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FULFILLED! *Magazine*

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF FULFILLED PROPHECY AND LIFE IN CHRIST

The following issue is rated:



The following issue contains:

- **Strong language**
- **Graphic doctrine**
- **Heretical content**



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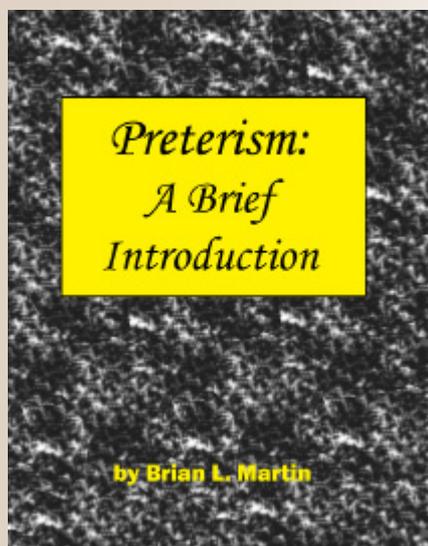


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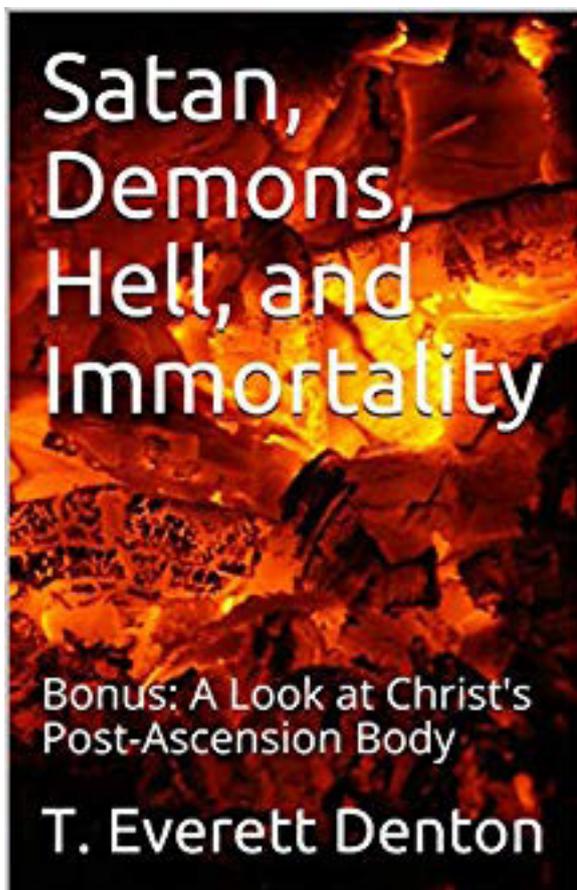
- Literal vs. Spiritual Fulfillment
- Audience Relevance
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Written by Brian L. Martin and distributed by Tony Denton, this booklet is priced for ordering in bulk and giving away copies to friends and family.

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(Please note that this booklet is currently not available from FCG.)

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If a truly Berean—or open-minded person (cf. Acts 17:11) spends the time necessary to execute an exhaustive study of biblical eschatology (or end times / last days), he/she will discover that it affects numerous topics which he/she may or may not have ever considered it affecting, and this happened to me several years ago.

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Editor's Note...

THIS ISSUE HAS BEEN the most difficult issue to produce since we started publishing nearly fifteen years ago. For over a year I have been trying to gain a better understanding of the CBV and IBV resurrection positions—what do they believe and why do they differ? The impetus behind my investigation was the claim by several IBV proponents that CBV distorts the gospel and is heretical. One of the obstacles to gaining a true understanding of these views is that there is no monolithic IBV or CBV view; there are many flavors of each. Thus, while some CBV proponents (or IBV for that matter) may hold to some heretical views, it wouldn't seem fair to label everyone who falls under one of those broad umbrellas as a heretic.

Further complicating matters is the amount of doctrinal debate within the preterist community that takes place online in social media. I currently do not participate in those platforms, and even if I did I simply don't have the time to chase down everyone's beliefs or verify every accusation leveled at one view by the other.

The last few months were particularly intense as FCG's board of directors wrestled with these topics and the stand that FCG should take. Obviously we do not want to be complicit in promulgating heresy. On the other hand, we don't want to promulgate unconfirmed charges of heresy. I personally became so conflicted over the matter that I had decided to cease the publication of *Fulfilled!* Magazine. The board, however, felt that the magazine was a valuable resource for the preterist community and thus still needed. So we have agreed to continue publishing, and presenting differing views, while emphasizing that

readers must be Bereans—you must study these things for yourself, just as you must work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. As I have often said in these pages, we are not telling you what to think, but giving you something to think about.

In this issue I asked several leading preterists from different resurrection views to contribute articles on how we define/determine heresy. I would recommend that you read their articles to refresh your mind regarding the controversies within preterism—and how we deal with them—prior to reading my articles, which follow. I am always reticent to write articles for the magazine, preferring rather to give the space to those more academically and theologically qualified than me. But due to the growing schisms in preterism, and FCG's struggles with those issues, I felt it necessary to say a few words.

Our western, scientific mindset (which represents the majority of our readers) wants to understand how everything works. We want to put things in a laboratory and analyze, study, and dissect until we understand how they work. This carries over to our approach to doctrine as well; we want to understand exactly what the death of Adam was and how does that apply to me? How exactly was Christ raised from the dead, and how does that apply to me? And so we should, for we are admonished to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

My concern with this pursuit of biblical knowledge and correct doctrine—which is certainly needed—is that we become prey to becoming imbalanced in our spiritual lives. Studying and rightly dividing the Word of Truth is something to which we

I personally became so conflicted over the matter that I had decided to cease publication of *Fulfilled!* Magazine.

apply ourselves—our time and our minds. Human nature being what it is, we have a proclivity to then become prideful in what we have discovered and the knowledge we have gained. The Pharisees were very knowledgeable about the Word, but they had become unteachable.

Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 13 that if he could understand all mysteries and all knowledge, yet didn't have love, he was nothing. Nothing. If I could understand the death of Adam, the resurrection life of Christ, and how that applies to all of us, yet I don't have love, I am nothing. Paul was intimately aware of the dangers of gaining great theological knowledge and understanding mysteries:

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. (2 Cor 12:7)

I'm not advocating that God give us all thorns in the flesh. But if we don't take pains ourselves to maintain a proper balance in our pursuit of doctrine, God may have to provide us with a thorn. How do we maintain that balance? Here's what works for me: As much as I'm intrigued by understanding the *how* of the death of Adam and life in Christ, I am continually humbled by the *why*.

Why did God choose to help the seed of Abraham, but not the angels (Heb 2:16)? Certainly not because mankind deserved it.

Why did God, when we were yet sinners, give His Son to die for us (Rom 5:8)? Again, not because we deserved it.

Why did God, when I was dead in trespasses and sin, make me alive (Eph 2:1)? Not because I deserved it.

Why do most people, when they hear "O Holy Night," hear a pretty Christmas song, whereas I understand that that night was holy and divine because our dear savior—my savior—was born? Why are most people seemingly *not* "in sin and ever pining," and are ready to move on to jingle bells, while I am ready to fall on

my knees? Certainly not because of anything I have done or accomplished; nor because of any doctrinal truth I have mastered. It is solely by the grace of God that I am spiritually alive. I had absolutely nothing to do with it. Nothing. It is Christ who lives in me! *Why* me?

Doctrine, on the other hand, I do participate in by applying my mind and time. Hence the danger of being puffed up—knowledge puffs up but love builds up (1 Cor 8:1). The *how* of the resurrection is a matter of the mind, whereas the *why* of resurrection is a matter of the heart. And if we are truly balanced, the more deeply we understand the *how*, the greater we will be awestruck and humbled by the *why*.

*How could I boast of anything, I've ever seen or done?
How could I dare to claim as mine, the victories God
has won?*

*Where would I be had God not led me gently to this place?
I'm here to say I'm nothing but a sinner saved by grace!*

(from *A Sinner Saved by Grace*, by Bill and Gloria Gaither)

We all heartily agree that we are sinners saved by grace, but has that become cliché? You see, grace is only amazing to the degree that you see yourself as a wretch. The greater the realization of your wretchedness, the more amazing grace becomes. I doubt the Pharisees had any concept of grace, because they didn't see themselves as wretched. They didn't perceive their need grace because they were born into, and studied their way into, God's favor.

Yes, I want to understand the *how* of resurrection—desperately. But the more I investigate it, the more overwhelmed I become by the *why*. And as we all investigate this and other complex doctrines, we will surely have times of disagreement. But the more of a wretch I see myself, the less inclined I am to claim that I'm a better wretch than you.

Blessings,

Brian

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Perspectives

When is Heresy Dangerous?

by David Curtis

AS PRETERISTS, WE ARE often called heretics by those holding a futuristic view of eschatology. According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, a basic definition of heresy is "adherence to a religious opinion contrary to church dogma." A second definition is "dissent or deviation from a dominant theory, opinion, or practice." Being called a heretic, therefore, is not necessarily a bad thing. These definitions identify two key elements: a dominant position and a contrary position. With regards to religion, any belief or practice that goes against the official position of the church is considered heretical. Obviously, the gauge for "heretical" teaching varies according to the established orthodoxy of the day. Any group or individual that differs from another group can technically be called heretical. Today the dominant position of the church is futurism. Futurism is a position that was biblically orthodox during the transition period between the Cross and the Second Coming when there were prophecies yet to be fulfilled. But when all prophecies were accomplished in AD 70, the futurist position became an unbiblical doctrine, even though it is still a majority held view.

Although preterists may be called heretical by the majority of the church, we are in line with what our Lord taught about His coming. We take seriously the time statements that our Lord gave about that event. Because the majority of the church calls us heretics, we tend to circle the wagons around eschatology. Unfortunately, this has caused us to ignore other more essential doctrines and has too often led us to accept anyone simply because he holds a past view of the Second Coming. I think that the biggest problem within the Preterist community is that we have elevated eschatology above all other doctrines. Notice Peter's warning:

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. (2 Peter 2:1 ESV)

Here the heresy is denial of the teachings of Yeshua, rather than the teachings of the church. Biblical heresy, then, is the denying of the doctrines God has given in his Word. I think we need to be careful that the cross of Christ doesn't take second place to the destruction of Jerusalem. We need to guard the Gospel above eschatology.

Obviously, not every disagreement in the church is heresy.

Having a different opinion is not wrong, but when the opinion is in defiance of clear biblical teaching, it becomes heretical. I believe there are several heretical doctrines that have gathered under the umbrella of Preterism. They are:

(1) **Universalism.** This is the teaching that God, through the atonement of Yeshua, will ultimately bring reconciliation between Himself and all people throughout history. This reconciliation will occur regardless of whether during their lifetime they have trusted in or rejected Yeshua as Savior.

Former Mars Hill pastor, Rob Bell, ignited a theological controversy over Universalism with his book, *Love Wins*. The gist of Bell's book is that every sinner, either in this life or in the next, will turn to God and realize that he has already been reconciled to God. In the end, love wins.

The basic presupposition of Universalism, then, is that because God's nature is love, He loves everybody. I see Universalism as the logical outcome of Arminianism. If God loves everyone, then it only makes sense that He will save everyone. In an attempt to prove their contention that "all" will be saved, Universalists go through the Scriptures to pull out all of the verses that mention "all" and "world."

I believe that Universalism is an attack on the Gospel itself. Over and over the Bible calls upon man to "believe on the Lord Yeshua the Christ" for salvation. But Universalism says, "You don't need to believe in Yeshua; all will be saved."

Believers, just because someone holds the correct doctrine of eschatology (e.g. that the Lord returned in AD 70) does not automatically make him our brother. Much more important than the Doctrine of Eschatology is the Doctrine of Soteriology, which deals with how a person is saved. The Bible clearly teaches that we are saved by faith.

(2) **Israel Only (IO).** This is another doctrinal error that gathers under the umbrella of Preterism. Those who hold this false teaching claim that the term "Gentiles" refers ONLY to the ten northern tribes of Israel, and thus the Bible is written solely and entirely to national Israel. There is nothing in the Bible for you and me; it is all about Israel. Advocates of this view also believe that "everything" ended in AD 70—everything. This includes salvation, sin, spiritual death, the Church, and the Law. If you believe that this is true, why would you even bother with the Bible? Once you learned that none of it applied to you, including salvation, why wouldn't you just throw out your Bible and go on with your miserable life? I don't say that to be mean, but if you believe in the unbiblical teachings of the IO view, then life is

... we tend to circle the wagons around eschatology.

Orthodoxy and Heresy

David Curtis

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without Yahweh and without hope. And that is a miserable life.

I believe that Yahweh has always had a plan for Gentiles. I believe that Yahweh loves Gentiles and that He saves them, and I believe that the Bible is the Word of the Living God and is relevant to us today.

Now the IO people are right when they say that the term “nations” (or “Gentiles”) is used of the northern kingdom of Israel. But let me make this clear—the northern kingdom of Israel is included in the term “nations/Gentiles” but it does not exhaust its definition. The Greek term *ethnos* can be used of the ten Northern tribes, which at times are called “goy” (Hebrew) or “*ethnos*” (Greek). But these terms are not exclusive to the Northern kingdom of Israel. For example:

... saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles.” (Mark 10:33 ESV)

Here *Gentiles/ethnos* is not referring to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, but to the Romans who were non-Israelites.

... or truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Yeshua, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel (Acts 4:27 ESV)

Here the Gentiles are a distinct group from Israel. Here “*ethnos*” is non-Israelites.

But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.” (Acts 9:15 ESV)

Paul was to take the Gospel to the “nations” and to the children of Israel. We see, then, that the term “nations” is not restricted to the nation of Israel, but, depending upon its context, it may refer to the dispersed ten Northern tribes, to non-Israelites, or to everybody. Because its meaning must be determined by its context, we must be diligent to do our homework.

It seems clear, then, that the body of Christ is made up of the regathered twelve tribes of Israel and many non-Israelites who have been called of Yahweh and have trusted in Christ. The term “Gentiles” is far more expansive than the IO people claim.

Those who hold to the IO false doctrine are cessationists—they believe “everything” ended in AD 70. They take the principle of “audience relevance” to such an extreme place that none of the Bible even applies to us today. They claim

that the Bible is written solely and entirely to national Israel. They accuse us of wrongly restricting audience relevance to only those texts involving time statements. What they mean by that is that all biblical texts, regardless whether or not they are time statements, must be viewed as having relevance to that first-century audience only. They have no relevance to us today.

According to IO, then, since none of the Bible was written to us, none of it applies to us. This view could not be more wrong! IO advocates teach that all Scripture is about the people of Israel and their sins, their salvation, and their Messiah. These folks go so far as to say that sin was done away with in AD 70. In other words, we don’t sin today, so we don’t need salvation.

Paul taught that the Gentiles in the Church shared in the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant with Israel:

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ. (Gal 3:16 ESV)

The promises were to one Seed, who was Christ. Yeshua is the seed of Abraham:

And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise. (Gal 3:29 ESV)

Is the “you” here limited to those in Galatia in the first century? No, it is not! If you by faith belong to Christ, you are Abraham’s seed and an heir according to the promise. It is not a

matter of whose blood you have in your veins but rather is a matter of whose faith you have in your heart.

The IO doctrine is an attack on the Gospel because its proponents do not see the Gospel as relevant today. They would say that the Gospel is not for us; it was only for Israel.

(3) **Baptismal Regeneration.** This is another doctrinal error that gathers under the umbrella of Preterism. Baptismal Regeneration means that the act of water baptism conducted by a pastor or priest contains regenerative or life-giving power.

Roman Catholicism, one of the largest religious groups in the world today, teaches that unless you are water baptized, you cannot be saved. The other prominent group that teaches a similar heresy is the Church of Christ, which boldly claims that water baptism is essential to salvation.

Within the Preterist camp, there are many who are members of the Church of Christ. While it is certainly commendable that they have embraced the ...continued on page 8

... just because someone holds the correct doctrine of eschatology (e.g. that the Lord returned in AD 70) does not automatically make him our brother.

When is Heresy Dangerous?

by David Curtis

...continued from page 7

eschatological truths of Preterism, and have done much to promote those truths, they unfortunately retain an incorrect soteriology by teaching that the ritual of water baptism is necessary for salvation.

Jack Cottrell, in his book, *Baptism: A Biblical Study* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1989, p. 84.) represents the denominational view of the “Churches of Christ” and “Christian Churches.” He writes:

“Every Christian has come within the scope of this sin-destroying force of the death of Christ; we have tapped into its lethal power. When did we do this? In our baptism. There is absolutely no indication that this union with Christ in His death happened as soon as we believed or repented. We did not believe into His death; we did not repent into His death. Paul explicitly says we ‘have been baptized into His death’ (v. 3)” (p. 84).

The Churches of Christ clearly teach that it is in the act of water baptism that a person is born again, rather than solely by the sovereign act of God by the Holy Spirit. Notice what John states concerning his purpose for writing the Fourth Gospel:

... but these are written so that you may believe that Yeshua is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:31 ESV)

This tells us that the reason for the writing of the Gospel of John is so that people will believe that Yeshua is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, they will have eternal life. John has a lot to say about belief, but he says nothing about water baptism. Now think with me. John wrote his Gospel specifically to bring people to eternal life. Yet in the Gospel of John, “baptism” is never mentioned. If baptism is necessary for salvation, John messed up. But the fact that John did not mention baptism speaks volumes. He did not mention it, because it is not necessary for salvation. Sadly, the idea of salvation by faith alone is an abomination to the Churches of Christ.

In talking to several Church of Christ ministers, I have learned that they believe that one must be baptized “for the remission of sins.” They falsely contend that if someone is baptized as an act of obedience only, or as a picture of his death and resurrection in Christ, and not for “the remission of sins,” he is not saved. The bottom line is that unless someone belongs to the Churches of Christ, he is not and cannot be saved.

While we can agree on eschatology with Preterists who are also Universalists, or with those who are proponents of the Israel Only view, or those who are teachers of Baptismal Regeneration, we cannot and must not tolerate their

unbiblical views of the Gospel. One’s understanding of the cross of Christ and all that it accomplished is way more important than his views on eschatology. I think that Paul’s warning to the Roman believers is applicable to us today:

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. (Rom 16:17-18 ESV)

“**Contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught**”—the noun “doctrine” is the Greek word *didache*. It is translated correctly here as “doctrine.” The second key word is the verb, “*have been taught*.” It is in the same family of words from which we get the term “disciple.” The implication is that we learn these particular doctrines as disciples. If Paul is dealing with the Judaizers, he could be talking about the “doctrines of grace,” that is, salvation by grace alone.

How are they to respond to those who are causing division and are stumbling blocks? Paul says they are to “avoid them”—the words “avoid them” are from the Greek word *ekklino* which means “to turn aside, to shun.” It is in the present imperative: “keep on shunning.”

Paul’s words to the Galatians are instructive here:

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. (Gal 1:8-9 ESV)

If we do not have a biblical view of the Gospel, then we are not giving the right message to the world. And the wrong message kills. For example, if a Pharmacist gives incorrect instructions to his clients as to how to take the medicine that they have been prescribed or if he gives them the wrong medicine, it doesn’t make any difference how sincere he or his clients are. His errors will cause devastating effects.

Those who teach that for one to be saved, one must be baptized in water are advocating a doctrine that is really similar to what the false teachers in Galatia were promoting. They are merely substituting water baptism for circumcision.

There are many Preterists who have elevated eschatology to prime importance. But Preterism is only one of many eschatological views. It is not a denomination, although it seems to have become that. It has become a “denomination” where the only doctrine that matters is eschatology. It is dangerous to rally around eschatology to the exclusion of soteriology. We must always hold the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone as prominent. We cannot forsake truth for unity. †

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Being Bereans:

Acts 17:11-12

The account of Paul's reception at Berea is the classical description of a more well-disposed and open-minded (RSV more noble) response by the Jews to the gospel. They were zealous to hear what Paul had to say, and so they met with him daily (and not merely on the sabbath). Nor did they accept what he said thoughtlessly and uncritically, but they themselves examined the Scriptures to see whether the case which Paul developed from them (as in 17:2f.) was sound. Here was no mere emotional response to the gospel, but one based on intellectual conviction. The result was that a considerable number believed, both Jews and also well-to-do Greek men and women; the order of the words suggests that the women are particularly prominent in the new Christian group.

Marshall, I. H. (1980). Acts: an introduction and commentary (Vol. 5, pp. 296–297). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Thank You!

We appreciate your prayers and financial support that keep this ministry going.

Perspectives

Why Can't Both Views Be Right?

by Edward E. Stevens

THE TITLE ASKS WHY the two preterist views, the *Collective Body View* (CBV) and the *Individual Body View* (IBV), cannot both be right. While totally agreeing on the first-century TIME of fulfillment, they radically disagree on the NATURE of fulfillment. And they part ways over the *kind of death* that Adam died after eating the forbidden fruit (Gen 2:17). While that may not seem like a critical difference, it has far-reaching implications for the kind of death Jesus had to die in order to atone for our sins.

We discussed the *Death of Adam* topic in great detail in my article in the previous issue of this magazine. That would be worth reading if you have not already done so. Additionally, both Don Preston and I are presently engaged in a written debate which is focused on this issue, and each of us has written a book on the subject. (See the links at the bottom of this article.)

The CBV claims that the only kind of death that was both threatened and carried out against Adam on the day he sinned was *spiritual death*, while the IBV claims it was *comprehensive death* (including physical, spiritual, and eternal death in the afterlife). Thus, each view automatically excludes the other. If either view is right, then the other view is automatically wrong. *Both views cannot be right*. Nor is there any viable hybrid view. The CBV simply will not work as a theological system if physical death in any sense is included in the Death of Adam. Their system requires *spiritual-only death* throughout the whole system in order for it to work.

So, the entire debate between the CBV and IBV can be reduced to determining what kind of death was threatened and carried out against Adam on the day he ate the forbidden fruit. Was it *spiritual-only* (CBV), or did it include *physical death* in some sense (IBV)?

In my “Death of Adam” article in the previous issue we saw that the threatened death did include *physical death*, and was carried out on that very day in the garden when God killed an innocent animal and clothed Adam and Eve with its skin (Gen 3:21). That animal sacrifice began the whole substitutionary sacrificial system, which pointed straight to the substitutionary *physical death of Jesus on the Cross*. This means that the CBV has wrongly identified the Death of Adam as being *spiritual-only*.

Does ‘Wrong’ Mean ‘Heretical’?

Someone might object at this point, “Just because one of the two views is wrong about the Death of Adam does not necessarily mean that it is heretical.” Very true. There is indeed a big difference between being wrong on a **non-essential** doctrine, which is not heretical, versus being wrong on an **essential** of the Faith, which is heretical.

So, we must go further and ask: Which issues are essential,

which ones are not, and how do we know the difference? On what basis do we decide whether or not something is essential? We cannot simply say that Scripture is our standard, since all of us claim to derive our doctrines from Scripture.

Additionally, just as not all futurist views of eschatology are correct on the *essential doctrines of the Faith*, neither are all preterist views orthodox. For instance, there are many full preterists who are Universalist, Unitarian, Christadelphian, or Israel-Only (all of which are heretical on essential issues). So, being a full preterist obviously does not automatically make one completely orthodox—we still have to examine their *primary* root level doctrines to see what they believe about the essentials of the Faith.

Furthermore, even though both views (CBV and IBV) are based on Scripture, they are diametrically opposed to each other due to their *interpretations* of Scripture. And since Scripture cannot contradict itself, we must admit that *both interpretations cannot be right*. At least one of the two has to be wrong. The conflict is not coming from Scripture itself, but rather from our *interpretations* of Scripture. And our differing interpretations result from the different *hermeneutical methods* we use, as well as the *presuppositions* with which we begin. So, we need to examine all of those things.

We are certainly not the first ones to face this challenge. Five hundred years ago, the Reformers faced a similar conflict between their interpretations of Scripture and those of the Roman Catholic Church. Out of that struggle came several very helpful interpretative principles, two of which we will mention here: (1) *Analogia Scriptura*: comparing Scripture with Scripture so that Scripture interprets itself; and (2) *Analogia Fidei*: comparing every doctrine with the overall plan of redemption to make sure it is in harmony with the one true system of Faith which was “*once for all delivered to the saints*” (Jude 3).

Many of us are fairly proficient at comparing Scripture with Scripture, but perhaps not so adept at proving that our interpretations are in sync with the overall plan of redemption. So, we will begin with the *Analogia Fidei*. Then we will define what the biblical system of faith is, and compare both preterist views of the Death of Adam to that system to determine which view harmonizes with it.

How Do We Test for Orthodoxy?

All of us are tempted to think that we are free to develop our own *private interpretations* of Scripture, even though we know that each biblical text can only have one correct originally intended meaning. We justify ourselves by quoting Paul: “*One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully*

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convinced in his own mind” (Rom 14:5; cf. 1 John 2:27, 3:21). We conveniently forget that Paul was talking about freedom on *secondary* issues—NOT about *primary* issues (*essentials* of the faith). There is no freedom for private interpretations on essential issues (2 Pet 1:20-21). Only those interpretations which are in harmony with the entire tenor of Scripture and the plan of redemption are orthodox.

Thus, even though all Christian doctrines are supposedly derived from Scripture, some of them were developed by twisting Scripture, using improper hermeneutical methods, or starting with incorrect presuppositions. So, we need to compare not only our *doctrines* with the Plan of Redemption, but also our *presuppositions* which lay at the foundation of our theological systems. If those basic presuppositions are not in harmony with the Plan of Redemption, then our entire system will be distorted.

We see this very thing happening when some preterists start with a wrong view of the Death of Adam, and end up misinterpreting the story of redemption. The Death of Adam is one of those issues which lay at the very foundation of our theological systems. It is a *primary* and *essential* issue. How we interpret the Death of Adam will determine how we explain the story of redemption.

Therefore, the standard by which we test for orthodoxy must always be “Scripture as it is *rightly interpreted*.” And the hermeneutic used to interpret Scripture must include not only grammatical, historical, and contextual considerations (audience relevance), but also comparisons with other related Scriptures (*Analogia Scriptura*) and with the overall *plan of redemption* as it is revealed throughout the Bible (*Analogia Fidei*).

What Is ‘The Faith’ and Its Essential Doctrines?

What is that Plan of Redemption with which all of our doctrines must agree? It may be summarized by three words: *Creation*, *Fall*, and *Restoration*. The Plan of Redemption was **planned** before the creation of the world, **revealed** throughout the Old Testament, and **fulfilled** by the Cross of Christ.

Apostle Paul tells us that God had a plan “*predestined before the ages*” (1 Cor 2:7) to “*sum up all things in the heavens and the earth in Christ*” (Eph 1:10). But the details of that plan were shrouded in mystery and “kept secret for long ages past” so that evil men and angels could not pre-empt it (1 Cor 2:7-10; Matt 13:35; Acts 13:27). That plan was gradually revealed throughout the Old Testament in types and shadows until the “fullness of time” arrived and Christ was “once for all” “manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Rom 16:25-26; 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 1:9; Heb 9:26; see also John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 3:24; Rom 1:1-4, 16:25-26; Eph

1:9-10, 3:9-10, Col 1:26; 2 Tim 1:10-11; Titus 1:1-3; 1 Peter 1:10-12).

The first three chapters of the Bible (Gen 1-3) record the Creation of all things, the Fall of Adam, and the First Promise of Redemption (Gen 3:15; 3:21). The remainder of the Bible reveals how sin and death were provisionally covered in the *sacrificial system*, but not fully and finally overcome until the substitutionary physical death and resurrection of Jesus.

At the Fall of Adam, God revealed that a seed of Eve would crush the Serpent’s head and redeem them from the consequences of their sin (Gen 3:15). The story line throughout the remainder of the Bible is inseparably linked with the unfolding and fulfilling of that ancient promise. Jesus was that “seed of Eve” (kinsman-redeemer) who came to save us. And the New Testament reveals exactly how he accomplished that redemption.

As a youth in the Baptist church, I will never forget my Bible Class teachers describing the Plan of Redemption as “the *scarlet thread*.” That idea resonated deep in my soul sixty years ago, and it blesses my heart even more today. It made the whole Bible come alive with purpose and meaning.

Woven throughout the fabric of the biblical narrative is a *scarlet thread* (the sacrificial system) which pointed directly to Jesus who would shed His physical blood to redeem us from the deadly consequences of our sin. That *scarlet thread* is the overall unifying theme of God’s revelation to man. It is the heart of the Gospel—without which the gospel would not be good news.

Anytime we mention the *scarlet thread*, we are obviously referring to real physical blood that was shed in the animal sacrificial system—NOT “spiritual blood,” or symbolic blood, or figurative blood (as the CBV advocates teach). Rather, the Old Testament sacrificial system was a *physical blood* sacrificial system which provided provisional forgiveness until Jesus came to offer His *physical blood* for our full and final atonement (Heb 9:22).

You may wonder why I am placing such a strong emphasis on the *physicality of the sacrificial system*. It is because the CBV *spiritualizes the blood* of Christ’s substitutionary death on the Cross. That concept may seem harmless at first sight, but it has far-reaching implications for the Plan of Redemption and our atonement. So, we need to take a very careful look at the Death of Adam to see how it is inseparably related to the Plan of Redemption.

Both Views Claim the Death of Adam Is Essential

Anything that is essential to salvation is part of the Plan of Redemption. *Forgiveness* of sins is what redemption is all about. Thus, forgiveness is not a secondary issue. It is the primary issue of all issues. Nothing is more *essential* to

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Why Can't Both Views Be Right?

by Ed Stevens

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the gospel than that! And forgiveness of sins requires the shedding of **physical blood** (“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” Heb 9:22).

Nowhere in the Bible is it even remotely hinted that we can be forgiven by a *spiritual-only* death of Christ or by the shedding of **spiritual-only blood**. The entire substitutionary sacrificial system (the *scarlet thread*) which pointed to Christ was comprised solely of *physical death* and *physical blood*—there was not a drop of *spiritual blood* anywhere in the animal sacrificial system. So, it ought to raise red flags when we see the CBV claiming that we have been saved (forgiven) by a *spiritual-only* substitutionary death of Christ and by his *spiritual-only* blood.

And we need to remember that the CBV bases its doctrine of the *spiritual-only* Substitutionary Death of Christ upon its presupposition that the Death of Adam was *spiritual-only*. They claim that the *only* kind of death that was threatened against Adam and actually carried out on the day Adam sinned was *spiritual death*. Preston admits that an animal died that day (Gen 3:21), but he denies that the animal death had anything to do with a substitutionary sacrificial death on behalf of Adam and Eve. Thus, he claims that there was NO physical death of Adam in any sense (not even substitutionary) “on the very day Adam sinned.” Therefore, in his view, the *ONLY* kind of death Jesus needed to die in order to overcome the *spiritual-only* Death of Adam was *spiritual death*. Do you see the error of that? **It eliminates the physical death of Jesus from his substitutionary death.**

Now we see why both views claim that the Death of Adam is a primary issue of the Faith. . For instance, in the first twenty pages of his book, *We Shall Meet Him in the Air* (WSMHA hereafter), Preston emphasizes the point that our *eschatology* (last things) cannot stand unless it is built on a solid biblical *protology* (first things), and that if our *first things* (our views on the Death of Adam) are “wrong,” then our *last things* (our eschatological views) will be “misguided.” Thus, we must establish our protology first, before constructing our eschatology. *First things first!*

And Preston does not leave himself any wiggle room on this. On page 2 of WSMHA he states: “Examining the Presuppositions: The *first* thing we want to take a look at is the *basic presupposition* that lies behind the traditional interpretation of Thessalonians.” He launches his attack on the futurist view by “examining their presuppositions *first*.” On page 3 he introduces four preliminary “facts” which he claims are “*critical* to understanding and interpreting 1 Thessalonians 4,” and states that a failure to honor these “facts” is a departure “from the *proper foundation* for Biblical interpretation.” His first “fact” (p. 4ff) is that “the death of Adam, which is the focus of Christ’s end time resurrection work, has nothing to do with biological death, but with the

loss of spiritual fellowship with God.”

He continues by claiming that if we *wrongly identify* the Death of Adam, we will automatically **mis-interpret** the story of redemption, *wrongly construct* our eschatological views, and *wrongly identify* the nature of the resurrection in the whole New Testament (WSMHA, pp. 4, 20). He admits that “the implications of this study are **profound**.” Indeed they are! That is why we so carefully examined his *spiritual-only* Death of Adam view in our article in the previous issue.

Preston claims that if we disagree with his “*spiritual-only*” Death of Adam view, we will **mis-interpret the plan of redemption** (i.e., the gospel, forgiveness of sins). In net effect, he is saying that his interpretation of the Plan of Redemption is the only correct one, and that everyone else who takes a different view of the Death of Adam is *distorting the gospel* (cf. Gal 1:6-9). Let that sink in for a moment.

However, if the CBV is wrong about the *spiritual-only* Death of Adam, then *they are the ones who are mis-interpreting the plan of redemption*. And since the plan of redemption (forgiveness of sins) is an essential issue, it means that the CBV is in error on one of the primary doctrines of the Faith. And that constitutes heresy.

So, how do we determine whether either of the two views is wrong in regard to the essentials of the Faith? Consider the following implications of the CBV view:

- All orthodox Christian theologians agree that the **substitutionary death** of Jesus for our forgiveness and atonement was for the purpose of *overcoming the death* that was threatened and carried out against Adam on the day he sinned.
- The CBV teaches that the death that was threatened and carried out against Adam on the day he sinned was **spiritual-only**, and did not include physical death in any sense (not even the substitutionary physical death of a sacrificial animal).
- That automatically means that the **substitutionary death** of Jesus for our forgiveness and atonement, which *overcame* the *spiritual-only* Death of Adam, was not his physical death, but rather his **spiritual-only death**.
- And if the death that was threatened against Adam did not include physical death in any sense (not even sacrificially), then neither did the **substitutionary death** of Jesus for our forgiveness and atonement include physical death in any sense.

But that fatally contradicts Hebrews 9:22 which unambiguously and unequivocally states that “*without the shedding of [Christ’s physical] blood there is no forgiveness*.” This verse absolutely demands that Jesus had to shed his *physical blood* for our forgiveness, and that His physical

death was included in His **substitutionary death** for our atonement. And since the **substitutionary death** of Christ included physical death, it automatically means that the Death of Adam *had to include physical death as well*. Thus, Hebrews 9:22 utterly demolishes the CBV doctrines of a **spiritual-only** Death of Adam and a **spiritual-only substitutionary death** of Christ.

The CBV tries to avoid this dilemma by saying that the word “blood” in Hebrews 9:22 refers to “spiritual blood,” not literal, liquid, physical, blood. But that tramples underfoot the precious *physical blood* of Jesus. And when something reflects adversely against the person, physical body, or physical blood of Christ, it is considered blasphemy.

Furthermore, we need to remember that forgiveness of sins *always* came through the shedding of physical blood (Heb 9:22). That idea was not invented by Jesus and the New Testament writers. It was put into place at the very beginning of human history. As Gulley pointed out, “*As soon as there was sin, there was a sacrifice.*”

The very first sin of Adam and Eve was covered by the shedding of sacrificial blood (Gen 3:21). After confessing their sin to God, He promised a descendant of the woman to crush the Serpent’s head (Gen 3:15). In faith of that promise of a future offspring, Adam named his wife Eve (Life). And because Adam and Eve believed that promise of a coming redeemer, God slayed an innocent animal on their behalf and clothed them with its skin (Gen 3:21). They “died with” that sacrificial animal and “put on” its skin. That was the first sacrifice and shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sin. God instituted the sacrificial system right there in the Garden on the very day Adam sinned.

Thus began the *scarlet thread* story of redemption that runs throughout the Bible from Adam to Christ. Even the very first sin of Adam was covered by the shedding of physical sacrificial blood (Gen 3:21; Heb 9:22). God did not wait hundreds or thousands of years to cover the sins of his people. And that physical blood sacrificial system pointed straight to Jesus who would likewise shed His own physical blood once for all to fully and finally cover our sins.

Conclusion

We noted at the beginning that both views (CBV and IBV) cannot be right because each view is diametrically opposed to the other in regard to the Death of Adam. The CBV cannot include physical death in any sense (not even substitutionary) in the death that was threatened and carried out against Adam on the day he sinned. They claim that the threatened death was spiritual-only.

However, we explained that an animal did die on behalf of Adam on that very day, thus showing that physical death was indeed included in the death that was threatened and executed against Adam. Thus, we have seen that the CBV is wrong about the Death of Adam. But being wrong about something does not necessarily make it *heretical*. So, we went further to show that there are *primary* (essential) and *secondary* (non-essential)

issues and, while there is freedom to differ on secondary issues, the Bible does not allow such freedom on primary issues.

We mentioned the Plan of Redemption (the *Scarlet Thread*, the Gospel) and how it was portrayed throughout the Old Testament in the *physical animal sacrifices* which pointed unmistakably to Christ’s physical death on the Cross. That Plan of Redemption was laser-focused on providing forgiveness of sins. And forgiveness of sins cannot occur without the shedding of Christ’s physical blood (Heb 9:22).

Any doctrine which is directly related to, directly affected by, or has a direct effect upon the Plan of Redemption is an *essential* doctrine. The Death of Adam is inseparably related to the Plan of Redemption. In fact, it was the sin of Adam which set in motion God’s whole redemptive program which culminated in the forgiveness of sins. There is nothing more *fundamental* to the gospel of our salvation than explaining how Christ brought forgiveness by overcoming the death that entered the world through the sin of Adam. Out of all the things that are essential to understand correctly, the Death of Adam has to be near the top of the list. It is not a secondary issue.

And since forgiveness of sins is an *essential* non-negotiable part of the gospel, anything which downplays, mitigates, or negates that forgiveness is automatically *heretical*. We saw how the CBV “spiritual-only” Death of Adam view eliminates physical death from the *substitutionary* sacrificial death of Christ. And since Christ’s physical death is absolutely essential for the forgiveness of sins (as Heb 9:22 clearly teaches), it means that the CBV has stripped the *substitutionary* death of Christ of its power to forgive. Thus, the CBV is clearly wrong on a *primary* (essential) issue, which means that it is *heretical*. You must catch the logic of this:

- Anything which negates an essential doctrine is heretical.
- The *Forgiveness of Sins* is an essential doctrine.
- Thus, anything which negates the *Forgiveness of Sins* is heretical.
- The CBV “spiritual-only” Death of Adam view negates the *Forgiveness of Sins*.
- Therefore, the CBV “spiritual-only” Death of Adam view is heretical.

In contrast to that, we need to note that the IBV harmonizes perfectly with the Plan of Redemption (the forgiveness of sins) by including physical death not only in the Death of Adam, but also, even more importantly, in the *substitutionary* death of Christ. This means that the IBV is *orthodox*. †

For more information, send an email request for the following free resources to Ed Stevens (preterist1@preterist.org):

- Article in the previous issue of *Fulfilled!*: “Death of Adam: Spiritual-Only or Physical Also?”
- *Death of Adam: Physical, Spiritual, or Both?* (85-page book) - Edward E. Stevens
- *Death of Adam Article* (7-page article) - Edward E. Stevens
- Preston-Stevens Written Debate on FaceBook (Preterist Debate group)

Perspectives

Heretic!

by Don K. Preston

I MUST CONFESS THAT the topic of this article is troubling. It has challenged me for years, and I suggest that as much as we would like to have an easy answer to the issue of “heresy” there is in fact no easy answer.

The word that serves as the title of this article is one that has historically struck fear in the hearts of believers. To be a heretic was to be *anathema*, condemned. The Online Miriam Webster Dictionary gives the following definition of heretic:

religion: a person who differs in opinion from established religious dogma

especially: a baptized member of the Roman Catholic Church who refuses to acknowledge or accept a revealed truth.

Of course, it is to be noted that early councils declared some well known teachers to be heretics, men such as Arius and Pelagius. Nonetheless, it is enlightening that, as the familiar story goes, Martin Luther stood trial for being a heretic, during which Emperor Charles V, said of Luther: “For it is certain that a single brother is in error if he stands against the opinion of the whole of Christendom, as otherwise Christendom would have erred for a thousand years or more.” (Cited in *Beyond Creation Science*, Timothy Martin and Jeffrey Vaughan, www.truthinliving.org).

Charles was clearly condemning Luther based on church history and tradition. And in fact, according to Luther, Eck informed Luther that he was acting like a heretic:

“Martin,” said he, “there is no one of the heresies which have torn the bosom of the church, which has not derived its origin from the various interpretation of the Scripture.” [Martin Luther. “Life of Luther (Luther by Martin Luther).”]

And so, in one of the most famous “heretic” trials in all of Christian history, the very basis of the condemnation of Luther was that he appealed to Scripture, and rejected the authority of the Pope, of tradition, and history.

What is so fascinating is to then take note that when the Reformation Movement came along, the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope were declared “heretical” by the reformers. This of course, sprang from Luther, who had earlier declared that the Pope was the Antichrist:

“This teaching [of the supremacy of the pope] shows forcefully that the Pope is the very Antichrist, who has exalted himself above, and opposed himself against Christ, because he will not permit Christians to be saved without

his power, which, nevertheless, is nothing, and is neither ordained nor commanded by God. This is, properly speaking, to exalt himself above all that is called God. . . . The Pope, however, prohibits this faith, saying that to be saved a person must obey him” (Smalcald Articles, II, IV, 10-12). Found at <https://wels.net/about-wels/what-we-believe/doctrinal-statements/antichrist/>).

Thus, when the Pope declared that Luther was a heretic, Luther then labeled the Pope as the real heretic. Later, the Reformed Movement followed suit, and in the Westminster Confession of Faith, it is affirmed that the Pope is the Man of Sin: (VI. There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalts himself, in the Church, against Christ and all that is called God. (Confession XXV:6) (https://reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/index.html?body=/documents/wcf_with_proofs/ch_XXV.html).

Thus, one “orthodoxy” built on tradition, history, and Papal authority (and an actual rejection of the authority of Scripture) became the standard by which all who differed were labeled as heretics. Later, another “orthodoxy” arose (Reformation theology), and this “new” orthodoxy had (has) no qualms about labeling all who differ as heretics. Still later, in America, what is known as the Restoration Movement (a.k.a. the Campbell-Stone Movement) came along and rejected the orthodoxy of the Reformed Movement (and that of Rome), seeking to establish the true “orthodoxy.” Today, this movement has spawned—per some sources—over 50 different schisms / divisions, each claiming to be the “true church,” and often labeling others are heretics and false teachers.

The sad history of Christianity is that believers are all too willing to label one another as heretics and withdraw from each other. It seems that far too often we seek for ways to withdraw instead of finding ways to embrace and accept. And thus, we have the proliferation of Christian churches, all claiming to be orthodox—really, truly orthodox—and those who differ are “out of step.” To say that many, if not most, of these divisions have been and are unnecessary would seem to be an understatement.

Now, we would like for all believers to “*speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (1 Cor 10:10f), and that is how Paul said we should live! So, what is the solution? How do we achieve what Paul

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Orthodoxy and Heresy

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said should be our focus, “*striving to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Eph 4:1-6)? Let’s be clear, there is patently not an easy solution. To speak the answer is not to find the answer in practical terms—as history confirms.

Let me share a challenging text. Notice Paul’s use of the word “heresy” in 1 Corinthians 11:19: “*For there must be also heresies (αἰρέσεις, haireseis, Strongs #139) among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.*” The word that is translated as “must” is from the Greek word *dei*, which normally denotes a divine necessity. Thus, Paul was stating something incredible: differences are necessary to make the truth *manifested* (from φανεροί, *phaneroi*, Strong’s #5318)! It is interesting that Luther himself rejoiced at the tumult caused by his teachings, noting that without tumult and debate, there is no change, no reform, no improvement (*Bondage of the Will*, Part I, SC XVIII). I am not certain that he appealed to 1 Corinthians 11:19, but he did appeal often to Jesus’ words, “*I did not come to send peace, but a sword.*”

We must realize that originally the word heresy simply meant “different” or “out of step,” without denoting condemnation. That is undeniable from the text above. But, oft times to be “out of step” spelled doom on many levels—social, familial, financial, and even physical. Unfortunately, there remain some, if they had their way, whose solution for those whom they deem to be “heretics” (those who “disturb the peace” of the established traditions of the Christian community—what is commonly called “orthodoxy”) would be a bullet to the brain.

This text above is truly challenging in the modern context. One might well ask, why did Paul say that “heresies” are necessary? Well, his statement is clear enough—to help manifest the truth—and yet, Christians today are, rightfully so, concerned about being a “heretic.”

If differences are necessary to reveal the truth, does that mean that anything or everything goes? Paul did not teach that. And we might examine 1 Corinthians as a test case to demonstrate this. What did Paul consider “heresy” in the fully negative—i.e. condemned—sense? Where, in other words, did Paul “draw the line” and say that those who go beyond that line were outside the fellowship of Christ’s grace? We can only do an overview here. This list can be added to from his other epistles and from other NT writings, but, again, this is simply a “sampling” of what Paul considered “heresy” in the strongest and most negative sense.

First of all, as noted, Paul prayed for all believers to, “*speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in*

the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 10:10f). And, in Ephesians 4:1-4, in his list of “ones,” he laid down the foundation stones for that unity:

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body (cf. 1 Cor 1, 12),

and one Spirit (see 1 Cor 12-14),

one hope of your calling (Paul’s entire focus in Corinthians is the fulfillment of God’s promises to Old Covenant Israel in order that the nations may partake of that salvation),

one Lord (see 1 Cor 8),

one faith (see 1 Cor 15:1-4),

one baptism (Paul discusses water baptism only briefly [chapter 1], and then on a corporate level he discusses both water baptism and Spirit baptism [1 Cor 10, 12-14])

one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (see 1 Cor 8, 15:28).

I suggest, as noted above, that these “ones” are played out in 1 Corinthians (not exhaustively as can be seen, however. Paul omits any in-depth discussions of some of these tenets. That is why I say that this survey is limited). But, look now at some of the issues that Paul does discuss and on which he demanded “unity.”

One thing to be noted is that Paul called for *maturity*, (the *pneumatikos*

mind/person, 1 Cor 3:1f) on the part of the believers. That maturity would, he affirmed, lead them beyond “personality” issues, i.e. “*I am of Paul, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ,*” into the one mindedness focused only on Christ. When believers begin exalting one person over another, instead of focusing on the exaltation of Christ, division invariably follows.

Lack of maturity involves issues that destroy the “unity” of the One New Man—i.e. specifically in Corinthians and Romans, the Jew/Gentile, social, and economic divisions (1 Cor 8, 10-11). Paul was firm in positing the breaking down of all barriers between believers—social, economic, racial. Thus, when writing to the church where there were some who were of the synagogue and some “who were once Gentiles” (1 Cor 12:3), he demanded that they strive to get along. His discussions regarding eating of meats sacrificed to idols (Rom 14; 1 Cor 8, 10-11), while they may strike us today as rather arcane, involved fundamental issues that historically divided Jews and Gentiles. I dare say that ...continued on page 16

... Paul was stating something incredible: differences are necessary to make the truth *manifested*.

Heretic!

by Don K. Preston

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we today have a difficult time relating to this scenario, and the “trauma” involved for those on both sides of the issues who were required to meet together in harmony, accept one another, love one another, and not condemn one another as heretics. Likewise, when Paul wrote, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Gal 3:28) this was radical, revolutionary, and challenging. Likewise, his little epistle to Philemon, in which he told his good friend to treat his runaway slave Onesimus *as a brother* with love, and not as a slave, was world changing. It was truly radical and revolutionary!

[Side bar: I suggest that the modern church has a long way to go in manifesting this kind of unity. We have white churches, African-American churches, Hispanic churches, Asian churches, Korean churches, etc. Does this truly show the world the “unity of the faith” and that we actually believe that in Christ, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*”? How so? These “divisions” may not be issues of “heresy,” but they most assuredly have to do with the unity of the faith!]

Notice then in chapters 5-6, that Paul discusses issues of *morality*, namely, sexual immorality within the body. He explicitly forbids this and calls for disciplinary action—in love, kindness, and patience—against those who engage in such actions. Paul draws the line here. Immorality in the body is not to be tolerated.

Regarding the resurrection of Jesus, Paul states, “*If Christ is not risen, your faith is vain, you are yet in your sins*” (1 Cor 15:12f). This is the bedrock of our faith; to reject this is to reject Christ, and the Father that sent him. Needless to say, there is a massive controversy that has flowed from that doctrine.

From the earliest days of Christianity, saints have held differing views on the doctrine of the resurrection of the saints, all the while accepting as essential the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus. For instance, Justin the Martyr said this of the doctrine of the resurrection:

Then I answered, “I am not so miserable a fellow, Trypho, as to say one thing and think another. I admitted to you formerly, that I and many others are of this opinion, and [believe] that such will take place, as you assuredly are aware; but, on the other hand, I signified to you that many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise.

But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be

built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare. (Dialogue With Trypho, Chap. LXXX).

Justin surely seems to be saying that while he and the other “right minded” believers affirmed the resurrection (and a literal restoration of earthly Jerusalem in a Millennial kingdom!), other “pure and pious” Christians disagreed! What? Pure and pious Christians that disagreed about whether there is to be a (literalistic, physical) resurrection?? And we will not even discuss the issue of a physically restored Jerusalem and a literal 1000-year reign! It appears that there was some serious dissension within the early church, and yet, each side was, apparently, accepting of each other. Hmmm.

Nonetheless, Paul did draw a line on the issue of the resurrection. He dealt with Hymenaeus and Philetus, who said that “the resurrection is already past” (2 Tim 2:18). Their doctrine was a heresy in the worst sense, because Paul said their doctrine destroyed the faith of some. Opponents of the consistent (true) preterist view love to appeal to this passage as proof that preterism is false and constitutes genuine heresy in the worst sense. But, a closer look reveals that there are serious flaws in this claim. Keep in mind that the purpose of this article is the discussion of how casually the term heretic is cast around. With that in mind, look at the issues surrounding 2 Timothy 2 that are virtually ignored as it is cast at preterists.

Here are issues that are ignored by those who appeal to 2 Timothy 2:18 as proof that preterists are heretics:

- The reality that whatever the resurrection is, it was to be the fulfillment of God’s Old Covenant promises, made to Old Covenant Israel.
- The undeniable reality that those OT prophecies posit the resurrection at the time of the judgment of Israel.
- The NT statements that the time of the end, the time for the parousia, the time for the judgment, had arrived in the first century and was coming soon, shortly, and without delay.
- Paul’s appeal to Numbers 11: “*Nevertheless, the foundation of God stands sure, for the Lord knows those who are his.*” How does this relate to the issue of Hymenaeus’ claim? You never read it discussed, and yet the grammar and context of the statement show that it is critical in Paul’s mind. Notice that “*Nevertheless.*”
- No one seems to want to ask the question: If the resurrection is an earth-burning, time-ending event, when every dead

We should not make a matter of faith an issue of accusation of heresy—that the Bible does with salvation.

and decomposed body is raised and restored to life, how was it possible for Hymenaeus to convince anyone that it had already happened? (I discuss these issues and more in my book: *The Hymenaeian Heresy: Reverse the Charges!* One might legitimately ask: If it was heresy to say the resurrection was past before it occurred, would it be heresy to say it is still future, *when in fact it is past?*)

Discussion of these facts is outside the bounds of this article. I point them out simply to show that when appeal is made to 2 Timothy 2 in order to cast out the derogatory epithet of “heretic,” that something is amiss and badly wrong—proof texting of the worst sort is afoot.

What I have just suggested, even if somewhat implicitly, is that the charge of “heresy” lodged against preterism is in fact based on a flawed and false hermeneutic. And herein lays a great

part of the misguided history of the application of the term “heresy” and “heretic.” Weigh the choices before us as we consider the application of that term. What is to be the basis and authority for calling someone a heretic?

Emperor Charles appealed to “a thousand years” of history, the creeds, and the Pope to prove that Luther was a heretic. Luther rejoined that the Bible and the Bible alone is the standard by which that judgment can be made.

John Calvin came along and, like Luther, rejected history, creeds, and tradition, insisting that the Bible and the Bible alone is the standard. Yet, sadly, today, the Reformed Movement appeals to the creeds—particularly the Westminster Confession of Faith—as the standard of orthodoxy. The creeds supposedly tell us how to properly interpret Scripture! This in spite of the fact that the WCF clearly states that creeds have often been wrong and that the Scriptures and the Scriptures alone are the final authority in matters of faith and doctrine:

III. All synods or councils, since the apostles’ times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith, or practice; but to be used as a help in both (WCF- 31:3).

If the WCF is accurate in this regard—and it is—then why do those in the Reformed community insist that church history and the creeds determine orthodoxy? What happened to the idea, and claim, that the Word of God is the final authority and determinate factor of orthodoxy?

While it may seem like a platitude, the reality is that *the only standard* by which anyone or any doctrine can be declared heretical is the Scripture and the Scripture alone. Let me illustrate:

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they

received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. (Acts 17:11)

Now contra those who claim that unless you have the Holy Spirit you cannot understand the Bible, we have here a situation involving those who were *non-Christians*. They patently did not, therefore, have the Spirit to “guide them into all truth.” They had the Scriptures alone by which to test Paul’s teaching. In fact, at that juncture, the only Scriptures that they had were the Old Covenant Scriptures found in the synagogue scrolls. Significantly, those Jewish, prospective Christians did not appeal to 1500 years of tradition, to any Sanhedrin, to any Rabbi. They searched the Scriptures daily to test what Paul was saying. If the apostle Paul himself could be “tested” and “put on trial” as it were, based only on a close examination of the Scriptures, is it any different today? Should it be?

Where does this leave us today? It leaves us, in reality, with but a couple of choices:

1. We can abandon the reliance on the Scriptures, as historically practiced by the Roman church, and put our faith on the “pontifications” of men.
2. We can rely on history (which is a “mixed bag” to be sure), or the creeds that, by their own admission, “may err; and many have erred.” Or,
3. We can, as suggested by Luther, Calvin, and a host of others (whose advice has been ultimately spurned by their followers) determine to accept the absolute authority of the Scripture.

Now, as noted above, “Scripture alone” may seem like just a platitude when one faction after another claims to do exactly this and yet charges of “heresy” spring from each of them against other believers. So, is there a solution? Well, not an easy one, and certainly not one easily accepted. Thus, it is with great trepidation that I offer the following as suggestions for consideration.

- We should not make anything a matter of faith and fidelity to Christ—or as the ground of the accusation of heresy—that the Bible does not link with salvation. A citation often quoted, *but seldom practiced*, from the Campbell-Stone Movement is actually valid: “In matters of faith, unity. In matters of opinion, liberty. In all things, charity.” If the Bible does not make it important enough to draw lines of fellowship over, then neither should we! When one considers all of the multitudinous issues that have and do divide believers, it is literally appalling—and amazing! We absolutely must learn to “not sweat the small stuff,” as I have personally preached for years.
- We must dedicate ourselves to

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Heretic!

by Don K. Preston

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being better students of the Bible. The discussion of the Hymenaeian Heresy above should—hopefully—open our eyes to the need for employing proper hermeneutic. This discussion alone would take us far, far afield from this article, but, this is so critical! Far too many Bible “students” actually scoff at the importance of audience relevance, of the value of scholarship, of solid logic and proper exegesis based on sound hermeneutic! (I have had people literally tell me that an appeal to audience relevance is “of the devil.” Likewise, one individual (among several) told me that we have no need of scholarship; all they need is the Bible. When I pointed out that if it were not for scholarship, they would not be able to read the Bible, the discussion ended.)

- We must learn to extend patience and grace to one another. Years ago, a friend asked me about my attitude toward others. Honestly, my answer was one exhibiting a bit of impatience, with a hint of anger perhaps, against those who do not accept preterism as quickly as I thought they should. He asked me how long it had taken me to arrive at the full conviction of the truth and to be willing to take a stand for it, knowing the professional consequences. I responded that it had taken me literally years. He asked me if I believed that God’s grace was covering me in my ignorance all of that time, to which I responded, “Of course.” He then asked me why I was not willing to extend to others the same degree of grace that I had expected for myself. It was a challenging—and appropriate—question, one that has changed my perspective in many ways. I suggest that a careful and applied reading of the following passages is tremendously important. (Keep in mind that in Romans

Paul is dealing with the Jews who were essentially calling the Gentiles, who were eating meat sacrificed to idols, “heretics.” But, Paul forbade that and mandated ways to accept one another’s prejudices and traditions).

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way. (Rom 14:13 NKJV)

Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. (Rom 14:19 NKJV)

Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus . . . (Rom 15:5 NKJV)

Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. (Rom 15:7 NKJV)

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph 4:1-3 NKJV)

Keep in mind the radical differences in “world view,” in practices, in traditions, and prejudices that existed in the early church between Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free, Scythian, barbarian, Greek, etc.! It is literally staggering to consider! Yet, look closely at the injunctions found in the verses just above. If Paul expected the early church to accept one another, in spite of all of their differences, then I suggest that it is incumbent on us today to be far more accepting of one another, and to be extremely cautious in casting out the word “Heretic!” †

Being Bereans:

Luke describes the Jewish Bereans as “more noble . . . than the Thessalonians,” because they investigate from Scripture the references Paul made to Jesus (v. 11). This implies that they open-mindedly challenge what Paul said, but Paul is not offended by such inquiry, because it leads them to discover for themselves what is true. This should warm the heart of any teacher of the Bible!

Baker, W. H. (1995). Acts. In *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* (Vol. 3, p. 910). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

Perseverance in Berea (vv. 10–15)

SUPPORTING IDEA: *Never trust somebody else’s explanation of the Scripture until you have studied it for yourself and allowed the Holy Spirit to confirm the truth of what you hear.*

The Visions of Daniel

Jimmy D. Higgins



A New Book by Jimmy D. Higgins

The several visions in the Old Testament prophetic book of Daniel (a key to understanding the New Testament book of Revelation) have been interpreted to be fulfilled in numerous ways and times, most of which have never come to pass, meaning, of course, that the interpretations have been inaccurate. In this work the reader will discover an interpretation which will take him or her on a journey into the various time-related statements that will no doubt make him or her wonder how such inaccuracies could have ever been conceived in the first place. So strap in and take ride.

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See page 2 for details.)*

17:10–12. The missionaries were on the road again. In the cover of darkness they continued the fifty miles west to Berea. Much to their delight, they found a synagogue. Sneaking off to Berea had solid precedent in the Roman world. Cicero (106–43 B.C.) had written that Roman authorities were so unpopular in Thessalonica that when he visited that city on government business he sometimes found it necessary to head off to Berea to escape the heat. Perhaps Paul had the same thing in mind. Hang out for awhile in Berea; when things died down, go back inside the beltway to continue his witness.

Paul may not have been prepared for the reception God set up for him in this foothill town. Luke leaves his objective narrative to offer an opinion about the Bereans which has etched them in Christian recognition for two thousand years. How many churches have a “Berean” Sunday school class which, one would hope, attempts to model itself after these open-minded people who personally checked out Paul’s arguments in the Scriptures? Luke seems to be telling us that if recipients of the gospel can put religious, political, and social prejudice out of the way for a bit, they will understand how logical and biblical the message about Jesus really is. Luke’s reference to Greek men and women in verse 12 indicates that Greek Gentiles as well as Jews and proselytes came to faith in Berea.

Gangel, K. O. (1998). Acts (Vol. 5, pp. 286–287). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Life in the Kingdom

The Tie That Binds

by Brian L. Martin

AS YOU BEGIN READING this article you may wonder how the topic fits within the purview of *Fulfilled!* Magazine. Hear me out and I believe that it will all make sense by the end.

I have some good friends who are going through a divorce. Not only is it difficult to see a long-term relationship come to an end, it is also difficult to sort through the resulting havoc it is playing within our larger group of family, friends, and acquaintances. Some amongst us said the relationship was doomed from the start and are amazed that it lasted as long as it did. Others, perhaps naively, hoped that this couple's common ground would prevail over their points of disagreement.

As the situation digresses, some amongst us are taking sides with one person or the other. Whispers of how one person (or the other) was impossible to live with, how they are the party at fault, are being bandied about. Since we are all just sinners saved by grace, there is no doubt plenty of fault and blame for everyone involved, even those of us in the circle of friends. Yet it is disheartening to hear some of what is being said, and to see how at least some amongst our circle are being polarized by the situation. Even at best it often makes for an awkward situation. If I host a social event, which person do I invite, since neither will attend if the other will be there? Even some of my other friends have made it known that they would not attend if "that person" will be there, and that unfortunately goes for whichever person I would invite.

Furthermore, I feel guilty whenever I talk or visit with one of them and the conversation happens to include the fact that I recently spoke with or saw their ex. By maintaining a relationship with both of them I always feel that I am betraying the other party.

As prevalent as divorce is these days, even within Christianity, you no doubt have experienced a similar situation. The reason I'm writing about this here is because you know the couple; they are CBV and IBV Resurrection. Though their differences are certainly deep, and could only lead to their inevitable departure from one another, they did coexist more or less amicably for many years. But the differences have become too pronounced, and too prominent, it appears, to allow any common ground to maintain a unity between them.

So the question before us now, I believe, is what kind of divorce will this be? Will it be a bloodbath all the way to the courthouse, with each side trying to retain every last

possession while impugning the other's character? Or will it be a friendly (dare I say godly) parting of the ways, in which each party acknowledges that the relationship cannot continue as is, that there must be a separation, yet a certain civility can be maintained.

I know of a divorce (true story) in which the parties actually got along better after the decision to divorce was made. The ex-husband helped the ex-wife with moving and projects at her new house, and the ex-wife encouraged even her own family members to stay in contact with her ex-husband. The divorce is still sad, but at least it's not bitter.

Some readers may be thinking, "But the gospel is at stake here; what fellowship has light with dark?" No doubt, but we must realize that there are preterists (not to mention futurists) on the other side of the issue saying the same thing about us! It behooves us all to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

When I spoke at last year's Big Tex conference, I shared the story of Gary Habermas' relationship with Antony Flew. Habermas is a Christian philosopher and apologist, and Flew was the leading philosophical atheist of his day. After a twenty-year relationship between the two, Flew acknowledged to Habermas that their relationship was instrumental in his leaving atheism and embracing theism. Habermas didn't have covenantal fellowship with Flew ("what fellowship has light with dark?"), but he did maintain a respectful, godly relationship with Flew that led to a drastic change in Flew's "theology."

Can we not do the same with other preterists? Even if we feel that we cannot have covenantal fellowship, and that the other person falls outside the bounds of orthodoxy (and who gets to define that?), can we not maintain a respectful relationship that may, by God's grace, lead to a drastic change in their theology? We are guaranteed to not make a change if we simply ostracize the other person. Now I'm not saying that we need to invite anyone and everyone to our conference's, or share ministerial platforms with them. As both Ed Stevens and David Curtis pointed out in their articles, just because someone embraces full preterism does not necessarily make them a brother in Christ. But if they are truly willing to "come, let us reason together" on a personal level, perhaps we should consider an open-door policy.

"But," some may say, "Jesus overturned the tables in the temple and drove out the moneychangers, and Paul rebuked Peter to his face. We must, as Jude wrote, contend for the faith." All this is true. But Jesus and Paul also healed the sick,

Dealing with Division

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raised the dead, and spoke/wrote the inspired words of God. When God has accomplished those same things through us as well, then perhaps we will be qualified to overturn tables and openly rebuke others. Until then, however, I would suggest that we follow Paul's admonition to Timothy:

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Tim 2:24-26; emphasis added)

Call me a heretic if you must. But if you do so in gentleness, and with a sincere, godly concern for my salvation, I will be much more open to what you have to share, perhaps allowing God to use you to lead me to a knowledge of the truth.

Paul was once zealous for Judaism, to the point that he persecuted the Way to the death (Acts 22:4ff). After Paul's conversion, did he then do an about face and persecute the heretical adherents of Judaism? Although Paul contended strongly with the Judaizers for the faith, he never persecuted them. On the contrary, he was heartbroken and in anguish over the blindness of his fellow Jews:

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. (Rom 9:1-5)

The Jews were heretics, proclaiming a salvation based upon national heritage and works of the law. Yet Paul had great sorrow and anguish in his heart for them. Brothers and sisters, do we sorrow and anguish in our hearts for those preterists whom we feel have fallen outside the bounds of orthodoxy? They are our eschatological kinsmen; to them belong the principles of audience relevance and the timing passages, apocalyptic language, and the cloud comings of God. Yes, some have gone too far in their teachings and interpretations. Do we anguish for them? Do we maintain respectful relationships in hopes that our dialog will, by God's grace, cause them to change their theology?

There is much more than just CBV and IBV over which preterism is divided (Calvinism/Arminianism, baptismal regeneration, etc.), but the resurrection seems to be the major rift. What kind of divorce will we have? I believe that depends upon you and me. Will we smugly call each other heretics, or will we anguish over those whom we feel have strayed from biblical truth into heresy? Will we allow our pious walls of orthodoxy to keep us apart from one another, or will we *always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks us for a reason for the hope that is in us; yet with gentleness and respect?* (1 Peter 3:15)

Over the years, many preterists have felt the need within Christianity for another reformation—a reformation of eschatology. Though there has been no watershed moment like Luther's 95 theses on the door at Wittenberg, I nevertheless believe that that reformation is underway.

Christ was born into the world "*when the fullness of time had come*" (Gal 4:2). One of the features of Christ's generation which made that time "full" was the fact that Greek was spoken and written throughout the Roman Empire. This enabled the gospel to be preached to all the known world (Roman Empire) during that generation, thus fulfilling Matthew 24:14. Likewise, in Luther's day the recent invention of the printing press enabled the rapid spread of the reformation truths. I believe in our time that the internet and social media are to the eschatological reformation what the printing press was to Luther's reformation.

Yet the reformation of Luther's day was not a monolithic, everybody-on-the-same-page movement. According to Bruce Shelley, early Protestantism was marked by four major traditions: Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, and Anglican (*Church History in Plain Language*, 2nd Edition, p 235). We can argue about how many "major" traditions exist within modern full preterism, but certainly there are at least two: CBV and IBV. Shelley also notes:

New reformers, many of them far more radical than Luther, appeared on the scene (ibid. p 243).

Most revolutionary movements produce a wing of radicals who feel called of God to reform the reformation (ibid. p 248).

Surely we can see parallels of those earlier reformation details within full preterism—we are neither lacking for radical views nor those who, embracing a particular "flavor" of preterism, feel the need to reform the rest of preterism. I am certainly no expert in

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The Tie That Binds by Brian L. Martin

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church history or church development, but it seems to me that full preterism is currently experiencing the same “growing pains” as those experienced by the early reformers. That being said, how do we respond to those growing pains—how do we deal with the schisms that are accelerating within preterism?

The reformers started by creating church-states and even church-nations, in which cities, regions, or even entire countries adopted, more for political reasons than doctrinal convictions, a particular brand of Protestantism. As Shelley notes:

As a result, church and state were identical. The church was simply everybody’s church (ibid. p 250).

But Geneva’s Protestantism rested chiefly on political hostility to the bishop, not doctrinal convictions (ibid. p 256).

The Protestants then persecuted one another, sometimes to the death. Of course, the persecution between Protestants and Catholics was even worse, with literal wars being fought. Thankfully, preterists aren’t killing one another; unless, of course, we consider the fact that “*death and life are in the power of the tongue*” (Pro 18:21).

According to Shelley, the eventual solution, though imperfect, was denominationalism:

For decades critics have called them “a scandal,” “a blight,” “factionalism,” and “a caste system,” but denominations remain the institutional hallmark of modern Christianity. . . . The simple fact is Christians are divided today, in part at least, because they have the freedom to differ. In earlier centuries they did not. (ibid p 301)

Denominationalism, as originally designed, is the opposite of sectarianism. A sect claims the authority of Christ for itself alone. It believes that it is the true body of Christ; all truth belongs to it and to no other religion. So by definition a sect is exclusive.

The word *denomination* by contrast was an inclusive term. It implied that the Christian group called or *denominated* by a particular name was but one member of a larger group—the church—to which all denominations belong.

The denominational theory of the church, then, insists that the true church cannot be identified with any single ecclesiastical structure. No denomination claims to represent the whole church of Christ. Each simply constitutes a different form—in worship and organization—of the larger life of the church. (ibid. p 306)

To paraphrase Shelley, the simple fact is preterism is divided today. Furthermore, many, if not most, preterists feel that they cannot be identified with or defined by a particular resurrection view with which they do not agree. Perhaps the time has come for IBV and CBV to part ways in some “official” manner. How that would be accomplished I haven’t a clue. But if there was an official separation, perhaps we could then minimize the energy we spend refuting each other and redirect that energy toward refuting futurism.

I don’t broach this topic glibly; rather, it pains me to have to express it (especially after having delivered a talk at last year’s Big Tex conference titled “Unity in the Community”). I have always tried to seek the common ground amongst preterists, and focus on the positive. (My spirit resonated with TJ Smith’s article in the Spring 2018 issue about putting aside differences and uniting behind the common goal of promoting past fulfillment.) But let’s be honest, preterism is divided. In the previous couple of issues I attempted to have both sides of the CBV/IBV debate lay out the foundations of their respective views, so that you the readers could analyze the facts for themselves. It is quite apparent that there will be no resolution between the two camps, and I have no desire to have the magazine reduced to an endless debate between them. I continue to wrestle with both views, not just for my own understanding, but also regarding how to handle them in the magazine moving forward. I found Don Preston’s statement regarding 1 Corinthians 11:19 from his article in this issue very thought-provoking:

“For there must be also heresies (αἱρέσεις, *haireseis*, Strongs #139) among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” The word that is translated as “must” is from the Greek word *dei*, which normally denotes a divine necessity. Thus, Paul was stating something incredible: differences are necessary to make the truth *manifested* (from φανεροί, *phaneroi*, Strong’s #5318)! It is interesting that Luther himself rejoiced at the tumult caused by his teachings, noting that without tumult and debate, there is no change, no reform, no improvement (*Bondage of the Will*, Part I, SC XVIII).

Based upon 1 Corinthians 11:19, there will always be tumult and debate both within Christianity in general and preterism specifically. Therefore, our goal is not necessarily to bring a resolution to all our differences (though that would certainly

be ideal), but to handle our differences, and each other, with grace. This realization is what led to the development of the denominational theory of church, as Shelley notes in his closing comments regarding the reformation age:

Few advocates of the denominational view of the church in the seventeenth century envisioned the hundreds of Christian groups included under the umbrella today. They had no intention of reducing the basic beliefs of Christianity to a general feeling of religious sincerity. But they could not control the future. *They simply knew that the traditional bigotry and bloodshed in the name of Christ was not the way forward.*

In the end, then, the denominational form of the church has marked the recent centuries of Christian history, *not because it is ideal, but because it is better than any alternative the years have offered.* (ibid. p 308; italics added)

I am not advocating the creation of preterist denominations, but just as futurism is divided into amillennialism, postmillennialism, dispensationalism, etc., perhaps it is time for preterism to develop distinct views with appropriate labels. Just as no believer is simply a futurist, so no believer is simply a preterist. Both of those terms must be qualified. Otherwise, when we tell others that we are a preterist, they automatically apply *their* understanding of preterism to *our* view:

“Oh, you believe that Christ didn’t have to die physically,” or, “oh, you believe in a literal first-century rapture.”

“No, those are the other preterists who believe that, not me. But we are all called preterists, so I can understand your confusion.”

Perhaps there are better solutions than a church split, so to speak (I realize I’m mixing my metaphors). I sincerely hope so. Furthermore, I am in no position to issue decrees or declare the future structure of the preterist community—I am simply opening up the discussion regarding the elephant we all know is in the room. My thought is that sooner may very well be better than later. If we wait too long, we may become so embittered with one another that an amicable divorce is impossible. On the other hand, by lancing the festering sore now, perhaps the pressure can be released and the healing process can begin, though there will always be scars.

I have been contemplating and praying about this issue literally for months. I have neither heard thunder from heaven nor seen the parting of the sea, so all I can do is share what is currently on my heart and leave it in God’s hands. I close with the lyrics from a song I wrote many years ago for my futurist pastor at the time, when my preterism had developed to the point that he suggested it was time that I fellowshipped elsewhere. †

The Tie that Binds

*When the storms of life are raging, and troubling our heart
And it seems that they’re succeeding at tearing us apart
When the tie that used to bind us it seems has broken free
And the wind and waves are blowing, dividing you and me*

*Just remember our Redeemer, Who died at Calvary
Just remember our Redeemer, Who says to you and me—*

*There’s a tie that binds, across the raging sea
There’s a tie that binds, it’s found on bended knee
There’s a tie that binds, through all adversity
There’s a tie that binds—it’s Christ in you and me*

*When our grip on one another slowly slips away
In spite of all our efforts to seek the Lord and pray
When the challenge faced seems greater with you and I than some
And the differences between us too great to overcome*

*Just remember our Redeemer, Who died at Calvary
Just remember our Redeemer, Who says to you and me—*

*There’s a tie that binds, across the raging sea
There’s a tie that binds, it’s found on bended knee
There’s a tie that binds, through all adversity
There’s a tie that binds—it’s Christ in you and me*

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Moving on . . .

The Road Ahead

by Brian L. Martin

IN HIS BOOK *The Last Days according to Jesus*, the late R. C. Sproul stated that his views on eschatology remained “in transition.” I find this a remarkable statement, coming as it does from one of the elite theologians of our day. If someone of Sproul’s theological status could still have his views in transition, then certainly those of us who are lay theologians can be forgiven for being a bit farther behind the curve in working out our own views.

The term *transition* means “the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another.” Within the context of theology, how can our views transition from one state (view) to another unless we are exposed to views that differ from the ones we currently hold? I don’t deny that the Holy Spirit can expose us to a different view during our private study when He allows us to suddenly see in a new way a passage that we’ve read a hundred times before. But more often than not, our current view is precisely what has caused us to read that passage the same way one hundred times. We come to the text with a predisposed, yet unperceived, bias, and we need someone to jolt us out of our theological rut. That jolt is typically not going to come from someone in your church who listens to the same sermons and reads the same books that you do. Rather than a jolt, you will likely just reinforce each other’s current view. That is not necessarily a bad thing, but be aware that it will likely lead to no major transition of views.

A number of years ago I read the book *E=MC2: A Biography of the World’s Most Famous Equation*, which chronicled the development of physics over the centuries that led to and culminated in Einstein’s famous equation. One of the things that struck me was how the progress of physics was halted, sometimes for decades, because the physicists at the time refused to entertain certain new theories. There were a number of reasons why they summarily dismissed these new theories without testing them in the laboratory: The views challenged a cherished traditional understanding of the laws of physics; they were proposed by someone lacking the “proper” education; they were proposed by someone who belonged to the wrong class of society; they were proposed by a woman.

None of those conditions qualified those theories for automatic rejection. In the field of logic, this is known as committing a *genetic fallacy*. A *genetic fallacy* is “a fallacy of irrelevance that is based solely on someone’s or something’s history, origin, or source rather than its current meaning or context. . . . The fallacy therefore fails to assess the claim on its merit.”

The physicists dismissed the claims based not upon the merit of the claim, but upon the *perceived* lack of merit of the

claim’s source. Often, the progress of physics was on hold until the old regime died off, and along with them their cherished traditions and prejudices (Max Planck, the originator of modern quantum theories, noted “A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it”). As the older generation of physicists died off, the new theories were then tested, leading to new discoveries and opening new vistas, resulting in great progress for the field of physics. Until, that is, those new physicists gradually became the old physicists, and their new discoveries became the cherished traditions of their generation.

The genetic fallacy is not limited to the field of physics. Consider the following:

To this they [the Pharisees] replied, “You [the blind man] were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out. (John 9: 34) The blind man was from the wrong societal class.

“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nazareth was apparently on the wrong side of the tracks.

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished . . . (Acts 4:13). While Peter and John may have astonished the Sanhedrin, because of their lack of education and their ordinary station in life, their theology was deemed unfit for serious consideration.

How does this relate to preterism? Do we automatically disqualify certain preterist views because they originated from outside of our denomination or tradition? Or how about, “IBV (or CBV)! Can anything good come from there?” While we may reject either the IBV or CBV system as a whole, who can deny the progress afforded to preterism by advocates of each of these views? You may have an aversion to a literal rapture, but can you deny that preterism has benefited from Ed Stevens’ historical research of early Christianity and theology? Conversely, you may have an aversion to an emphasis on the spiritual death of Adam and Christ, but can you deny that preterism has benefited from Don Preston’s analyses of the numerous biblical themes that point to an AD 70 fulfillment? (I use Don and Ed throughout as representatives of CBV and IBV, respectively, since they are those views’ most visible proponents.)

But what if one of these views is heretical—shouldn’t we steer completely clear of it? Consider David Curtis’ article in this issue, in which he claims that Roman Catholicism, due to its gospel of works, is heretical. I can’t speak for Ed and Don, but since neither of them embrace Catholicism I would

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assume that they would agree in principle. This is not to say that there are no true believers in the Catholic Church, rather that the system itself presents a heretical view of the gospel. That being said, someone would be guilty of a genetic fallacy if they summarily dismissed all Catholic scholarship simply because it was Catholic. Now it just so happens that both Don and Ed quote Catholic scholars to support their views (Don quotes Brant Pitre in *Seventy Weeks are Determined for . . . the Resurrection*, and Ed quotes Brian Schmisek in his study “History of the Resurrection Views”).

Now, if we can find beneficial material from “heretical” Catholic sources, can we not also find beneficial material from CBV/IBV sources to support the general premises of preterism? If we dismiss all CBV/IBV material out of hand because of its source, we commit a genetic fallacy. More importantly, how can we transition our own preterist views if we don’t interact with differing preterist views? Obviously, not every fringe view is worthy of consideration, and discretion must be applied. Just because you are a fellow full preterist does not mean that I will feel obligated to consider your belief in unicorns (to use an extreme illustration). But CBV/IBV are not fringe elements within full preterism; rather, they are arguably *the* two major distinctives.

Over the years, the magazine feature about which we’ve received the most positive feedback is the inclusion of various perspectives on the topics presented. This tells me that many readers’ views are, as were R. C. Sproul’s, still in transition on these matters—they are still working out their theology. Don Preston shares about his transition from futurism to preterism in his article in this issue:

Years ago, a friend asked me about my attitude toward others. Honestly, my answer was one exhibiting a bit of impatience, with a hint of anger perhaps, against those who do not accept preterism as quickly as I thought they should. He asked me how long it had taken me to arrive at the full conviction of the truth and to be willing to take a stand for it, knowing the professional consequences. I responded that it had taken me literally years. He asked me if I believed that God’s grace was covering me in my ignorance all of that time, to which I responded, “Of course.” He then asked me why I was not willing to extend to others the same degree of grace that I had expected for myself. It was a challenging—and appropriate—question, one that has changed my perspective in many ways.

No doubt Ed Stevens, a staunch opponent of CBV, would also claim God’s grace for the fifteen years he leaned, albeit tentatively, toward CBV:

For the first fifteen years of my full preterist career (1975-1990), I leaned toward the CBV. (*History of Resurrection Views* (final), p 15)

It seemed contrived, but I gave him [Max King] the benefit of the doubt until I could study it more and understand it better. (*Ibid*, pp 15-16)

The rest of us, if we are true Bereans, cannot simply take either Don or Ed’s word for granted regarding the resurrection; we must examine the Scriptures for ourselves to see if these things are so. We must walk the paths that they have walked. Thankfully, they have walked those paths and, just like walking in snow, the path is always easier for those following the first person. We will hopefully not need fifteen years to walk those paths, thanks to their trail-breaking efforts, but we need to walk those paths nevertheless.

So my question is, will God’s grace cover us, and *Fulfilled!* Magazine, on our respective journeys, just as it covered Don and Ed on their journeys, if we continue to entertain possible interpretations from both sides of the issue; can we give others the benefit of the doubt while we examine the Scriptures for ourselves to see if their claims hold up? Furthermore, we are all at different stages of the journey, and have differing quantities of time to devote to these matters amidst our hectic lives. Perhaps you have studied your way to a firm conclusion—praise God! Become a resource for those of us lagging behind. (John Bray once shared the following quote with me: “A great teacher doesn’t tell you what he knows, he invites you to stand beside him and see what he sees.”) Will we allow newcomers to preterism the time and resources needed to work out their own theology regarding the resurrection (amongst a host of other issues), or will we simply hand them a pre-packaged theology and tell them what to believe? (Frankly, if they were willing to receive such a pre-packaged theology, rather than work out their own theology, they would likely still be futurists.)

If I choose the resurrection view that I deem to be more scriptural and exclude the other views from the magazine, am I doing you a service by protecting you from false doctrine, or am I doing you a disservice by withholding contrary views by which your views may be sharpened? If the only material with which we interact is sourced from those with whom we agree, there will certainly be unity, but will we have lost the cutting edge necessary to rightly divide the Word of Truth? A set of matching butter knives certainly portrays unity, but they are only useful for spreading condiments on items that have previously been prepared. To prepare those items—to rightly divide the meat of the Word—a cutting edge is

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required; an edge which is only acquired by knocking off the rough edges via the sharpening process. Butter knives never require sharpening.

Fulfilled! Magazine is neither a CBV nor an IBV publication; it is a publication that promotes the fulfilled view of Bible prophecy, as do both CBV and IBV. If all we did was talk about timing, then we all could hold hands and sing *kumbaya*. But timing inevitably leads to nature; yes, we all believe in a past resurrection, but what was the nature of that resurrection? Here paths diverge and things start to get dicey. Now we start encroaching upon the doctrines of redemption and the heart of the gospel itself. When Don and Ed quoted from Catholic scholars, they were neither embracing nor endorsing the Catholic doctrine of redemption, but were availing themselves to scholarly material on peripheral issues. (During a 2010 Preterist Pilgrim Weekend lecture, Don again cited Pitre very favorably, but then rhetorically asked, “Will you agree with all his theology? No!”) Unfortunately, timing and nature are a package deal in preterism; if we are going to tell people that prophecy was fulfilled in the past (timing), we must also tell them *how* it was fulfilled (nature).

Like R. C. Sproul, my own views on these matters remain in transition. I am not a theologian, just an interested layperson (as I suspect most readers are). Therefore, compared to Don and Ed (and many others), I have only a small fraction of the education and time invested in these matters that they do. I admit that my struggles with these views are likely due to my own theological shortcomings, nevertheless, I have issues with both views. This is complicated by the fact that there is neither a monolithic CBV nor IBV view; each has its various flavors.

I don't agree with everything stated by either Don or Ed, but that doesn't mean that I'm right and they are wrong. Rather, it means that I have much more studying to do. And I suspect that many readers feel likewise. Furthermore, the CBV/IBV positions presented by Don and Ed are not necessarily the views, in every detail, held by others who would count themselves in one of those camps. The dilemma for FCG is how to deal with this controversy moving forward, especially since claims of heresy are involved. This dilemma is further complicated by the amount of time necessary to examine the copious amounts of material produced by both camps. Additionally, even if, by examining Don and Ed's material, I was inclined to agree with certain claims of heresy and therefore exclude a particular view from the magazine, what of those within that particular camp who do not hold to the heretical aspects of that view—are they simply guilty by association?

Hence, I feel that in the spirit of iron sharpening iron, *Fulfilled!* Magazine should continue, at least for the immediate future, presenting material from both views, but with the following caveats as a backdrop:

1. The inclusion of any article, ad, ministry reference, etc. does not imply endorsement by FCG. I cannot vet every preterist's theology, read every new book, etc. We are simply sharing resources to help and encourage readers in the understanding and promotion of the preterist view. You, the reader, must do your own due diligence. We all must be Bereans.
2. Just as both Don and Ed quoted Catholic scholars to support their views, we may publish preterist articles that we feel are quite beneficial to readers for the topic at hand, while strongly disagreeing with other aspects of the author's theology. The fact that we print an excellent article addressing audience relevance and the New Testament timing passages by a preterist who also happens to believe in unicorns does not mean that FCG endorses a belief in unicorns. We may have approved the article based on its own merits and not have even been aware of the author's belief in unicorns (again, I cannot vet every preterist's theology).
3. In the spirit of 1 Corinthians 11:19 (For there must also be factions (Gk. heresies) among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you), there will be heresy in these pages. Not because FCG desires to promote heresy; rather, because it is an inevitable outcome of entertaining various views in order to recognize the scriptural view. None of us has a perfect theology. Just as the IRS, if they chose to look closely enough, could find errors in all our tax returns, so someone looking closely enough could find heresy in our theology. Thanks be to God for His grace! If Paul hadn't yet attained it, but continued pressing on—if Sproul's views could be in transition—I believe that there is hope for us.

As the resurrection debate (as well as other preterist debates) progresses and CBV and IBV become more polarized, FCG will undoubtedly have to revisit its policy on these issues. Yet even if I become fully settled on a particular view, that doesn't mean that all readers will be settled in their views. Do I still allow space for a view which I do not hold? That will likely depend on how egregious I feel the other view is in light of Scripture. Perhaps the time will come when CBV and IBV will each want to develop their own publication. Though the resurrection is a core issue within preterism, and one which weighs heavy on my heart, my desire is to steer the magazine back toward a greater variety of content. Your prayers would be greatly appreciated. ✚

Being Bereans:

“A person can firmly believe that he has the correct interpretation of a particular Bible subject, but his interpretation could still be wrong. For example, one person might believe that salvation occurs at baptism, while another person believes that salvation does not occur at baptism, but instead he believes it occurs when a person puts his faith in God and Jesus by believing that God exists and that the Bible is God’s word. Each of those two people has been exposed to his particular doctrine for many years, and each one can refer to specific Bible passages to try to prove his viewpoint. Each of them firmly believes his particular view about salvation, but both views cannot be correct because they’re opposites regarding baptism. One of those people is wrong regarding baptism, even though that person firmly believes his particular viewpoint.

That demonstrates how a person can firmly believe in his interpretation of a particular Bible subject, but his interpretation can still be wrong. Even Paul firmly believed that he was doing the right thing by persecuting Christians before he was converted and saw God’s truth.

However, we should admit to ourselves that it’s possible for our viewpoint to be wrong, so if someone wants to share a different view, we should be willing to listen.

We should strive to be open-minded like the Bereans in Acts 17:11-12. When Paul and Silas preached the Word to them, the Bereans didn’t immediately accept the message, nor did they immediately reject it; they took the time to study the message by “search[ing] the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” God commended them for being “more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica.” They were open-minded enough to consider whether they might have been wrong.

From those two verses in Acts, we can learn three things about what it means to be truly open-minded in God’s sight:

- Open-minded people give those with a differing belief a fair and honest hearing. (In John 7:51, Nicodemus asked the Pharisees, “Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?”)
- Open-minded people weigh the beliefs and evidence presented by others in light of the Scriptures.
- Open-minded people willingly admit when they’ve been wrong and make the necessary changes.”

- Malcolm Neelley, *Dating the Second Coming of Jesus*, pp 123, 126-127

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Preterism...it's about time!

It's about the time Jesus told His disciples that He would return—this(His) generation!

It's about the time the New Testament authors told their readers Jesus would return—soon, near, at hand, shortly!

It's about time for a scriptural explanation other than delay!

It's about time for a "last days" view that doesn't conjure up gaps and parenthetical ages!



Preterism
Preterism
Preterism

...maybe it's about time you looked into it!