

The question, of course, is this: in what ways do Dispensational Theology and Covenant Theology really differ in the areas of contrast mentioned above; and in what ways can these contrasts be narrowed still further? Let us consider these questions in connection with each of the seven areas of contrast listed above.

1. With regard to Dispensationalism's claim that it is doxological or theocentric on the one hand, whereas Covenant Theology is soteriological or redemptocentric on the other, it should be pointed out that Covenant Theology's distinction between the decrees of God in general and His decrees that pertain to salvation raises a question whether it can properly be said to 'narrow the purposes of God to one, namely that of individual salvation.

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* Questions 7, 8, and 11 run as follows:

"Q. 7. What are the decrees of God?

A. The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

Q. 8. How doth God execute his decrees?

A. God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence.

Q. 11. What are God's works of providence?

A. God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions."

Subsumed under God's works of providence are His covenant of works and His covenant of grace, as expressed in Question 12 and 20:

"Q. 12. What special act of providence did God exercise towards man the estate wherein he was created?

A. When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.

Q. 20. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?

A. God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer."

God's providence appears to include the preserving and governing of the physical universe, the spirit world, and Gentile nations, Israel, and the Church, and all for His own glory! Thus God's overall purpose includes subpurposes related to creation, preservation, providence, and judgment, as well as to redemption.

The claim that Covenant Theology focuses almost exclusively on soteriological concerns may therefore be a caricature. The counterclaim that Dispensationalism focuses almost exclusively on ecclesiological and eschatological concerns may also be a caricature. On the other hand, these may be only relative differences of emphasis, in which case further dialogue should clarify them.