

The Evangelical Bridge

The dangerous melding of American Evangelicalism from a Dispensational perspective

J. Steel - TBC (Leadership class stand-in 11/19/2014)

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 2 Tim. 2:24

Please understand that we are entering a discussion which involves godly men and Bible expositors whom we deeply love and respect. The issues in question are paramount and affect the future of Christ's body. However, the character and godliness of the men with whom we differ is not in question.

But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: Titus 2:1

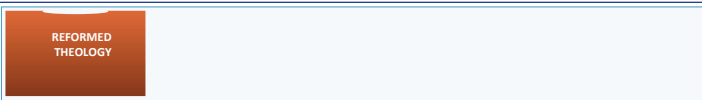
OUR PLAN FOR THIS SESSION: HOW IT WAS, NEW PLAYERS, WHY IT MATTERS, THE ONE-STOP SHOP, OUR CHOICE

Once again – just to be sure! We live in a culture where it is considered unloving to even discuss our differences. In reality, love demands it. We are all being tested and are all called upon to prove or test our own lives and ministries. Gal. 6:4, Eph. 5:10,11, Phil. 1:9

We minister to edify, and use the instruments of peace, love, and wholesome communication. Rom. 14:9, 1 Cor. 8:1, 14:26. Edification is a temple building term. Our craftsmanship, while building on Christ's temple, will be examined by Christ Himself. 1 Cor. 3:10 ff.

I. How It Was

The Reformed Movement



Adherents

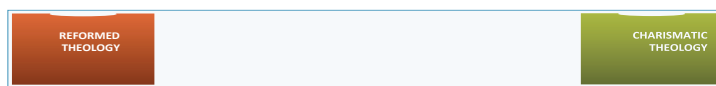
Distinctives

History

Notable Figures

Footnote

The Arminian / Charismatic Movements



Adherents

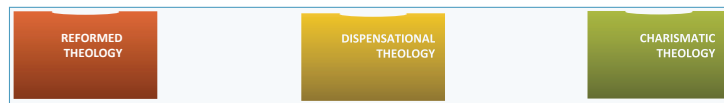
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The Dispensational Movement



Adherents

Distinctives

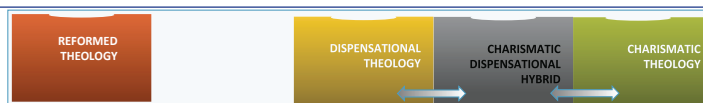
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II. THE NEW PLAYERS

The Charismatic /Dispensational Crossover



Adherents

Distinctives

History

Notable Figures

Footnote

* A cessationist believes that the sign gifts such as tongues and healing (related to offering the Millennial Kingdom) have ceased. Non cessationists believe that these gifts are in place and are a testimony to our “kingdom authority.”

The Reformed Dispensational Crossover



Adherents

Distinctives

History

Notable Figures

Footnote

III. WHY IT MATTERS

Why This Convergence Matters - Reason # 1

The Principle: When we stress one extreme at the expense of another, we not only distort and negate that truth, we get caught in a pattern which forces us, in turn, to stretch other truths out of their proper perspectives.

Grace Confused - The Calvinistic View

The Doctrine: Unsaved men are lost in their sin and they are totally sinful and cannot save themselves. (Titus 3:5)

The Extension: A man who is dead in his sins cannot exercise faith because he is dead and cannot respond. Therefore, he must be “given” faith to believe unto salvation. Some even say he must be regenerated through baptism or a sacrament in order to be able to receive Christ.

The Truth: Death means separation, not annihilation. Dead men can respond to the gospel of Christ because God has given all men the command and the capacity to exercise faith. When the Holy Spirit convinces a man of his sinfulness, he can respond to the gospel. (Acts 17:30).

Why is this dangerous? Here’s an example from George Zeller who cites John MacArthur (Reformed/Dispensational)

“Faith is a gift from God . . . it is permanent . . . the faith that God gives begets obedience . . . God gave it to you and He sustains it . . . May God grant you a true saving faith, a permanent gift that begins in humility and brokenness over sin and ends up in obedience unto righteousness. That’s true faith and it’s a gift that only God can give, and if you desire it, pray and ask that He would grant it to you.” [Transcribed from John MacArthur’s tape GC 90-21 dealing with Lordship Salvation]. Zeller comments:

“Notice carefully what MacArthur is doing. He is telling the sinner not to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31) but to pray and ask God to grant the gift of faith. This perverts the gospel of Christ by making the condition of salvation prayer instead of faith. Sinners are commanded to believe on Christ. They are not commanded to pray for the gift of faith. [We recommend the article by Roy L. Aldrich entitled “The Gift of God,” Bibliotheca Sacra, July, 1965, pages 248-253].”

The previous provides a single example how grace has become compromised through extreme emphasis of one truth over another from within the Reformed and Hybrid movements.

Other “grace hindering” teachings imported from Reformed and Hybrid camps include: The doctrine of limited atonement, the doctrine of Lordship salvation and the doctrine of perseverance of the saints. These are diluting the pure doctrines of grace.

Note: EACH of these doctrines result from the mixing of Old and New Covenant dynamics primarily through the Reformed exegesis of the gospels.

Grace Confused - The Arminian View

The Principle: Arminian views also hinder the gospel of the grace of God. Consider a single Arminian example.

The Doctrine: The Security of the Believer. John 10:27-28 , Romans 11:6

The Confusion: Mainstream Charismatics (AOG) and older groups teach that our salvation depends upon our obedience.

Note: The Charismatic Dispensational Hybrid mixes its hermeneutics. It embraces the Reformed doctrine of perseverance of the saints while rejecting the remaining four of the five points of Calvinism. At the opposite extreme, it sees the doctrine of divine election as something which results from salvation, not something which leads to it.

Why This Convergence Matters - Reason # 2

The Principle: When we compromise any one principle in scripture for the sake of love, unity, or success we always injure another biblical truth.

OUR BIBLICAL CONCERN:

CESSATIONISM CONFUSED

A. Reformed Theology: Mixed and ambivalent (because they have nothing at stake in the issue.)

- Edwards and Warfield were strict *cessationists* (each for slightly different reasons.)
- Calvin and Owen were mild *cessationists* (special circumstances could require sign gifts.)
- Luther, Knox, and Rutherford were *continuationists*.

B. Reformed Dispensational Hybrids: Strong cessationists because it is foundational to their eschatology.

Why does this cessationism matter? Remember, cessationism is the doctrine that the sign gifts have ceased.

In addition to being a blessing, sign gifts performed two functions. First they authenticated divine revelation during the time when God's revelation had not been fully inscripturated or written down. Secondly, they authenticated God's placement of the New Covenant in place of Israel's Old Covenant and God's Kingdom offer to Israel. In short, sign gifts authenticate new Revelation and authenticate the Kingdom offer.

For a Dispensationalist: Sign gifts are not present in this age. Revelation is complete, and the Kingdom is future.

For a Charismatic: Charismatic theologians have much in common with Progressive Dispensationalists in that they believe the Kingdom is "already, but not yet." Christ, who is now reigning from David's throne, has given us kingdom authority and kingdom signs. Most Charismatics are open to new revelation from God through tongues.

For a Charismatic Dispensationalist: Calvary Chapel people, as a whole, are strong supporters of the separation of Israel and the church in God's program. They are unknowingly embracing the seeds of their own defeat in this area.

WHAT MAY WE EXPECT LONG TERM – AS WE CONVERGE?

Both free grace and cessationism will become indistinguishable as they are absorbed into larger expressions from both the left and right.

Prophecy will be increasingly marginalized because it is divisive, and;

Dispensationalism will be increasingly seen as passé, and;

Augustine's techniques now in place, will lead to the domination of Replacement theology.*

It matters! When Replacement theology wins, the dynamics of the law will be mixed with grace because the church will be seen as the new Israel, ethnic Israel will ultimately be rejected as Zionist, and, evangelical ecumenism will finally be a reality.

FACT!

This is one “domino effect” that has played out in history. Allegorical interpretation eventually ends in Replacement theology.

IV. THE ONE-STOP SHOP

“Why can’t we all be one? Did not our Lord want us to be united? (John 17)”

“Isn’t it time we laid aside our differences and focus on evangelism and discipleship?”

“There is too much at stake to be divisive. The world needs to see a common front!”

The burning question is: Unity at what cost?

We are fast melding into one evangelical culture! Like Harley riders, the more we separate from the culture in order to be different... The more similar we become! While doctrinal distinctives are diminishing, cultural dynamics are expanding...

Expect the “**cultural criterion**” to continue to erode *doctrinal distinctives* as we meld around a common core:

1. Professional “Worship”
2. Contemporary platform dynamics
3. Broad based messages sans exposition
4. Mildly confrontational applications
5. No rebuke of false teachers or apostasy or worldliness
6. Doctrine minimized and obscured

Our common music, media and cultural mindset has overshadowed our doctrinal preferences. This cultural criterion has already bred a “New Gen” believer. In so doing, we are paving the way for the spirit of antichrist:

Today’s New Gen Believer:

1. Thinks this conversation is divisive and nonproductive
2. Considers doctrine a matter of personal preference
3. Would be at home in most of the above churches
4. Cannot distinguish between truth and lie
5. Imagines he thinks independently while he swims in shoals.

This is the price we have paid in order to be perceived as peaceful and tolerant. It is a peace that is no peace.

V. OUR CHOICE

A BIBLICAL SOLUTION

1. Care enough about truth to be grounded in your own convictions. Understand what is at stake. These are real issues with real consequences. Like bald tires, consequences happen over time.
2. Care enough to understand your hermeneutics. Unlike ALL other theologies, Dispensationalism builds on a consistent system of literal interpretation in all disciplines. – NOT on church fathers or dynamic leaders.

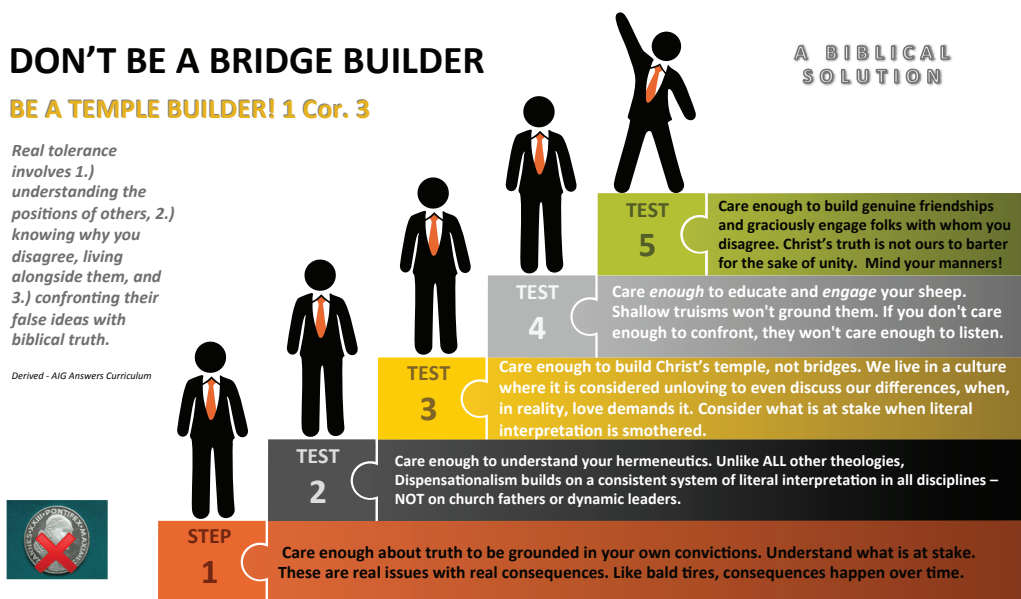
- Care enough to build Christ's temple, not bridges. We live in a culture where it is considered unloving to even discuss our differences, when, in reality, love demands it. Consider what is at stake when literal interpretation is smothered.
- Care enough to educate and engage your sheep. Shallow truisms won't ground them. If you don't care enough to confront, they won't care enough to listen.
- Care enough to build genuine friendships and graciously engage folks with whom you disagree. Christ's truth is not ours to barter for the sake of unity. Mind your manners!

A BIBLICAL RESPONSE

Put your PASTOR to the test.

Put YOURSELF to the test.

- Does your church really put Bible teaching first? Sound Bible exposition makes sound believers who will be prepared to endure the tests of our age. Clue: If the Word of God is not central to every ministry of your church, be very concerned.
- Does your church take the Bible exactly for what it says? Take God at His Word. Clue: Literal interpreters of the Bible will always see God's unique plans for Israel and the Church and will always love Bible prophecy.
- Does your church's worship and music enrich believers by teaching sound biblical truth with a godly, non worldly musical style? Clue: Redemptive worship has always led to corrupted worship.
- Does your church take consistent stands against the values of our age and apostasy? Clue: The pastor who cannot offend cannot defend his sheep.
- Does your church have a love for biblical evangelism and discipleship that is a visible result of its stand on the Bible? Clue: You can't fake a love for the lost – it shows!



* Note: While Reformed and Charismatics disagree, both share the same interpretive style of Augustine!