

That Ye May Keep Your Own Tradition"

A Refutation of the Partial Preterist' "we" Excuse

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J. E. Gautier Jr.

Into such paradoxes interpreters are led by a false theory. But as in a true theory in science every fact fits easily into its place, and lends support to all the rest, so in a true theory of interpretation every passage finds an easy solution, and contributes its quota to support the correctness of the general principle. (*The Parousia*, Dr. James Stuart Russell, pp.198-199)

In the recently republished classic, *The Parousia* by Dr. James Stuart Russell, Dr. R. C. Sproul states in the *Foreword* -

But for me one thing is certain: I can never read the New Testament again the same way I read it before reading *The Parousia*. (p.x)

In his book, *Last Days According To Jesus*, Dr. Sproul quotes Dr. Russell extensively. Since I too appreciate Dr. Russell's work, I will also refer to some excellent statements of his. All of Dr. Russell's quotes are from *The Parousia*, published in 1878.

There is a new book out called, *The End of All Things - A Defense of the Future*, by C. Jonathin Seraiah. I find the title of this book rather odd. Apparently, Mr. Seraiah is taking this from I Peter 4:7, "The end of all things is *near* (or, *at hand*)." How does Mr. Seraiah interpret this verse?

Clearly his reference to the "end" being "near" shows that he is referring in this context to the end of all things in the Jewish age. (p.83)

So how did he come up with such a title? To support a future coming, he uses a verse that says "all things" would end in the Jewish age? That's peculiar. Peter said, "The end of ALL things is at hand." Mr. Seraiah, however, takes exception to Peter's statement. In defense of the future does Mr. Seraiah go on to *prove* how Peter was mistaken; and that it was actually the end of only *some* things? Partial preterists must do the same with Christ's words in Luke 21:22 -

But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand. For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Partial preterists would agree that both verses, I Peter 4:7 and Luke 21:22 are within the context of the fall of Jerusalem at AD 70. Both verses say that "**all things**" would see their fulfillment by that time. Christ emphasizes the statement further by saying that it is "all things **which are written**;" but the partial preterist says, "No. Not all things."

Perhaps a better title for Mr. Seraiah's book would have been -

The End of Some Things - A Defense for the Futurist.

The Name Game

On the back cover of *The End of All Things*, you'll find endorsements. It looks as though all of the heavyweight partial preterists are jumping on the -- "If we change their name, people won't associate us with them anymore" bandwagon. The "Hyper-Preterist" name-calling didn't work, it still had the word "preterist" in

it, so they've come up with a new one -- "pantelist," and hope that it sticks. As one brother noted, "Well, doesn't this make them partial pantelists?"

Just for the record, only those who believe that the Scriptures teach that ALL the events related to Christ's Parousia (i.e. "Second Advent," the resurrection and judgment, etc.) are PAST deserve the name "Preterist." All others are simply Futurists of a sort. In an email from Kenneth Davies -

The term "preterist" can be found in the Unabridged versions of Webster's Dictionary. I've found the definition as far back as 1913. It says -- "**2. (Theol.) One who believes the prophecies of the Apocalypse to have been already fulfilled. Farrar.**" Dictionaries are by definition authoritative compilations of word meanings, and the inclusion of a word is significant. The fact that the word "preterist" can be found as far back as 1913 shows conclusively that it has had the meaning we've been associating it with for at least 86 years!

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition 1996, defines the words "preterit" and/or "preterite" as -

Of, relating to, or being the verb tense that describes a past action or state.

On page 99 of his book, *The Last Days According To Jesus*, Dr. R. C. Sproul Sr. used the term "Preterist" to describe those who hold to the **one** New Testament Parousia of Christ that saw fulfillment at the end of the Jewish age. And Dr. Sproul actually gives an excellent definition of who should rightfully be called a Preterist, and who should not -

Both are preterist with respect to *some* eschatological events, but both are not preterist with respect to *all* eschatological events. (p.156)

Even Dr. Sproul says that partial preterists "**are not preterist** with respect to all eschatological events."

As we shall see, the partial preterists' predilection of a still future-to-us coming of Christ, forces them *to find* passages that actually support one. In the process, they must reject the hermeneutical principles (rules of interpretation) set forth by the Reformers. Only true Preterists adhere to these principles; and by so doing, have found that the New Testament teaches only a (one) past Parousia of Christ. Partial preterists pick and choose at their convenience when to comply with these rules. Because this future-to-us coming cannot be found in Scripture Alone, the rules are abandoned, and tradition and name-calling become their tools. And as we shall see, since these have not worked to counter Preterist arguments, some have resorted to another tactic that will certainly prove to be their downfall.

Dr. Sproul from his book, *Faith Alone* -

No church tradition can bind the conscience. But the Word of God must bind the conscience and take precedence over any and all other loyalties. (p.191)

Please let it be known that, although I quote Dr. Sproul frequently, I am by no means placing him in the same category as the above. Dr. Sproul has made it clear that tradition and the creeds are, and always will be subordinate to Scripture. I hold Dr. Sproul in the highest respect. Also note: In this article, R. C. Sproul Sr. is referred to as "**Dr.** R. C. Sproul." His son is referred to as "**R. C. Sproul Jr.**" And quotes that used the term "pantelist" have been changed to - Preterist.

The purpose of this article is not to critique Mr. Seraiah's entire book, but to question certain statements made, to examine the implications of what R. C. Sproul Jr. wrote in the *Foreword*, and to tie these comments into some significant passages of Scripture and statements made by other prominent partial preterists.

One "Second Coming" -- Not Two

The partial preterist position is by nature inconsistent. The knowledge of *a type of coming* of Christ in AD 70 forces them to deny, in many passages, the analogy of faith (comparing Scripture with Scripture).

Dr. Kenneth Gentry from the front page of his short work, *A Brief Theological Analysis of Hyper-Preterism* -

I deem my historic, orthodox preterism to be exegetical preterism (because I find specific

passages calling for specific preterist events); I deem Max King and Ed Stevens' views to be theological preterism or comprehensive preterism (they apply exegetical conclusions drawn from several eschatological passages to all eschatological passages because of their theological paradigm.)

To his credit Dr. Sproul says this of Preterism in *Last Days* -

Gentry distinguishes between "exegetical preterism" and "theological preterism." This distinction is not all that helpful. Gentry's view is intensely theological, and that of Stevens and others is vitally concerned with exegesis. Gentry is charging that comprehensive preterists are driven to their "consistent" viewpoint by their theological paradigm. (p.154)

And Preterists would "deem" that Dr. Gentry and partial preterists are driven to their inconsistent viewpoint "by their theological paradigm." Most Preterists were previously partial preterists who saw the inconsistency of their traditionally-driven paradigm.

Dr. Murray J. Harris, from his book *From Grave to Glory* -

It is, of course, somewhat arbitrary to distinguish between exegetical and theological issues, for any sound theology is based on careful exegesis. (p.401)

Unlike Dr. Sproul's statement above, I believe the statement below to be to his detriment. From *Last Days* (ital. emphasis his, bold mine) -

[P]artial preterists acknowledge that in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70 there was a parousia or coming of Christ, they maintain that it was not *the* parousia...Partial preterists understand that there are nuances to biblical terminology regarding the coming of Christ and the day of the Lord, nuances **that make it possible** and **necessary** to speak of more than one event that encompasses all these things at once. (pp.158-159)

And due to these "nuances" it is "possible and necessary" to have two of everything! The partial preterists must pluralize all things related to "the end times." They are even forced to teach two "end times!" It should be noted that the New Testament never refers to the Parousias (plural) of Christ; it is always singular. Nor does it ever distinguish one Parousia from another, as the partial preterists insist. Milton S. Terry's words from *Biblical Apocalypics*, published in 1898, would pertain -

It creates more difficulties than it presumes to solve...All sorts of efforts have been made to evade the simple meaning of these words, but they all spring from the dogmatic prepossession that the coming of the Son of man in his glory must needs be an event far future from the time when the words were spoken. (pp.213-252)

One reason to be suspicious of the partial preterists' conclusions is the fact that it exists in such varying degrees. What one partial preterist says was fulfilled at AD 70, another says has a yet-future fulfillment, and vice-versa. Reminds me of plucking the petals off a daisy -- "AD 70, AD 70 not..." You never know where a certain partial preterist posits a particular verse until you see it in writing. And then that may change tomorrow. Milton S. Terry in *Biblical Apocalypics* wrote this in reference to the arbitrary "splitting" of Matthew 24, but it applies well to all attempts by partial preterists -

[T]he attempts to show a dividing line between what refers to the fall of Jerusalem and what refers to a yet future coming of Christ, the remarkable differences of opinion as to the point of transition from one subject to the other are of a nature to make one suspicious of the hypothesis. (pp.213-252)

In his comment, "[Preterists] apply exegetical conclusions drawn from several eschatological passages to all eschatological passages," isn't Dr. Gentry giving us the perfect definition of what happens when you allow Scripture to interpret Scripture? Church history has always recognized ONE Second Coming of Christ. Now partial preterism comes along and "splits" in two what the Church, by the analogy of faith, has always recognized as one. The partial preterist is taking the previous work of the Church and "splitting" it. The Preterist, however, takes that same work and applies it to the time statements (audience relevance); that the

creeds and confessions **never** did.

Example: Let's take a look at two passages that the *Westminster Confession of Faith* attributes to a yet future-to-us coming of Christ, at "the Last Day." One of these passages, Matthew 24:30-31 (*WCF* Larger Catechism-question 56), Dr. Gentry and most partial preterists posit at AD 70. The other is I Thessalonians 4:16-17 (*WCF* Chapter XXXII .II e.); that they contend is still future. Remember, the *WCF* uses both of these as proof texts for a yet future (one) coming of Christ (bold emph. mine). -

...They will see **the Son of Man coming on the clouds** of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels **with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect** from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. (Mtt.24:30-31)

For **the Lord himself will come down from heaven**, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and **with the trumpet call of God**...we who are still alive and are left will be **caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**. (I Thess.4:16-17)

And the Preterist is said to be driven by a paradigm? The analogy of faith (Scripture interpreting Scripture) demands that these two passages are speaking of the same **one** coming of Christ; and the *WCF* agrees. Church history has agreed. But because the Thessalonian passage is within a resurrection/*rapture* context, the partial preterist is forced to deny the teaching of **one** past coming. Their system demands a future coming, so Scripture is not allowed to interpret Scripture. In turn, the partial preterist is allowed to keep his future-to-him coming. Isn't "the Son of Man coming on the clouds" the same as "the Lord himself will come down from heaven"? And isn't "a loud trumpet call" the same as "the trumpet call of God"? And isn't the "gather[ing] of the elect, the same as "meet[ing] the Lord in the air"? Paul says it is (emphasis mine). -

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ **AND our being gathered to him...Don't you remember** that when I was with you **I used to tell you these things?** (II Thess. 2:1 and 5)

Don't you remember, **Thessalonians**, about "**our** being **gathered** to him"? That "**we**" would be "**caught up together** with them"? Just as ("by the word of the Lord") He described -- "they will **gather** his elect"?

Dr. Russell on II Thessalonians 2:1 -

The apostle begins by distinctly stating the subjects on which he is desirous of setting the Thessalonians right. They are, (1) 'the coming of Christ,' and (2) 'our gathering together unto him.' These are evidently regarded by the apostle as simultaneous, or, at all events, closely connected. What are we to understand by this 'gathering together unto Christ' at the Parousia? There is no doubt a reference here to our Lord's own words, Matt. xxiv. 31: 'He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds,' etc. The *ἐπισυναξοσι* [shall gather together] in the gospel is evidently the *ἐπισυναγωγή* [the gathering together] of the epistle; and we have another reference to the same event and the same period in 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17: 'For the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God,' etc. This can be nothing else, then, than the summoning of the living and the dead to the tribunal of Christ. (p.174)

Church history, the creeds, and the *Westminster Confession of Faith* have all, **always** interpreted one coming of Christ. When Scripture is allowed to interpret Scripture, it remains **one** coming. And when audience relevance is applied, **that one coming has already happened**.

"Some Of You Will Not Sleep" -- Huh?

In Mr. Sproul Jr.'s *Foreword to The End of All Things* -- Let's examine the comment made about how effective the preterist approach to interpretation has been in the fight against premil-dispensationalism -

Thankfully, God in his mercy has done a great work in waking up many people to their condition. The rapid spread of the doctrine of preterism has been a welcome tonic. No more visits to the chiropractor after making "some of you will not sleep" and "this generation shall not pass" stretch out into two millennia. (p.9)

One of the major inconsistencies that partial preterists try to defend (or should I say cover up?) is the plain language time statements found in I Corinthians 15:51-52 "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," and I Thessalonians 4:15-17 "we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." Because of the surrounding context (resurrection and change, *rapture*) partial preterists are forced to play word games with the obvious time-frame references. Ideas are concocted in an attempt to escape the impact of the plain meaning of the text. Isn't this what the premil-dispensationalists do? Isn't this the very issue that Mr. Sproul Jr. is addressing in the above statement? Aren't partial preterists engaging in the same tactics they detest? How do "We shall not all sleep" and "we which are alive and remain" **NOT** fit into the below verses that partial preterists (*All Things* p.14) posit at AD 70?

When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. (Mtt.10:23)

For the Son of Man is *about to* (Gr. *mello*) come with His angels in the glory of His Father. And then He will give reward to each according to his works. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. (Mtt.16:27-28)

Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. (Mtt.26:64)

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. (Mtt.24:34)

In all of these verses, some of that generation would still be alive to witness Christ's coming. What does "some of you standing here shall not taste death" mean? Doesn't it mean that **some would live**, and **some would die**? Doesn't that fit perfectly into "**this generation**"? -- Before this generation passes, some of you will die, yet some of you will live to see the Parousia of Christ in the destruction of Jerusalem. This is how the partial preterists understand Matthew 16:27-28 and 24:34 together. Again, how is it that "We shall not all sleep" and "we which are alive and remain" do not fit into this understanding? Some would live, and some would die.

I propose that this really isn't as hard to understand as the partial preterists are making it out to be. In the January, 1999 issue of *Tabletalk* magazine (R. C. Sproul Jr., editor in chief), Ligonier Ministries monthly publication, on the cover the phrase "Some Of You Will Not Sleep" is written. And just inside the front cover is R. C. Sproul Jr.'s "*Coram Deo*," where again you will find the phrase "some of you will not sleep." In this section, Mr. Sproul Jr. states in similar language what he wrote in the *Foreword* to Mr. Seraiah's book -

This position, known as preterism, takes seriously the time frame references of Jesus and the apostles regarding Christ's return. While all others, especially the most hard-core dispensationalists, are practicing exegetical yoga with Jesus' promises that "some of you will not sleep" and "this generation will not pass," preterists read and understand without contortion or embarrassment.

Mr. Sproul Jr., in this excerpt *once again* uses this **phrase** -- "some of you will not sleep." I have one question: Where does he find this? **It's not in my Bible. It's not in any Bible that I have ever seen. It's not a verse!** If he is trying to quote from Matthew 16:28, and I believe that he is, that's not what the verse says! Matthew 16:28 says, "some of you **standing here shall not taste of death.**" This must be what he meant to quote; because he certainly would not have been quoting from the verse that actually has -- "**not sleep**" in it, and apply that to AD 70! The verse that more closely reflects his phrase would be I Corinthians 15:51 -

Behold, I shew you a mystery; **We shall not all sleep**, but we shall all be changed,

Mr. Sproul Jr. would not have *intentionally* connected I Corinthians 15:51's "We shall not all sleep" with Matthew 24:34's "this generation will not pass" would he? That would be a "damnable heresy" (*All Things* p.10)! How could he have confused Matthew 16:28 with I Corinthians 15:51? Partial preterists know where to draw the line don't they? They know that Matthew 16:28 **must be** applied to AD 70, because Christ was

SPEAKING TO His disciples, and He said, "**you**." But I Corinthians 15:51 is allowed to be applied to *some other* coming because Paul was **WRITING TO the Corinthians**, and he said, "**we**"? I guess audience relevance is only good for you when taken in moderation. ([cover photo of Tabletalk](#))

It's not surprising to find that Dr. R. C. Sproul did something similar in *Last Days*. On pages 160-163, Dr. Sproul contends with I Corinthians 15. Take a look at what he says -

[I]t is likewise possible that the "we who are alive" can be even more inclusive and refers to any reader of the Corinthian text in the future. (p.162)

Do you see what happened? Dr. Sproul wrote, "we who are alive." **"We who are alive" is not in the Corinthian passage! It's in the Thessalonian passage!**

Why are these men confusing these verses? Could it be because **they all connote the same meaning?**

"Some of you standing here shall not taste death" = "We shall not all sleep" = "we who are alive and remain"

All three fit perfectly into "this generation." Partial preterists argue **for** a coming of Christ in AD 70 against premil-dispensationalists. The above verses, when allowed to plainly speak, support their argument! But they are not used. Why is that?

R. C. Sproul Jr. writes that "preterists read and understand" the time-frame references in the New Testament. I wholeheartedly agree.

The -- "But Paul died before AD 70" Excuse

Dr. Russell's *Introduction* to I Corinthians 15 -

In entering upon this grand and solemn portion of the Word of God we desire to do so with profound reverence and humility of spirit, dreading to rush in where angels might fear to tread; and anxiously solicitous 'to bring out of the inspired words what is really in them, and to put nothing into them that is not really there.'...Old traditions and preconceived opinions are not patient of contradiction, and even truth may often be in danger of being spurned as foolishness merely because it is novel. Let him be assured that every word is spoken in all honesty, after every effort to discover the true meaning of the text has been exhausted, and in the spirit of loyalty and submission to the supreme authority of Scripture. It is no part of the business of an interpreter to vindicate the sayings of inspiration; his whole care should be to find out what those sayings are. (p.199)

Partial preterists in their attempts to water-down the strong words of Paul in I Corinthians 15:51 and I Thessalonians 4:15-17, have come up with some pretty weak arguments (see *The End of All Things*, pp.175-181). One of these comes from the fact that Paul did not live to AD 70. Partial preterists see this as a loophole to manipulate in these otherwise obvious time statements.

Although I do not believe this to be the correct answer, it could be argued that at the time Paul wrote these letters it had not yet been revealed to him ("the time of my departure is at hand." II Timothy 4:6) that he would not live to see the Day.

The *New Geneva Study Bible*, notes on II Timothy -

2 Timothy is the last letter written by Paul...Paul wrote 2 Timothy during his second Roman imprisonment (1:8; 2:9)...probably between A.D. 64 and 68. (p.1917)

And on I Corinthians -

Paul makes it clear in 16:8 that he wrote this letter from Ephesus during the third missionary journey (A.D. 53-57). Since the apostle stayed in Ephesus well over two years (Acts 19:8, 10), I Corinthians was written about A.D. 55. (p.1797)

And I Thessalonians 4 -

Paul wrote the first letter to the Thessalonians almost certainly from Corinth, where Silas and Timothy, senders with him of the letters, were reunited with him (Acts 18:5; 2 Cor. 1:19). The letter was most likely written in A.D. 50 or 51, with 2 Thessalonians following shortly. Therefore, 1 and 2 Thessalonians are among the earliest letters we have from the hand of Paul... (p.1893)

Mr. Seraiah wants to assign the year AD 66 (p.177) to Paul's death. O.K., we'll give him that. And the *New Geneva Study Bible*, dated II Timothy as "probably between A.D. 64 and 68." So for the purpose of this paper we'll take the date of AD 65 for the writing of II Timothy. One year before Paul's death.

This means that at least **fourteen years** had passed (51 to 65) between the writing of I Thessalonians 4:15-17, when Paul included himself among the "we who are alive and remain" and II Timothy 4:6, when he **now** knew that he would *probably* not live to see the Day. And considering the I Corinthians passage -- **ten years** (55 to 65) had expired from the time that he had included himself within the "We shall not all sleep," and the II Timothy passage when he declared that his "departure [was] at hand."

The above is to demonstrate that -- just like you or I, if we were the author and did not know, we would naturally have included ourselves. It is very simple language when allowed. It's obvious that what impairs the partial preterists' ability to see this is a "persistent blindness of a dogmatic bias" (M.S. Terry).

I also don't believe this to be the correct answer, but another point to consider in the "we" excuse, is that I Thessalonians is addressed from -

Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians...

In I Thessalonians 4:15, who are the "we" and the "you"?

For this **we** say to **you** by the word of the Lord, that **we** who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

This epistle is from "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy," the first "we" of verse 15. Unless one can prove that all three, Paul, Silas and Timothy did not live to see the Day, then the -- "Paul couldn't have been meaning that he would live to see the Day because he died before it, and therefore the 'we' is for countless generations" excuse, won't work. At the time that Paul wrote this epistle, he knew that it was possible that he could live to see it; so he said "we."

AND NOW -- what I consider to be the real answer. Don't forget that within the "we" there are two groups of people -- those who would live to see the Day, and those who would die before it came. In that he says "we," **he includes himself in either group**. Simply because Paul died before AD 70, in no way gives us free license to change a letter written "**to the church of God which is at Corinth**" or "**To the church of the Thessalonians**," into one written **TO US** 2,000 years later.

Dr. Russell -

[I]t would not alter the plain and natural meaning of words, or make it incumbent upon us to force an interpretation upon them which they will not bear. The Scriptures must be allowed to speak for themselves -- a liberty which many will not concede. (p.172)

On page 162 of *Last Days*, Dr. R. C. Sproul argues -

If we conclude that Paul, by divine inspiration, is predicting that the resurrection will occur while he is still alive, then the resurrection occurred at least five years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem (Paul was martyred under Nero in A.D.65).

Dr. Sproul is trying to assert that since Preterists contend that the resurrection occurred at the Parousia in AD 70, and since "by divine inspiration" Paul said "we," then for Preterism to be correct this demands that the resurrection must have taken place while Paul was still living. I will refer to the arguments above and below to refute this logic. The fact remains, Paul under divine inspiration said "we." Even Jesus in Matthew 24:36 said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Jesus said that *even He* didn't know when! But He did say, "this generation." Jesus said that **"no man"** knows. Paul did not, under divine inspiration know the day or hour; and he says as much in I Thessalonians 5:1, but he did know and teach that Christ would Return in that generation. Paul is teaching the exact same thing as Christ! According to Dr. Sproul's argument Paul was saying, "I'm definitely going to be among the 'alive' when He comes." But is this what Paul said? No, he said that **some of them**, maybe even he himself, would live unto the coming of the Lord. How would you have said it? How could Paul have been any clearer? "We shall not all sleep" and "we who are alive and remain." How do these not fit perfectly into Christ's Parousia at AD 70 that partial preterists admit to having happened? Dr. Sproul argues that because Paul said "we," this demands that Paul had to be among those alive. How does this allow for Dr. Sproul's resurrection 2,000+ years into the future? How does Paul saying "we," now mean "me" in the 21st century and beyond?

Paul was Wrong?

It's interesting to note that many commentators *used to* know what "we" meant. They saw the implication of Paul's words, and said something like, "It's obvious that Paul thought Christ was coming back in his day, but he was wrong." To them "we" meant "we" (this generation). But now, this new-found knowledge of "*a type of coming*" at AD 70, and all of a sudden the definition they used to give to "we" no longer exists. Why is that? Has the knowledge of AD 70 provided them with an apparent escape route? They no longer have to say under their breath, "Paul was wrong." Now it's -- "'We' doesn't mean 'we.'"

Dr. Russell -

The legitimate inference from the words of St. Paul in ver. 15, 'we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord,' is that he anticipated it as possible, and even probable, that his readers and himself would be alive at the coming of the Lord. Such is the natural and obvious interpretation of his language. Dean Alford observes, with much force and candour, --

'Then, beyond question, he himself expected to be alive, together with the majority of those to whom he was writing, at the Lord's coming. For we cannot for a moment accept the evasion of Theodoret and the majority of ancient commentators (viz. that the apostle does not speak of himself personally, but of those who should be living at the period), but we must take the words in their only plain grammatical meaning, that "we which are alive and remain" are a class distinguished from "they that sleep" by being yet in the flesh when Christ comes, in which class by prefixing "we" he includes his readers and himself. That this was his expectation we know from other passages, especially from 2 Cor. v.'

But while thus admitting that the apostle held this expectation, Alford treats it as a mistaken one, for he goes on to say: --

'Nor need it surprise any Christian that the apostles should in this matter of detail have found their personal expectation liable to disappointment respecting a day of which it is so solemnly said that no man knoweth its appointed time, not the angels in heaven, not the Son, but the Father only (Mark xiii. 32).'

But the question is, had the apostles sufficient grounds for their expectation? Were they not fully justified in believing as they did? Had not the Lord expressly predicted His own coming within the limit of the existing generation? (pp.166-167)

Dean Alford recognized the plain language and said that Paul by saying "we who are alive and remain" meant that generation. He then goes on to say that they (the apostles) were mistaken; and that, *no man knows the day or hour, not even Christ*. But is this what Paul was teaching? That he knew the day and hour? Or was Paul simply teaching exactly what Christ had taught -- "this generation"? By the way, how can one go to Paul's teaching on *the nature of the resurrection*, yet not believe him on *the time of it*?

Within the "We" there are Two Groups of First Century Believers

As previously stated, I believe the correct answer is -- Paul, by writing, "We shall not all sleep," includes himself in one of two groups -

group 1) Not all of **them** would die, and

group 2) Not all of **them** would live.

This fits hand in glove with "some of you standing here shall not taste of death" and "this generation."

Partial preterists argue that -- "Paul said 'we,' but he died before AD 70, therefore he couldn't have meant Christ's coming at AD 70." But we mustn't forget the rest of the verse. I Corinthians 15:51 -

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

In the first "we" Paul includes himself within one of the two groups. No one knows who is going to live or who is going to die before the Day. Paul does not know which group he will be a part of, but he does know and tells them as much, that -- **some will live** to see Christ's Return, and **some will die** before it happens. Now look at the second "we" -

but **we shall all** be changed

The second half of the verse cannot be overlooked. Paul says, "**we shall all** be changed" -- Not all of us are going to die, but **we all**, even those of us who die, will be changed. By saying "we-all," Paul has, without a doubt, included himself among that first century audience! In that he says, "we shall all be changed," Paul is now speaking of both groups, **the living and the dead** ("him who is **ready** to judge the living and the dead" I Peter 4:5). At Christ's coming **all would be changed**, the living and the dead. The fact that Paul says "we" both times shows that he considered himself to be in one group (the living), or the other (those who would die). Some of the Corinthians certainly DID live to see the Day at AD 70! This demands that "by divine inspiration" Paul taught that the resurrection/change would occur at Christ's Parousia in that generation! Whether we believe that it happened or not (like Dean Alford), is another story. The plain language "without contortion or embarrassment" fits into that generation! I Corinthians 15:51-52 -

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

The very next verse defines this "change" that both groups ("we-all") would experience. I Corinthians 15:53 -

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

The "change" for the dead saints was that they would be "raised incorruptible;" they would "put on incorruption." The still living "mortal" Christians would "put on immortality" (a condition not available under the Old Covenant).

Dr. R. C. Sproul from *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Interpreting The Bible) (ital. emphasis his, bold mine) -

[P]roperly understood, the only legitimate and valid method of interpreting the Bible is the method of literal interpretation. Yet there is much confusion about the idea of literal interpretation. Literal interpretation, strictly speaking, means that we are to **interpret the Bible as it is written. A noun is treated as a noun** and a verb as a verb. It means that all forms that are used in the writing of the Bible are to be interpreted according to the normal rules governing those forms. Poetry is to be treated as poetry. Historical accounts are to be treated as history...In this regard, **the Bible is to be interpreted according to the rules that govern the interpretation of any book.** (pp.25-26)

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition 1996 -

we - pronoun 1. Used by the speaker or writer to indicate the speaker or writer along with another or others as the subject.

Dr. Russell on I Corinthians 15:51-52 -

But the question for us is, To whom does the apostle refer when he says, 'We shall not all sleep,' etc.? Is it to some hypothetical persons living in some distant age of time, or is it of the Corinthians and himself that he is thinking? Why should he think of the distant future when it is certain that he considered the Parousia to be imminent? Why should he not refer to himself and the Corinthians when their common hope and expectation was that they should live to witness the Parousia? There is no conceivable reason, then, why we should depart from the proper grammatical force of the language. When the apostle says 'we,' he no doubt means the Christians of Corinth and himself. (pp.208-209)

Is Audience Relevance Really that Important?

Dr. R. C. Sproul in *Last Days*, fights for an audience relevance-based interpretation (preteristic) of Matthew 24:4-13 -

What significance did Jesus' warning have for and to his immediate hearers? It is one thing for us to ask how Jesus' teaching applies to us; it is quite another to ask what it meant in its original context. We must keep in mind that Jesus was answering questions posed by his disciples, questions about *when* his previous utterances would be fulfilled. His words were directed to them. "Take heed," he said, "that no one deceives *you*." He told his disciples that they would hear of wars and rumors of wars, and so forth. (pp.34-35)

And Paul was writing **TO** the **Corinthian** and **Thessalonian** churches. "His words were directed **TO them**." It seems that rules of interpretation are arbitrarily enforced in the partial preterist camp. "[W]hat it meant in its original context" is cast aside when it doesn't produce the desired result.

Again Dr. Sproul from *Last Days* (emphasis mine) -

It is one thing for us to ask **how Jesus' teaching applies to us**; it is quite another to ask **what it meant in its original context**. (p.35)

And from *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Private Interpretation) -

A particular statement **may have numerous possible personal applications**, but **it can only have one correct meaning**. (p.28)

If you were a member of the first century church in Corinth or Thessalonica, what would you have thought Paul meant? And if Paul was teaching two different Parousias separated by thousands of years as the partial preterists contend, which Parousia would you have connected the resurrection to? The one in **your** generation, right?!? He said, "**We** shall not all sleep;" and "**we** which are alive and remain." Again, how do these clear time statements (and they are clear), when allowed to mean what they plainly say, **not fit** perfectly into the partial preterists' Parousia in AD 70?

We saw above that for Dr. Sproul, the use of the word "you" when Christ was speaking **to his disciples** was a deciding factor for an audience relevance-based interpretation. In an effort to help the partial preterists convert (Scripture interprets Scripture) the I Corinthians 15 and I Thessalonians 4 passages into *acceptable* preteristic interpretations, let's take a look at II Corinthians 4:14, where Paul uses the *preferred* word "you" when writing **TO** the Corinthians -

Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

Dr. Russell on II Corinthians 4:14 -

We have already seen (1 Thess. iv.15, and 1 Cor. xv.51) that the apostle cherished the hope

that he himself would be among those 'who would be alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord.' In this epistle, however, it would seem as if this hope regarding himself were somewhat shaken. His experience in the interval between the First Epistle and the Second had been such as to lead him to apprehend speedy death. (See chap. i.8, etc.) His 'trouble in Asia' had made him despair of life, and he probably felt that he could not calculate on escaping the malignant hostility of his enemies much longer. He had now 'the sentence of death in himself;' he bore about 'in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus,' and felt that he was 'always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.'

But this anticipation did not diminish the confidence with which he looked forward to the future; for even should he die before the Parousia, he would not on that account lose his part in the triumphs and glories of that day. He was assured that 'he which raised up the Lord Jesus would raise up *him* also by Jesus, and would present him along with the living saints who might survive to that period. He would not be absent from the great *επισυναγωγή* (gathering together, JEGjr) at the coming of our Lord (2 Thess. ii. 1), but would be 'presented,' along with his friends at Corinth and elsewhere, 'before the presence of his glory.' In fact, the apostle now comforts himself with the same words with which he had comforted the bereaved mourners in Thessalonica. He appears to have relinquished the hope that he would himself live to witness the glorious appearing of the Lord; but not the less was he persuaded that he would suffer no loss by having to die; for, as he had taught the Thessalonians, 'them also which sleep in Jesus God would bring with him;' and the living saints would in that day have no advantage above those who slept (1 Thess. iv. 14, 15). (pp.215-216)

Isn't this verse, II Corinthians 4:14, speaking of the same *rapture* passage as I Thessalonians 4:14-17? But now Paul uses the personal pronoun "you," that partial preterists demand for an AD 70 fulfillment -

Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present **us** with **you**. (II Cor.4:14)

We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus **those who have fallen asleep in him**. 17 After that, **we who are still** alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. (I Thess.4:14 and 17)

Dr. Russell on I Thessalonians 4:13-17; the resurrection of the dead and the *rapture* of the living saints -

These explanations of St. Paul are evidently intended to meet a state of things which had begun to manifest itself among the Christians of Thessalonica, and which had been reported to him by Timotheus. Eagerly looking for the coming of Christ, they deplored the death of their fellow- Christians as excluding them from participation in the triumph and blessedness of the Parousia. 'They feared that these departed Christians would lose the happiness of witnessing their Lord's second coming, which they expected soon to behold.' (Conybeare and Howson, ch. xi.) To correct this misapprehension the apostle makes the explanations contained in this passage.

First, he assures them that they had no reason to regret the departure of their friends in Christ, as if they had sustained any disadvantage by dying before the coming of the Lord; for as God raised up Jesus from the dead, so He would raise up His sleeping disciples from their graves, at His return in glory.

Secondly, he informs them, on the authority of the Lord Jesus, that those of themselves who lived to see His coming would not take precedence of, or have any advantage over, the faithful who had deceased before that event.

Paul says "you" in II Corinthians 4:14 when referring to the Corinthians; those who would live to see the Day. This letter was written **to the Corinthian church** and Paul says "**you**." Are the partial preterists going to play the word game again? "You" means "you" when Jesus **speaks** it, but "you" doesn't mean "you" when Paul **writes** it? These epistles were written **TO the Corinthians**, and **TO the Thessalonians** and they are addressed as "you" (emph. mine) -

Behold, I shew **YOU** a mystery; We shall not all sleep... (I Cor.15:51)

For this we say **TO YOU** by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord... (I Thess.4:15)

How does the partial preterist explain Paul's use of "you" here? How are the "you" **NOT** part of the "we" of **the very same verses**?

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition 1996 -

you - pronoun 1. Used to refer to the one or ones being addressed

Let's take another look at the resurrection and *rapture* of I Thessalonians 4:14,17 and compare it to Hebrews 11:39-40. Remember, the *Hebrews* writer in the previous verses had been listing many of the Old Testament saints who had died in faith, but "none of **them** received what had been promised." In 11:39-40, he goes on to tell **the first century LIVING readers of the epistle** ("us") that **those** ("them") **who had died** before, would be "perfect[ed]" **together with the living** -

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of **them** received what had been promised. God had planned something better for **us** so that only **TOGETHER WITH US** would **they** be made perfect. (Heb.11:39-40)

We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus **those who have fallen asleep** in him. After that, **we who are still alive** and are left will be caught up **TOGETHER WITH THEM** in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. (I Thess.4:14, 17)

Both of these passages are teaching the same thing. And both were written **to** those first century Christians. Both passages place the resurrection of the Old Testament saints in that generation. They would be "made perfect" along with those "who [were] still alive" at His coming (the "change" of the living). The only way to get around these time statements is to say, "It didn't happen," and "they were wrong." That is something that Preterists will not tolerate. Preterists say, "I'm taking their word for it. Now let's dig deeper and see what they meant, and exactly *what did happen* back then."

Greek [Mello] -- "[P]referred meaning is: 'be on the point of, be about to'" -Dr. Ken Gentry

Above we saw that Peter wrote that Christ was "**ready** to judge the living and the dead." In Acts 24:15, Paul states that there was "a resurrection to be **about to be** [Gr. *mello*] both of just and of unjust" (Alfred Marshall's *Literal Translation Bible*). Just before Paul died he wrote to Timothy, "I solemnly witness before - God and Christ Jesus, the one **being about to** [Gr. *mello*] judge living ones and dead, both by the appearance of him and by the kingdom of him" (II Timothy 4:1 *LTB*). Although the partial preterists have an 'appearance' of Christ and a 'kingdom' coming at AD 70, they consider the events of II Timothy 4:1 to be something *different*; despite the clear indication of imminence, these are reserved for *some other* coming. Remember -- two of everything?

Dr. Russell on II Timothy 4:1 -

The nearness of this consummation is distinctly affirmed. It is not, as in our Authorised Version, 'who shall judge,' but 'who is about to judge' [του μελλοντοζ κρινειν]. One statement like this might suffice to settle the question both as to the fact, that the time of the Parousia was at hand. But, instead of a single affirmation, we have the constant and uniform tenor of the whole New Testament doctrine on the subject. Those who say the apostles were in error on this point must have 'a verifying faculty' to distinguish between their inspired and their uninspired utterances. If St. Paul was inspired to write κρινειν (to judge, JEGjr), was he not equally inspired to write μελλοντοζ (being about, JEGjr)? (p.262)

Why is it that the partial preterists only use the Greek *mello* - "about to" when it suits them? You'll see it in all of their books. But when it comes to these verses -- Acts 24:15 and II Timothy 4:1, they are silent. Why is

that? Why would all of the popular literal translators -- Marshall, Young, Green, Weymouth, etc., translate this word as "about to" in these resurrection and judgment verses? They were not Preterists. They certainly did not translate *mello* as "about to" in order to support an agenda. The answer is simple -- It's what the word means, and these men were honest with the text!

Partial preterists go to these **same translators** of *mello* in passages *they choose* in order to support their claim of a *type of coming* in AD 70. For example, Dr. Kenneth Gentry on Revelation 1:19, *Before Jerusalem Fell* -

The relevant phrases read: "the things which are about to occur"... the word's preponderate usage and preferred meaning is: "be on the point of, be about to." All of this is particularly significant when the contexts of these occurrences of $\mu\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omega$ (Rev.1:19 and 3:10 JEGjr) in Revelation are considered: the words appear in near proximity with the statements made up of the two other word groups indicating "nearness." ...Clearly, then, the Revelation 1:19 and 3:10 references hold forth an excited expectation of soon occurrence. (pp.141-142)

Let's take a look at how one of Dr. Gentry's preferred translators, Jay P. Green Sr. (*BJF* footnote p.141) translates Revelation 1:19 -

Write what things you saw, and what things are, and what things are about to occur after these things.

The apostle John is told to write down -- what things he **saw** (*past* to him), what things **are** (*present* to him), and the things that **are about to occur** (*near future* to him).

Dr. Gentry has done well to point out that John was given specific instruction to write down **the things that are about to occur**; and that these "things" were also said to be "[near]." But where in this verse is John told to write down **the things that are going to occur at least 2,000 years in the future**? In two chapters (Rev.11 and 20), John writes about the resurrection and judgment. How does the partial preterists' postponed resurrection and judgment fit into "the things that are about to occur," that were declared to be "[near]"?

Dr. Gentry also shows that in Revelation 1 and 22, John is shown "**the things** which must shortly come to pass...for the time is at hand." Aren't these the same "**the things** that are about to occur"? Aren't the resurrection and judgment part of "the things" that John wrote down? How is it that the partial preterists are allowed to get away with violating their own rules? This is the very nature of partial preterist' hermeneutics -- Dr. Gentry argues like a Preterist, then again, he doesn't.

Why do partial preterists feel safe in their use of *mello* against the premil- dispensationalists? Think about it. What premil-dispensationalist would bring up the fact that the partial preterists are inconsistent in their use of *mello* in Acts 24:15 and II Timothy 4:1? None. The premil-dispensationalists are not going to point out to the "Christian World" that **the proper translation of those verses support a PAST Resurrection and Judgment!**

Why is the partial preterist inconsistent in the use of the word? Is it because the consistent translation of *mello* only supports one coming, and not two? Is it by sheer coincidence that when *mello* is translated properly in all verses, those verses fit perfectly into "this generation"? As Dr. Russell pointed out, the word is in the original Greek text, God put it there, it is just as inspired as every other word in the New Testament. Why don't we find it properly and consistently translated in our *popular* versions? Why won't the partial preterists go to their favorite literal translators for the very same Greek word (*mello*) in these resurrection verses? **Mello translated as "about to" in Acts 24:15 and II Timothy 4:1 supports the partial preterists' argument for a coming at AD 70!** But we don't see them use it. Why is that? The irony is -- It's not as though Preterists are arguing for some strange and obscure date in history, like, say, 1584 for *some other coming* of Christ. No, Preterists are arguing for the partial preterist! Preterists recognize the plain language, and when that language is allowed to mean what it plainly says, it fits perfectly into AD 70. Preterists, through the plain language of the Scriptures are arguing for the partial preterists' coming at AD 70. Yet, the partial preterists argue against Scripture - against their own coming at AD 70 - against themselves!

When it's in their favor partial preterists will use "audience relevance" argumentation and *mello* against the premil-dispensationalists. Notice, however, that these two favorite weapons must be abandoned when

arguing against true Preterists. In the partial preterist system the "analogy of faith" no longer exists. Passages that are almost identical in word and meaning that *used to* speak of the same **one** coming of Christ, don't anymore. This is now explained-away as, "understand[ing] that there are nuances to biblical terminology... nuances that make it possible and necessary to speak of more than one event."

(See article: [All Nations Stood Before The Throne](#) -- points out many of the *violations* of plain Scripture by partial preterists; in order to maintain a future resurrection.)

TO: Only One Possible Generation

Dr. Sproul from *Last Days* (emph. mine) -

[I]t is likewise possible that the "we who are alive" can be even more inclusive and **refers to any reader of the Corinthian text in the future.** (p.162)

This argument doesn't work either. If Paul says, "We shall not all sleep," he can only be writing that **TO** the generation that the Lord's coming actually occurs in, past or future. The Futurists' understanding of this is -- at the time of Christ's Return in our future, those "who are alive and remain" - those who would "not all sleep" - will be raptured. Well, doesn't this demand that Paul was only writing these verses **TO** that generation in the future that it will actually happen in, and that he was writing it **FOR** every other generation since? For the past 1,900 years of Christianity, Christians have "all [slept]." How can it be said that this was written **TO** them? It can't. But it was written **FOR** them. The verses say that **some of the "we"** would be **ALIVE** at the Lord's coming! So these verses **must be** proscribed to only one generation -- The first century generation Christians **TO** whom Paul's letters are actually addressed, many of whom were ALIVE at Christ's coming in AD 70.

In Matthew 24, the signs that were to precede Christ's coming... The full-on Futurist believes that these signs are still to come, or, are happening now. So, were these "signs of the times" written **TO** the Christians in, say, the 15th century? No. It would have to be said that they were written **FOR** them. Now, the partial preterist understands that those signs were spoken **TO** the first century Christians who would actually live through the Great Tribulation that led up to AD 70, and that these "signs" are past in fulfillment. But weren't Matthew 24's "signs of the times" written **FOR** us? Haven't we learned from them what happened back then? Would the partial preterist argue that Christ's warning "signs" were spoken **TO** us? No. **The one generation that would actually see the fulfillment of these prophecies is the only generation TO whom they were spoken/written!** The prophecies, and the knowledge of the fulfillment of those prophecies are **FOR** the benefit of every other generation since that time.

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; **of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.** (I Corinthians 15:4-6)

Even the most staunch premil-dispensationalist must read this verse (15:6) like a Preterist. Is Paul writing this **TO** *some* generation 2,000 + years later? Are most of those brethren who had seen the risen Jesus, still alive today; and only some of them have fallen asleep? Of course not; that would be ridiculous! So why does the partial preterist insist that Paul all of a sudden, just a couple of verses later, **must now be** writing **TO** *some other* generation way off in the future?

Behold, I shew you a mystery; **We shall not all sleep...** (I Cor.15:51)

Isn't Paul, in this verse (15:51), simply stating the same as he had previously? Some of **their** contemporaries, who had seen the risen Savior, had "fallen asleep," but most were still alive! He then repeats **TO** the Corinthians, his contemporaries, that -- "**We** shall not all sleep." These verses proclaim exactly what Christ affirmed in Matthew 16:28 -- "Some of you standing here shall not taste of death."

What is it that makes the partial preterists change the plain meaning of the word "we" in verse 51? It must be the surrounding context -- resurrection. But isn't verse 6 introducing the resurrection context which doesn't end until verse 58? The point being -- Just like Matthew 16:28, these phrases are interchangeable, they mean the same thing. Paul was writing **TO the Corinthians** in verse 6, and he was still writing **TO the**

Corinthians in verse 51! Not all of **THEM** would sleep!

"The Reason that THEY Might Sleep" - C. Jonathin Seraiah

Immediately following the great *rapture* passage -

Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. (I Thessalonians 5:1-4)

Mr. Seraiah from *The End of All Things* -

I am not denying that 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9 speaks of the readiness that Paul wanted his readers to have in preparation for the Neronic persecution. We are, however, stating that Paul does make a clear switch in topic when he says, "but as to the times and seasons" (i.e., the times and seasons that he and his readers were then in as opposed to the Final Advent which they would not even see). (p.178)

In the very next sentence, Mr. Seraiah gives away his entire argument for the rejection of the plain language meaning of "we" in I Thessalonians 4:15-17 (emph. mine) -

In verse ten, Paul brings together the two topics (of the Final Advent and Christ's spiritual coming against Jerusalem) by saying that "whether we wake or sleep we might live with him." His point of our "living with him" is an obvious reference back to the "raising" of believers that happens in 4:16-17; the fact that Christ "rose again" to life and that we are to "rise" means that we will "live with him" (see also John 14:19). The reason that **they** might "sleep" is because **they** may not survive the Neronic persecution he was warning **them** about. The fact that he has returned to the topic of resurrection, as found in 4:16-17, is evident in 5:11 that he repeats from 4:18. (pp.178-179)

In this whole incongruous argument, Mr. Seraiah has inadvertently given away the "we" of **I Thessalonians 4:15-17!** By admitting that when Paul says, "whether **we**-sleep" means that **"they** might 'sleep'- because **they may not survive the Neronic persecution**" -- This demands that Mr. Seraiah is **equating the "we" of this resurrection passage TO the THE THESSALONIANS!** IF according to Mr. Seraiah, Paul's "we" means "they" in this verse (5:10), THEN it **certainly must mean "they" (Thessalonian Christians) in I Thessalonians 4:15-17!** IF **I Thessalonians 5:10 was written TO the Thessalonians, THEN so was I Thessalonians 4:15-17!**

This means that -- **THE FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANS WERE INCLUDED AMONG THE "WE WHO ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN UNTO THE COMING OF THE LORD!"**

And isn't "whether we wake or sleep" saying **EXACTLY THE SAME THING AS IN I CORINTHIANS 15:51's "WE SHALL NOT ALL SLEEP"?** Doesn't "we shall not all sleep" mean that -- some would be "awake" and some would be "[a]sleep"? Mr. Seraiah said, "The reason that **they** might 'sleep'..." This is not what Mr. Seraiah *wanted* to say, but he did. **He has equated the "we" TO "[them]."** Because the epistle was only written **TO** one generation, past or future, this demands that Paul was writing **TO those first century Christians** (Mr. Seraiah's "they") and that it was **to occur in their generation while some of THEM were STILL ALIVE!**

Also note that Mr. Seraiah connects Paul's statements for readiness (emph. mine) -

The fact that he [Paul] has returned to the topic of resurrection, as found in 4:16-17, is evident in **5:11** that he repeats from **4:18**.

So according to Mr. Seraiah, these two resurrection references (4:16-17 and 5:10) are speaking of the same future-to-us event, but both have readiness exhortations **TO the Thessalonians** attached to them in their subsequent verses (4:18 and 5:11). (emph. mine) -

After that, **we who are still alive** and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so **we** will be with the Lord forever. Therefore **encourage each other** with these words. (I Thess.4:17-18)

He died for us so that, **whether we are awake or asleep, we** may live together with him. Therefore **encourage one another** and **build each other up**, just as in fact **you are doing**. (I Thess. 5:10-11)

"[J]ust as in fact you are doing" -- Is Paul looking through the ages of generations of Christians and applying this statement to us? It was a present reality in that generation! They were "build[ing] each other up." If Paul was teaching a far-distant future Parousia with accompanied resurrection/*rapture*, why would he have said, "**whether** we are-asleep;" as if "sleep[ing]" was merely an option for the Thessalonian, not a certainty?

Also note that just as in I Thessalonians 4:15, where Paul uses the personal pronouns "you" and "we" together, we find the same in I Thessalonians 5:10-11 -

For this we say to **you** by the word of the Lord, that **we** who are alive and remain (I Thess.4:15)

whether **we** are awake or asleep...encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact **you** are doing. (I Thess. 5:10-11)

Again, how does the partial preterist explain Paul's use of "you" here in connection to the "we" of the previous verse?

Mr. Seraiah is absolutely correct to connect these two together. Both are saying the exact same thing -- Some of them would live (be "awake") and some of them would die ("sleep") before the Lord Returned -- "Therefore encourage **each other** with these words." **By including "[them]" in the "we" of 5:10, Mr. Seraiah proves the Preterists' case for Paul's plain language usage of "we" in the resurrection/*rapture* passage of 4:15-17!**

Just a few verses down in I Thessalonians 5:23, Paul further emphasizes the fact that some of them would live to see the Day (emph. mine) -

And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and **BODY** be **PRESERVED ENTIRE**, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. Russell -

If any shadow of a doubt still rested on the question whether St. Paul believed and taught the incidence of the Parousia in his own day, this passage would dispel it. No words can more clearly imply this belief than this prayer that the Thessalonian Christians might not die before the appearing of Christ. Death is the dissolution of the union between body, soul, and spirit, and the apostle's prayer is that spirit, soul, and body might 'all together' (ολοκληρον) be preserved in sanctity till the Lord's coming. This implies *the continuance of their corporeal life until that event.* (p.170)

The fact is -- **When the plain language of all of these passages is allowed, every one of them fits perfectly into the partial preterists' return of Christ in AD 70!** This is ungetoverable.

Too Much Information

One of the clearest and easiest passages to read preteristically concerning our Lord's coming is II Thessalonians 1:1-10. Keep in mind who wrote this epistle - "Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy" - they are the "we" and the "us." The Thessalonians are the "you" (not **you** and **me** 2,000 years later) -

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to **you** and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **We** are bound to thank God always for **you, brethren**, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of **you** all abounds toward **each other**, so that **we ourselves boast of you** among the churches of God for **your patience** and faith in all **your persecutions and tribulations that you endure**, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that **you** may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which **you also suffer**; since it is a **righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you**, and to give **you** who are troubled **rest with us** when the Lord Jesus is **revealed from heaven** with His **mighty angels**, in flaming fire taking vengeance on **those** who do not know God, and on **those** who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with **everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of His power, when He **comes**, in **that Day**, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because **our** testimony among **you** was believed.

If I was a partial preterist, and I wanted to prove my case for a coming of Christ in AD 70, this sure would be a passage that I would use! But why don't we see this? Why isn't this one in their books? Why does Mr. Seraiah only mention it in passing (below) as fulfilled at AD 70, and not dedicate an entire chapter to it? Could it be that this passage says too much? **For the partial preterist** this passage is so very preteristic, yet at the same time it is so very futuristic. What is the partial preterist to do? The **content** of this passage is too damaging to their system for it to be AD 70, and they know it, so they must be silent.

Paraphrase: On THAT DAY, when Christ is REVEALED FROM HEAVEN with HIS MIGHTY ANGELS, taking vengeance on THOSE who persecuted THE THESSALONIANS, God would repay THEM with EVERLASTING destruction from the presence of the Lord! This passage says too much! It has AD 70 **AND** Second Advent written all over it! Those who were persecuting the Thessalonians would be -- "punished with **everlasting destruction.**" Paul wrote, "EVERLASTING!" When does *Christ* say the unrighteous go into "everlasting punishment"? Isn't it at the same time the righteous go into eternal life?

Matthew 25:46 -

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

Dr. Russell on II Thessalonians 1:7-10 -

It is manifest that there would be no meaning in these urgent calls to watchfulness unless the apostle believed in the nearness of the coming crisis. Was it to the Thessalonians, or to some unborn generation in the far distant future, that St. Paul was penning these lines? Why urge men in A.D. 52 to watch, and be on the alert, for a catastrophe which was not to take place for hundreds and thousands of years? Every word of this exhortation supposes the crisis to be impending and imminent.

To say that the apostle writes not for any one generation, nor to any persons in particular, is to throw an air of unreality into his exhortations from which reverent criticism revolts. He certainly meant the very persons to whom he wrote, and who read this epistle, and he thought of none others. (p.169)

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* assigns II Thessalonians 1:7-10 (and Matt. 25:31-46, above) as proof for a future-to-us coming.

Chapter XXXIII - Of the Last Judgment, II e., -

...For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fulness of joy and refreshing, which shall come from the presence of the Lord...

These men of the *Westminster Assembly* recognized that both II Thessalonians 1:7-10 and Matthew 25:46 were speaking of the same **one** Parousia -- "[When] the righteous go into everlasting life" at the "Last Judgment."

But Mr. Seraiah posits II Thessalonians 1:7-10 at AD 70! (emph. mine) -

The preterist interpretation is actually the most faithful to the biblical text because it recognizes that Old Testament prophetic terminology was used by the New Testament authors. This recognition is helpful in distinguishing the prophecies of Christ's coming that were near in the first century (Matt.10:23; 16:28; 24:30; 26:64; 1 Thess.5:2; **2 Thess. 1:7**; James 5:7-9; 1 Pet.4:7; Rev.1:3,7; etc.) and thus fulfilled in A.D. 70... (p.14)

In Chapter XXXII of the *WCF* - Of the State of Men after Death and of the Resurrection of the Dead, Section II.-

At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: (e) and all the dead shall be raised up, (e) I Thess.4:17; I Cor.15:51, 52

So, the *WCF* connects II Thessalonians 1:1-7 ("everlasting"- "Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven"- "that Day") to I Thessalonians 4:17 ("Lord himself will come down from heaven"- "the trumpet call of God"- resurrection/*rapture*), and I Corinthians 15:51-52 ("at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound"- resurrection/change). All three passages to be fulfilled at the **one** Parousia of Christ!

Question: What was it that was in the II Thessalonians 1:1-10 passage that made Mr. Seraiah "[distinguish] the prophecies of Christ's coming that were near in the first century" -- from Christ's coming in I Thessalonians 4:15-17, that he says is still future? Both epistles were addressed from "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy." Both were written **"to the church of the Thessalonians."** AND BOTH EPISTLES ARE JAMMED FULL WITH THE PERSONAL PRONOUNS "WE" AND "YOU"! What gives Mr. Seraiah, or any partial preterist the right to make two letters with the exact same content all of a sudden be speaking of TWO DIFFERENT COMINGS? **"We" means "we" in II Thessalonians 1:1-10, but not in I Thessalonians 4:15-17?** What could it possibly be about these passages (I Cor.15:51-52, and I Thess.4:15-17), and these passages alone, that is forcing the partial preterists to change the plain meaning of the word "we"? Only one answer will suffice -- An unwillingness to admit to the possibility that these things happened already; and that their concept of the nature of **the believer's** resurrected body might be a faulty one. The fact that Church history has always *assumed* the resurrection to be future has allowed for an erroneous idea of the nature of that resurrection. One error allowed for another to continue. What has been considered by some to be a major tenet of the faith -- "the resurrection of the flesh," for them, it is absolutely impossible that this has been wrongly interpreted. Although the entire New Testament testifies to one Parousia of Christ with accompanying events in that generation, the partial preterists refuse to re-examine Paul's description of the believer's resurrected body in I Corinthians 15 in light of this proof.

Dr. Sproul from *Faith Alone* -

We make an important distinction in the arena of apologetics between proof and persuasion. A certain proposition may be proven objectively to be true, and a person may be unpersuaded by the proof. There can be various reasons for this. A person may be so prejudiced or hostile to the proposition that he will not honestly weigh the evidence. (pp.79-80)

Why are Daniel 12's resurrection verses (2 and 13) taken out of its certain AD 70 context? Why is Jesus' Olivet Discourse (Mtt.24-25) arbitrarily "split" in two? Why is the resurrection of Revelation 11 and 20, taken out of "the things that are about to occur" and "the things which must shortly come to pass...for the time is at hand"? Why is it that *mello* doesn't mean "about to" in II Timothy 4:1 and Acts 24:15? Why is it that Jesus said, "all things that are written" but the partial preterist says, "Not all things"? Why is it that "we" doesn't mean "we" in I Corinthians 15:51 and I Thessalonians 4:15? **Why is it that when all of these passages are allowed to mean what they plainly say, every one of them fits perfectly into the partial preterists' coming in AD 70; and not some other proposed coming?**

From Ernest Hampden-Cook, *The Christ Has Come*, 1891 -

The belief that Christ's Second Advent, with its accompaniments of a resurrection and a judgment, took place at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem rests on precisely the same basis as the expectation of the events ever taking place; namely, on the plain, emphatic, and continually repeated statements of our Lord and His apostles given beforehand...He himself

predicted that these events would take place at the close of the Jewish dispensation. To Christian believers this affords the strongest possible presumption that they did take place...The burden of proof in the argument rests not on those who assert, but on those who deny the past advent...To deny the truth of His predictions because we are unable historically to verify a certain portion of them is simply to make manifest the shallowness of our faith in Him. To disprove the truth of those predictions would be to shake the Christian religion to its very foundations. Let God and God's Son be true, and, if need be, every mere man a liar!

The Clear, and the Not-So-Clear

Dr. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Interpreting the Bible) -

The chief rule of biblical interpretation is "sacred Scripture is its own interpreter." This principle means that the Bible is to be interpreted by the Bible. What is obscure in one part of Scripture may be made clear in another. To interpret Scripture by Scripture means that we must not set one passage of Scripture against another passage. Each text must be understood not only in light of its immediate context but also in light of the context of the whole of Scripture...The Bible is not to be interpreted according to our own desires and prejudices. We must seek to understand what it actually says and guard against forcing our own views upon it. (pp.25-26)

What is clear is that Paul said "**We** shall not all sleep." What is clear is that **nowhere in the Scriptures** is there any indication that Jesus or the apostles ever taught anything but one Parousia. What is clear is that Paul *did* live in the generation that saw Christ's coming in AD 70! What is clear is that if Paul had not died prematurely (martyrdom - information he was not privy to at the time he wrote I Cor. and I Thess.), he would have lived to see Christ's coming at AD 70; like those to whom he wrote, he would have been "alive and remain[ed] unto the coming of the Lord." What is clear is that many of the Thessalonian and Corinthian Christians were "alive and remain[ed]" and did "not all sleep" before Christ's coming in AD 70! What is clear is that Paul taught that the resurrection and *rapture*/change were to occur within the lifetime of those in that generation. All of the partial preterists' exegetical gymnastics flow from the denial of these truths.

Mr. Seraiah -

Note first that there are no true time references. We say no "true" time references because some wish to say that Paul's reference to "we who are alive" (in vs.15) means that Paul expected to be alive when Christ came. (p.176)

Paul knew that Christ was going to Return within the lifetime of his readers; Jesus said He would, even partial preterists say He did! If Paul had not been martyred, wouldn't he have lived to AD 70? Of course! The only thing that prevented Paul from seeing the Day was -- God planned it that way. How can the partial preterists honestly say that they are not "set[ting] one passage of Scripture against another," when it is obvious that they are playing such word games with the plain language? To simply use the "time references" as the only tool to resolve between a coming at AD 70, and *some other* coming in the future is preposterous; especially if you're not going to use that tool consistently in all time references. "We shall not all sleep," and "we who are alive and remain" are TRUE time references! Mr. Sproul Jr. helped point that out to us -- that these verses are equal to Matthew 16:28, which partial preterists posit at AD 70. Mr. Seraiah aided us to see that when Paul said "we" ("you" Thessalonians) in I Thessalonians 5:10-11, and II Thessalonians 1:1-10, Paul meant the same "we" in the resurrection/*rapture*/change passages of I Thessalonians 4:15-17, and I Corinthians 15:51-52. The partial preterists even pick and choose when-and when-not-to use their own "time reference" tool. If the tool is not to be used in every instance, then what good is it? Did the *Westminster Assembly* use this *new* tool? No. What did they use? Well, it's obvious that it wasn't audience relevance; but they did use the analogy of faith. They saw that II Thessalonians 1:1-10 was speaking about the same, "Lord Jesus [that] shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels," as I Thessalonians 4:14-17's "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." And that I Corinthians 15:51-52's "at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound," was none other than Matthew 24:30-31's "Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet."

Confusing, isn't it? Only if you want to be a partial preterist. Aren't all of the above passages speaking of the same coming? Church history has said, "Yes, they are." This is the analogy of faith. This is allowing "sacred Scripture [to be] its own interpreter." Mr. Seraiah says that two of the above happened already, and two of

them haven't. Can you tell them apart? The *WCF* couldn't tell them apart. Our creeds couldn't tell them apart.

The partial preterist would say that interpreting the New Testament is easy -- "Everything is AD 70, save the resurrection passages." But is that what the Scriptures say? The Scriptures must be allowed *to attest to themselves*; not *to what* partial preterists simply assert. Statements like -- "Paul does make a clear switch in topic" and "there are no 'true' time references" are mere assertions made to protect a system that have no Scriptural support to back them up. How does the partial preterist consistently distinguish between two different comings without violating the analogy of faith (comparing Scripture with Scripture)? They don't. They don't do it with audience relevance, they don't even do it with their own "time reference" tool! The partial preterists' *pick and choose* method of interpretation produces a jumbled mess! When we can go to a passage and not violate any of the rules of interpretation; then we know that we are on the right track. Preterism is the only method of interpretation that does this. It's true, Preterism may violate the past interpretations of men -- men who did not take into account all of the rules of interpretation; but as pointed out, partial preterism is no stranger to this either. Partial preterism hides behind the guise of "orthodoxy," points its finger and screams "damnable heresy!" For 2,000 years "orthodoxy" has been -- **one** Second Coming! Partial preterism teaches two; and attempts to pass it off as orthodox. The very existence of partial preterism is unorthodox.

Mr. Seraiah, *End of All Things* -

Agreeably, the Scriptures speak more about the incarnation of Christ and His coming against Jerusalem in A. D. 70 than they do about His Final Advent, (p.187)

Mr. Seraiah continues -

We must remember here that [Preterists] need to show that everything in this book is false in order to defend themselves. (p.187)

I disagree. All Preterists have to do is show that partial preterists are not honest with the plain language usage of the word "we." That's what this whole argument boils down to -- Who is going to allow God's Word to speak for itself, and who is not? When Paul's plain language teaching is allowed to happen, then, as Dr. Russell stated, "every fact fits easily into its place." It should be obvious, just by some of the arguments shown in this paper, that partial preterism is nothing more than a compromise of the Truth (and not easy to follow at that). The Truth, however, is easier to understand when the word games are put up on the shelf. Mr. Seraiah says, "But Scripture is not that simplistic" (*All Things* p.12). Yet Paul writes that, "God is not the author of confusion" (I Cor.14:33). If "we" is allowed to mean "we," then the partial preterist system shuts down, and they know this.

Tradition and Corruption

The purpose of this section is to show that when an "appeal to tradition" is combined with the rampant corruption that was in "the Church," along with the lack of Bibles in the hands of the laity for the first fifteen hundred years of Church history, the proper formula for an unorthodox-Orthodoxy is produced.

STUDIES IN CHURCH HISTORY - The Rise of the Temporal Power. Benefit of the Clergy. Excommunication. The Early Church and Slavery, by Henry C. Lea, 1883, (emph. mine) -

Throughout the whole I have sought rather to present facts than to draw inferences, and I have endeavored to confine myself to points which illustrate the temporal aspect of ecclesiastical history, showing how the church, in meeting the successive crises of its career, **succeeded in establishing the absolute theocratic despotism which diverted it so strangely from its spiritual functions.** If in this I have appeared to dwell too exclusively on the faults and wrong-doing of the church, it has arisen from no lack of appreciation of the services rendered to humanity by the organization which in all ages has assumed for itself the monopoly of the heritage of Christ. Yet if we ask what would have been the condition of the world if that organization had not succeeded in bearing the ark of Christianity through the wilderness of the first fifteen centuries, in summing up the benefits which man has derived through the church, we may also not unreasonably inquire how much greater would have been our advance in all that renders us worthy of the precepts of the Gospel had that church always been true to its momentous trust...[N]o one who feels the sublime beauty and truth of

the precepts of Christ can fail to mark with sorrow **the immeasurable distance which has ever separated Christendom from the ideal of its aspirations.** That our imperfect nature should be able to attain this ideal is of course impossible, but that we should still be so hopelessly afar from it may not unreasonably be attributed to **that organization which assumed to be gifted with supernatural powers as the direct representative of Christ,** and His name sought and obtained complete authority over the souls and consciences of men. **Had it been true to the law which it professed to administer; had it spurned the vulgar ambitions of power and wealth, and had it taught by precept and example the evangel of love, Christendom would not now, in the nineteenth century after the birth of the Redeemer, be groping as blindly as ever over the yet insoluble problems of existence.** (Preface pp.iii-v. Philadelphia, Nov., 1869)

When Constantine embraced Christianity, nothing was further from his intention than to abandon to the Church any portion of his imperial prerogative. He could not, it is true, be the Pontifex Maximus of his new religion, but it mattered little whether he personally performed the sacred rites so long as he retained supreme control over those who were privileged to do so. By the organic law of the Empire, the people, from the highest to the lowest, were **all equally at the mercy of the monarch,** whose powers were only limited by his own sense of prudence and justice, **and against whom the only remedy was assassination or revolution.** 1 (Even in the sixth century, Justinian asserts autocracy to be the fundamental constitution of the empire.) **Least of all could his autocracy be doubted by Christians who, even in times of persecution, had taught that their pagan sovereigns ruled by divine right and were second only to God.**

The church, therefore, formed no exception to this universal subordination, and fully acquiesced in its condition. Its faith and discipline, its internal policy and its external privileges, were **all subjected to the supremacy of the imperial power.** Even when it gathered together in its most august and authoritative assemblies, **the presumed inspiration of the Holy Ghost** afforded it no exemption from this domination. **The confirmation of the sovereign was requisite to confer validity on the canons of general councils,** nor was that consent by any means given as a matter of course. Thus we find Constantius vetoing a portion of the canons of the synod of Rimini in 360, and the acknowledgment of this subordination was expressed at the council of Tyre, during the heat of the Arian controversy, in 335, when the Catholic bishops appealed to Count Dionysius, the imperial commissioner, asking him to reserve the questions discussed for **the decision of Constantine, whose prerogative it was to legislate for the church and its members.** **How complete was the control thus centred in the person of the emperor** is manifest in the rescript of Theodosius II. and Valentinian III. respecting the disgraceful scenes which marked the opening of the council of Ephesus in 431, under the lead of St. Cyril...the business of general councils was regulated by imperial commissioners, who were laymen, and when the council of Chalcedon, in 451, had sat from the 8th to the 30th of October, we find these officials informing the assembled prelates that **the work in hand must be hurried to completion,** as grave affairs of state required their presence elsewhere, and they could not devote more time to the church 4 (Concil. Chalced. Act.xii.). Of course, under these conditions, all general synods were convened by the authority and in the name of the sovereign; 1(For the proof of this, with respect to the first four general councils - Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon - see Hardouin, T.I. pp.345, 807, 1354; T.II. p.54) and the pretensions of the Roman see to supreme authority in convoking and presiding over these bodies were too late in their origin and too fraudulent in their proof to merit extended examination. (pp.13-15)

The laws of the Christian emperors, from Constantine to Leo the Philosopher, manifest the absolute subordination of the spiritual to the temporal authority. The minutiae of church government, the relations of the clergy among themselves, and to the state, their duties, their morals, and their actions, monastic regulations, **the suppression of heresies** (what they considered to be heresies, JEGjr) - all the details, in fact, of ecclesiastical life, internal and external, are prescribed with the assurance of unquestioned power, and with a care which shows **how large a portion of the imperial attention was devoted to the management of the church.**

Under this despotic authority, the loftiest prelates were but subjects, whose first duty was

obedience, and a long succession of feeble and worthless Caesars was requisite before the able and vigorous men who occupied the bishopric of Rome could begin to **emancipate themselves from the traditions of imperial authority**. (p.18)

Among the ecclesiastical privileges of the Caesars had always been assumed the right of dictating to the church its form of belief; and, whether the reigning conscience were orthodox or Arian, Eutychian or Monothelite, **efficacious means were always found on enforcing conformity on the part of the hierarchy**. The Western Emperors, for the most part, had troubled themselves but little with the subtleties of theological speculation, and the Arian Goths had tolerantly respected the established worship of Rome, so that **the popes, as the primates of Latin Christianity, had gradually come to consider themselves as the guardians of orthodoxy**. (p.23)

History of Christian Doctrine, Vol. 1, second period, AD 320-726 Scripture and Tradition by Henry C. Sheldon (professor of historical theology at Boston University), 1885. This entire section should be bolded -

In the theory of the Church at large, tradition was regarded as supplementing the Scriptures in the way of an authoritative exposition of their contents. Inasmuch as the Arians and other heretics sought to uphold their views by the quotation of scriptural texts, there was a strong incentive on the part of Catholic Christians to challenge their interpretation by an appeal to tradition. Hence we have the case of men who, while acknowledged the dogmatic sufficiency of the Bible, so far as content is concerned, insisted that arbitrary and capricious interpretations must be avoided by reference to tradition.

As it was felt that there might be spurious traditions, there was occasion to define the marks of the genuine, and of attempts in this direction that of Vincentius is especially noted. Three marks, according to him, distinguish valid tradition; viz. universitas, antiquitas, consensus. What the Church in all lands has confessed with the united voice of the great majority of her fathers, teachers, and priests, has upon it the impress of truth, and may claim apostolic sanction.

Tradition, no doubt, held a wider place, practically, than was allowed to it theoretically. Its extreme convenience in controversy tended to bring it into requisition. It was much easier to say, in justification of a tenet, that it had long been current in the Church, and ought therefore to be regarded as having come down from the apostles, than it was to make a thorough examination of scriptural evidence upon the subject. Conspiring with this convenience of an appeal to tradition was the weight which came to be attached to the decisions of ecumenical councils. As these councils were great bulwarks of the Catholic faith, Catholic Christians were naturally inclined to magnify their importance. The idea was early entertained that they were under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit. The councils themselves claimed as much by customarily prefacing their decrees with the apostolic formula, "Visum est Spiritui sancto et nobis," as well as by assertions in specific instances that the voice of a council was the voice of God. The decrees passed by the Nicene fathers were pronounced by the council of Chalcedon to be in every way unalterable, "for it was not they who spoke, but the Spirit Himself of God and the Father." Said Gregory the Great: "I confess that I receive and venerate the four councils [those of Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon] as I do the four books of the Holy Gospel." To the same effect is the language of Justinian: "The doctrines of the four councils we receive as we do the Holy Scriptures, and observe their rules as the laws." (See Schaff, Church History.) Thus emphatically was recognized an extra-Biblical authority. Now this naturally added to the importance and authority of tradition in the eyes of the Church. It accustomed men to look elsewhere than to the Bible for a doctrinal standard. Moreover, in proportion as there was an unwillingness to regard the decrees of councils as innovations, and it was troublesome to make out for them a scriptural basis, there was a tendency to look upon them as definite expressions of traditions which had been in the Church from the beginning. So the councils became tributary to the growing stream of tradition and traditionary authority. (pp.184-186)

History of Christian Doctrine, Vol. 1, third period, AD 726-1517 Scripture and Tradition. This entire section should also be bolded -

In the Latin Church, tradition no doubt was practically an authority of vast import; in the

actual control of thought and belief, it took precedence of Scripture, since it both governed to a very large extent the interpretation of Scripture, and also insured acceptance of tenets having no distinct Scriptural foundation.

Tradition, as heretofore, was commonly assumed to have an apostolic basis, being founded upon oracles as distinguished from the written word of the apostles. But meanwhile there was no care to prove the apostolic basis by the use of searching historical investigation. Long-continued currency of a tenet in the Church was taken as a sufficient evidence of its being substantiated by valid tradition. This, of course, gave a fictitious breadth to tradition. Church authority, that is, the existing hierarchy, had it in its power to seal as dogma that which was confirmed neither by Scripture nor by the opinion of the primitive Church.

As the sheer authority of the Church became of such dogmatic import, it was natural to emphasize its infallibility in matters of faith. It was generally understood that the Church embraces a tribunal of unerring judgment...[A]t the close of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century...There was a return, accordingly, that an ecumenical council is the highest tribunal of the Church, and the special instrument for defining the faith. This view was explicitly and emphatically asserted by the council of Constance (1414-1418). The following is among its declarations: "The council of Constance, lawfully assembled in the name of the Holy Ghost, and forming an ecumenical council representing the Catholic Church..."

While the dogmatic pre-eminence of the Bible suffered from the encroachments of tradition and church authority, its practical influence was curtailed by its exclusion from the hands of the laity...Inasmuch as the Waldenses and others were active in spreading the Bible in the language of the people, the reading of the same by laymen became associated in the minds of the authorities with heresy. A council held at Toulouse in 1229 forbade the laity to read the Old or the New Testament...A like decision was repeated by councils in 1233 and 1246. These were indeed provincial councils; but inasmuch as they were held under the sanction of the Pope, their decrees did not fall far short of a sweeping prohibition of the Scriptures to the laity. (pp.324-327)

Unlike the picture of purity and cohesion that the opponents of Preterism **must** paint for today's laity, and for themselves, our Church history is far from it; it's more like a watercolor that got rained on. I find it unbelievable that anyone who has taken even a glimpse into Church history, would claim that wherein all the confusion, man's agenda, the appeal to oral tradition over the Scriptures, we've been handed down perfect **interpretation** of the Scriptures.

Mr. Seraiah from *All Things* -

Throughout history, the primary creeds that have been used by the Spirit to unite the Church (the Apostles' and Nicene) have affirmed the three essential doctrines of the Final Advent, the physical Resurrection, and the Day of Judgment. This is certainly not to be taken lightly. (p.12)

[T]he Holy Spirit has led her [the Church] to respond by stating the truth in written format - the creed....[It] is not intended to supersede the Scriptures but rather to be an authoritative interpretation of them....In the creeds we are confronting an authoritative body, which has, through the illumination of the Spirit, declared the truth of certain doctrines. (pp.193-195)

Unless you are willing to put the -- "it was not they who spoke, but the Spirit Himself of God" stamp upon these councils, as some in the early church did, and as Mr. Seraiah does (above), then this is a reality that must be faced -- God **does** allow His Church to be wrong. If not, then you are claiming an extra-Biblical authority (the early Church fathers, creeds and councils) as equal to the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of **interpreting the Scriptures!**

Tradition and the Early Church Fathers

The argument goes something like this -- "I can't believe that God would allow the Church to be wrong for so long." Is it not possible that we've been handed down **interpretations** of the Word that are faulty?

Interpretations that say, an emperor believed to be true; who had the sole (sovereign) authority over what

was to be deemed Orthodoxy? The **interpretations** of popes and councils who claimed themselves as equal to the Word of God? How does Mr. Seraiah explain the fact that God allowed the Church to wade through nearly 1,500 years of error before He had the Protestant Reformation come about? Answer: He allows His Church to be wrong. How does Mr. Seraiah explain the fact that the *Calvinism versus Arminianism* argument has gone on for close to 500 years now; only one can be correct, yet both still exist? Answer: God allows His Church to be wrong. How does Mr. Seraiah explain the fact that we have so many denominations within His Church today? How does Mr. Seraiah explain the fact that premil-dispensationalism is error, yet it is the predominate view within the Church? Could it be because -- **God allows His Church to be wrong? It is ONLY the Scriptures that are never wrong!**

Walter C. Kaiser Jr., from the *Foreword* to *From Grave to Glory* -

The doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible assures believers that we may have total confidence in God's revelation to us in the Bible; it does not mean, however, that we may have total confidence in our particular interpretation of that revelation. Nevertheless, it is discouraging to note how frequently evangelicals make the methodological mistake of confusing the assurance of the truthfulness of the Bible with the assurance of the correctness of traditional interpretive positions. All too many believe that to question the latter is equal to doubting the former.

...Evangelicals must awaken to the fact that belief in a high view of Scripture and a belief in the central truths of the Gospel do not ensure unanimity on every interpretive point nor the uniform adoption of the traditional exegesis of all scriptural passages - especially those that deal with questions such as those Professor Murray J. Harris's book poses [the nature of the resurrection JEGjr]. To use this division of the house on matters of interpretation as the occasion for introducing suspicion and doubt regarding one's orthodoxy or one's doctrine of Scripture is to fail to remember how widely equally convinced inerrantists disagree on such things as the mode of baptism, the practice of charismatic gifts, the doctrine of election, and the type of church government Scripture teaches. (pp.xxi-xxii)

Mr. Seraiah's entire book is based upon one premise; and he begins with that premise in Chapter One! His premise -- There is absolutely no way that those early Church fathers could have been wrong in their **interpretation**.

But an appeal to Church fathers, who can err, and who have erred, is NOT *sola Scriptura*

Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 19th century (emph. mine) -

In the Protestant system, the authority of symbols (creeds-JEGjr), as of all human compositions, is relative and limited. It is not coordinate with, but always subordinate to, the Bible, as **the only infallible rule of the Christian Faith and practice. The value of creeds depends upon the measure of their agreement with the Scriptures.** In the best case, a human creed is only an approximate and relatively correct exposition of revealed truth, and **may be improved by the progressive knowledge of the Church, while the Bible remains perfect and infallible.** The Bible is of God; the Confession is man's answer to God's Word. The Bible has, therefore, a divine and absolute (authority), the Confession only an ecclesiastical and relative authority. **Any higher view of the authority of symbols is unprotestant and essentially Romanizing.** (Vol. I, p.7)

Dr. Louis Berkof, *Systematic Theology*, 1939 (emph. mine) -

[I]t must be said that **there has never been a period in the history of the Christian Church, in which eschatology was the center of Christian thought.** The other loci of Dogmatics have each had their time of special development, but **this cannot be said of eschatology...**The Reformation adopted what the early Church taught respecting the return of Christ, the resurrection, the final judgment, and eternal life...**It can hardly be said that the Churches of the Reformation did much for the development of eschatology...**In general it may be said that **eschatology is even now the least developed** of all the loci of dogmatics. Moreover, it was **often given a very subordinate place in the systematic treatment of theology...**Reformed theologians on the whole saw this point very clearly, and therefore discussed the last things in a systematic way. However, **they did not always do**

justice to it as one of the main divisions of dogmatics, but gave it a subordinate place in one of the other loci. (pp.662-665)

Tradition and *Sola Scriptura*

Because the partial preterist system cannot be defended through Scripture Alone, but only through a futurist matrix, Preterism has forced most partial preterists to change the very definition of *sola Scriptura*. *Sola Scriptura* used to mean -- "the Holy Spirit speaking **in the Scripture**" (*WCF*); now it's -- The Holy Spirit **through the Church interpreting** the Scriptures throughout history (aka tradition). There is a big difference between the two -

Dr. Sproul from *Faith Alone* -

The formal cause of the Reformation was declared in the formula *sola Scriptura*, meaning that the only source of special written revelation that has the authority to bind the conscience absolutely is the Bible. (p.21)

From the *Westminster Confession of Faith* -

The authority of the holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God...[The Scriptures] being immediately inspired by God...so as, in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal unto them. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly...The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture...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.

The Roman Catholic Church *countered* this "heresy," and insisted that tradition must needs be considered as equal to the Scriptures. (*The Council of Trent 1545-1563*) -

The sacred and holy, ecumenical, and general Synod of Trent, - lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost...before promised through the prophets in the holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first promulgated with His own mouth, and then commanded to be preached by His Apostles to every creature, as the fountain of all, both saving truth, and moral discipline; and seeing clearly that this truth and discipline are contained in the written books, and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand; (the Synod) following the examples of the orthodox Fathers, receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety, and reverence, all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament - seeing that one God is the author of both - as also the said traditions, as well those appertaining to faith as to morals, as having been dictated, either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession...But if any one receive not, as sacred and canonical, the said books entire with all their parts, as they have been used to read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin vulgate edition; and knowingly and deliberately condemn the traditions aforesaid; let him be anathema.

How is this **not** exactly what is happening now? Today, 500 years later, the sons of the Protestant "heretics" are employing Roman Catholic arguments, appealing to tradition, and screaming, "Let him be accursed!"

Mr. Sproul Jr. from the *Foreword to All Things* -

Many of us, in doing battle with the [Preterists], have been using powerful weapons that

aren't quite powerful enough. We warn the [Preterists] that they have strayed from the confessions of the Church since its beginning...He [Seraiah] answers the Scripture twisting of the [Preterists] with straight Scripture...But his work is not finished. Having dispatched error with Scripture alone, Mr. Seraiah wisely goes back to sharpen the creeds, to explain that while they can err, they nevertheless define historic orthodoxy. (p.10)

Someone must have reminded the partial preterists that the cry of the Protestant is not, "Long live the creeds," but "*Sola Scriptura*!" A question for Mr. Sproul Jr. -- Are you saying that you agree with Mr. Seraiah's definition of *sola Scriptura*? (found under the "**Sola Scriptura**" section of *All Things*, p.198) -

It is the Scriptures that we give absolute authority to because they are the very words of God.

That was perfect Mr. Seraiah! But why didn't you stop there? Seraiah continues -

When the Church examines those Scriptures, she explains what the Spirit leads her to see by declaring those truths in creeds...they are genuinely authoritative interpretations of the Scriptures.

This is *sola Scriptura*? Since when? Not since the Protestant Reformation anyway! Is this the "orthodox" Protestant definition of *sola Scriptura*? I think not. In so many words, but without actually coming right out and saying it, Mr. Seraiah is postulating that the creeds are Holy Spirit **inspired interpretations** of the Scriptures! I find it incredibly hard to believe that **R. C. SPROUL Jr.** identifies this interpretive approach as -- "straight Scripture" and "Scripture alone." As Philip Schaff wrote - "Any higher view of the authority of symbols is unprotestant and essentially Romanizing."

Scripture Alone means -- not imposing your presuppositions upon the text, but allowing the Scriptures to interpret themselves. And as we have seen, Mr. Seraiah hardly does this. No partial preterist can. It is the nature of their system to look at the Scriptures with a preteristic *right* eye, and a futuristic left eye.

Example: I Peter 4:5 reads (emph. mine) -

Who shall give account to him that is **ready** to judge the quick and the dead.

Then, just two verses later Peter states -

But **the end of all things is at hand**: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

Let's take a look at how Mr. Seraiah contends with these verses, that are in such close proximity to each other (emph. mine) -

It becomes obvious that Peter here is speaking of the Final Judgment of all men at **the end of all things** in the future....**Clearly** his reference to the "end" being "near" shows that he is referring in this context to **the end of all things** in the Jewish age. (pp.82-83)

Well, which is it? What should be "obvious" and "clear" is that it is Mr. Seraiah's futurist paradigm that drives his interpretation. Peter states that Christ was **READY** to judge the living and the dead, and that the end of **ALL** things was at hand. Peter only says "the end of all things" once; but Mr. Seraiah says it twice. How can you have "the end of **all** things" in the future **and** in the past? Oh, that's right, since you don't actually have a verse that states "the Final Judgment of all men at the end of all things in the future," you simply postulate it. Remember -- Two of everything. Also note, the verses that actually refer to *some* "Final Judgment of all men" (Mtt.16:27-28 and Rev.22:12), partial preterists posit at AD 70! (emph. mine) -

For **the Son of man is about to come** in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then **he shall reward EVERY MAN according to his works**. Verily I say unto you, **There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death**, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. (Mtt.16:27-28)

And, behold, **I come quickly**; and **my reward is with me, to give EVERY MAN according as his work shall be**. (Rev.22:12)

In the past, the Church has used these verses to support *some* future-to-us coming. But now we understand them to refer to Christ's Parousia in AD 70. But what has changed? Christ's words? No. It is only **our understanding** of *the timing* that has changed. "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain" who will attempt to explain this away! 2,000 years ago, Christ said that He was **coming quickly** to reward **EVERY MAN** according to his work! This cannot be changed! **We musn't change the Scriptures in order to accommodate our understanding.** The exact opposite must occur. Now of course, the partial preterist would insist that this is exactly what the Preterist is doing -- "the Scripture twisting of the [Preterists]" -- But who is simply allowing the **plain language** to speak for itself? And who is writing an entire book explaining it away? When allowed, God's Word is plain and straightforward.

Futurism is a presupposed, creedally-motivated, interpretive method that will not allow Scripture to be its own interpreter. The **content** in the creeds concerning Christ's coming is accurate. New Testament statements were merely lifted out of the Scriptures and affirmed as what we believe to be true. The problem is -- those statements were lifted right out of the generation that actually experienced them. They were written **TO** those first century Christians and concerned **their** near future. In essence, **the credal writers INTERPRETED these statements for us as futuristic** by writing them down **after** they had already occurred.

Look at what Mr. Sproul Jr. actually says -- In the first part he states that partial preterists in the past have used "powerful weapons" and have "warn[ed] the [Preterists] that they have strayed from the confessions of the Church since its beginning." Then in the same breath he goes on to say how those same "powerful weapons" (the creeds and confessions) may err! This is a ridiculous way to argue, but this is exactly how their inconsistent exegeses of the Scriptures are produced -- He demands us to read the Scriptures through a lens that has erred, simply because that's what has "define[d] historic orthodoxy." **The Scriptures Alone should define what is Orthodox!** "The Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture" NOW, Today! It is only God's Word that has *always* been alive with the Truth, not man's interpretation! Church history is replete with misinterpretation, but God's Word has never changed!

Why is Mr. Seraiah and partial preterism allowed to announce that "the creeds-can err," and have erred, but no one else can? And why are they allowed to "sharpen the creeds" where they see fit, but no one else can? Mr. Seraiah picks and chooses where the Holy Spirit was, and was not, leading the early Church Fathers. Where Mr. Seraiah agrees with the Church Fathers on a certain point - Well, that's where the Holy Spirit must have been leading them. Neither the Scriptures, nor the creeds allow for **TWO different Second Comings of Christ** separated by thousands of years, yet that's what the partial preterists teach. They chastise the premil-dispensationalists for their "gap theory," yet they themselves, through their *pick and choose* hermeneutic, place so many 2,000 year gaps between verses that even Hal Lindsey's head is sent spinning! This "unprotestant-Romanizing" desire to uphold the past interpretations of men, has forced them to jettison proven methods. They say that it is necessary to follow *their method* in order to correctly understand the Scriptures (*All Things* p.12). Thanks, but no thanks.

As Protestants, when our attempts to defend the "confessions of the Church since its beginning" prompt us to violate the **plain** teaching of Scripture, then our choice should be a simple one -- **Sola Scriptura!** Where would we be today if Martin Luther had simply appealed to the faulty **interpretations of men** who had come before him? -

Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen. (before the Diet of Worms - Church council charging him with heresy)

Tradition and the Resurrection

The idea that the Church has "always and everywhere" held that it is "this body" that is resurrected, and that there were no other interpretations, is not true. It is granted that many **councils** affirmed it, but just because certain individuals today have sided with **the interpretations** of various past councils doesn't mean that those councils were correct, or, that **we** are obliged to agree with them. The *WCF* affirmed much that partial preterists no longer affirm. Remember, all of these councils were working from a *still future* interpretation of the timing of the resurrection.

History of Christian Doctrine, Vol. 1, first period, AD 90-320 Eschatology by Henry C. Sheldon, 1885 (emph. mine) -

1. CHILIASM. - The doctrine that the end of the present dispensation is to be preceded by the personal reign of Christ upon earth was entertained in the second century not only by Ebionites, and writers who, like Cerinthus, mixed with their Gnosticism a large element of Judaism, but by many (very likely the majority) of those in the Catholic Church. There is, to be sure, no inculcation of the doctrine in the writings of Polycarp, Ignatius, Tatian, Athenagoras, and Theophilus. It was expressly advocated, however, by writers as representative of their age as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, as well as by Papias. "I and others," says Justin Martyr, "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**...There was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by revelation made to him, that **those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem**; and that thereafter the general, and in short the eternal, resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place."

Origen devoted a chapter of his "De Principiis" to **the refutation of materialistic notions of the millennial reign** (II.11), and his disciple, Dionysius of Alexandria, controverted, with great zeal, the tenets of Egyptian Chiliasts. **At the end of the third century, therefore, Chiliasm held a disputed place in the Church. In the early part of the next century, it became virtually obsolete.** As late a writer as Lactantius, it is true, appears as an ardent believer in it, and pictures at length the second advent and the earthly kingdom (Div. Inst., Lib.VII.); but he **in no wise represents the drift of his age**, for the cessation of the persecutions and the erection of a Christian Empire gave a new direction to thought and desire. Nothing was more natural, while the storm of heathen violence was raging, than for Christians to long for the coming of their Deliverer, and for a manifest triumph of His kingdom over the kingdom of this world. The storm, however, having ceased, and the kingdom of this world having passed under a Christian sceptre, their desire for the special and open intervention of their Divine Leader was necessarily relaxed." (pp.145-147)

3. THE RESURRECTION. - In the common view, the resurrection assumed a very literal aspect, and was regarded as destined to restore to the soul the same body, as respects substance as well as form, with which it had been united in this life. **A clear indication of such a conception of the resurrection is seen in the theory entertained of the millennial kingdom by many, as a kingdom in this world and possessing the essential marks of an earthly kingdom**, while yet a principal part of its citizens were described as resurrected saints. (p.150)

Dr. Louis Berkof, *Systematic Theology*, 1939, Section B. Eschatology in the History of the Christian Church. -

1. From the Apostolic Age to the Beginning of the Fifth Century -- In the very first period the Church was perfectly conscious of the separate elements of the Christian hope...But these elements were simply seen as so many separate parts of the future hope, and **were not yet dogmatically construed**...At first it seemed as if eschatology was in a fair way to become the center of the construction of Christian doctrine, for in the first two centuries Chiliasm was rather prominent, though not as prominent as some would have us believe. As it turned out, however, **eschatology was not developed in this period.**

2. From the Beginning of the Fifth Century to the Reformation -- ...Especially under the influence of Origen and Augustine, anti-chilastic views became dominant in the Church. But **though these were regarded as orthodox, they were not thought through and systematically developed.** There was a general belief in a life after death, in the return of the Lord, in the resurrection of the dead, in the final judgment, and in a kingdom of glory, **but very little reflection on the manner of these.** (pp.662-663)

History of Christian Doctrine, Vol. 1, third period, AD 726-1517 Eschatology -

3. THE RESURRECTION. - The Augustinian theory of the resurrection, as a literal restoration of the body, was completely in the ascendant. Erigena, however, was inclined to

Origenistic views, and Durandus suggested that it would in no wise detract from the identity of the individual, even if the same material particles which composed the old body did not enter into that of the resurrection, inasmuch as matter itself, not yet specialized by form, has no distinctive character...As respects the peculiar qualities and capabilities of the resurrection body, little advance was made upon Augustine's representations... (p.407)

History of Christian Doctrine, Vol. 2, fifth period, AD 1720-1885 Eschatology -

3. THE RESURRECTION. - **The period has witnessed, on the whole, a wide drift from the more literal interpretation of the resurrection.** The successive phases through which the teaching on this subject has passed in Germany are thus outlined by Kahn: "The transition theologians of the eighteenth century united in the view, that between the resurrection body and that lying in the grave there is a greater difference than the orthodox proposition of the identity of the two allows. **The body which we bury is only the substratum of the resurrection body...**The strict literal theory, which asserts that the entire substance, or at any rate most of the substance, of the body which goes into the grave enters into the resurrection body, has also **an occasional representative.** Aside from these **two extremes** there are **three or four views of the resurrection** which are especially noteworthy.

What is called the germ theory has some advocates. Van Oosterzee gives it favorable notice in these terms: "We may perhaps suppose that an invisible and indestructible germ of the future body dwells already in the present, and that precisely therein is placed the guaranty of the identity of the two, - an identity even amidst the greatest possible difference." (Dogmatics, Sect. CXLIII.)

A third theory makes no account whatever of material identity, and regards the resurrection body as identical with the present only as having the same organizing principle. This organizing principle in the era of the resurrection appropriates or is joined with material suited to the demands of a spiritual body. As some represent, this material is taken from the purified earth. Many of the recent theologians of Germany have favored this theory. So Julius Muller, Lange, Nitzsch, Kahn, Martensen, and Dorner. As early an American writer as Dr. Dwight approved of the same theory (Serm. CLXV.), and in the last few decades it has rapidly won adherents. Hodge, Pond, and H.B. Smith have declared it at least an admissible theory. J.J.S. Perowne and Bishop R.S. Foster have given it their support. **Among Protestant scholars at large, it commands probably at present as wide assent as any other theory.** (pp. 392-394)

Contrary to the assertions made by partial preterists -- that the interpretations of the nature of the resurrection of the believer has *always only been* "this flesh," a brief look into Church history has shown otherwise. The partial preterists **have simply chosen to side with Tertullian, or Augustine's view** of the nature of the resurrection for the believer and deemed *it* as orthodoxy.

"For Dust You Are and To Dust You will Return"

Mr. Sproul Jr., from the *Foreword to The End of All Things* -

[Preterism] is fatal because it denies not only the return of Christ but also the resurrection of our bodies. (p.9)

This statement by Mr. Sproul Jr. is not very accurate. Preterists do not deny the Return of Christ. Preterists affirm the Biblical teaching of **one** Return of Christ that occurred in that first century generation of Christians (the same return that partial preterists affirm). Also, Preterists do not deny the apostle Paul's teaching of a resurrection body for the believer that would be like unto Christ's body. Although in The Apostle's Creed, this phrase -- "resurrection of the flesh" (Latin - *carnis resurrectionem*) **of the believer** that has somehow found its way into "orthodoxy," or what has been *chosen to be* considered as orthodoxy, cannot be found in Scripture. Neither can Mr. Sproul Jr.'s preferred -- "resurrection of the body."

Dr. Murray J. Harris (who is not a Preterist) in his book, *From Grave to Glory* (emph. mine) -

[T]he resurrection of the flesh -- This phrase gained early dominance in both the Western

and Eastern regions of the church, owing to its apologetic value in countering Docetism on one side and gnostic spiritualism on the other, and its vigorous defense by apologists of the early church such as Athenagoras and Tertullian (Chiliasts, JEGjr), both of whom wrote a treatise "On the Resurrection." After the Council of Constantinople (AD 381), the credal formula "the resurrection of the dead" came to be preferred by the Eastern church **because of its biblical origin**. But **until the time of the Reformation** the creeds of the West spoke of "the resurrection of the flesh."

There is no unanimity among the defenders of this phrase as to the meaning of *flesh* as used here. Some would follow J.A. Schep and take *flesh* to mean the material components, the substance, of the body, the fleshly body as distinct from the soul. Some of the difficulties attaching to this view may be mentioned. Schep himself draws attention to the fact that: "[F]rom a formal point of view **the traditional expression of the Creed may be called a misnomer.... Though the expression 'the resurrection of the flesh' is not found in Scripture and does not adequately formulate the biblical truth, it should be retained** in view of the spiritualizing tendencies abounding in our modern world." (pp.417-418)

In the church at large, and within evangelical circles, **two views have been held, and are held**, with regard to the relation of the physical body to the spiritual body. One view argues for continuity of both person and "substance," and is epitomized in the (non-Biblical, JEGjr) phrase "the resurrection of the flesh." The other position contends for a continuity of person but discontinuity of "substance." **Since no ecumenical council of the church ever defined the nature of the resurrection body of believers, a formulation of Christian belief in the resurrection that accommodates both these views is to be preferred.** "The resurrection of the dead" (a Biblical phrase, JEGjr) does precisely that. (p.421)

After His resurrection, Christ exhibited qualities of His Person, that previously had not been shown (emph. mine) -

God raised up this One the third day **and gave to Him to become visible**; (Acts 10:40)

Dr. Harris explains -

"A form of corporeality in which the spirit is supreme," that is, a spiritual body. It is this supremacy of the spirit in the resurrection body that allows Paul to depict Jesus' resurrection state as "spirit" (I Cor. 15:45; II Cor. 3:18; and perhaps I Cor. 6:17; I Tim.3:16) while never relinquishing his belief that that state was also "bodily" (Col.2:9). Both before and after his resurrection Jesus was "body-spirit," but only after his resurrection did he possess a "spiritual body."

Nor have I ever expressed the view that the resurrection body of Christ was simply immaterial. It was "customarily immaterial" in the sense that in *his customary mode of existence* during the forty days, he did not have a material body of "flesh and bones." But when, on occasion, he chose to appear to various persons in a material form, this was just as really the "spiritual body" of Jesus as when he was not visible or tangible. The resurrection of Jesus was not his transformation into an immaterial body (as Prof. Geisler imagines I believe) but into a "spiritual body" which could be expressed in an immaterial or a material mode, a nonphysical or a physical form. In each instance it was his body and was "spiritual"...the risen Jesus is a permanently embodied Spirit who, during the forty days, when his appearances on earth were ended, Jesus assumed the sole mode of being visible to the inhabitants of heaven but having a nonfleshly body....From the Gospels, then, we can deduce that one property of the resurrection body is the ability to become visible and tangible to earthlings under terrestrial conditions. (pp.404-405)

God said that from dust we came and to dust we would return. God also said that He would not allow His Holy One to see decay (Acts 13:37). **Christ was raised from the dead in His flesh**; He was **the only one** promised to never see decay.

Dr. Harris -

"In him [Christ] there dwells the whole fullness of deity in bodily form" (Col. 2:9)...In the Incarnation the Son of God became what he was not (viz. "flesh"), without ceasing to be what he was (a divine Being). In the Resurrection he assumed what he did not have (viz. a "spiritual body"), without losing what he already had (a truly human nature and form). The glorified Jesus is still "in the flesh." (pp.414-415)

But does this demand that **our** resurrection is of "this flesh"? Dr. Harris continues -

Whether we view the resurrection of Christ as the cause, the pledge, or the pattern of believers' resurrection, there need not be a precise identity between the two. Basic similarities do not exclude significant differences. Several of these differences stem from the distinctiveness of Christ's person and work....only Christ needed to reappear on earth to convince his disciples that he had indeed risen from his tomb and was the all-sovereign Lord....while Christ was raised "on the third day" (I Cor.15:4), his people experience their resurrection on the Last Day. This leads to a difference of great importance. In the case of Christ, resurrection some thirty-six or so hours after his death preserved him from decaying in the grave (Acts 2:27-31; 13:34-37), whereas the bodies of believers who die before the second advent of Christ are not spared dissolution. When Christ rose on the third day, the flesh and bones of his body were still intact; when believers rise on the Last Day, their bodies in most cases will long since have disintegrated...

Given the fact of the empty grave of Christ, we may insist on an "identity" between the body that was crucified and buried and the body that was raised, provided we bear in mind two points. First, all human bodies are in a continuous state of flux, so much so that the molecular composition of our bodies is completely changed during a seven-year cycle. After death change continues, but now it is the process of cellular breakdown. When Jesus rose from the dead, the process of decomposition which began when he died was halted and completely reversed. God did not permit his Holy One to experience final dissolution (Acts 13:37). So the bodily "sameness" in the case of Christ was not complete, but relative. Second, dramatic changes had taken place in his body as a result of his rising, so that it could now be described as "glorious" (Phil.3:21) and immortal (Heb.7:16; Rev.1:18).

But does the concept of "resurrection," of "rising up," compel us to believe that in the case of believers who die, the scattered fragments of their decomposed or cremated bodies will be miraculously reassembled to assume once more the form they had at the time of their death, prior to being transformed into the likeness of Christ? Let it be said immediately that such a miracle, though stupendous, would be less dramatic than the initial creation of matter, for that was "out of nothing." (pp.409-411)

Dr. Harris turns to M.C. Tenney and his book, *The Reality of the Resurrection*, 1963. Tenney examines the apostle Paul's **analogy of the seed** in I Corinthians 15:36-38 -

When a grain of wheat is dropped into the ground, its husk quickly decays, and even the live core disintegrates. The life of the seed, rather than its material substance, provides the continuity of existence. As the rootlets begin to grow, they draw nourishment from the earth, and by the chemistry of sun and rain the small seed soon becomes a large plant. The plant bears no external resemblance to the seed, nor is the bulk of its tissue drawn from the seed; nevertheless, the continuity is undeniable. There is persistence of type, because a given seed will always produce its own kind. Identity of type is not incompatible with discontinuity of substance.

Continuity of individuality is assured by the persistence of the personality, which God will reclothe with a body. Jesus' statement, "all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (Jn 5:28-29), assumes the preservation of individuality, since those that have been buried will be restored to life. The restoration, however, is not a reconstitution of the original body that was interred, but a new structure patterned on the resurrection body of Christ. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Cor.15:49).

Tenney, who was for many years Dean of Wheaton College Graduate School, is certainly

not alone in maintaining this view of the resurrection of believers. It is no exaggeration to say that the majority of theologians, whatever their view of Scripture and revelation, hold a similar view. True, others may use different terminology in describing the relationship of the "spiritual body" to the physical body. Some speak of "continuity of corporeal life" (G.B. Stevens), "somatic identity" (G.E. Ladd), "identity of form if not of substance, as the grain of stalk is the same in kind, though not numerically the same, or composed of the same particles, as the seed out of which it springs" (A.B. Bruce), identity of occupant but not of dwelling (C.R. Bowen), or historical continuity, with the same "I" inhabiting first an earthly, then a heavenly body (W. G. Kummel). Common to all these proposals is the insistence that *for Christians* the continuity between the earthly and heavenly bodies is personal, not material.

To conclude: our final difference between the resurrection of believers and of Jesus is this. In his case there was, to use another Tenney phrase, "continuity...of substance" as well as identity of person. In their (believers, JEGjr) case there will be "continuity of human personality" but "discontinuity of substance." (pp.412-413)

"How are the Dead Raised Up? and with What Body do They Come?"

To properly understand *the nature of* the body that the believer receives at death, one must first understand how a seed truly works. The apostle Paul makes this comparison; and we must follow it. All seed descriptions are taken from the *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*.

But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. (I Cor.15:35-36)

The *traditional* interpretation is -- When you die, you are "sown" into the ground (buried). But is that what "sowing" means?

sow - *verb.* **sowed, sown, sowing, sows** 1. To scatter (seed) over the ground for growing.



plant-ed, plant-ing, plants - *verb.* 1a. To place or set (seeds, for example) in the ground to grow. sow: *plant a field in corn.*

Seeds are sown "for growing." A sower does not sow dead seeds, but living seeds. For the purpose of Paul's "seed analogy," the seed is sown alive. The inner germ of the seed must be alive (viable) when it is sown. A dead seed (not viable) will produce nothing. -

Each species of plant has its specific period of viability; seeds sown after the period of optimum viability may produce weak plants or may not germinate....Lack of viability of seed is often confused with seed dormancy. Many seeds require a so-called resting period after falling from the parent plant before they are able to germinate into new plants....The term *germination* is applied to the resumption of the growth of the seed embryo after the period of dormancy....Some seeds are viable (capable of growing) for only a few days after falling from the parent tree. Other seeds are viable for years...

Dead seeds are not sown. Only viable seeds are sown. A dead, or non-viable seed will not germinate. After a seed is sown, it is dormant for a period of time before it begins to germinate. A seed germinates into its new plant body only **after** the outer-shell has died -



During germination, water diffuses through the seed coats into the embryo, which has been almost completely dry during the period of dormancy, causing a swelling of the seed; the swelling is often so great that the seed coat is ruptured....seeds have extremely tough seed coats that must soften or decay before water and oxygen can enter the seed to take part in the growth of the embryo, or before the growing embryo is capable of bursting through the seed coat....Sowing usually is done in the spring, when environmental conditions for germination are most suitable. As soon as a sufficient amount of water is absorbed by the seed, biochemical changes take place, cell division begins, and germination occurs.

We are sown into this world as a seed. Our period of dormancy is our lifetime. Our "inner man" (II Cor.4:16) is the inner-germ of the seed. Our "outward man" (II Cor.4:16) is the outer-shell of the same seed. Seeds are sown well before the outer-shell dies. This is how Paul could say in verse 36 - "What you sow does not come to life unless it dies." The seed (our entire being - outward and inner man) is sown into this world; but not until after the outer-shell (outward man) dies, does the new plant body come to life. The *traditional* position would have *an already dead seed* being sown. This is not how a seed works. Paul continues (emph. mine) -

When you sow, **you do not plant the body that will be**, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and **to each kind of seed he gives its own body.** (I Cor.15:37-38)

Planting and sowing are the same thing. Paul specifically states that "When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed." We are sown into this world in seed form (inner-germ and outer-shell). This is NOT the body that will be! The outer-shell of a seed is only a part of that seed until the outer-shell dies. Once it dies and decays, it has NO PART of the inner-germ and new plant body whatsoever. Contrary to the *traditional* interpretation -- The outer-shell of a seed IS NOT part of the new plant body. Only the inner-germ continues on into the new plant body.

Seed testing also ensures the marketing of seed that is true to type - that is, seed that does not differ from the variety of plant desired.

Every "type" of seed has its own individual proportion and size; but what sprouts forth from the inner-germ, and out of the shell is an entirely different form. It is a new plant body - "[A]nd to each kind of seed he gives its own body."

Paul continues, and explains the different "variet[ies]" (emph. mine) -

All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is **one kind of flesh of men**, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: **but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.** There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. (I Cor.15:39-41)

"So also is the resurrection of the dead" - Paul is about to get into the most controversial portion of this entire text. What is the "It" of verses 42 through 44? *Tradition* says, "It -- This body. This body ('it') is sown in corruption; this body ('it') is raised in incorruption." But there's a problem -- That's not how a seed works! In the previous verses, Paul told us that what we "sow" is a seed. He makes this comparison, **"SO ALSO is the resurrection of the dead"** (paraphrase) - "Just like I explained to you about the seed, SO ALSO is the resurrection of the dead." This means that every time Paul says "it is sown," we must bring the seed analogy back into these verses (42 - 44)!

"It is sown" -- What is sown? Seeds are sown. "It is raised" -- What is raised? Not seeds! When a seed is sown, what is raised? Not the dead and decayed outer-shell, but the inner-germ is raised into its new form. "IT is raised" a totally new plant body. "When you sow, **you do not plant the body that will be**, but just a seed" (emph. mine) -

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It (the seed) is sown in corruption; it (the seed's plant) is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it (the seed) is sown a natural body (inner man with outward body); it (seed's plant) is raised a spiritual body (inner man with new body). If there is a natural body, **there is also** a spiritual body. So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. **The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven.** As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we (inner man) have borne the image of the earthy, we (inner man) shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; **neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.** (1 Cor.15:42-50)

Dr. James Moffatt, from his commentary *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 1938 (All italic and bold emphases are Moffatt's. Verses 34-54) -

36 Paul soars above such matter-of-fact applications in his use of the seed analogy. The body **sown** at birth is **not the body that is to be** ours in the resurrection; it is very different. What a contrast between what **you sow** (the **you** is emphatic) and what God gives later to the same spirit - as he does in vegetation, for example! **38** There the vital germ is placed in a soil of being where inevitably it alters its form as it rises into the upper air. Only, Paul does not say that it alters; he makes **God**, as usual (i. 21, xii. 11, 18), the sovereign giver of the new form. What he has in mind is the Hellenistic ideal of immortality without any "body." Plato's supreme hope had been a state of existence after death "when the soul is by itself, apart from the body" (*Phaedo*, lxvi.). It was an idealistic hope which had even affected a holiness movement in Judaism like that of the Essenes, who looked forward to disembodied souls as the finest prospect of eternal life. Paul's hope is for an order of being in which the spirit is **39** endowed by God with "a body." Why should that be thought impossible, when under God there were already so many varieties of "bodies" in the universe? He uses **flesh** in a very free way here for substance or nature, and throws in the remark **40** about differences in glory or splendour between the **heavenly bodies** and the **earthly**, because he has in mind the coming contrast between the animate and the spiritual body.... **42** Instead of saying that "man is born," he carries on his metaphor of the human seed being **sown**, and concludes the lyrical description with an antithesis which starts the next movement, i.e. between the **animate body** and the **spiritual**.

43-44 ...The argument implies that to be **sown** is to be born, not to be buried; Paul did not consider that physical death was the necessary prelude to the resurrection. The seed of mankind is dropped into the present material order, which is mortal, corruptible (as in 2 Cor. iv. 16, Rom. viii. 21), and corrupting; but in the new, risen order of being, which is **imperishable** and free from corruption (verse 50), it acquires a fresh form, which does not correspond to the **animate body** of the previous existence. He is working with a traditional rabbinic analogy between the seed of man and the seeds of plants in this connexion, in order to present his own conception of **a spiritual body**, a conception which at the same time refutes the twofold Greek idea of immortality as essentially bodiless and also as an inherent quality or capacity of the human soul.

...Here **body** means shape, form or the outward being of life, even of non-human life, for these celestial bodies were supposed to be alive. Indeed Paul implies that **flesh** or substance, as we moderns call it, within the entire organic world of plants as well as of men, takes form or **body**. So far, there is nothing novel or characteristic. But **spiritual body** is a coinage of his own, struck out of his belief in the Spirit, and in the Spirit as forming an ethereal **glory** or divine being of its own for the personality which was possessed by the Lord or Spirit. It is a semi-metaphysical term, essential to his view of the risen life as neither pure spirit nor wrapped in a crudely material shape, neither disembodied nor yet embodied, as current rabbinic speculation imagined, in a replica of the present physical constitution. In

speaking of the solidarity of **Christ** and of **all who belong to Christ** (in 20-28), he did not require to use the body metaphor as he had done in xii. 12-30. Here he employs the concept in an unparalleled sense for the personality of the Christian after death. It was a startling challenge to those who saw no alternative to the "flesh and blood" resurrection of popular Judaism (which meant the reunion of soul and body), except in some adaptation of the purely immaterial Greek idea. At the heart of Paul's thought is the affirmation that the life of Christians after death must continue to possess the capacities for action and affection, insight and understanding (xiii. 12) which in the present body have a real though limited range. The **spiritual**, in other words, is not the immaterial. The **animate body**, with its functions for maintaining and continuing human existence (see vi. 13, xv. 50) is a **flesh and blood** existence for which there is no further need in the life eternal; but a **body** of some sort, as the medium of expression for the **spiritual** personality with its high aspirations and affections and enjoyment of the Spirit in fellowship with God and his saints, is vital. The **animate body** itself, as a shrine of the Spirit (vi. 19), provided for this already. But such a partial and imperfect provision would one day be replaced by a complete embodiment.

On its nature Paul does not speculate. He speaks of this organic individuality sometimes as **full sonship** (Rom. viii. 17), but even in the most explicit allusion (Phil. iii. 21, **the Lord Jesus Christ will transform the body that belongs to our low estate till it resembles the body of his Glory**) there is a noticeable reserve. The change (verse 52) may be connected with the inward renewal of the Christian personality or real self at present (vi. 19 f., 2 Cor. iv. 16), but how the **spiritual body** came into existence, and how it corresponded to the risen body of Christ, Paul never explains, any more than he explains the first creation of man. The creation of the first man had been an Act of God, raising him from a lower to a higher order of animate being, above the animals, in which he was designed to come under God's promises and laws. So with the change into a spiritual body; it was also a wonder, a sheer change wrought by the same God. Paul leaves this truth as it stands, though, with a stroke of his profound religious genius, which at this point, as at so many others, has been often missed by theological as well as by popular Christianity, he repudiates any notion of a material identity between the present and the future body. **We shall all be changed** or transformed. While there is to be a vital change, there is continuity of spirit or personality; and the change is not from life in a body to life without a body, but from spirit in one type of body to spirit in another....**God**, God by his own power, brings it to pass, **gives a spiritual** no less than an animate **body as he pleases**. The End will resemble the beginning of God's dealing with man.

...**45** As in Matt. v. 43, the citation of a text is completed by supplying its opposite. The words of Gen. ii. 7, *man became a living soul* (psyche) or person (i.e. *an animate being*), were not much discussed by rabbis, but they had started speculation in Hellenistic Judaism, possibly under Iranian influence, about the two Men in the dual stories of creation. Thus in Philo we overhear an interpretation of some *haggada* which contrasted the ideal **first Man** with the mortal **second**; the first, created in God's own likeness (Gen. i. 27) corresponds to Plato's ideal Man, spiritual and immortal, i.e. the genus as conceived in the divine mind, while the second, the historical Adam (of Gen.ii. 7, with his descendants), answers to the person of *material* man, made *from the earth* and modelled after the first. If this speculation ever occurred to Paul, he reverses it, not on any speculative ground, but owing to the facts of revelation in history and providence. He interprets Gen. ii. 7 in the light of the messianic hope, not of metaphysics, though a metaphysic of being is implicit in his statement. Thinking not simply of the pre-existent messiah, but of the current Jewish notion of Adam as the original, ideal man, whose lost glory was to be restored by messiah (ii. 7. 8), he coins the title of **the last Adam**, in order of historic time and succession. Jews spoke of the "first man," Adam, but never of a **second** Adam, as the apostle did. For Paul, Christ is not the primal Man of Iranian or Philonic speculation on the cosmos, but One who has towards the End entered history, as the Lord of glory, in order to inaugurate the new order of being.

Instead of equating this second Man with the first, he presses the unique function of the heavenly Man for mankind. Men would die in their mortality, were it not for the new Act and Order of God which, in Christ, the **life-giving Spirit**, restores and completes man's destiny.

As Adam was **animate** or *material*, in the sense of being made out of earth, **46** the second Man is **heavenly**, or, as it is put elsewhere, **47** he was originally divine by nature, "in the form of God." As descendants of Adam we all have the human existence **48** that man shares with men. Those who **are heavenly** are those who **belong to Christ** (verse 23), possessing what he alone can give, the life of the Spirit, which at the resurrection acquires

its full expression in **the likeness of the heavenly Man...**

50 I tell you this, my brothers, flesh and blood cannot inherit the Realm of God, nor can the perishing inherit the imperishable.

Flesh and blood (as in Gal. i. 16) means human nature as opposed to the divine. In the next life, Paul had told sympathizers with Greek mysticism, there must be a "body" of some kind for the spirit of man. Now he insists (with reference to the Jewish belief) that this "body" cannot be the present body. On any nexus between the present physical frame and the spiritual body the apostle never speculates. There will be a change, a transformation of our being, but it is the glorious triumph thus gained over death that thrills him, and on personal data he does not stop to dwell. All he urges - and for him it is everything - is that the change by which Christians pass into God's realm of immortal bliss, beyond the fear and force of Death, is God's own doing (57).

...**52** Thinking in apocalyptic terms of the End, where trumpets sounded to awaken the dead or to rally the living loyalists, he speaks of **the last** summons from God as sudden and instantaneous; the resurrection is accomplished by God's power in a moment, instead of being any long-drawn-out process of reanimation for dead corpses of the faithful. Then, using freely some abstract terms of Hellenistic Judaism, he mentions for the first and the only time **immortality**, **53** a catchword of the gnostic liberals at Corinth in their theosophy. It was a word common in Greek Jews like Philo and the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon (*God created man for immortality and made him the likeness of his own being; but by the envy of the devil death entered the world, and those who belong to the devil's party experience death: ii. 23, 24*); literally it is "incorruption," but the idea is eternal duration or indestructible existence. What is "immortal" called up in the mind associations which were practically the same as those of what is "imperishable," and they amount to an equivalent for glory (ii. 7) in this connexion (4-43). The metaphor of being clothed or **invested** with immortality, so familiar in the *Hermetica* and the Jewish apocalypses as well as in Indian and Persian religion, carries on the thought of wearing or bearing **the likeness of the heavenly Man** (49). Paul reverts to this in 2 Cor. v. 1-5 (with its shudder at the very notion of a naked, disembodied spirit). At present it is merely a passing touch as he hints what real **immortality** means for Christians, **54** i.e. an embodiment. (pp.258-267)

Paul taught that the believer would receive a body, but he specifically teaches that it is **not this** body. Paul says that the *second Adam*, Christ, is not of the earth. He is "of heaven." The first man, Adam, is out of the earth and we (spirit) bear his image. Christ **is not** from out of this earth, He is of heaven, and we (spirit) will also bear his image. And as Dr. Moffatt pointed out, isn't Paul teaching the exact same concept in II Corinthians? (emph. mine) -

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for **the things which are seen are temporal**; but **the things which are not seen are eternal**. For we know that if **our earthly house** of THIS tabernacle **were dissolved**, we have **a building of God**, an house not made with hands, **eternal in the heavens**. For in THIS we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with **our house which is from heaven**: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in **THIS tabernacle do groan**, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. (II Cor.4:18 - 5:1-4)

Paul says that in this earthly house (earthy man, Adam, natural body) "we groan - earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven (heavenly man, Christ, spiritual body)." At death, the Christian's inner-man (spirit) is "clothed upon" with his Christ-like "building of God-our house which is from heaven." Just as the seed analogy, this "house" analogy is teaching the same concept -- One inner-man, two numerically different bodies.

"The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual....If there is a natural body (first), **there is also a spiritual body**" (second).

The outer-shell of a seed (first) dies and decays, and the inner-germ (spirit) sprouts forth into its new plant body (second). **"You do not plant the body that will be."**

There is an earthly house (first), and when it is dissolved, we (our spirit) will not be found naked because "**we will be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven**" (second).

Tradition does not take the seed analogy into account -- Paul does. *Tradition* says we get the outer-shell of the seed back -- That's not how a seed works. *Tradition* says we **do** plant the body that will be -- Paul says we **do not**. *Tradition* says corruption **will** inherit incorruption -- Paul says otherwise.

The demand that **our** body (read - *our flesh*) is what is resurrected actually produces more problems than it solves. And as we saw, many in the past recognized these problems and tried to resolve them. I wonder what they would have thought had they realized that the resurrection was past? When *the timing* of the resurrection is properly interpreted as past, and *the nature* of it is re-examined, these problems are alleviated.

Dr. Harris, Dr. Moffatt and others recognized these problems, and even from a future resurrection perspective, they exegeted the Scriptures and arrived at their position. For more on the nature of the resurrection, see Dan Harden's [Overcoming Sproul's Resurrection Obstacles](#) and Ed Stevens' *Questions About The Afterlife*.

Tradition and Sola Fide

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Of Saving Faith -

But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

Hasn't Mr. Sproul Jr., by declaring **his interpretation** of *these things* (the time and nature of the Return of Christ and the resurrection of the believer) as essential to saving faith, put *them* on par with, say, the deity of Christ? And if *these things* are placed on the same level with regard to what is **essential** to saving faith, hasn't he thereby condemned all Christians who would disagree with him? Christians who don't believe that ones' view of *these things* are essential doctrines to saving faith? Can a person be a Christian and say that Christ's deity is a non-essential? No. In the same regard, if *these things* are essential, and a person says that *they* are not, in Mr. Sproul Jr.'s Book, they could not be considered a Christian. This is not a far-fetched conclusion. This is the logical implication of Mr. Sproul Jr.'s assertion (see excerpt from "anathemas" below). Either a doctrine is essential to saving faith, or it is not! Mr. Sproul Jr. and others who share his viewpoint condemn not just Preterists, but any and all Christians **throughout Church history**, who have not agreed with his view -- that *these things* are essential to saving faith.

The Anathemas of the Second Council of Constantinople - 553 AD (emph. mine)

X. If anyone does not confess that our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified in the flesh is true God and the Lord of Glory and one of the Holy Trinity; let him be anathema.

XI. **If anyone does not anathematize** Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, Apollinaris, Nestorius, Eutyches and Origen, together with their impious, godless writings, and all the other heretics already condemned and anathematized by the holy catholic and apostolic Church, and by the aforementioned four Holy Synods and all those who have held and hold or who in their godlessness persist in holding to the end the same opinion as those heretics just mentioned; **let him be anathema.**

Although I do not believe that he has thought this through, this IS the logical implication of Mr. Sproul Jr.'s anathema against Preterists - **If anyone does not anathematize Preterists...let him be anathema!**

Not only has the definition of *sola Scriptura* been perverted, but the Gospel itself has taken on a new requirement. Their pure disdain for the Preterists' understanding of the nature of *these things* has led **them** outside of *what is* Protestant. No longer is *faith alone in Christ alone* sufficient enough for ones' salvation. No, now you're required to have a *proper traditional* understanding, **their understanding**, of "the return of Christ [and] the resurrection of our bodies." Now it's Christ **plus** an understanding of the nature of *these things*. How is this **not** a new Gospel being preached?

Dr. Sproul from *Faith Alone* -

Surely the Catholic Church of the sixteenth century did not consciously and intentionally condemn the gospel. I trust that the churchmen of Rome condemned what they believed was heresy. If in fact sola fide is the very essence of the gospel, then in her misguided zeal Rome condemned the gospel. If the true gospel is condemned after careful deliberation, then that condemnation, intentional; or not, is an act of apostasy...Who has maintained that doctrinal theory ever saved anyone? The sole point of sola fide, which Rome categorically rejects, is that we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone. The issue is not, Does Christ save or does doctrine save? The issue is, What is the gospel that must be the basis of any shared mission of faith? ...But far more important is the question of betraying the gospel. It is easy for me to fall into the trap of idealizing the Reformation. I do believe that the heart of the Reformation was the recovery and heroic defense of the gospel of sola fide...No church tradition can bind the conscience. But the Word of God must bind the conscience and take precedence over any and all other loyalties. (pp.179-191)

Preterism -- A "Fatal-Damnably Heresy"?

Mr. Sproul Jr. spoke his mind in the *Foreword*; he said that Preterism is a "fatal-damnably heresy." The words of Henry C. Lea, from *Studies In Church History*, seem applicable here -

When man assumes to place himself between his Creator and his fellow-beings, and to wield, without appeal, supreme authority over eternal life and death, the contrast between his finite intelligence, obscured by human passions, and the infinite power to which he aspires, would be ludicrous if it were not revolting...nor was there any possible tribunal to which an appeal could be carried against their decisions, for they spoke in the name and with the assent of the supreme and omnipotent God.

That men believing themselves armed with so tremendous and fearful a power should exercise it so recklessly, seems incredible, and yet unfortunately the facts exist to show beyond the possibility of doubt that those who so acted were possessed of that belief.

I will interpret Mr. Sproul Jr.'s charge of a "fatal-damnably heresy" this way -- Because Preterists believe that when Paul said, "we," he was teaching nothing other than what Christ taught in His Olivet Discourse ("this generation"); and that this is the plain language meaning of the word; and that when the plain language is allowed, it fits perfectly into the partial preterists' coming in AD 70; and that Preterists will not say that Paul was wrong (as Alford & co. have); and that Preterists are not at all satisfied with the excuses partial preterists have come up with that, in our opinion, still maintain *Paul being wrong*; and that Preterists adhere to Paul's usage of a seed analogy, and how a seed actually works -- THEN Preterists are going to hell!

Well, this frees-me-up to speak my mind -- For far too long, the *right way* to read the New Testament has been paralyzed by Futurism. Perhaps Dr. Sproul recognized this, and that's why he said that he could "never read the New Testament again the same way." That's what happens when you begin to read it properly and apply audience relevance; it becomes impossible to read it *partially*. A transformation occurs -- You can no longer read it the same way you used to. Reading the New Testament with an audience relevance-based perspective is the key. As Dr. Russell commented, "it is the key to the interpretation of much that would otherwise be obscure and unintelligible." It is *this key* that **all** Preterists have found, including partial preterists. I believe that partial preterists face this dilemma within themselves. They've learned how to no longer read as a Futurist but there are certain events they simply cannot *allow* to be fulfilled. I believe this to be the cause behind Mr. Sproul Jr.'s little goof-up. But what appears to have been a minor mistake, in reality is a MAJOR testimony to how true his father's words are -- "[You] can never read the New Testament again the same way." By inventing a *verse* that does not exist -- "some of you will not sleep" -- **R. C. Sproul Jr. has shown that "some of you standing here shall not taste of death" MEANS EXACTLY THE SAME THING as "We shall not all sleep"!** So, what's it going to be? Will Mr. Sproul Jr. declare that Paul was wrong about the timing, or will he join the rest of the "heretics" who confess that Paul was right?

And he said unto them, Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition....Making void the word of God by your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do. (Mark 7:9,13)

Summary

With respect to Christ's Coming, today's **premil-dispensationalists** adhere to the analogy of faith; and rightfully interpret **one** Second Coming of Christ. The problem is -- they pay no attention to audience relevance; and if they do, it's because they're explaining it away. Through the analogy of faith they have

come to the proper conclusion on the number of Second Comings of Christ -- **one**. This is no different than Church history, the creeds, or the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. But because audience relevance is violated, that one Second Coming is still future.

Today's **partial preterists** are fighting a two-front battle. Because of this, they must violate both the analogy of faith (comparing Scripture with Scripture), and audience relevance. There are certain events they simply cannot *allow* to be fulfilled. Their preconceived notions are given precedence over sound hermeneutics; resulting in a desperate attempt to combine wrong tradition with the Truth of the Word. It won't work.

The **Preterist**, however, is the only interpreter who does not violate these rules. Through Scripture Alone -- without an appeal to tradition or a futurist predilection -- he "seek[s] to understand what it actually says and guard[s] against forcing [his] own views upon it."

Dr. Russell -

It was hardly to be expected that views, which come into conflict with traditional and popular opinion, should meet with ready concurrence; but the author must confess his disappointment that no serious attempt has been made to disprove any of his positions. The work is almost wholly exegetical; and there is no attempt to invent or establish a theory, but only, by honest and faithful interpretation of the New Testament Scriptures, to allow them to speak for themselves. The only way to set aside the conclusions of the book is to point out the text which is wrongly interpreted: as it is, the author has seen no reason to cancel a single sentence of what he has written. Truth, however, can afford to wait; and the invariable bursting of every pseudo-prophetical bubble, which for the moment attracts the credulous, will at length, it may be hoped, incline men to more sober and reverent handling of the Word of God. (Preface New Ed.)

This article is dedicated to the memory of ~David Harold Chilton. A man who lived for the Truth of *sola Scriptura*. From his book *The Days of Vengeance* -

[T]he Christian who understands the truth of God's sovereignty is assured thereby that nothing in his life is without meaning and purpose - that God has ordained all things for His glory and for our ultimate good. This means that even our sufferings are part of a consistent Plan; that when we are opposed, we need not fear that God has abandoned us. We can be secure in the knowledge that, since we have been "called according to His purpose" (Rom.8:28), all things in our life are a necessary aspect of that purpose. (p.100)
