

A Spectral Analysis
Focusing on Calvary Baptist Church
Sleepy Eye, MN
(originally taught at Calvary in 2003-2004)

Introduction: A spectrum is normally reserved for discussion regarding physics. A spectroscopic analysis determines the characteristics of varying spectra. In this study, I would like to do an analysis of the varying theological spectra that people use to evaluate local assemblies. Where we are on a particular spectrum is vital to many people considering our assembly. Do we know where we are? Are we where we ought to be?

Part One—Our Understanding of the Bible

1) The Bible

- a) We believe the Bible (in its 66 books) to be without error in its original writing in all areas.
- b) We believe in verbal (the very words themselves) and plenary (every word) inspiration.
- c) We believe it is the sole authority for faith and practice, including teaching, counseling, etc.

2) Bible Translations

- a) We believe in the Divine inspiration of the original texts of Scripture.
- b) We believe English translations have derived inspiration, in so far as they accurately reproduce the original texts.
- c) We reject any attempts to reduce the extent of inspiration to only one English version. The modern King James Version Only movement is a Biblical heresy, needlessly dividing the people of God over a man-made opinion.
- d) We reject translations that merely attempt to convey the *thoughts* of the passage rather than the original wording. We believe the Greek and Hebrew texts are to be the focal point, not the English language.

3) Bible Teaching

- a) We believe that Bible teaching should demand “center stage” in every ministry of the local assembly.
- b) We believe that exegetical, expository teaching should be the norm in the local assembly.
- c) We believe that entertaining people in the name of Christ is contrary to Biblical teaching.
- d) We believe in God-centered interpretation, teaching, and practical application.

Part Two—Our Understanding of Salvation and Evangelism/Witnessing

- 1) Salvation
 - a) We believe that salvation is entirely of God, from beginning to end, and that there is nothing that people can do or say that in any way brings about their salvation—Acts 13:48; John 1:13; James 1:18; Hebrews 12:2; Ephesians 2:8-10
 - b) We believe that man's responsibility is to repent of self-dependence and depend entirely upon the once-for-all completed work of Christ on the cross and His resurrection in order to be saved—Acts 16:31; 20:21; Romans 10:9-10
 - c) We believe that man's desire and ability to depend on Christ alone is in itself a gift from God—2nd Peter 1:1; Ephesians 2:8-10
- 2) Evangelism/witnessing
 - a) We believe that God should be the focus of our evangelism/witnessing efforts. The message we share with the unsaved is the Gospel of God—Romans 1:1; 1st Peter 4:17
 - b) We believe that witnessing is done most Biblically when done in relationships one has already formed—Colossians 4:5-6; 1st Peter 3:15
 - c) Evangelism/witnessing is the purpose of the assembly *scattered*, not *gathered*—Matthew 28:18-20
- 3) Calvinism
 - a) We believe that the basic Reformed truths regarding salvation (as often summarized with the acrostic TULIP) are Biblical valid (with certain clarifications on the issue of limited/unlimited atonement). Hence, this makes us 4.5-5 point Calvinists. We hold to these truths, not because John Calvin taught them, but because they are clearly taught in Scripture.
 - i) Total depravity of mankind
 - ii) Unconditional election
 - iii) Limited or particular atonement
 - iv) Irrresistible grace
 - v) Perseverance of the saints
 - b) We reject Arminianism as being unbiblical and man-centered. Much of what is observed in the revivalism tradition and modern church-growth movements appears to be rooted in this man-centered philosophy.
- 4) Sanctification
 - a) We believe that Biblical sanctification is at least 4-fold in nature
 - i) The non-salvific sanctification of unsaved spouses and children—1st Corinthians 7:14
 - ii) The positional sanctification at the moment of salvation—Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1st Corinthians 1:2; Hebrews 10:10; (Note especially the perfect tense usage)
 - iii) The progressive sanctification throughout the life of the believer—Hebrews 2:11; 10:14 (Note especially the present tense usage)
 - iv) The prospective sanctification at the end of the believer's earthly life—Ephesians 5:26-27

Part Three—Our Understanding of Music in the Local Assembly

- 1) We believe that music utilized in church ministries should not be for entertainment or evangelistic purposes. There is no reference under the New Covenant to using music for either of these reasons.
- 2) We believe that music utilized in church ministries should fulfill the New Covenant principles for music.
 - a) Colossians 3:16
 - i) What?
 - (1) Corporately
 - (a) Teaching (# 1321) one another
 - (b) Admonishing (# 3560) one another
 - (2) Individually
 - (a) Singing (# 103) with grace (thankfulness) in your heart to the Lord
 - ii) Why?
 - (1) These are part of allowing the word of Christ to dwell in you richly with all wisdom
 - b) Ephesians 5:19
 - i) What?
 - (1) Corporately
 - (a) Speaking (# 2980) to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
 - (2) Individually
 - (a) Singing (# 103) in your heart to the Lord
 - (i) Compare same word in Revelation 5:9; 14:3; 15:3
 - (b) Making music (# 5567) in your heart to the Lord
 - (i) Compare same word in Romans 15:9; 1st Corinthians 14:15; James 5:13
 - ii) Why?
 - (1) These are part of being completed by the Spirit
- 3) We believe, in addition to the above teaching, the following historical, Biblical truths are observed:
 - a) Paul and Silas sang hymns of praise while suffering in the jail at Philippi—Acts 16:25
 - b) Paul apparently sang songs in different languages in addition to Greek—1st Corinthians 14:15
 - c) When we are cheerful, we are commanded to sing praises—James 5:13
- 4) Other principles
 - a) Ignorance of, or rejection of, these Biblical principles can lead to satisfaction with any type of music.
 - b) To simply listen “to the music I like” indicates selfishness, which is part of the flesh.
 - c) Music listened to outside the assembly should not violate Biblical principles of holiness and beauty. If the music is secular, it should not clearly contradict the teachings of God’s Word (on love, marriage, values, etc.). No music is neutral or amoral. All music has values, even instrumental music. The question is: will the music I listen to draw me closer to God and His values?
 - d) Neither “special music” nor choirs are mentioned as being utilized under the New Covenant. Though not sinful in and of themselves, the use of them must not contradict other principles contained in Scripture.

Part Four—Our Understanding of the Local Assembly

- 1) Church Polity
 - a) Church leadership within the assembly
 - i) See church membership lessons on our view of *shared, male, qualified, and servant-minded* leadership within the assembly.
 - b) Decision making within the assembly
 - i) We believe (after a study of the decisions made in Acts and the Epistles) that decision making within the assembly is to be a balance of pastoral and congregational decisions.
 - ii) Pastors are under the strict authority of Jesus Christ and His Word. They are not a ruling oligarchy. They cannot do or say whatever they want. The church does not belong to the pastors; it is Christ's church (Acts 20:28) and God's flock (1 Peter 5:2). Thus the pastors' leadership is to be exercised in a way that models Christ-like, humble, loving leadership.
 - iii) Submission on the part of other members of the body is always difficult. Our hearts are stubborn, prideful, and at times rebellious. Yet we are called to submit, even in trying and disagreeable situations (Hebrews 13:17). The requirement to submit is not blind, mindless submission. Nor does it suggest that pastors are above questioning or immune from public discipline.
 - iv) The goal of the pastors and congregation should always be to speak and act as a united community. Both the leaders and those led should take the time and make the effort needed to work and pray together to achieve this oneness of mind. This means, among other things, that pastors must inoculate themselves against aloofness, secrecy, or independently seeking their own direction.
 - v) The people of the assembly must be persuadable and yieldable (Hebrews 13:17). There are several questions the people must ask when they are in disagreement with the decisions made by the pastors:
 - (1) Is it a matter of conscience or merely preference?
 - (2) Is the leadership causing us to sin or is it confronting our sin?
 - (3) Is the leadership issuing commands clearly rooted in Scripture or are they merely offering counsel?
- 2) Deacons/Deaconesses
 - a) We believe that deacons are to be *servants*, not leaders.
 - b) We believe the Bible teaches that women can and should serve in these capacities (Romans 16:1-2).
 - i) Being a deacon does not give authority over men; therefore having deaconesses does not violate 1st Timothy 2:12.
- 3) Children/youth work
 - a) We believe that reaching young people for Christ is primarily the work of the parent(s) [see Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21].
 - b) We recognize that the concept of churches having a separate "youth ministry" can be traced back to churches of the 1930's. Those attempts of keeping youth in church by means of entertainment, youth-focus, etc. are no different than the church growth movement of today.

- c) We believe that young people are capable of learning, growing, and interacting with adults as they enter into what is commonly understood as the junior high years.
 - i) Historically, there has been no such thing as adolescence. People were either children or adult. Childhood has historically ended about the 12-13 years of age level.
 - ii) Biblically, it seems that adulthood begins when a person is spiritually responsible for their own decisions of right and wrong (Isaiah 7:15-16).

Part Five—Our Understanding of the Future

- 1) Dispensationalism
 - a) Dispensationalism is identified by three primary characteristics:
 - i) The overall goal for everything is the glory of God—1st Corinthians 10:31; Romans 11:36
 - ii) Our method of interpreting Scripture is to consistently seek a literal/normal interpretation—Hebrews 1:1
 - (1) As opposed to allegorical, devotional, or liberal interpretations
 - (2) We still recognize that there are figures of speech, etc.
 - iii) We seek to maintain God's distinction between Israel and the church—Romans 9-11; 1st Corinthians 10:32; Colossians 3:11; Galatians 6:15-16
 - b) Because Covenant Theology has significant problems with the second characteristic, it also struggles with the third characteristic.
 - i) Progressive dispensationalism seeks to “walk the fence” between covenant theology and dispensationalism.
 - c) A proper understanding of the Biblical covenants is consistent with Dispensationalism.
 - d) We do, at times, have problems with certain *dispensationalists*, but not the basic tenets of *Dispensationalism*.
 - e) See *There Really is a Difference!* by Renald E. Showers (Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry: Bellmawr, NJ, 1990) for a helpful book explaining Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism.
- 2) End Times (Eschatology) and prophecy
 - a) Our view of the end times and prophecy is rooted in our framework of Biblical dispensationalism. Thus, we seek to interpret prophecy of the end times in a literal/normal manner, not allegorical or devotional. We believe in a literal 1,000-year kingdom and a literal 7-year tribulation.
 - b) We are *premillennial* in our view of Christ's second coming
 - i) As opposed to an *amillennial* (a.k.a. realized millennium) view, which teaches we are in the kingdom now. There is no literal 1,000 year utopian rule of Christ on earth as king.
 - ii) As opposed to a *postmillennial* view, which teaches that either Christ will return after the world has become Christianized (made a better place through the working of believers to achieve kingdom-like conditions), or that we are in the kingdom now (although not everyone obeys God's laws).
 - c) We are *pretribulational* in our view of Christ's catching away (rapture) of His bride
 - i) As opposed to a posttribulational catching away, which teaches that believers will go through the entire Tribulation time before they are caught away
 - ii) As opposed to a midtribulational catching away, which teaches that believers will go through the first-half of the Tribulation before they are caught away
 - iii) As opposed to a pre-wrath catching away, which teaches that believers will go through the first 5½ years of the Tribulation before they are caught away
 - iv) As opposed to a partial catching away, which teaches only truly spiritual believers will be caught away. The rest will go through the Tribulation.