

# “The Problems with Positing A Presuppositional Point of View on Prophecy.”

## “When Shall These Things Be?” A Review of Select Chapters

*Assessing R.C. Sproul Jr., Kenneth Gentry, and Doug Wilson’s comments  
in the light of Scripture, Creed and Confession.*

By Dr. Kelly Nelson Birks

My name is Kelly Nelson Birks. I am a Christian pastor. I am Reformed, Presbyterian and Preterist. I hold to the Westminster Statement of Faith as my basic confession of faith. I am not anti-creedal. As to the nature of the believer’s resurrection body, I believe in a future, bodily resurrection: all believers will receive their individual, glorified, heavenly-corporeal and Christ-like resurrection bodies.<sup>1</sup> I believe in a future judgment on all mankind. Furthermore, I recognize, along with the framers of my confession, that the creeds and confessions are not the standard by which truth and error, fact and falsehood are to be judged; conversely, only by the Spirit of God speaking in the Scriptures. The Westminster Confession of Faith (hereafter WCF) speaks directly to this issue:

“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.”<sup>2</sup>

I affirm that the above statements are true. I also affirm the following:

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<sup>1</sup> For a more complete statement concerning this doctrine and understanding read Birks’, “The End of Sin: An Eschatological Odyssey into Teloarmatia.” Birks writes at the beginning of the chapter devoted to the nature of the believer’s resurrection body, “As the result of Christ’s own resurrection from the dead, by which his earthly carbon based body was transformed into his glorified state, he became as Paul states, ‘a quickening (or, life giving) spirit’ (1 Cor. 15:45), without ever disposing of his earthly glorified body. What is so essential for us is that we who are believers in Christ will be transformed into this same state of likeness, and we ourselves must of necessity...be clothed with the image of this heavenly Christ...” Dr. Kelly Nelson Birks, *The End of Sin: An Eschatological Odyssey into Teloarmatia* (Baltimore: PublishAmerica, 2004), 127.

<sup>2</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 1.9, 10

“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 an help in both.”<sup>3</sup>

You now have my name and basic theological confession. Here is my education: I earned a Bachelors in Pastoral Theology (B.A.); a Master’s Degree in Theology (Th.M.); followed by two doctorates in Biblical studies: Doctor of Philosophy, and Doctor of Ministry (Ph.D and D.Min), respectively. At this point you may be thinking, “Why is this guy parading his educational pedigree in front of us?” My intention is only to convey the importance of the writer’s qualifications on the subject of Biblical theology, in this case, eschatology, and especially while engaged in scholarly debate. However, it is no secret that many of our Reformed and Christian brothers have taken it upon themselves to steer the average Christian away from the Preterist position. Doing so by making the accusation that those who hold to the Preterist point of view are minimally, if not at all, educated within the advanced areas of theology. For instance, Gentry makes this prejudicial and unfortunate statement,

“Again, we must remember that all of this debate is over the difference between the formal, unified mind of the church through the centuries *and a small band of untrained theological innovators in the present.*”<sup>4</sup> (Emphasis, KNB)

Note that Gentry does not set aside *some* Preterists as being untrained, but in this quote, *all* Preterists.<sup>5</sup> This is, of course, a weak attempt at essentially saying that we are not academically qualified and trained as they, hence we should not be listened to. This is an implied form of *reductio-ad-absurdum* in a “straw man” approach by Gentry which is used throughout “When Shall These Things Be?”(hereafter cited as WSTTB). Again, Gentry makes a huge assumption later in his chapter,

“Thus as noted earlier in this chapter, the movement is being led by men who are largely unschooled in the standard theological disciplines.”<sup>6</sup>

The only reason I begin my response in this way, is so that you the reader, can know precisely who is commenting on the work of other Reformed men and debating their view of eschatology. The contributors to WSTTB and I would both be in agreement on a vast majority of other issues with Reformed and Biblical Theology.

These men are not only established in their fields of theology and ministry, they are men whom I

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 31.4

<sup>4</sup> Keith Mathison, ed., *When Shall These Things Be?* (Phillipsburg; P&R Publishing, 2004), 45.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted here that when the author refers to “Preterist” or “Preterism,” he is stating the doctrine of Parousia having taken place in the first century. This is opposed to the “Partial Preterism” that is held by the authors of “When Shall These Things Be.” (For a more accurate assessment of the author’s view, see footnote 7 below.)

<sup>6</sup> WSTTB, 61.

believe genuinely desire to see that Christ be glorified in the right enunciation and practice of His Word. They are *not* my enemies (no matter what they might think towards me).

So, why have I titled this review, “The Problems of Positing a Presuppositional Point of View of Prophecy,” (besides proving my penchant for alliteration)? First, any point of view that places the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ any time outside of the first century does so because of presuppositional thinking. Secondly, a view that places the Second Coming outside of the first century cannot be established by an unbiased reading of Scripture. Thirdly, the position of a future Second Coming (i.e., you, the reader’s near future) is not determined by solid exegesis of Scripture, but by a presuppositional reading of the text. The title of the book that I am critiquing is “When Shall These Things Be?” After reading through the book I must respond to Mathison and company, “Clearly, you still don’t know.”

Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language defines a presupposition as:

1. To suppose or assume beforehand; take for granted in advance.
2. (Of a thing, condition, or state of affairs) to require or imply as an antecedent condition: An effect presupposes a cause.

Prior to the advancement of a fledgling type of futurism that began in the mid-second century and what later became known by some scholars as the on-set of the Postponement Theory, what the church possessed eschatologically were the plain text statements of Christ and the writers of New Testament Scripture which clearly pronounced within its pages a first century expectation of the Parousia, or Second Coming of Christ, along with its attending occurrences of a general resurrection as well as the judgment. Let me state briefly here, that I am neither a partial preterist nor do I take the moniker of full preterist. Rather, I claim as I do in my second book, “The End of Sin” to be a modified preterist.<sup>7</sup> I do believe that Scripture, while teaching the first century fulfillment of the Parousia, does point us towards a yet future-to-us consummation of God’s program for His Church in the world. This plan does not confine itself to the first century “consummation-of-salvation-program” which the Second Coming represents (Heb. 9:24-28).<sup>8</sup> Every statement concerning the Second Coming in the New Testament either

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<sup>7</sup> “There are many different types of ‘Preterists’ across the eschatological landscape...The author holds to the Modified Preterist position that all prophecies surrounding the Parousia of Christ have in fact taken place, but with still future-to-us ramifications.” “The End of Sin” (Pg. 193, end note 2)

<sup>8</sup> This is one of the mistakes that the futurist makes is his understanding of the consummation of salvation. Leviticus 16 explains the role and function of the high priest in regards to atonement. This whole chapter in Leviticus is the shadow, or type, of the High Priestly office of Christ in Hebrews 9:24-28. The Messiah also fulfills the type of sin-offering to be burnt, as well as the live goat (scape goat) that carries the sins away from Israel. Without the High Priest coming out of the Holiest of Holies (Parousia) the second time, the Church cannot know of the acceptance of the atonement offering (consummation of salvation). The futurist would agree with these statements; however, the preterist tells the futurist that his salvation is not “known” to him because he is still waiting for the High Priest (Christ) to make His appearance to the people. The preterist, on the other hand, is not waiting for his salvation to be consummated, “so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly awaiting for him.”

As previously mentioned, I affirm a glorified, individual, and corporeal view of the resurrection body which is given to us *out of heaven*, not out of the ground – 2 Cor. 5:1-5. For a fuller exposition on the necessity of an individual-

states directly or implies a first century fulfillment of the Second Coming. Conversely, *there is not a single passage in all of the New Testament that states that the Second Coming would occur at anytime outside of the first century*, and according to Christ, it would take place at the end of the destruction of Jerusalem which transpired between August and September of the summer of A.D. 70. (Mtt. 24:15-35, Lk. 21:20-33)

So what of the title of Mathison and companies book, “When Shall These Things Be?” Taking this question of the disciples to Christ from the Olivet Discourse (“Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?”-Mtt. 24:3, Mk. 13:4, Lk. 21:7, NASB-so throughout), we read in its context Christ answering the question in explicit detail, placing the occurrences of when these things shall be (including his one and only Parousia - V.’s 27-34) well within the lifetimes of the disciples of the first century.<sup>9</sup> One would recommend that before one titles a book that is meant to disprove the position of the first century Second Coming of Christ, that the editor would check the context of the passages in question to make sure it does not backfire into the contributor’s faces. Christ tells the disciples (Peter, James, John and Andrew) that they would see (at least some of them-Mtt. 16:27-28, as well as “other” disciples who lived pre-A.D. 70, Mk. 9:1 cmp. w/ Mk. 8:34) the events discussed within the Olivet Discourse, including his glorious Second Coming:

“See to it that no one misleads *all of you* (second person plural of the Greek, and so throughout)...And *all of you* are about to be hearing of wars and rumors of wars...then they will deliver *all of you* up to tribulation and will kill *all of you*...Therefore when *all of you* shall see the abomination of desolation (Lk. 21:20-the Roman armies abominating the city and the temple with their pagan standards of various gods), ...but *all of you* pray that your flight not be in winter...if therefore they say to *all of you*...and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven. And then all the *tribes of the land* will mourn, and they (the tribes of the land of Israel) will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the heaven with power and great glory...even so *all of you*, when *all of you* SEE ALL THESE THINGS, recognize that He is near right at the doors.” (Mtt. 24:4, 6, 9, 15, 20, 26, 30, 33)

I ask again, what is the title of this book under review? “When shall these things Be?” Jesus most certainly answers this question asked of him by the disciples. He said that the things of Mtt. 24 through Mtt. 25 would occur during the lifetime of the disciples. There is no legitimate way of establishing a partial preterist view that somehow has Matthew's narrative occurring at a time outside of the first century. Cross reference Mtt. 24-25 with Lk. 17:22-37 and you will see that Luke's record causes all of the events in both of Matthew’s chapters to be co-mingled, thus demonstrating that the events described in each of Matthew's chapters (24 and 25) would occur at the same time. Luke's narrative is what links the two chapters of Matthew together with an inseparable bond. There is no way one can legitimately place the events of the Olivet Discourse

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corporeal resurrection view read my, “The End of Sin” (see footnote 1). Chapter four is titled, “Immortality and the Nature of the Believer’s Resurrection Body-Ultimate Teloarmatia.”

<sup>9</sup> (See the appendices in my book, “The Comings of Christ: A Reformed and Preterist Analogy of the 70th Week of the Prophet Daniel”)

at any other time in history other than during the first century. This is only a small portion of all the New Testament passages that place the Second Coming within the confines of the first century.

“Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me *and of my words*, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”- Jesus- Mk. 8:38

### **Sparring with Sproul.**

My purpose is to briefly comment on the matters that are brought up in this book by R.C. Sproul Jr. in his *Foreword*, Kenneth L.Gentry Jr. in his *The Historical Problem with Hyper-Preterism*, and Douglas Wilson in his *Sola-Scriptura, Creeds and Ecclesiastical Authority*.

I affirm the statements made by R.C. Sproul Jr. in regard to the importance of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ confessing a common faith. I believe in the necessity of creeds and confessions. They state what it is we as a church believe and why we believe. The confessions, especially in my Reformed and Presbyterian tradition (WFC), are given in order to explain what it is we mean by what it is we say we believe.<sup>10</sup> Of course the creeds (from the Latin, *credo*-“I believe”) came about as a historical necessity in order to define Biblical Christianity away from the errors of those masqueraders of Christianity that would posit a different Jesus and a different gospel. They are giving explanation and enunciation to the doctrines of the Bible by arriving at those explanations through fair and upright exegesis. Nevertheless, while truth as revealed in Scripture is static, the opinion, councils and teachings of men are not. As Luther said when he stood before the Roman Inquisitors who were about to judge his life concerning his teaching of Justification by Faith and a host of other doctrines: “Here I stand, I can do no other.” Luther said this within the context of many years of serious and as unbiased as possible, Biblical exegesis. He had discovered that the creeds and doctrines of the church were not only in error, but they were in serious error concerning the matters of Justification. Even if a doctrinal error is not salvific with eternal consequences, it is always serious when one misrepresents, mischaracterizes or just mistakes any portion of Scripture. God’s word must be given free course and glorified as well as rightly divided at all times, otherwise, glory is removed from Christ even if we believe that we are actually glorifying him through our opinions, presuppositions, and so forth. Exegesis without prejudice is what is at stake here in answering the eschatological question “When Shall These Things Be?”

Sproul Jr. begins the Foreward by stating that at Saint Peter Presbyterian Church, in confessing their common faith, they would sometimes sing either the Apostle’s Creed or the Nicene Creed.

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<sup>10</sup> Some could have a difficult time understanding this statement. In other words, perhaps you have had a conversation in the past, finding it difficult explaining what you truly mean. This is where the confessions, for example, could be effective in helping you and the participant in the conversation discern what it is you really believe. If someone asks you, “what do you mean by saying that you believe in the eternal decree of God?” If you have studied the WCF you can think of chapter 3, “Of God’s Eternal Decree” and tell the person what you believe.

He goes on to write, “And what makes all of us one is our common faith. So let us confess together our common faith...”<sup>11</sup> Question: What if some of the “common faith” that is presented in creeds and confessions is wrong? You see, what drives our Reformed brothers to discount Preterism as being incorrect is not because they have simply exegeted the Scriptures, but that they have *presupposed* the accuracy and veracity of the creeds and confessions as being the proper template to place over the passages of Scripture that speak to the Second Coming of Christ and attending events. There is nothing worse than preceding the exegetical discipline with a controlling prejudice.

The starting point of correct confession according to Sproul Jr. is not the Scripture alone, but the presumption that the creeds and confessions correctly interpret what the Scripture means by what it says. And so after presenting some of the contents of the Apostles Creed, Sproul Jr. proclaims: “This is what makes us one.”<sup>12</sup> Does that Creed or for that matter any creed, really make us one? Sproul Jr. gives the creed a unifying feature as being that which must be adhered to if the Church is to be “one” within itself. Not only is this an unscriptural statement, it carries with it the power of either unifying or tearing asunder one group in the church from another. The Creeds were never given this type of power and authority by Christ. The Bible does not teach that we are to compose and then stick like glue to a specific confession or creed. Christ himself taught the unifying factor for the church, that which makes us one, was expressed through His High Priestly prayer that he prayed for His then and future disciples in John 17:20-26. 1.) The Christian is sanctified by the truth (not by a creed) because Christ Himself was sanctified. – John. 17:19, “For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.” 2.) Faith in Christ’s own Word establishes one-ness. – vv. 20-21: “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, {are} in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.” 3.) The glory that the Father gave to His Son, the Son gives to the church and makes them one. – v. 22: “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;” And 4.) The fact of Christ within the church establishes our unity or one-ness. v.23: “I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”

Gentry thinks that the creeds and confessions do have scriptural warrant. I will deal with that statement in due course. We complain of the Roman Catholic System of theology as being undergirded not by Scripture but by a human being known as the Pope (Papa), and by Cardinals, Bishops and their Councils. These are men who are opposed to any kind of rule in the church other than their own. I would suggest to you, dear reader, that many of our Reformed brothers and sisters have replaced a personal pope with a paper pope by preferring the creeds and confessions as somehow being maintained and controlled (dare we say, inspired) by the Holy Spirit. This, my friends, is the starting point from which most cults spring. When personal responsibility before God in Biblical study is usurped by “that which has always been believed

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<sup>11</sup> WSTTB, vii.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, viii.

among us”, then it is time to re-evaluate how one has arrived at the static position of presuppositional creedolatry. Only IF the statements within the creeds and confessions are exegetically true and upright should we affirm them and make them a mandatory absolute of scriptural validity. So the question from the Bible’s point of view is not “Which creed/confession rightly mirrors the Word of God,” but rather, “How are we to study, categorize as doctrine, test and retest, in order to confess as true that which is the Word of God?” How is it that the Bereans never had any use of a creedal or confessional template from which to guide them into a true and right interpretation of Scripture, yet they came to all the right conclusions? “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the creed...(whoops, I mean)...the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Many of them therefore believed...” Acts 17:11-12

Consider the following treatment as to how the Holy Spirit informs us, the readers, what needs to be in place in order for faith to come and for us to understand the Word of God.

- 1.) Attitude: The Bereans examined the Scriptures with an attitude of “great eagerness.” They were a people who were hungry for its truth like Peter states we are to be (1 Pt. 2:2).
- 2.) Frequency: The Bereans did not “play church” or play around with the Bible. Because their attitudes were right, the Holy Spirit moved them to *examine the Bible daily*. No dusty Bibles in Thessalonica laying around in the same spot all week long only to be carried once a week to church like a religious appendage, only to be returned to its previous position as a dust collector a few hours later.
- 3.) Testing: The reason that the Holy Spirit referred to the Bereans as being noble-minded in their eagerness to study the Word daily was that they were actually putting the preaching of the Apostle Paul...(the Apostle Paul!)...to the test to see if what he preached measured up to the Creed! Isn’t that what your Bible says? Of course it doesn’t say that. They examined the Scriptures daily to see if what the Apostle preached measured up to the Word, the only ultimate authority. And yet, this is the creedal-attitude that Sproul Jr. denies. He says that it is the creeds and confessions that unify us, further implying that it is the creed and confession that is to be placed over the Bible as a sort of an interpretive template. Now, the creeds and confessions have their place in Biblical research, but not in a unifying absolute sense of hermeneutics. Ask yourself again: How is it that the Bereans were not only able to come to the truth of the matters before them by examining the Scriptures without the extra-Biblical help of a creed to guide them? It’s a question worth pondering.

Sproul Jr. continues his egregious assault by making the mistake of referring to those who hold to the plain text statements of Christ and his apostles as “hyper-preterists.”<sup>13</sup> He uses this inaccurate labeling on us in order to separate himself and other partial-preterists (of which he is one) from the real Preterists. It is by far, much more difficult to remain a partial, inconsistent preterist, than it is to be a real Preterist. However, he wants to claim the term “Preterist” for himself and the other partial preterists. And so we are labeled *hyper*-preterist:

**hyper-**

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, viii.

1. Over; above; beyond: hyperflexion. 2. Excessive; excessively: hyperhydration.<sup>14</sup>  
Adjective 1. overexcited; overstimulated; keyed up. 2. seriously or obsessively concerned; fanatical; rabid: She's hyper about noise pollution. 3. hyperactive. Noun: 4. a person who is hyper.<sup>15</sup>

If we take the plain definitions given by the American Heritage and RandomHouse Dictionaries as to the meanings of “hyper”, should we not also include our partial preterist brethren who are equally seriously and obsessively concerned with their own views of Scripture? WSTTB reflects an overly excited and stimulated desire to press their own view of Scripture and to correct those with whom they disagree. That makes them “hyper-partialists.” In other words, they are over-stimulated about only being half correct.

Additionally, Sproul Jr. makes an inaccurate, erroneous assertion as to what it is Preterists supposedly believe concerning the nature of our resurrection bodies. He writes,

“This book does not directly address the problem of theological liberalism. Rather, it addresses an aberrant group called hyper-preterists, Preterists who claim to be conservative, Bible believing, evangelical and Christian. However, they agree with liberals that the body of Jesus before the Resurrection has no continuity with the ‘body’ of Jesus after the Resurrection. In fact, the ‘body’ of Jesus after the Resurrection has no continuity with any body. Because the resurrection bodies of the saints, while not corporeal, come with this Achilles’ heel, it gets messy. That is because hyper-preterists cannot have any kind of meaningful resurrection, they bicker and compete among themselves, coming up with ever more desperate attempts to avoid Paul’s charge that their religion, because it has no real resurrection, is in vain.”<sup>16</sup>

I have no idea how Sproul Jr. comes to the conclusion that some Preterists who confess a different interpretation of the nature of the believer’s resurrection body are to be lumped in with those who hold to the view of the believer’s resurrection body as being Christ-like, glorified, corporeal and individual, as I do. I have been teaching and promoting the Biblical view of glorified, heavenly corporeal and individual resurrection bodies for many, many years now. While it is true that there are “some” within the Preterist movement who hold to a different view of the believer’s resurrection, it is not true of myself. It is a disingenuous tactic on Sproul Jr.’s part that makes us look as though we all believe the same thing because we do not. Not only do I not know of any conservative and Reformed Preterist who holds what Sproul Jr. is talking about, I must also refuse to bear the *Sproul Jr. imposed burden* of Paul supposedly telling the Preterist that his “religion” is in vain. Having the documentation as what it is that Reformed Preterists are

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<sup>14</sup> The American Heritage Stedman’s Medical Dictionary. (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002)

<sup>15</sup> Dictionary.com Unabridged (version 1.1) Based on RandomHouse Unabridged Dictionary. (RandomHouse, Inc. 2006)

<sup>16</sup> WSTTB, viii.



supposed to believe relative to the resurrection, might help Sproul Jr.'s argument maintain a little more validity. Really though, this is nothing more than a desperate attempt on his part to discredit any Preterist, no matter what they may say about the resurrection, because he and those like him, hate the idea that they may have to spend eternity with those whom they have disingenuously labeled as non-Christian, an on-going violation on their part of Mtt. 7:1-4<sup>17</sup>, I fear.

In conclusion to my review of the Foreword, it might serve us well to ask why it is that the plain text statements of Jesus and the apostles concerning Christ's first century Parousia can go on being misunderstood as much as they are. If I hand you a pair of glasses that have orange colored lenses along with a piece of white paper and ask you to tell me what color the paper is, what would you say? If you are looking through the orange colored lenses you would say what it is *that you are seeing*, but not necessarily the reality of the color of the paper. You would exclaim that the paper is "clearly" orange even though I tell you time and again that it is in fact white. However, you would never be able to embrace the truth of the fact of the paper being white as long as you are wearing those orange colored glasses! This is exactly how a presupposition forces itself upon Scripture. When attempting to do Biblical exegesis, or just plain reading of the text of Scripture, as long as I already believe that the Second Coming is still in our future, beyond the year 2009, I will always, always place that idea upon whatever text that teaches anything concerning the Parousia. This is why the desperate attempt at qualifying the first century Parousia statements of Scripture are explained away with a statement like: "Yes, the text states clearly that the original recipients of that gospel/epistle believed that Christ was coming back in their own lifetimes. (Do you hear the dance music starting up?) However, this was stated in that way so that all men, in every generation over all time until Jesus returns, would always hold to the belief that the Second Coming could happen in their lifetimes no matter what time in history they are living."

You see, Christians like to feel secure. Secure especially over the thorny issues of eschatology. Prophetic matters are, without accepting the Biblical preterist view, very unstable and people want to feel that they have a dependable template-hermeneutic that they can place over their Bibles concerning matters of eschatology and believe that they understand the facts of the matter. They don't like to wrestle with the subject and feel unsure as to what the Bible means concerning the prophetic.

Futurist versions of eschatology abound (pre-mill, post-mill, a-mill, rapture versions aplenty) along with different points of view and ways to make their futurism acceptable. (They have to work *so hard* to make their view work.) The Bible teaches only one Biblical eschatological point of view concerning the Parousia. The Scriptures do not present an acceptable plethora of opinions concerning any Biblical subject. God is not confused over the matter. Why are so many, while holding to their futurist views of the Second Coming, simply ignoring the plain text

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<sup>17</sup> Jesus says here, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?"

statements of Scripture? See the title of this review for your answer.

### **Jousting with Gentry.**

As you continue to read and reflect on this chapter, do keep in mind the chapter title concerning presuppositional thinking because Gentry's comments are loaded with them. Dr. Gentry's chapter entitled, "The Historical Problem with Hyper-Preterism," begins with two Scripture quotes. Gentry's use of these two passages from God's Word make my point for me. They are Jude 3 and Ephesians 4:14.

"Beloved while I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly, for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3)<sup>18</sup>

Did you read anything in this quote concerning the Second Coming? Anything at all about anything eschatological? Anything that would lead you, the reader, to understand that the Preterists are wrong about their views? Me neither. Gentry not only offers Scripture at the beginning of his chapter that has nothing to do with the subject of eschatology, but he presents us with Scripture that he *assumes* is pointing to those who do not believe, what is to him and others, an acceptable brand of futurist eschatology. WSTTB points to the proposition of a Second Coming that takes place in our future. This is what drives eisegetical<sup>19</sup> assumption by which the Scriptures are changed from a first century fulfillment to an off-into-the-future- fantasy. By Gentry quoting Jude 3, he is clearly saying that a Preterist should be contended with as one who is outside of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. (Which of course brings up the question, is it necessary in order to be Justified by Faith to hold a particular view of the Second Coming?) He also suggests that the Preterist may not be a saint (made holy by Christ) because the Preterist, in his eschatological conviction, is outside of saint-hood. Because if a Preterist were a saint, he would be contending for that which was once-for-all-delivered to the saints and what was once for all delivered is clearly an end-of-history Parousia, which if he was a saint, he would believe because...Quite the study in circular thinking, isn't it? So Gentry's Jude 3 quote is meant to say that futurism is what was once for all delivered to the saints, and that is what we should believe even though the text of Jude 3 says nothing even remotely close to the timing of the Second Coming.

The same idea is assumed in his quote of Eph. 4:14.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> WSTTB, 1.

<sup>19</sup> eisegesis-the interpretation of a text (as of the Bible) by reading into it one's own ideas. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. ([www.m-w.com/dictionary/eisegesis](http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/eisegesis))

<sup>20</sup> WSTTB, 1.

“As a result we are to no longer be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.”  
(Eph. 4:14)

Again, this passage says nothing about the Second Coming or anything eschatological! Gentry is doing the hermeneutical habit of every futurist by reading into the text their brand of futurism: taking the Biblical, pre-A.D. 70 statements and making them contemporaneous to us. The implication Gentry makes by quoting Ephesians 4:14 is that Preterism is a “wind of doctrine.” He suggests that Preterists are men of trickery and deceitful schemers. How unfortunate that without dealing with any of the Preterist exegesis, it seems he feels in order to have a fighting chance, he must color the subject and skewer the argument in his direction from the beginning. Well, who can really blame him? If my argument for Preterism was as bereft of scriptural backing as Gentry’s futurism, I might be tempted to resort to such tactics myself.

As Gentry proceeds forward with his critique, I find myself agreeing with much of what he says and quotes concerning the historical necessity of creeds and confessions. (That’s right, I agree.) In the light of that observation there remains something that I have always wanted to ask a Reformed brother like Dr. Gentry, with whom I share a like-mindedness concerning the Westminster Confession of Faith: “Why did the framers of the WCF not include a chapter on the Second Coming?”

It is obvious that they considered the subjects that they devoted chapters to of the utmost importance. So why not include a chapter on the Second Coming where they would give the scriptural proofs of the timing and nature of the Parousia? Did the framers perhaps not believe in it? No, for there is reference to it in the chapters of other subjects. Of course the catechisms contain definite statements as to their position on the Second Coming. But why no *chapter* concerning the Lord’s Parousia? I am not really searching for an answer to my question as much as I am making the point that subjects like the authority of the Scriptures, the nature of the Godhead in the Trinity, the hypostatic union of Christ’s two natures, the Biblical teaching on saving faith, election, assurance of salvation and the nature of the church which are all present in the confession, if the presence of these and other subjects in the WCF is a testimony to the importance of what is to be believed by the church, then why do some Reformed leaders place a level of importance on a specific kind of Parousia which the actual framers of the confession did not? You could argue that the framers did in fact do so, but then this begs the question again, why did they not then produce a chapter on the Second Coming that was to be believed as Bible doctrine? In other words, an argument could be made that those who hold the WCF are themselves going outside of the confession in their absolute insistence that a certain type of futurism is to be believed and embraced by all when it makes no such demand upon the believer. Certainly, some of those Reformed brothers who contributed chapters to WSTTB, must admit that their partial preterist view is certainly not tolerated within the pages of the confession. And yet they would insist that a Preterist point of view should not be tolerated at all. They argue that all other eschatological views outside of Preterism all hold a yet future view of the Parousia, yet there exists no passage of Scripture that allows for a view of the Second Coming outside of the first century. Every Parousia passage that exists in the New Testament either directly states or else implies that said Parousia would occur during the lifetimes of some of the apostles. (Mtt.

16:27-28, 26:64, John. 21:22, James 5:7-9, etc). The text of the WCF itself demands that we believe as our full and final authority the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures, not the words of a confession or creed. (Chap. 1, Para. 10) The framers even suggest that their own work represented in the WCF be scrutinized and held up to the inspection of the Scriptures. (Ch. 1, Para. 8, 10) The framers state that no opinion of men or group of men, no matter how many of them there might be, should be preferred over the exegesis of the text of Scripture. Furthermore, not only can the writers of creeds and confessions be mistaken, but some of them have been mistaken and their writings should not be credited as the rule of faith or practice. (Ch. 31, Para. 5) Yet, this is precisely what these Reformed writers in WSTTB are doing: ascribing a greater degree of authority to the confession and creed than the framers intended and allowed. They chime in that we are all awaiting the Parousia of Christ because the Church Fathers and the Creeds announce that the Scriptures say so and that they are to be believed because all those ancient voices cannot be wrong. With this said, the still-future-to-us-Second Coming is to be held onto because the church has always believed this, thus it could not be wrong. Conjecture, presumption and question begging, ad-homonym arguments abound along with more circular reasoning. This is the nature of being caught in the vortex of a vicious cycle. Those who hold to futurism are simply afraid that what they believe, along with the majority of the church since the mid-second century, could be mistaken. Furthermore, this is what the Reformed Theologian Louis Berkhof pointed to when he wrote concerning the subject of eschatology as requiring much more attention and study.

“The doctrine of the last things never stood in the center of attention, is one of the least developed doctrines, and therefore calls for no elaborate discussion...It may be that, as Dr. Orr surmises, we have now reached that point in the history of dogma in which the doctrine of the last things will receive greater attention and be brought to further development.” “Brought to further development...At the same time it 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.”...<sup>21</sup>

There is so much that could be responded to in this response concerning Dr. Gentry’s remarks, but allow me to focus on one more thing in particular. I find the last series of statements by Gentry to be the most egregious and damaging to his position because it places him in the most desperate position of responding to Preterism. Under the heading “The Importance of the Creeds,” Gentry makes a most disconcerting series of statements as to the idea that the Scriptures supposedly “requires” the church to produce creeds and by virtue of extension to produce confessions as well.<sup>22</sup> I have already made it clear by my previous comments, that one may be thoroughly Reformed and hold to one of the basic confessions as I do, be Presbyterian and educated in the higher elements of theological academia and still be Preterist, all the while esteeming the confessional standards of the Westminster Confession of Faith while taking exceptions, and even a scruple, as many of the Reformed do. At the same time, I assure you dear

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<sup>21</sup> “The History of Christian Doctrines” Louis Berkhof, 1937

<sup>22</sup> WSTTB, 20-27

reader, since the WCF makes it clear that the confession itself is not a static instrument and if found to be in error, (as they suggest it could be - Ch. 31, Para. 5) it should not be held up to be the rule of faith and practice. It is then the honorable thing to hold up the statements of the confession for testing. Once the confession is tested by rightly exegeted Scripture and found to be errant, then it should be, with all speed and diligence, corrected by Godly exegetes comparing it against the Word of God. This is precisely what the framers of the WCF (as I have shown) have insisted upon.<sup>23</sup> With this in mind, why would a Reformed man try to make a defense for a theorem of confessionary superiority that is made indefensible by the confession itself? Because we believe that the Scriptures are the rule of faith and practice, it is heinous to conclude Scripture giving some kind of a holy set of marching orders relative to the promotion of the idea that the Bible itself actually commands us to create creeds from passages of Scripture. The only acknowledgeable way this can be done is by twisting and maligning them in order to have them say what we want them to say. Here are the words of Dr. Gentry...

“Despite hyper-preterist concerns about creeds...Scripture requires that the church produce them. Christians are to ‘continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast’ (Col. 1:23), maintain ‘the good confession’ (1 Tim. 6:12), ‘retain the standard of sound words’ (2 Tim. 1:13), and ‘contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints’ (Jude 3). Christianity holds to a core body of theology and seeks to maintain, promote, and defend it, by developing creeds in response to such verses as these.”<sup>24</sup>

Regarding Gentry’s last statement, “Christianity holds to a core body of theology and seeks to maintain, promote, and defend it, by developing creeds in response to such verses as these...” it is good and well to develop them and work with them. Use them as study tools, but not as if their composition is being done at God’s behest. The use of the creeds and confessions is to clarify Scripture, not to bind the conscience of men. Only the Scriptures have that place in our lives.

Before we take apart this paragraph of Gentry’s, let me point out the two statements that he makes that are necessary in order to understand the premise he gives concerning the Scriptures telling us to produce creeds. “Scripture requires the church to produce them...” and “Christianity holds to a core body of theology and seeks to maintain, promote, and defend it, by developing creeds in response to such verses as these.” I will demonstrate from the context of the Scriptures Gentry quotes, that these passages do not justify the idea of Scripture demanding us to produce creeds. Not only do they not justify as he contends howbeit, they actually teach other things that

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<sup>23</sup> Not only does the WCF explicitly state this, the Second Helvetic Confession states the same in different words: Chapter 2.2, INTERPRETATIONS OF THE HOLY FATHERS. Wherefore we do not despise the interpretations of the holy Greek and Latin fathers, *nor reject their disputations and treatises concerning sacred matters as far as they agree with the Scriptures; but we modestly dissent from them when they are found to set down things differing from, or altogether contrary to, the Scriptures. Neither do we think that we do them any wrong in this matter; seeing that they all, with one consent, will not have their writings equated with the canonical Scriptures, but command us to prove how far they agree or disagree with them, and to accept what is in agreement and to reject what is in disagreement.* (emphasis added)

<sup>24</sup> WSTTB, 20.

are entirely different from what Gentry surmises. However, before I do, I must say that this is one of the most desperate moves of any author I have read coming out against the subject of Preterism. Kenneth Gentry knows very well that the Scriptures promote no such idea that he is here postulating. This is a straw-man technique being used here by Gentry, pure and simple. This is the fatal flaw in his entire argument: by making the attempt to wax a Scriptural validation as to the creation of creeds and confessions, he shows that he has no Biblical argument against Biblical Preterism. If he did, he would produce that instead of trying to get God to be the one validating the creation of creeds by the twisting of these passages. Since the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God and His voice speaking to us in them, I suggest very strongly that Dr. Gentry is not simply mishandling the Bible, but that he is actually breaking several of the commandments in order to validate his substantiation of Scripture requiring us to produce creeds.

Since Gentry is, in effect, *signing God's name* to the idea of credal production and if it can be shown that God has done no such thing, would not he be guilty of breaking the second commandment? “You shall have no other gods besides me.” (Ex. 20:3) The proposition of assigning the idea of credal formulation to God, if it can be proved that the God of the Bible did not command that such a thing be done, would this not then be another god or a different god that Gentry is appealing to? If the God of the Bible did not say to produce creeds and we say he did, we are ascribing to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ a lie, not to mention a severe misrepresentation. Further, are we not bearing false witness about God and His Word (“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”- Ex. 20:16.) when we insist that the Word says something when it in fact does not? Do we not create a new god and a new bible when we do this? Since Gentry is signing God's name to the idea that the Scriptures teach that we are to promote and create creeds, if it can be proved that God has not, Gentry would be in violation of taking God's name in vain. (“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.” – Ex. 20:7) “In vain” means that which is worthless or meaningless. It is a misuse of the name of God when we ascribe to Him something that is not true. If it has been proven that one has misrepresented God's Word in this way and that person refuses to repent of this offence, can they not be charged with breaking the tenth commandment by coveting their opinion to be of a greater value than the truth itself? (“You shall not covet...”- Ex. 20:17.)<sup>25</sup>

Dr. Gentry uses four different out-of-context Scripture quotes as an attempt to establish his idea that the Scripture actually “requires the church to produce them.” He is saying that God is commanding that they be produced by the church. (Of course if God is requiring this information found in creeds and confessions to be passed on to other generations of Christians, would this then not require that they be perfect as His Word is perfect, if not inspired? A slippery slope, Dr. Gentry.) He further states that the creeds are to be “developed in response to such verses as these.” Then let us see if the above quoted verses by Gentry demonstrates any contextual relationship as he presupposes.

Gentry's first quotation is from Colossians 1:23 “...if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast...” (please note that Gentry does not even quote the full passage of

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<sup>25</sup> I beg the reader to read the Westminster Larger Catechism concerning these commandments: Questions 107-115. They make what Scripture teaches in regards to these commands and answers how a person can violate them.

Scripture). Gentry says in effect, “The Bible teaches that we are to write creeds and confessions because Paul told the Colossians that they were to, ‘continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast.’ ” Here is the question: Does this verse say or imply that we are supposed to produce creeds or confessions? If this passage does, I beg how? This approach is something by the way, which is performed by those who promote cultic aberrations of Christianity. If a cultist wishes to promote and/or teach a certain point of view while trying to convince someone of its Biblical validity, then an out-of-context Scripture quote is often the tool of choice. And so Gentry pulls a statement out of its context in order to substantiate his point, making his “point” even more suspect. Let’s face it, Gentry is completely off track here. Bluntly stated, he is thoroughly wrong. The way believers continue in the faith, firmly established and steadfast, (as Paul teaches) is by the means of the teaching elders in the church of Christ doing their jobs by going verse by verse through the Bible, systematically explaining it to the church. Then, the believer applies the doctrines of Scripture to their lives which they have learned through their elders.

I come to this conclusion by first considering the obvious: This passage in its context, gives no command about writing, producing or in anyway paraphrasing or explaining Bible doctrine. Moreover, from the context, we see that what Paul says that will keep the believers firmly in the faith is, “the hope (expectation) of the gospel that you have heard.” Furthermore, what Paul teaches the Colossians, is not the writing or producing of another theological explanation outside of the Bible itself, but the actual gospel that they had already heard and that was continuing to be proclaimed throughout all creation. The full quote starting from V. 22 is this:

“(Y)et he has now reconciled you in his fleshly body through death, in order to present you before him holy and blameless and beyond reproach – if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.” (Col. 1:22-23, NASB)

Note how Paul expresses that it is through the vehicle of *preaching* the gospel (proclaimed in all creation) and that through the means of *hearing* the gospel preached, (not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you have heard) the believer is kept firmly established in the faith and not moved away from its hope. Nowhere does Paul state, or even imply, that a second causal element is to be used to keep believers in the faith. In fact, within Paul’s Epistles to Timothy, we find that the way in which the truth is maintained and promoted within the church is through the teaching elder’s individual study and public proclamation of the Scriptures. Note that nowhere in these passages is the idea of producing a creed separate from the Scriptures promoted.

- “Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.” (1 Tim. 4:13)
- “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things...” (1 Tim. 4:16)
- “If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words (not, does not agree with the creed), those of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the doctrine conforming to Godliness,...” (1 Tim. 6:3)

Note that it is the words of the Lord Jesus Christ that are to be appealed to. The advancing of the creeds and confessions to the level of the words of the Lord Jesus is clearly what is being promoted these days by some.

- “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15)

Here, approval before God is gained by one accurately handling (KJV- “rightly dividing”), not a creed, but the word of truth. Don’t you think that if the promotion of a creed was desired by God as an absolute necessity for maintaining the purity of doctrine in His church that He would have commanded such a thing to be done? But we find not even the remotest idea advanced in Scripture. Instead, men are to accurately handle the word of truth.

- “(A)nd that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. 3:15)

It is the Scriptures that give the wisdom that leads one to salvation, not a secondary theological treatise. At this point let me interpose that I find that the creeds and confessions do in fact prove to be very helpful for the establishing of right doctrine. Not as a primary source, but as which we can benefit from by researching how the church in the past has understood the doctrine and point of view of Scripture. The greatest benefit of creeds and confessions is found in our taking advantage of the work performed by men of God who have preceded us. However, this does not mean that they are always correct in everything they say, nor are they to be made the rule of faith and practice. Like the WCF says, it is the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures that establishes what the Bible means by what it says, and no other secondary medium.<sup>26</sup> The creeds and confessions have their place in our studies and schools but NOT in our pulpits. That venue is the supreme place of the proclamation of the Scriptures as men have rightly and correctly understood what the word means by what it says as they have worked hard in their studies.

- “All Scripture (not creed) is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness...” (2 Tim. 3:16) It is the Scriptures that train us in righteousness.

We could advance many more passages of Scripture that speak to our point, but let us continue further with Gentry’s quotes that he says supports the idea that the church is to produce creeds. His next quote that he uses out-of-context is from 1 Tim. 6:12, “[christians are to] maintain ‘the

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<sup>26</sup> The Belgic Confession of Faith agrees with both the WCF and 2nd Helvetic Confession by stating, “Neither do we consider of equal value any writing of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, for the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars, and more vain than vanity itself. Therefore, we reject with all our hearts, whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule, which the apostles have taught us, saying, Try the spirits whether they are of God. Likewise, if here come any of unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house.” (Article 7)



good confession' ..."<sup>27</sup> Yes, *that* is his quote. I think because the translation he is using has the word "confession" in it and because he holds to the Westminster Confession of Faith, that he believes that this is God telling us to write confessions in explanation of what the Word means. I have already stated that I am a supporter of confessions that promote the results of good exegesis of the Bible. However, I am not a supporter of the idea that a creed or a confession is somehow to be preferred or given the place of absolutism, for establishing the interpretation of the Bible over properly exegeted Scripture. To boot, all Gentry offers here for his reason for producing creeds is, "the good confession." Actually, according to Paul's context, the reference to a "confession" here in 1 Tim. 6:12 is not in reference to producing a creed or confession, but is in regard to Timothy having professed and confessed his faith before many witnesses in the first century. This is then paralleled with Christ's own good confession before Pilate in v.13. Here is Paul's full, contextual quote of 1 Tim. 6:12... "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and YOU made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." (emphasis mine) The implication is that Timothy's confession of faith was on record before witnesses and that those witnesses could be called upon to substantiate Timothy's live confession at that point in history. Again, no real reference to promoting a creed or theological confession. It certainly is interesting when error is promoted by the use of the Bible, that those who promote it must work so hard at trying to get the Scripture to say what they want it to say, when a simple reading of the passage offers instant understanding. Clearly, the idea of this passage substantiating the need for producing a creed is forced into the text. This is a chargeable offence within Presbyterianism: adding or taking away from the essential meaning of the Bible. Perhaps the charge of Dr. Gentry adding and thereby taking away from the Scriptures should be considered by those of his own denomination. (Dt. 4:2, Pro. 30:5-6, 1 Cor. 4:6, 2 John 9, Rev. 22:18-19)

Our third "slice" of the Biblical pie offered up by Dr. Gentry in order to give credence to his theory that the Bible tells us to make creeds, is 2 Tim. 1:13. It is quoted by Gentry as simply, "retain the standard of sound words." The Greek word which is translated into the English "retain", is the verb EKO. "To have, to hold," in the present, active, imperative form. This simply means it is the standard of sound words of which Timothy is to hold, being commanded (imperative) to be done in a continuous, habitual way. Very regular and consistent is Paul's meaning along with the sense of God actually commanding Timothy to do so (and to us as well by extension). But the meaning of supplying the church with a humanly produced theological commentary or standard is not "the standard of sound and healthy words". What is this "standard" of which Paul is referring? Once the text is understood in its immediate context, all debate ends as to what Paul is making reference to. If Dr. Gentry had just kept on quoting the rest of the verse (that's how close the answer was to him), he probably would have thought twice about including this verse as one of his proof texts for establishing his theorem. (Which, to this point, has still not been established). Here is the passage in its full quote: "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 1:13)

The standard to which Paul was clearly referring was not to a creed nor to establishing a

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<sup>27</sup> WSTTB, 20.

catechism explaining the confession which was to explain the Bible, rather, it was *the words of Paul himself!* Paul says that the standard of sound words was what Timothy had actually heard from Paul! “Retain the standard of sound words...WHICH YOU HAVE HEARD FROM ME...” As we have shown, the Greek word for retain, EXO, means to hold, retain, consider, account. We are not only not told to create a creed or any other secondary pedagogical source form, but to retain and consider Paul’s actual words which were heard by Timothy (i.e. contained in Paul’s epistles that were inspired) and kept by God’s Spirit.

Lastly, Dr. Gentry provides one final text by which he hopes to convince the reader of the divine mandate of creating creeds and confessions. Jude 3 is offered up thusly: “(C)ontend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” Again, Gentry’s proposition cannot be established if he quotes the passage in its context. Nor can he be assured of convincing the reader of his position if he spends too much time explaining the text itself. Dr. Gentry contends that the passage which says, “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” means that we are to make creeds in order to do this. Remember at the beginning of his paragraph introducing his idea that the Bible requires us to develop creeds, he says that, “Scripture *requires* the church to *produce* them (creeds)”. To “contend earnestly” does not mean to make a creed or create a secondary theological tome that offers statements and interpretations of what “the faith” might be. Again, according to the New Testament, this is the job of the pastor/teacher/elder. It must be maintained that we have no quarrel with those who create commentaries, creeds or confessions, as long as no one elevates them to the status of being the final interpretive grid regarding the understanding of what God’s Word means by what it says. Unfortunately, this is precisely what Gentry and company are doing. The one thing I observed in Gentry’s chapter in WSTTB, was the passion and fire with which he defended the sanctity of the creeds. Would that he shared the same fire for promoting God’s Word and his being willing to give the same respect to the Scriptures as he does the creeds. If the way he chooses to misrepresent and twist the passages is any indication of where his priorities lie, then I’d say, “Call the dogs, we’ve got a wolf in sheep’s clothing.”

Amazingly, it is charged against the Preterists of somehow changing the text or ignoring basic hermeneutics, in arriving at the conclusion of a first century Parousia. Yet, note the speed at which Gentry attempts to do a “drive-by” on these texts so that the reader will not spend too long in the consideration of them. These texts are being used in an illegitimate fashion in order to substantiate his charge against Preterists and to validate his theory that the Bible teaches us to make creeds. I have demonstrated so far that none of the passages he has offered as “proof” have anything to do with the applications given to them. Frankly, this is a shameful thing to do and I would call Dr. Gentry to repentance over this matter. In Jude’s passage, he makes reference to something that has been delivered to the church that should be defended earnestly. Jude calls this something, “the faith.” Now a simple search through a Bible concordance or similar tool will yield the fact that the New Testament phrase, “the faith”, is a reference to all that God has revealed fully and finally in the Old and New Testaments that are to be believed by all since they are a revelation from God. This “faith” by the time Jude wrote his epistle, had been fully and finally revealed and it is that faith which was to be earnestly contended for. In fact, a slow purposeful inspection of this verse of Jude 3 will yield the immediate idea that “the faith” that was to be contended for, *did not require further reproduction* in creeds, confessions or

anything of the like because Jude says it was, “once for all delivered to the saints.” The once-for-all nature of the faith that has been delivered and graciously sustained for us in the Holy Scriptures, requires no additional material outside of the Biblical function of studious pastors and teachers to make them understood. For the last time, we cannot justify the meaning of producing creeds in order to contend for this faith. This passage, like the others Gentry has used, cannot be used as proof of anything concerning the production of creeds. I’ve never seen anyone shoot themselves in the foot more than Gentry has in this chapter of WSTTB. Who was it once for all delivered to? No other than the saints, these “saints,” being the redeemed, the church of Jesus Christ. The faith delivered was so perfect, so complete and without error and true in all of its parts, that Jude says all that is required of us to defend what has been given by the Holy Spirit was sealed in the Scriptures themselves. Here’s a brief newsflash: Gods does not need our help! He does not *need* us to produce any documents whatsoever to help Him do what He is quite capable of doing all by Himself. This does not mean that it’s ok to throw out the NT doctrine of the office of pastors and teachers that are raised up by Christ and recognized as such by his elders and saints. The teaching offices are gifts given to promote the understanding of the truth of the faith once for all given. They are to do what we have already demonstrated from the Scriptures previously and study to show themselves approved unto God by rightly dividing and correctly handling the Word of truth. We can stand on the shoulders of other brother exegetes who have come before us and certainly benefit from their work, but we cannot and should not use them as anything else but as a help to us in aiding our understanding of the meaning of the text of Scripture.

“All synods or councils since the apostles times, whether general or particular, may err, AND MANY HAVE ERRED; (meaning the framers of the WCF could err as well) therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used *as an help* in both.” (WCF, Ch. 31, Para. 4)

### **Warring with Wilson**

Despite the fact that Douglas Wilson has recently publicly rejected the historic, Biblical and Reformed view of Justification by Faith, having embraced a baptismal-works oriented view for salvation (see his book, “Reformed is not Enough: Recovering the Objectivity of the Covenant.”), he is nevertheless included in this book WSTTB. We should wonder if the other men who have contributed to WSTTB think it ok for Douglas Wilson to be seen as a thorough going Calvinist when he has rejected classical Reformed soteriology at its very core. I’m not really sure, but I think that if these Reformed theologians were pressed for their comments concerning Wilson’s view of soteriology they would not be kind.

What would you think of someone who claimed to be a Christian, held to the Bible as being fully inspired, pastored a “Reformed” church and yet ascribed inspiration to The Apostles Creed? Yes, that’s right. I said Douglas Wilson believes that The Apostles Creed is inspired like the Old and New Testament documents. Perhaps I should just end my “war” with Wilson right here, for a man who views the canon of Scripture (as contained in the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments) as not being sufficient, surely cannot be trusted with representing the correct view

of the doctrine of eschatology. However, far be it from me to not prove what it is that I am asserting.

Wilson's chapter title is, "Sola Scriptura, Creeds, and Ecclesiastical Authority."<sup>28</sup> By playing what he calls, "devil's advocate", he never actually rectifies what he means by his assertion that The Apostles Creed was actually inspired and is equal in authority to the Bible itself. Here, Wilson quotes Ed Stevens on the creeds. After this, he makes a very unwise statement:

"The orthodoxy of the creeds must constantly be tested by each new generation. (Why shouldn't they be? To not do so assumes that they possess tacit authority in accordance with divine inspiration.-KNB) Creeds were developed after the NT and are based on questionable interpretive methods. *The NT is both inspired and orthodox, but creeds are not inspired nor necessarily orthodox.* (emphasis original)<sup>29</sup> (Now Wilson says)..But this is a mere assertion, suspended in midair. Allow *me* to illustrate *by playing devil's advocate* for the moment:..." (emphasis added)<sup>30</sup>

And now, Wilson speaks as if he is truly the one speaking and promoting what he is about to say. He never really recovers out of this mindset of what is being promoted as the "devil's advocate" (his point being more devilish than I'm sure he would like to admit) and demonstrates what he believes. Further quotes from Wilson will demonstrate the high and lofty view he has for the authority of the creeds. Make no mistake, Wilson does in fact hold their having at least an equal authority to the Scriptures themselves. Wilson continues:

"Actually, Mr. Stevens is quite wrong, and for a very simple reason. He has *misdrawn* the boundaries of the New Testament. The Apostles Creed which he so glibly rejects as having no authority, *was actually inspired by the Holy Spirit and should be considered part of the New Testament.* Therefore, within the pages of the New Testament we find an express rejection of the doctrine of hyper-preterism. The Bible has sixty-seven books, *not sixty-six.*" (emphasis added)<sup>31</sup>

The reader of this may wish to read that again. Better yet, procure a copy of WSTTB and go to the above listed citation and read it all for yourself. Interestingly enough, Wilson's attempt at illustrating the idea that Stevens' comments are no more than a mere assertion, is that Wilson continues to affirm in his chapter that he actually does treat the creeds as if they were "actually inspired by the Holy Spirit", like he says while playing "*devil's advocate.*" By the way, what does Wilson mean by using the phrase, "devil's advocate"? According to the Encyclopedia Britannica's Online Version, a devil's advocate is described thusly:

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<sup>28</sup> WSTTB, 255-286.

<sup>29</sup> Ed Stevens, "Creeds and Preterist Orthodoxy." As quoted by Wilson.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 262.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 262-63

*“Latin Advocatus Latin Advocatus Diaboli,* in the Roman Catholic church, the promoter of the faith, who critically examines the life of and miracles attributed to an individual proposed for beatification or canonization. He is popularly called the **devil's advocate** because his presentation of facts includes everything unfavorable to the candidate.”

In other words, with Mr. Wilson’s own words combined by the encyclopedia’s definition of what he describes himself to be, he is actually promoting the idea that The Apostles Creed actually is inspired by the Holy Spirit. This is done in order to substantiate his claim that Stevens is incorrect about his previous statement. Now, I am quite sure that Mr. Wilson did not intend to actually say what he has said. However, as Wilson’s own quotes will show, he attributes some kind of divine inspiration to the creeds.

Wilson says of the creeds:

“It is not possible to have a *Scriptura* that we can appeal to, *sola, solo,* or otherwise, without having a coherent doctrine of the teaching authority of the historic Christian church. The Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox have an erroneous form of such a doctrine, and classical Protestants have a right understanding of this *ministerium.*”<sup>32</sup>

“It is not possible” to know what the Bible means without a creed, Wilson asserts. So, not only does Wilson predicate that one cannot understand what the Bible means without the creed, but that Protestants must, furthermore, be like the Romans and the Eastern Orthodox having a group of men, known as the *ministerium*, to tell us what to believe. The next question is obvious and simple. What if they are wrong? Where does the Bible teach that a group of men are to be assigned over the church universal acting as the by-all and end-all of Biblical hermeneutics? Clearly, the Scripture teaches no such thing and yet Wilson wants to go outside and beyond what the Scripture says in order to establish such a thing. If he wants to be a Roman Catholic and be under the so called *ministerium*, he should simply join the Roman Catholic Church and be done with it. The real issue, is that he and other like-minded individuals, like the idea of Holy Mother Church. They like the idea of subjugating other men to their interpretive will. They must step outside of the Bible in order to justify this type of thinking because the Scriptures clearly will not validate such a thing. (Have we discovered the true reason for their insisting on the creeds first?) In fact the Scriptures teach against it. Not only have I already shown that the NT places the teaching authority in the hands of the local church teaching elders (thereby making them accountable to the congregation, as well as the Presbytery), but allow me to now demonstrate that to advocate doctrines and church practices that are outside of the NT is nothing less than rebellion against the Lord of the Scriptures Himself.

- “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I am

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 263.

commanding you.” (Dt. 4:2. 12:32)

- “Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words lest He reprove you, and you be proved a liar.” (Pro. 30:5-6)
- “Now these things brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and to Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn *not to exceed what is written*, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against another.” (1 Cor. 4:6)
- “If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with the sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to Godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing...” (1 Tim. 6:3-4a)
- “Anyone who goes too far (goes on ahead, goes past-KNB) and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 9)
- “I testify to anyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book. If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Tree of Life, and from the holy city, which are written in this book.” (Rev. 22:18-19)

Where does the Bible ascribe to the church through time, that she will never make a mistake, never be in error, concerning anything that she believes? The Scriptures assume no such purported and contrived legitimacy to this idea and yet this is the very idea that is insisted on by those who hold the idea that the creeds must be our template by which we interpret all Biblical doctrines. What these men want is some kind of imaginable unbroken line of doctrinal purity that is within the creeds and confessions of the church which the Bible will nowhere ascribe to her. So even though the men who wrote creeds and confessions have stated that they can and have been in error, our present day men of the Reformation want it to be otherwise. They want their comfort zones to be paved by bricks of ministeriums and paper popes that may be appealed to in the place of thorough exegesis and study of the Scriptures. But I digress. Consider more of Wilson’s quotes relative to his very real desire of the creeds being treated as equal in importance and authority with the Scriptures. Note carefully his line of faulty logic in his next quote: “When a fallible authority says something is true, that truth by definition cannot be falsifiable”<sup>33</sup> Actually, it is the exact opposite that is true. Wilson admits that an authority is in fact fallible. However, if that is the case, just because the (fallible) authority states that a thing is (infallibly) true, it is possible they could be false because of their admitted fallibility. In other words, Wilson implies that if the church says its true (through its creeds), no further examination of the Bible need occur because the church (or some group of men) has deemed it to be true in its fallibleness. Do you see the faulty logic in Wilson’s argument? It’s like admitting, “I was wrong once, but then I realized I was mistaken.” That is as circular and contrary as any argument could possibly get.

Wilson adds to his mistake even further... “And this is what the church has done on key

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 264.

doctrines, like the doctrine of Scripture, as she has been guided by the Holy Spirit throughout her history.”<sup>34</sup> Did you get that? He has just attributed, with no Biblical verification whatsoever, that the Holy Spirit has been involved in guiding the church in its key doctrines throughout history. With the conclusion being, that if you mess with what the church has stated is true in her creeds, you are essentially messing with the Holy Spirit. Fine Mr. Wilson. Prove what you just said from Scripture. What he implies is that anyone who does this is making an enemy of God. This is, however, the same type of argument that the Roman Catholic Church makes for its ministerium, as well as their pope speaking *ex-cathedra* revelation from the throne of God. Wilson and others who hold to this point of view, would save us all a lot of trouble if they would just drop the Reformed platitudes and just go to Rome!

However, the biggest act of legerdemain that I have read thus far, is Wilson’s attempt at trying to prove that *the Bible itself is a creed* simply because the church has recognized that the Bible’s 66 books were inspired by God. The implication being, that the church, who recognized Biblical inspiration in the books of the Bible, must also be able to recognize the meaning of all the doctrines of the Bible in its creeds! A statement such as this is insidious.

Wilson says:

“She has published the most fundamental creed imaginable-the table of contents of the Bible (?!?!-KNB)...Thus before we come to the word of God in Genesis 1:1, we come to the word of the church in the table of contents. Put another way, the table of contents in every Bible is a creedal statement.”<sup>35</sup>

Note that Wilson says before God speaks, the church gets to go first. “Before we come to the Word of God, we come to the word of the church.” Ladies and Gentlemen, that is Rome speaking! The table of contents in every Bible is a creedal statement?!?!?! What audacity. The table of contents is exactly that: a table of contents! It tells us what and where we are to find the books (in this case) listed in the book known as the Bible. Wilson says that it is the creed of the church speaking! Of course, Wilson is hoping that you buy into his argument at this point. For if you do not, what he has stated and what he will state will in the main fall to the floor. He wants you to believe that it is the church alone that establishes the table of contents that reflects location and page numbers of where these books are located in whatever Bible version you own. This is similar to saying, “If we (the church) got it right on which books of the Bible are inspired, then we must also have got it right on *the meaning of what* we are to believe the Bible teaches as it is explained to us in the creeds.” Howbeit, recognizing which books of the Bible are to be included in the canon and which are not, is not the same as explaining what those books mean. For example, I may be able to recognize that if I take some aspirin for my headache that it will work to remove my pain, but that is far from being able to explain *why* taking the aspirin removes my pain. I recognize that I can think, but I cannot explain to you how the process of thinking actually works from a medical-scientific point of view. Amazingly, no scientist can

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 264-5.

dissect a person's brain and stick parts of it under a microscope and see a person's thoughts, yet as sinful human beings we have the audacity to say that we have a God-given template provided to us in creeds and confessions by which we might see and understand the thoughts of God. Remember what Phillip Schaff said earlier about the creeds and confessions? They are approximations of the truth, but not the truth itself. That they are the "*approximate and relatively* correct exposition of revealed truth, and may be *improved* by the progressive knowledge of the church..."<sup>36</sup> This is not to say that what the creeds and confessions teach *in toto* is incorrect. Most of it is correct, but we are on dangerous ground by ascribing to creeds and confessions a near absolutism that is to be ascribed to the Bible alone. The table of contents of a Bible is not a "creed." Nice try Wilson.

Having considered how far afield Wilson is concerning the authority of the creeds provides much insight into his next statement. He quotes Ed Stevens again, "*The NT is both inspired and orthodox, but creeds are not inspired nor necessarily orthodox.*"<sup>37</sup> In response, Wilson says, "But how can Stevens with his wooden absolute, find out where the Bible places the exact boundaries of the Bible? He cannot because Scripture does not provide us with this service."<sup>38</sup> He cannot because the Scripture does not provide us with this service? Of all the authors I have been reviewing for this response book, I believe Wilson gets the prize for the amount of times I have had to read and then re-read and re-read again the same statements. I just cannot believe I am reading everything this man is saying. Just when I think I read him go as far away from Scripture, reason and the original intention of the WCF, I am once again astounded as to how much his own presuppositions control his thinking. How does a man who is a pastor, having the responsibility of leading a congregation of God's people into the Bible and Christian maturity, say that another man's statement of the NT being inspired and orthodox is a *wooden absolute*? Then he goes on to say that we cannot know the boundaries of the Bible because the Scripture does not provide it! Is he kidding? The man does not know what and where the Bible validates and states its own inspirational boundaries and yet he wants to insist that he knows what the Bible means as to the subject of the timing and nature of the Second Coming of Christ!

First, the Bible does in fact teach us how to recognize what is inspired from what is not. In other words, inspiration extends to the very words of Scripture. Paul himself said that his words were "taught by the Spirit." (1 Cor. 2:13) Peter affirmed this as well in 2 Pet. 3:15-16, stating that Paul's writings were on an equal level of inspiration along with the OT. The Lord Jesus claimed that what was written in the whole of the OT spoke of him (Lk. 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Heb. 10:7). The NT itself considers that the very words spoken by those in the OT were considered to be God's words by the NT writers. (Mtt. 1:22-23, Mtt. 2:15, 1 Cor. 2:8-9, Heb. 1:1,5-13 Heb. 3:7-11.) No boundaries Mr. Wilson?

Secondly, the OT makes specific claims to inspiration. In Ex. 20:1, Moses states, "And God spoke all these words." (Also, 32:16, Ex. 35:1) In Deuteronomy we find specific tests for

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<sup>36</sup> Philip Schaff, "The Creeds of Christendom", Vol.1, Page 7

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 262. (Wilson's emphasis is his original) Quote taken from Ed Stevens, "Creeds and Preterist Orthodoxy."

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 263.



determining what is and what is not God's Word (are you listening Mr. Wilson?) "When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word which the Lord has not spoken." (Dt. 18:22)

So truthfulness and accuracy in fulfillment of a thing is a specific test that the Scripture tells us to use when determining truth from error when it comes to recognizing when God is and is not speaking. (And since every passage in the NT that speaks of the Second Coming prophesies it as being fulfilled in the first century, to deny the accuracy of those passages is to bring the very core of the Scriptures as inspired into question.) But after all, as Wilson says, the Scriptures do not provide us with boundaries as to what is and what is not inspired Scripture. On the contrary, the NT itself spends much time making various references to the authenticity and know-ability of the inspiration of the OT. (Mtt. 2:14, 21:4-5; Lk. 17:26-27; John. 1:3; Rom. 5:12-14; 1 Cor. 15:54-55; Col.1:16; 1 Tim. 2:13-14; Heb. 11, etc...) The NT states that the NT writings are directed by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. 1:20-21) That the apostles themselves and those with apostolic giftings and callings would be led into all truth and that these writings would be the foundation of the church. (John 14:26, 16:13, Eph. 2:20) Still think that Stevens' statement that the NT is both inspired and orthodox is "nothing more than a wooden absolute?" If the Bible itself does not provide for us the method of recognizing canonicity (which books should and should not be included in the Bible), then how can Wilson or anyone state anything authoritative about any NT teaching at all? For a full treatment on the subject of how canonicity was discovered (we *recognize* what is canonical, we do not make it canonical) and how we know the 66 books of the Bible tell us that they are from the hand of God, see Geisler and Nix's excellent treatment on the subject in "A General Introduction to the Bible", Ch. 11- The Discovery of Canonicity."

I am grateful for the fact that Wilson does, in some places in his chapter, stress the fact that a statement made by a creed for instance, is authoritative not because a creed necessarily says so, but because it is Scriptural. If only this admission was a consistent one by Wilson. Speaking of the Nicene Creeds statement concerning the Trinity, Wilson writes, "The ground of this authority lies in the fact that what they confessed was scriptural and resonated with God's revelation of himself in Scripture."<sup>39</sup> He then turns around one page later and writes, "The corrective for an abuse of authority must be a willingness to weigh and consider seriously what generations of saints before us have believed and taught."<sup>40</sup> He seems to be heading back again to the fundamental error of Sola Ecclesia. Wilson's statement assumes that if the church has always believed and taught a thing, it must be correct because the church has always believed it. The return to circular reasoning continues to make the head spin.

Wilson's contradictions of himself continue to astound me. On the one hand, he states that balance needs to be struck between those who hold to the Bible speaking to us individually and those who would try to bind our hearts and minds to their interpretation as being the only

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 266

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 267.

understanding, ala Roman Catholicism.<sup>41</sup> Then, because Wilson’s thesis in his chapter of WSTTB is to essentially equate the authority of the creeds with the authority of the Scripture, he states:

“Classical Protestantism, in line with the Word, says that the Scriptures are given to the church.” (I wonder where exactly the Bible says that? Curious as to why Wilson does not offer any Biblical citation to verify the preceding statement. – KNB) Wilson continues, “Just as the oracles of God were entrusted to the Jews (Rom. 3:2), so the books of the new covenant were entrusted to the church. This gift was given to councils and synods, certainly...”<sup>42</sup>

Just a moment. This “*gift was given to councils and synods*”? This statement by Wilson attempts to get the reader to assume a ton! Talk about a drive-by shooting! It implies that not only have the very books of the Bible been given to the church, but that their very meaning has also been handed to the church through the creeds! So don’t mess with the creeds! Amazingly, the very confession that Wilson claims to hold to (The Westminster Confession of Faith), expressly denies what he is here affirming (WCF, Ch. 31:4). Where does the Scripture teach that in the same way that the words (oracles) of God were entrusted to the nation of Israel for safe keeping (and that did not guarantee that Israel would always interpret it correctly), that the same *gift* was given to the church? The church after all is not the nation of Israel, nor is she a specific hierarchy of individuals who exercise authority over what the Bible means by what it says, thereby binding the saint’s conscience to it indefatigably and absolutely. The Bible teaches that the job of proper exegesis and teaching is assigned to the pastor /teacher/elders within the various congregations who are presided over by Presbyteries. The church is certainly the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), *but she is not the truth itself*. That position is reserved for her King. (John 14:6)

Wilson’s goal in his chapter of WSTTB is simple: To educate you, the reader, into believing that the creeds represent the on-going actions of the Holy Spirit actively interpreting for us what is to be believed by the church for all time. It is an exercise in mutual equivalency.

### **Conclusion:**

Concerning the men I have been reviewing in this response and the situation that they would place us in, even though we are using proper and good hermeneutics which all Reformed scholars would approve and since we come to another conclusion other than that which has always been believed as expressed in the creeds, their conclusion is that we cannot possibly be right. Yet, who originally decided that Martin Luther was right when he came to his conclusions concerning the doctrine of justification by faith while going against the church of his day? Answer: Individual men using good and proper hermeneutics working directly from the text of Scripture itself. That is, our Reformed forebearers. (The church certainly did not approve of it).

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 267-8.

Martin Luther was one of the first to direct the attention of the church away from a works righteousness methodology of salvation to the freedom of faith alone in Christ alone. Had Dr. Luther not stood up against the tide of unbiblical authoritarianism of his day, where would you be in regards to your assurance of salvation? Where would men like Sproul Jr., Gentry, and Wilson be? Certainly God would have undoubtedly gotten the job done by raising up someone else. Enough of the assumption that is communicated by some that the church could not have possibly gotten its eschatology wrong for the last two thousand years. For nearly the first 1400 years of the existence of the church on earth, she was without a Biblically verifiable and forthright understanding as to the doctrine of Justification by Faith. Why then does it seem strange, in light of the fact that the history of the church is largely a history of God correcting the church in some error of doctrine and establishing the original Biblical teaching of the various subjects that were addressed, that we suddenly should now not believe that God is at it again? “He is there, and He is not silent”, to coin a phrase from a book of the same title by the Reformed philosopher Francis Schaeffer. After all, God is no more glorified in the various and contradictory doctrines of eschatology that are espoused by many in the church, than he would be over multiple doctrines of justification. (And yet, multifaceted disagreements in eschatology are tolerated by many amongst the Reformed and yet no one does anything to honor God in getting to the one and true heart of the meaning of the matter. Louis Berkhof would be ashamed.) The Bible has a single meaning as to all of its doctrines and we better get busy waking ourselves up from the slumber of our comfort zones and start rightly dividing the Word of truth concerning eschatology. Where does this lack of humility, evidenced by some in the Reformed camp in the face of Scripture, come from? It comes from the emotional presupposition that the creeds have it right 100% of the time and that the church could not have missed anything that the Bible teaches on any subject in those creeds. Also, there exists a real fear on their part that they themselves would be publicly proven to be wrong on this matter and would be forced to state as much before the church and the watching world. Not to mention negative financial effects that they would experience concerning the sale of their books. Perhaps we should start apologizing to the martyrs of the church who gave their blood to defend the Biblical doctrines that they suffered to defend while the majority of the creed affirming “church” made sure that there was enough wood surrounding them so that they and their heretical views, would be thoroughly burned up.

In short, Sproul Jr.’s biggest problem is that he presupposes that the information contained in the creeds and confessions should be considered first, before the Scriptures, in the belief that the creeds and confessions have been providentially guided by the Holy Spirit to instruct the church on how to interpret the Bible. Dr. Gentry’s most glaring mistake concerns the audacity with which he changes and then attempts to force onto the unsuspecting believer passages of Scriptures that he says teach the church to produce creeds. This is nothing short of heretical and should be addressed by those in his denomination. Wilson’s not-so-subtle underpinning within his argumentation is that there exists at least some kind of divine mandate or inspiration that is somehow to be owned by the creeds and confessions. This along with the fact that Wilson has abandoned the Reformed doctrine of Justification by Faith and has left the fold of Calvinism in order to graze on the grass of Rome, should at least be raising some red flags for anyone who is considering if this is the kind of man that we should listen to relative to his interpretation of Biblical eschatology. I am glad that Mathison and company have written this book against

Biblical Preterism, for it has done us all the favor of exposing the very poor thinking and more than questionable beliefs that the men who oppose Biblical Preterism hold to.

No wonder they just don't get it.

“To the Law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” Isa. 8:20- KJV.