

# ESSENTIALS OF DISPENSATIONAL THEOLOGY

by Robert Dean, Jr.

Since John Nelson Darby first articulated and systematized his theological/hermeneutical system of theology known as dispensationalism in the early nineteenth century, that system has been intensely scrutinized, critiqued, and evaluated. Those who have been strongly influenced by it have also modified it, though some today have dangerously changed it.<sup>1</sup> A comparison of the system incorporated by C. I. Scofield into the Scofield Reference Bible with Darby's system displays various changes which occurred in the nineteenth century. Further comparisons of Scofield with later twentieth century dispensational theologians reveal even more developments.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, those who have strongly opposed dispensational theology have too often misunderstood this development, although their own theological systems show the same sort of modifications, and these critics continue to address certain Scofieldian distinctives (which are no longer held) as if they were the only essentials to dispensational theology. All of this naturally raises the important question of just what is the essence of dispensational theology?

Earlier in this century this question would probably have been answered by pointing to certain schemes or timelines of prophetic fulfillment, some even went so far as to suggest that if anyone believed that they were no longer under the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Covenant then they were a dispensationalist. In 1965, Dr. Charles Ryrie refocused the issue. He suggested that what was essential to dispensationalism was not necessarily a specific prophetic timetable or belief in a certain number of dispensations. The essence of dispensationalism was a threefold *sine qua non*: an understanding that the basic purpose of God's plan in history is manifesting His own glory, a consistent employment of a normal or plain interpretation of the Scriptures, and a distinction between God's plan for ethnic and national Israel and the New Testament Church.<sup>3</sup> Since that time dispensational scholars seem to have focused most of their attention on a discussion of the latter two points.

## Critics and Straw Men

Too often critics of dispensationalism have themselves failed to grasp the importance of these latter two distinctives and insist on focusing the debate on issues that have been either essentially resolved or they attack "straw men" and by their misrepresentation of dispensationalism impugn its credibility.<sup>4</sup> Some of these issues that have been resolved include the distinction between a law based salvation in the Old Testament (OT) and grace salvation in the New. No dispensational scholar today believes in anything other than a salvation by grace through faith alone in Christ alone for all dispensations. In the Old Testament dispensations faith anticipated the cross, in the New Testament faith looks back to the finished work of Christ on the cross. Second, no longer is there a dichotomy between law and grace. Grace as seen in the Old Testament and the New Testament clearly affirms a "law" in terms of the necessity of obedience to the mandates of Scripture, not for gaining salvation or maintaining it, but in the sense of obligation to serve the Lord who saved us so we can advance to spiritual maturity. We are to live by the law of Christ, the protocol for the spiritual life of the Church Age.

Some critics also accuse dispensationalists of being "date setters." While some over zealous popularizers

of dispensationalism may have done this, dispensationalism became popular during the middle and late 1800's because of its insistence that the return of Christ was imminent, and could not be forecast. Thus no prophecy need be fulfilled for the Rapture to occur, yet many prophecies must be fulfilled before the Second Advent takes place. This relates to the doctrine of the imminency of Christ's coming. Since it is imminent, it must come at any moment regardless of prophetic fulfillment.

One recent, blatant example of the use of a straw man argument is in Dr. Gary North's recent newsletter "Dispensationalism in Transition." [5](#) (If hypercritics like Gary North are listened to, then almost every screwball interpretation of the last century is essential to dispensationalism.) In a recent newsletter he made use of at least ten logical fallacies to argue that because C. I. Scofield inserted a note on Gen. 1:2 in his reference Bible stating that there was a gap of indeterminable time between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2 and the geologic ages could be inserted there, dispensationalism was an accommodation to Darwinism. He went on to accuse Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) of not teaching a literal six-day creation. If Dr. North would attend class there he would discover how distorted his views actually are.

His statement is so ludicrous it is incredible that anyone would believe it, but some people believe anything in print! The truth is that North's assertion that holding to a gap theory and/or rejecting a literal 6-day creation is essential to dispensational theology is so much poppycock. If dispensationalists were to base their arguments on his type of (il)logic, then it would be true to say that any evidence of compromise with Darwinism in dispensationalism was present only because the early dispensationalists were wrongly influenced by our Calvinistic, Covenantal brothers.[6](#) For example, the gap theory was first articulated by the Scottish Presbyterian Thomas Chalmers (certainly not a dispensationalist) as an attempt to reconcile the Biblical account with the large time periods historical geology was demanding, not Darwinism (Chalmers predated Darwin by several decades). At about this same time another popular approach for resolving this conflict was the "day-age" theory which viewed each day of Genesis 1 as an extended geologic age. Both the gap and day-age views were hostile to a literal 6-day creation and were compromises with historical geology.

If North had done his homework he would know that the leading Covenant theologians of the nineteenth century were almost all advocates of the day-age theory. Men like Charles Hodge, W. G. T. Shedd, B. B. Warfield, and in the 20th Century, men like E. J. Young.[7](#) Yet no one accuses Covenant Theology of being essentially Darwinist. Not even on the basis of George Fredrick Wright's strong assertion that Darwinism was nothing else but the application of Calvinism to biology.[8](#)

It is unfounded assertions like North's that should destroy the reconstructionist, neo-postmillennial movement (how people can be influenced by such shoddy argumentation amazes me). Their unwillingness to do any detailed study—historical, exegetical, or theological—is matched only by the inaccuracy of their facts and the audacity of their straw-man arguments. If the type of arguments North uses justified his conclusions then he should be liberal, Darwinian, and Baptist, since the postmillennial A. H. Strong was all three of those.

The fact is that it just galls North to admit that if the issues involving Gen. 1-3 and special creation had been left in the hands of the Reformed, Covenantal camp, we would all be theistic evolutionists. It was the premillennial dispensationalists, Whitcomb and Morris, who wrote *The Genesis Flood* (regardless of who did or did not publish the book) and brought evangelicals back to a solid basis for creation. It was Weston Fields, another premillennial dispensationalist, who published a critique of the classic gap theory.[9](#) In fact, not one Covenant or Postmillennial scholar can be found who came out in strong support of a literal 6-day creation during the early 20th century (E. J. Young was silent publicly, but in private he must have been teaching his son Davis theistic evolution).[10](#) DTS, at least since the early sixties, has been a strong advocate of a literal 6-day creation (Dr. Hoehner's Biblical Chronology course is built upon an approximate 4,000 B.C. creation date, Dr.'s Howe, Lightner, Burns and others teach a

young earth model and early creation). In fact, when I was a ThM student at DTS, I received credit for attending the Institute for Creation Research summer institute in Dallas. It was again offered at DTS in the summer of 1987, and Dr. Henry Morris was one of the major speakers. North wants to be a creationist, but he can't find anyone in his camp to support him. He has to ride piggyback upon the work of dispensationalists.

What this digression has attempted to show is that all types of beliefs are held by dispensationalists and covenant theologians. Scholars and pastors in both traditions have made serious theological errors at times and been led astray by popular opinion. To argue that any of this is essential to either system is faulty reasoning (*argumentum ad hominem*). What matters is determining the essentials of dispensationalism and then discussing the issues on that basis.

## The Essentials

Of the three essentials mentioned by Dr. Ryrie, contemporary, classic dispensational theologians generally agree that the true essential lies in one, both, or a mix of the latter two. These are: a consistent emphasis on the plain or normal literal interpretation of the passage and maintaining a distinction between God's plan and purpose for Israel and the His plan and purpose Church. It is clear that the two are intimately related. The second is arrived at on the basis of the first. (The doxological distinctive is sometimes set aside as Reformed theologians stress this principle as well. However Reformed theology generally sees even the glory of God to be subsumed under His soteriological purposes. How this can relate to life other than human is another example of the inadequacies of Covenant theology.) So in some sense that which is unique to dispensationalism is their consistent literal interpretation, especially as it is applied in the relationship of the Church to Israel.

### Literal Interpretation

The description of the dispensational interpretive method as a literal hermeneutic, while accurate, is in some sense unfortunate. Many non-dispensationalists protest that their system of interpretation is just as literal. Others misunderstand the term literal and force it to mean some sort of wooden literalism that would not allow for any legitimate use of figures of speech. The term "literal" needs to be more carefully defined. First, I will give a clarification of the definition and then illustrate it through two Biblical examples.

By "literal" interpretation, Ryrie asserts that it is an interpretation that gives the "plain or normal meaning to a word." This way of defining literal interpretation has its source in 19th century theological writings. Unfortunately, this definition is still somewhat obscure and nebulous for some. What exactly is meant by "plain" or "normal?"

If I were to lift the statement, "go jump in the lake" out of its context, it could have one of two meanings, both of which could be understood as plain, normal, or literal. The first would interpret the statement in terms of the direct, specific meanings of the terms (their denotative meaning). The second, would interpret the statement in terms of the phrase's suggested, or idiomatic meaning (its connotative meaning). The denotative meaning would indicate a specific person or persons were to physically leap into a large body of water. The idiomatic or connotative meaning might simply see this as a suggestion to be quiet or as a friendly rebuke. Both interpretations could be labeled literal. The context would indicate which one was the correct interpretation. If the setting was near Lake Travis, and the group was in their swimming attire, then the first would be the obvious meaning.

The issue in the debate over dispensational theology is not whether the Scripture ought to be interpreted

literally, for many believe the interpretation should be literal. (Those that don't soon find themselves awash in spiritual subjectivity and mysticism.) This literal interpretation though, includes the correct identification and interpretation of figures of speech, symbols, and apocalyptic imagery. The problem is that the covenant theologians and other non-dispensationalists identification of these figures is much broader than the dispensationalist interpretation and is inconsistently applied. This is clearly seen in how they interpret Old Testament passages which are used and applied in the New Testament in ways apparently unintended or inconsistent with the context of the Old Testament. By literal interpretation, dispensationalists mean a way of approaching Scripture that clearly recognizes the use of figures of speech, symbols, and apocalyptic imagery. This approach also recognizes the application of certain Old Testament passages intended for Israel to the Church, however, that application of the Old Testament passage in such a way that the original intended meaning and application of the passage to Israel is not done away with.

An example of this is the use of Hosea 11:1 in Matt. 2:15. The reference is to the departure of Joseph and Mary to Egypt, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet saying, 'Out of Egypt I called My Son.'" It is clear that the meaning assigned to Hosea 11:1 by Matthew is a completely new meaning. As Feinberg summarizes the issue,

What is problematic here is that we are given the impression [by G. E. Ladd] that the meaning of Hosea 11:1 in Hosea 11:1 either becomes the meaning given it in Matthew 2:15, or the meaning of Hosea 11:1 in its context is to be neglected.<sup>11</sup>

Since the Hosea reference is not to some vague, eschatological event, but to the historical event of the Exodus, to reinterpret it on the basis of the apparent interpretation given it by Matthew would totally destroy the meaning of the passage in its context in Hosea. The point of this is that while New Testament writers had the freedom to utilize Old Testament passages in ways perhaps not clearly seen by the Old Testament writer, that new meaning cannot replace the original meaning without destroying the original meaning of the passage. So when it comes to interpreting the land and kingdom promises to Israel given in the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, to spiritualize them for the Church in such a way that any actual application to Israel as intended by its original context is totally unnecessary and destroys the Scripture. The actual land and kingdom promises to Israel must stand and be fulfilled in the future by Israel.

Another example of how this understanding of a literal interpretation applies is seen in the interpretation of Matt. 24:29–30:

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

How exactly is it to be understood that the sun and moon will be darkened or the stars fall from heaven? As North points out it is an exegetical problem to see literal falling stars (as some dispensationalists have interpreted this), however, Chilton's explanation is even more incredible,<sup>12</sup> for he fails to either exegetically or hermeneutically support his conclusions.<sup>13</sup> He simply imposes his symbolic interpretation upon the text, cites a number of passages that use similar words, and totally fails to demonstrate how these passages support his position or relate to his point. Beyond that, he is only able to maintain his position by completely ignoring the context of a number of these passages. These are discussed below.

To understand the meaning of the descriptions in Matt. 24 one must simply examine the various passages where this type of language is used in a similar context. Jesus clearly had these passages in mind when He spoke. He knew that by this terminology His hearers, and later readers, would know He was speaking of the events of the great and final day of the Lord. From the Old Testament these references are : Is. 13:10; 24:21–23; 34:4; Jer. 4:23; Ezek. 32:7; Joel 2:10; 3:3; Amos 5:20; Zeph. 1:15; Hag. 2:6, 21. When these passages are examined one of the striking similarities is that they are all in contexts describing the coming judgments associated with the future judgments of the Day of the Lord. Although the term “Day of the Lord” had meaning for the temporary judgment of God against Judah when she was destroyed by Babylon in 586 B.C., many of the contexts clearly indicated a much broader judgment which refers to the final judgment at the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ (Is. 13:10–16; Joel 2:10; 3:3; Hag. 1:6, 21, etc.). In some of these passages, i.e., Hag. 1:6, 21, the shaking of the heaven and earth is clearly a reference to the upsetting of earthly political order as a result of the final physical judgment of the Lord. It is future for it describes the overthrow of the throne of kingdoms and the destruction of the strength of the Gentile kingdoms (v. 22).

On the strength of the context of the other passages it could be possible to take the meaning as merely a description of the cataclysmic, destructive, and socio-political restructuring of the earth at the final judgment. However, when one examines the context of these heavenly signs in Revelation, the context there indicates that while socio-political upheaval may be included in meaning, it does not exclude actual cataclysm in the heavenlies. Luke 21:25 is the parallel to Matt. 24:29 and states more clearly that:

there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear .

..

The structure of the passage flows from disturbances in the heavens, to disturbances on the earth, defined as nations, to disturbances in the oceans, to disturbances in the hearts of men. It is one sentence. To make any one of these symbolic to the degree that it negates its explicit meaning would mean that *all* must be symbolic. But the point climaxes in the panic and fear produced in the hearts of men. If actual mankind is meant here, then the rest of the passage must be applied, at least in a more literal sense, even if this suggests a broader, more symbolic meaning.

Further, Gen. 1:14 states that one of the purposes for the sun, moon, and stars is to serve as “signs” in the heavens. Are these references to sun, moon, and stars to be taken merely as symbols with no physical referent? This would be absurd. However, Chilton comes close to implying this in the way he treats the concept of “day.”<sup>14</sup> Comparing the Luke passage with the Gen. 1 statement, indicates that even though some broader meaning may be suggested, it cannot be separated from actual physical disturbances in the sun, moon, and stars, without destroying the meaning of the passage as a whole.

All of these OT passages relate these cataclysmic signs to the Day of the Lord which is the final week of Daniel (the seven year Great Tribulation, or time of Jacob's Trouble). Revelation also describes these same types of heavenly and earthly disturbances. Rev. 6:12 describes the sixth seal; a great earthquake, the sun darkened, the moon becoming like blood and the stars falling. To relate this symbolically ignores the context; it is not poetic, as some of the OT passages are, and the response of the men is to hide in caves. Rev. 8:12 says a third of the sun and moon and stars will be darkened. How can this be? Physiologically or scientifically it may be difficult to comprehend the exact mechanics. Does it mean that the light is reduced, that heat is reduced, clouds block the vision of man, or what? I believe that Rev. 8:10, 11 helps clarify part of this. The waters of the earth are polluted by the falling of a great star. This is clearly physiological, but spoken in a language of appearance or accommodation. Just as we know that it is the earth that revolves around the sun, yet still speak of sunrise and sunset, so we speak of comets as “shooting stars,” when we know they are not stars. Even though we may not understand

exactly how this takes place, that something dramatic will take place in the heavenly bodies cannot be doubted.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, the effect of the sin was not confined to themselves or to the race they generated, it effected every square inch of the universe. The coming Day of the Lord is the great judgment of God upon sin and its effects on the universe. To expect anything of less degree is preposterous. These images show that from the nations and kings that have arrayed themselves in rebellion against the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, to the individual who asserts his own personal independence, to the earth and heavens that groan under the curse, *all* will feel the impact, all will be shaken and stirred by the return of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This is the first essential of dispensational theology. A way of approaching the Scripture that allows the Scripture, through the progress of revelation to interpret itself. It does not approach the Scripture through some fantastic, interpretational scheme, composed of complex symbolism which reduces the Scripture to a mystical code book that requires a special decoding manual in order to figure it out. The second essential, flows from the first. It is a distinction between Israel and the Church.

In the OT God made certain promises to Abraham when He promised to make him the father of a special people. Dispensationalists understand these promises, and other unconditional covenant promises (i.e., treaty grants) made by God to Israel to still be primarily for Israel although the Church may share in the blessing. Ultimately, God will not only restore Israel to a place of blessing (Rom. 11), but will also fulfill the land and kingdom promises made to Israel in the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. In the present time, God has another plan for the Church which is distinct from Israel. Dispensationalists do not believe that the Church is the New Israel or has replaced Israel as the heir to the Old Testament promises. Eventually, the distinctions between the two groups will not be eradicated.

Dispensational writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were guilty of overstating the nature of this distinction. Because this is what is contained within the note of the Scofield Reference Bible, many non-dispensationalists still mistakenly believe that dispensationalists still believe those things. The earlier position was that there were two distinct peoples of God, Israel and the Church. Israel had an earthly destiny, with earthly blessings and would spend eternity on the New Earth. The Church had a heavenly nature, heavenly blessings and an eternal heavenly destiny. There was one New Covenant for Israel and another New Covenant for the Church. The distinction produced a radical dichotomy; unity was lost. Against this, non-dispensational writers over emphasize the unity to the degree that diversity within the peoples of God is lost. This type of radical distinction is no longer held by most dispensational scholars and has not been for over 30 years. However, it is still clear from Heb. 12:22-24 that there will be distinctions between OT saints and Church Age believers in the heavenly city.

In order to understand the importance of holding to the distinction between Israel and the Church, look at how this relates to an understanding of the Abrahamic and the New Covenant.

When God came to Abraham, He promised Abraham that He would give him a specified land and make a great nation of him (Gen. 12:1-3). The land was further identified in Gen. 15:18ff as being bounded by the river of Egypt and the River Euphrates. It was a land said to be inhabited by specific ethnic, political groups: "the Kenites, the Kenesites, and the Kadmonites; the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Rephaim; the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." The description clearly establishes the land as a specific piece of real estate occupied at the one time in history by various pagan tribes. This land promise was never completely fulfilled in the Old Testament. Unless God is to go back on His word, or unless He reinterprets the meaning of this (which amounts to the same thing) in the New Testament this must be fulfilled.

Some non-dispensationalists do not understand this at all to be literal. The claim is that because of Israel's hardness of heart, the Church has replaced Israel, and the land promised by the Abrahamic Covenant is a reference to heaven. They support this by referring to Heb. 11:16 where it is said that Abraham looked for a heavenly city. However, this heavenly city cannot be equated with the land promise for that would mean that heaven had been occupied at one time by those pagan tribes, which is absurd. Also, the specific boundary descriptions imply an earthly real estate. This means that since this promise has not been fulfilled, its fulfillment is yet future, and a return of national, ethnic, regenerated Israel, to the land, must be anticipated.

Even though the Church shares in the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant by inheriting the promise of justification by faith (Gal. 3:6-9) and may dwell in the land alongside Israel in the Millennial Kingdom, this does not mean they have replaced Israel. To assert this is to assert that no one in the OT correctly understood the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. This would suggest that the Messianic expectations of Mary and other believers at the First Coming of Christ were completely erroneous. They might have had confusions, but Jesus never corrected their fundamental expectations of a literal, physical, kingdom of Israel in the land.

The New Covenant has also generated a tremendous amount of discussion as its relation to Israel and the Church is investigated. It is absolutely clear from the context of the covenant in Jer. 31:31-33 that the covenant as prophesied was to be "with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." The context shows that Israel was about to be judged by the Babylonian invasion and captivity. In the midst of this the Lord speaks and gives them hope. He has not deserted them. He will make a new covenant with them, not like the old one, but a new one whose provisions will include a change of heart, the indwelling Spirit of God, and the internal knowledge of God's law in such a way that they will be "My people." Any interpretation of this passage that applies it to the Church in a way that its application in the context of Jeremiah is not realized negates this promise.

In the NT, Jesus, the night before He went to the cross, as He remembered the Passover with His disciples, reinvested the cup of wine with new meaning. He said, "This cup is the New Covenant in My Blood." (Luke 22:20) His death on the cross was the sacrifice that established the New Covenant. Further, in 2 Cor. 3:6, Paul states that he is a minister of the New Covenant. The writer of Hebrews in the eight chapter also applies the New Covenant to the Church.

Does that mean that the Church is the heir of the New Covenant blessings in place of Israel? That is extremely difficult to uphold for at least two reasons. First, a number of Old Testament passages that are clearly New Covenant in context, (i.e., Joel 2:28ff.) have not been fulfilled literally and await the coming Day of the Lord for that fulfillment. It will be then, the "after these things" of Joel 2:28, that Israel as a redeemed nation, will enter into New Covenant blessing. Second, to apply the New Covenant exclusively to the Church, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, totally negates the specific statement in Jeremiah that the covenant would be made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The church clearly benefits from the New Covenant, not as a replacement for Israel, but joined into the place of blessing alongside of Israel. The way in which the covenant was prophesied to be fulfilled for Israel will still take place, but this does not exclude additional, unmentioned application of the covenant to the Church.

## Conclusion

These then are the two essentials of dispensational theology; an approach to Scripture that consistently applies a literal hermeneutic and a distinction between Israel and the Church in the plan of God. This is the arena of discussion. It should not only take place at the level of interpretive and theological

principle, but discussion should center on specific passages and their interpretation in context. Unfortunately, there are too many out there who are only concerned with stirring up strife and entering into combat over these issues. Too often their arguments, like those used by North, focus on insignificant issues or they misrepresent dispensational theology for their own benefit. It is our hope and prayer that Christian will not be taken in by such deception, and will continue to search the Scriptures to know the will of God and to develop solid Biblical perspectives on all the issues that face our world today.

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#### Endnotes

1 This type of modification is not unique, all theological systems have gone through modifications and changes in their first century or two. Some are still going through modification, although minor, as Scripture is more accurately understood. However recent developments in progressive dispensationalism are dangerous changes which threaten the integrity of the system and which, we believe, will eventually lead to allegorization of millennial passages and an amillennial interpretation. See, Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, *When the Trumpet Sounds* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995) and Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master, *Issues in Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody, 1994).

2 For further study see Craig A. Blaising, "Developing Dispensationalism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145:578 (April-June, 1988).

3 Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 44-47. Since the original publication Dr. Ryrie revised and updated this standard text on Dispensationalism, the new book, *Dispensationalism*, includes a chapter critiquing the new progressive dispensationalism and answers the critics of the original book.

4 One recent non-dispensational work that moves toward better understanding is Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1987).

5 Gary North, *Dispensationalism in Transition*, Vol. I, No. 1 (January, 1988). Each issue so far has only used "straw man" argumentation. We await something accurate.

6 North is honest enough to state that "Virtually no leading theologian in any orthodox camp was steadfast in his defense of Bishop Ussher's chronology or anything remotely resembling it." Does this mean that all theological systems have become compromisers with Darwinism? Of course not. But if one has, as North suggests, then it applies to all, even his own.

7 David N. Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 100-130.

8 If "Scofield set the standard of dispensational compromise" as North asserts, then Hodge and Warfield set the standard for compromise among covenant theologians.

9 Weston Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled* (Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976). As argued in this



paper, the classic Gap Theory did compromise with evolution and sought to stuff the historical ages into the period between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. This is not to be confused with the view that a gap of time does exist between 1:1 and 1:2, but does not suggest that the geologic ages or that any pre-Adamic life existed then. A view that sees a temporal disjunction between the opening verses of Genesis pre-exists the evolution debate and is not necessarily an accommodation to it. It is this view which the author of this paper holds.

10 As North admits, this condition reigned throughout evangelical circles, it was unrelated to theological perspectives.

11 John S. Feinberg, "Salvation in the Old Testament," in John S. and Paul D. Feinberg, *Tradition and Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 47.

12 David Chilton, *Paradise Restored* (Fort Worth: Dominion Press, 1985), 98-110; *Days of Vengeance* (Fort Worth: Dominion Press, 1987).

13 If Chilton's highly symbolic interpretation is followed through consistently in the verses he cites, one major effect is that the plagues of Egypt, which are clearly delineated as physical, become socio-political descriptions. All objective meaning is lost.

14 Chilton, *Paradise Restored*, 134-5.