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BOOK PROPOSAL FOR:
PERSPECTIVES ON ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

I. CONTENT

THESIS:

This book would set out the five most basic approaches to the Church/Israel, Covenant/Dispensational theology issues. The purpose would be to allow readers to assess the various interpretations as they are defended by major scholars from each school of interpretation.

PREMISE:

The rationale for this book is simple. There does not now exist a convenient format for understanding and evaluating the competing theories on the hermeneutical systems for understanding the Church/Israel issue. This is really quite remarkable, since this is one of the most divisive, most relevant issues in the church today. I believe this book will enable both professors and pastors to have the opportunity to consider the various options that have been put forth by biblical scholars and theologians and decide for themselves which is the best model.

OUTLINE:

Introduction: A Historical and Theological Introduction to the debate. (The Reasons Why We Disagree). This would be written by the editor—me. The Introduction demonstrates the importance of this book for this time in history, then proceeds to an overview of the specific traditions represented in the book. It also gives a brief historical overview of the development of this doctrine. This enables the reader more profitably to engage the ensuing debate.

1. The Traditional Dispensational Perspective

Traditional Dispensationalism holds that the church is a parenthesis in history that was not anticipated by Old Testament prophets. Most dispensationalists also argue that there is a significant discontinuity between the old covenant and the new. They also contend for a series of dispensations through history in which God implemented a series of varied means for establishing man's relationship with him. They also argue that the church age is temporary and that God will re-enact his covenant with Israel sometime in the future. The church is now not under the law as a moral mandate, since it is free from the law, though the law might be helpful in some fashion. Candidates would be Charles Ryrie or Robert Thomas.

2. The Progressive Dispensational Perspective

Progressive Dispensationalists agree with traditional dispensationalists on many points, but they differ on several significant issues. First, they affirm that in some sense the church was anticipated in the Old Testament, though not in the form we know it today. Progressives also play down the multiplicity of dispensations, or at least do not treat them in the same way as the Traditionalists. They also have a different view of Israel's "future," moving away from the notion that the church is a parenthesis, though many of them are still pre-trib. Possible writers include Craig Blaising, Darrell Bock, or Robert Saucy.

3. Kingdom Theology Perspective

This Kingdom Theology view was popularized earlier in this century by G. Eldon Ladd. Ladd contended that Jesus inaugurated the new covenant in his coming, and that this was applied to his followers particularly on the Day of Pentecost with the gift of the Spirit. This gift was in continuity with the work of the Spirit in the Old Testament, but as a gift without measure it is also a new thing. This position does not anticipate a renewal of the covenant with Israel in the future, but argues rather that many Jews will be brought into the new covenant at some point in the future. My primary suggestion as a writer for this chapter is Russell Moore, whose recent book, *The Kingdom of Christ*, treats many of these matters.

4. Traditional Covenant Theology Perspective

Traditional Covenant Theology does not see the body of Christ as a totally new thing, but rather sees it as the continuity of the Old Testament people of God. This idea made it easy for early covenant theologians to contend for a state church as the best of all possible ecclesiologies and what has led some in the Covenant Theology community (Reconstructionists) to hope for a restoration of the state church. This continuity has implications for baptism, as these theologians contend for an analogy between baptism and circumcision. Most would hold that there is no future for Israel as such (aside from the redemption of Jews to Christ), and some in this camp also hold to a replacement theology. Most in this school believe that promises made to Israel in the Old Testament are fulfilled in the church, and that the church is still under the law as a moral mandate, often contending that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath. Many persons would be candidates to write this chapter: Michael Scott Horton, Richard Gaffin, John Frame.

5. New Covenant Theology Perspective

New Covenant theologians agree with Covenant Theology that Old Testament promises are fulfilled in the church (or in Christ), but they disagree with Covenant Theology's belief that the body of Christ is in continuity with the Old Testament people of God. For them, the church is a totally new thing, though it was anticipated by the prophets. They also disagree with Covenant Theology's analogy between baptism and circumcision.

Many of the advocates of this position are, thus, baptistic. They do not believe in a future covenant with Israel, but contend that there may be a future ingathering. John Reisinger has written one of the most influential books for this position, but Stephen Wellum is the most credentialed theologian who holds this view.

CONTENTS:

Each author would be instructed to include these elements in his chapter:

1. Lay out the biblical and hermeneutical basis for his position. What is the hermeneutical/philosophical basis for Dispensationalism, or Covenant Theology, for instance?
2. Give a brief historical account of the rise of this position in the church's theology.
3. Address the theological implications of this position in the following areas: what are the differences in the nature of personal salvation from the Old Testament to the New (e.g., were OT believers regenerate)? Has the church replaced Israel, and if not, what exactly has happened with the coming of the body of Christ? What is the future for Israel? What should be our attitude toward the current nation of Israel? What other eschatological implications are there?
4. Address any practical issues that arise from these convictions. How does one's position affect ecclesiological issues such as baptism, the Lord's Supper, or church discipline? Does one's position have political implications? Early Dispensationalists eschewed political involvement, but this changed with the rise of organizations such as the Moral Majority. Covenant theologians have traditionally been more politically involved, but the rise of Theonomy has chastened some of them. Is there a political role for the church, or is it consigned to a purely "spiritual" function?

The maximum word count for each chapter would be 28,000 words. Each author would then reply to the other chapters.

II. THE MANUSCRIPT

STATUS:

Not yet begun, since we need a publisher in order to approach our prospective writers. I believe the manuscript could be ready within twenty-four months of signing contracts. I have previous experience on the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* and with two other multiple views projects in working with multiple authors.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

The counterpoint approach would itself be the most engaging feature of the book.

ANTICIPATED LENGTH:

280-320 pages.

III. AUDIENCE:

The intended readership would primarily be students and pastors. Some laymen might wish to read the book, and it would ideally be written so that interested laypersons would be able to follow the various essays. But in reality, it is a book for college and seminary students and interested pastors.

IV. COMPETITION

There are no competing titles. No one has done anything like this. This alone makes the book desirable. There are, of course, “perspectival” books on the millennium and the tribulation, but this deals with a whole different set of issues. The counterpoint approach is a very attractive type of publication. On this particular issue it will provide an opportunity to do something very new and useful. I believe the book could be adopted as a textbook for courses on systematic theology, historical theology, and contemporary issues in theology.

V. AUTHOR/EDITOR

Chad Owen Brand is Professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. He is also Associate Dean for Biblical and Theological Studies at Boyce College. He holds the Ph.D. degree in historical and systematic theology from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Chad Brand has written numerous articles and reviews for publications such as *JETS*, *Criswell Theological Review*, *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, *Journal of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, *Trinity Journal*, and a number of other publications. He has published essays in several symposia, including, among others, “Defining Evangelicalism,” in *Renewing the Center*, ed. Millard Erickson (Crossway, 2004), and “Genetic Defects or Accidental Similarities? Orthodoxy and Open Theism and Their Connections to Western Philosophical Traditions,” in *Beyond the Bounds*, ed. John Piper (Crossway, 2003). He served as Assistant Editor of *Southern Baptist Public Affairs*, and is Book Review Editor of *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*. He previously published *Holiday Sermons* with Thomas Nelson (1994) and is one of the editors of the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, for which he also wrote eleven articles, including the ones on “Baptism in the Holy Spirit” and “Predestination.” He is co-editor of *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Polity*, editor of *Perspectives on Spirit Baptism*, and co-author of *One Sacred Effort*, all published by Broadman & Holman.