Book Review:
Keith Mathison (Ed.) When Shall These Things Be?
A Reformed Response to Hyper-Preterism
(Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), Paperback, 376 pages. $17.99

If you haven't heard of hyper-preterism, you're probably in good company. Driven by a small but very vocal group of largely self-proclaimed theologians, the growing hyper-preterist movement swings the eschatological pendulum to the opposite extreme from the futurism of the *Left Behind* series, claiming that *all* the Biblical prophecies of the End Times were fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. This astonishing claim has far-reaching implications: no future second coming of Christ, no future bodily resurrection of the dead, and no future renewal of the heavens and earth. *When Shall These things Be?* contains seven essays by Reformed theologians (of varying millennial persuasions) that effectively dismantle the hyper-preterist case to present the historic Christian view of the Eschaton.

Kenneth Gentry's opening essay gives a helpful overview of the movement and its origins. Hyper-preterism is portrayed as notoriously difficult to pin down theologically (due in part to its reliance on the internet as a mouthpiece), and extremely divisive of local churches, whose authority is rejected. Perhaps the most compelling chapter is Charles Hill's survey of the eschatology of the Early Church Fathers from AD70-140, who *unanimously* point to a glorious future Second Coming. In probably the weakest contribution in the book, Richard Pratt addresses the hyper-preterist contention that Jesus' apparent prediction of an *imminent* return (e.g. Mk.13:30) can only mean an AD70 fulfillment of *all* prophecy. His conclusion is sound, but many will question his method of getting there – that Jesus' prophecies *did* speak of an imminent return, but due to the historical contingencies of the Church's unfaithfulness, the Parousia has been indefinitely delayed. The question of how to read the Bible's eschatological time texts is further developed by Keith Mathison's essay, and by that of Simon Kistemaker, who explains the time references of Revelation as "eschatological time" rather than "chronological time", and argues for a post-AD70 date of the Book of Revelation, thus removing two of hyper-preterism's key pillars. Douglas Wilson contributes a most helpful essay on the eschatology of the creeds, suggesting that the issue is ultimately one of ecclesiology rather than eschatology, as he exposes the hyper-preterist tendency to be its own arbiter of truth. Robert Strimple closes the collection with a thorough defense of the orthodox doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

This volume is recommended reading as a Reformed survey of eschatological topics, and not just a polemic against the issue of hyper-preterism. It is fairly technical, but certainly accessible to any serious reader wishing to familiarize themselves with the debate, and *must* reading for anyone embroiled in it.

David Whitla



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