

## **Timely Questions about Preterism and it's Reconstruction Ally**

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<http://www.mountainretreatorg.net/eschatology/preterist.html>

### **Part I: A Timely Question about "Preterism"**

by Prof. David Engelsma

A reader has asked about "preterism." The question is occasioned by the series of editorials defending (Reformed) amillennialism (Standard Bearer, Jan. 15, 1995 — Dec. 15, 1996). The subject is worthy of editorial treatment.

The question and my response follow.

#### ***Question***

I have read your articles on amillennialism and have learned much. I have some dealings with people who hold to a postmillennial view. Lately, some people have come to our church who hold to a preterist view. Do you know much about this view? Do you know what good books or articles I could read? They deny the second coming of Christ and many other important truths. I hope that you can help me.

Michael Mc Cullough  
Ripon, CA

#### ***Response***

What "Preterism" is

Your question is timely.

"Preterism" is a heresy that, astonishingly, is creeping into Reformed and Presbyterian churches. That it does so is largely due to postmillennial Christian Reconstructionism. Against this error I was fighting in the series of editorials that occasioned your question.

Your question is also timely because preterism is about time, specifically the time of Jesus' second coming, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the renewal of the creation.

Preterism holds that the time of Jesus' second coming (Greek: *parousia*) was A.D. 70. The second coming of Jesus was the destruction of Jerusalem in that year. Preterism holds that the second coming of Christ promised in Scripture was exclusively the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. A.D. 70 was the end of the ages prophesied by Scripture. Christ came then; the dead were raised then; the final judgment took place then; creation was renewed then.

To expect a visible, bodily coming of Jesus, a resurrection of the dead, a final judgment, and a cataclysmic destruction of the present creation in the future on the basis of any prophecy of Scripture is mistaken. All is past.

Hence, "preterism." The term itself derives from a Latin word meaning 'past.'

Basic to the heresy is its interpretation of Matthew 24 as referring exclusively to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The preterist insists that verse 34 is decisive for this interpretation: "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

Preterism also makes much of the fact that Scripture teaches that Jesus' coming is "near," or "at hand." Explaining this "nearness" in terms of a very brief period of time according to man's standards, preterism concludes that the New Testament predicted the coming of Christ within 40 years at the most. This prediction was fulfilled in A.D. 70. It was completely and exhaustively fulfilled in A.D. 70.

### ***Preterists***

A recent book promoting preterism is *The Promise of His Coming: Interpreting New Testament Statements concerning the Time of Christ's Appearance* (Chicago: Laudemont Press, 1996), by R. C. Leonard and J. E. Leonard. The book contends that all the eschatological prophecies of Scripture have been fulfilled in the past, in A.D. 70.

Since the coming of Christ, as predicted in the New Testament documents, has already taken place, little scriptural basis exists for perpetuating the doctrine that it still lies in the future (p. 216).

We have presented the evidence that the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 represents the fulfillment of what the apostolic church knew as the promise of Jesus' coming and the end of the age. The future hope of today's church, therefore, lies in another direction... (p. 219).

For today's Christians, the last days to which the New Testament refers lie in the past. Our task is not to anticipate the end, but to live in the new community inaugurated by Jesus Christ (p. 220).

Present-day preterism, including the teaching of the Leonards, draws heavily from a book by the 19th century Congregational writer, James Stuart Russell. The book is *The Parousia: a Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*. A new edition of this work, first published in 1878, was published in 1996 by Kingdom Publications in Bradford, PA. The references that follow use this recent edition.

According to Russell, the second coming of Christ that is foretold in 1Thessalonians 4:13-17 and in 2Thessalonians 1 and 2 happened in A.D. 70 in the destruction of Jerusalem (pp. 165-190). The resurrection of the dead promised in 1Corinthians 15 happened in A.D. 70 in the destruction of Jerusalem (pp. 199ff.). The public, final judgment of Matthew 25:31-46 is not the future, "final judgment of the whole human race, but that of the guilty nation ... of Palestine ... whose day of doom was now near at hand" (p. 108). The renewal of creation described in Romans 8:19-22 is not a coming deliverance of the "irrational and inanimate creation," but the liberation of groaning, "suffering and down-trodden humanity" when "the whole visible fabric and frame of Judaism were swept away" in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (pp. 222-232).

The entire book of Revelation, with the embarrassing exception of the millennium of chapter 20, found its complete fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem (pp. 362ff.).

Russell's preterism is consistent. Every prophecy of Scripture about the coming of Christ and the end of the world was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

We are compelled ... to conclude that the Parousia, or second coming of Christ, with its connected and concomitant events, did take place, according to the Saviour's own prediction, at the period when Jerusalem was destroyed, and before the passing away of "that generation" (p. 549).

As this quotation indicates ("according to the Saviour's own prediction"; "passing away of 'that generation'"), Russell's interpretation of New Testament eschatology is squarely based on his explanation of Matthew 24 as referring exclusively to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Russell affirms that the language of Matthew 24 (and 25) "is not only appropriate as applied to the destruction of Jerusalem, but that this is its true and exclusive application" (p. 82).

### **This is heresy.**

It is gross denial of the second coming of Christ and, with it, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the renewal of the creation of the heaven and the earth.

No one can possibly fail to detect the false doctrine.

Preterism destroys the Christian hope: the soon-coming of Jesus Christ our Lord in the body to raise our bodies from the dead and to take us unto Himself in the perfected fellowship of the covenant. With the scoffers of II Peter 3:4, it asks, "Where is the promise of his coming?" With Hymenaeus and Philetus, it says that "the resurrection is past already" (II Tim. 2:18).

It is rejection of the Christian hope with a vengeance. Nothing of our hope is left.

Russell admits as much. Having annihilated the expectation of Christ's coming on the part of the church and the Christian, he imagines his readers asking, "Whither are we tending? What is to be the end and consummation of human history?" Indeed! What are our prospects? What were the prospects of the believers and their children after A.D. 70?

Russell's answer?

"Scripture prophecy guides us no further" (p. 549).

And, "Where nothing has been revealed it would be the height of presumption to prognosticate the future" (p. 550).

God's Word leaves us completely in the dark as regards the future.

The church and the believer are hopeless. Since we are saved by hope, according to Romans 8:24, preterism strips us of salvation.

### **The Preterism of Christian Reconstruction**

This grievous heresy, postmillennial Christian Reconstruction is promoting in Reformed and Presbyterian churches today, although it claims to avoid full-blown, consistent preterism. The close relationship between the fully developed, consistent preterism of James Stuart Russell and the Leonards on the one hand, and the less fully developed, inconsistent preterism of Christian Reconstruction on the other hand, is evident.

The new edition of Russell's *The Parousia* features glowing recommendations of the book by Gary DeMar and Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. DeMar writes:

"Russell's *Parousia* takes the Bible seriously when it tells us of the nearness of Christ's return.... Reading Russell is a breath of fresh air in a room filled with smoke and mirror hermeneutics."

Although not agreeing with all of Russell's conclusions, Gentry praises the book highly and confesses his own dependence on it:

I highly recommend this well-organized, carefully argued, and compellingly written defense of preterism to serious and mature students of the Bible. It is one of the most persuasive and challenging books I have read on the subject of eschatology and has had a great impact on my own thinking.

DeMar and Gentry are mainstream champions of Christian Reconstruction.

Also, the Leonards, consistent preterists, appeal to Christian Reconstructionist David Chilton in support of their consignment of the whole of the book of Revelation to the past (*The Promise*, p. 156).

In addition, the reading of Russell's *The Parousia* brings to light the dependence of the Christian Reconstructionists on Russell for their interpretation of such passages as 2Thessalonians 2 and the entire book of Revelation.

As for the protest by Christian Reconstruction that it wants to retain the hope of a future coming of Christ and a future resurrection of the dead on the basis of a few New Testament prophecies that still apply to the church today, that is, that it wants to hold an "inconsistent preterism," three things make this impossible.

*First*, Christian Reconstruction teaches that Matthew 24:1-35 applies exclusively to the destruction of Jerusalem, not at all to the coming of Christ in the future. Such is the basic importance of the prophecy of Matthew on the reckoning of everyone that if Jesus' eschatology has only the destruction of Jerusalem in view the same is true of all the eschatology of the New Testament. Matthew 24 is the issue. The interpretation of Matthew 24 is the difference between the hope of the Christian faith and the hopelessness of preterism. The four articles in which I examined, criticized, and refuted J. Marcellus Kik's preterist interpretation of Matthew 24 and then set forth the right explanation of the passage were the heart of the series of editorials, "A (Reformed) Defense of Amillennialism" (SB, April 1, April 15, May 1, and May 15, 1996).

*Second*, Christian Reconstruction insists on explaining the New Testament's teaching that the coming of Christ is "near" and "at hand" as meaning that Christ would come in the second coming within a few years, that is, in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. If this is, in fact, what is meant by "near," "at hand," and "quickly," Christ came in A.D. 70, and everything connected with His coming, e.g., the resurrection, took place at that time in the past. Scripture's prophecy of the end has been fulfilled. It has been fulfilled completely. It has been fulfilled completely in the destruction of Jerusalem. There is no further revelation of any future coming.

*Third*, Christian Reconstruction is committed to a consistent preterism, despite its protestations to the contrary, inasmuch as the one, great good in the future that Christian Reconstruction has its heart set on, looks forward to, and hastens toward is the earthly kingdom of its dreams. The hope of Christian Reconstruction is not the second coming of Christ. To a future coming of Christ, Christian Reconstruction pays lip service. The hope of Christian Reconstruction is a carnal kingdom of earthly power, prosperity, and peace.

When the Leonards — consistent preterists — get around to telling us why they have shoved all of New Testament eschatology into the past, thus annihilating the expectation of Christ's coming, this is what they say:

(This) provides the incentive for the church militant, the followers of Jesus Christ engaging the distortions and inequities of a godless culture, and laying the foundation for the continual reconstruction of society according to the principles of God's covenant law. Christians have no biblical warrant for withdrawing from this struggle in the hope that Christ will appear, sooner or later, to execute the sanctions of the end. The last days have come and gone, leaving the church on earth where Christ intended it to be (The Promise, p. 208).

Sound familiar?

The carnal kingdom of "Jewish dreams"!

Christian Reconstruction is committed, willy-nilly, to the full-blown, consistent preterism that strips the church and the Christian of all hope and all salvation.

The gospel of hope is Reformed, amillennial, biblical eschatology.

Jesus Christ is coming. He is on the way now. He will come in the future. He will come personally, bodily, and visibly. He comes quickly. His coming is near. We live daily in the expectation of Him. His coming is our hope.

Come, Lord Jesus!

## **Part II: The Preterism of Christian Reconstruction**

by Prof. David Engelsma

In the letters column of this issue of the *Standard Bearer*, two champions of Christian Reconstruction take sharp issue with the recent editorial, "A Timely Question about 'Preterism'" (SB, Feb. 15, 1999).

The editorial answered a question by a reader in California (where the preterism of Christian Reconstruction makes headway in Reformed and Presbyterian churches), asking for information about the "preterist view." The editorial explained that preterism (from a Latin word meaning "past") is the heresy that teaches that the second coming of Jesus Christ is a past event. The second coming of Christ occurred in AD 70. The second coming of Christ was the destruction of Jerusalem.

The editorial charged that postmillennial Christian Reconstruction is promoting this heresy in Reformed and Presbyterian churches today:

This grievous heresy (that is, preterism), postmillennial Christian Reconstruction is promoting in Reformed and Presbyterian churches today, although it claims to avoid full-blown, consistent preterism.

This charge has provoked the angry responses from the two champions of Christian Reconstruction.

I have published both letters in full. This will surprise some. The letters stoop to personal abuse. Worse, they indulge in a scurrilous attack on historic, confessional, Reformed amillennialism. Were I to write a similar letter to the magazine of which Sandlin is editor, the *Chalcedon Report*, or to DeMar's *American Vision* publication, in defense of amillennialism my letter would never see the light of day.

But I am not doing them a favor by publishing their letters. It is my purpose that these defenders of Christian Reconstruction be permitted to expose themselves, as they insist, and that the preterism of Christian Reconstruction be established beyond any shadow of doubt.

One thing that becomes plain from the letters is that, although Christian Reconstruction is good at handing out criticism, it has a very thin skin when it comes to taking criticism. For 30-odd years now, R. J. Rushdoony and his disciples have been mercilessly excoriating Reformed amillennialism. Consider this condemnation of amillennialism and amillennialists by Rushdoony, patriarch of the movement:

Amillennialism ... (is) in retreat from the world and blasphemously surrender(s) it to the devil. By its very premise ... that the world will only get worse ... it cuts the nerve of Christian action.... (With premillennialists) they (amillennial believers-DJE) are . . . the most impotent segment of American society, with the least impact on American life. To turn the world-conquering word of the sovereign, omnipotent, and triune God into a symbol of impotence is not a mark of faith. It is blasphemy ("Postmillennialism versus Impotent Religion," in the *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, 3, no. 2 [Winter, 1976-77]: 126, 127).

The Rev. Sandlin's letter illustrates the relentless attack on and ridicule of amillennialism by Christian Reconstruction over the years: "your own highly defeatist and implicitly Manichean amillennialism."

But let a Reformed amillennialist venture a criticism of Christian Reconstruction, and the Christian Reconstructionists react with vitriolic, personal abuse:

"twisted depiction"; "guilty of slander"; "your own highly defeatist and implicitly Manichean amillennialism"; "lie about what people actually believe"; "very poor scholarship"; "embarrassing"; "why don't you do substantive exegesis?"

The question about preterism to which I responded in the February 15, 1999 issue of the SB was occasioned by a series of editorials defending (Reformed) amillennialism against the postmillennialism of Christian Reconstruction. These editorials ran from January 15, 1995 through December 15, 1996. Soon after I began the series, one of that bellicose crowd — a lawyer-threatened legal action if I did not cease criticizing Christian Reconstruction.

All of this bluster has the tendency, if it is not designed, to frighten off all would-be opponents of Christian Reconstruction. Who is eager to be taken to court by a sharp young lawyer? Who relishes being lampooned by the mighty exegetes, logicians, and theologians of Christian Reconstruction? The result is that opponents timidly retreat from the field, leaving eschatology in the hands of Christian Reconstruction.

This must not happen. The postmillennial eschatology of Christian Reconstruction is false doctrine. It must be exposed. Amillennialism, as God's own truth-vitally important truth-about the last days, must be defended against Christian Reconstruction's wicked attack on it as "blasphemy." This is our calling.

Much of the contents of the two letters can be answered quickly. Neither Sandlin nor DeMar addresses my grounds for charging that, although (as I recognized) Christian Reconstruction protests that it wants to retain a future coming of Christ, in fact Christian Reconstruction is committed to a consistent preterism (see the Feb. 15, 1999 SB, p. 223). These grounds have to do with the Christian Reconstruction explanation of Matthew 24; the Christian Reconstruction understanding of the New Testament's teaching that the return of Christ is "near"; and Christian Reconstruction's having its heart set, not on Jesus' return but on the carnal kingdom of its dreams. Until Sandlin and DeMar demonstrate, or make some effort at demonstrating, that these grounds are false, the charge stands.

DeMar should not appeal to Charles H. Spurgeon's endorsement of James Stuart Russell's preterist book, *The Parousia*. For one thing, the bad example of another is no justification of one's committing the same evil. For another thing, placing Spurgeon's recommendation in the earlier editions of Russell's book was misleading, if not deceptive. Spurgeon's full review of Russell's *The Parousia* was critical, not commendatory. Only the last line was qualified recommendation of the reading of the book. To lift that line out of the critical review and make it an endorsement was dubious at best.

There is more to DeMar's appeal to R. C. Sproul. Sproul has recommended Russell's *The Parousia*. This is the book, remember, that puts all of the eschatology revealed in the Scriptures, with the exception of the millennium of Revelation 20, in the past. This is the book that denies any revelation of a future coming of Jesus Christ. Sproul's recommendation is glowing: "Russell's work is one of the most important treatments on Biblical eschatology that is available to the church today." Sproul has since written a book of his own on eschatology in which he expresses strong attraction to preterism as taught by Russell. It is all too evident that he has been powerfully influenced by Russell. The Christian Reconstructionists have not been slow to hail the popular Sproul as their ally.

And with right.

This makes exposure of preterism as false doctrine all the more necessary. Exposure of preterism becomes necessary for the sake of Reformed and Presbyterian Christians among whom R. C. Sproul is influential.

DeMar urges me to do “substantive exegesis” of Scripture on the issues. Alas, he is ignorant of the exegesis that I have done on the pages of the SB of several of the passages of Scripture that are crucial in the debate: Matthew 24; Isaiah 65; and Revelation 20. The reason for his ignorance is that he does not read the SB.

Both Sandlin and DeMar are at pains at the very beginning of their letters to inform me that they themselves did not know of my editorial on preterism to which they respond. A “friend,” in one case, and a “member of our editorial committee,” in the other case, had to bring the magazine to their attention. They do not read our magazine.

This is perfectly understandable.

The readers of the SB should know that these are important and busy men.

They cannot be expected to read such a humble magazine as the SB.

But then neither should DeMar allege my failure to do substantive exegesis of the Scriptural passages in the debate between Reformed amillennialism and Christian Reconstruction postmillennialism. The fact is that a good part of my series, “A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism,” a series occasioned by a long letter by Gary DeMar, dutifully printed in the SB, consisted of exegesis that claimed to refute the postmillennial position and to ground the position of amillennialism.

That these important and busy men do not take the time to read the SB is understandable. But it is not wise. Humble though the SB may be in comparison with the learned tomes over which these mighty exegetes, logicians, and theologians pore, it is the one magazine today that boldly defends historic amillennialism. Their own cohort, Gary North, made this observation in the preface to his recent commentary on Numbers. Explaining why he devotes so many pages to a consideration of Protestant Reformed writing on eschatology, North says that Protestant Reformed men “are among the very few remaining Dutch-American Calvinist defenders of traditional amillennialism who are willing to go into print on the topic.” He adds:

But so few theologians today are ready to defend with real conviction and enthusiasm the original amillennial pessimism (sic!), that (the Protestant Reformed men) have staked out a kind of operational monopoly: the last really enthusiastic defenders of the older Dutch amillennial tradition (*Sanctions and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Numbers*, ICE, 1997, pp. xxviii, xxix).

Sandlin and DeMar might find it worth their while to read the one vigorous, unabashed defense of amillennialism being published today.

All of these matters may have their importance, but the central issue is my charge that Christian Reconstruction’s doctrine of the last things is preterist. This must be the charge that DeMar castigates as a “lie.” He never tells us what the “lie” is. Much less does he prove that anything in the editorial is a “lie.” Apparently, busy and important scholars need not condescend to such details. For them, it is sufficient to declare on their own authority that an entire article in general is a “lie.” This verdict must then be accepted as decisive.

At the humble SB, we operate differently. We require that the “lie” be precisely identified and then that the charge of falsehood be proved.

No doubt, DeMar refers to the charge of preterism.

DeMar recommended James Stuart Russell's book, *The Parousia*. This book is devoted to the proposition that every single eschatological prophecy in the Bible, save only the millennium of Revelation 20, has been fulfilled in A. D. 70. That is, all of the last things is past. Christ came then, and there is no future coming of Jesus Christ to look forward to. Russell's book is preterism. It is preterism with a vengeance. It is full-blown, consistent preterism. It is preterism that destroys the Christian hope. It is as much a denial of the second coming of Jesus Christ as is the liberal doctrine that the corpse of Jesus (if ever He lived) lies moldering in the dirt of Palestine. About this book, on the back cover of the 1996 reprint edition, Gary DeMar says:

How many times have you struggled with the interpretation of certain Biblical texts related to the time of Jesus' return because they did not fit with a preconceived system of eschatology? Russell's Parousia takes the Bible seriously when it tells us of the nearness of Christ's return. Those who claim to interpret the Bible literally often trip over the obvious meaning of these time texts by making Scripture mean the opposite of what it unequivocally declares. Reading Russell is a breath of fresh air in a room filled with smoke and mirror hermeneutics.

One who has recommended Russell's book cannot cry "lie" when an amillennialist charges "preterism!" Nor can he cry "lie" when the amillennialist alleges that Christian Reconstruction postmillennialism is promoting the grievous heresy of the consistent preterism of James Stuart Russell. This is exactly what DeMar did, intended to do, and is doing by his recommendation on the back cover of the book.

What DeMar ought to have written about Russell's *The Parousia* is that it is a damnable denial of the whole of the Christian hope of the second coming of Jesus Christ, including the bodily resurrection, the final judgment, and eternal life in the new world. He should have added that it is a wicked, foolish dissolving of the glorious promise of the Day of Christ into the day of the destruction of a second-rate city in the distant past.

DeMar will object that, although he is a preterist, he is no hyper-preterist.

This is also Sandlin's defense: Christian Reconstruction rejects "consistent preterism." It may be noted in passing that consistency is a jewel. It also has a certain inevitability about it. In theology, positions that began as inconsistent embrace of an error invariably become consistent embrace of the error.

But let this be. In the editorial on preterism, I acknowledged that Christian Reconstruction "claims to avoid full-blown, consistent preterism." I acknowledged that Christian Reconstruction protests "that it wants to retain the hope of a future coming of Christ and a future resurrection of the dead on the basis of a few New Testament prophecies that still apply to the church today, that is, that it wants to hold an 'inconsistent preterism.'"

But I added that there are three reasons why this is impossible, three reasons why Christian Reconstruction is committed, willy-nilly, to full-blown, consistent preterism. These three reasons, Sandlin and DeMar have not touched. They must do so.

In a following article, I will demonstrate, mainly from the writings of Gary DeMar, that Christian Reconstruction is preterist. That is, first, Christian Reconstruction erroneously explains important events of biblical eschatology that are future as past events. Second, Christian Reconstruction is guilty of making most of biblical eschatology a thing of the past. Third, Christian Reconstruction is bound by its own theology to regard all of eschatology as past event.

But I would like the Rev. Sandlin and Mr. DeMar to read my response to their letters in this and the following issue of the SB.

May I ask the friend of Mr. DeMar and the member of the editorial committee of Chalcedon Report who brought the editorial of February 15 to the attention of these men to do the same with these issues.



### ***The Letters:***

#### *Christian Reconstruction on the Attack*

A friend sent me a copy of your February 15, 1999, issue of the Standard Bearer on the subject of preterism.

To raise a standard one must have a standard. It's one thing to disagree with a position and those who hold it, it's another thing to lie about what people actually believe. The ninth commandment is still in force. Your editorial is an example of very poor scholarship. It's embarrassing to think that it was written by a seminary professor who is supposed to be preparing students for ministry and truth telling. I will be using it as an example for my students how not to argue. You do your cause no favor by printing such half truths.

Let's have a debate at your seminary. Have your students decide who's telling the truth. Assign them *Last Days Madness*. Let's see if they come to your conclusions. They should also read Ken Gentry's *Before Jerusalem Fell*.

I did not use Russell for my research. I was most influenced by the Hebraist scholar John Lightfoot, one of the participants at the Westminster Assembly. He, along with many other commentators, showed that Matthew 24 and 2Thessalonians 2, to name just two passages, have a preterist fulfillment. If you read my *Last Days Madness* and follow its arguments, you might not be so quick to misrepresent a brother in Christ. Will you also attack C.H. Spurgeon for his endorsement of Russell? (See the first reprint edition by Baker.) What about Baker Book House for twice reprinting it? And then there's R.C. Sproul and his endorsement. In fact, he wrote the foreword to Baker's latest reprint edition. Why didn't you mention Sproul and his preterist conference with nearly 4,000 in attendance? Are you afraid that your entire case would be considered suspect if people learned that Sproul holds a similar position and stood with a number of reconstructionists on this issue?

Why don't you do substantive exegesis instead of name-calling?

You state that Jesus' coming is "near." What do you mean by "near"? You never tell your readers.

Hope to read better arguments in the future.

Gary DeMar  
President, American Vision  
Atlanta, GA

#### *Another "Attack"*

A member of our editorial committee alerted me to your February 15 editorial, "A Timely Question About 'Preterism.'" It was so twisted in its depiction of the Christian Reconstructionist position that I prefer to assume you are simply misinformed for, certainly, one would otherwise be guilty of slander to so egregiously misrepresent the documentable view of Christian Reconstruction. For example, David Engelsma sweepingly declares: "Christian Reconstruction is committed, willy-nilly, to the full-blown, consistent preterism that strips the church and the Christian of all hope and all salvation."

This is flatly wrong. Christian Reconstruction and "consistent preterism" are antithetical positions, and we made this point categorically in the July, 1997 issue of the *Chalcedon Report*. Christian Reconstruction embraces the orthodox Christian Faith, crucial aspects of which the "consistent preterists" deny. Some Christian Reconstructionists hold that certain parts of Matthew 24 and the Apocalypse were fulfilled in AD 70, but all of them affirm the future physical Second Advent of Christ, resurrection of the just and unjust, and final judgment. That

is, all are orthodox eschatologists. If they were to adopt “consistent preterism,” they would thereby abandon Christian Reconstruction — and, for that matter, orthodox Christianity.

Nobody at Chalcedon is a preterist — certainly not as this is today defined. Rushdoony and I hold that most of Matthew 24 and the Apocalypse describe events of much of the interadvental era, including, to be sure, the destruction of Jerusalem. (I myself think Matthew Henry’s view is quite on target.) You assert that Russell’s view in locating the Second Advent at AD 70 is heretical. We agree, and do not in any way endorse his pernicious work, *The Parousia*. While some Christian Reconstructionists have more recently accepted a mild, orthodox form of preterism, this interpretation is in no way endemic to our position.

Perhaps to you the Hymenaen heresy (“consistent preterism”) offers a convenient issue by which to dismiss our consistently Reformed approach to the Faith, and to advertise your own highly defeatist and implicitly *Manichean amillennialism*. In any case, if you are committed to attacking our position, please have the courtesy to attack our distinctives: orthodox, catholic, Reformed Christianity; VanTilian presuppositionalism; biblionomy; postmillennialism; and dominionism.

Preterism has never been a distinctive of Christian Reconstruction.

Your readers deserve to hear the facts of this letter.

(Rev.) Andrew Sandlin  
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