

~The Double Fulfillment Theory~

(On The Double-sense Fulfillment Theory of Matthew 24)

"There is not a scintilla of evidence that the apostles and primitive Christians had any suspicion of a twofold reference in the predictions of Jesus concerning the end." *The Parousia by James S. Russell (p. 545)*

"The second best critical argument was based on the premise that the Olivet Discourse is intended to be interpreted as having a double fulfillment. It is taught by many (including Spurgeon) that the passage is **primarily** about the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70, but has a **secondary** fulfillment at the end of the world. This position would state that Nero was a 'type' of the coming Antichrist, etc. The problem with this persuasion was that those who held it could never provide one shred of evidence, Biblical or otherwise, to defend the hermeneutic. On top of this, they needed to provide texts which taught an eschatology for the universe (Cosmological Eschatology). All that can be found, focus on the passing of the Old Covenant, and the establishment of the New Covenant (Covenantal Eschatology). Partial Preterists say there are verses which teach cosmological eschatology--full Preterists say there aren't... but that all New Testament eschatology is Covenantal in nature. According to Hebrews 8:13, they were in the "last days" of the Old Covenant, which was *then* (A.D.60s) "ready to vanish away." We know that the Old Covenant did not pass away until after the book of Hebrews was written (8:13), so the New Testament's "last days" are not those of the New Covenant (Max King asks that if the Old Covenant hadn't ceased at the time of Heb 8:13, then is it possible that the New Covenant, which was supposedly inaugurated at the Resurrection, could have ceased before the Old?), nor are they the last days of the physical universe, which literalist method of interpretation many held. At any rate, there is no Biblical or hermeneutical justification for the arbitrary "Double Fulfillment Theory." So agrees Anglican Archbishop F.W. Farrar, who is considered, by many, to be one of Christianity's most brilliant theologians and historians. *F.W. Farrar (1886) "It was to this event, the most awful in history - 'one of the most awful eras in God's economy of grace, and the most awful revolution in all God's religious dispensations' - that we must apply those prophecies of Christ's coming in which every one of the Apostles and Evangelists fixed these three most definite limitations - the one, that before that generation passed away all these things would be fulfilled; another, that some standing there should not taste death till they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom; and third, that the Apostles should not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come. It is strange that these distinct limitations should not be regarded as a decisive proof that the Fall of Jerusalem was, in the fullest sense, the Second Advent of the Son of Man which was primarily contemplated by the earliest voices of prophecy"* (Vol. 2, p. 489).

Some passages which confuse people into thinking that the Bible speaks of the end of the universe are those which use the Greek word *aion*. Confer with Matthew 13 and the parable of the wheat and tares. "The harvest is the end of the world" often confuses people (often Post-Millennialists) into believing that this is a passage of cosmological significance. The fact of the matter is that the harvest was simply (if such can be said of it) the end of the Old Covenant age

(By the way, while in Matthew 13, notice v. 30 - Who is gathered first? "the tares" not the wheat! So long, secret rapture of the saints...)" . by **Todd Dennis**

THE following extracts, from theologians of different ages, countries, and churches, exhibit a powerful consensus of authorities in opposition to the loose and arbitrary method of interpretation adopted by many German and English commentators:

' Unam quamdam ac certam et simplicem sententiam ubique quaerendam esse.'- **Melancthon.**
('One definite and simple meaning of [Scripture] is in every case to be sought.')

' Absit a nobis ut Deum faciamus o.,i.,glwtton, aut multiplices sensus affingamus ipsius verbo, in quo potius tanquam in speculo limpidissimo sui autoris simplicitatem contemplari debemus. (Ps. xii. 6; xix. B.) *Unicus ergo sensus* scripturae, nempe *grammaticus*, est admittendus, quibuscunque demum terminis, vel propriis vel tropicis et figuratis exprimatur.' -**Maresius.**

(Far be it from us to make God speak with two tongues, or to attach a variety of senses to His Word, in which we ought rather to behold the simplicity of its divine author reflected as in a clear mirror (Ps. xii. 6 ; xix. 8.) Only one meaning of Scripture, therefore, is admissible: that is, the *grammatical*, in whatever terms, whether proper or tropical and figurative, it may be expressed.)

' Dr. Owen's remark is full of good sense-" If the Scripture has more than one meaning, it has no meaning at all: " and it is just as applicable to the prophecies as to any other portion of Scripture.'- **Dr. John Brown, Sufferings and Glories of the Messiah, p. 5, note.**

The consequences of admitting such a principle should be well weighed.

What book on earth has a double sense, unless it is a book of designed *enigmas* ? And even this has but one real meaning. The heathen oracles indeed could say, "*Aio te, Pyrrhe, Romanos vincere posse;* " *but* can such an *equivoque* be admissible into the oracles of the living God ? And if a *literal* sense, and an *occult* sense, can at one and the same time, and by the same words, be conveyed, who, that is uninspired, shall tell us what the occult sense is? By what laws of interpretation is it to be judged ? By none that belong to human language; for other books than the Bible have not a double sense attached to them.

' For these and such-like reasons, the scheme of attaching a double sense to the Scriptures is inadmissible. It sets afloat all the fundamental principles of interpretation by which we arrive at established conviction and certainty and casts us on the boundless ocean of imagination and conjecture without rudder or compass.'- **Stuart on the Hebrews, Excurs. xx.**

' First, it may be laid down that Scripture has one meaning, -the meaning which it had to the mind of the prophet or evangelist who first uttered or wrote to the hearers or readers who first received it.'

' Scripture, like other books, has one meaning, which is to be gathered from itself, without reference to the adaptations of fathers or divines, and without regard to a *priori* notions about its nature and origin.'

' The office of the interpreter is not to add another [interpretation], but to recover the original one : the meaning, that is, of the words as they struck on the ears or flashed before the eyes of those who first heard and read them.' - **Professor Jowett, Essay on the Interpretation of Scripture, § i. 3, 4.**

' I hold that the words of Scripture were intended to have one definite sense, and that our first object should be to discover that sense, and adhere rigidly to it. I believe that, as a general rule, the words of Scripture are intended to have, like all other language, one plain definite meaning, and that to say that

words do mean a thing merely because they can be tortured into meaning it, is a most dishonourable and dangerous way of handling Scripture.' - **Canon Ryle, Expository Thoughts on St. Luke, vol. i. P. 383.**

On the Prophetic Element in the Gospels.

Let us proceed to the predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem. These predictions, as is well known, in all the gospel narratives (which, by the way, are singularly consentaneous, implying that all the Evangelists drew from one consolidated tradition) are inextricably mixed up with prophecies of the second coming of Christ and the end of the world - a confusion which Mr. Hutton fully admits. The portion relating to the destruction of the city is singularly definite, and corresponds very closely with the actual event. The other portion, on the contrary, is vague and grandiloquent, and refers, chiefly to natural phenomena and catastrophes. From the precision of the one portion, most critics infer that the gospels were compiled after or during the siege and conquest of Jerusalem. From the confusion of the two portions Mr. Hutton draws the opposite inference -- namely, that the prediction existed in the present recorded form before that event. It is in the greatest degree improbable, he argues, that if Jerusalem had fallen, and the other signs of Christ's coming showed no indication of following, the writers should not have recognised and disentangled the confusion, and corrected their records to bring them into harmony with what it was then beginning to be seen might be the real meaning of Christ or the actual truth of history.

'But the real perplexity lies here. The prediction, as we have it, makes Christ distinctly affirm that His second coming shall follow "immediately," -- "in those days," after the destruction of Jerusalem, and that "this generation" (the generation he addressed) should not pass away till all "these things are fulfilled." Mr. Hutton believes that these last words were intended by Christ to apply only to the destruction of the Holy City. He is entitled to his opinion; and in itself it is not an improbable solution. But it is, under the circumstances, a somewhat forced construction, For it must be remembered, first, that it is rendered necessary only by the assumption which Mr. Hutton is maintaining -- namely, that the prophetic powers of Jesus could not be at fault; secondly, it assumes or implies that the gospel narratives of the utterances of Jesus are to be relied upon, even though in these especial predictions he admits them to be essentially confused and, thirdly (what at we think he ought not to have overlooked), the sentence he quotes is by no means the only one indicating that Jesus Himself held the conviction, *which He undoubtedly communicated to His followers*, that His Second coming to judge the world would take place at a very early date. Not only was it to take place "immediately" after the destruction of the city (Matt. xxiv. 29), but it would be witnessed by many of those who heard Him. And *these predictions are in no way mixed up with those of the destruction of Jerusalem* : " There be some standing here that shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom " (Matt. xvi. 28); " Verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come (Matt. x. 23) ; " If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee 2 (John xxi. 23): and the corresponding passages in the other Synoptics.

'If, therefore, Jesus did not say these things, the gospels must be strangely inaccurate. If He did, His prophetic faculty cannot have been what Mr. Hutton conceives it to have been. That His disciples all confidently entertained this erroneous expectation, and entertained it on the supposed authority of their Master, there can be no doubt whatever. (See 1 Cor. x. 11, xv. 51 ; Phil. iv. 5 ; 1 Thess. iv. 15 ; James v. 8 ; 1 Peter iv. 7; 1 John ii. 18 ; Rev. i. 13, xxii. 7, 10, 12.) Indeed, Mr. Hutton recognises this at least as frankly and fully as we have stated it.' - **W. R. Greg, in Contemporary Review, Nov. 1876.**

To those who maintain that our Lord predicted the end of the world before the passing away of that generation, the objections of the skeptic present a formidable difficulty -- insurmountable, indeed, without resorting to forced and unnatural evasions, or admissions fatal to the authority and inspiration of the

evangelical narratives. We, on the contrary, fully recognise the common-sense construction put by Mr. Greg upon the Language of Jesus, and the no less obvious acceptance of that meaning by the apostles. But we draw a conclusion directly contrary to that of the critic, and appeal to the prophecy on the Mount of Olives as a signal example and demonstration of our Lord's supernatural foresight.