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Dispensationalism Disparaging the Gospel

Dispensationalism — and premillennialism, chiliasm in general — is charged with disparaging the Gospel. See CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, 1935, p. 481 ff.¹⁾ In an article entitled "Modern Dispensationalism and the Doctrine of the Unity of Scrip-

1) "In various ways chiliasm, dispensationalism, goes against the Gospel principle. 1) 'When it actually enters the heart, it diverts the heart and mind from the hidden spiritual glory of the Christian life, which consists in the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and of the future heavenly heritage, and puts in place of it the expectation of external and earthly grandeur.' (F. Pieper, *Chr. Dog.*, III, p. 592.) . . . 2) It fails to give full scope to the Gospel-message. The thoroughgoing chiliast has made, not soteriology, but eschatology, the chiliastic eschatology at that, the center of his theology. . . . 3) It undervalues the Gospel. The chiliasts indeed preach the Gospel of salvation through the blood of Christ with great earnestness and vigor. But at the same time they disparage this glorious Gospel. For one thing, the present dispensation is characterized by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ Crucified. But this is not the final dispensation. A better one is coming — the dispensation of the Kingdom. Chiliasm declares in effect that the Church is to look forward to something better than the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins. It obscures the glory of the Gospel. Again, it belittles the Gospel by replacing the simple Gospel-preaching of the present era with the more efficient instrumentalities of the millennium, instrumentalities of force and of visible splendor, and new revelations as agencies to accomplish the conversion of sinners. The millennial kingdom will exert a wider influence than the Kingdom of Grace, equipped only with the Gospel. The Gospel saves but a few. It is a poor, weak Gospel. But when the millennial forces are once put in operation, a universal salvation will result. . . . 4) Chiliasm, in its normal development, directly antagonizes the Gospel of grace. Dispensationalism does just that. It sets up in effect a way of salvation different from that of the Gospel. The final, the most glorious dispensation will not be one of grace. . . . Again, there are chiliasts who antagonize the Gospel in the most direct way; they teach the possibility of salvation by works of the Law. In the millennial kingdom, the final and most glorious dispensation, the legal system, the law of merit, rules. Jesus Christ did at one time, and He will again, preach the Law as the vehicle of God's blessings. — 'Any theory which thus disparages the Gospel of the grace of God must be false.' (C. Hodge, *Syst. Theol.*, III, p. 865.)"

ture," published in the *Evangelical Quarterly*, January, 1936, pp. 24—35, Dr. Oswald T. Allis, at that time professor of Hebrew in Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, makes the same charge. And the answer to this article, entitled "Dispensationalism," by Dr. L. S. Chafer, president of Dallas Theological Seminary, which appeared in the October-December, 1936, issue of *Bibliotheca Sacra*, pp. 390—449, does not invalidate the charge, but substantiates it.

Professor Allis charges that dispensationalism disparages the Gospel. "The very heart of the Bible is its message of salvation. It is because it gives the only true and adequate answer to the question, 'What must I do to be saved?' that the Bible is the most precious Book in the world. Now, the question may very properly be asked in view of the alleged distinct dispensations whether the Bible gives a consistent answer to this question throughout or not. In *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* Dr. Scofield makes a statement that is arresting, to say the least: 'It should be needless to say that in this dispensation neither Jew nor Gentile can be saved otherwise than by the exercise of that faith on the Lord Jesus Christ whereby both are born again. . . .' Why the qualifying words 'in this dispensation'? the reader naturally asks. Have there been, or are there to be, dispensations of which this could not be said? The very fact that the statement is qualified implies or at least suggests an affirmative answer. But the question is far too important to leave the answer to mere inference. Is there definite warrant for such an inference? For an answer to our question we turn back to the *Scofield Bible*. A comment on the word 'Gentiles' at Matt. 10, 5 reads thus: 'The kingdom was promised to the Jews. Gentiles could be blessed only through Christ crucified and risen. Cf. John 12, 20—24.' 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. We turn to a still more noteworthy statement. In the comment on the word 'everlasting,' Rev. 14, 6, we are told in the *Scofield Bible* that 'four forms of the Gospel are to be distinguished.' They are: the Gospel of the Kingdom, the Gospel of the grace of God, the everlasting Gospel, and what Paul calls 'my Gospel.' It is with the first two 'forms' that we are here particularly concerned. They are defined and contrasted in the following terms: '(1) The Gospel of the Kingdom. This is the good news that God purposes to set up on the earth, in fulfilment of the Davidic covenant, a kingdom, political, spiritual, Israelitist, universal, over which God's Son, David's Heir, shall be King and which shall be, for one thousand years, the manifestation of the righteousness of God in human

affairs. See Matt. 3, 2, note. (2) The Gospel of the grace of God. This is the good news that Jesus Christ, the rejected King, has died on the cross for the sins of the world, that He was raised from the dead for our justification, and that by Him all that believe are justified from all things. It is the Gospel "of the grace of God," Acts 20, 24, because it saves those whom the Law curses; of "our salvation," Eph. 1, 13, because it is the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," Rom. 1, 16. . . . The most startling thing about these two 'forms' of the Gospel, when we compare them, is their mutual exclusiveness. The one speaks of the Davidic King, the other of the crucified and risen Savior. The Gospel of the grace of God—in a word, the Cross—belongs to the Church age; the Gospel of the Kingdom was preached before the Church was founded and is to be preached after the Church is 'raptured.' But it is a different gospel. It is the gospel of the Crown, not the Cross. This is consistent dispensationalism. 'Grace' and 'the Kingdom' belong to two distinct dispensations which are set definitely in contrast, and each has a Gospel of its own. Salvation clearly will be on quite a different basis in the Kingdom age from what it is today in the Church age. . . ."

"The distinction between the Church age and the Kingdom age, a distinction which involves the recognition of a distinct 'Gospel' for each, brings us naturally and inevitably to this question: How shall men be saved in the Kingdom age? For an answer to this question we turn to the 'Summary' on the 'Kingdom' (Old Testament) as given in the *Scofield Bible*, where we read: 'The Kingdom is to be established by power, not persuasion, and is to follow divine judgment upon the Gentile world-powers, Ps. 2, 4—9; Is. 9, 7; Dan. 2, 35. 44. 45; 7, 26. 27; Zech. 14, 1—19. See Zech. 6, 11, note.' It will be observed that practically all the passages here quoted speak in terms of kingly rule and obedient service, but not in terms of redemption or atonement. Men are to be saved apparently by obedience to the King and not by trust in the Savior. The Sermon on the Mount is said to give us the 'constitution' of the Kingdom. It is 'pure law'; and apparently it is to be perfectly kept by all the righteous in the Kingdom age. Thus we observe that the New Testament Kingdom age of the future has a very important feature in common with the Old Testament Kingdom age. The Davidic kingdom belonged to, and was a part of, the dispensation of the 'law.' The future Kingdom age will likewise be an age of 'law,' not of 'grace.' . . ."

"In the comment on what the *Scofield Bible* declares to be 'dispensationally . . . the most important passage in the New Testament,' Acts 15, 13 f., the statement is made: "The Gospel [that is, "the Gospel of the grace of God"] has never anywhere converted

all, but everywhere called out *some*.' But during the Kingdom age 'the enormous majority of earth's inhabitants will be saved,' and the comment goes on to state: "The New Testament, Rev. 20, 1—5, adds a detail of immense significance — the removal of Satan from the scene. It is impossible to conceive to what heights of spiritual, intellectual, and physical perfection humanity will attain in this its coming age of righteousness and peace, Is. 11, 4—9; Ps. 72, 1—10.' What does this mean if not that the preaching of the Cross is relatively of little efficacy as compared with the exercise of the kingly power at, or in connection with, the coming of the King and the 'removal of Satan from the scene' in the Kingdom age? And if the establishment of the Kingdom and the removal of Satan can make it possible for men to attain in that age to such incredible heights of spiritual, intellectual, and physical perfection, how will this 'enormous majority of earth-dwellers' be able to join with the Church-saints, who never attained to these heights, in singing praises to the Lamb that was slain and hath redeemed us by His precious blood? What meaning will the Cross have for those who have attained to a legal righteousness in the Kingdom age?"

"This separation between the Kingdom and the Church, which is as unscriptural as it is dangerous, leads to one of the most serious errors of dispensationalism, the tendency to minimize the importance of the present Gospel age in the interest of the Kingdom age that is to come. This is the age of individual conversions, the snatching of a brand here and there from the burning. That is to be an age of mass conversions, nations born in a day. The dispensationalist exalts the cross as the only hope of hell-deserving sinners — with one exception. It is a very important exception. It is for the dispensation of grace, for the Church age, and for this age only, that he exalts the cross. . . . The 'Gospel of the grace of God' is, according to the *Scofield Bible* (on Matt. 4, 17), the Gospel for the Church age; and the Church age is a parenthesis of indeterminate length between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Dan. 9. It is an interlude in the history of God's people, Israel. It is a time when the great prophetic clock is silent. It does not figure in prophetic history. It is 'time out' in sacred chronology. Yet this parenthesis period is the Church age, the age of the Cross, of the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God. How could a 'Bible Christian' minimize more seriously the value and centrality of the Cross in Biblical Revelation? The 'parenthesis' view of the Church which is taught in the *Scofield Bible* sheds important light upon the distinction drawn there between the Gospel of the grace of God and the Gospel of the Kingdom. Throughout the entire Church age the Gospel of the grace of God has been, and is to be,

proclaimed by *Christians, i. e.*, by Church saints. But if the entire Church, every true Christian, is to be 'raptured' at the [invisible] return of Christ for His saints, there occurs of necessity a definite break between the Church age and the Kingdom age which it is difficult to bridge. After the Rapture there will be no Christians left on earth to preach the Gospel, which has been the power of God unto salvation during the Church age. Consequently those who hold this view have recourse to the 'two witnesses' (Moses and Elijah or Enoch and Elijah) of Rev. 11, 3, and a Jewish remnant who will have turned unto the Lord during the Great Tribulation (*Scofield Bible*, p. 1205). They are to rake up and proclaim the 'beautiful Gospel of the Kingdom.' (*Ibid.*, p. 949.) We observe therefore that the Gospel of the Kingdom differs from the Gospel of the grace of God no less as to its contents than as to its heralds. . . . Its heralds are to be not the New Testament apostles but Old Testament saints, and not believing Christians but Jews who have not believed at the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God during the Church age (had they done so, they would have been raptured), but to whom the preaching of the Cross was foolishness and who remained in unbelief until after the Rapture. How could the break between the Kingdom and the Church be made more emphatic?"

" . . . We ask the dispensationalists to read again the definition of the 'Gospel of the Kingdom' and then to face the question seriously and squarely, Where does the Cross come in? It is hard to see how any thoroughgoing dispensationalist can sing the lines of the familiar hymn 'In the Cross of Christ I glory, Towering o'er the wrecks of time; *All the light of sacred story Gathers round its head sublime.*' For according to the logic of his position the Cross belongs to the Church age, not to sacred story as a whole. And it is a *parenthesis*, we are tempted to say, *merely* a parenthesis, between the Kingdom age that is past and the Kingdom age that is yet to come. . . . The Bible also teaches that this is the age of the invisible reign of the sovereign Lord, who said, 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.' Yet the dispensationalist regards this age as demonstrably bankrupt and is looking to the Kingdom age to accomplish by a display of kingly power and through the binding of Satan what the preaching of the Cross has been unable to accomplish in nineteen Christian centuries. What is this if not to minimize the Cross? . . . If we are to have the distinct dispensations of Law, grace, and the kingdom, and if the dispensation of grace, or the Church age, is to be regarded as merely an interlude in God's dealings with Israel, a parenthesis in the history of redemption, the inferences and conclusions which we have stated, are logical and inevitable. . . ."

Does dispensationalism disparage, minimize, the Gospel, as charged by Dr. Allis and others? Dr. Chafer indignantly denies the charge. But if his account of dispensationalism is true,—and he is a leader of this school of premillennialistic thought,—the dispensationalists have not been falsely accused by Dr. Allis. His article, an “outline of dispensational fundamentals,” contains those very teachings on which Dr. Allis and others base the charge that dispensationalism disparages the Gospel. He does not deny that the dispensationalists teach these things. He glories in them. We herewith submit copious extracts from his article and leave it to our readers to judge whether these teachings glorify or disparage the Gospel.

“The Bible sets forth at length three distinct and complete divine rulings which govern human actions. Two are addressed to Israel, one in the age that is past, known as the Mosaic Law, and the other the setting forth of the terms of admission into, and the required conduct in, the Messianic kingdom when that kingdom is set up in the earth. The third is addressed to Christians and provides divine direction in this age for the heavenly people who are already perfected, as to standing, in Christ Jesus. These three rules of life do present widely different economies. . . . The third administration which is contained in the Bible [this refers to the *second* of the divine rulings addressed to Israel] is that which is designed to govern the earthly people in relation to their coming earthly kingdom. It is explicit also as to the requirements that are to be imposed upon those who enter that kingdom. This body of Scripture is found in the Old Testament portions which anticipate the Messianic kingdom and in large portions of the synoptic gospels. *The essential elements of a grace administration*²⁾—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—are 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, which blast and wither as the Mosaic system could never do, Matt. 5, 20—48.” (Pp. 413—416.) “The rule governing the conduct of Israelites is in two principal divisions, namely, that which obtained from Moses to Christ, or the Mosaic Law, and that which determines entrance into, and conditions of, life within the yet future kingdom on the earth. The terms of admission into the Kingdom as set forth in Matt. 5, 1 to 7, 27 are

2) Italics in this section our own; original italics are so indicated.

in reality the Mosaic requirements intensified by Christ's own interpretation of them. The contrasts which He draws between the former interpretation of these laws and His own interpretation does not tend to soften anything in the interests of grace, but rather binds with greater legal demands than any unaided person in the present age can hope to achieve. Why are the plain injunctions of Matt. 5, 39—42; 10, 8—14; 24, 20 so universally ignored today if it is not that it is so generally recognized that these injunctions belong to conditions obtaining in another age? Will not the exalted demands of the Sermon on the Mount be more easily obeyed when earthly conditions are changed as they will be? The Church will be removed and Israel advanced to a position above all nations of the earth, with Jehovah's Law written in their hearts and the Spirit poured out on all flesh. Satan will be bound and in the abyss; the present world system will have been destroyed; the bondage of corruption now resting upon creation will be lifted, and Christ, as the glorified Son of David, will be reigning on David's throne out from Jerusalem and over the whole earth. The effect of that reign will be that righteousness and peace shall cover the earth as waters cover the face of the deep." (P. 443.)³⁾

This is exactly what Dr. Allis and we lay to the charge of dispensationalism: The last dispensation, the most glorious one, the dispensation of the Kingdom, is the reign of the Mosaic Law. And this reign of the Law accomplishes what the reign of grace could not accomplish: it covers the earth with righteousness and peace. They may protest that this teaching does not disparage the Gospel. Let the reader judge!

Does dispensationalism teach that the instrumentalities of power and splendor as applied in the Kingdom age are more efficient than the Gospel? Does it uphold or repudiate the statement of the *Scofield Bible* "The Kingdom is to be established by power, not persuasion"? The article under discussion does not discuss this point beyond stating that the effect of the reign of Christ as the glorified Son of David will be that righteousness and peace shall cover the earth as waters cover the face of the deep and that "a nation shall be born 'at once'" (p. 424); but in *Bibliotheca Sacra*

3) In *Premillennialism or Amillennialism?* a book highly recommended by *Bibliotheca Sacra* (p. 491), Charles Feinberg, professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and a pupil of Dr. Chafer, writes: "Israel was governed (and will be in the millennial age) by a principle wholly foreign to that which is in force in the Church age. The principle governing in the Church [age] is that of grace." (P. 190.) "Many Gentiles are saved out of the Great Tribulation as a result of the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom." (P. 135.) "God does not have two mutually exclusive principles, as Law and grace, operative in one period." (P. 126.)

of July, 1934, p. 280, Dr. Chafer explicitly states that "the kingdoms of this world do not become the kingdom of Christ by virtue of human service and ministry but by the sudden and mighty power of God and in the midst of humanity's rebellion against God on earth." And Professor Feinberg writes: "The next objection lodged against the premillennialists is a serious one, but one which cannot be sustained. It is claimed that the millennial view disparages the Gospel, because it teaches conversion by means foreign to the Gospel, such as wrath, judgment, or a display of glory. Premillennialists assuredly do not disparage the Gospel. It is true that Christ commissioned each believer to preach the Gospel to every creature, but that does not automatically mean that every one is to be saved. We do not believe that the Gospel has any less power than the amillennialists do. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes, whether Jew or Gentile. But the burden of proof rests on the amillennialist to show that it is the avowed purpose of God to save *all in this age by the Gospel*. In other words, it is not a question of power, but a matter of purpose." (*Op. cit.*, p. 219 f.) Professor Feinberg admits that dispensationalism teaches conversion by a display of glory, etc., in the Kingdom. What he denies is that this teaching disparages the Gospel.⁴ To put just one more witness on the stand, Dr. H. W. Frost, a prominent dispensationalist, declares: "In the coming dispensation [the Kingdom] He will make salvation possible by consummating all that the past promised and the present secures, enjoining faith with works and *constraining* men to worship Christ as they see Him in all the splendor of His being and reign, Zech. 14, 9—21." (*The Second Coming of Christ*, p. 132.) Certainly the dispensationalists believe, teach, and confess that in the Kingdom age the Gospel will be replaced by more powerful agencies.

Speaking of the way of salvation for the Israelites as taught in the *Scofield Bible*, Dr. Allis says: "Men are to be saved apparently by obedience to the King and not by trust in the Savior. The Sermon on the Mount is said to give us the 'Constitution' of the Kingdom. It is 'pure Law,' and apparently it is to be *perfectly kept* by all the righteous in the Kingdom age. (Page 999, note 2.) It is not

4) The argument is: The dispensationalist does not disparage the Gospel since he admits that it is the power of God unto salvation. However, there is that fatal restriction: "*in this age*." Now the Gospel saves (and saves only a few), but later on other instrumentalities will be applied. Recall the statement of Dr. Allis: "The dispensationalist exalts the Cross — with one exception. It is for the dispensation of grace, for the *Church age*, and for *this age only*, that he exalts the Cross." The same restriction is made by Dr. Chafer in our article: "The divine purpose *in this age* is an all-satisfying and complete demonstration of grace" (p. 427), and: "It may be concluded that the *present primary-age purpose* of God is the demonstration of His grace" (p. 429).

expressly stated here that *perfect obedience* will constitute 'righteousness' in the Kingdom age. But the inference is a natural one." In our article Dr. Chafer states just that in express terms. We read on page 425: "Matt. 5, 20 declares the condition upon which a Jew might hope to enter the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is entered by a righteousness *exceeding the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.*" On page 423 we read: "Luke 10, 25—29. In this passage the lawyer asks as to how he may *inherit* [italics in the original] eternal life and is told by Christ in the most absolute terms that eternal life *for him* is gained by the keeping of that contained in the Mosaic Law. In Luke 18, 18—27 it is likewise reported that a young ruler made the same inquiry, and to this sincere man our Lord quoted the Mosaic commandments; but when the young man declared that these things had been kept by him from his youth, Christ did not chide him for falsehood, but took him on to the ground of complete surrender of all he was and all he had as the way into that state which Christ termed '*perfect*' [italics in original]." We get the significance of these statements when we read on the same page: "Dr. Charles Hodge states: "The Scriptures know nothing of any other than two methods of attaining eternal life: the one that which demands *perfect obedience*, and the other that which demands faith. (*Syst. Theol.*, II, p. 117.)" That offer of eternal life which depends on obedience is *thought by Dr. Hodge and others to be hypothetical and unattainable* by any one and therefore serves to enforce the fact that there is but one practical way to secure eternal life—by faith alone. There are two important factors often omitted from this discussion. . . ." Our article is denying that salvation through perfect obedience of the Law of Moses was unattainable by the lawyer and the young ruler. In the Kingdom the Jews obtain a perfect righteousness by perfect obedience.—Does such a teaching leave the Gospel of the *sola gratia* intact?⁵⁾

5) A *perfect* righteousness will be attained by the Jews in the Kingdom. So we are told on page 425. However, on page 416 we read: "These Kingdom injunctions (Matt. 5, 20—48), though suited to the conditions that will then obtain, could *perfect no one as men in Christ are now perfected*, nor are they adopted as a rule of life for those already complete in Christ Jesus." We do not know what to make of this, as little as we know what to make of various other tenets of the chiliastic faith. Does it mean that there are two kinds of *perfect* obediences of the Law? Surely it cannot mean that. It does mean, as these men state elsewhere, that the Sermon on the Mount does not apply to the present age—and that is false. But what can be the meaning of the statement that the Law as expounded by Jesus is "not adapted as a rule of life for those already complete in Christ Jesus"? The Christian does not according to the new man, need the Law. But on account of his flesh he needs it, and he finds the Sermon on the Mount perfectly adapted to his needs as a rule of life. What can Dr. Chafer mean?

"The terms of admission *into the Kingdom* are the Mosaic requirements, intensified by Christ's own interpretation." What was the rule governing the conduct of Israelites which obtained *from Moses to Christ*, under the fifth dispensation, the Dispensation of the Law? "For faithfulness under the Law they were promised a share in the future glories which Jehovah, with unconditional sovereignty, covenanted to the nation. . . . Blessing under Mosaic economy was conditioned on individual faithfulness to the Law. This economy formed a secondary covenant, which was *meritorious* in character." (P. 441.) "This fact necessitates the recognition of a sphere wherein God deals with individuals *as to their personal conduct*. . . . When under the Mosaic Law, the individual Israelite was *on an unyielding meritorious basis*." (P. 440.) Were Israelites actually saved through their obedience to the Law? H. Frost unhesitatingly affirms this. "Through the five dispensations of the past God made salvation possible by revealing Himself through dramatic miracles and specific laws and *by requiring works*." (*The Second Coming of Christ*, p. 131.) Will the other dispensationalists affirm it? Does the *Scofield Bible* affirm it? Dr. Allis says: "In justice to Dr. Scofield it should be stated here that he not only recognizes but stresses the fact that the Old Testament ritual of sacrifice plainly sets forth in type Christ in His atoning work as Savior." According to this, Dr. Scofield teaches that at the time of the Old Testament Israelites were saved, not through the Law but through faith in Christ. Now, what does Dr. Chafer teach? In the first place, he holds that "*none were able to keep the Law perfectly*." (In the Kingdom age they will be able to keep it perfectly; they were not able to do so in the Law age.) In the second place, he teaches that they were saved by means of the sacrifices. Does that mean that they were saved through faith in Christ or that the offering of the sacrifice *as a prescribed work* saved them? Here is how Dr. Chafer presents the matter: "That offer of eternal life which depends on obedience is thought by Dr. Hodge and others to be hypothetical and unattainable by any one and therefore serves to enforce the fact that there is but one practical way to secure eternal life—*by faith alone*. *There are two important factors often omitted* from this discussion: (a) Eternal life, if offered on the ground of obedience to all, is offered only to those who are Israelites, and (b) they had the continuing animal sacrifices, which, when faithfully offered, maintained for them a righteous position before God and became the ground of forgiveness for every failure. Because of this forgiveness the standing of a Jew before God could not have been hypothetical. . . . Distinction must be made between the Law as a rule of life which none were able to keep perfectly

and the Law as a system which not only set forth the high and holy demands upon personal conduct, but also provided complete divine forgiveness through the sacrifices. The final standing of any Jew before God was not based on Law observance alone, but contemplated that Jew in the light of the sacrifices he had presented in his own behalf." (P. 423.) Note, first, the statement that two things gave the Jew the right standing before God: his observance of the Law *and* the faithful offering of sacrifices. That is a denial of the *sola fide*, the heart of the Gospel. Dr. Chafer penned these lines with the express intention of repudiating the "by faith alone." And we ask, secondly, What is meant by "offering the animal sacrifices faithfully"? It is nowhere stated that the sacrifices had saving value only because they were *types of Christ's sacrifice*. Examine once more the statement just given. And examine these other statements on the same subject: "In case of failure to meet the moral and spiritual obligations resting upon the Jews because of their covenant position, the sacrifices were provided as a *righteous* basis of restoration to their covenant privileges. . . . The individual Jew might so fail in his *conduct and so neglect the sacrifices* as, in the end, to be disowned by God and cast out." (P. 422.) "For faithful observance of the Law, *which included the remedial value of the sacrifices*, they were promised immediate prosperity and tranquillity." (P. 440.) "What is identified as a spiritual remnant in Israel, seen in all her generations from Moses to Christ, is none other than those who through personal faithfulness claimed the immediate blessings which the Law provided. Some Israelites did live on a very high plane and were in much personal blessing. To this a multitude of Old Testament saints bear witness, Heb. 11, 1—38; and none are more conspicuous than Daniel. When looking back upon his experience in Judaism, the Apostle Paul could say that he had been, as 'touching the *righteousness which is in the Law*, blameless,' Phil. 3, 6. This did not imply sinless perfection, but that he had *always provided the requisite sacrifices*. On that basis the faithful Jew lived and was accepted of God in the Mosaic system." (P. 441.) Never a word of the sacrifices' being a *type*, never a word of faith in the coming Savior; only the stressing of the sacrifices as *required*, as belonging to the *righteousness of the Law*. Dr. Chafer is certainly teaching that under the Mosaic system there was salvation through the Law.⁶⁾

6) Dr. Chafer's article, as all chiliastic writings, makes hard reading. We read on page 431: "The individual Israelite, when under the Mosaic Law, was, as to his personal blessing, under a secondary, meritorious covenant with gracious provisions in the animal sacrifices for the covering and cure of his sins and failures." But on page 426 we had read: "Of

Surely dispensationalism is a disparagement of the Gospel. He is out of harmony with the Spirit of the Gospel who can write down these thoughts: "If no other age — those recorded in history or those anticipated in prophecy — could it be said that its primary divine purpose is the making by God of a specific demonstration, all satisfying to Himself, of His grace. Likewise, in no other age could it be said that those who are saved are 'accepted in the Beloved.'" (P. 429.) He detracts from the glory of the Gospel who places beside it other means of salvation. The children of God in the Old Testament trusted in the work of Christ solely and entirely for their salvation. They lived under the Law indeed, but the Gospel of Christ was their sole hope and comfort. The apostles did not know the theology of dispensationalism, but spoke and taught in this manner: "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, *even as they*" ("our fathers"), Acts 15, 11. He makes everything of the Gospel who says: "The blessed proclamation, the Gospel, which proclaims the forgiveness of sins through the blessed Seed, that is, Christ, has from the beginning of the world been the greatest consolation and treasure to all pious kings, all prophets, all believers. . . . For they have believed in the same Christ in whom we believe; for from the beginning of the world no saint has been saved in any other way than through the faith of the same Gospel." (Apology; *Trigl.*, p. 273.) Seven different dispensations? You do not know the Gospel! There is but one dispensation — one will and way of God to save — one Gospel. Yes, surely, there is, Scripturally speaking,

the blessings which Judaism provided, some temporal and spiritual experiences were immediately secured through adjustment to the Mosaic system; but the larger features of the *taking away of sin*, the receiving of eternal life, and the Kingdom glories, were reserved for the return of their King." (P. 426.) Did, or did not, Israel obtain forgiveness of sins under the Mosaic system? — Here is another sample. The exigencies of the situation created by the dispensational scheme require that the New Covenant of Jer. 31, 31—40 ("I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel. . . . I will put My Law in their inward parts. . . . I will forgive their iniquity") take in only the Jews ("these promises do not apply even remotely to the Church," p. 438), and that, in turn, requires that some differences between this New Covenant and the "New Covenant now in force for the Church" be found. These are the differences as set forth on page 438: "(a) Jehovah's Law will be written on the heart of the Jew; but God, by His indwelling Spirit, is now working in the believer both to will and to do of His good pleasure. (b) Jehovah will be Israel's God, and they will be His people; but the Christian is now in Christ [italics in original], and his life is now 'hid with Christ in God.' (c) All Israel shall know the Lord; but the Christian is in the most vital union and communion with God as Father. (d) Israel's iniquities will be forgiven and her sins remembered no more; but for the one in Christ judicial forgiveness is secured to the extent that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, and they have been forgiven all trespasses." A chiliast may understand that; we do not.

the Old Testament, the "dispensation" of the Law, and the New Testament, the "dispensation" of the Gospel; but, again speaking Scripturally, back of the economy of the Mosaic Law there always was the economy of grace, always operative, always the power of God unto salvation. Those who teach that men have been saved, or will be saved, in a fabulous future Kingdom age other than by the Gospel are detractors of the Gospel.

We have not yet finished with the *Bibliotheca Sacra* article. It contains several paragraphs which *directly* aim to defend dispensationalism against the charge that it disparages the Gospel. Dr. Chafer stresses particularly two points. He asserts that dispensationalism (a) magnifies the Gospel and (b) extols the grace of God, hence cannot be charged with minimizing the Gospel of grace. Let us examine these claims.

(a) Dr. Chafer asserts that dispensationalism sets the Gospel of grace above the Gospel of the Kingdom. To our mind the following words were written to establish that point: "These kingdom injunctions, though suited to the conditions that will then obtain, could perfect no one *as men in Christ are now perfected.*" (P. 416.) "The distinctive 'good news' of the Gospel of the Kingdom is the announcement of the presence of the long-expected Messiah and His predicted blessings for Israel. Over against this the Gospel of the grace of God is even *more extensive* and announces a plan of *perfect* salvation for Jew and Gentile alike. . . . The one and only requirement on the human side which the Kingdom Gospel imposes is *repentance* [italics in original], while the only requirement in the Gospel of the grace of God is *faith*, or *believing* [italics in original]. The requirement on the human side for present salvation is belief in Christ as Savior, which belief includes all the repentance (which is a change of mind) that a *spiritually dead person can produce.* . . . Believing as related to the Messiah must be distinguished from *believing unto salvation.* Since the first preaching of the Kingdom Gospel called for repentance only, it is evident that this Gospel call was not for the *salvation* even of Israel, but was for their revival and restoration." (P. 436.) (This paragraph was written as reply to Dr. Allis's criticism of the late Dr. Scofield for distinguishing at least four uses of the word "gospel." See also what was quoted above on the difference between the New Covenant of Israel and the New Covenant of the Church. The point here made is that dispensationalism cannot be charged with disparaging the Gospel; for it exalts the Gospel of grace above the Gospel of the Kingdom.

This calls, first, for the obvious remark that such a defense involves the abandonment of the fundamental position of dispensationalism. The entire dispensational scheme is built up on the

proposition that the Kingdom age is the most glorious dispensation. (See above.) A dispensationalist cannot remain a dispensationalist in good standing if he teaches that the Gospel of grace is superior to the Gospel of the Kingdom. Dr. Chafer's proposition must therefore be amended. What he means is, not that the Gospel of grace is *absolutely* superior to the Gospel of the Kingdom, but that it surpasses the other Gospel only *in some respects*. Of that anon.

Next, study the statement that "the only requirement on the human side which the Kingdom Gospel imposes is *repentance*, while the only requirement in the Gospel of the grace of God is *faith*." Whatever the word "repentance" here may mean, we have here the explicit statement that the two gospels essentially differ, and if we understand the writer correctly, he here makes the fatal admission that his "gospel of the Kingdom" is of a *legal* nature; for it imposes not faith, but repentance. Further, do the words "which belief includes all the repentance (which is a change of mind) that a spiritually dead person can produce" mean what they say? Can the spiritually dead person produce something that is included in faith? We do not know whether the tenet is generally held among the dispensationalists that the spiritually dead person retains spiritual powers.

Next, we do not know what to make of the statement that "believing as related to the Messiah must be distinguished from *believing unto salvation*. The first preaching of the Kingdom Gospel was not for the *salvation even of Israel*, but was for their revival and restoration." Was the salvation which according to the dispensational scheme was offered to Israel by John the Baptist and Christ (in the beginning of His ministry) not real salvation? Does Dr. Chafer hold that real salvation is found only in the *second* preaching of the Kingdom Gospel? Are there, then, two different gospels of the Kingdom? We cannot find our way through the maze.

Next, is the *salvation* gained by Israel in the Kingdom different in nature from the salvation gained by men in the Gospel age? Yes. If you would ask the dispensationalist: Will the inhabitants of the Kingdom be eternally saved, enjoying heavenly bliss? he would tell you that "eternal salvation" and "heavenly bliss" are not synonyms. What Dr. Chafer tells us on this subject forms one of the weirdest chapters in the premillennialist romance. This is the story of the three kinds of human beings now living and of their final destination: "The Bible presents the origin, present estate, and destiny of the three widely different classes of people dwelling together on the earth, the Gentiles, the Jews, and the Christians." ("The Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God, 1 Cor. 10, 32.") The Gentiles will yet share, as a subordinate

people, with Israel in her coming kingdom glory. In *this age* they are privileged, through riches of grace in Christ Jesus, to be partakers of a *heavenly* citizenship and glory. . . . Thus it is disclosed that in spite of the fact that in *this age* the Gospel is preached unto them with its offers of *heavenly* glory and that in *the coming age* they share the blessings of the Kingdom with Israel and appear in the *eternal* glory, they remain Gentiles, in contradistinction to the one nation Israel, to the end of the picture." (P. 397 ff.) "Israel is set apart as an elect nation. . . . These promises (Ps. 45, 8—17; Is. 11, 1 to 12, 6, etc., etc.) are all of an *earthly* glory and concern a land which Jehovah has given as an everlasting possession to His elect people Israel. . . . Nor could the divine administration be the same after the removal of the Church from the earth, after *the regathering of Israel and the restoration of Judaism*, and after the seating of Christ at His second advent on David's throne to rule over the whole earth, as it is now, before those events occur." (P. 400 ff.) "*The Christians*. This new elect company is being called out from the Jews and Gentiles by a spiritual birth of each individual who believes to the saving of his soul. . . . This new-creation people, like the angels, Israel, and the Gentiles, may be traced on into the eternity to come, Heb. 12, 22—24; Rev. 21, 1 to 22, 5. . . . The heavenly people, whether taken individually from either Jewish or Gentile stock, attain immediately by faith unto a standing as perfect as that of Christ. . . . The heavenly people have no burden laid upon them of establishing personal merit before God since they are perfected forever in Christ. . . . The Christian is thus already constituted a heavenly citizen and belongs to another sphere." (P. 406 ff.) Now, where will the Jews, together with those of the Gentiles who have been found worthy to enter Israel's Messianic kingdom ("Many Gentiles are saved out of the Great Tribulation as a result of the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom as a witness to all nations. . . . The outcome of the Judgment of the nations, Matt. 25, 31 ff., will be the entrance of the sheep nations into the Kingdom, *later* to be granted to enter into eternal life, while the goat nations will be denied participation in the Kingdom and will go away into everlasting life. . . . The city of Jerusalem will be built again. The nations in the Kingdom will recognize the favored condition of Israel when God wipes away forever their reproach and uses them in *the conversion of the Gentiles*." Thus Feinberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 135, 241, 146), where will they have their eternal home, and where will the Christians have their eternal home? "To such a degree as the soteriology of Judaism and the soteriology of Christianity differ, to the same degree do their eschatologies differ. Judaism has its eschatology reaching on *into eternity* with covenants and

promises which are everlasting. On the other hand, Christianity has its eschatology which is different at every point. . . . There is an eschatology of Judaism and an eschatology of Christianity and each, though wholly different as to details, reaches on into eternity. One of the great burdens of predictive prophecy is the anticipation of the glories of Israel in a transformed earth, under the reign of David's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. There is likewise much prediction which anticipates the glories of the redeemed in heaven." (P. 420 ff.) "There is a present distinction between earth and heaven which is preserved even after both are made new. The Scriptures so designate an *earthly people who go on as such into eternity*, and a *heavenly people, who also abide in their heavenly calling forever*." (P. 448.) And on this page the teaching is rejected "that there is nothing in eternity but heaven and hell." Page 487: "God has an *eternal earthly* purpose, in which all Israel will share." Yes, this group of dispensationalists does teach "that Israelites as a nation have their citizenship now and their future destiny centered only in the *earth*, reaching on to the *New Earth* which is yet to be, while Christians have their citizenship and future destiny centered only *in heaven* extending on into the *New Heavens* that are yet to be." (*Bibl. Sacra*, 1934, p. 147.) This disposes very neatly of the objection raised by Dr. Allis: "If the establishment of the Kingdom and the removal of Satan can make it possible for men to attain in that age to such incredible heights of spiritual, intellectual, and physical perfection, how will this 'enormous majority of earth-dwellers' be able to join with the Church saints, who never attained to these heights, in singing praises to the Lamb that was slain and hath redeemed us by His precious blood? What meaning will the Cross have for those who have attained to a legal righteousness in the Kingdom age?" The blessed on the New Earth do not sing praises *together with* the blessed in the New Heavens. They do not meet in all eternity.— To sum up: The eternal salvation of the Kingdom people is only an eternal earthly, new-earthly, salvation, while the salvation granted by the Gospel of grace is an eternal, heavenly salvation.

And now for our final and chief observation. The fact that the dispensationalists teach that the Gospel of grace surpasses the Gospel of the Kingdom in some respects does not absolve them from the charge that they disparage the Gospel. This very fact that they set up two different gospels, two different *saving* gospels, renders them guilty as charged. For there is but one Gospel. The Gospel of the grace of God is, and remains to the end of time, the *only* means of salvation. Nothing must be added to it, and nothing must be placed beside it. To speak of two saving gospels darkens the glory of the one saving Gospel. We are not satisfied—the

Gospel is not satisfied — with the protestations of the dispensationalists that they assign the Gospel the superior position in some respects. There is only one saving Gospel. We are not now discussing the charge that dispensationalism detracts from the glory of the Gospel by proclaiming the superiority of the Gospel of the Kingdom. That was substantiated in the first part of the present article. What we are stressing now is that the setting up of two gospels (irrespective of their respective worth) constitutes a disparagement of the Gospel. What the dispensationalist urges in his defense substantiates our charge.

(b) A second point urged by Dr. Chafer in defense of dispensationalism is that it extols the grace of God. Nowhere is the grace of God excluded. The dispensations of the Law and of the Kingdom are indeed essentially different from the dispensation of grace, but in each and every dispensation God's grace is at work. He writes: "It may be concluded that the present primary age purpose of God is the demonstration of His grace, which belief in no way precludes one from recognizing the gracious acts of God in all other ages. What worthy Bible expositor has ever contended for aught else than this concerning the grace of God?" (P. 429.) "The Jews were born into covenant relation with God wherein there were no limitations imposed as to their faith in Him nor upon their fellowship with Him. This fact was itself a demonstration of superabounding grace." (P. 422.) "Since human faithfulness of whatever degree could never be the exact compensation or exchange for the values of eternal life or for unending blessings in the Kingdom, there is a very large measure of divine grace to be seen in the salvation of the elect earthly people." (P. 441.) The dispensationalist thus makes much of "the grace" of God. However, that does not absolve him from the charge of disparaging the Gospel of grace. For the grace which the Gospel proclaims is the grace of God which saves by forgiving sins. And our charge is that the dispensationalist disparages this Gospel of the forgiveness of sins by denying that it provides the way of salvation in all periods of history, in all ages of the world. He does speak of manifestations of grace in these other dispensations; we hear him say: That the Jew was born into covenant relation with God was "a demonstration of superabounding grace"; that God bestows greater blessings in the Kingdom than human faithfulness earns is "a very large measure of divine grace." But all that is beside the point. That does not extol the grace of the Gospel. The grace which the dispensationalist magnifies in this connection is not the grace which saves by forgiving sins. As long as he will have men be saved in other dispensations by anything else than the Gospel of grace, of the forgiveness of sins, he is a detractor of the

Gospel of *grace*, let him laud the "grace" of God as much as he will. The Catholic theologian has much to say of the "grace" of God gained for us by Christ, but since he is talking, not of the gracious forgiveness of sins, but of the *gratia infusa*, we and the premillennialists spurn his teaching as a detraction of the Gospel. Pelagius himself, the archenemy of grace, ascribed the salvation of men to "grace." He chose to call the natural abilities and achievements of man "grace"; man owes his nature, his free will, to God's grace! (Cp. *Lehre u. Wehre*, 31, p. 8.) Did that put him among the champions of the Gospel of grace? We are not putting the dispensationalist in the same class with Pelagius and the Catholic theologian, but we do say that his recognition of a certain measure of "grace" in the Kingdom dispensation does not take him out of the class of the detractors of the Gospel. He remains in that class as long as he maintains: "The essential elements of a grace administration—faith as the sole basis of acceptance with God . . . —are not found in the Kingdom administration." (P. 416.)

There is an axiom in Lutheran theology that every departure from the teaching of Scripture will sooner or later vitiate the article of grace. Chiliasm is a case in point. TH. ENGELDER



The Church and Social Problems

There can be no doubt that the chief aim of the Christian Church, in fact the one aim which the Church as such is to pursue, is that assigned to her in the Great Commission, namely, to preach the Gospel of the salvation of men through the mercy of God in Christ to all nations. It was in this sense that John the Baptist performed his ministry, in preaching repentance and remission of sins, in accordance with the prophecy of his aged father: "Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins," Luke 1, 76. 77. It was thus that Jesus Himself carried out the duties of His ministry, when He preached: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the Gospel," Mark 1, 15. In this spirit St. Paul looked upon his apostolic office, as when he writes to the Romans: "As much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," Rom. 1, 15. 16. He repeats this thought in practically every one of his epistles, as when he writes, 1 Cor. 9, 16: "For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of, for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." The attitude