

In Memory of Garrett Brown (1923-2021)

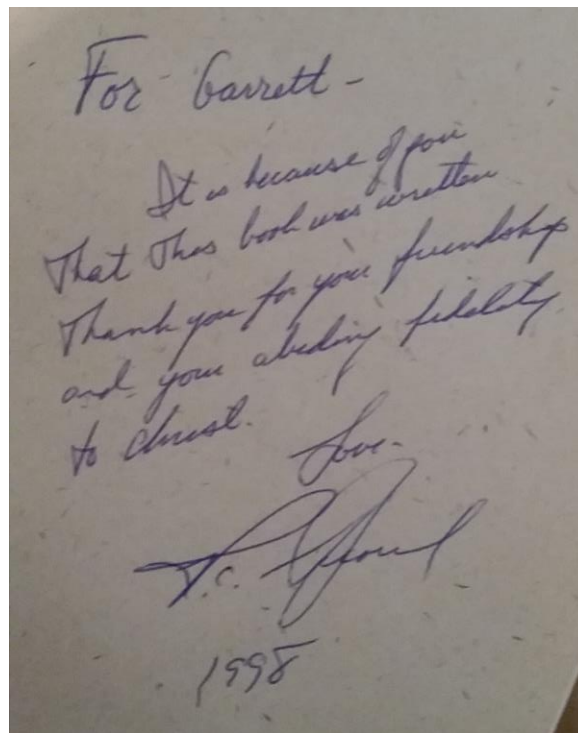
by Brian L. Martin

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PRETERISM RECENTLY LOST SOMEONE whom I consider to be one of its founding fathers. Within the preterist community, Garrett Brown isn't a household name like Max King, Don Preston, or Ed Stevens. He never spoke at a preterist conference. However, it was Garrett, along with his wife Beverly, who organized and funded the 1993 Mt. Dora, Florida eschatology conference which brought Max King together with R. C. Sproul, Kenneth Gentry, Jr., and several other leading reformed theologians to discuss preterism.

Garrett never wrote a book, but he got R. C. Sproul to write one. Garrett challenged R. C. with preterism, and on occasion when Kayla and I would visit Garrett and Beverly, he would read excerpts from personal letters that R. C. had written to him. I once heard it said that R. C.'s book *The Last Days according to Jesus* "put preterism on the map" within Christianity. Garrett was the reason that R. C. wrote that book, and he dedicated it to Garrett (see picture below).



Likewise, Ed Stevens mentions Garrett in the “Acknowledgments” of his *What Happened in A. D. 70?* booklet, and his *Expectations Demand A First Century Rapture* is dedicated to Garrett and Beverly.

You wouldn't be reading this magazine if it weren't for Garrett and Beverly Brown. First, because I can trace my “conversion” to preterism back to Garrett, as portrayed in our *You've Gotta Be Kidding, Right?* video. If Garrett had never embraced preterism, it is very likely that I would never have heard the term. Second, Garrett and Beverly financed the first couple years of producing the magazine, allowing our readership to grow to the point that we could become self-sustaining (although they remained faithful contributors to FCG).

After screening a rough draft of our *Kidding* video, Garrett and Beverly supplied funds for us to buy a decent camera (this was before the high-def days) and some other equipment to enable us to produce the final product. The comments and reviews we received regarding the video attest that it has reached hundreds, if not thousands, with the message of preterism. Some of the latter segments of the video were filmed at Garrett's place, where I walked up to a cross that he had erected on a hill many years ago. (A couple of weeks after Garrett's passing, I had the privilege of walking up to that cross for perhaps the last time, and took a few photos. The watermark on this spread and this issue's cover are two examples.)

All of the above is credited to the accounts of Garrett and Beverly Brown, whose behind the scenes impact on preterism we will only truly know when we join Garrett in our heavenly home.

Whether or not this qualifies Garrett as a founding father is a trivial technicality. He was from my perspective. Likewise with my former coworker Bill (also introduced in the *Kidding* video), who affectionately called Garrett the “GOP”—the “Godfather of Preterism.”

I wouldn’t be surprised if Garrett has found R. C. Sproul and is enthusiastically ironing out the wrinkles in R. C.’s eschatology. And as the rest of us work out our own eschatology with fear and trembling in this life, we will be forever grateful for what Garrett and Beverly have done, mostly behind the scenes. For those of us who got to see glimpses behind the scenes, and know Garrett personally, he will be missed.

Quoting Ephesians

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[Although not mentioned by name, Garrett was the “patriarch” mentioned in this article from our second issue of the magazine.]

A while back my wife and I had the pleasure of spending an afternoon of food and fellowship with three other couples—all of whom were preterists. In fact, everyone at the table could trace their preterist roots—either directly or indirectly—to one man at the table. In a way, he was our preterist “patriarch.” As the meal wound to a close, one of the men asked the “patriarch”—a man in his eighties—if he could still recite the first chapter of Ephesians. The patriarch replied that he thought he could, and proceeded to recite the first half of chapter one. Jumping abruptly ahead he said, “this is my favorite part,” and started quoting chapter two, where Paul wrote to the Ephesians that “*you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sin*”.

The power of those verses as he spoke was moving beyond words. The inflection and emphases he placed on particular words and phrases went beyond a mere recitation of memorized text. And it’s not as though he is trained in recitation or oratory, for he is not. No, the power of those words did not come just from the mind which had memorized them, but also from the heart which had felt their impact. Here was a person who knew what it was to be dead in trespasses, and yet to be made alive in Christ. He knew that he had been saved by faith—and that not of himself. Nor was this just “shallow” emotionalism, for when this individual begins talking theology, the average Christian, including me, is quickly left in the dust.

I said all of that to say this: the opponents of preterism often insist on continuing to “swallow camels” until we can answer every single last gnat at which they strain. Therefore, many preterists must spend an undue amount of time engrossed in eschatology. But there is a subtle danger to this. We can get to the place that when we read the Bible, the only thing that “jumps off the page” at us is another point that supports preterism, or another verse that disagrees with futurism. Our search of the Scriptures can turn into an exegetical exercise, like a lawyer preparing a case, rather than a heartfelt cry to know more of God. In short, we can become modern-day Pharisees, able to define, defend, and debate our position, but all the while growing more and more distant from the One who is the very focal point of the Scriptures. Jesus told the Pharisees, “*You search the Scriptures—you do well, for they speak of Me.*”

If we find in our Bible study that the only thing that “moves” us is finding another “gem” for preterism, or finding another refutation of futurism, then perhaps it is time to lay down our eschatology for a while. Perhaps it is time to rekindle our first love with the One who bought us with His imperishable blood; the One who, while we were yet sinners, gave His life for us that we might pass from spiritual death into life.

Yes, it is important (and biblical) to be able to define, defend, and debate our position. But as Jesus told Martha, “*you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*” Have we chosen the good part?

In Acts chapter 4, the Pharisees, who were the bastions of defining and defending their faith, viewed Peter and John as “uneducated and untrained men.” But they also recognized that they had been with Jesus. When all is said and done, I would rather that the “Pharisees” of my day not acknowledge me as a defender of preterism. Instead, by His grace, I would much rather be recognized as “uneducated, untrained” and “as having been with Jesus.” †