Preterism Rightly Divided

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Introduction

Christ’s return to gather his elect, to bring judgment on all the apostate peoples and nations, and to set all things right is the future age of glory that all Christians look forward to. In Matthew and Acts, Jesus’ disciples were eager to know when the restoration of Israel would take place thus fulfilling the promise of a time of peace and prosperity for the covenant people of God (Matthew 24:1-2; Acts 1:6). However, the final consummation of God’s redemptive plan in the coming of the Son of Man “on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory . . . is coming at an hour you do not expect.”¹

Though God’s timing of this momentous event is unknown, the Scriptures, however, provide markers for God’s people to look for in the coming days proceeding Christ’s ascension. These markers, signs, to look for in the future, from the context of the New Testament Scriptures, reveal that just as a pregnant woman experiences an increase in the frequency and duration of birth pangs, Christians, and the world for that matter, will also experience birth-pang like events of trials and tribulations leading up to and into the Day of the Lord (Matthew 24:25). This will be a “day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed” (Romans 2:5).

With the details (some vague and much of it apocalyptic) of what to expect comes curiosity from Christians and students of Scripture as to how and when these events will unfold. The study of the end times, the branch of eschatology as it is most

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures will be taken from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001).
notably referred to, is a field consisting of an array of perspectives. The various perspectives, while considered to be within the confines of Christian orthodoxy, are nonetheless, with a few exceptions (and the most important ones), contradistinctive to each other. However, there are some who hold to a particular perspective that, according to those of other eschatological camps, have positioned themselves outside of orthodoxy into heterodoxy.²

In the study of eschatology, there are four general ways or schools of interpretative thought when it comes to the book of Revelation (these views also have bearing on how the Olivet Discourse and other Scriptures that pertain to eschatology are interpreted). The *idealist* (or symbolic) sees the symbols and apocalyptic events of the book presented as timeless truths about the nature of reality or human existence denoting a continual conflict between God and evil. The *futurist* sees the events of Revelation to be speaking of an end-time event that will come to pass in the future. The *historicist* sees that the apocalyptic events have and are occurring throughout church history. The *preterist* sees that all the end-time events have arrived in the first century particularly in AD 70.³

Though these are generally considered orthodox views, those who interpret from a preterist perspective, however, have received criticism extending beyond a

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critique of exegetical and hermeneutical methods. The criticism has escalated to making heretical accusations toward their approach to Revelation and the end-times fulfillment.

Hank Hanegraaff, for example, remarks how dispensational premillenialist Tim Lahaye wrongly associates him with the heretical form of preterism. According to PreteristArchive.com, Hank Hanegraaff is a preterist; however, he does not label himself a preterist; rather, he uses a method he coined called Exegetical Eschatology, which emphasizes the proper method of biblical interpretation, exegesis, over following a model of eschatology. With that said, however, his exegetical perspective falls closely in line with a preterist interpretation of the book of Revelation.

In the last twenty years, preterism has experienced resurgence in Reformed churches. Preterism is generally a view held by those in the Reformed camp, so with the growth that has occurred in Reformed theology, particularly Calvinism, the growth in a preterist interpretation, likewise, seems to be the logical reason for its resurgence.

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5 Ibid., pp. 1-2.

6 See particularly, “Chapter 5: Historical Principle,” in Ibid., p. 95


8 “Young, Restless, Reformed | Christianity Today,” http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/september/42.32.html (accessed May 10, 2013). To further support this, the advocates of preterism listed later on in the paper are all from a Reformed/Calvinist/covenantal perspective. If Reformed theology is gaining more adherents, then a growth in preterism or at least an interest in the perspective seems likely to follow. However, there are those who are Reformed in their soteriology who are not preterists. Preterism is generally an interpretive method espoused by covenantalists, and all who are covenantalists are Reformed/Calvinist.
One view is that it has experienced growth in evangelicalism in reaction to the *Left Behind* series.⁹

However, the problem is that there is an extreme form of it that is considered heretical, and that is the view that gets the attention in evangelicalism, which preterists R.C. Sproul¹⁰ and Kenneth L. Gentry¹¹ have ensured to distinguish from in their support of preterism. And because of the concern for improper caricaturing of preterists, the purpose here is to explore and examine the preterist perspective with the intention of rightly delineating the orthodox and heterodox forms of it.¹²

The most important aspect of any interpretive approach to end-times perspectives is proper exegesis of the Scriptures. Ultimately, the advocates from the four schools of interpretation all claim that their view is supported by sound, biblical exegesis using “the cherished Reformation principle of the historical-grammatical hermeneutic.”¹³ But, regardless of the claims, each has convictions in which the evidence they see from their perspective most clearly supports their own view.

However, and most importantly, as Millard J. Erickson says:

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¹² One can already see the misconception behind preterism, for even in his survey on eschatology, Erickson, in providing summary definitions for the four main views of interpretation of Revelation (see page 2), posits preterism to believe that all of the end time events have been fulfilled in the first century. While the term does imply that, it is too general of a term to use for this view—hence the purpose of this paper.

The apostle Paul did not intend the doctrine of the second coming to have such an effect [one that causes division among brethren]. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 he indicated that the Lord’s coming is the basis of hope for believers and that they are to comfort one another with this hope. Comfort, not contention, is the purpose of this message.\(^\text{14}\)

### Preterism Rightly Divided

According to some, the preterist perspective started with Jesus, for they believe that he was a preterist.\(^\text{15}\) Preterists see that the kingdom is a reality, which is in contrast to dispensationalists who see it as a future event that will come at the parousia.\(^\text{16}\) However, because there are many forms under the umbrella of preterism, the development of it actually pervades throughout different parts of church history. One can go to various preterist websites and see the array of views within this perspective. One site lists six major views of preterism: Full Preterism, Idealist Preterism, Charismatic Preterism, Historic Preterism, Partial Preterism, and Hyper Preterism.\(^\text{17}\) Furthermore, according to this site, all of these forms of preterism have aka names: Full/Hyper Preterism (aka Realized Eschatology, Consistent Preterism, Covenant Eschatology), Idealist Preterism (aka Spiritualized Preterism, Mystical Preterism), Charismatic Preterism (aka True Preterism, Fullness Preterism, Mature Preterism), Historic Preterism (aka Orthodox Preterism, Traditional Preterism), and Partial Preterism.

\(^{14}\) Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, p. 183.

\(^{15}\) “Randall Otto: Preterism and the Question of Heresy - Quodlibet Journal.”


(aka Post Millennialism, Amillennialism, Historicism, Historic Preterism, Realized Preterism).\textsuperscript{18} R. C. Sproul has a few more names that can be added to the list as well: Radical Preterism, Theological Preterism (both full preterist views), Moderate Preterism, and Exegetical Preterism (both partial preterist views).\textsuperscript{19} In looking at all of the different names associated with this perspective (and quite comical as well), which is already comprised of many diverse views, one can see how labeling someone a preterist can be very misleading, particularly if there is an assertion of heresy attached to the label.

Due to the abundance of names associated with preterism, the partial preterist (first highlighting the historic and modern distinctives of it) and the full preterist (aka hyper preterism) perspectives will be examined. Ultimately, all of the other subcategories of preterism fall under one of the two branches, for these two perspectives best describe and represent the main distinction between the two.\textsuperscript{20}

**Overview of Partial Preterism**

The majority of all eschatological views are primarily partial because while biblical prophecy has been fulfilled in the past, some has yet to come.\textsuperscript{21} Preterists place “the prophecies of intense evil and foreboding gloom in the first century, focusing on the events surrounding the forty-two-month long Neronic persecution (A.D. 64-68, cf. 

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus*, p. 155.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., pp. 155–156.


Historical preterism has “roots dating back to the first century, such as in the writings of Barnabus and Clement of Rome, and finds greater development in the writings of Justin Martyr and Eusebius.”

Historical Preterists believe that only a minor amount of biblical prophecy has been completely fulfilled in the early centuries of Christianity (with some of the end-times prophecies being fulfilled by AD 70), while the considerable portions of prophetic fulfillment is yet to be revealed on the Day of the Lord.

Advocates of this view determine their perspective based on where they see a transition from the past to the future in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24 and 25 (they see it in the middle of 24) and the book of Revelation (in the middle). This was the most commonly held perspective in orthodox and Catholic churches during the Middle Ages with the contemporary forms of it having been largely developed in the writings of Calvin, Luther, Grotius, and Lightfoot. Proponents of historical preterism include: Augustine, Karl Barth, F.F. Bruce, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, John Gill, Matthew

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24 “Partial Preterism at PreteristArchive.com”

Modern preterists believe that the majority of end-times biblical prophecy has been completely fulfilled in the early centuries of Christianity but with the “bulk of it solely being applied to Israel.” This view arose during the Reformation, or Counter Reformation, and was fully developed by the Jesuit Alcasar in the beginning of the seventeenth century. However, there are those who see the modern preterist perspective throughout church history specifically beginning with the church historian Eusebius who presented a consistent, systematic view of it in his work Theophany written in AD. 310. This data supports that preterism, of the modern understanding, “existed in the church as much as a thousand years before the time of Alcasar.”

Modern preterists, like historical preterists, determine their perspective based on where they see a transition from the past to the future in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24 and 25 (somewhere in 25) and in the book of Revelation (near the end).

Advocates of modern preterism include: Jay Adams, Greg Bahnsen, Gary DeMar,


27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.


30 Ibid.
Overview of Full Preterism

The full-preterist perspective holds that all “biblical prophecy was fulfilled at or before AD 70.” Furthermore, full preterists, contrary to partial preterists, believe that all of the end-time eschatological events where fulfilled as well at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. These events include the “Second Coming, judgment and resurrection of the living and dead,” thus marking the end of the Old Covenant age.

Full preterists believe that Christ’s return was indeed literal; however, his return was manifested not in bodily form but in judgment in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70. The language used in Revelation 1:7 that speaks of Christ’s “coming on the clouds,” is apocalyptic metaphor similarly used in the Old Testament (Isaiah 13:1, 9-13; 19:1; Psalm 18:7-15; 104:3; Joel 2:1-2; Micah 1:3-4). In the Old Testament, God used militaristic forces from distant nations to bring judgment on Israel (Isaiah 19). The literal return of Christ is understood to be the same referent as found in the Old Testament when God’s presence was manifested in judgment on other

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31 “Categories of Preterist Scholarship.”


34 “(Full) Preterism.”

35 Gentry in Pate and Gundry, Four Views on the Book of Revelation, p. 47.
nations.\textsuperscript{36} Full preterism holds to the belief that the resurrection of the dead is not a physical resurrection; rather, there are two possibilities that could (or did) actually occur.

One view, called, “The Individual Body at Death View (IBD),”\textsuperscript{37} espouses that the soul was raised up from Sheol or Hades, the holding place of the dead, and both the living and dead were “raised, changed, caught away and glorified together into one/corporate matured New Covenant Body of Christ.”\textsuperscript{38} Within this perspective, some believe that the righteous obtained a spiritual and substantial body in heaven, while the unrighteous were thrown into the Lake of Fire.\textsuperscript{39}

The other possibility is a view called, “The Corporate or Collective Body View (CBV).”\textsuperscript{40} As the name implies, this view posits that the resurrection was a collective regathering of the dead ones (those of Israel whom God divorced himself from) from their dead status as promised by God according to his covenant.\textsuperscript{41} Furthermore, this regathering also includes the Gentiles from the new covenant.\textsuperscript{42} Exegetically, advocates of this view see this in “1 Corinthians 15 where Paul quotes Isaiah 25 and Hosea 13 which speaks of God’s promise to one day cause His people to once again return to the

\textsuperscript{36} “(Full) Preterism.”  
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{38} “(Full) Preterism.”  
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
‘land of the living,’ . . . [and in the] “promised regathering spoken of in Daniel 12 and Ezekiel 37 (the ‘dry bones’).” This corporate regathering of Jew and Gentile into the one body of Christ enters into a new-covenant relationship with God, which is essentially the Church as established during the period of the Great Commission prior to and after the return of Christ in AD 70. Those who are part of the corporate body of God are “instantly raised to life as a new creation.”

Some full preterists believe, due to the symbolic nature of Revelation, that hell was symbolic of Gehenna, the Greek word used in Scripture to refer to hell and the Lake of Fire, which was actually the burning-garbage dump in Jerusalem during the AD 70’s. Furthermore, because of the first-century-audience-relevant hermeneutic, this place of burning only pertained to an age (Greek aionios) and was not an eternal place. So, the judgment of being cast into the Lake of Fire only has a first-century significance; therefore, any view of judgment for all mankind does not apply. Other advocates of full preterism believe that Israel is first to receive judgment, then, in following Revelation 21-22, those outside the city gates (the church) are thrown into the Lake of Fire, which is part of the new heavens and the new earth in the new covenant age.

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
Hermeneutical Focus in Partial Preterism

Partial preterism holds that much of the book of Revelation has been fulfilled in the first century. The immediacy in the context of John’s words in Revelation is the key to interpreting it correctly, for in 1:1, 3 and in 22: 6, 10, John writes that these events “must soon take place . . . for the time is near.”\(^{50}\) In keeping with an exegetical approach where the context and intended audience of the letter is fundamental, the specific nature of Revelation, particularly the temporal expectations of it, demands a preterist approach.\(^{51}\) Furthermore, Bill Mounce, while not a preterist, affirms in his commentary on Revelation, “It is vitally important to see with the preterist that the book must be interpreted in light of the immediate historical crisis in which the first-century church found itself.”\(^{52}\) Kenneth L. Gentry Jr. points out the important aspects of the context of Revelation that demonstrate the validity of a preterist approach to it. He writes:

Revelation is personal-motivational. John is here writing to human beings . . . warning (on the basis of human suffering) of the nearness of temporal judgment. Revelation is concrete-historical. John is writing to seven specific, historical churches (1:4, 11; 2:1-3:22) about their present dire circumstances (they are in “tribulation,” 1:9; 2:9-10, 13), their need for patience (1:9; 2:2-3, 10, 13, 25: 3:10-11), and soon-coming judgments (2:5, 16, 25; 3:3, 11; 22:10, 18-19). . . . Revelation is emphatic-declarative. The expressions of imminence are didactic (non-symbolic), frequent (in the introduction, conclusion, and elsewhere), and varied. How else could John have expressed nearness in time if not by these terms? . . . Revelation is parallel-harmonic. The temporal expectations in Revelation parallels New Testament teaching elsewhere. . . . In Matthew 24:34 Jesus holds the same expectancy as John: “Assuredly I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away until all these things take place” (NKJV, italics added; cf. 23:36). . . . In Mark

\(^{50}\) Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., “A Preterist View of Revelation,” in Pate and Gundry, Four Views on the Book of Revelation, p. 41.

\(^{51}\) Gentry in Ibid., pp. 42–43.

9:1 Jesus promises that some of his hearers will not “taste death” before witnessing “the kingdom of God come with power.” This most certainly points to the destruction of the temple at the behest of Christ.\(^{53}\)

In response to the objection that these events, while occurring in the first century, do occur again throughout history either in double fulfillment or a repetitive sequence, Gentry argues that “there is no exegetical warrant for it” and is merely theological conjecture.\(^{54}\)

The New Testament is filled with verses using temporal language demonstrating the nearness of divinely governed events (Matthew 26:64; Acts 2:16; Romans 13:11-12; 16:20; 1 Corinthians 7:26, 29-31; Colossians 3:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:26; Hebrews 10:25, 37; James 5:8-9; 1 Peter 4:5, 7; 1 John 2:17-18).\(^{55}\) In these verses, such phrases and words as “‘soon,’ ‘near,’ ‘at hand,’ ‘at the door,’ ‘present’; ‘the hour has come’; ‘the time is short’; ‘the wrath of God is coming’; ‘the day is approaching’; in ‘just a little while,’”\(^{56}\) demonstrate the nearness of the events in the New Testament. And as Gentry remarks, “How else could the New Testament express nearness more clearly?”\(^{57}\)

If the apostle John employs the same language in Revelation, then why should the hermeneutic shift to a futurist perspective? It pulls the reader away from the original intent and context of John’s letter. If the position is taken that these events are

\(^{53}\) Pate and Gundry, *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, pp. 42–43.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., p. 44.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., pp. 43–44.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., p. 44.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., p. 43.
to be reoccurring in the future, then it requires the belief that “many specific events, things, and personages of Revelation will appear repeatedly”\(^\text{58}\) in history. Will there be successive groupings of the 144,000 or beasts marked out by the same number 666?\(^\text{59}\)

Furthermore, the widely held already/not yet principle among evangelicals cannot be applied to Revelation as a whole, for the work is too complex and contains many global themes that occur simultaneously, which distort the already/not yet perspective that applies more precisely to the kingdom, salvation, new creation, etc.\(^\text{60}\)

The apostle John affirms that the events he is speaking of are to take place soon. In the book of Daniel, the angel told Daniel to seal up the words he was given for later times, while John, who is living in the last hour (1 John 2:18), was commanded not to seal up the prophetical words in his book because the time is near (Revelation 22:10).\(^\text{61}\) The language, historical context, and audience demand that a preterist perspective be applied to understanding and interpreting the prophetical messages of the apostle John.

In understanding the foundational perspective of preterism, the primary theme then of Revelation, and of the Olivet Discourse, is that God is going to soon judge first-century Israel for rejecting and crucifying his anointed Messiah.\(^\text{62}\) Revelation 1:7 contextually points to this judgment in the destruction of Jerusalem and her temple in

\(^{58}\) Ibid., p. 44.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., pp. 44–45.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., p. 44.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., p. 46.
AD 70. Because the Jews rejected its Messiah, God poured out his wrath in judgment by destroying their city and temple (Matthew 21:33-44), thus concluding the “anticipatory old covenant era (John 4:20-23; Heb. 1:1; 12:18-29)” and forever closing down the aged and now obsolete typological sacrificial system (Hebrews 8:13). Ultimately, the ending of the Jewish age in the destruction of Jerusalem frees the Christian faith from Jewish restraints thus reorienting the worship of God (Hebrews 9-10) and effectively universalizing the Christian faith (Matthew 28:10-20; Ephesians 2:12-22).

The central issue among preterist perspectives “is this: What events prophesied in the Bible are as yet unfulfilled.” Partial preterists see that the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 was a parousia, a coming of Christ in judgment on the Jewish nation, “indicating the end of the Jewish age and the fulfillment of a day of the Lord.” Contrary to full preterists, partial preterists believe that the Second Coming of Christ, the Day of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, the rapture of the living, the final judgment, and the end of history are still future events to unfold in God’s redemptive plan.

63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., pp. 46–47.
65 Sproul, The Last Days According to Jesus, p. 158.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid., p. 170.
Hermeneutical Focus in Full Preterism

For the most part, full preterists run parallel to partial preterists from a hermeneutical perspective as it pertains to the “time and nature [spiritual] of fulfillment” of the end-time prophecies. Full preterists, similar to partial preterists, believe that the audience and focus of the book of Revelation and the Olivet Discourse were that of the first-century church. They interpret the imminent statements in the New Testament that say, “some standing here shall not taste death till,” “this generation shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled,” “shortly,” “quickly,” “at hand,” “soon,” and “about to be,” to refer to Christ’s coming (parousia), which was fulfilled in AD 70. And like partial preterists, full preterists understand that the “NT’s use of the ‘last days’ covers the time period between Christ’s first and second comings.”

These are the key elements in the hermeneutical perspective of preterism, which keep it within orthodoxy. However, the division that occurs among preterists, thus ultimately creating a heterodox and orthodox view, is in the timing and the nature of the Second Coming, final judgment, and the resurrection of the living and the dead. The one common link between all of the end-time schools of the Christian faith is that they understand the Second Coming, the resurrection of the living and the dead, and the final judgment to be future events. However, full preterists interpret the texts of Scripture that refer to the immanency of Christ and the end times to mean that “THE

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68 “What is Full Preterism? | fullpreterism.com.”

70 “What is Full Preterism? | fullpreterism.com.”

71 Ibid.
(ONE) parousia . . . [and the] judgment and resurrection of the living and dead and the arrival of the New Creation took place . . . in AD 70.”

They believe that when Christ taught that his kingdom was not of this world and would come upon his return, it would not be “discerned by our physical eyes, because the realm of fulfillment would be “within” (Luke 17:20-21; Luke 21:27-32; John 18:36).” They believe that Christ and the Father have made their home in the church when the New Jerusalem, the heavenly temple, descended upon the earth thus clothing it while it is here (John 14:2-3, 23; 2 Cor. 4:18–5:1-10–6:16; Rev. 21:2ff.). Full preterists shift to a spiritualized (and even figurative) hermeneutic. And in that perspective, full preterists understand that the believer today, while he in is the flesh on the earth, has been raised from the dead (a spiritual resurrection) and “‘the hope of glory’ which is ‘Christ in you’ is now a ‘hope realized’ in the New Covenant age (Cols. 1:27; Prov. 13:12).”

In interpreting the end-time prophesies and the Scriptures pertaining to the kingdom, full preterists emphasize their spiritual nature and fulfillment. This is a major shift in exegesis in that they maintain a literal, physical fulfillment in interpreting the time-frame references in the Olivet Discourse, as partial preterists do, however, they

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
treat the parousia and the events pertaining to it (i.e., the resurrection of the dead and the living) figuratively.\textsuperscript{76}

\textbf{The Fatal Flaw of Full Preterism}

Full preterists hold to the belief that the resurrection of the dead has already taken place in the first century. However, the most severe obstacle for this view is the absence of any documentation or historical record of this momentous event.\textsuperscript{77} And because of that issue, they interpret the “resurrection of the dead and transmutation [reference to the change, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)] of the living [as having taken place] in the region of the spiritual.”\textsuperscript{78}

This understanding departs from the clear teaching of Scripture that the resurrection of the believer’s body will be a physical one. In 1 Corinthians 15:45-54, Paul says that the resurrected body will be like Christ’s who died and was raised in the same body. It will be spiritual in that it will no longer be tainted by sin and subjected to weakness and death. The view of a spiritual resurrection carries the influence of Gnosticism, dualism, and is even what the Jehovah’s Witnesses believe of Christ’s body. The use of the word \textit{spiritual} is not to be understood in an immaterial sense, for if that were the case, are the readers of Scripture to believe that the spiritual food and drink

\textsuperscript{76} Sproul, \textit{The Last Days According to Jesus}, p. 161.


\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
that Moses and the Israelites consumed in the wilderness was immaterial (1 Corinthians 10:1-5)?

The Bible does not say that the resurrected bodies of believers will be spirits; rather, they will be spiritual and a body nonetheless. Christ’s body was material—a physical body. When he appeared to his disciples they were frightened for they thought they had seen a spirit (Luke 24:37). But Christ said to them, demonstrating otherwise, “a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (24:38).

If the resurrection was indeed a spiritual one, it was truly unfortunate then, as R. C. Sproul points out, “that the apostle failed to alert the Corinthians—and us, by extension—that he was speaking of a . . . spiritual resurrection. . . . Paul so clearly conjoins the resurrection of our bodies with the resurrection of Christ’s body,”79 for he teaches that Christ is the resurrected of the first fruits of all who will be raised; they will be patterned after the resurrection of Christ.80 The full preterists view of the resurrection does not cohere with New Testament teaching, and it is indeed a fatal flaw for the full preterists.

Conclusion

The key points of division between partial and full preterists are in their perspectives on Christ’s return (his Parousia), the general judgment, and general resurrection. Full preterists believe that all the prophetical statements related to the

79 Ibid., p. 162.

80 Ibid.
end times have been fulfilled in the first century, which clearly they have not. The points of contention are so crucial that those who fall inline with full (hyper) preterism are considered to be “outside the realm of Christian orthodoxy,”⁸¹ and are “clearly heretical.”⁸² While full preterists agree that these views depart from creedal orthodoxy, they deny that they depart from biblical orthodoxy.⁸³ However, even conservative scholars will not interact with full preterism or propose it as a biblical approach to eschatology.⁸⁴ For this reason, those who oppose preterism must not lump all preterists together—one view is biblical, and the other is not (hence another motive behind the works of R. C. Sproul, Kenneth L. Gentry, and others in clearly defining and defending the conservative view of it). Though the number of preterist interpreters is growing,⁸⁵ the view still receives criticism from within the faith that discredits preterism as a biblically viable option in eschatology. Unfortunately, it is due to misrepresentation and

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⁸³ Sproul, The Last Days According to Jesus, p. 159.

⁸⁴ It is interesting to observe that many eschatological works/commentaries do not even elaborate on the full/hyper view of preterism. They only present or address and interact with those of the conservative partial/orthodox preterist perspective (Beale, The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text (New International Greek Testament Com (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, pp. 44-45; Benware, Understanding End Times Prophecy p. 157; Gregg, Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary, p. 38; Hanegraaff, The Apocalypse Code, he only mentions it in his glossary, p. 275; Mounce, The Book of Revelation, pp. 26-27; Sproul, The Last Days According to Jesus, pp. 154-155, he and Kenneth L. Gentry, as he makes reference to as well on these pages, spend their time engaging against full preterist advocates).

a lumping together of those who hold to a preterist view. However, in spite of the criticism, as already noted, more people in conservative scholarship are adopting preterism as a biblically legitimate approach to eschatology.

For partial preterism to continue gaining acceptance in conservative Christianity, observers and critics, particularly from the other schools of thought, need to divorce partial preterism from the full preterist view. Serious students of Scripture should not dismiss the works of those in the partial preterist camp because of the heretical-stigma attached to preterism as a whole and study it for themselves. Not all views are right. Maybe it is more ideal to take an eclectic approach as Greg Beale does in his Revelation commentary, for the apostle John could possibly be a preterist, historian, futurist, and an idealist without contradiction. After all, he was the one who was inspired by God to write down what he observed in order to preserve for the Faith the promises of God to come in the consummation leading to final salvation and judgment.

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86 Gentry makes the observation that even in the aspect of presenting an early date for the book of Revelation, advocates from the other schools of thought tend to discredit preterists by failing “to recognize a critical distinction between preterists of radical, naturalistic liberalism and those of evangelical, supernaturalistic orthodoxy.” Gentry, Before Jerusalem Fell, pp. 25–26.


88 Mounce, The Book of Revelation, p. 29.
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