

Reformation or Retrogression?

An Examination of the International Preterist Association's Claims and Methodology

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Introduction

In the last several years an emerging eschatological movement has made itself well known and highly visible at the annual and regional meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society, the Christian Booksellers Convention and other significant venues. The International Preterist Association¹ (hereafter IPA) has become something of the umbrella organization for a group advocating the theological/eschatological position commonly known as Hyper-Preterism (hereafter HP).

This novel position initially began to form² within some Church of Christ assemblies in Ohio through the ministries of “C. D. Beagle and his son-in-law, Max King.”³ HP is the

¹ John No is president of another group called, *Prophecy Reformation Institute* (www.prphecyrefi.org). Max King is the leader of an organization called *Living Presence Ministries* (www.livingpresence.org). There are several other websites including www.planetpreterist.com and www.preteristarchive.com that present Hyper-Preterist materials.

² Here we are speaking of the organization and systematization of the HP scheme. J. Stuart Russell's book, *The Parousia: A Study of the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*. This work was originally published anonymously and then with Russell's name (London: Daldy, Isbiter & Co., 1878) and (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1887). Besides influencing Milton Terry and his work, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, Russell's work made little impact and was out of print for nearly 100 years, until Walter Hibbard (who himself had adopted the HP position) arranged with Baker Book House to reprint the work in 1983. *The Parousia* is available through Baker Books and other smaller single-subject publishers. However, it should be

view that all Biblical prophecy saw its fulfillment at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It differs from the normal form of Preterism in terms of extent.⁴ They teach that, among other things: (1) Christ returned and established His kingdom; (2) The resurrection of the just and unjust has occurred; (3) the final judgments have been pronounced at the Great White Throne; (4) Satan and his cohorts among men and the angelic realm have been cast into the lake of Fire; (5) We are now enjoying the New Heavens and New earth.

This view has spread beyond the Church of Christ denomination through several writers and speakers, notably Edward E. Stevens, John Noë, and Randall E. Otto. For some time the HP novelty seemed to be simply an internecine debate within the larger Preterist sphere. So much so that outside of those circles very few have even been aware of the issue. Of the large number of HP publications in the last ten years or so, only three reviews of their books have appeared in non-preterist orientated publications.⁵

However, in the last few years more and more interest has been demonstrated in the HP position, caused in no small part by the aggressive marketing by the IPA and the ubiquitous nature of the Internet. Anecdotally, this author has been recently involved with

noted that even Russell was not entirely within the HP position as it is currently formulated. Russell viewed the millennial kingdom as “still future and unfulfilled” (p. 523).

³ Bob L. Ross. *The Historical background of Modern Preterism or AD 70ism*. (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publishing, n.d.), p. 2. This is one of a series of short monographs by Ross on the subject of Preterism. All are available on his web page at <http://members.aol.com/pilgrimpub/pretrist.htm>

⁴ We do not mean by this that extent is the only difference between preterism and HP. The theological and practical differences will be noted in the paper in the following sections. Preterist writers themselves have been the most vocal critics of the HP position to date.

⁵ In 1994 John F. Walvoord (*Bib Sac* 151 [Oct-Dec 1994], p. 492) reviewed John Noë's *The Apocalypse Conspiracy* (Brentwood, Tennessee: Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishers, 1991). Another book by No, *Beyond the End Times; The Rest of the Greatest Story Ever Told* (Bradford, Pennsylvania: Preterist Resources, 1999), has been reviewed by A. Boyd Luter (*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* [43:4 [December 2000], pp. 743-44; and by this author (*The Master's Seminary Journal* 12:1 [Spring 2001], pp. 119-21. While Walvoord's review could be characterized as “dismissive” and not extremely detailed, the reviews by Luter and this author were more thorough, although both have been characterized as “scathing” in evaluating Noë's work.

matters of church discipline, serving as interim pastor of IFCA and GARBC churches (both of whom have definitive premillennial doctrinal statements) where the HP teaching was introduced. The growth of the HP position and claims of the IPA and related groups make an examination what many have called the resurgence of the error of “Hymenaeus and Philetus” (2 Tim 2:18) a needed study.

This article will briefly examine the HP position in four areas: (1) Motivation; (2) Methodology; (3) Claims; and (4) Consequences. It should be noted that our purpose is not to enter into a dispute with normative or classic Preterists; although approaching the subject from a futuristic premillennial perspective, our Preterist friends will likely disagree with some of the points of argumentation. Our focus is strictly on the HP position and their claims.⁶

IPA’s Motivation: Flawed

In reading the material from HP authors, especially those associated with the IPA it becomes immediately clear what their motivation. A recent book by John Noë makes the motivation clear in its title: *Dead in Their Tracks: Stopping the Liberal/Skeptic Attack on the Bible*.⁷ Following the lead of *The Last Days According to Jesus*, where R. C. Sproul

⁶ For a recent and thorough treatment of traditional preterist (and by extension hyper-preterist) arguments see Richard L. Mayhue, “Jesus: A Preterist or a Futurist?” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 14:1 (Spring 2003): 9-22. The foundational issue in establishing preterism is the date for the writing of the Book of Revelation. As Mayhue notes:

Regarding the writing dates for Revelation, Bible scholars generally recognize two possibilities. First, the early date is shortly before A. D. 70 (ca. A. D. 68) during Nero’s reign (A.D. 54-68). Second, the late date would be ca. A.D. 95 during Domitian’s time (A.D. 81-96). Significantly, a futurist would not have to change his eschatological thinking if a pre-A.D. 70 date for the writing were to be established. However, the preterist position is eliminated from consideration is the late date of ca. A.D. 95 can be validated (13).

⁷ John No. *Dead in Their Tracks: Stopping the Liberal/Skeptic Attack on the Bible*. (Bradford, Pennsylvania: International Preterist Association, 2001).

introduces the objections to Christianity of the near nihilistic philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872-1970).⁸

One of Russell's objections to Christianity (and they were certainly not limited to the singular selection quoted by Sproul and Noë) was that Christ claimed that he would return within the lifetime of His hearers and, in fact, He did not.⁹ Noë also cites the "Father of the Historical Jesus" movement and noted liberal theologian, Albert Schweitzer, along with several Jewish and Islamic writers who object to Christianity on the same basis. Noë then also cites the famous Christian apologist C. S. Lewis as one who concluded that Jesus was wrong about His second coming. Part of Noë's citation is where Lewis is voicing the objections of his created critic of Christianity,

It is clear that they [the disciples] expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime. And, worse still, they had a reason, and one which you will find very embarrassing. Their Master had told them so. He shared, and indeed created their delusion. He said in so many words, 'this generation shall not pass till all these things be done.' And He was wrong. He clearly knew no more about the end of the world than anyone else.¹⁰

⁸ R. C. Sproul. *The Last Days According to Jesus: When Did Jesus Say He Would Return?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1998), p 12-13.

⁹ It should be noted, as Sproul does, that Russell was entirely skeptical as to whether or not Jesus ever even existed! "Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about Him, so I am not concerned with the historical question, which is a very difficult one." Cited in Sproul, *Last Days*, p. 12.

¹⁰ C. S. Lewis. *The World's last Night and Other Essays*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1960), p. 98. In his citation, No actually references this essay as it appeared in *The Essential C. S. Lewis*. Lyle W. Dorsett, ed. (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1996). This serves to make a notation about IPA publications in general and Noë's works in particular. There is a great deal of secondary and even tertiary sources used as references. Sources are often poorly cited and even more poorly checked. In this case, No indicates that this essay was written in 1960, when in fact, it was first written in 1952 and appeared with a different title in the periodical *Religion in Life*. See the author's review of Noë's *Beyond the End Times* (*The Master's Seminary Journal* 12:1 [Spring 2001], pp. 119-21 for several other examples. One work published by the IPA, Daniel E. Harden, *Overcoming Sproul's Resurrection Obstacles*. (Bradford, Pennsylvania: International Preterist Association, 1999), is perhaps the most egregious case to date. In this book there are no footnotes, even though there are extensive quotations (apparently) from various other writers. There are occasionally page numbers listed, apparently referring to a short bibliography at the end of the book, but no other real information. The formatting makes it difficult to know where a quotation ends and the author's words begin. This is certainly not the paradigm for what purports to be informative or scholarly publications.

To his credit, Noë takes these criticisms of the veracity of Christ and the inerrancy of the Bible seriously. He states,

Do you hear what these critics and even C. S. Lewis are saying? They are saying that Jesus was literally wrong when He made numerous time-restrictive predictions and statements regarding his coming, his return. As we shall see, the embarrassment belongs to C. S. Lewis et al. But this perceived weakness was, and still is, the crack that let the liberals in the door to begin their systematic criticism and dismantling of Scripture with its inevitable bankrupting of the faith.¹¹

From this Noë asserts, “Regrettably, this ‘nonoccurrence’ problem cannot be lightly brushed aside without undermining the integrity and divinity of Christ and placing the inerrancy of the Bible in question. It’s that simple. It’s that profound. And it calls for another reformation of Christianity around a more conservative and biblical view of eschatology.”¹²

His view then is that only the HP position, which sees fulfillment of all prophecy in the A. D. 70 time frame, can answer these critics of the Bible and apparently force them to see its truthfulness.

Despite the apparently noble intentions and zeal that is exhibited here the motivation of the IPA and HP writers is clearly overstated and apologetically flawed. A brief examination of the examples cited will suffice to demonstrate this. In the example of Russell, his objections regarding the *parousia* are a fraud at their very foundation. Russell was an atheist and as already noted, he doubted that Jesus even existed! The idea that answering his objection about the supposed “nonoccurrence” of the Second Coming would sway him is naive at best. The writer of the Book of Hebrews, stated, “And without faith it

¹¹ No, *Dead in Their Tracks*, p. 8. Edward E. Stevens makes the same comments (using a few of the same examples) in his work *What Happened in A. D. 70?* (Bradford, Pennsylvania: Kingdom Publications, 1997), p. 3

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

is impossible to please Him, *for he who comes to God must believe that He is*, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb 11:6 italics ours).

The Jewish skeptics that Noë cites are of another category. From the beginning Judaism has sought to deny the reality of Christ as Messiah. Despite the overwhelming evidence of His deity and fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and even in light of the indisputable evidence of the resurrection, the Jewish leaders created an illusionary explanation as noted in Matthew 28:11-15. The Islamic skeptics simply don’t believe that Jesus ever claimed to be God or that He would ever return, as Noë himself notes.¹³ Islam teaches that these are simply lies that were added to the Bible. Attempting to prove that Jesus returned in A. D. 70 is a useless exercise as a foundation in witnessing to Muslims.

Regarding C. S. Lewis, the issue is a little more difficult. As significant an apologist for Christianity as he was, Lewis rejected the inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture.¹⁴ He was not a theologian and he affirmed several non-evangelical theological positions.¹⁵ For Lewis the seeming contradiction (between Jesus at one point saying that no one knows the day or hour and then seemingly giving an exact time reference with “this generation”) was actually a mark of the “historical reliability” of the Bible.¹⁶ However, Lewis does get the issue correct when he states, “The doctrine of the Second Coming teaches us that we do not and cannot know when the world drama will end. The curtain may be rung at any moment: say, before you have finished reading this paragraph.”¹⁷ In this Lewis correctly understands

¹³ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁴ See Michael J. Christensen. *C. S. Lewis on Scripture*. (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1979).

¹⁵ See this author’s review of Jeffrey D. Schultz and John G. West, eds. *The C. S. Lewis Reader’s Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 1998) in *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 13:1 (Spring 2002), pp. 140-41 for a more detailed discussion of Lewis and his theology.

¹⁶ Lewis, *The World’s Last Night*, p. 98-99.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 105.

that the doctrine of imminence is not so concerned with “soon” but rather with “at any time.”¹⁸

But the motivation of the IPA and HP’s is flawed at a deeper level. In 2 Peter 3:4 Peter declares that there will always be mockers, liberals and skeptics decrying the Christian faith asking, “where is the promise of His coming?” As Hiebert notes, “‘Where is the promise of his coming?’ embodies their taunting reaction to the orthodox teaching concerning the return of Christ.”¹⁹ This is the same type of mocking that Isaiah dismissed in Isaiah 5:19 and the Lord through Ezekiel did the same in Ezekiel 12:21-25.

Richard L. Mayhue, addressing Sproul’s work particularly, clearly summarizes this issue as it relates to the HP position as well, stating,

The advocates of preterism appear to have missed, or at least undervalued, Peter’s reminder that in the days prior to A. D. 70 there also were scoffers similar to Russell and Schweitzer. Instead of foretelling the events of A.D. 70, just a few short years away, Peter encourages them to wait in faith, believing that all will eventually happen in God’s timing, which is different from man’s timetable (2 Pet. 3:3-4, 8-9). Attempting to answer objections from the skeptics is no way to validate or evaluate a particular eschatological system.²⁰

IPA’s Methodology: “Spin Control”

The IPA has clearly attempted to position their unique views within the mainstream of evangelicalism and evangelical theology. This has been necessitated by the fact that their theological conclusions have been labeled as heretical; by both preterists and those who hold

¹⁸ For further see, Robert L. Thomas. “Imminence in the NT, Especially Paul’s Thessalonian Epistles.” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 13:2 (Fall 2002), pp 191-214. Also a classic work is J. Barton Payne. *The Imminent Appearing of Christ*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1962).

¹⁹ D. Edmond Hiebert. *Second Peter and Jude: An Expository Commentary*. (Greenville, South Carolina: Unusual Publications, 1989), p. 143. See also Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*. The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1901), pp. 291-92.

²⁰ Mayhue, “Jesus: A Preterist or Futurist?” p. 12.

a futurist position. The noted preterist scholar, Kenneth L. Gentry calls the position, “heterodox,” stating, “It is outside of the creedal orthodoxy of Christianity.”²¹ Thomas Ice, Director of the Pre-Trib Research Center, wrote that, “Both Dr. [Kenneth] Gentry and I believe that such a position is heretical, for it denies a bodily resurrection of believers and a future second coming of Christ.”²² MacArthur forcefully declares:

The hyper-preterist error is exactly like that of Hymenaeus and Philetus, who “strayed from the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past . . . they overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:18). The apostle Paul was not reluctant to speak plainly about the seriousness of such soul-destroying error. nor should we be hesitant to point out the dangers posted by such a serious departure from biblical truth. It is, after all, heresy of the worst stripe to deny the bodily return of Christ, and this particular brand of that heresy is currently overthrowing the faith of many.²³

Without using the term “heresy” R. C. Sproul states, “I share Gentry’s concerns about full preterism, particularly on such issues as the consummation of the kingdom and the resurrection of the dead.”²⁴ West, however, does not mince words, calling HP a “damnable heresy.”²⁵

In view of these widely shared conclusions, the IPA’s strategy has been to engage in what has been referred to in the political arena as “spin control.” That is, attempting to place itself in a favorable light by deflecting criticism away from the main issues. To that end they have taken up two main deceptions: (1) an attempt to redefine terminology; and (2) to present the illusion of evangelical acceptance and by extension, orthodoxy.

²¹ Kenneth L. Gentry. “A Brief Theological Analysis of Hyper-Preterism.” *Chalcedon Report*. 384 (July 1997), p. 23.

²² Thomas Ice and Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future? Two Evangelicals Debate the Question*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1999), p. 7.

²³ John F. MacArthur. *The Second Coming: Signs of Christ’s Return and the End of the Age*. (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1999), p. 13.

²⁴ Sproul, *Last Days*, p. 158.

²⁵ Jim West. “The Allurement of Hymenaeen Preterism: The Rise of “Dispensable Eschatology.”” *Chalcedon Report* 384 (July 1997), p. 22.

1. Redefining Terminology

Those associated with the IPA have strenuously objected to characterizing their position as “hyper-preterism.” They wish to be called “Full” or “Consistent” preterists. In doing this they wish to redefine the terms of the debate granting to themselves the high ground as “consistent” and give their opponents within the preterist camp labels such as “partial” or “inconsistent” preterists. In fact in all of the IPA’s published material they always refer to their own position as “preterist” and all others as either futurist or partial preterists.²⁶ As Edward Stevens, the current president of the IPA, notes:

Actually the term “preterist” is all that is needed to describe our view. “Preterist” means past fulfillment. Only those who take a past fulfillment of all the eschatological events (e.g. the return of Christ, resurrection, judgment) can rightly be called “preterist.”²⁷

However, it seems that the prefix “hyper” is entirely justified. Hyper connotes the taking of a position to perhaps a logical, but unwarranted and unbiblical continuation. Two other examples in the theological world suffice to illustrate this: (1) Hyper-Calvinism and (2) Hyper-Dispensationalism²⁸

The attempt to “spin” the terminology has not gone unnoticed and to a certain degree has been a successful tactic. R. C. Sproul attempts to forge some kind of peace in the use of terminology and in so doing grants to the IPA a victory in “spin.” Sproul states,

²⁶ As Luter noted in his review of Noë’s *Beyond the End Times*, Preterists like Gentry must be “dumbfounded” to note that the HP label them as “futurists.” This is simply more of the HP “spin” to not only redefine the terminology to suit their needs, but to redefine the position of their opponents.

²⁷ Edward E. Stevens. *Stevens Response to Gentry: Detailed response to Dr. Ken Gentry’s critique of the Preterist view entitled, “A Brief Theological Analysis of Hyper-Preterism.”* (Bradford, PA: International Preterist Association, 1999): 3. Virgil Vaduva, apparently the operator of the “Planet Preterist” website (www.planetpreterist.com), has even filed an application with United States Government to “trademark” the word “preterism,” giving it their own definition in an attempt to gain control of the word, see <http://tess2.uspto.gov/bin/showfield?f=doc&state=gojj7b.2.1> (accessed 1/20/2004).

²⁸ Hyper-Dispensationalists also wish to be rid of the “hyper” label and so often they call themselves “Pauline Dispensationalists” or “Consistent Dispensationalists.” Hyper-Calvinists also often follow the same pattern referring to themselves as “Consistent Calvinists,”

Maybe the terms that best describe the two positions are *full preterism* and *partial preterism*. Both are preterist with respect to some eschatological events, but both are not preterist with respect to *all* eschatological events. The terms *full* and *partial* can then be safely applied to these two positions.²⁹

However, this concession ignores the fact that the Preteristic method of interpretation has a long history; a history that never included the novelties that the IPA their associates have introduced since the early 1970's.³⁰ To take the long-established theological and hermeneutical construct of Preterism and then grant to usurpers the high ground that the terms "full" or "consistent" denote, while relegating the established position to that of "partial" or some other weaker label is to yield ground without reason. One preterist writer has seen this clearly and stated,

We must not let them get away with calling themselves "preterists" or "consistent preterists," or believers in "fulfilled eschatology." The word "preterist" is a good word, the disciples of Hymenaeus are not preterists; their "dispensable eschatology" makes them heretics.³¹

The HP adherents are simply seeking to usurp a birthright that is not theirs.

2. *The Illusion of Evangelical Acceptance*

The IPA has been notable in its presence at both regional and national meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society. At the annual meetings for the last several years they have had a large and prominent display in the exhibitor's area. Two of their leading spokesmen, John Noë

and Randall E. Otto, have regularly presented papers at regional and national meetings. Noë's books in particular, with few exceptions, always make mention that the material was originally presented at one ETS meeting or another.

On Noë's web page (www.prophecyrefi.org) he notes that the flyer "9.5 Theses for the Next Reformation," a sort of credo for the Hyper-Preterist movement, was released at the

²⁹ Sproul, *Last Days*, p. 155-56 (italics in original).

³⁰ Ross, *Historical Background*, p. 2.

³¹ West, "Hymenaen Preterism," p. 22.

2001 National ETS meeting. The press release for this document begins, “A new era in church history began last week with the “posting on the Church door”-i.e., presenting and distributing-of the *9.5 Theses for the Next Reformation* document at the 53rd Annual Meeting of Evangelical Theological Society.”³² The press release goes on to talk about how many ETS participants “took” their material.

Their literature often contains anecdotal stories of “conversions” to their position, such as a “Christian college instructor” who was “convinced” of the position by reading Noē’s paper read at the 45th Annual Mid-Western Regional meeting of ETS.³³ Of course, the “instructor” is not identified nor is his field of instruction divulged.

The IPA, and other HP’s, make a great deal out of the fact that the well-known Theonomist theologian, David Chilton, “converted” to the HP position shortly before his death. However, Vern Crisler observes that before this conversion Chilton had suffered his first heart attack and his friends recognized that, “the resulting neurological trauma probably affected his judgment more than he realized.”³⁴ Crisler also predicted the “spin” of the IPA and other HP’s as he stated,

Chilton’s last minute conversion to heresy will be exploited by the remaining full-preterists, but they will only be exploiting a debilitated man’s eccentricities, not his healthy and mature judgments.³⁵

³² John No. “The Next Reformation Has Begun.” Prophecy Reformation Institute press release. http://www.prophecyrefi.org/release_95theses_1101.htm (accessed 11/6//2002).

³³ John No. *Dead in their Tracks: Stopping the Liberal/Skeptic Attack on the Bible*. (Bradford, PA: International Preterist Association, 2001), p. vi & viii. It should be noted that the page numbers of this book are incorrect as the preface moves from page “v” to an unnumbered page (which we have listed as page “vi” and then to page “viii.”

³⁴ Vern Crisler. “The Eschatological *A Priori* of the New Testament: A Critique of Hyper-Preterism.” *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 15 (Winter 1998), p. 226.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

Other attempts at “spin” can be noted in the material from IPA and their associates. In his work, *What Happened in A.D. 70?* Edward E. Stevens, the President of the IPA, compiles an impressive bibliography. It is lengthy and seemingly impressive. He breaks down the categories with two interesting headings. The first section he titles, “Books Which Teach a Similar View.”³⁶ However, it is clear after looking at the listing of 76 works, that “similar” is used in the most expansive manner possible. The next category entitled, “First-Century Fulfillment of Revelation”³⁷ is equally misleading. This unqualified statement attempts to give the impression that the listed writers agree with Stevens’ HP interpretations, when, in fact, several of those listed have been amongst the most vocal critics of HP.³⁸

Occasionally their “spin” borders on incredulity. One example is the aforementioned book by John Noë, *Beyond the End Times*. On the back cover in his biographical sketch, Noë is referred to as “conservative, evangelical scholar, and an active member of the *Evangelical Theological Society*.”³⁹ However, in his preface for this book Stevens, while calling him a “scholar” admits, “John is not a professional theologian. He has had no formal seminary training, but that may be an advantage—it might have handicapped his communication style.”⁴⁰ Whatever information this *non sequitur* may be intended to convey, it is certainly a strange manner in which one affirms his scholarly *bona fides*.

³⁶ Edward E. Stevens. *What Happened in A.D. 70?* (Bradford, Pennsylvania: Kingdom Publications, 1997), p. 35.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³⁸ The various HP websites are also notorious for this type of misrepresentation. The “Preterist Archive” site (www.preteristarchive.com) lists dozens of writers as “Preterist Commentaries” that are clearly no such thing. Some of the names listed in their web pages as supposedly supporting their position include John Bengal, F. F. Bruce and even John Nelson Darby!

³⁹ No, *Beyond the End Times*, back cover.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. x. It should also be noted that according to the by-laws of the *Evangelical Theological Society*, No cannot be a “full member” as he lacks the necessary academic credentials. He can only be an associate member. Apparently this lack of education is no longer seen as an “advantage” as the most recent IPA publications indicate that Noë is currently a “candidate for a Ph.D. degree from Trinity Theological

In the face of condemnation of their position from both the futurist and preterist camps, the concept of “spin-control” is certainly helpful public relations, but it is certainly less than forthright in many instances.⁴¹

IPA’s Claims: Heterodox

The IPA’s claims have already been noted. In short, they claim that all Biblical prophecy has been fulfilled, although Stevens attempts to deflect this slightly by stating that HP does not “teach that all prophecy has been totally fulfilled with absolutely no continuing implications, applications, or ongoing fulfillment.”⁴² By this he means that the present “Kingdom Age” continues to grow and expand,

The church only had the “earnest” and the “seal” of their kingdom inheritance during that transitional generation (AD 30-70). If anything, we in the post-70 period have a more relevant and applicable revelation [by which he means the Scripture]. We are now in the kingdom. The full inheritance is here. All the things Jesus, Paul and the other apostles taught about the kingdom now apply fully to us. Several prophetic passages have ongoing fulfillment in the kingdom (i.e. Ezek 47:1-12 and Rev. 21:24-22:5)⁴³

Seminary and the University of Liverpool” (an institution with only recognition from a non-recognized accrediting organization in Colorado).

⁴¹ Whether a deliberate part of their “spin” or not, it is also interesting the IPA has used several different names for their publishing arm. They have mostly used *International Preterist Association*. However, they have also used *Kingdom Publications*, and *Preterist Resources*.

⁴² Edward E. Stevens. *Stevens Response to Gentry: Detailed response to Dr. Ken Gentry’s critique of the Preterist view entitled, “A Brief Theological Analysis of Hyper-Preterism*. (Bradford, Pennsylvania: International Preterist Association, 1999. This is perhaps the most detailed response to criticisms faced by the HP’s to date. However, it is a rambling 114 pages (as compared to Gentry’s original articles of little over 2 pages) of largely fallacious reasoning in which the *tu quoque* (commonly called the “you too”) fallacy is rampant as well as majoring on Gentry’s minor points and giving little attention to the major ones. Stevens fails to do any real exegesis of the texts that are raised in objection, making instead superficial, and often *non sequitur* observations strictly from the English Bible.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 46. It is beyond our scope and space would fail in evaluating how these two passages can possibly be viewed as having “ongoing fulfillment” today. In short the passage in Revelation speaks of (1) no longer any night or darkness, (2) no longer any curse [that is the complete reversal of Gen 3:14-17], (3) the glory and honor of the nations are brought into the New Jerusalem, (4) believers see Christ’s face to face. How one can claim that these things have begun to occur now, much less are currently having “ongoing fulfillment” staggers the imagination.

The HP's, particularly Stevens, chaff at any mention or reference to the great doctrinal statements or creeds in the history of the church in evaluating their orthodoxy, especially as it relates to the resurrection of Christ and that of believers.

Creeds can be wrong since they embody more than just biblical material. They contain uninspired interpretations and applications of Scripture, which must always be subject to some suspicion of error. Only inspired Scripture is infallible and beyond question. And on the Biblical content of the creeds is above suspicion, error and correction.⁴⁴

While this statement is true, it is a two-edged sword for the HP's. Stevens wants to believe that while the creeds can be in error (which also is true) somehow there is a material difference between a creedal statement and his own documentation of "properly exegeted Scripture."⁴⁵ But what is a creedal or doctrinal statement other than a systematic presentation of the exegesis and interpretation of Scripture as it relates to different areas of doctrine? Stevens would like to somehow posit a supposed superiority of his interpretations of the Bible over against those that have been formulated throughout the last 2,000 years.

Here is the problem that the HP position cannot wish away. As Gentry notes, "No creed allows for any second Advent in A. D. 70. No creed allows any other type of resurrection than a bodily one. Historic creeds speak of the universal, personal judgment of all men, not a representative judgment in A. D. 70."⁴⁶ From a futurist position, A. Boyd Luter states, "I know of no denomination or academic institution, of whatever evangelical stripe, with an eschatological plank of consequence in its doctrinal position that Noë [or anyone of the HP position] could affirm."⁴⁷ It is an indisputable fact that outside their own

⁴⁴ Edwards E. Stevens. *Questions About the Afterlife*. (Bradford, Pennsylvania: International Preterist Association, 1999), p. 1

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Gentry, "Theological Analysis," p. 23.

⁴⁷ A. Boyd Luter. "A Review of *Beyond the Ends Times: The Rest of the Greatest Story Ever Told*." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43:4 (December 2000), p. 744.

small group, they can point to not a single denominational statement of faith, not a single one of the great creedal statements in the history of Christianity, not a single seminary or academic theological institution presently or in the past, that will affirm the HP view on the return of Christ, the resurrection, the judgments, and affirming that the New Heavens and New Earth has been enjoyed by believers since A.D. 70. The HP's find bits and pieces here and there from this person or that (normally accomplished with violence to the original context and the overall corpus of a particular writer) but nowhere in the history of doctrine can they cite anything remotely resembling their unique theological construct.

The issue is not the creeds *per se* (which Stevens really just uses as a red herring); it is the absolute negation of the HP view in the history of the church. Stevens states, "Only the canon of Scripture can be used to determine true Biblical orthodoxy."⁴⁸ But this is little more than obfuscation on his part. While honesty forces one to admit that it is *possible* that the HP position is correct and all of Christendom for 2,000 years has been incorrect, that possibility is so remote so as to be *impossible*.

There are several other claims that the HP position makes which space does not allow for a full examination. However, four of these are briefly noted here:

- *Rejection of the Millennial Kingdom.* The HP position rejects the notion of a 1,000 year millennial kingdom, whether the 1,000 years is taken literally or figuratively. The only place where they can fit a millennium is in the 40 years or so between the Cross and their Second Advent. Max King has developed something that he calls "transmillennialism."⁴⁹ In this scenario the time before the Cross is called "This

⁴⁸ Stevens, *Response to Gentry*, p. 17.

⁴⁹ Max King. Frequently Asked Questions (questions 2-3). Living Presence Ministries. <http://www.livingpresence.org/lpmfaq.htm>. Accessed 9.26.2002. For some reason King has actually trademarked the word "Transmillennialism." Another HP writer, Kurt M. Simmons, has created another

- Age” the period between the Cross and the Second Advent is the “Last Days” and the post- A.D. 70 era is the “Age to Come.” Stevens is hopeful about this approach, stating, “I hope Max King’s suggestion (that the millennium was the period from 30 to 70 AD) is the correct one it certainly sounds good.”⁵⁰
- *Rejection of the Physical Return of Christ.* The HP position states that when Christ returned in A.D. 70 it was “in clouds of judgment.”⁵¹ This return was invisible to the physical eye. This is a patent rejection the description of Christ’s return predicted in Acts 1:11.
 - *Rejection of any Post- A.D. 70 Fulfillment of Prophecy.* Stevens claims that, “Jesus said that all OT prophecy would be fulfilled by the time Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70.”⁵² One passage, among many in the OT, then requires explaining. In the passage dealing with the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31, the chapter ends with a prophecy related to the city of Jerusalem (31:38-40). In that prophecy physical Jerusalem is said to be (1) rebuilt and enlarged, (2) sanctified, and (3) immune from future destruction. The boundaries of the city are given with exacting geographic detail. This prophecy in the HP view apparently failed, in that the city was never rebuilt and enlarged to the border of the prophecy, and even if it were, the prophecy failed because Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 and also afterwards.⁵³
 - *Rejection of the Traditional View of the Resurrection.* Since the resurrection occurred in A.D. 70, HP writers have to redefine what the resurrection means today. To accomplish this they, in large part, have adopted the views of Murray J. Harris concerning the nature of the resurrection, which certainly alters the nature of the

scheme called “Bimillennialism” or the idea that Rev 20 teaches that there will two separate millenniums (http://preteristarchive.com/Preterism/simmons-kurt_03_p_01.html accessed 1-19-2004).

⁵⁰ Stevens, “Questions and Answers.”

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Stevens, *What Happened?*, p. 32.

⁵³ For further see this author’s paper, “The Expansion of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 31:38-40: Never, Already or Not Yet?” A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Nashville, Tennessee, 2000. As previously noted if the traditional dating for the Book of Revelation is correct then the entire superstructure of the HP view collapses (as well as normative preterism) and in fact the HP demands that all of the NT have a pre A.D. 70 date of writing.

physical resurrection, making it essentially “spiritual in nature.”⁵⁴ Stevens, in rather convoluted language, denies that Christ had a literal physical resurrection body.⁵⁵ He states “Preterists are not removing the physical body from the Bible’s systematic theology regarding the resurrection. It was never the ultimate kind of resurrection body God had planned and revealed in Scripture in the first place.”⁵⁶ Stevens presents this summation of the HP position on the resurrection:

The “change” of the living saints at AD 70 was not giving them their new bodies, but giving them immortality. For the dead saints, it was the reception of immortality, their new bodies, and full access to the presence of God. For both the dead and living saints, it was the consummation of the change that had already begun with Christ’s resurrection, and which was guaranteed (pledged, sealed) by the “eternal life” the Holy Spirit had quickened them with during the transition period. The “change” from being “dead in their trespasses and sins” to “alive in Christ Jesus” was fully consummated.⁵⁷

IPA’s Consequences: A Hopeless and Helpless Church

Beyond the theological implications of Hyper-Preterism, the practical life of the church must also be considered. Of course, the IPA does not like to refer to the church as the assembly of believers today, Stevens states,

⁵⁴ See Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1983) and *From Grave to Glory: Resurrection in the New Testament; including a Response to Norman L. Geisler* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1990). Harris’ works were highly controversial and led to a lengthy series of articles and exchanges, including Norman L. Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1989). In the height of the controversy a panel of scholars on behalf of the Evangelical Free Church examined Harris’ views. Stevens notes that the panel, “J. I. Packer, Gleason Archer and Peter Toon have all stated in print that they see Murray Harris’ position as Scripturally orthodox” (Stevens, *Response to Gentry*, p. 52). Nine pages later in the same book, Stevens misrepresents Packer, Archer and Toon, stating that they “take the same view of the resurrection body as Preterists [and Harris] do[es]” (Ibid., p. 61). It apparently escaped Stevens that there is a significant difference between stating that something falls within the realm of orthodoxy and personally agreeing with that position.

⁵⁵ Stevens, *Response to Gentry*, p. 51-55.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 65.

I'm not totally comfortable using the word "church" in reference to the Kingdom of God today. The word "church" just might refer to the "calling-out" process of the transitional period from 30-70 AD when Christ was building His Kingdom.⁵⁸

In the preface for the book, *Beyond the End Times*, Stevens also remarks that the author (John Noë) is "working on a sequel that will explore more implications for Christians living after A.D. 70."⁵⁹ Such a work is certainly necessary to explain the absolute havoc their theology has on the life of believers in the present age, however it may be defined. It is clear that even a cursory examination of the New Testament will demonstrate that the HP position leaves the church in a confused muddle of hopelessness and helplessness.

The overarching problem presented by the HP position for believers today is that the totality of the New Testament is relegated to a past era, not really applicable in terms of imperatival commands. As Gentry has concluded their position leaves the church without a revelation from God by which to guide their lives in this current age.

If all prophecy was fulfilled prior to A. D. 70 and if the entire New Testament spoke to issues in the pre-A. D. 70 time-frame, we do not have any direct relevant passages for us. The entire New Testament must be transposed before we can use it.⁶⁰

Beyond this, there are five specific passages of Scripture dealing with everyday life in the church that are rendered useless by the Hyper-Preterist position.

1. *The Church is Left without a Remembrance and Message*

In 1 Corinthians 11:26 the purpose of communion is given to the church by Paul. In the celebration of communion the assembly "proclaims the Lord's death until He comes."

The phrase, "proclaiming the Lord's death" can only have reference to the totality of the

⁵⁸ Edward E. Stevens. "Questions and Comments." International Preterist Association Web Page, <http://www.preterist.org/articles-old/q&a.htm> (accessed on 11/12/2002).

⁵⁹ No, *Beyond the End Times*, p. xii.

⁶⁰ Gentry, "Theological Analysis," p. 23.

Gospel message. As Mare notes, communion was to be celebrated until “the second advent.”⁶¹ Erickson states that communion is “also a proclamation of a future fact; it looks forward to the Lord’s second coming.”⁶² Thiselton makes the point quite clear:

Just as the sun outshines any source of illumination otherwise provided in everyday life, so when **he** (*the Lord*) **comes**, this reality [as pictured in communion] will eclipse and outshine the pledges and promises that have been hitherto pointed to it. In this sense the fellowship gathered around **the table of the Lord** (10:21) provisionally and in partial measure constitutes the pledge and first preliminary imperfect foretaste of the “Supper of the Lamb” of the final consummation to which the Lord’s Supper points in promise. . . . The story does not reach its culmination **until he comes**, and only then will the full meaning of all present moments be disclosed, beyond the need for partial significations.⁶³

One of the clearest connections in the New Testament between evangelism and eschatology is in Acts 17 and Paul’s presentation to the Areopagus. In vs. 30-31 Paul brings his address to conclusion with the call to repentance. The reason for repentance is *kaqoti* (because, or in view of the fact) that is, God “has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness” (vs. 31) and the proof of that is the resurrection from the dead. But for the HP that day is past, Christ has returned and judgment has occurred. If he were preaching to a group of philosophic skeptics today, Paul would need an entirely different conclusion, according to the HP’s.

2. *The Church is Left Without an Ethical Imperative*

⁶¹ W. Harold Mare. “First Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Frank E. Gaebelein, ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 1976), 10:259.

⁶² Millard J. Erickson. *Christian Theology* (second edition). (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 1988), p. 1120.

⁶³ Anthony C. Thiselton. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), p. 888-89 (bold and italics in original).

In Titus 2:11-15 Paul tells Titus to instruct those in Crete to live a godly life in light of their salvation. Particularly they are commanded to be “looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God, even our savior, Christ Jesus” (v. 13).

Godly living is directly tied to the anticipation of Christ’s return. If that has already happened, the imperative is gone. Knight comments, “We live from the vantage point of ‘expectedly waiting’ and ‘looking forward to Christ’s appearing.’”⁶⁴ He further adds that, “Paul joins to the instructions given by grace about living the Christian life (vv. 11-12) this note of looking forward to Christ’s appearing, so that the two give perspective to each other.”⁶⁵ Christian ethics and the outworking of the Christian life are always bound up in the anticipation of the return of Christ (see also Phil 3:15-21; 1 Tim 6:13-16). As Quinn summarizes,

The “sensible, honest, godly way” of Christian life does not derive itself from Greek ethical demonstrations; it does not hope for that knowledge (*phronesis*) of the good which the philosophers promised. The consolation and release that believers expect are bound up with the coming of the risen Lord and their own resurrection, literally, “the blessed hope and manifestation (*epiphaneian*) of the glory of the great God and our savior, Jesus Christ.” “Hope” in the PE [Pastoral Epistles] means the person hoped for (see 1:2), Jesus, hidden for the time being but certain to appear.⁶⁶

Additionally, in verse 14 Paul states that Christ will “redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works.”

⁶⁴ George W. Knight III. *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), p. 321. See also I. Howard Marshall. *Commentary on Titus*. International Critical Commentary. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Publishers, 1999). He adds that this text, “shows that balance of realized and future divine action and salvation which is characteristic of the NT generally” (p. 272). The Puritan divine, Thomas Taylor demonstrates that this is an interpretation that has stood the test of time, “From this our apostle includes a very strong argument [the second coming of Christ] to enforce all the former duties, of which we have spoken in the verse going before, and an effectual means to contain believers in those duties.” Thomas Taylor. *Exposition of Titus*. (Cambridge, 1619; reprint, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Klock and Klock, 1980), p. 348.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Jerome D. Quinn. *The Letter to Titus: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary and an Introduction to Titus, I & II Timothy, The Pastoral Epistles*. The Anchor Bible Volume #35. (New York: Doubleday, 1990), p. 169.

Since, according to the HP position, everything related to the Second Coming has already occurred, we are driven to the conclusion that Christ has already purified a people. In Romans 13:1-10 Christians are enjoined to be in subject to the governing authorities. But that set of imperatives is also enforced by anticipation of the Second Coming (vs. 11). Far from giving a chronological time frame Paul simply states, “our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed” (vs. 11). Harrison, citing Leenhardt, makes a point that the HP need to note well,

The time of the appearing is subordinate to the fact of the appearing. “If primitive Christianity could note, without its faith being shaken thereby, that the ‘end’ did not come within the calculated times, that is just because the chronological framework of its hope was a secondary matter” (Leenhardt, in loc). The believer is not like a child looking for a clock to strike the hour because something is due to happen then. He is content to know that with every passing moment the end is that much closer to realization.⁶⁷

3. *The Church is Left Without Hope and Reason for Patience*

In James 5:8 the assembly is instructed by James to be patient in the light of oppression because the coming of the Lord is at hand.” “The readers know that the Lord is coming back in the capacity of Judge. They ought to exercise patience toward their adversaries and demonstrate patience in respect to the coming of the Lord. He will avenge his people when he returns (II Thess 1:5-6).”⁶⁸ Obviously if the Lord has already come the Church has nothing to comfort it in the light of oppression and persecution.

⁶⁷ Everett F. Harrison. “Romans,” in the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 1976), 10:142-43.

⁶⁸ Simon J. Kistemaker. *New Testament Commentary: James, Epistles of John, Peter and Jude*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1995), p. 164. See also, Todd C. Penner, *The Epistle of James and Eschatology*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplemental Series #121 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1976). “The themes of reversal, boasting, humility, pride, wealth, and commerce come together within the framework of God’s expected judgment at the ” (p. 170).

Without the promise of the second coming the church today is alone and without hope in the world. There is no coming Christ, there is no promise of the intervention of God on behalf of His people in this age. The HP position teaches that this present world will never end⁶⁹ there is no promise that the condition of this world will ever be anything beyond what it is; a place where the truth is suppressed by ungodly men, where Christians are persecuted and in places martyred and false religions, cults and others error-laden philosophies spring up almost daily capturing men's souls. In the midst of this the only hope for the believer, according to the HP is death, escape from this present, and never-ending, world. All of this, it seems, would ultimately see a return to the "gloomy amillennialism" of Francis Turretin.⁷⁰

4. *The Church is Left Without Rewards for Faithfulness:*

In 1 Peter 5:4 the apostle instructs elders to exercise wise servant leadership over the flock commending to them the reward that will be theirs "when the Chief Shepherd appears." This may seem like a minor issue, yet the thought of reward is extremely important in the teaching of the New Testament. At the end of his life Paul stated, "in the future there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim 4:8). Paul speaks of this "day" as future and distant, certainly not in keeping with the relatively short time between his death in February-March A.D. 68 and the HP notion of an A.D. 70 culmination.

⁶⁹ No, *Beyond the End Times*, pp. 41-57.

⁷⁰ Earl William Kennedy "From Pessimism to Optimism: Francis Turretin and Charles Hodge on 'The Last Things,'" in *Servant Gladly: Essays in Honor of John W. Beardslee III*. Jack D. Klunder, ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), p. 104.

5. *The Church is Left Without a Purpose and With Useless Equipment:*

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) is limited by the phrase, “even to the end of the age” (vs. 20). But since the HP’s teach that we are now living in “the age to come” it becomes clear that the age of the Great Commission, in their view, must be over and fulfilled. Stevens admits this point, stating, “But the ‘Great Commission’ (just like the ‘Great Tribulation’) was a special time of inspired apostolic activity that will never be duplicated.”⁷¹ He admits “evangelism goes on”⁷² for the HP in this age but it is certainly not the evangel of the New Testament that they proclaim. Even the ministry of the Holy Spirit towards unbelievers is severely weakened. In John 16:8 we are told that the Spirit will, “convict of sin, righteousness and judgment.” But if the final judgment has already occurred, what does the Spirit convict men of?

One of the more startling problems with the HP position is encountered when the Christian arrives at Ephesians 6:10-20. The entire imperative of Paul to “put on the full armor of God” is predicated on the need for such armor to “stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (6:11). Paul continues by warning believers that their battles are not against “flesh and blood” but against Satan and his demonic hosts.⁷³ But according to the HP position Satan and his demons are no more, they have been cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:10) they are no longer able to wage war against the saints. The “shield of faith” (Eph 6:16) need to combat the “flaming missiles of the evil one” is needed no more. All of the armor of God (which includes the Word of God) is rendered as obsolete and useless equipment for the

⁷¹ Stevens, *Response to Gentry*, p. 104.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ This is perhaps one of the most remarkable aspects of the HP scheme, the idea that Satan and demons have been completely and eternally dispatched to the Lake of Fire. To propose that there is no Satanic activity in the world today is utterly ludicrous.

believer, as the enemy for which it was designed is no longer a threat (see also Eph 4:27; 1 Tim 4:1ff; 2 Tim 2:26). As Hoehner clearly demonstrates in his masterful commentary on Ephesians:

Due to this, one must always be cognizant that the strategies or schemes of the devil are based on lies and are designed to deceive believers. Consequently, Paul exhorts believers to put on the full armor of God for the purpose of being able to stand firmly against the lying strategies of the devil. In these strategies, the devil is craft in that he “does not always attack through obvious head-on assaults but employs cunning and wily stratagems designed to catch believers unawares.” They are told not to attack the devil or advance against him; they are only told to “stand,” hold the territory that Christ and his body, the church, have conquered. Without the armor of God it is certain that believers will be deceived and defeated by those “schemes” of the devil, which have been effective for thousands of years.⁷⁴

Hoehner clearly points out, “the entire armor is absolutely necessary in the spiritual warfare against the devil and his angels.”⁷⁵ In the same immediate context one wonders what the HP view of prayer (vs. 18) might become?

One of the most dramatic charges to pastoral fidelity and responsibility is found in 2 Timothy 4:1-5 where Timothy is told to “preach the Word.” However, Paul prefaces the charge with the concept that it is to be done to serve God and Christ Jesus, who will “judge the living and the dead by His appearing and His kingdom” (vs. 1). If that appearing has already happened and the judgment has fallen, the entire motivation for faithful gospel preaching is severely weakened. Additionally, the HP teachers must also believe that “the god of this world” is no longer blinding “the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the Gospel” (2 Cor 4:4) since again, Satan has been dispatched to the Lake of Fire.

⁷⁴ Harold W. Hoehner. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002): 824. See also Hoehner’s entire argumentation on the nature of the battle as being against spiritual evil personally lead and directed by Satan and the relation of the armor to that battle, pp. 819-54.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 853.

It is an eminently significant issue, one that the HP position has presented no answer for, as to why is there no instruction from the NT writers about the Christian life for the post A.D. 70 believers? Every affirmation for the message of the church, the ethical conduct of the church, the hope for the church in light of persecution, the rewards for faithfulness and the purpose and equipping of the church are all bound up in passages that teach believers to “look forward” to a future appearing of Christ, a future resurrection of the saints, a future judgment of the wicked, the temporal battle for believers is with the evil world system, organized and controlled by Satan. The HP position robs the church of every precious promise and comfort that God affords to His people as it relates to this life.

Conclusion

The IPA trumpets the claim that their view of Preterism may be the “spark that ignites the next Reformation of Christianity.”⁷⁶ Strangely, nowhere in their numerous writings do they ever detail what this “reformation” would entail or what they expect to see happen.

In his review of Noë’s book, *Beyond the End Times*, A. Boyd Luter stated, “no doubt, much of his overall theological position is within the evangelical pale. However, I know of no denomination or academic institution, of whatever evangelical stripe, with an eschatological plank of consequence in its doctrinal position that Noë could affirm.”⁷⁷ In this assessment Luter is far too kind. The particular eschatological position of the IPA of HP and its resulting conclusions cannot possibly be categorized as evangelical, even in the broadest sense.

⁷⁶ John No. *9.5 Theses for the Next Reformation*. (Fishers, Indiana: Prophecy Reformation Institute and Bradford, Pennsylvania: International Preterist Association, 2001).

⁷⁷ Luter. “Review of *Beyond the Ends Times*,” p. 744.

The HP position, as currently construed, is “comprehensive” in that they (whether they realize it or not) have developed a theological construct that affects every aspect of theology and Biblical interpretation.⁷⁸ So pervasive are the implications of this system and so pernicious are the outcomes that it does not seem too much to call this movement “proto-cultic,” that is, a potential cult in the making.

The implications of HP in terms of both theology and practical Christian living will not lead to the “reformation” envisioned by its adherents; it can only lead to “retrogression,” a movement backwards to the error of Hymenaeus and Philetus, an error Paul roundly condemned as “overthrowing the faith of many” (2 Tim 2:18).

⁷⁸ See Gentry, ‘Theological Analysis’ for a listing of the implications of the HP position.