

Where Dispensationalists Err

**DISPENSATIONALISM IN AMERICA:
ITS RISE AND DEVELOPMENT. C.**
Norman Kraus. John Knox. 156
pp. \$3.

Reviewed by Charles C. Ryrie

On the whole this is a fair treatment of dispensationalism, for the author, though not himself a dispensationalist, has a good grasp of the subject. However, his historical tools are considerably better than his doctrinal ones.

The historical study of dispensationalism ends with the publication of the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909, and the inference is that there has been no change or refinement in dispensationalism since then. If anything is unfair about the book this is it, for the author does not allow recent dispensationalists to speak on points which he criticizes and which have been thought through more carefully by them since 1909. Even from the standpoint of completeness it seems strange to omit nearly 50 years of the development of dispensationalism.

Some of the author's criticisms are very penetrating; others are most superficial. For instance, he has some right things to say about dispensationalists' general lack of emphasis on the human element in the Scriptures, their lack of attention to historical contexts, their failure to place proper emphasis on the local church, and their shallow thinking about progressive revelation (though on the last point one wonders if the author is much better off than those whom he criticizes).

On the other hand, it is shallow to criticize dispensationalists for using the word *dispensation* in a theological way even though its biblical sense is different. Does the author not use *atonement* similarly? Nor should he have labored to try to prove that dispensationalists teach several ways of salvation when the quotations which he himself uses from their writings show that they do not so teach.

Too, it hardly seems very penetrating to charge dispensationalism with the "distinctive theological emphases" of verbal inspiration, total depravity, and sovereign transcendence of God as if these doctrines were so heretical or so exclusive of dispensationalism.

Perhaps his own theological bent is showing at this point.

Furthermore, surely the author knows that calling the Revelation the consummation is not a dispensationalist's peculiarity. Perhaps, too, in order to be fair he should have noted that Covenant Theology fails "to seize the true idea of development, and by an artificial system of typology, and allegorizing interpretation, sought to read back practically the whole of the New Testament into the Old" (Orr, *The Progress of Dogma*).

The book is stimulating and every dispensationalist would do well to read it self-critically. It underlined in my mind two particular needs in dispensationalism: the need to relate carefully the dispensations to a proper concept of progressive revelation, and the need to be certain that our method of interpretation is truly grammatico-historical and not, as the author observes is sometimes the case, grammatico-dispensational.

The author is a Mennonite minister holding degrees from Goshen College and Goshen and Princeton seminaries, and he is presently teaching at Goshen College.

PERSUADED TO LIVE. Robert O. Ferm. Revell. 192 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by Warren Wiersbe

Here are several dozen testimonies from people who have made decisions

REVIEWER

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