

DISPENSATIONALISTS AND SPIRIT BAPTISM

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An area of debate among dispensationalists has involved continuity and discontinuity of Spirit baptism from dispensation to dispensation. Classic Dispensationalism as a whole endorsed the position of discontinuity. Revised Dispensationalism did the same with even more emphasis, a few of its spokesmen doing so by proposing two New Covenants, one for Israel and one for the church. With the abandonment of the two-New Covenants view by revised dispensationalists came the introduction of Progressive Dispensationalism. Progressive dispensationalists have proposed continuity of the doctrine of Spirit baptism from the OT through the church age into the future millennium. They likewise have suggested that the "body" metaphor for the church applies to all New Covenant believers, even those on earth after the church's rapture. An alternative dispensational view defends the continuity of Spirit baptism by allowing that OT prophets foresaw its occurrence as did John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. In the book of Acts, Peter connected earliest instances of Spirit baptism with previous predictions too. Yet the alternative proposal does not go so far as to indicate continuity of the body of Christ metaphor, but rather limits it to church believers of this dispensation.

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Dispensationalists debate the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit on at least three fronts. First, they have generally been non-Pentecostal and have dismissed as unbiblical the teaching that Spirit baptism

produces speaking in tongues.¹ Second, they have debated other non-Pentecostal fundamentalists and evangelicals who believe that Spirit baptism was a second experience after conversion which greatly enhanced power for Christian service. Concerning D. L. Moody, R. A. Torrey wrote:

¹See, for example, John Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen, 1954) 180-88. Douglas A. Oss, an Associate Professor of Hermeneutics and New Testament at Central Bible College in Springfield, Missouri, a Pentecostal school, brought a helpful paper to the Dispensational Study Group of ETS in November, 1991. Oss writes that "while a 'Pentecostalized' version of dispensationalism has been part of the Pentecostal framework from the beginning, the rigid dualism of Scofieldism has never been part of mainstream Pentecostal scholarship" (Oss, "The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism with the Pentecostal Tradition" 3-4). John Wimber writes, "Of all theologies, dispensationalism is probably the most antagonistic toward the charismatic gifts and Pentecostalism" (John Wimber, *Power Evangelism* [San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986] 143).

Once he had some teachers at Northfield, fine men all of them, but they did not believe in a definite Baptism with the Holy Ghost for the individual. They believed that every child of God was baptized with the Holy Ghost, and they did not believe in any special Baptism with the Holy Ghost for the individual.

Mr. Moody came to me and said, "Torrey, will you come up to my house after the meeting tonight and I will get these men to come, and I want you to talk this thing out with them." Of course I readily consented, and Mr. Moody and I talked for a long time, but they did not altogether see eye to eye with us. And when they went, Mr. Moody signaled me to remain for a few minutes. Mr. Moody sat there with his chin on his breast, as he often sat when in deep thought; then he looked up and said, "Oh, why will they split hairs? Why don't they see that this is just the one thing that they themselves need? They are good teachers, they are wonderful teachers, and I am so glad to have them here; but why will they not see that the Baptism with the Holy Ghost is just the one touch that they themselves need?"²

Third, dispensationalists have discussed the Scriptural teachings concerning the continuity and discontinuity of Spirit baptism. The discussion is not only between dispensationalists and covenant theologians, but also between the more classic (revised) dispensationalists and progressive dispensationalists. Besides basic definitions, the following questions are typical of the ones raised: (1) Were OT saints baptized in the Spirit? (2) Was there a prediction of the baptism of the Spirit in the OT? (3) Is the body metaphor of Jews and Gentiles in one body predicted in the OT? (4) Was Spirit baptism as known today in the church either predicted or realized in the OT? (5) What is the future of Spirit baptism in the Tribulation or the Millennial Kingdom? The debate over continuity and discontinuity is the focus of this essay.

Some contemporary dispensationalists divide the history of dispensationalism into three broad periods: Classic Dispensationalism (from about 1830 to 1955), Revised Dispensationalism (beginning about 1955), and Progressive Dispensationalism (beginning in the 1980's).³ Of

²R. A. Torrey, *Why God Used D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody, 1923) 59-60. See also John R. Rice, *The Power of Pentecost* (Wheaton, Ill.: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1949). Rice calls the dispensational teaching about the baptism of the Spirit "an unspeakable tragedy" (151).

³Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1993) 22-23. In an earlier work, Blaising named the eras of American dispensationalism Niagara dispensationalism, Scofield dispensationalism, essentialist (*sine qua non*) dispensationalism, and progressive dispensationalism (Craig Blaising, "Dispensationalism: The Search for Definition," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. by Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992] 16-34.) Charles Ryrie suggests that a better division of the history of dispensationalism would be (1) Darby Era (2) Scofield/Chafer Era (3) Revised (or Normative) Era (4) Progressive Era (*Dispensationalism* [Chicago: Moody, 1995] 162).

course, representatives of earlier phases of dispensationalism continue to write at the present time. The plan in this article is to explain briefly the typical understanding of Spirit baptism in each era of American dispensational history and then to suggest a possible alternative dispensational view.

SPIRIT BAPTISM IN CLASSIC AMERICAN DISPENSATIONALISM

The classic period of dispensationalism extended from about 1830 to about 1955. Most credit John Nelson Darby and the British Brethren for initiating dispensationalism in Britain, but in America, James Brookes and the Niagara Bible Conference (1875-1900), C. I. Scofield and his *Reference Bible* (1909, 1917), and Lewis Sperry Chafer's *Systematic Theology* (1948) are key representatives of this era.⁴

Niagara Bible Conference and Its Participants

The Niagara Bible Conference began near Chicago in 1875 with a small Bible study led by James Hall Brookes, pastor of the Washington and Compton Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Missouri.⁵ The next year the Bible study took the name of the "Believers' Meeting" and met in Swampscott, Massachusetts. As it became more open to the public, the conference met in the following years at Watkins Cove (Glen), New York (1877); Clifton Springs, New York (1878-80); Old Orchard, Maine (1881); Mackinac Island, Michigan (1882); Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario (1883-97); Point Chautauqua, New York (1898-99); and Asbury Park, New Jersey (1900). The conference offered a sounding board for the proclamation of the "unchanging features" of dispensationalism,⁶ and provided an opportunity for friendship among dispensationalists.

In particular, "two features of the conference especially lent them-

⁴Concerning the Niagara conference, Frank Gaebelin suggests that "the Niagara group and their many followers might well be credited with keeping before American Protestantism some of the great evangelical and prophetic teachings of the Bible" (*The Story of the Scofield Reference Bible* [New York: Oxford University, 1959] 13). Ernest Sandeen has described the *Scofield Reference Bible* as "perhaps the most influential single publication in Fundamentalist historiography" (*The Roots of Fundamentalism* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970] 222). Chafer's theological set is the first major multi-volume systematic theology written by an American dispensationalist.

⁵See further, Larry Pettegrew, "The Historical and Theological Contributions of the Niagara Bible Conference to American Fundamentalism" (ThD dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Tex., 1976), and Carl E. Sanders II, "The Premillennial Faith of James Hall Brookes" (PhD dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas Tex., 1995).

⁶Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* 13-21.

selves to the development of dispensationalism."⁷ One was its emphasis on the Bible, and the other was its view of the church. Concerning the church, the writers of the Niagara Bible Conference Creed (specifically James Brookes) wrote:

We believe that the Church is composed of all who are united by the Holy Spirit to the risen and ascended Son of God, that by the same Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, and thus being members one of another we are responsible to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, rising above all sectarian prejudices and denominational bigotry, and loving one another with a pure heart fervent-ly. . . .⁸

Beyond this basic statement, most of the Niagara attenders seemed to agree on the following teachings about Spirit baptism. First, the OT saints did not receive baptism in the Spirit. Brookes insisted,

It is never said of the Old Testament saints that the Holy Spirit abode with them, or that He dwelt in them, or that by one Spirit they were all baptized into one body of which the risen Jesus was the glorified head. He had not then ascended, and consequently there was no man at God's right hand, to whom believers could be united by the Holy Ghost. . . .⁹

Second, predictions by the OT prophets of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit were not fulfilled at Pentecost. James Brookes, after quoting the prophecy of the New Covenant outpouring of the Spirit in Jeremiah 31, wrote that "all will admit that this prediction in the fullness of its blessing and meaning remains to be fulfilled. . . ."¹⁰ A. C. Gaebelein agreed: "In a future day the Spirit will be poured out upon them, after their great national repentance, when they will mourn for Him (Zechariah xii:9-14; Ezekiel xxxii:29)."¹¹

⁷Blaising and Bock, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church* 16-17.

⁸"Declaration of Doctrinal Belief of Niagara Bible Conference," *The Truth* XX (1894):509-11. This creed first appeared in 1878 as the unofficial position of the Believers' Meeting for Bible Study and was officially adopted by the Conference in 1890. Actually, the same confession of faith also appears in an 1883 book, edited by John H. Elliott. Elliott assigns authorship to James Brookes (James H. Brookes, "A Safe Doctrinal Belief," in *Suggestive Outline Bible Studies and Bible Readings*, John H. Elliott, ed. [Albany, N. Y.: D. R. Niver, 1883] 23-26). The Niagara Creed has been republished in the Appendixes of Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* 273-77, and in David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity* (Greenville, S. C.: Unusual Publications, 1986) 375-79.

⁹James Brookes, "The Promise and Presence of the Holy Spirit," *Truth* XIII (1887):486.

¹⁰James Brookes, *Israel and the Church* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.) 65.

¹¹A. C. Gaebelein, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Our Hope, 1912) 63.

Third, the promises of the outpouring of the Spirit in the OT nevertheless had some relationship to the present day. Speaking at Niagara in 1889, H. M. Parsons of Toronto explained,

In Ezek. xxxvi. 26,27, Jehovah speaks to His ancient people concerning the new covenant, and declares two things: (1) "a new Spirit will I put within you;" (2) "I will put my Spirit within you." While this is future and to be witnessed when Israel and Judah have national restoration—and acceptance of their Messiah—it is also repeated in promise to the Church in the New Testament.¹²

In one place, Brookes also suggested that Isaiah's promise to pour out water on a thirsty land applied "first to Israel," but "is fulfilled in part at least" in the church.¹³ Since the Niagara Bible Conference did not purpose to be an academic meeting, it is doubtful that such problems as how these OT promises could be partially fulfilled were ever worked out in any detail.¹⁴

Fourth, as noted above in the Niagara Creed, the result of the baptism of the Spirit in this age is the formation of the church.

Fifth, each individual experiences only one baptism of the Spirit, the one that occurs at the time of conversion. In his message to the Niagara Conference in 1898, W. J. Erdman said, "One baptism, no matter how many refillings there may be, how many ebbings and flowings, how much intermittence there may be, there must have been given at some time the gift himself that there may be after that refillings through his indwelling in our hearts"¹⁵

C. I. Scofield and His Reference Bible

After his conversion in 1879 (Scofield was 36), C. I. Scofield joined the First Congregational Church in St. Louis, a church pastored by C. L. Goodell, a friend of James Brookes. A. C. Gaebelein, in his *History of the*

¹²H. M. Parsons, "The Abiding Presence of the Holy Spirit," *Truth* XV (1889):435.

¹³Brookes, "The Promise and Presence" 486.

¹⁴Later, during this classic period, W. H. Griffith Thomas did show some insight by speaking of the fulfillment of these OT prophecies in the "Messianic days" (W. H. Griffith Thomas, *The Holy Spirit of God* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1913] 14).

¹⁵W. J. Erdman, "22nd Annual Bible Conference," *Watchword and Truth* XX (September 1898):258. A. J. Gordon, who was a mediating figure between the dispensationalists and the Finney/Moody/Torrey type of theology, argued that "the baptism of the Spirit was given once for the whole church, extending from Pentecost to Parousia. . . . As there is one body reaching through the entire dispensation, so there is 'one baptism' for that body given on the day of Pentecost" (A. J. Gordon, *The Ministry of the Spirit* [Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1894]:53).

Scofield Bible, wrote that "the most important event after his conversion was his early acquaintance with the outstanding Bible teacher of that day, Dr. James H. Brookes."¹⁶ Gaebelien continued,

At the feet of this choice servant of Christ, Scofield took his place. Here he learned what he could not have learned in any of the theological seminaries of that time. Being instructed by Dr. Brookes in Bible study, he soon mastered, with his fine analytical mind, the ABC's of the right division of the Word of God. . . . From Dr. Brookes' instruction he became acquainted with the high points of sacred prophecy relating to the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God.¹⁷

Scofield began to talk about the *Reference Bible* at the Sea Cliff Bible Conference in 1901 and published the first edition in 1909.¹⁸

Scofield, who had participated in the Niagara Conferences himself, did not alter the doctrine of Spirit baptism taught there. He continued the Niagara teachers' emphasis on the relationship of Spirit baptism to the church. He wrote, "The Spirit forms the church (Mt. 16.18; Heb. 12.23, note) by baptizing all believers into the body of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:12,13). . . ." ¹⁹ He also noted, "The mystery 'hid in God' was the divine purpose to make of Jew and Gentile a wholly new thing—the church, which is his [Christ's] body,' formed by the baptism with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12.12,13) and in which the earthly distinctions of Jew and Gentile disappear (Eph. 2.14,15; Col. 3.10,11)."²⁰ In another place, Scofield taught that "there cannot be a church, first of all, without a head; nor, secondly, without the baptism of the Holy Spirit which began at Pentecost; therefore we say that the church began with the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost."²¹

If there is anything surprising in Scofield's teaching, it is found in his note on Peter's use of Joel on the Day of Pentecost. Unlike the strong discontinuity position which argues that Peter used Joel only as an analogy to what happened at Pentecost, Scofield taught that Joel actually began to be fulfilled at that time. In his footnote on Joel 2:28, Scofield explained,

Cf. Acts 2.17, which gives a specific interpretation of "afterward" (Heb. acherith="latter," "last"). "Afterward" in Joel 2.28 means 'in the last day' (Gr.

¹⁶A. C. Gaebelien, *The History of the Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Our Hope, n.d.) 22.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁹C. I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University, 1917) 1150.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 1252.

²¹C. I. Scofield, *Addresses on Prophecy* (Greenville, S. C.: The Gospel Hour, n.d.) 25.

eschatos), and has a partial and continuous fulfillment during the "last days" which began with the first advent of Christ (Heb. 1.2); but the greater fulfillment awaits the "last days" as applied to Israel.²²

Thus, in at least this area of pneumatology, Scofield accepted continuity between the OT and the church and between the church and the future. What was prophesied in the OT was partially and continuously fulfilled in the church. And what was partially and continuously fulfilled in the church will be ultimately fulfilled in the eschaton with Israel.

Lewis Sperry Chafer

Later representatives of classic dispensationalism, if anything, tended to support even more discontinuity in the doctrine of Spirit baptism. Lewis Sperry Chafer, the first president of Dallas Theological Seminary, summarized his teachings concerning Spirit baptism as follows:

The primary facts that this ministry—unlike the works of regeneration, indwelling, and filling—is not mentioned in the Old Testament, that it was not in operation before the Day of Pentecost, and that there is no anticipation of it in the age to come restrict it to the present age and its benefits are seen to be exclusively the portion of the Church, the New Creation; in fact, that which the Church represents in her exalted heavenly glory is almost wholly due to this specific ministry of the Holy Spirit.²³

SPIRIT BAPTISM IN REVISED DISPENSATIONALISM

Identification of Revised Dispensationalism

In America, the mid-to-late 1950's is the suggested time for the beginning of the period of Revised Dispensationalism—also called Essentialist, Normative, and *Sine Qua Non* Dispensationalism. The title "revised" stemmed from the revision of the Scofield Reference Bible completed in 1967. According to some students of dispensational history, by this time a number of leading dispensationalists had modified the teachings of original classic dispensationalism enough to signal the beginning of a new era in American dispensationalism.²⁴ Contributors to Revised Dispensationalism came from several different colleges and

²²Scofield, *Reference Bible*, 932.

²³Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary, 1948) 6:157.

²⁴For a discussion of the developments in Revised Dispensationalism, see Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* 21-46. Also see Charles Ryrie's discussion of the difference between "development" and "change" ("Update on Dispensationalism," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master, eds. [Chicago: Moody, 1994] 15-27).

theological schools. Especially notable were Alva J. McClain, Homer A. Kent, Jr., and others from Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana, and John Walvoord and others—such as Merrill Unger and especially Charles Ryrie—from Dallas Theological Seminary. In 1965, Ryrie published a classic defense of dispensationalism entitled *Dispensationalism Today*, in which he tried to define the unique essence of dispensationalism, an essence he called the "*sine qua non*" of dispensationalism.²⁵

The Baptism of the Spirit

As to the baptism of the Spirit, representatives of Revised Dispensationalism have argued, perhaps with more emphasis than their predecessors, that Spirit baptism was restricted to the church. Ryrie insisted,

The baptizing work of the Spirit is the one work of the Spirit which is not found in any other dispensation. This is proved theologically and biblically. Theologically, the proof is based on 1 Cor. 12:13. . . . If it is the baptizing work of the Spirit that places a person in the Body of Christ, and if the Body of Christ—because it depends on the resurrection and ascension of Christ—is distinctive to this age, then so is the baptism. Biblically, the baptizing work is never mentioned as being experienced in the Old Testament or in the days of Christ's earthly ministry. . . . Although the Spirit will be active in the millennial age, no specific mention of His baptizing work then is given in the Bible.²⁶

Because it is church truth, it was impossible for the OT prophets to know anything about Spirit baptism since the church was a mystery to them. Moreover, according to Ryrie, after the rapture of the church, this ministry of the Spirit will cease.

Not only was Spirit baptism not an experience in the OT, but also the OT did not predict it. In Merrill F. Unger's words,

The baptism of the Spirit announced by John is not once in view in the Old Testament. The essential nature of this new work of God's Spirit and its unique place in the divine program are such as to forbid its occurring, or even being predicted there. . . ."²⁷

²⁵Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody, 1965) 43-47. See also the revised edition of this book, published in 1995 by Moody under the title *Dispensationalism*. In the revised edition Ryrie includes his evaluation of Progressive Dispensationalism (161-81).

²⁶Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody, 1974) 39-40; idem, *Issues in Dispensationalism* 22.

²⁷Merrill F. Unger, *The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody, 1974) 39-40.

But some dispensationalists began to wonder about such strict discontinuity in the doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit. What about those New Covenant prophecies in the OT that predicted an outpouring of the Spirit (Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29, et. al.)? Even more problematic is the fact that John the Baptist, who predicted the outpouring by Christ that seemed to eventuate in the church, was an Old Covenant prophet. Also Christ, as He was about to ascend into heaven, instructed His disciples to stay in Jerusalem and "wait for what the Father had promised" and promised they would "be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:4-5). A few days later, the fulfillment of His prophecy came and the church began. How did the church fulfill "what the Father had promised"? Is it defensible to teach that there is total discontinuity between the outpouring of the Spirit as predicted in the OT and as seemingly initiated on the Day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:16)?

In working through the continuity/discontinuity matters surrounding the prediction of New Covenant pneumatology in the Old Covenant prophets, a few (certainly not most) revised dispensationalists, following Lewis Sperry Chafer, opted for two New Covenants: one for Israel and one for the church.²⁸ The pneumatological implication was that the benefits of an outpouring of the Spirit (regeneration, indwelling, teaching) that the church experienced were similar to those promised to Israel, but not the same. Israel's new covenant spawned pneumatological benefits to Israel; the church's new covenant spawned pneumatological benefits to the church. Thus discontinuity reigned supreme. But when they encountered exegetical difficulty in proving the two-New Covenant view, most of that view's adherents abandoned the view, and dispensationalism and its pneumatology were ready for a major

Unger adds, "The baptism of the Spirit announced by John is a unique operation confined to this present age from Pentecost to the rapture" (ibid., 42). But if that is true, every dispensationalist must wonder what John, an Old Testament prophet, knew about church truth.

²⁸Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* 1:41-43; 4:325; 7:98-99; John F. Walvoord, "The New Covenant with Israel," *BSac* 103 (1946):22-26; idem, "The New Covenant with Israel," *BSac* 110 (1953):193-205; idem, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959) 208-20; Charles C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux, 1953) 105-25. Though Ryrie abandoned this position, he seems to be willing to reaccept it if it be necessary to defend Classic/Revised Dispensationalism (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* 174). Homer A. Kent of Grace Theological Seminary is more typical of Revised Dispensationalism when he argues for one New Covenant and the church's participation in it: "The New Covenant," *Grace Theological Journal* 6/2 (1985):289-98. For a recent analysis of dispensationalism and the New Covenant, see Rodney J. Decker, "The Church's Relationship to the New Covenant," *BSac* 152 (July-September 1995):290-305 and *BSac* 152 (October-December 1995):431-56.

development. At least one observer believes that abandoning the two-New Covenants view opened up the door to Progressive Dispensationalism.²⁹

SPIRIT BAPTISM IN PROGRESSIVE DISPENSATIONALISM

Progressive Dispensationalism is the latest stage in the history of dispensationalism. According to Craig Blaising,

Progressive dispensationalism offers a number of modifications to classical and revised dispensationalism which brings dispensationalism closer to contemporary evangelical biblical interpretation. Although the name is relatively recent, the particular interpretations that make up this form of dispensationalism have been developing over the past fifteen years. Sufficient revisions had taken place by 1991 to introduce the name *progressive dispensationalism* at the national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society that year.³⁰

This theological movement within dispensationalism has been led by Craig Blaising, now of Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, Darrell L. Bock of Dallas Theological Seminary, Robert Saucy of Talbot School of Theology, and the authors of *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*. The name "progressive" does not imply that its adherents are contemporary and up-to-date, but rather that they stress the progressive relationship from dispensation to dispensation. Progressive Dispensationalism emphasizes the continuity from past dispensations to the present dispensation and from the present dispensation to the future dispensations.³¹

Baptism of the Spirit

Partly as a result of increased emphasis on continuity from dispensation to dispensation, progressive dispensationalists do not consider Spirit baptism to be unique to the present dispensation. In the first place, they hold that the OT predicted Spirit baptism—called "Spirit outpouring" by the OT prophets. Darrell Bock writes,

Continuity in the preaching of the kingdom is found in the promise of the

²⁹Ronald N. Glass, "The New Covenant: A Response to Progressive Dispensationalism" (paper presented to the Evangelical Theological Society at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 16, 1995). Glass writes, "By dismissing this position out of hand, Walvoord launched Dallas Seminary on the road to progressive dispensationalism" (8).

³⁰Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* 22-23.

³¹Blaising and Bock, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church* 380 ff.

Spirit as it is tied to repentance. John the Baptist had specifically noted that one of the distinctive features of Jesus' ministry versus his own was the baptism of the Spirit, which the "Coming One" would supply (Luke 3:15-18). Luke 24:49 refers to the "promise of the Father" that Jesus shall send and for which the disciples must wait. This must be an *Old Testament promise*, given the context of Old Testament fulfillment in Luke 24.³²

Thus John's prediction concerning the Messiah's baptizing with the Holy Spirit, later called the "promise of the Father," was "an Old Testament promise."

Moreover, Bock contends that this OT promise began to be fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost:

[T]he event that is singled out as that which fulfills Joel is the pouring out of the Spirit on all believers. In fact, the idea is mentioned twice in the space of the quotation (vv. 17b, 18b), with the second mention being an addition to the quotation for emphasis. This event must be the "promise of the Father" that was spoken of in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4. . . . [A] careful study of the use of Joel in Acts 2 shows that "this is that" is not "this is *all* of that" or "this is *like* that;" the meaning rather, is "this is the *beginning* of that," since the cosmic signs of Joel 2 are not fulfilled in the first coming of Jesus.³³

But not only was the OT promise about the outpouring of the Spirit fulfilled in part in the church (Acts 1:4-5), it was also closely related to a future dispensation. He adds,

In fact "the promise of the Father" alludes not only to Joel but to a key promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31, an important eschatological text that promised a bestowal of the Spirit to God's people. . . . The eschaton has begun; the movement toward the culmination of the eschaton has started, as have the benefits associated with the coming of the Day of the Lord.³⁴

The continuity of the baptism of the Spirit extends from the OT into the eschaton in Bock's analysis. That differs significantly from the "unique to this age" view of Classic and Revised Dispensationalism, and Ryrie's

³²Bock, *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church*, 45 (emphasis added). See also Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993) 174-83.

³³*Ibid.*, 48 (emphasis original).

³⁴*Ibid.*, 48-49. See also Bruce A. Ware, "The New Covenant and the People(s) of God," 68-97, and Kenneth L. Barker, "The Scope and Center of Old and New Testament Theology and Hope," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 293-328. Barker says that "another example of progressive fulfillment is Malachi 4:4-5, fulfilled through John the Baptist as well as through Elijah the prophet (or through another who will come in the spirit and power of Elijah) in the eschaton (cf. Rev. 11:6)" (325).

contention that some of the teachings of Progressive Dispensationalism are "changes," not "developments," is well-taken.³⁵ In the words of Robert Saucy, a progressive dispensationalist, "The baptism with the Spirit is therefore not some unique ministry only for the people of the present church age, from Pentecost to the rapture, but rather is the sharing by members of the church in the Spirit's ministry of the new covenant."³⁶ The implication for some progressive dispensationalists is that the church, that organism formed by the baptism of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, was at least implied in the Old Covenant prophets, and the church is a "sneak preview" of the kingdom.³⁷

Baptism Into the Body

The final debated issue concerning the doctrine of Spirit baptism among dispensationalists is the "body" metaphor (1 Cor 12:13). If Spirit baptism is prophesied in the OT, what about the "body" of Christ. Robert Saucy is one progressive dispensationalist who argues that the "body" metaphor is not unique to the present dispensation. He begins his discussion of the body of Christ metaphor as follows:

Dispensationalists have traditionally tended to interpret the various images as descriptions of the church as a distinct entity rather than as simply figurative language used to describe spiritual truth that may apply to others besides the church. . . . This view of metaphors does not seem appropriate in light of their usage in Scripture.³⁸

Saucy proceeds to suggest that just as the "bride" metaphor is used for Israel and the church, so the "body" metaphor is also general enough to apply to "all new covenant believers," and includes the church as well as other future New Covenant believers.³⁹ Apparently, after the church is raptured from the earth, future believers living in the Tribulation and the Millennium will also be baptized into the body. Once again, it is difficult to

³⁵Ryrie, "Update on Dispensationalism," in *Issues in Dispensationalism* 15-27.

³⁶Saucy, *Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* 183.

³⁷Bock, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church* 50. See also Robert Saucy's chapter, "The Church as the Mystery of God," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 127-55. Saucy writes, "The unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ is taking place in the church in partial fulfillment of Old Testament promises" (151); also see Saucy's book, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, especially his chapter, "The Church and the Revelation of Mysteries," 143-73. There Saucy indicates, "Thus we agree with the non-dispensationalists that Paul's teaching concerning the mystery of the church in the union of Jew and Gentile in Christ is a fulfillment of Old Testament predictions" (164).

³⁸Saucy, *Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* 184.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 186.

call this teaching merely a "development" within dispensationalism. Such continuity is a significant change from Revised Dispensationalism.

To summarize, classic and revised dispensationalists teach that Spirit baptism is unique to the present age. It was not predicted or experienced in the OT, nor will it be experienced in the future age. But progressive dispensationalists teach that the OT predicted Spirit baptism, that its partial fulfillment comes in the present age, and its ultimate fulfillment will come in the future age.

Likewise, classic and revised dispensationalists teach that the body metaphor is unique to the present age. It was a mystery in ages past, and when the rapture takes the church from the world before the Tribulation, this specific ministry of the Holy Spirit baptizing into the body will cease. Some progressive dispensationalists, however, teach that the body metaphor is not unique to the present dispensation, and that the Holy Spirit will continue to baptize into the body in the future age.

AN ALTERNATIVE DISPENSATIONAL VIEW

Applying scriptural tests to positions of various dispensationalists regarding the doctrine of Spirit baptism, one may find more continuity than classic and revised dispensationalists advocate, but more discontinuity than progressive dispensationalists teach.

Continuity of the Baptism of the Spirit

The OT Prophets. First, he may discover more continuity in that doctrine than classic and revised dispensationalists have taught.⁴⁰ Old Covenant prophets, whom the Lord used to draw the blueprints for the New Covenant program, specifically predicted an age-inaugurating outpouring of the Spirit, even though they did not experience that outpouring themselves. For example, Isaiah wrote, "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field . . ." (32:15); "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessings upon thy offspring" (44:3). Also Joel prophesied, "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; And also, upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit" (2:28-29).

The conclusion to be drawn from these and other OT passages is

⁴⁰For a fuller discussion of this point, see Larry D. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit, A Study in Continuity and Discontinuity* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1993) 27-45.

that the outpouring of the Spirit was an important part of a series of events that would initiate the eschatological time-period. So when Jesus told his disciples that the Spirit was about to come, they naturally wondered if He was going to inaugurate the kingdom at that time (Acts 1:4-8). Undoubtedly the common understanding among the Jews, as James D. G. Dunn notes, was that "the gift of the Spirit was one of the decisive marks of the new age."⁴¹

John the Baptist. The same was certainly John the Baptist's understanding. John, though 400 years closer to the initiation of the New Covenant than the OT prophets, was himself an Old Covenant prophet. Both John and the other OT prophets taught that Messiah was to perform the outpouring (or baptism) of the Spirit; both taught that judgment would accompany the outpouring (or baptism); both taught that the outpouring would initiate the kingdom. John, who began his ministry by announcing the nearness of the kingdom (Matt 3:1), said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire" (Matt 3:11; cf. Ezek 7:8; 39:29; Joel 2:28-32). Dispensationalists have often minimized this agreement of John's message with the message of the Old Covenant prophets.

Of course, the metaphor changed. The OT prophets before John never used the metaphor, "baptism." Their favorite figure was "outpouring." But a change in the figure of speech from "outpour" to "baptize" is not surprising. In fact, ample evidence supports the idea that the Spirit and fire "outpouring" of the OT prophets (as Ezek 7:8; 39:29), and the Spirit and fire "baptism" of John, describe the same ministry of the Spirit.

First, the content of the message of OT prophets was the same as that of the message of John (see above). Second, the metaphors are both liquid, that is, watery. Third, John changed his metaphor to baptism because of his dramatic ministry of baptizing people in water. He had a ready-made visual illustration of the coming ministry of the Messiah who would immerse believers in the Spirit.⁴² Fourth, the later interchange of the two metaphors by the apostles proves the identification of the "baptism of the Spirit" with the "outpouring of the Spirit." Metaphors always have to be considered in their context, but Luke records Peter using

⁴¹James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970) 46.

⁴²Dunn notes that "the fact that 'liquid' verbs are one of the standard ways of describing the gift of the Spirit in the last days would make it very easy for John to speak of the messianic gift of the Spirit in a metaphor drawn from the rite which was his own hallmark" (ibid., 12-13).

"outpouring" (Acts 2:17, 33; 10:45), "receiving the Spirit" (Acts 8:15, 17; 10:47), and "baptism" (Acts 11:16) to describe the New Covenant pneumatic ministration in its initial dispensing.

Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ also anticipated an outpouring of the Spirit (John 7:37-39; John 14:17; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8). His expression, the "promise of My Father" (Luke 24:49) no doubt referred to the outpouring promised in such OT passages as Joel 2:28-32. Then the Lord clearly related this promise (and prophecy) and John's prophecy of Spirit baptism to the day of Pentecost:

And being assembled together with them, [He] commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, you have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now (Acts 1:4-5).

Peter. The apostle Peter also taught that the church at Pentecost began reaping benefit from Spirit baptism as prophesied by John and interpreted by Christ's ascension-day prophecy. In his explanation of the Spirit's outpouring on the Gentiles, Peter rehearsed the statement of Christ: "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 11:16).

Moreover, though its interpretation and significance is debatable, Peter, in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, pronounced that the outpouring of the Spirit was the beginning of the fulfillment of OT prophecy: "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). Beyond this, he ties both Joel and Pentecost into the "last days" (Acts 2:17). Bock writes,

The period of the "last days" is by its very nature a period of fulfillment. In saying this, it is not necessary, or correct, to go on and say the period of consummation is present, for the NT can still speak of the "Age to Come." What is present is an inauguration-transition, not a completion as the nature of the fulfillment of Joel will show. The "last days" point to the presence of the eschaton, but not to the presence of all of it.⁴³

Thus, the church has the great privilege of "tasting of the powers of the age to come" (Heb 6:4) that are available to "whosoever shall call on the name

⁴³Darrell L. Bock, "The Reign of the Lord Christ" (unpublished paper presented to the Evangelical Theological Society, 1987) 8. Interestingly, Bock's view on this point is similar to Scofield's view (see above under discussion of "C. I. Scofield and His Reference Bible"). For a fuller discussion of this point, see Pettegrew, *New Covenant Ministry of the Spirit* 94-100.

of the Lord" (Acts 2:21), and participating in the pneumatological benefits of the New Covenant. To this degree, continuity exists between the OT and the present and between the present and the future millennium in the doctrine of the baptism or outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Discontinuity of the Body of Christ Metaphor

On the other hand, the case for continuity of the body of Christ metaphor is not compelling. Though a detailed analysis of this teaching goes beyond the scope of this essay, the argument for its application to non-church believers is based on the general usage of metaphors and other theological presuppositions.⁴⁴ In actuality, the "body" metaphor is not used for Israel in the OT,⁴⁵ or used by the OT prophets for any future group, nor does the NT use it for any group of believers other than the church. The metaphor is a strictly Pauline idea for the organism in which believing Jews and Gentiles who were outside of the covenants and promises, come together into a gracious relationship with Christ and each other (Eph 2:11-22).⁴⁶ Without further Biblical evidence, the case for continuity of the "body" metaphor fails. The conclusion therefore is that baptism by the Spirit **into the body** of Christ is a unique ministry for this dispensation.⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

Much of the doctrine of Spirit baptism in Classic and Revised Dispensationalism is compatible with the Scriptural data. The baptism of the Holy Spirit could not begin until after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and OT saints did not experience the baptizing work of the Spirit, even those alive during the earthly ministry of Christ. Discontinuity exists between Israel and the church. Baptism of the Spirit **into the body** is unique to the church age. The truth of the Jew and Gentile placed together into one body was a mystery that Paul developed for the first time.

Likewise, much of the doctrine of Spirit baptism in Progressive Dispensationalism is compatible with the Scriptural data:

- (1) The OT prophets predicted a future Spirit outpouring which would initiate the kingdom (Isa 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 39:25-29; Joel 2:28-29);
- (2) John the Baptist prophesied that Christ would baptize with the

⁴⁴Contra Saucy, *Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 184-86.

⁴⁵John A. T. Robinson, *The Body* (London: SCM Press, 1952). Robinson points out that "Hebrew has no word for 'the body' which is in any sense technical or doctrinally significant" (ibid., 11).

⁴⁶Robinson notes, "For no other New Testament writer has the word *sōma* any doctrinal significance" (ibid., 9).

⁴⁷Donald Guthrie (*New Testament Theology* [Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1981] 744-46) has a good introductory discussion of the body of Christ. Herman Ridderbos (*Paul, An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard DeWitt [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981] 362-95) discusses many of the non-evangelical views of this important part of Paul's theology.

Spirit (Matt. 3:11)—essentially the same prophecy as the OT prophets;

(3) Christ taught that the Spirit would minister to believers in a new way (John 7:37-39; 14-17)—again, essentially the same prophecy as the OT prophets (Ezek 36:27);

(4) Christ notified his disciples of the imminent inauguration of the Father's promise and John's predictions (Acts 1:4-5);

(5) Peter believed that the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost began to fulfill the OT prophets (Acts 2:16) and [in] the promise of the Father (Acts 2:33); and

(6) Peter asserted that the Spirit's outpouring on the Jews and Gentiles related to Christ's prediction about Spirit baptism (Acts 11:15-16), and in turn marked the beginning of the church's involvement in "what the Father had promised" (Acts 1:4-5; cf. Gal 3:14; Eph 1:13).

Therefore, dispensationalists studying the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit should consider both discontinuity and continuity between the OT and the present age and between the present age and the future millennium.