

The essence of dispensationalism, then, is the distinction between Israel and the Church. This grows out of the dispensationalist's consistent employment of normal or plain interpretation, and it reflects an understanding of the basic purpose of God in all His dealings with mankind as that of glorifying Himself through salvation and other purposes as well."

-- Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), pp. 43-47.

From these quotations (and others previously quoted) together with the matters discussed under "The Hermeneutics of Prophecy" we can discern some contrasts between Dispensational Theology and Covenant Theology, among which the following appear to be important:

1. The contrast between the doxological, all-inclusive purpose of God and the soteriological or redemptive purpose of God.
2. The contrast between Israel and the Church.
3. The contrast between Law and Grace, viewed both as principles and as dispensations.
4. The contrast between the Work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Dispensation (i.e., pre-Pentecost) and His work during the present Dispensation.
5. The contrast between consistently literal interpretation of Old Testament predictive prophecy and spiritualization or inconsistently literal interpretation, and the implications of these approaches for eschatology.
6. The contrast between an emphasis on historical covenants and an emphasis on the outworking of the Covenant of Grace (following the Fall).
7. The contrast between dispensations viewed as recurrent cycles of tests of the natural man following the pattern of revelation, responsibility, failure, and judgment; and dispensations viewed as historical stages in the progressive unfolding of revelation concerning both law and gospel.

C. Analysis of Genuine Differences between these Systems, together with Proposals Regarding Possible Areas of Rapprochement

During the past twenty-five years several attempts have been made to build bridges of mutual understanding and agreement between adherents of Dispensational Theology and those of Covenant Theology. In 1979 Ian D. Radmacher was able to detect a "growing rapprochement that has been taking place between covenant and dispensational theologians of orthodox persuasion over the last decade or so." During the past five years several articles witnessing this development have appeared, including Harold O. J. Brown's "Covenant and Dispensation" (*Trinity Journal*, Spring 1981), Kenneth L. Barker's "False Dichotomies Between the Testaments" (*JETS*, March 1982), Robert Saucy's "Contemporary Dispensational Thought" (*TSF Bulletin*, March-April 1984), and Saucy's "Dispensationalism and the Salvation of the Kingdom" (*TSF Bulletin*, May-June 1984).