



The Sword & The Plow

Newsletter of the Bimillennial Preterist Association

Vol. IX, No. V – June 2007

Simmons' Response to Simmons

Is Universalism a Logical Corollary of Full Preterism?

In a recent article posted on PreteristArchive.com, Brian Simmons tells the story of his journey from partial Preterist, to full Preterist, to Universalist. The thrust of Brian's article is that Universalism is a necessary and logical implication of full Preterism. I feel this is error, and therefore respond. It is not full Preterism¹ that leads to Universalism, but a lack of sufficient grounding in basic Bible instruction regarding issues of sin and salvation (soteriology) that lead to belief in this pernicious doctrine.

Wrong Premises lead to Wrong Conclusions

At the outset, it should be noted that Brian has been a full Preterist for less than two years. It was not until the summer of 2005 that he began his inquiry into full Preterism, and not until November of that year that he embraced fulfilled eschatology. This is more than passing significant, because it shows that Brian does not bring the voice of experience or maturity to his conclusions, but those of a mere neophyte. His is not the voice of one who has wrestled with

these issues over long years only to surrender at last, but someone who, in the space of little more than a year, rashly followed his own mistaken premises to wrong conclusions. I have been a full Preterist for over 27 years, and have never become a Universalist, and never will. It is difficult to imagine anything more biblically indefensible than the irresponsible notion of "universal salvation." On the other hand, there are few things more biblically sound or easily defended than full Preterism. Far from one leading logically to the other, they are like water and oil that will not mix. It is only by perversion of the gospel and Preterism that one can fall into Universalism. Whatever led Brian to Universalism was not the full Preterism embraced tens of thousands of sound and faithful believers, but errors peculiar to Brian and those sharing his views. If there is anything we can learn from Brian's example, it is that one should be well grounded in first principles before embarking upon a study of "last things." Brian was not well grounded and therefore wandered into error.

Mistaken Premise No. 1: Reversal of "Original Sin"

Brian indicates that approximately one year after embracing full Preterism, he became aware of certain logical conclusions he felt flowed out of J. Stuart Russell's *Parousia*. Says Brian: "As I traced Russell's system to its obvious

¹ By "full Preterism" is simply mean fulfilled eschatology; viz., that the prophecies of Christ's eschatological coming were historically fulfilled in the world events culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

conclusions, I began to feel that he was correct. Yet the full doctrinal implications of his teaching had yet to dawn on me. It would take almost a year before I realized one major truth: ***If death was destroyed in A.D. 70, why would anyone be under condemnation today?***

There is a logical fallacy here: Brian assumes that the “death” destroyed at the eschaton was juridical death, which he believes was imputed to all mankind based upon Adam’s transgression. That this is Brian’s meaning is clear from what he says later: “In time, however, the same questions kept recurring. If death was abolished, it could only have been abolished in a universal sense. ***This would release all men from the condemnation of Adam’s transgression, thus imputing righteousness to all.***” (Emphasis added.)

Thus, Brian believes in ***universal, imputed condemnation***, including apparently infants (if it is not imputed at birth, when is it?), based upon Adam’s transgression. This is nothing but the Catholic doctrine of “original sin,” carried over into some Protestant churches by early reformers, but by no means unanimously embraced among Christians. Indeed, it is probably a minority position among evangelical churches.

The doctrine of original sin is based on Paul’s statement in Romans 5:19 that “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.” However, this passage can be interpreted several ways. The Catholic interpretation is that God imposes *legal condemnation* to all mankind based upon the transgression of Adam, requiring even infants to be baptized to be saved. The Catholic church recently softened this view, and now allows the possibility that unbaptized infants may escape damnation. But the basic teaching remains that God condemns mankind *vicariously* in Adam. How this squares with the notion of a just God I will leave those embracing that view to work out for themselves. I personally find it irreconcilable with the Bible and the justice I see exercised by God throughout. This leads to the second way of interpreting the passage, and the one that I would urge is correct; that is, that mankind was made the heir of Adam’s fallen *condition*, not his legal condemnation; that mankind inherited Adam’s fallenness, but that no man is condemned before God based upon that fallenness until he

personally acts upon it, having attained to an age of accountability.

Sin implies *moral culpability* and this, in turn, implies possession of *moral faculties* beyond those of infants and small children. It also means that legal blame is *not* transferred or imputed from one man to another, but that every man is answerable only for *his own sins*. Ezekiel clearly establishes this point for all that will objectively consider the prophet’s words: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” (Ezek. 18:20) This passage expresses God’s system of equity and justice and his decree that one man shall not be visited with the sins of another. We do not speak here of the unavoidable consequences of the child growing up in the home an alcoholic parent, or similar situation, for in this case the sins of the fathers are plainly and unavoidably visited upon the children. But this is due to the nature of things, and not to the specific judgment of God. (Incidentally, this is why all mankind suffers from Adam’s fall, without the imputation of his guilt; *viz.*, because we inherit his fallen nature as the offspring of his loins.) Rather, we speak to the established principles upon which God exercises his office as judge of the world, and either saves or condemns individual men. God’s righteous judgment is the model for man’s righteous judgment; as men expect justice by earthly sovereigns in government, so they expect justice in God. Appeal to “sovereignty” is not a license to arbitrary and unjust judgment in God any more than it is men. The notion that God condemns the whole race based upon Adam’s transgression cannot be reconciled with a just and righteous God.

Issues of man’s free moral agency enter into the equation. Luther denied free will in man: “Free will is really a fiction and a label without reality, because it is in no man’s power to plan any evil or good...Everything takes place by absolute necessity.”² In another place, Luther said that “free will is a downright lie.”³ However, as Erasmus ably pointed out, “Wherever there is pure and perpetual necessity, there can be neither

² Luther, *Asertio*, Art. XXXVI.

³ Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, Introduction.

guilt nor virtue.” “I have set before you life and death. Choose the good and follow me.’ Could it be stated any more plainly? God shows what is good and what is evil. He offers as recompense death or life. He relinquishes to man the freedom of choice. It would be ridiculous to command one to make a choice, if he were incapable of turning in either direction.”⁴ It is probably an easier step logically for those that deny free will and embrace doctrines like “predestination” and the “impossibility of apostasy” to make the transition into the error of Universalism than for those that deny them, for they take responsibility away from man and assign everything to the will of God. “Did God condemn all men based upon the act of a single man? What of it? God now justifies all men based upon the sacrifice of Christ.” Man is simply a passive instrument in the hands of God; human volition does not enter in.

It is clear that Brian’s understanding of Rom. 5:19 and belief in “original sin” (by whatever name) are leading factors causing him to embrace Universalism. Conversely, rejection of the doctrine of original sin has kept tens of thousand of other full Preterists like me from falling into Brian’s error. Indeed, Universal justification is not a logical corollary of full Preterism at all! One can fall into the error of Universalism, irrespective of his view of eschatology, for the basic premise of Universalism is not fulfilled eschatology, but the universal affect of the cross. It is true that some have fallen into the error of Universalism after embracing full Preterism, but typically, as with Brian, this has more to do with the unsoundness of doctrines they embraced when they became full Preterists, than full Preterism itself. Full Preterism does not teach original sin; that is an error Brian brought with him; full Preterism merely provided the catalyst for him to think his errors through and logically apply them; it did not create them. The better policy would have been to reject original sin, not embrace Universalism!

Townely, who also went from full Preterist to Universalist (and back again) followed the same trail as Brian. As may be plainly seen, the culprit is not Preterism, but erroneous notions about imputed sin:

⁴ Erasmus, *Discourse on Free Will*, Ernest F. Winter translation.

In this state or constitution all the family of God, who were of the existing generation, were interested, independent of their knowledge. For instance, the Philipian jailor, as he was judged in the first Adam head, so he was justified in the resurrection of the second Adam head. Did his ignorance of these facts, prior to Paul’s preaching, absolve him from the judgment any more than it precluded him from the justification? By no means. As he had been in the state of condemnation by the first Adam, so was he then in the state of justification by the second. He was reconciled to Go by the death of the Son, and not by the knowledge of that death.⁵

Notice that Townely here preaches Universalism without being aware of it (he actually argues against Universalism in one of the articles appended to his book). Hence, it is not Preterism that brought him to Universalism, but his own imperfect understanding of sin and salvation. It may be that his imperfect understanding of sin and salvation when viewed through the prism of Preterism caused him to see the Universalism that had always been a latent part of his system of belief, but Preterism itself did not put those beliefs there. Like Brain, they were Townely’s long before he became a Preterist.

Mistaken Premise No. 2: Death Universally Destroyed

Brian argues: “The premise is incontrovertible. If death has been nullified, it can only be nullified completely. This means eternal life is imputed to all men, regardless of faith.” Contrary to what Brian alleges, the premise is not “incontrovertible.” Indeed, it is completely false and easily refuted. It is only in the city, the new Jerusalem (the church), that death is destroyed. (Rev. 21:4) Outside the city are “dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and *murderers*, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.” (Rev. 22:15) John, who wrote the Revelation, says *no murderer has eternal life abiding in him*. (1 Jno. 3:15) Does John contradict himself? Does he say in one place that murders do not share in salvation, but in another that they do? Not at all. Those who enter into the city are acquitted for their sins; those that are without the city remain dead in sin. Death has not been completely or universally destroyed, as Brian maintains. Brain gratuitously reads that into the Bible, but it is not there.

⁵ Robert Townely, *The Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ a Past Event* (1845, London), p. 90.

When Paul says that “in Christ all shall be made alive” (I Cor. 15:22), he limits the application of grace to those who have obeyed the gospel. Being “in Christ” is the same as being in the new Jerusalem, the church. The Bible teaches only *one way* for a man to get “into Christ,” and that is by repentance and baptism.

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” Rom. 6:3-5

Few things could be plainer: by baptism man is made a partaker of Christ’s death. Jesus said “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mk. 16:15) Peter said “baptism doth also now save us.” (I Pet. 3:21) In baptism man receives the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and his sins are washed away: “And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16) “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls...and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (Acts 2:41, 47)

Some people’s paradigm of how we are made partakers of Christ causes them to reject these verses, as if acknowledging their plain meaning somehow entails preaching a gospel of “works.” But deny them as they will, the truth remains the same: we get into Christ by repentance and baptism in Jesus’ name, or *not at all*. And this is the teaching of virtually all the reformers, to say nothing of the church fathers, and the Nicene Creed, recited almost everywhere in Christendom. I will quote Calvin as representative of them all:

"Ananias, therefore, only intended to say to Paul, "That thou mayest be assured that thy sins are forgiven, be baptized; **for in baptism the Lord promises remission of sins**; receive this and be secure." (Calvin, *Institutes*, Vol. 2, p. 487)

"**By baptism, God promises remission of sins**, and will certainly fulfill to all believers: **that promise was offered to us in baptism**; let us, therefore, embrace it by faith; it was long dormant by reason of our unbelief; now, then, **let us receive it by faith**." (Calvin, *Institutes*, Vol. 2, p. 488)

The idea that death has been destroyed for those out of Christ (those that obey not the gospel) is alien to the scriptures. Brian’s premise that death was destroyed for all men is wrong. It was his own mistaken premise that led to his wrong conclusions, not full Preterism.

Brian quotes statements by Russell that he feels hold latent seeds of Universalism, and may even have been disguised to conceal his views. But this is wrong. Russell quotes Jesus when he says “I will draw all men unto myself” and Paul when he states that “grace did much more abound.” These are not affirmations of Universalism. They simply show that God invites all men to be saved, not that he thrusts salvation upon them. It is Brian, not Russell, who is wresting the scriptures.

Mistaken Premise No. 3: Source of Sin & Death was the Mosaic Law

Another error common to those who wander out of the way and into Universalism is the idea that the source of sin and death was the Old Testament. Brian indicates that this was his view: “I tended to see everything in the New Testament canon as applying to the Old Covenant only. In a statement I made at the time, I said: ‘*On the day of Pentecost the Old Covenant was made spiritual, and it ended in A.D. 70.*’” In other words, Brian came to see man’s salvation exclusively in terms of his redemption from the Old Law. This meant that the Bible had little relevance for today, speaking only to circumstances applicable to other men: “The epistles were just old letters written to dead people who were under a totally different covenant. Thank heaven we were out of that business now, and under a different set of terms and privileges. Since sin has been abolished through the nullification of death, a mass murderer such as Henry Lee Lucas cannot be any less righteous than a man like Billy Graham. Neither Graham nor Lucas can fulfill the law... right? Then how can Graham be more righteous than Lucas? They both must rely on the finished work of Christ. And that work was ‘**finished in A.D. 70.**’”

This is a common mistake. Townely said “sin, Satan, death, and hell have their true and scriptural meaning in reference only to the two

covenants.”⁶ He states moreover, that death was a dispensational matter done away in A.D. 70. “Death and time are dispensation matters in scripture: we hold that at the close of the dispensations, in the fall of Jerusalem, there was time no longer; so, in like manner, we maintain that at the same close there was no more death.”⁷ Max King, who also has wandered out of the way into Universalism (“comprehensive grace”), makes the same error, affirming that the sole source of sin and death was the old law: **“One must look to the Jewish system as the state and power of death to be destroyed by the reign of Christ.”**⁸ “Paul is conscious that death’s defeat hinges upon sin’s defeat, and that the defeat of sin is tied to the annulment of the old aeon of law...For Paul, **death is abolished when the state of sin and the law are abolished.**”⁹ “When the ‘ministration of death written in tables of stone’ was finally destroyed, death was swallowed up in victory.”¹⁰

It is easy to see the seeds of Universalism in all of these statements: If sin and death existed only in the Mosaic law, removal of that law can only equate with universal justification. Notice again King’s statement: **“the state of sin and the law are abolished.”**¹¹ Thus, the logical implication of King’s soteriology is the complete abolition of the state of sin and death for all mankind; viz., universalism!

However, be it noted: This mistake is completely unrelated to full Preterism! Preterism may have been the vehicle for bringing to the surface the flaws in these men’s soteriology, for bringing them into light, but it did *not* create them. The source of death is *not* the Mosaic law; the source of death is the *law of sin and death*. (Rom. 7:23; 8:2) This law existed in the garden; it was the penalty attached to transgression of God’s moral law by disobedience to his commandments. “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Gen. 2:17) The law of sin and death has existed in every age and generation; it existed in the

garden; it existed under the law of Moses; and it exists even now. “For him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not for him it is sin.” (Jam. 4:17) “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” (Rom. 14:23) Brian states that “sin has been abolished by the nullification of death” but this is reverse of the truth. It is death that is abolished by the nullification of sin. The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. (I Cor. 15:56) Christ satisfied the law by his cross; for those that obey the gospel his death takes the place of their own. Those who refuse to believe and obey remain in sin. “For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” (Jno. 8:24) “There is a sin unto death.” (I Jno. 5:16) Indeed, Brian states that both Graham and Lucas must “rely on the finished work of Christ.” But does Lucas rely upon that work? *That* is the issue. For those that rely upon Christ by obeying the gospel, repenting of their sins, and being baptized, Christ is indeed Savior. But for those that refuse the offer of grace, he is their judge and will say “depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matt. 25:41) “But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath; tribulation and wrath upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also the Gentile.” (Rom. 2:8, 9)

Conclusion

Universalism is not a logical corollary of full Preterism. Tens of thousands of full Preterists reject Universalism with no logical inconsistency in their system of beliefs. Those that fall into the error of Universalism do so based upon erroneous conclusions about soteriology, not eschatology or Preterism.



⁶ Townely, p. 17.

⁷ Townely, p. 84.

⁸ Max R. King, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Warren, OH, 1971), pp. 144.

⁹ Max R. King, *The Cross and the Parousia of Christ*, p. 644.

¹⁰ Max R. King, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, p. 145

¹¹ Max R. King, *The Cross and the Parousia of Christ*, p. 644.

Review of
Israel P. Warren

Parousia

- A.D. 1879 -

*A Critical Study of the Scripture Doctrines of
Christ's Second Coming; His Reign as King; the
Resurrection of the Dead; and General
Judgment.*

In this article, we review Israel P. Warren's, A.D. 1879, *Parousia*.

Among the earliest full Preterist books, Warren's *Parousia* was digitalized and made available online by Google, and brought to light by Scott Thompson (Dallas, TX).

Although it shares the same title as J. Stuart Russell's *Parousia*, it was independently written and published by the author; it shows no sign that Warren was aware of Russell's work by the same title. In fact, use of the same title by the author is good evidence that he knew nothing of Russell's book, for this would have been the most blatant form of plagiarism and would have discredited Warren's work. Russell published his work anonymously in England in 1878 – and later republished with his name appended in 1887. Warren's work was thus published almost simultaneously on this side of the Atlantic when Russell published his work in England.

Although and written according to a different plan and not as exhaustive in its treatment as Russell's nearly six hundred page work, which addressed every passage in the New Testament touching on the second coming, Warren deals competently with the subject matter, and makes an able case for Christ's first century eschatological return. Warren, however, has some unique aspects to his approach, which we will examine here.

Protracted Eschatological Parousia

Central to Warren's interpretation and case is his view of the Greek term "parousia" as "presence," rather than "coming." Although Warren agrees that *coming* is implied in the term as sometimes required by the context, he argues that *presence* conveys a more accurate understanding of the eschatological events associated with the term.

From this view of the word it is evident, I think, that neither the English word "coming" nor the Latin "advent" is the best representative of the original. They do not conform to its etymology; they do not conform to the idea of the verb from which it is derived; nor could they appropriately be substituted for the more exact word, "presence," in the cases where the translators used the latter. Nor is the radical idea of them the same. "Coming and "advent" give most prominently the conception of an *approach* to us, *motion* toward us; "parousia" that of *being with* us, without reference to how it began. The force of the former ends with its arrival; that of the latter begins with it. Those are words of motion, this of rest. The space of time covered by the action of the former is limited, it may be momentary; that of the latter, unlimited, - continuance that may be eternal. So in respect of place; a coming implies an arrival at some locality; a presence may be universal, "wherever two or three are met." The promise of the Lord's coming to men, therefore, is not the same thing as a promise of his presence with them. The one implies nothing more, necessarily, than a single manifestation, a visit however short; the other implies a stay with them, relations of permanence; not the performance of a single act, but rather a dispensation including within it many acts, and covering a long period of duration, possibly eternal. *Parousia*, pp. 14, 15

For Warren, the nature of the Parousia is comprehended in Christ's office as King and Judge, and giver of life to the dead. Warren does not see this as a single eschatological event, but a continuing series of acts stretching over all time. The Parousia is

The presence of Christ in the world in the exercise of his mediatorial office. In this view, it is the complement and contrast of his first advent, when he came in the flesh. It is for the completion of the work which he then began. It is for the harvesting of the seed then sown. Matt. 13:37-43. The former, according to the nature of its work, was temporary; this is to be permanent. That was associated with memories of sorrow, humiliation, and death; this with the promise of perpetuity, and glory, and blessedness. The one was a day of visitation to men (Luke 19:44); the other an abode with them. What better term for such an abode could be devised than one which includes all the ideas of grace and joy involved in the exercise of his great offices, the Parousia, - a blessed and eternal presence with them? *Parousia*, pp. 20, 21

Warren urges that while there are potentially many comings (manifestations) of Christ, there was only the *one* Parousia:

It follows from this that while we are permitted to conceive and to speak of but one Parousia of Christ, there may be many comings. These are to be regarded as specific events under a *generic* dispensation. Several are so designated in the scriptures, and many more might equally well be. Among them were the Spirit's work on the day of Pentecost, the judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira, the conversion of Saul, the various deliverances of the apostles from prison, the overthrow of Jerusalem, the destruction of the man of sin, the conversion of Constantine, etc., and generally the happy death of believers, the conquests in the work of missions, revivals, etc. *Parousia*, p. 24

Any one familiar with the work of John Noe will recognize an affinity in thought here, both in John's work arguing for many comings of Christ and his work, which argues that there is a sense in which Christ "never left." However, Noe's view may be distinguished in several important particulars: John is clear that there was only one eschatological coming of Christ and that it culminated historically in the events marking the destruction of Jerusalem. Warren, on the other hand, does not confine the Parousia to the first century. On the contrary, Warren's view that the Parousia is of prolonged and indefinite duration, *reaching even to our day*, is probably the most unique aspect of his approach. "This protracted duration of the Parousia is a fact of so much importance, that it deserves particular consideration." (*Parousia*, p. 73)

Warren does not view the second coming as an event in history, but an *epoch* stretching over vast ages. "The grand programme of the world's history under the administration of our Lord, with its mighty procession of centuries and ages, refuses to be thus narrowed down to a single point." (*Parousia*, p. 78) "The Parousia is not something pertaining to a point, but to a vast space of time. It is not an event, but a dispensation." (*Parousia*, p. 79) According to Warren, the Parousia encompasses the *whole* of the resurrection and judgment, not just the general resurrection of souls from Hades at the last day, but endures as long as there are men to be judged and dead to be raised.

But this, at least, is certain that it is to embrace the whole family of mankind; that there never has been and never will be one to whom it is not appointed to "stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad. *Parousia*, p. 77.

Binding of Satan

Warren views the binding of Satan in reference to the cessation of persecution.

It is not Satan in his general character, so to speak, as the prince of all evil, that is the subject of the prophetic narrative; it is solely in his capacity as persecutor. For this alone is he introduced upon the scene; it is to symbolize the quality of a persecutor that the hideous characters of his person are portrayed, and it is this work which throughout the sketch he is represented as doing by means of his agents, the Beast and False Prophet. Consistency, therefore, requires that the confinement he now suffers should be taken in the same special and restricted sense. *Parousia*, p. 128.

Although Warren correctly identifies the significance of the binding of Satan, his view of the Parousia as a dispensation reaching into modern times, causes him to apply Revelation's imagery to events beyond the first century. For Warren, the binding of the dragon began at the triumph of Christianity by the conversion of Constantine and the cessation of persecution by the Roman Empire.

The binding of Satan, then, I cannot doubt, denotes the cessation of pagan persecution against the church. And if that view be correct, it is not difficult to assign an approximate date to which it is to be referred. In the year A.D. 324, Constantine the Great, by the defeat of Licinius, the emperor of the east, became the sole monarch of the Roman Empire...Constantine, now attaining the sole imperial dignity, issued a new proclamation reaffirming the edict of toleration, and exhorting all his subjects to "imitate without delay the example of their sovereign and embrace the divine truth of Christianity." *Parousia*, p. 132.

Gog and Magog

But if the thousand-year binding of Satan is the cessation of persecution by the conversion of Constantine, what is the losing of Satan in the battle of God and Magog? Warren answers: the persecution of the Mohammedanism.

The thousand years are over and Satan is loosed again. In the distant regions of the earth, - the land of Gog and Magog, - are mighty nations with a population innumerable "as the sand of the sea." These he stirs up against the saints. They leave their barbarous homes, and invade the Christian territory, surround its capital, and beloved city, - Jerusalem, - but are destroyed by the lightnings of heaven. What is this but a graphic description of the rise, conquests, and ultimate overthrow of the OTTOMAN EMPIRE, in which the great monarchy of Mohammedanism, the rival religion to Christianity, enthroned itself and undertook the conquest of the world?

...

“From the conquest of Prusa,” says Gibbon, “we may date the true era of the Ottoman Empire.” This was in the year 1326, one thousand and two years from the promulgation of the imperial edict of Constantine. *Parousia*, p. 137, 139.

At this point, Warren’s idea that the Parousia was a permanent presence reaching until our own day loses its ability to persuade us, and he becomes just one more in the long line of those that stumble over the imagery of the millennia, propelling them headlong into a form of “*continuous-historical*” method that removes Revelation from its first century context. If Gog and Magog is Islam, biblical prophecy has not been fulfilled, and we are not dealing with a true contemporary-historical (Preterist) analysis of scripture.

The First Resurrection

According to Warren, the first resurrection is one of quality in rank and order, not in time, and speaks to a unique honor bestowed upon those who suffered martyrdom for Christ, by their reigning with him *in heaven*. This belongs only to martyrs; other saints are excluded from this reign; it is their special heritage as martyrs of Jesus. Warren believes that this special heritage is reflected in the Greek, which for other saints is merely a resurrection of the dead, but for the martyrs a resurrection *out of* the dead, signifying their special elevation above their brethren on account of being martyred. “It implies that out of the whole number of the departed there shall be those that attain a peculiar honor, one which they do not share with the rest.” (*Parousia*, p. 151) The thousand years is not symbolic, but actual, measured by the period commencing with the accession of Constantine until the overthrow of the Ottoman Empire by Islam. However, although the binding of the persecutor terminates after a thousand years when Islam is allowed to persecute Christians (actually, 1,002 years by Warren’s calculation), the martyrs *continue* to reign. Thus, the one ends, but the other does not.

Warren’s interpretation is unfortunate. The saints reign, not in heaven, but in Hades paradise; the resurrection of the dead does not occur until the last enemy is destroyed at the “last day” (Jno. 11:24; I Cor. 15:26), depicted toward the latter part of the chapter. (Rev. 20:11-15)¹² The idea that there was a *special*

¹² Warren denies that the latter half of Rev. 20 refers to the general resurrection and judgment,

resurrection of martyrs prior to the general resurrection is taught nowhere else in scripture, nor is it taught here. Indeed, Warren’s whole scheme is internally inconsistent; the saints most certainly do not reign while the dragon is bound, for the simple fact that that they cannot suffer martyrdom until he is loosed. It is only when the dragon is loosed that the saints suffer martyrdom and thus attain to the first resurrection of the soul in paradise. Further, the battle of Gog and Magog is the same battle depicted elsewhere in Revelation. This is nowhere more apparent than in chapter nineteen, which makes specific allusion to Gog and Magog by quoting the prophet Ezekiel’s description of that event. (Rev. 19:17, 18; cf. Ezek. 39:17) The battle of Gog and Magog, also known as the battle of Armageddon, is nothing but a symbolic depiction of the persecution under Nero; the battle begins in chapter thirteen, where it is given to the beast (the persecuting power of Rome) to make war against the saints, and concludes in chapters nineteen and twenty, where the dragon, beast, and false prophet (the latter representing persecuting power of the Jews) are slain. (Rev. 19:20, 21) Chapter twenty is a recapitulation; it retraces ground previously covered, bringing us again to the time when the dragon that had persecuted the church under Caiaphas, Pilate, and Paul in chapter twelve, was loosed to persecute the church again under Nero. (Rev. 11:7; 17:10)

The Consummation

According to Warren, the continuing Parousia of Christ will result in a grand consummation, similar to the golden age of Pre- and Post – millennialists. Warren says “it is expressly declared that neither the senses nor imagination of man are adequate to conceive of the glorious reality” of the consummation yet to come. (*Parousia*, p. 159) Warren rejects the Premillennial model of a millennium suddenly accruing upon the coming of Christ, and opts instead for the gradualism of Postmillennialism in which the kingdom advances slowly until it overtakes and consumes all, ridding mankind forever of the works of the devil and very sin itself. (“I will not presume to imagine what this world will become when sin is destroyed, and when all its inhabitants and forces become holy

but argues that it refers symbolically to the defeat and destruction of persecutors alone. *Parousia*, pp. 153-158.

to the Lord.” *Parousia*, p. 174) According to Warren, Christianity will become universal; it will become the sole religion; it will be greatly intensified in power; and thus pervade all the forces that mold human character and affect the condition of the world:

The earth itself is to be regenerated morally and physically, the latter through the former. God is going to make new heavens and a new earth, but he will not do it by sudden miracle, but by the hands of the renewed and sanctified inhabitants of the earth. He is to be in the hearts of men as the new Creator who makes all things new. It is thus that his tabernacle is to be with them, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. *Parousia*, pp. 169, 170 *cf.* 297

Where Warren gets these ideas is a mystery. He is very clear later in his work that the imagery of the new heavens and earth (Rev. 21, 22) describe the present reality of the world in which the saved are in the new Jerusalem (church), outside of which is the world of unregenerate men. (*Parousia*, pp. 207-214) Moreover, Warren believes that the ultimate home of the saved is in heaven. (“But while the immediate design of the description of the new Jerusalem is to show forth the glory and felicity of the church of God on earth, when viewed as a whole, there seems also to be a tacit reference to the further glory of its eternal reward in heaven.” *Parousia*, p. 213) That Warren should thus believe in a future, earthly paradise free from sin is an anomaly for which we cannot account. The connection between an improper understanding of Rev. 21 and 22 and Universalism is now well established. A significant number of Preterists have fallen into the false gospel of Universalism by the mistaken belief that the new heavens and earth speak to a world in which all men are justified and have fellowship with God apart from obedience to the gospel. It is therefore with interest that we note this error in Warren’s analysis.

The Resurrection and Judgment

Warren’s view of the resurrection is very sound; he holds the *germ* of man’s resurrection being and body is present in his body of flesh, like a seed within a piece of fruit, and that the saints receive their *immortal body* at the time of physical death.

I cannot resist that he [Paul] viewed the resurrection

in a manner very unlike that of traditional theory; that he believed the assumption of the spiritual body would immediately follow the demission of the natural; not occurring therefore simultaneously with the whole family of man, nor at some distant “end of the world,” but successively as individuals live and die, through all the ages of time. *Parousia*, p. 254.

Having received their immortal bodies at death, the souls of the departed waited in Hades for soteriological perfection at the coming of Christ, when they were taken to heaven. The living put off the body at death and, one-by-one, are instantaneously changed, caught up together with those that slept to join the saints in heaven.

They shall be changed instantaneously. This appears to still be in contrast to the sleepers. A long time elapsed after they dropped the natural body, until they arose from Hades into the light and blessedness of heaven. But Christians who live in and under the Parousia shall pass thither directly. The change shall be “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” Observe: It is not said that all shall be changed at the same moment; that it shall be simultaneous with the whole body of Christians that live under the Parousia. It could not be, in fact, because all do not live at the same time. Generation shall succeed through all the ages. Each individual, as he completes this life of probation, shall, when the Lord calls him, pass at once to his place in the “many mansions.” *Parousia*, p. 265.

It may be objected here that Paul expressly affirms that those alive when Christ came would, in fact, experience *simultaneous* change. “Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (I Cor. 15:51, 52) Thus, while it is true that believers this side of the eschaton receive eternal life one-by-one as they put off the body in death, that does not appear to be Paul’s teaching in this place. The better view is that Paul here is speaking of the believers’ *soteriological perfection* - the justification that was held in abeyance from the cross and accrued to the saints’ benefit at Jesus’ coming, also referred to as the adoption, redemption, and manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:23), and “redemption of the purchased possession” of which the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were the earnest. (Eph. 1:14; I Cor. 1:4-7) This “change” was essentially legal and juridical, and conditionally imparted immortality to the whole body of believers alive at the eschaton, as adopted sons and putative heirs of eternal life. It was because the change was legal and covenantal that Paul

styled it a “mystery,” for it would entail no mystery if believers were actually translated, as was mistakenly believed of John. (Jno. 21:21-23)

Irrevocable Judgment and Everlasting Punishment

As with present day Preterists, Warren is conscious that re-evaluation of the figurative nature of prophetic language throws into question issues about the perpetuity of punishment. Here, Warren plainly states his view that the language seems calculated to suggest perpetual duration of the punishment of the lost, which we interpret to mean “eternal, conscious torment.” “On one point, I cannot deem the teachings of scripture to be doubtful, and that is to the perpetuity of future punishment. Whatever meanings the phrases may sometimes have, which describe it, I cannot resist the conclusion that they are designed to teach us that in this connection they mean endless duration.” (*Parousia*, p. 296.) Finally, as if anticipating the false gospel of Universalism and King’s “comprehensive grace”, Warren says that there is no second probation for man after death:

The decisions of judgment are represented as final. I can find no hint of another probation after this present life, - a second probation for those who may be supposed to have had no “fair chance” in this. If any there have been or may be among the inhabitants of time, they will most surely be fairly dealt with by a merciful God. With him we may safely leave them, without attempting to find for them a grace that is nowhere promised, or a new probation of which Christ the Saviour has never told us. *Parousia*, p. 297.

Conclusion

Despite erroneous views that the Parousia is a dispensation, rather than an event, notions of a future earthly paradise, and that the binding of the dragon speaks to the edict of Constantine and the battle of Gog and Magog to medieval Islamic hoards, Warren’s Parousia can be read with profit. Published in 1879, Warren’s work was an important step in the direction of recovering the church’s original, full Preterism, and therefore is worthy to be read.

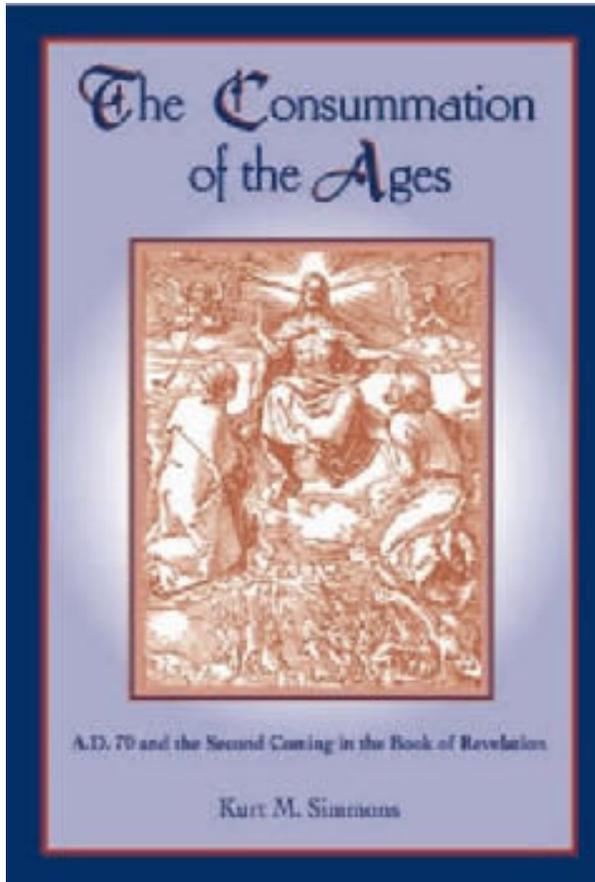
Make Plans Now!

Second Annual Carlsbad Eschatology Conference

March 2008

*Last Year’s Conference By All Reports the Best
Most had Ever Attended!*





The Consummation of the Ages

468 pages, Hardcover

\$34.95

plus \$3.00 shipping & handling (Note: international postal rates are higher)

Your pieces on Bimillennialism are settling lots of issues that have troubled me for years. Your clarity of mind and simplicity of expression seem to me inspired. Your symbolic interpretations are right on, and each is supported by more than enough scriptural witness. Consummation of the Ages is already THE important commentary to reconcile history with the Bible.

*Tupper Saussy, Santa Monica, CA,
author of Miracle on Main Street*

**The Best Commentary on
Revelation in Print!**

The Book You Need

The Information You Want

Get it Today!