

Discovering Dispensationalism: Tracing the Development of Dispensational Thought from the First to the Twenty-First Century, edited by Cory M. Marsh and James I. Fazio. El Cajon, CA: SCS Press, 2023. x + 386 pp. \$29.95.

Dispensationalists tire of the frequent mischaracterizations and ill-informed arguments levied against their approach to Scripture. One common, but well-worn and misguided, assertion is that the dispensational approach is entirely of recent theological development with no precedent in the early church or the Middle Ages. The present volume, edited by two professors at Southern California Seminary, seeks to dispel this notion by tracing a through line of dispensational thought from the church fathers to the present day. The volume is a welcome addition to the literature, especially given that defenses of dispensationalism often engage at the popular level rather than the academic. Whether the volume is successful or ultimately impactful for these discussions remains to be seen, but it takes a decided step toward elevating these conversations into a more thoughtful exchange, particularly among church leaders and secondary professors and students.

Cory Marsh is Professor of New Testament and James Fazio is Professor of Biblical Studies at Southern California Seminary. This seminary established SCS Press a few years ago in the hopes of filling a lacuna by providing scholarly theological/biblical studies from a dispensational perspective. The need arose from the reluctance of many current academic evangelical presses to provide a platform for dispensational interpretation. The volume includes twelve scholars from a range of dispensational colleges and seminaries, from Faith Baptist Bible College to Shepherds Theological Seminary. Notable authors include Darrell Bock, Larry Pettegrew, Thomas Ice, Paul Hartog, and Mark Snoeberger. Two authors have passed away since the publication (William Watson and Larry Pettegrew), but the others teach in a variety of fields spanning New Testament, systematic theology, and church history.

Following an introduction, the book is organized into three parts corresponding to three periods in church history. These parts cover the ancient period from the New Testament era through the Nicene period (AD 30–430), the medieval period into the modern era with J. N. Darby (430–1882), and the late modern period from the rise of the Bible conference movement to the emergence of progressive dispensationalism (1875–present). The book ends with a conclusion by Marsh and Fazio providing retrospect and prospect for dispensational thought. In the first chapter Fazio seeks to establish that dispensational interpretation rises from the teaching of Jesus and the New Testament apostles. A lot of the chapter is spent analyzing how the various teachers and writers use the term *dispensation*, with the goal of providing a definition. He concludes by defining dispensationalism as the “theological system which reflects God’s administration over His household, whereby a sovereignly appointed steward has administered a divinely apportioned measure of God’s grace” (45).

In the second chapter Paul Hartog surveys the patristic period. His discussion interacts with Crutchfield's defense of dispensational thought in the church fathers and Hill's thesis that chiliastic theology in the early church stemmed from those fathers' two-compartment view of Sheol. Hill's thesis is rather simplistic and has been addressed by Blaising and others. Nonetheless, Hartog does an admirable work dispelling this connection. He demonstrates that chiliasm was a commonplace, even the norm, in the patristic period, espoused by Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and others, and that it declined thereafter. Outside the chapter on J. N. Darby, this chapter is the longest in the book. Jeremiah Mutie next considers the broader Nicene period. He interacts with Cyprian of Carthage, Lactantius, Jerome, Augustine, and others. In this period dispensationalism declined, although there were still some adherents to varying aspects.

The chapters turn then to continental Europe with the Medieval and early modern period. William Watson admirably traces precursors to dispensational thought in figures such as Cyril of Alexandria and the Venerable Bede, among others. Much of the proto-dispensationalism here has to do with interpreters who posit a future for the nation of Israel in fulfillment of Old Testament promises. Ron Bigalke follows this with a survey of the Reformation period. He focuses a good deal on Luther and the Anabaptists. In the next chapter Mark Snoeberger considers the Pre-Darby era (1600–1800). He includes a helpful overview of Ryrie's *sine qua non* in the light of this discussion, concluding that the key issue at stake in this period as well as others is the distinction between Israel and the church as to their nature and future. Here Puritanism proved a particularly fertile ground for theological defenses of a redemptive restoration for national Israel, thereby contending as a concomitant that the church does not supersede Israel. Max Weremchuk then provides an extensive overview of Darby's life and work. This is the longest chapter. He traces the influences on Darby's thought and corrects some errant notions regarding Darby. The value of the chapter lies in a clear delineation of Darby's theology, including his eschatology and hermeneutical approach.

The final part considers dispensationalism in the late modern period. Larry Pettegrew surveys the Bible conference movement, emerging from the prayer revival of 1857–58 and the Irish revival. He provides helpful overviews of important figures such as George Needham and James Brookes. The next chapter by Philip Long considers the mid-Acts dispensational movement, known to some as hyper- or ultra-dispensationalism. This view holds that the church does not begin at Pentecost but rather with the advent of Paul's ministry. Thus, the approach denies the validity of believers' baptism. Some might question the inclusion of this position within the book, but the editors took the step so as to allow the movement an opportunity to champion its position as within the mainstream of dispensational thought (Marsh [14] nonetheless calls the inclusion "an unprecedented effort" to give the view an opportunity to express itself alongside other forms of dispensational-

ism). Thomas Ice then considers the so-called golden years of dispensationalism, from C. I. Scofield to Hal Lindsey (1900–1980). Much attention is given here to the Scofield Reference Bible and to Dallas Theological Seminary. Darrell Bock provides the final chapter, charting the rise of progressive dispensationalism within the larger field, starting in the 1980s. The editors conclude the book with a final retrospect and prospect. They tie together the long history of dispensational forms of Christian thought and end on a hopeful note that dispensationalism will continue to grow and develop in the coming years.

The book has strengths and weaknesses. Its primary strength is its unique status as an academic treatment of historical approaches to dispensational thought. Not many works of this nature have been published. As a corollary, the book provides dispensational thinkers some cover in making the case that dispensationalism is not merely a recent aberration feverishly dreamed up by a convalescing J. N. Darby. There are, however, a few drawbacks to the work. The academic rigor of the essays is of varying quality, creating a certain unevenness that is often difficult to avoid in a multi-author work. Another criticism would be a certain inconsistency in defining what actually constitutes dispensational thought. A book of this nature can easily become a “Where’s Waldo” of church history, straining to find elusive figures and arguments, perhaps finding them where they do not clearly exist. This is not to say that the book ultimately fails to accomplish its objective, only that at times a certain vagueness or latitude in what really constitutes the dispensational approach offsets the book’s piquancy to some degree. All that notwithstanding, I commend the book to readers, who, I think, will find here much of value in discerning the historical forebears to the dispensational approach to Scripture.

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Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture, edited by Brent E. Parker and Richard J. Lucas. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022. ix + 266 pp. \$21.99.

The editors of this volume are Brent E. Parker and Richard J. Lucas, who also worked together on *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies* (B&H, 2016). Parker serves as assistant editor of *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* while Lucas is pastor of teaching and preaching at First Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida. As for the book’s contributors, representing Covenant Theology is Michael S. Horton, the J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Westminster Seminary California. Writing on behalf of Progressive Covenantalism is Stephen J. Wellum, Professor of Christian Theology at the Southern