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Cone and Fazios' "Forged from reformation: How dispensational thought advances the reformed legacy" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Cone, C., Fazio, J. I. (Eds.). (2016). *Forged from reformation: How dispensational thought advances the reformed legacy*. El Cajon, CA: Southern California Seminary Press. 582 pp. \$40.00. ISBN 9780986444234

In, *Forged from Reformation*, Christopher Cone, President and Research Professor of Bible and Theology at Calvary University and James Fazio, Dean of Bible and Theology, and Professor of Biblical Studies at Southern California Seminary have edited a volume which demonstrates “how dispensational thought has carried the reformer’s legacy forward” (p. 14). This book “articulates in each and every chapter how, five hundred years later, dispensational thought upholds and advances the legacy of the Reformation unlike any other theological system in Christian tradition” (p. 8).

The content of the book is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the historical and contextual backdrop related to the Protestant Reformation and “how this theology connects with the Reformation and its aftermath” (p. vii). Chapter two provides a historical introduction to dispensationalism and the Reformation (p. 8). Chapter three provides an evaluation of Martin Luther’s *95 Theses* and demonstrates how dispensationalism is compatible with the content and intent of the *95 Theses* (pp. 8-9). Chapters four and five demonstrate how John Nelson Darby “bears certain parallels with Martin Luther (p. 9). Chapter six focuses upon local church autonomy as a distinct Reformed characteristic and argues that present day local church autonomy is “something uniquely advanced through dispensational influence” (p. 10). Chapter seven addresses the sensitive subject of anti-Semitism “as it emerged in the thought of Martin Luther” and argues that this resulted from an inconsistent hermeneutic (p. 10). Chapter seven concludes by pointing out “how dispensational thought corrects Luther’s flawed perspective of Israel by following a consistent literal grammatical-historical hermeneutic” (p. 10).

The second part is “laid out according to the five *solas* which defined the Reformed legacy” (p. 8). Cone and Fazio note that “each of the five *solas* have one or more chapters which demonstrate how dispensational thought advances the Reformation legacy, in some cases, even more so than current expressions of the Reformed tradition that bears the name” (p. 8). Chapters eight through twelve addresses *sola Scriptura*. Chapter eight argues that the allegorical method plunged the church into a thousand-year period known as the Dark Ages (p. 11). It is dispensational thought and its commitment to a literal grammatical-historical hermeneutic that helped bring

about a hermeneutical revolution. Chapter nine credits the return of premillennialism to prominence to a return of a literal grammatical-historical method of interpretation (p. 11). Chapter ten asserts that literal approaches of Protestant biblical interpretation served “as the bedrock principle for the Reformed doctrine of *sola Scriptura* (pp. 12-13). Chapter eleven demonstrates that Martin Luther’s Christocentric-method of interpretation “is inconsistent with all of the other principles which he affirmed in so many of his writings” (p. 12). Chapter twelve addresses two hermeneutical extremes: Christocentric-allegory and woodenly-literal interpretation. The chapter argues that a consistent application of the literal grammatical-historical method found in the dispensational tradition “is the best safeguard against either extreme” (p. 12).

Chapter thirteen addresses *sola gratia* and builds “the case for how dispensational thought has advanced the doctrine of grace by making a healthy distinction between faith and works in the believer’s sanctification” (p. 13). Chapter fourteen addresses *sola fide* by soundly rejecting the notion that dispensationalism teaches “multiple ways of salvation” (p. 13). Instead, arguing that “salvation has always been received by man exclusively as a result of God’s grace through faith – in every dispensation” (p. 13). Chapter fifteen addresses *solus Christus* as the reformers “came to view the supremacy of Christ over the church from reading the New Testament” (p. 13). Only to be highlighted by how “dispensational thought has shone an even greater spotlight on Christ, with respect to His present ministry toward believers” (p. 13). Chapters sixteen and seventeen address *solī Deo gloria* and the emphasis that “all of human history since the creation week declares the glory of God,” which is an inseparable parallel between the Reformation and dispensationalism (pp. 13-14).

Chapter eighteen concludes the book with the charge: *semper reformanda* (always be reforming). This means that dispensationalism, like the Reformation, must set truth as its aim and “not errors which become fixed into nature. God’s truth never changes, but we must change in conforming our hearts and minds to be more aligned with His own timeless truth” (p. 567). This book is well documented throughout and achieves its agenda. It is a helpful resource for students and lay members of the church seeking to understand dispensationalism, the Reformed legacy, and how dispensational thought has advanced the Reformed legacy.

Reviewer

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