundering of the earth.

He warns against making idols of traditional metaphors and images, such as the masculine terminology used of God (p. 174). Migliore denounces anthropocentrism (p. 181), individualism (p. 186), and the fundamentalistic apocalypticism of Hal Lindsey (p. 235). He also cautions against a coercive concept of the authority of Scripture, a type of authority that he notes spills over into other aspects of the Church. For Migliore the authority of Scripture speaks of its power by God's Spirit functioning in the community of faith "to create a liberating and renewing relationship with God through Christ" (p. 46).

Migliore is most critical of authoritarian branches of the Church that keep people's minds in bondage. "When faith no longer frees people to ask the hard questions, it becomes inhuman and dangerous. Unquestioning faith soon slips into ideology, superstition, fanaticism, self-indulgence, and idolatry. Faith seeks understanding passionately and relentlessly, or it languishes and eventually dies" (p. 5).

The book closes with three hypothetical dialogues between representative twentieth-century theologians: Barth, Tillich, Rahner, Bultmann, Pannenberg, Niebuhr and others. The topics discussed have direct bearing on Migliore's methodology: (1) the question of whether our common human experience informs our knowledge of God revealed in Christ, (2) the question of the historicity of Christ's resurrection, and (3) the question of the Church's involvement in the struggle for justice, freedom and peace in the world, especially among the oppressed.

The volume is a provocative reinterpretation of Christian theology. Migliore's focus on the new community offers positive insights for theological reflection. The book is clearly written and well organized. It covers all major Christian doctrines from revelation to eschatology and can be recommended as a supplemental text in traditional theology courses to stimulate discussion.

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The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology. By Robert L. Saucy. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993, 336 pp., n.p. paper.

The theological expression brought to mature form here seems to have had its initial form in Saucy's 1961 dissertation. Herein Saucy carefully sets forth his own theological position within dispensationalism, a basic viewpoint often termed "modified dispensationalism." This position, now christened in a more official way as "progress-

sive dispensationalism" (seeing greater continuity within God's salvation-historical purpose), has, broadly speaking, also been represented by G. Lewis, J. and P. Feinberg, C. Blaising, W. R. Cook and E. Radmacher, among others.

In addition to the illuminating Biblical-theological discussion and development in relation to the more comprehensive systematic theological questions, Saucy's book is of great significance within the developing perspectives of and between covenant and dispensational theologians. Covenantal trends toward greater diversity within the unity of God's redemptive-kingdom program in Christ have been matched in dispensational circles, especially after C. Ryrie's *Dispensationalism Today* of the 1960s, with increasing recognition of the unity of God's purpose through the diversity enacted in the unfolding of the divine purpose. Within this historico-theological context alone, Saucy's fine-tuned discussion is of great significance. Yet the importance of his contribution within the breadth of evangelical theology is so much more.

Saucy's discussion is careful, detailed and consistently irenic. Early on he emphasizes that the differences between the two schools of thought do not lie in the law-and-grace issue, nor in the application of the sermon on the mount, nor in any distinction (or nondistinction) between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. On these and other issues Saucy is clear that there is (or ought to be) agreement on both sides. Thus the ultimate difference is not hermeneutical, nor does it lie in the ultimate purpose of history. Rather, Saucy says that the basic issue is "the way we understand the historical plan and the goal of that plan through which God will bring eternal glory to himself. . . . It is the question of the purpose and plan of God *within* human history, i.e., from this creation until the inauguration of the eternal state" (p. 20). This involves more than the basic goal of history. It includes the "meaning and integration of the various aspects of God's work during this period."

Upon the basis of the earlier major sections and their central theological concerns, the question of Israel and what the OT and NT declare about the place and role of Israel past, present and future is actually at the heart of the matter. In all of these issues Saucy brings much-needed clarity, resolution and development to the current and future discussions.

The commendable qualities of this excellent and timely work are numerous. Here I mention but a few. First, what might be termed "Saucy's razor" has trimmed down what have falsely been considered major differences between dispensational and nondispensational theologians to the essentials while strongly affirming evangelical, theological and methodological commonality. Second, Saucy is always careful in his examination of pertinent passages and themes in Scripture. He also makes it clear that the most prominent OT and NT exegetes and theologians (especially German) of this century have acknowledged the necessity of the progressive dispensational emphasis on diversity in unity and the continued distinction of and place for national Israel in God's redemptive-kingdom purpose in Christ. Finally, Saucy makes quite clear the Israel-Church unity and distinction. His lengthy discussion on the place and role of Israel according to OT and NT prophecy and the central role of Israel in the future so advances understanding of the issue that all future discussion must make this the starting point.

As all participants in this discussion must be, Saucy is and wants only to be a hearer and teacher of the Word. In the past both sides have often lacked his concern and peaceable temper. Saucy's chapters bring about a step-by-step advance of his discussion, though each chapter in the first half of the book tends to follow the same format: traditional dispensational views and traditional covenant theological views and the problems and proprieties of each as preparing and opening the way to Saucy's discussion and conclusions on the various issues. One is soon able to see where the

argument will ultimately conclude. Also, some may perceive that Saucy's repeated use of the most esteemed exegetes and theologians from outside this particular evangelical fray constitutes an argument from authority. While Saucy does in particular make large use of authors in the *TDNT* as well as a multitude of other nonevangelical works, his methodological intention seems not to be an argument from authority but rather one of support for his own exegesis from universally acknowledged scholars who would have no apparent axe to grind in the dispensational/nondispensational interface. And it is noteworthy that this work consistently engages the hermeneutical question of NT fulfillment of OT prophecies. Yet perhaps an appendix concentrating on the issue (cf. G. E. Ladd) would prove helpful.

Absolutely must reading, the book receives my highest recommendation.

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Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism. By John H. Gerstner. Brentwood: Wolgemuth and Hyatt, 1991, n.p.

For the last decade or so the debate between dispensationalists and covenant theologians has been carried on in an irenic tone. That ceased with the publication of the book under review. Gerstner argues that dispensationalism presents "another gospel." He concludes his book by saying, "My plea to all dispensationalists is this—show me the fundamental error in what I teach or admit your fundamental error. We cannot both be right. One of us is wrong—seriously wrong. If you are wrong (in your doctrine, as I here charge), you are preaching nothing less than a false gospel. This calls for genuine repentance and fruits worthy of it before the Lord Jesus Christ whom we both profess to love and serve" (p. 263). In his appendix he says that "dispensationalism does not require genuine faith in Jesus Christ for salvation" (p. 272). If those charges are true, then dispensationalism is a very serious heresy.

Gerstner's reasoning is as follows: Calvinism is equal to orthodoxy; dispensationalism is not equal to Calvinism; thus dispensationalism is not equal to orthodoxy. Gerstner spends chapter after chapter detailing how many dispensationalists are not strict Calvinists. He then concludes that dispensationalism is not orthodox. The problems here are manifold: First, who decided that Calvinism is equal to orthodoxy? Calvinism is a system of theology (as is dispensationalism), and all systems of theology are manmade and fallible. We should not test one system against another. Rather, we should test the system against the Word of God itself. Gerstner's book is very weak in exegesis. Virtually no interaction with the Biblical text (except some prooftexting) takes place.

Second, there are various degrees of Calvinism. Gerstner argues that unless one accepts all five points one is not a Calvinist but an Arminian. This is overly simplistic.

Third, Gerstner fails to show the necessary link between dispensationalism and inconsistent Calvinism (or Arminianism). Certainly there were Arminians (sixteenth century) around before there were dispensationalists (nineteenth century), and there are Arminians today who are not dispensational. Contrariwise there are strict Calvinists who are dispensational. Gerstner even acknowledges D. Barnhouse (pp. 60–61), A. MacRae (p. 60), J. MacArthur (p. 253) and others as examples of Calvinistic dispensationalists. Why does he not recognize that this destroys his argument (is it a coincidence that he omits their names in the index?)? If one can be a Calvinistic dispensationalist, as these men are, then obviously dispensationalism and Calvinism are



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