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DID CLASSICAL DISPENSATIONALISM TEACH MULTIPLE WAYS OF SALVATION?

JOHN CARPENTER

From its inception in 1828, Dispensationalism has been dogged by accusations that it teaches multiple ways of salvation.¹ Its advocates often insist that these accusations are unfounded; that they are all based on misunderstandings and a few “unfortunate statements taken in isolation.”² Many, if not all, leading dispensationalists insist that their system has never made any such claim. While Charles Ryrie (1925–2016) insisted, “Dispensationalism does not teach two ways of salvation, and there are sufficient statements by dispensationalists to prove the fact.”³ He complains that claims to the contrary are “repeated with the regularity of a dripping faucet.”⁴ The Dallas Theological Seminary Statement of Faith on dispensations states, “dispensations are not ways of salvation... salvation in the divine reckoning is always ‘by grace through faith,’ and rests upon the basis of the shed blood of Christ.”⁵ Michael Svelgel matter-of-factly notes that “mainstream dispensationalists... insisted on soteriological continuity in every dispensation.”⁶ Joining the chorus are dispensational scholars E. Schuyler English (1899–1981), Mal Couch (1938–2013), Anthony C. Garland, Matt Sherro, and Michael Vlach.⁷ With such force-

¹ I am dating the beginning of dispensationalism from the publication of John Nelson Darby’s *The Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ*.

² Tony Garland, “Does Dispensationalism Teach Two Ways of Salvation?” *The Conservative Theological Journal*, March 2003, p. 1. <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/documents/articles/4/4.htm?x=x>, accessed July 23, 2021.

³ Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1965), 112–113.

⁴ Ryrie, *Revised and Expanded* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), ebook, (<https://www.google.com/books/edition/Dispensationalism/eo3BxTfTqJEC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=>, accessed July 23, 2021), 105.

⁵ Dallas Theological Seminary, Doctrinal Statement, Article V. <https://www.dts.edu/about/doctrinal-statement/>, accessed July 21, 2021.

⁶ Michael J. Svelgel, “The History of Dispensationalism in Seven Eras,” *Dispensationalism and the History of Redemption: A Developing and Diverse Tradition* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2015), 49.

⁷ English wrote, “Dispensationalism teaches that man is saved by grace and grace alone in any age.” (“E. Schuyler English Looks at Dispensationalism,” *Christian Life*, XVIII, 5 [September 1956]: 25, according to Daniel Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum* [Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI,

ful claims and emphatic denials, one would think that evidence of classical dispensationalism teaching otherwise would be rare and vague. One would be wrong.

From the outset, I admit that classical theologians of dispensationalism – which I define as ranging from John Nelson Darby to Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871-1952) – taught, at times, that salvation in every dispensation was only through Christ.⁸ Darby wrote, “Every sinner in all ages is saved as such, individually, by grace.”⁹ Likewise, Chafer wrote, “God never saved any one person or group of persons on any other ground than that righteous freedom to do so which the Cross of Christ secured.”¹⁰ (More on this later.) Yet, at other times, the founders appeared to teach otherwise. The issue is their consistency. The question, here, is not whether the founders of dispensationalism sometimes taught a continuity of salvation, but whether they at other times, taught the opposite. That is, did they

1980], 34.) Mal Couch (1938-2013), founder of Tyndale Theological Seminary, wrote that classical dispensationalists “*never believed* that one is saved by the law.” (Mal Couch, *A Biblical Theology of the Church* [Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999], 34, emphasis original.) Anthony C. Garland wrote, “Normative dispensationalism has *never* taught anything other than a single way of salvation.” (Garland, “Does Dispensationalism Teach Two Ways of Salvation?” 1, [The Conservative Theological Journal - March 2003, <https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/documents/articles/4/4.htm?x=x>, accessed November 24, 2025] emphasis original.) Matt Sherro writes, “Dispensationalism has always taught one way of salvation.” (Matt Sherro, “Salvation and Dispensationalism”, March 9, 2017, <http://exploringthetruth.Org/salvation-and-dispensationalism/>, accessed July 23, 2021.) Michael Vlach emphasizes, “*dispensationalism has not and does not teach multiple ways of salvation.*” (Michael Vlach, “What is Dispensationalism,” *Christ’s Prophetic Plans*, John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, editors [Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012], e-book. Emphasis original.) In an editorial for The Gospel Coalition, he wrote that dispensationalism affirms “salvation has always been by grace through faith alone.” (Michael Vlach, “Dispensational Theology,” *Concise Theology* series, nd, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/dispensational-theology/>, accessed July 26, 2021.)

⁸ Since I am defining classical dispensationalists as from Darby to Lewis Sperry Chafer, then dispensationalists after Chafer commenting on the founders of the system are regarded as secondary sources.

⁹ J. N. Darby, *Collected Works*, vol 11, “Elements of Prophecy,” (nd) 47. (<https://www.stempublishing.com/authors/darby/PROPHET/11003E.html>, accessed July 7, 2023.) He also wrote, “A sinner at all times since the fall is saved in the same way, no Christian can doubt that for a moment.” J. N. Darby, *Collected Works*, vol 10, “Law,” 12.

¹⁰ Lewis S. Chafer, “Editorial,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* Vol. 102, No. 405 (1945), 1.

contradict themselves? Did their theology, in fact, teach multiple ways of salvation?

DISPENSATIONS AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF DIFFERENT WAYS OF SALVATION

The first hint that dispensationalism taught different ways of salvation is in the very concept of “dispensations,” in particular, a dispensation of law contrasted with a dispensation of grace. Charles Ryrie admitted that the terminology implies soteriological discontinuity: “labeling the present dispensation as that of Grace has been taken to mean that dispensationalism teaches there was no grace in any other age.”¹¹ Labelling the current era the “Dispensation of Grace” invites the conclusion that the prior “Dispensation of Law” relied on law-keeping for salvation. However, dispensationalists protest that such a conclusion is presumptuous, that it demonstrates simplistic, superficial knowledge of the system. They can then present numerous quotations of dispensationalists that support their contention that “dispensations” were never about salvation but rather about “testing.” Anthony Garland specifies that these “tests associated with dispensations are not for salvation.”¹² But that begs the question as to what is being tested. If not salvation, then what? William Trotter (1818-1865), a contemporary of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), wrote that “The conversion of souls has taken place under every dispensation that God has established since the fall... But the characteristics of the dispensation are to be found in that which relates to *the divine government of the earth*.”¹³ Hence, what distinguishes the dispensations is how one relates to God’s government kingdom. C. I. Scofield wrote, “A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.”¹⁴

Specifically, some early proponents of dispensationalism, like Lewis Sperry Chafer, used terms like “divine government” or “testings” to define dispensations, but these concepts are so interwoven with God’s Kingdom and one’s ultimate status with God that they are effectively synonymous with salvation. The “divine government” is not distinct from God’s kingdom. Scholars are so accustomed to making fine distinctions that they

¹¹ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 111.

¹² Garland, “Does Dispensationalism Teach Two Ways of Salvation?” (2003), <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/documents/articles/4/4.htm?x=x#sdfootnote14sym>, accessed July 23, 2021.

¹³ William Trotter, *Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects*, 406. Emphasis original.

¹⁴ *Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford, 1909), 5.

sometimes fail to see that two things with different names are functionally identical. To be in God’s kingdom is, *ipso facto*, to be saved. For example, in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul speaks of “inheriting the Kingdom of God” as equivalent to final salvation. So, to be tested of one’s relationship to the Kingdom or “divine government,” however it is phrased, is functionally the same as to be tested whether one is saved. Thus, if the “Divine Government” determines who enters the Kingdom, then the criteria for government are the criteria for salvation. If the administration changes from Grace to Law, or vice versa, and inclusion in the Kingdom – effectively the same as being saved – relies on passing the test of that administration, the mode of salvation has effectively changed. If one fails the test, then one’s one is shown to be excluded from God’s Kingdom. That is another way of speaking of exclusion from salvation. If the administration of God’s rule changes, there is reason to believe that the criteria for who is saved under the different administration have changed.

“To be tested for ‘obedience,” as Scofield suggests, is inherently to be tested for salvation, unless one embraces antinomianism by severing obedience from salvation entirely. Since salvation produces “the obedience of faith” (Romans 1:5, 16:26), sanctification cannot be fully divorced from justification. This creates a theological dilemma regarding the nature of the “test” under the dispensation of law.

If the test was merely to demonstrate righteousness, then it is akin to the Reformed “third use of the law” (*tertius usus legis*).¹⁵ However, if this testing is the condition for entering the Kingdom, it ceases to be sanctification and becomes a work-based justification—precisely the charge dispensationalists deny. Furthermore, removing the old test of the law, with the new “dispensation of grace,” implies that believers today lack legal admonition, effectively rendering the present age antinomian. For Darby, the law “played no part in the accomplishment of salvation” for Christians.¹⁶ There was no “evangelical use of the law. Conversely, if passing the “test” of law-keeping had been required to procure justification, then the method of salvation has indeed changed from one dispensation to the next. If it was not – that is, if one could fail the test and yet still be justified – what was the test for? Therefore, despite modern denials, the dispensational structure forces a choice between present-day antinomianism or historical discontinuity in the way of salvation.

¹⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 2.7.12-13

¹⁶ Crawford Gribben, *J. N. Darby and the Roots of Dispensationalism* (Oxford University Press, 2024), 45.

Hence, even if dispensationalism has been revised to avoid the suggestion that it originally taught differing ways of salvation under differing dispensations, it is now frequently criticized for falling into antinomianism.¹⁷ Michael Vlach defends dispensationalism from this charge by noting that “Dispensationalists believe the Law of Christ as described in the New Testament.”¹⁸ However, Vlach’s defence assumes first that the “dispensation of grace” begins with or before the Lord Jesus’ ministry; that is, at the onset of the New Testament, so that the teachings of Christ apply to the Christian. Classical dispensationalism did not believe that. For Darby, a new dispensation, that of “Spirit,” apparently dawns with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18ff), being “the command on which the dispensation hung.”¹⁹ Thus, the teachings of Jesus fall in the prior dispensation and hence are not binding on Christians.

Like Darby, Scofield, and Chafer placed the ministry of Christ under the “dispensation of law.” Scofield wrote, “The sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ introduced the dispensation of pure grace.”²⁰ The result is that even the teachings of Jesus, such as the Sermon on the Mount, are not for the church. So, Scofield concluded, the Lord’s Prayer’s petition for forgiveness, “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,” is “legal ground. ... Under law, forgiveness is conditioned upon a like spirit in us; under grace, we are forgiven for Christ’s sake, and exhorted to forgive because we have been forgiven. ...”²¹ Scofield is pointing out how even the teachings of Jesus (i.e., “the law of Christ”) fall within the “dispensation of law” and are inapplicable to the Christian. For some dispensationalists, this results in claiming that all the teachings of Jesus, even after the resurrection, are no longer relevant.²² Thus, classical dispensationalism

¹⁷ This was the theme of John Gerstner, for example in *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism*, (Brentwood, TN, Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991) and followed by R. C. Sproul.

¹⁸ Michael Vlach, “How Two Covenant Theologians View Dispensationalism,” 2012, https://www.preteristarchive.com/2012_vlach-how-two-covenant-theologians-view-dispensationalism/.

¹⁹ *Collected Writings of John Nelson Darby*, Volume 14 (London, Stow Hill and Bible Tract Depot, n.d.), e-book. – https://www.google.com/books/edition/Collected_Writings_by_John_Nelson_Darby/1BpqBgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Darby,+%22, accessed July 23, 2021.

²⁰ C. I Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, (New York: Fleming H. Revel Company, 1896), 16.

²¹ *Scofield Reference Bible*, Matthew 6:12.

²² For example, in a debate with a “Church of Christ” representative, Brian Edwards, pastor of Hope Church, Danville, Va., seeks to refute the claim that baptism is necessary for salvation, according to the Church of Christ inter-

appears caught between the devil of antinomianism and the deep blue sea of changing ways of salvation.

Our task here is not to explore all these questions raised by introducing the structure of dispensations into Biblical theology. Rather, let us note that dispensations impact soteriology in one way or the other, John MacArthur's claim notwithstanding: "dispensationalism shapes one's eschatology and ecclesiology. That is the extent of it. ... [T]rue dispensationalism makes no relevant contribution to soteriology."²³ That assumes theology is highly compartmentalized, with a major hermeneutical concept that only affects eschatology and ecclesiology without influencing soteriology.

In fact, soteriology is closely interwoven with both ecclesiology and eschatology. Soteriology explains why and how people are saved, that is, how sinners become the people of God. Ecclesiology explains who is saved, who are "the people of God." They are those to whom God gives the covenantal promise, "I will be their God, and they will be my people."²⁴ Soteriology defines salvation. Ecclesiology can be defined, at least in part, as the study of who is saved, who constitutes the assembly of those on whom God will have final mercy (the implications of that statement point to an eschatological subject). The objects of soteriology are the subjects of ecclesiology.

For example, in his commentary on Romans 9:24-29, Darby interweaves soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology.²⁵ The question arises naturally: if the Jews are "my people" in God's eyes simply based on their ethnicity, then is not the basis of their salvation different than that of Gentile "sons of the living God"? A dispensationalist interlocutor replied,

pretation of Mark 16:16, by countering that Mark 16:16 is "pre-first century church." That is, since the church came to be only at Pentecost, ostensibly inaugurating a new dispensation, then Jesus' instructions to His disciples even post-resurrection, are not for the church. (c. 1:02.20, "church of Christ vs Baptist, Robertson-Edwards Saved By Faith Alone Debate," Johnny Robertson, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozK4FZmXCTk&ab_channel=JohnnyRobertson, accessed July 20, 2021.)

²³ John F. MacArthur, *The Gospel According to the Apostles*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), appendix two.

²⁴ "Thus, the people of God are those in both the Old and New Testament eras who responded to God by faith, and whose spiritual origin rests exclusively in God's grace." C. Marvin Pate, "Church, the," *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, <https://www.studydrive.org/dictionaries/eng/bed/c/church-the.html>, accessed July 23, 2021.

²⁵ J. N. Darby, On the Epistle to the Romans, https://www.stempublishing.com/authors/darby/MISCELLA/33015G_C.html, accessed July 23, 2021.

“Darby and the others were clear that Jews were God’s people by way of *election*, not ethnicity.” This is a distinction without a difference since it is the ethnicity that is elect; that is, one is elect by being in the ethnicity. Early critics of dispensationalism saw it suggesting that “the means of salvation were in flux, which, if true, would unsettle many other aspects of systematic theology.”²⁶ To claim that pieces of ecclesiology or eschatology can be pulled out without affecting soteriology, like pulling pieces of a Jenga puzzle without the whole thing toppling, invites investigation. Hence, this article.

Today, claiming that dispensations imply different ways of salvation can result in being accused of not having read the primary sources carefully enough.²⁷ This accusation cannot be levelled against Benjamin Wills Newton (1807-1899). He was a co-founder of the Plymouth Brethren with J. N. Darby, originally a partner with Darby, and yet he came to believe that, if Darby’s theology was followed logically, it implied two distinct and separate ways to salvation. Darby had defined dispensations as “any arranged dealing of God in which man has been set before his fall, and having been tried, has failed, and therefore God has been obliged to act by other means.”²⁸ These terms -- “fall,” a trial and failure, God acting – naturally encourage the idea that people are falling from grace, from a state of favour with God, of justification, and that God is acting to rescue people from that disfavour; that is, from His wrath, so suggesting salvation. Further, on John 1:17, Darby commented, “Law requires from man what he ought to be before God, and, if he fulfils it, it is his righteousness. Truth in Christ shows what man is (not ought to be), and what God is, and, as inseparable from grace, does not require but brings to man what he needs.”²⁹ Darby’s “writings were ... not entirely consistent,” including on this point.³⁰ Even where he explicitly affirmed salvation by grace in

²⁶ Hummel, *The Rise and Fall of Dispensationalism*, 195.

²⁷ For example, Micah Martin claims that the revision of comment on John 1:17 in *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (1967), should be accepted as clarifying what Scofield really meant “by anyone who is intellectually honest” (“Did Scofield Teach Multiple Ways of Salvation?” July 12, 2019, <https://contendingearnestly.wordpress.com/2019/07/12/did-scofield-teach-multiple-ways-of-salvation/#comments>, accessed July 26, 2021.)

²⁸ John N. Darby, *Collectanea*, 6, https://stempublishing.com/authors/darby/New8_95/38Collectanea.html, accessed July 23, 2021.

²⁹ John N. Darby, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, “John 1,” <https://stempublishing.com/authors/darby/synopsis/index.html>, accessed July 23, 2021.

³⁰ Daniel G. Hummel, *The Rise and Fall of Dispensationalism: How the Evangelical Battle over the End Times Shaped a Nation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2023), 21.

every age, formulations such as this introduced instability into his system, and the issue we are exploring is the consistency of the founders of dispensationalism. Darby appears to imply – by “if he fulfils it” – that righteousness, and thus justification and thus final salvation, could have been achieved through the law during that dispensation. Glenn R. Kreider admits as much: “In this statement, Darby seems to imply the possibility of achieving righteousness through the law.”³¹

Because of these suggestions, Darby’s friend B. W. Newton “considered Mr. Darby’s dispensational teaching as the height of speculative nonsense.”³² Newton believed, as had most Protestants until the advent of dispensationalism, that the church “includes all the faithful from Abraham to the present; that it is not something unique to New Testament times.”³³ The church is the assembly of God’s people, the gathering of people God has redeemed. However, for Darby, there is a distinction between the church, to whom God reveals himself as Father, and the Jews to whom he reveals “the character of Jehovah, the king ... by reestablishing them in earthly glory.”

The Jews, then, are the people by whom, and in whom, God sustains His name of Jehovah, and His character of judgment and righteousness. The church are the people in whom, as in His family, the Father reveals His character of goodness and love.³⁴

Here, Darby claims one people are God’s “by the spirit of adoption,” “sons of the living God,” on the one hand, and, on the other, another who are

³¹ Kreider, “Sola Fide in Every Dispensation,” *Forged From Reformation*, Christopher Cone and James I. Fazio, editors, [San Diego: Southern California Seminary Press, 2017], 429.)

³² H.A. Ironside, *A Historical Sketch of the Brethren Movement* (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1985), 25.

³³ “John N. Darby and the Brethren Assemblies,” <http://www.johndarby.org/difficulties/>, accessed July 20, 2021. Alister McGrath notes that the view that the Church has replaced Israel as the people of God, known as supersessionism, had a “wide consensus” in the early church. (Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 2d ed. [Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998] 461-62.) For more documentation of the church fathers’ teaching on supersessionism, see Michael J. Vlach, “Rejection Then Hope: The Church’s Doctrine of Israel In the Patristic Era,” *The Masters Seminary Journal*, 19/1 (Spring 2008): 57-60.

³⁴ John Nelson Darby, “Israel’s Restoration: The Manner of Its Accomplishment.”

simply “God’s people,” apparently by right of ethnicity.³⁵ But since salvation could legitimately be defined as how one becomes one of God’s “my people” (in contrast to his “not my people,” as in Hosea 1:9-10), if God has two different people, does he then have two different ways of becoming one of them? If there are two different assemblies of God’s people – the church and Israel – that suggests that there are two different ways to become part of those people, hence different ways of salvation. Because of this, Newton “was vehemently opposed to the idea of the church being a special company of whose calling and destiny the Old Testament knows nothing, a line of things emphasized by Mr. Darby....”³⁶

Stephen Sizer notes that “Newton and others saw Darby’s elevation of Israel above the church as ‘full-blown heresy’... Darby’s scheme, followed logically, implied two distinct and separate ways to salvation.”³⁷ In particular, he believed that Darby’s suggestion that Israel would be blessed without faith in Jesus Christ was, “virtually to say there are two kinds of Christianity, two Gospels, two ways, and two ends of salvation.”³⁸ In April 1845, Newton issued a declaration of thirteen points in which he differed with Darby. Declaration VII states, “That there is no salvation and no life apart from union with the person of the Son of God, and that all who so rise in Him are sons of God.”³⁹ The implication was that Darby was teaching the opposite, namely that there was salvation apart from Christ, presumably through law-keeping. Newton cannot be dismissed as not having heard classical dispensationalists. Crawford Gribben notes that “many antagonists” accused Darby “of teaching salvation by law in the Old Testament and by grace in the New Testament.”⁴⁰ If “many antagonists” and at least one friend are coming to the same conclusion, perhaps the problem is with the logical implications of his system. Hence, Darby, the founder of dispensationalism, was understood by originally sympa-

³⁵ John Nelson Darby, “Israel’s Restoration: The Manner of Its Accomplishment.”

³⁶ Ironside, *A Historical Sketch*, 25.

³⁷ Stephen Sizer, “John Nelson Darby--The Father of Premillennial Dispensationalism,” August 31, 1998, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120207121049/http://www.theologue.org/JNDarby-SSizer.htm>, accessed July 20, 2021.

³⁸ As noted by B. W. Newton and S.P. Tregelles, *Teachers of the Faith and the Future* (Taunton, Phoenix, 1969), 75, according to Steven R. Sizer, “The Promised Land: A Critical Investigation of Evangelical Christian Zionism in Britain and the United States of America since 1800” (Ph.D. Thesis, Middlesex University, 2002), 54.

³⁹ Ironside, *A Historical Sketch*, 26.

⁴⁰ Gribben, *J. N. Darby and the Roots of Dispensationalism*, 36, note 27, p. 173.

thetic partners to be implying that ways of salvation changed with the dispensations.

THE SCOFIELD REFERENCE BIBLE

If Darby is usually recognized as the founder of dispensationalism, C. I. Scofield (1843-1921) is one of its “governing principals,” a “world famous prince in the dispensational kingdom.”⁴¹ This prince produced what is by far the most quoted piece of evidence used to show that classical dispensationalists taught multiple ways of salvation: the note in his famous reference Bible on John 1:17, “As a dispensation, grace begins with the death and resurrection of Christ... The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ...”⁴² Dispensational defenders, like Charles Ryrie, note that Scofield is speaking of the beginning of the “dispensation of grace,” not the beginning of grace *per se*. “To be sure, the dispensationalist does not say that there was no grace ever displayed before the coming of Christ.”⁴³ But even so, Scofield claims that now, with Christ’s death and resurrection, “legal obedience” is “no longer” the “condition of salvation.” He implies, then, that “legal obedience” had been the “condition of salvation” before the death and resurrection of Christ, that is, during the “dispensation of law.” Here, Scofield specifically says that the “point of testing” was exactly about the “condition of salvation,” not some other revelation or facet of life unrelated to salvation. That Scofield never argues that anyone was actually saved by works during that dispensation is irrelevant. Even if the potential means of salvation was never fulfilled by a single individual does not alter the claim that there was an alleged means of salvation outside of Christ.

Scofield’s note to John 1:17 is commonly explained as a “misstatement.”⁴⁴ But who makes a misstatement in a published work, in a study Bible note to the prologue of John, one of the most theologically important texts in all of scripture? The claim that Scofield carelessly let slip a “misstatement” that is inconsistent with the rest of his theology, at such a crucial point, may be believable if he never suggested anything similar. E. Shuler English, chairman of the New Scofield Bible Editorial Committee, admitted

⁴¹ Svigel, “The History of Dispensationalism in Seven Eras,” 69-100.

⁴² *Scofield Reference Bible*, 1244-45.

⁴³ Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism, Revised and Expanded* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), ebook, <https://www.google.com/books/edition/Dispensationalism/eo3BxTfTqJEC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=>, accessed July 23, 2021.

⁴⁴ Couch, *A Biblical Theology of the Church*, 34.

that the original note to John 1:17 needed “clarification” because “nowhere else in his writings does Scofield imply such a thing.”⁴⁵ Is that true?

R. Todd Mangum answers that question tersely: “This is not really true.”⁴⁶ For example, notes on Exodus 19 also suggested salvation through law-keeping. On Exodus 19:5, Scofield wrote, “What under law was condition, is under grace, freely given to every believer. The ‘if’ of v. 5 is the essence of law as a method of divine dealing and the fundamental reason why the law made nothing perfect (Romans 8:3; Hebrews 7:18, 19).” As in John 1:17, there is a strong contrast between salvation in the era of law and now. Salvation now is “freely given” whereas, according to Scofield, under the dispensation of law it was conditional. And he goes on. “The Abrahamic (Genesis 15:18, note) and New (Hebrews 8:8-12, note) minister salvation and assurance because they impose but one condition, faith.”⁴⁷ Hence, salvation in the Abrahamic and the New Covenant is conditioned on *Sola Fide*, which is distinguished from the dispensation of law in which salvation was conditioned on legal obedience. Even if no one successfully availed themselves of salvation and assurance through the law, Scofield is implying that, beginning at Sinai, legal obedience was the new “condition of salvation” until the dawn of the next dispensation.

Scofield confirms the retrogression of the dispensation of law. “The Dispensation of Promise ended when Israel rashly accepted the law (Ex. 19:8).” That Scofield says they accepted the Law “rashly” suggests that they should have remained under the previous dispensation and could have done so rightly. Chafer echoed a similar implication, “[Israel’s] choice [of accepting the law] was in no way required by God.”⁴⁸ Daniel Fuller noted, “The implication of this statement seems to be that Israel could have rejected the law without displeasing God.”⁴⁹

Scofield continues, “Grace had prepared a deliverer (Moses), provided a sacrifice for the guilty, and by divine power brought them out of bondage (Ex. 19:4); but at Sinai they exchanged grace for law.”⁵⁰ This exchange of grace from the previous dispensation for the law of the next dispensation was not just for some kind of “test” unrelated to salvation, but as the “condition of salvation” itself.

⁴⁵ E. Shuyler English, “The New Scofield Reference Bible,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 124 (Jan-March 1967), 130.

⁴⁶ Mangum, *The Dispensational-Covenantal Rift: The Fissuring of American Evangelical* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 184.

⁴⁷ Scofield Reference Bible, 93.

⁴⁸ Chafer, *Systematic Theology IV*, 162.

⁴⁹ Fuller, *Gospel and Law*, 140.

⁵⁰ Scofield Reference Bible, 20.

Further, on 1 John 3:7, “he that doeth righteousness is righteous,” Scofield notes, in part, “The righteous man under law became righteous by doing righteously; under grace he does righteously because he has been made righteous.”⁵¹ Here, he specifically states that the condition of justification – becoming righteous – was, in the dispensation of law, “doing righteously” in contrast to the condition of justification now, which is grace. Justification is unquestionably part of salvation, indeed, the grounds of it. Hence, Scofield’s note for John 1:17 is not inconsistent with other expressions of his theology.

As with Darby, Scofield was also perceived to be teaching different ways of salvation by contemporaries who studied him closely. In Scofield’s case, the perceiver was Oswald T. Allis (1871 –1952), one of the founding professors of Westminster Theological Seminary. In 1936, Allis wrote two articles for *The Evangelical Quarterly* critiquing dispensationalism and, in so doing, documenting how he believed it taught different ways of salvation.⁵² That just seven years into the seminary’s existence, with the modernist controversy still alive and the fallout from the departure from Princeton still fresh, Allis and other leading Presbyterians thought dispensationalism was a sufficient problem to justify their engagement demonstrates how seriously Reformed theologians took dispensationalism in the first half of the twentieth century. Allis pointed out that the *Scofield Reference Bible*’s note for Matthew 10:5 stated, “The kingdom was promised to the Jews. Gentiles could be blessed only through Christ crucified and risen.” Allis commented, “Here we have a statement that seems clearly to teach that there was an essential difference between salvation for the Jew and salvation for the Gentile. The one needed the kingdom, the other needed Christ crucified and risen.” Allis noted that not only was the present age of grace contrasted with the past age of Law but also it is different from the future “dispensation of the Kingdom.” Commenting on “two distinct dispensations which are set definitely in contrast, and each has a Gospel of its own,” Allis concludes, “Salvation clearly will be on quite a different basis in the Kingdom age from what it is today in the Church age.”⁵³ Citing the *Scofield Reference Bible*’s “Summary” on the “Kingdom,” in which Scofield claims “The kingdom is to be established by power,” Allis comments, “Men are to be saved apparently by obedience

⁵¹ *Scofield Reference Bible*, 1323.

⁵² Oswald T. Allis, “Modern Dispensationalism and the Doctrine of the Unity of Scripture,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* VIII (January 1936): 22-35; and “Modern Dispensationalism and the Law of God,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* VIII (July 1936): 272-290.

⁵³ Allis, “Modern Dispensationalism and the Doctrine of the Unity of Scripture,” cited as page 30, in Daniel Fuller, *Gospel & Law*, 23.

to the King and not by trust in the Saviour.”⁵⁴ Further, Allis focuses on Acts 15:13ff, which Scofield describes, “Dispensationally, this is the most important passage in the N.T. It gives the divine purpose for this age, and for the beginning of the next.”⁵⁵ There the *Scofield Reference Bible* states, “The Gospel has never anywhere converted all, but everywhere has called out some.” In contrast, Scofield writes that during the Kingdom dispensation “the enormous majority of earth’s inhabitants will be saved.”⁵⁶ Allis takes offence at this statement for, he says, this claim makes the gospel less effective than “the Kingdom.” “What does this mean, if not that the preaching of the Cross is relatively of little efficacy as compared with... the Kingdom age?”⁵⁷ Once again, a careful, contemporaneous student of classical dispensationalism interpreted it as teaching various ways of salvation depending on the times despite dispensationalists’ claims otherwise. This contradictory nature of dispensational teaching likely owes something to the fact that dispensationalism did not arise in an academically rigorous environment, as Lutheran or Reformed theology did, but was “a lay theology formed and promulgated by preachers and laypersons.”⁵⁸

LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER

That same year, Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871 –1952), one of the leaders of dispensationalism’s era of “promising propagation” (1900-1950),⁵⁹ essentially, pleaded guilty to Allis’ charge of differing means of salvation:

⁵⁴ Allis, “Modern Dispensationalism and the Doctrine of the Unity of Scripture,” <https://www.monergism.com/modern-dispensationalism-and-doctrine-unity-scripture>, accessed July 24, 2021. Scofield’s statement is in notes to Zechariah 12:8.

⁵⁵ *Scofield Reference Bible*, Acts 15:13, 1166, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/sco/acts/15.htm>, accessed July 23, 2021.

⁵⁶ *Scofield Reference Bible*, Zechariah 12:8, 976, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/sco/zechariah/12.htm>, accessed July 23, 2021

⁵⁷ Allis, “Modern Dispensationalism and the Doctrine of the Unity of Scripture.”

⁵⁸ Ben Wintherinton III, *The Problem With Evangelical Theology: Testing the Exegetical Foundations of Calvinism, Dispensationalism, and Wesleyanism* (Baylor University Press: Waco, TX, 2005), 95.

⁵⁹ Svigel “The History of Dispensationalism in Seven Eras,” 53. Svigel actually puts Chafer in the era of “Legalizing Precepts (1950–1980),” even though his *Systematic Theology* was published in 1947 because it was most influential in this era. However, Mangum claims that soon after Chafer’s death, dispensationalism distanced itself from his teachings, at least on salvation in the Old Testament (*The Dispensational-Covenantal Rift*, 182).

“There are two widely different, standardized, divine provisions, whereby man, who is utterly fallen, may come into the favor of God.”⁶⁰ Coming into the favour of God is essentially what “justification” – and thus salvation – is. He explains that these “two widely different, standard divine provisions” for what amounts to salvation are necessary because of the radical contrast between the church (“the heavenly people”) and the natural people of Israel:

The heavenly people, by the very exalted character of their salvation being “made” to stand in all the perfection of Christ... have no burden laid upon them of establishing personal merit before God... No meritorious system, such as was the Law, could possibly be applied to a people who by riches of divine grace have attained to a perfect standing.⁶¹

Just as in Allis’s description of Scofield’s system, so too Chafer’s described salvation in the present dispensation of grace as in stark contrast to the coming dispensation of the Kingdom. According to Chafer, the essential elements of the grace administration are “faith as the sole basis of acceptance with God, unmerited acceptance through a perfect standing in Christ, the present possession of eternal life, an absolute security from all condemnation, and the enabling power of the indwelling Spirit.” These elements are, according to Chafer, “not found in the kingdom administration. On the other hand, it is declared to be the fulfilling of the law and the prophets (Matt 5:17,18; 7:12), and is seen to be an extension of the Mosaic Law into realms of meritorious obligation.”⁶² This is consistent with what he had written twenty years earlier in *The Kingdom in History and Prophecy* (1915): in the coming dispensation of the millennium “there will be a return to the legal kingdom grounds.”⁶³ “Return” implies that the “grounds” – as in the “basis” hence “basis of acceptance with God” – were indeed some legal achievement. These explicit affirmations of differing ways of salvation according to different dispensations (or “administrations”) were in response to Allis’ critique.

As with Darby and Scofield, contemporary students of the system saw that it was teaching various ways of salvation. This time James E. Bear of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia jumped into the fray, first with an article in *The Union Seminary Review* and then, after becoming chairman of the committee of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian

⁶⁰ L. S. Chafer, “Dispensationalism,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 93 (October 1936): 410.

⁶¹ Chafer, “Dispensationalism,” 415.

⁶² Chafer, “Dispensationalism,” 416.

⁶³ Chapter VI, “Present Truth,” 7, http://bartimaeus.us/pub_dom/the_kingdom_in_history_and_prophecy.html, accessed July 23, 2021.

Church of the United States (the Southern Presbyterians), leading the adoption of an official resolution, in May 1944, about dispensationalism:

Dr. C. I. Scofield ... and Dr. L. S. Chafer, ... both teach a dispensational view of God's various and divergent plans of salvation for various groups in different ages.... It is the unanimous opinion of your Committee that Dispensationalism is out of accord with the system of the doctrines set forth in the [Westminster] Confession of Faith, not primarily or simply in the field of eschatology, but because it attacks the very heart of the theology of our Church. Dispensationalism rejects the doctrine that God has, since the Fall, but one plan of salvation for all mankind and affirms that God has been through the ages administering various and diverse plans of salvation for various groups...⁶⁴

Chafer's reaction was to call the Committee's conclusion a "libelous statement." While he "protested this description of his views, he struggled to maintain a consistent line, as other fundamentalists identified his teachings as, at best, inconsistent on the issue."⁶⁵ He claimed that he only needed to explain himself, that the references that appear to show him teaching multiple ways of salvation – a "meritorious system" of the Law, "faith as the sole basis of acceptance with God" which is "not found in the kingdom administration" – "have no bearing on salvation whatever." The Presbyterian disciplinary committee reviewing his theology did not agree.

Chafer emphatically claimed that he "yields first place to no man in contending that a holy God can deal with sin in any age on any other ground than that of the blood of Christ." His statements, interpreted by the Presbyterian committee to be about salvation, were, instead, about "the rule of life which God has given to govern His people in the world."⁶⁶ He is apparently insisting on a separation between how God governs His people – otherwise known as the Kingdom of God or simply as the law – and salvation. Separating God's law, especially what in Reformed theology has been called the "third use of the law," from salvation seems to be fertile ground for antinomianism.⁶⁷ If one can talk of an "acceptance with

⁶⁴ James E. Bear, "Dispensationalism and the Covenant of Grace," *The Union Seminary Review*, 49 (July 1938): 285-307. 1944 PCUS Report on Dispensationalism, <http://www.pcahistory.org/documents/pcus1944.html>, accessed July 21, 2021.

⁶⁵ Hummel, *The Rise and Fall of Dispensationalism*, 195.

⁶⁶ Chafer, "Dispensational Distinctives Denounced," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 101 (July 1944): 259, according to Daniel Fuller, *Gospel and Law*, 30.

⁶⁷ "The third use of the Law (being also the principal use, and more closely connected with its proper end) has respect to believers in whose hearts the Spirit

God” and coming “into the favor of God” that, indeed, has “no bearing on salvation whatever,” then living in a pleasing way that is acceptable to and favoured by God is disconnected from salvation. So, if that is the case, professed believers can live with no regard for being acceptable to or favoured by God and still expect to be saved from wrath. Hence, we are back to a dispensation of antinomianism mentioned earlier. But to our point here, this dispensation with no third use of the law will not last into the next one when “there will be a return to the legal kingdom grounds.”⁶⁸

In response to the charge of heresy, Chafer wrote an editorial in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, the title of which sums up his feelings: “Inventing Heretics through Misunderstanding.” (To be fair, I don’t believe that the Presbyterians were accusing him or most dispensationalists of being “heretics,” nor would I.) Rather than clearing up the misunderstandings, he muddied the waters. He states that the problem with dispensationalism’s critics is “the persistent failure on the part of men to recognize that Israelites were by physical birth born into covenant relation to God.”⁶⁹ He asks the rhetorical question: “Are there two ways by which one may be saved?” He seems to answer the question unequivocally: “There is, therefore, but one way to be saved and that is by the power of God made possible through the sacrifice of Christ.”⁷⁰ But then he equivocates. There is a “far lesser question,” he explains: “the precise human terms upon which men may be saved.” This is what, in Reformed theology, has been called “the instrumental cause of salvation.”⁷¹ Salvation was earned by Christ (the meritorious cause), Chafer claims, but in different dispensations, people avail themselves of that salvation differently, by what he calls “human terms,” what Reformed theology traditionally labels “the instrumental cause.”

John Calvin defined the “instrumental cause of salvation” as the means “whereby the righteousness of Christ is applied to us.” “The formal or instrumental cause” of salvation is faith in Christ. The “material cause” (or meritorious cause) is the righteousness of Christ (Romans 3:24). The instrument, or tool, that brings that righteousness into our life, hence accomplishing justification, is faith (Romans 3:25).⁷² The Westminster

of God already flourishes and reigns.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II, vii, 6-12.

⁶⁸ Chapter VI, “Present Truth,” 7. http://bartimaeus.us/pub_dom/the_kingdom_in_history_and_prophecy.html

⁶⁹ Chafer, “Inventing Heretics through Misunderstanding,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 102, number 405 (1945): 3. <http://newcovenantsanctuary.blogspot.com/2011/06/inventing-heretics-through.html>, accessed July 23, 2021.

⁷⁰ Chafer, “Inventing Heretics through Misunderstanding,” 1.

⁷¹ Mangum, *The Dispensational-Covenantal Rift*, 44.

⁷² *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.14.17.

Confession further stated, “Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification.”⁷³ J. I. Packer interprets this statement to mean that faith is the “means” of salvation. This saving “faith is an object-oriented response, shaped by that which is trusted, namely God himself, God’s promises, and Jesus Christ, all as set forth in the Scriptures.”⁷⁴ R. C. Sproul explains that the instrumental cause is like a tool. The instrumental cause of a sculptor’s statue is his hammer and chisel, the tools he uses to make the statue. Hence, faith in Christ is the tool believers use to gain righteousness.⁷⁵ For these theologians, justified believers before Christ were saved through the instrument of their faith in the promises eventually fulfilled by Christ. Hence, Abraham was justified by believing in the “gospel in advance” (Galatians 3:8).

While Chafer maintained *Sola Fide* (faith is key), he redefined its object. Our “belief is not centered on a son which each individual might generate, as in the case of Abraham, but in the Son whom God gave to a lost world....”⁷⁶ He argued that Abraham believed a promise regarding a son, whereas Christians believe in the Son of God. If the “content” of faith in the Old Testament was not Christ, then the instrumental cause of salvation has changed. The object of faith, and so the instrumental cause, has changed. “Dr. Ryrie has stated that the object of faith in every age has been God and that the content of faith was different in the Old Testament.”⁷⁷ Technically, dispensationalism retained *Sola Fide*, but by detaching Old Testament saints from the Messiah, it forsook *Soli Christi*.

Further, Chafer concluded his attempt to clear up the misunderstandings by stating, “It is only God’s power set free through Christ’s death that can save, and it is always and only through Christ’s death, whatever the human responsibility may be.”⁷⁸ But notice the admission, at the end, that “the human responsibility” changes with the dispensations. There is nothing unique to dispensationalism about recognizing that faithful

⁷³ Westminster Confession of Faith, XI.2.

⁷⁴ J. I. Packer, “Good Works Are an Expression of Faith,” <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/packer/works.html>, accessed July 23, 2021.

⁷⁵ R. C. Sproul, “The Instrumental Cause of Justification,” Oct 14, 2019, <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/instrumental-cause-justification/>, accessed July 23, 2021.

⁷⁶ Chafer, “Inventing Heretics through Misunderstanding,” 2-3.

⁷⁷ Grover E. Gunn III, *Dispensationalism: Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow*, Footstool Publications, 1987, ebook, <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/gunn/Dispensationalism%20-%20Grover%20E.%20Gunn%20III.pdf>, accessed July 23, 2021.

⁷⁸ Chafer, “Inventing Heretics through Misunderstanding,” 3.

believers would have had different ways to express their faith, i.e. responsibilities. What is unique about dispensationalism is that the responsibility is the instrumental cause of salvation. That is, in dispensationalism, the way believers procured the benefits of Christ's atonement was through law-keeping in that bygone dispensation and will be through the imposition of Christ's rule in a coming dispensation.

Chafer attempted to clarify that "human responsibility" changes with dispensations, but this defence backfires. As R. Todd Mangum notes, admitting a change in the "instrumental cause" (the responsibility) proves the critics' point: R. Todd Mangum sums it up,

If the point of issue is whether the *instrumental* cause may change from dispensation to dispensation, then Chafer's adamant insistence on the singularity and consistency of the *meritorious cause* misses the point – nor does his vigorous defense of this single meritorious cause relieve his view of the charge of teaching "two ways of salvation" the way he thinks it does. On the other hand, his explicit affirmation of changes in instrumental cause from dispensation to dispensation establishes the very point of his detractors' objection.⁷⁹

Further, in his essay intended to dispel the misunderstanding that had supposedly libelled him as a "heretic," Chafer stated outright that for Israel, "salvation is dated to transpire at the second advent of Christ and according to Jehovah's irrevocable covenant with that nation, and is unique in every particular."⁸⁰ If for Israel, "salvation... is unique in every particular," then it is different than salvation for Christians. Yet, in the same breath, he insisted it relies "on that righteous ground alone" (Christ's death). Chafer fails to explain how salvation can be simultaneously "unique in every particular" and identical in its basis to the Church's. In attempting to prove continuity, he provided evidence of the opposite. Glenn Kreider, when citing Chafer's defence as if it answered Chafer's critics, does not see that in the process of trying to clarify that he believes in continuity of salvation, Chafer did, in fact, provide yet more evidence to the contrary.⁸¹

The Southern Presbyterians found that he and Scofield taught changing ways of salvation. After their report, dispensationalists became more conscious of the problem. Despite the Presbyterian controversy, Chafer's Systematic Theology explicitly contrasts the "dispensation of grace" with

⁷⁹ Original emphasis, Mangum, *The Dispensational-Covenantal Rift*, 182.

⁸⁰ Chafer, "Inventing Heretics through Misunderstanding," 3.

⁸¹ Kreider, *Forged From Reformation*, 434. Kreider quotes from Chafer's editorial, to place the "misstatements" of dispensationalists that appear to show discontinuity in salvation in their context and sums up with a quotation from Ryrie that Chafer is his own best interpreter, as if that settles the question.

a “hopeless covenant of works.” He asserts that “men were therefore just because of their own works for God whereas New Testament justification is God’s work for man.”⁸² Here, a founder of the system explicitly states that the grounds of justification change with the dispensations. The supposed era of grace in the prior dispensation was contrasted with the dispensation of Law that he called a “hopeless covenant of works.” He insisted, “It should be noted that no child of God under grace is subject to this hopeless conditional covenant of law works (Rom. 6:14).”⁸³

Chafer used the term “covenant of works” which covenant theologians employ for the pre-fall covenant with Adam in the garden and the basis of the active obedience of Christ. Thus, in covenant theology, there is a “continuity of the covenants,” as even the covenant of works serves to ultimately save.⁸⁴ However, Chafer used the term as equivalent for the “dispensation of Law,” the era of the Law of Moses. “The children of Israel definitely chose the covenant of works, which is law, as their relationship to God.” By doing so, “They fell from grace.”⁸⁵ Further, to make the point clear, Chafer wrote, “According to the Old Testament, men were just because they were true and faithful in keeping the Mosaic Law. ... men were therefore just because of their own works for God whereas New Testament justification is God’s work for man in answer to faith (Rom. 5:1).”⁸⁶ Hence, Chafer explicitly states that the grounds for justification have changed with the dispensations.

CONCLUSION

A straightforward reading of Darby, Scofield, and Chafer reveals that they occasionally taught soteriological discontinuity, modern denials notwithstanding. They were inconsistent. This filtered down to popular teachers, like William Evans (1870-1950), who wrote that salvation is “no longer by legal obedience,” implying it once was.⁸⁷

Our question here is whether classical dispensationalists, the founding fathers of Darby, Scofield, and Chafer, taught that ways of salvation

⁸² Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 7:219.

⁸³ Louis Sperry Chafer, “Major Bible Themes,” The Association of Messianic Congregations (1926), <http://www.messianicassociation.org/ezone42-lsc-major-bible-themes.htm>, accessed November 24, 2025.

⁸⁴ R. C. Sproul, “The Covenant of Works,” <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/covenant-works/>, accessed July 23, 2021.

⁸⁵ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 4:162-164.

⁸⁶ Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 7:219.

⁸⁷ William Evans, *Outline Study of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1941), 42.

varied with the (so-called) dispensations. Their writings speak for themselves. They were, from the beginning, understood to be saying exactly that, even by originally sympathetic hearers. Their claims otherwise, such as Chafer's, are too equivocal. Indeed, Chafer's 1945 editorial digs his hole deeper. Daniel Fuller, in examining Chafer's teachings, concluded that "the Southern Presbyterians had not libeled Chafer."⁸⁸ He notes, "dispensationalists were long on making protestations that they believed in salvation by grace through faith in all ages but short on explaining how they could consistently affirm this along with their other essential affirmations."⁸⁹

Denial of the problem does not make it go away. Like a dysfunctional family that wants to forget that dad used to be a drunk, so too dispensationalists who want to continue the denial only perpetuate the problem. Contemporary dispensationalists often mask this history. For example, Glenn R. Kreider's *Forged From Reformation* (2017) attempts to prove soteriological continuity by prioritizing secondary sources (Ryrie, Feinberg) over the founders' own assertions. This is improper historiography. Primary sources cannot be buried beneath a mountain of modern revisions.

Denying the primary sources of classical dispensationalism will not make them go away. Like a family in denial about a painful past, refusing to acknowledge the system's problematic roots only perpetuates the problem. To gain theological credibility, modern proponents must frankly admit that their progenitors taught a changing instrumental cause of salvation, even if the current system has evolved beyond it.

⁸⁸ Fuller, *Gospel & Law*, 33.

⁸⁹ Fuller, *Gospel & Law*, 39.