

# Crisis!

**Volume 1**



**DESMOND FORD**  
**Foreword by F.F. Bruce**

# **CRISIS!**

**A Commentary on the Book of Revelation**

**Volume 1**

**A HERMENEUTIC FOR REVELATION**

**by**

**Desmond Ford**

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## ***DEDICATION***

Dedicated with much affection to my students of Avondale College, N.S W., Australia, and Pacific Union College, Angwin, California, over the years 1961 to 1979, from whom I have learned much--especially Grethe and Glenn Hartelius, and Dean and Mona Jennings, who provided space, privacy, and tools, for my preparation of this manuscript.

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Thomas Austin of Cooranbong volunteered some excellent materials on the chiasmic structure of Revelation, and we have quoted sections of these in chapter six of the first volume. To Herschel Lamp who painstakingly proof-read the first draft, I return grateful thanks, and to Dr. Colin Greenlaw, who at this time is labouring on an index for the completed work. May I also again pay tribute to my former students and fellow ministers of the gospel whose verbal interaction has helped me greatly. These include Noel Mason, Ritchie Way, Paul Porter, Norman Young, and many others. But they are in no way responsible for the errors in this work.

I owe a special thank you to Professor F. F. Bruce who, with his usual courtesy and kindness, read this manuscript prior to writing its Foreword. My debt is much greater than that, for his person and learning have inspired me for many years, and he has ever graciously responded to pleas for help.

Finally, I am indebted to Pacific Union College, which gave me sabbatical leave during part of 1979 for the preparation of this manuscript.

## ***FOREWORD***

**by F. F. Bruce**  
**Emeritus Professor**  
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To his commentary on Daniel Dr. Ford has now added a detailed study of the Revelation to John, and it is a pleasure for me to write a few words in commendation of this work as I did for its predecessor.

Since the exegesis of Revelation is a subject on which I myself have published some reflections, readers will know that not all the conclusions reached by Dr. Ford coincide with my own views. His confessional background is different from mine; to me, for example, the New Testament antitype of the sabbath is that divine rest into which "we who have believed" find entrance.

His estimate of the historical and geographical reference of many of the details of Revelation differs from mine; to me the book is primarily intelligible in the light of the church's experience in the Roman Empire in the second half of the first century A.D.

But, just because the visions of John were seen in that contemporary context, they have a permanent and universal relevance, especially for readers living in a situation not unlike that in which John and his first readers lived. And Dr. Ford's study deserves special commendation because of the clarity with which it brings out that permanent and universal relevance. He has read widely in exegetical literature, as the wealth of quotation in the following pages shows; yet throughout he has exercised his own judgment on the meaning of the text. Above all, the book of the Revelation emerges from his study as a powerful witness to the authentic biblical gospel.

It is always a source of pride and joy for me to greet and commend the work of a former student, but when the work proclaims the faith of the gospel so eloquently as Dr. Ford's work does, the pride and joy are doubled.

## ***A WORD ABOUT THE FORMAT AND USE OF THIS COMMENTARY***

The introductory portions of this book in Part 1 are not dispensable. They aim at setting forth guiding principles, so that any reader can thereby exegete the Apocalypse for himself. If a reader only has time to read either Part 1 or Part 2, he should concentrate on the former. The commentary does not deal with minutiae unless such has direct bearing on the central ideas. Too many commentaries lose the wood for the trees, and we have refrained from being discursive in areas not strictly relevant to the central themes of the visions. In a few instances concepts central to this work have been touched upon in more than one chapter. This is not an oversight, but a teaching technique.

To avoid the charge of innovation, and to give readers the cream of an entire library on the book of Revelation, we have not been content with bibliographical data only, usually of little help to the laity. Instead we have often quoted other commentators, and occasionally at considerable length. This is not done on the basis that numbers determine truth, but rather because if a thing is true it is rarely new, and if it is new it is rarely true. In biblical exegesis, as in all research, each man stands on the shoulders of his predecessors. If he is determined to be wholly original, he may engage in a mountain of effort for a pebble of discovery. Any man, whose finished work is entirely his own, is not worth reading. "He that doesn't read will never be read, he who doesn't quote will never be quoted, he who doesn't use other men's brains shows he has no brains of his own," said Spurgeon. Some will not approve of certain authors quoted, or conclusions arrived at, but we would gently suggest that if anyone wants a commentary with which he can wholly agree, he will need to write it himself. But he should be warned that his happy sense of appropriate exegesis will not be fully shared by anybody else.

We have given introductions to each of the seven major divisions of the book. These also are not dispensable, but deal with the main ideas of the subsequent chapters. Therefore what is written beneath the verses themselves contains only a part of the commentary on that portion. The preface in each case is more important than what follows.

Finally, we are old-fashioned enough to agree with Luther that "prayer is the better half of study," and dare to remind the reader that a wholesome humility of approach with little background is vastly better than a vast back-ground and no sense of need. It is still the poor in spirit, the mourners, and the hungry who are fed by heaven. Care, effort, and prayer are the way to blessing.

## **PREFACE**

". . . the word 'eschatology' first occurs apparently in 1844, where it is used in a disparaging sense."<sup>1</sup>

Why disparaging? Should not all be interested in eschatology--the study of the last things for the individual and the world? That well-known Christian business man and author, Bruce Barton, made a strong plea for interest in eschatology when he wrote:

Immortality of some sort is a necessary complement to the existence and nature of God.

For why was the universe set going in the first place? To what end is all the struggle and suffering and self-sacrifice? To produce a nobler race, a finer character? And for what? To blot it all out in the end? Where is the justice in such a plan? Would you, if you were God, create in man the conviction that life is significant, that there is an eternal difference between right and wrong, that love and self-sacrifice and devotion and loyalty are important--would you make them feel all this, and act in accordance with it, often to their own hurt, and then laugh at them in the end? You would not. . . . There must be some place hereafter where life goes on, where injustices are righted and inequalities evened up, where those who have been thwarted and disappointed and cheated are given a fairer field and a better chance. This world as we know it cannot be the whole answer.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, if one has any conviction about right and wrong at all, it is a logical consequent that he should be very much interested in eschatology. For unless right and wrong are related to an unseen reality beyond the visible universe, all moral convictions are no more significant than itching--in fact, such convictions are only another form of the same biological phenomenon. James Denney put it well:

Those who take a materialistic view of the world do not need to raise any questions about its end; it is an essentially meaningless affair for them, and it does not matter whether or how it ends. But if we take an ethical view of the world and of history, we must have an eschatology; we must have the moral order exhibited, vindicated, brought out in perfect clearness as to what it is. It is because the Bible is so intensely ethical in spirit that it is so rich in eschatological elements--in visions of the final and universal triumph of God, of the final and universal defeat of evil. It is not ethical to suppose that the moral condition of the world is that of an endless suspense, in which the good and the evil permanently balance each other, and contest with each other the right to inherit the earth. Such a dualistic conception is virtually atheistic, and the whole Bible could be read as a protest against it. Neither is it ethical to suppose that the moral history of the world consists of cycles in which the good and the evil are alternately victorious. There are, indeed, times when that is the impression which history makes upon us, but these are times when the senses are too strong for the spirit; and as the moral consciousness recovers its vigour, we see how inconsistent such a view is with its postulate, that the good alone has the right to reign. The Christian doctrine of a final judgment is not the putting of an arbitrary term to the course of history; it is a doctrine without which history ceases to be capable of moral construction.<sup>3</sup>

As Denney says, "It is because the Bible is so intensely ethical in spirit that it is so rich in eschatological elements." That richness has only been perceived since the middle of the last century, and even more in the twentieth, when the study of "the last things" has come into its own. While in preceding centuries all the serious work done in this area could in



summary have been put on a post card, suddenly a spate of eschatological movements and books appeared. Other eras were marked by attention on the part of the church to such areas of theology as Christology, the Trinity, Anthropology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Pneumatology--but Eschatology remained a Cinderella until the Victorian era, despite occasional enthusiasts prior to that time. Perhaps it is the exhausting of this world's boundaries which has increased interest in spiritual regions beyond; perhaps it is the knowledge explosion which has accelerated similar expansion in biblical studies; perhaps it is the new awareness of the fragility of all things since the ushering in of the atomic era in 1945--whatever the cause, for the first time, theologians and Christians in general are becoming preoccupied with the final division of theology. Its significance is widely acknowledged. Consider the following estimate of its importance:

Eschatology is the crown and capstone of dogmatic theology," ....It is the one locus of theology, in which all other loci must come to a head, to a final conclusion. . . . Every other locus left some question unanswered, to which eschatology should supply the answer. In theology it is the question, how God is finally perfectly glorified in the work of His hands, and how the disrupting influence on sin is completely overcome; in Christology, the question, how the work of Christ is crowned with perfect victory; in soteriology, the question, how the work of the Holy Spirit at last issues in the complete redemption and glorification of the people of God; and in ecclesiology, the question of the final apotheosis of the Church. All these questions must find their answer in the last locus of dogmatics, making it the real capstone of dogmatic theology. . . .

"As a matter of fact, it (eschatology) does shed a clear light upon every single section of doctrine. Is the universality of God's saving plan, is personal communion with a personal God asserted without reserve, is the permanent significance of the Redeemer upheld, is forgiveness of sin conceived as one with victory over the power of sin--on these points the eschatology must remove all doubt, even when indefinite statements which have been made in the preceding parts could not at once be recognised as such. Nor is it difficult to discover the reason of this. In the doctrine of the last things, the communion between God and man is set forth as completed, and therefore the idea of our religion, the Christian principle, is presented in its purity; not, however, as a mere idea in the sense of an ideal which is never completely realised, but as a perfect reality--and it is clear what difficulties are implied in that. It must therefore appear at last, in the presentment of eschatology, if not sooner, whether the reality of this communion with God has received its unrestricted due."<sup>4</sup>

Where then shall we turn for information on eschatology? To Scripture, yes, but where in Scripture? Christ and Paul had some things to say about the End, but only one book is entirely devoted to eschatology, and that book is fittingly the very last of Scripture--the book of Revelation.

To look aright at the one prophetic book of the New Testament in this last quarter of the 20th century, must be to view it with an awareness of theological and other changes which have marked the years 1900-1980, changes to which we have only alluded.

Not only Karl Barth, but the whole theological world, has been awakened from its dogmatic slumbers in our century. Beginning with Johannes Weiss (1892) and Albert Schweitzer (1906), the truth has emerged that men have studied the New Testament for ages through their own philosophical and cultural glasses rather than according to the historical and intellectual matrix from which that book emerged.

As recently as 1959, Wolfhart Pannenberg shocked his fellow theologians by claiming that the study of apocalyptic was crucial for Christian theology. He asserted that the

apocalyptic concept of history "was both the presupposition of the historical thinking of the west, and the horizon which spans the whole of Christian theology in general."<sup>5</sup> Until then, apocalyptic study had been something in the depths--virtually lost. Now scholars like Kasemann arose, affirming with Pannenberg that what had been thought a tributary was actually the main stream "from which everything else at the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New was allegedly fed."<sup>6</sup> According to Kasemann, apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology.

There were subsequent "agonised attempts to save Jesus from apocalyptic."<sup>7</sup> The attempts have failed. Christ accepted the message of the Baptist--an essentially apocalyptic one, and drew key emphases of his own ministry, such as the Messiah and the kingdom of God, judgment and resurrection, from Daniel-- the only existing canonical apocalypse. As regards eschatology, the only difference between Him and preceding apocalypticists was His declaration that the expected kingdom had both come with Him and yet would be consummated in the future.

On the popular side, apocalyptic has influenced millions who have never heard the term. Through the writings of J. N. Darby, C. I. Scofield, and more recently, Hal Lindsey, bizarre perversions of biblical apocalyptic have filtered down to pastors and congregations. *The Late Great Planet Earth* has sold more than 18,000,000 copies despite the fact that no respectable biblical scholar could endorse it.

In philosophy, sociology, and a host of other fields, change has been similarly dramatic to that in theology. The traumatic events of our times have forced men to question the "Pollyanna" optimism of the nineteenth century which vitiated serious research in biblical as well as other areas. For example, it was fashionable through the nineteenth century to subordinate hermeneutics to philosophy and the "in" thing in philosophy at the turn of the era, as in preceding decades, was the supposed law of progress. Thus the twentieth chapter of Revelation was rarely interpreted by the same canons operating for the exegesis of preceding chapters. The first resurrection was "obviously" of a different nature from the second and could only mean a great revival of piety in the world. Thus, the second coming of Christ was, in contemplation, delayed for at least a thousand years, and this attitude explains the original disparaging references to eschatology mentioned in our first paragraph. But two world wars, economic depression, and a continued downward spiralling of social behaviour, have led to a new look at the supposed absolute of progress, and there are only very few who now cherish such a conviction.

Related to this change is the new attitude to apocalyptic, referred to above. In the nineteenth century, it was distasteful to think of Christ as echoing the apocalyptic concepts of Daniel, and scholars worked industriously to relieve him of such outdated and irrelevant ideas. It became an axiom of New Testament scholarship that Mark 13 was not dominical, and was contributed by Jewish elements of the new church. Particularly since the mid-century, there has been a significant change of outlook in this area too. The outstanding work of G. R. Beasley-Murray on Mark 13 resulted in even some German scholars conceding that there were no real grounds for denying that Christ could have uttered the Olivet discourse, at least substantially.

The appearance of whole issues devoted to apocalyptic in theological journals has characterised the new interest in this study. At an entirely different level, books such as Hal Lindsey's, purporting to be the result of eschatological study, have become best sellers in a world aware of Doomsday as never before.

Another factor to be considered is the continued study of the Old Testament apocalypse-- Daniel. It has become a fruitful field for those interested in themes such as Antichrist, the new temple, the Son of Man, the kingdom of God, the remnant, as well as eschatology in general. It is now recognised that this book is probably the most influential of all in the Old

Testament in its impact upon the New. Former positions, for instance, seeing in Antiochus Epiphanes the entire significance of the end vista in Daniel, have come under question.<sup>8</sup> More important is the growing awareness that Christ's teachings in eschatology are but an enlargement of Daniel's, and that both Paul and the Revelator likewise develop gestalts about the end time, which have their rudimentary elements in "Daniel the prophet." The central issue is no longer that of the dating of Daniel, but the dependence of the New Testament upon that work. Passages such as Daniel 8:14; 7:9-13; 9:24-27 (all three related and setting forth the essence of Old Testament apocalyptic),<sup>9</sup> point to the judgment and the kingdom, and are now receiving their merited attention. The many thousands of pages written by scholars on the key symbol of the "Son of Man" illustrate the place of Daniel in biblical studies. Koch quotes Kasemann in this context. "The heart of primitive Christian apocalyptic. . . is the accession to the throne of heaven by God and by his Christ as the eschatological Son of Man - an event which can also be characterised as proof of the righteousness of God." He then continues, "That is why the Pauline doctrine of the righteousness of God and our own justification must also be derived from apocalyptic."<sup>10</sup> Thus even the Pauline gospel finds its roots in the apocalyptic passages of Daniel, which promise vindication and righteousness to the believing remnant (the justifying of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14). For them "everlasting righteousness is brought in" by the atoning judicial work of the Messiah, all of which makes Daniel the "great-grandfather" of the Protestant Reformation, as well as the "mother" of all Christian theology.

Another phenomenon of the twentieth century is the existential crisis. According to Tillich, God died in the nineteenth century, and man in the twentieth. Certain it is, that the chief modern issue, the great watershed of all human thought, is the search for meaning. Modern literature and art, as well as sociology, criminology, psychology, psychiatry, and history, have demonstrated that contemporary man cannot think as he feels, or feel as he thinks. The loss of God and the supernatural has torpedoed the natural. If man is not made in the image of God then he can be made in the image of society. That, however, implies totalitarianism and all its brood, so repugnant to post-Renaissance man. Since the launching of the atomic Frankenstein monster, axiology (the science of values) has become supremely important. But values sufficient to restrain the lust for, or abuse of, power cannot grow on naturalistic terrain. It is becoming clear that a God in heaven above is as necessary to man as the earth beneath his feet, and that homo sapiens is either related to both, or has no significant relationships whatever.

The increasing superstitious cults testify that when the great God goes, the little gods come. Spiritism, Satan-worship, scientology, transcendental meditation, eastern cults, belief in the Illuminati, and similar fables, are filling the vacuum left by the death of God. Those too intellectual to swallow such offerings, find themselves left to the alternatives indicated by Sartre, Camus, Beckett, and Ionesco, as pointed out by such Christian apologists as C. S. Lewis, Francis Schaeffer, and others. These alternatives acknowledge that life has no meaning, that man is an accident, and that chloroform masks of artificially contrived "time-fillers" are the only resort till death.

At certain points, the intellectual crisis is increasingly acute. Take educational theory and practice. What should be the goals in education? These depend on values and from whence should these be derived? Only the spiritual descendants of William Jennings Bryan can live as though Darwin had never lived--educationalists cannot.

The modern notions that the world of nature is the primary reality and that man is to be explained on mechanistic premises, have under-girded much of prevailing education. In a \$2,500 award for educators only, the prize went to Professor Stace, author of *The Destiny of Western Man*. A prominent member of the committee who selected the winner was Carl Van Doren, who affirmed that this book was one of "worldwide significance, sure to clarify and fortify contemporary opinion and to leave its mark on years to come."

Declared Stace in his book,

"The Greeks therefore, had in general no right to their belief that man is superior to the other animals. . . . And therefore we cannot admit the validity of that argument in favour of the primacy of reason which bases itself upon man's superiority to the rest of creation."<sup>11</sup>

The implications as regarding ethics of such philosophy is obvious.

. . . why strive at all, if the end of man is but a square meal for lower animals? Shall their welfare stimulate us to live honestly rather than dishonestly? Will it affect their diet any if we commit fornication or if we refrain from it? Will the maggots complain about their menu if we are plunged into an atom war?<sup>12</sup>

With the demotion of man as a spiritual being has come the tumbling of ethical pillars which had mainly rested on metaphysical foundations.

"Give a man a concept of what he is, and he will do what he ought, is a philosophical observation which seems to have been confirmed by history.

Conversely, when we give man a concept of himself which does not extend beyond the pleasure-pain dimensions of his being, he will not spontaneously undertake duties no matter what efforts are made to have him do so.<sup>13</sup>

Thus with man's change of concept regarding himself and the universe, there has come a subsequent revolution of thought concerning ethics. These two are ever linked. Ethics are always based on a Weltanschauung, and its basic presuppositions are drawn from the world-view which is its parent. Thus it has been truly said concerning our day that--"the essential nature of the crisis through which we are living is neither military, nor political, nor economic, but moral."<sup>14</sup>

Sorokin asserts the same when he says:

This means that the main issue of our times is not democracy versus totalitarianism, nor liberty versus despotism; neither is it capitalism versus communism, nor pacifism versus militarism, nor internationalism versus nationalism, nor any of the current popular issues daily proclaimed by statesmen and politicians, professors and ministers, journalists and soapbox orators. All these popular issues are but small side issues--mere by-products of the main issue, namely, the sensate form of culture and way of life versus another different form.<sup>15</sup>

The dream described by Dostoyevsky in the Epilogue of *Crime and Punishment* seems to be a parable concerning this age as foreseen by the author. Aware of the significance of the new matter and method in current communication, Dostoyevsky pictures the whole world under process of disintegration because of a terrible and strange plague. New kinds of microbes possessing intelligence and will attacked the bodies of men. Those who were infected became mad and furious. But "never had men considered themselves so intellectual and so completely in possession of the truth as these sufferers, never had they considered their decisions, their scientific conclusions, their moral convictions so infallible."<sup>16</sup>

Entire towns, cities, and nations went insane because of the infection. In their fury they could no longer understand one another. "Each thought that he alone had the truth and was wretched looking at the others. . . . They did not know how to judge and could not agree what to consider evil and what good."<sup>17</sup>

In senseless rage they killed one another with their armies. All day long, alarms rang in the towns and cities, but when men rushed together they were unable to find why or by whom they had been summoned. Trades were abandoned, and the land was permitted to lie

fallow. "Men met in groups, agreed on something, swore to keep together, but at once began on something quite different from what they had proposed. They accused one another, fought and killed each other."<sup>18</sup> Conflagration and famine spread over the world until "all men and all things were involved in destruction."<sup>19</sup> Dostoyevsky concludes his description by saying:

Only a few men could be saved in the whole world. They were a pure chosen people, destined to found a new race and a new life, to renew and purify the earth, but no one had seen these men, no one had heard their words and their voices.<sup>20</sup>

This remarkable narrative portrays many aspects of the tragedy of this twentieth century and suggests what may yet lie ahead. It is most significant that Dostoyevsky points out that a distinguishing character of the crisis which he pictures was the fact that the people "did not know how to judge and could not agree what to consider evil and what good." That is to say, they possessed no agreed-upon ethical values. It is this characteristic, according to many diagnosticians of our times, which particularly marks the present human dilemma.

The issue of morality in politics reflects this dilemma. Was Watergate the logical, if amoral, conclusion of millenniums of philosophical and religious enquiry, or an aberration? Is this conclusion (or aberration) to be the pattern for the governors and statesmen of communities in the world of the twenty-first century? Historical research cannot salve our hurt. Indeed, studies such as Cochrane's <sup>21</sup> remind us that malaise of spirit and not the barbarians, caused the fall of Rome, and may likewise cause ours.

Nature also is intruding on the act. Only in this century has it become apparent that there is a limit to nature's material resources and to nature's "patience." Even if burgeoning population does not shove millions into the sea, there is the question as to whether the environment will remain as long-suffering as in former times to those who continually rape her by economic greed, spiritual nonchalance, and ignorance of natural law.<sup>22</sup>

Not only the world without, but the world within, is a Pandora's box of problems. Mental disease rises with our skyscrapers. We are becoming aware of new diseases spawned by recent technological monstrosities dominating the urban scene. Privacy and quietude are disappearing, while increasing leisure screams or meaningful avocations. Not only is it a post-Christian era, but there are tendencies towards the post-family era. Illegitimacy and homosexuality no longer have any moral connotation for man. The venereal diseases are pandemic, and it looks as though divorce could become as passé as marriage itself and for the same reason. But with all this nonchalance towards standards which were once taken for granted, the little man within refuses to conform. He knows he is not what he should be, would be, or could be. The outer and inner attitudes are not congruent. Guilt remains and intensifies frighteningly in most moderns. The psychiatrist's couch remains forever warm, while the profession most prone statistically to suicide is the one which owns the couches. Mental disease spawns at least eighty per cent of functional illnesses, with no decrease in sight. Concerning cities such as New York, it has been suggested that fifty per cent have either received psychiatric treatment or need it.

Men turning to religion for help are often disappointed. Most seminaries have become centres of disillusionment. Philosophy still dominates theology and philosophy has no answers, only questions. Men with questions and no answers cannot contribute to a disillusioned world.

The conclusions of Paul Tournier thirty years ago become increasingly relevant.

If everything is accidental, then the only rule of life is to let all considerations go and seize opportunity by the forelock. If happiness is no longer the blessing promised to those who obey the laws of God, but only a blind stroke of fate, then the greatest possible shrewdness is the best rule of life. And when everyone wants to be the

shrewdest, existence finally becomes nothing more than intrigue, lies, and dodges.

And the conflicts and injustices that result, far from causing men to examine themselves and become honest again, only drives them to resort even more to these poisonous weapons in order to conjure away their bad luck: they certainly are not going to be left holding the bag.<sup>23</sup>

The true problems of men are metaphysical, religious, and emotional in character. They are the problems which the physicians discover today in the tormented souls who come to consult him in ever greater numbers. They are dread, the fear of death, remorse, and the thirst for love and forgiveness. Even though they are hardly conscious of these things any longer, the great mass of people today are suffering from nothing less than this. Neither science, which is mute in the face of the irrational, nor liberalism, which is indifferent to the need for human fellowship, nor socialism, which is blind to sin, have any answer to these questions.<sup>24</sup>

Ancient words come thundering upon us: "Is there any word from the Lord"? The Book of Revelation claims to answer that enquiry.

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## **CHAPTER 1** [\(TOC\)](#)

### **REVELATION AND YOU**

Forty years ago I was left with a widowed aunt and her three daughters while my mother took a holiday of about six weeks duration. My temporary home was not far from an ice-cream factory where occasionally old stock was thrown out and gleefully captured by boys of my ilk. A similar advantage of the new location was the fact that Aunt Louise made ginger nuts and other goodies, and made them often, or was it only when she had her ten-year old nephew with her?

On the debit side was the fact that daily the spinster daughters (in their thirties), quite impervious to the embarrassment of their victim, investigated whether their young cousin took full advantage of the bathroom shower. Judging by their scent and powder, these young women thought that tropical weather demanded a painstaking and thorough counter-attack by all, especially bare footed, grimy boys. They refused to accept the concept that frequent swimming in the nearby ocean was adequate for all the demands of hygiene.

These conscientious sisters also felt they should do the nearby school a favour by making sure I did my homework. Even to a child it was quite clear that life is a patchwork quilt, a checker board with blacks and whites. Reality is ambivalent. Days surrender to nights, pleasure to pain, and mystery follows hard on the heels of increasing knowledge.

But my main memory of that stay is the night I sat under a light on the verandah, probably a typical balmy sea-coast evening in a land where winter was unknown, and began to read the book of Revelation. Most, if not all, of the book was devoured that evening. Never will the impression be forgotten! Thunder, lightning, beasts, women (beautiful and otherwise), angels (of both camps), scenes of heaven and hell, altars, blood and incense, horrific horsemen from above and dreadful winged monstrosities from below, heavenly orbs darkening, seas and rivers turning to blood, vials of wrath being poured out, myriads of wicked beings on the march, white horses from heaven, a giant angel straddling sea and land, eagles with their cry of "Woe!" and ultimately, like the soothing final strains of a great symphony, the irenic scenes of the New Jerusalem with its Tree of Life and the crystal stream from the throne of the Lamb.

What was it all about? I went to bed with my mind whirling, to dream dreams even more complicated than those of John on Patmos. . . .

If, as Thoreau wrote, the majority lead lives of quiet desperation, why do we live at all, why do we usually fight to resist at least some of the pressures within and without? Because most men, believers and unbelievers, naive or sophisticated, are motivated by faith and hope and love. These factors are stronger than all the negatives piled up by tragedy, despair, and apparent meaninglessness. Despite the testimony of our senses, the fears of our hearts, and the querulous queries of our minds, most of us believe in the ultimate goodness of reality, hope for better things, and because we love both abstractly and concretely, we resist the gravitational pull to nihilism exerted by our environment. We sense that the shadows themselves are only possible because of the light beyond, and that doubt could not exist were it not for truth.

As Nietzsche asserted, "Man can put up with almost any what, provided he has a why." If he believes that nightmares never last, that all winters end, and that all tunnels out at last, man can fight overwhelming odds. But the death of hope leads to the hope for death. Which is why suicide, though not yet considered normal, is nonetheless pandemic, taking more lives during the first four decades of life than any other cause save accident.



For a generation gasping for hope as drowning men gasp for air, the Bible's last book is more to be valued than a king's ransom. The Apocalypse insists that the tragedy so normal to us is a temporary intruder in the universe, soon to be bowed out by the Creator whose name is Love. This book affirms that the cuffs and buffets of existence have an ultimately beneficent purpose. The rebellious race which has abused its freedom is to learn from the bitter fruit of evil that true life depends upon glad submission to Him who made and preserves all things. God Himself is soon to wipe all tears from our eyes and there will be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying. Affliction will not rise up a second time, and the ages of eternity will more than compensate for the hard lessons in the rigorous school of life.

Faith, hope, and love, which alone can steer storm-tossed souls, find much to feed upon in the book of Revelation. Central to its visions is ever the slain Lamb, reminding us that our Maker has shared earth's nightmare. Sin has cost Him more than anybody else. That black Friday of Calvary, frequently imaged in this book, becomes a pattern of reality. Crucifixion was succeeded by victorious resurrection. Pain, disappointment, and death were not permitted to have the last word. The divine Sufferer is alive and has the keys of death and the grave. He offers now to light our way through the darkness, and to hold our hands as we journey. This book of His promises that He measures every trial, and that not one hair can perish but by His permission and for our eternal good. However black the night, we shall see Him in the morning. However spent and crippled we may now be, we are soon to be made anew, sharing forever the life and joy of the resurrected Son of God. "When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" (1 Corinthians 15:54 RSV). Both man the microcosm, and earth the macrocosm, are to pass from the cocoon of trauma into the glorious liberty of the new creation.

Some years ago at a Florida dog-racing track, the mechanical rabbit, which darts about the track as a lure, exploded and disappeared. The dogs manifested all the symptoms of a nervous breakdown. They seemed to go stark crazy because the entire purpose of their existence had evaporated. The goal they had feverishly pursued had betrayed them. It is a mirror of life. Most of the goals pursued by the multitudes suddenly evaporate leaving life barren and cheerless. Men need to learn that there is just no way of making sense of life's course by the course itself. Only in the perspective of heaven and hell does human existence achieve value and significance. Only the future, a future filled with hope, can give full meaning to the present.

But if there is no God, no heaven, no afterlife, then there is no man either—, only potential fertiliser, only developed worms. If there is no God, everything is permitted. Thus George Bernard Shaw testified that it was not true that he had a "kindly dislike of his fellow creatures." Said he:

. . . Dread would have been nearer the mark than dislike; for man is the only animal of Which I am thoroughly and cravenly afraid. I have never thought much of the courage of a lion tamer. Inside the cage he is at least safe from other men. There is less harm in a well-fed lion. It has no ideals, no sect, nor party, no nation, no class: in short, no reason for destroying anything it does not want to eat.<sup>1</sup>

Millenniums of human history demonstrate the truth of Shaw's declaration. If there is no God in whose image man was made, then man can be conformed to the image of society, and the Nazi right of might is normative for all men. But if churches become the mausoleums of God then, as prophesied, the world will writhe in convulsions. To deny God and heaven is to bid farewell to the validity of thought, for from chaos only chaos can flow. Thinking becomes no more than itching, and words like good, better, best, right, wrong, worth, ought, blame, are nothing but nonsense syllables. Why shouldn't everyone follow

Cratylus, whose only concession to life and others was to wave his arms? At that stage, and many have reached it, one reaches for chloroform masks, one after another. Sex, money, power, become the temporary bromides, the purple hearts which work their magic for an hour and then leave us as before, only worse.

Yesterday I paused to watch a gifted professor with two walking sticks slowly manoeuvre from a sidewalk to street level. It seemed to take ages, but he knew what he was doing, for he had had many falls. His haemophilia meant that every step was perilous, and every day fraught with danger and pain. A little later I cycled past a spastic boy seated as usual in his wheelchair in a front garden, his face and limbs contorting this day as on every other that I had passed him. In my own home right now we are privileged to have as guests visiting Australians--a family where the wife is pitifully crippled by a mysterious immunological disease, catastrophically introduced into her experience after she had contracted German measles. Her little boy plays much on his own, since his mother cannot even embrace him without pain. The other boy in our house, my own son, lost his mother with cancer when he was four. Mine is everybody's story. Others have much more to tell but it is of the same strain. And it has meaning and value only if life down here is a probationary experience, a school preparing us for a life that will measure with the life of God.

A universe forever housing such a plague spot as earth is unthinkable. Would not even the angels, if they exist, rebel? If God is there, what does He have to say about tomorrow? The book of Revelation is the most used source for the majority of those who seek light on such questions, and heaven itself invites us to study it. As the Bible's concluding book it illustrates, with unique power, life's grim intensity, but also the certainty of restoration and a reward of grace for all who cherish faith, hope, and love--the fruit of fellowship with the Author of the Apocalypse.<sup>2</sup> To that book, we now invite you to turn.

## CHAPTER 2 [\(TOC\)](#)

### CHALLENGE!

"And the Apocalypse of St. John is the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn scenes and acts with a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies."

--John Milton, *The Reason of Church Government*.

"The soul has said, 'I do not know what all these emblems, in which angels and devils and beasts with heads and horns are introduced, may exactly signify, but I do see that all vain cunning will be proved to be vain by holy wisdom; I do see that the Lord of the great heavens will, governing here as well as on high, and managing His transactions according to great preparations made in the invisible scene, bear down with helpful powers upon the earth, and make the changes below correspond to the changes above.'"

--Frederick D. Maurice, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*.

The book of Revelation is not only the seal but the Sphinx of Scripture.

No book is so puzzling, yet so full of promise, so actually difficult yet avowedly plain, so hated and so loved. Of all the literature of the world this ancient work written by an old fisherman (of fish and men) in exile<sup>1</sup> has infinitely more challenge, and offers exceedingly more reward than all others. "Blessed is he that readeth. . . ."; "Blessed are those who keep the saying of this book"; He will "have the right to the tree of life" and to "enter the city."

After spending over twenty years immersed in the study of apocalyptic literature, R. H. Charles opened his *Lectures on the Apocalypse* with this statement. "From the earliest ages of the Church, it has been universally admitted that the Apocalypse is the most difficult book of the entire Bible."<sup>2</sup> Nearly two hundred years ago Archdeacon John Chappel Woodhouse of Salop, England, wrote as the introductory paragraph of his commentary the following:

The prophecies of the Apocalypse, though illustrated by commentators of all ages, have not been so successfully explained, as to afford general satisfaction. From the interpretations most commonly received, many of the learned have with-holden their assent; and doubts have been expressed, whether we are yet in possession of the fortunate clues to be derived from human sagacity or Divine inspiration; or of the necessary aids of learning; or of the events in history; which, at some future period, may be destined to ascertain the completion of these predictions.

The Archdeacon's words are as relevant now as they were then, for when individual Bible-readers attempt any such inquiry, baffling frustration usually results. One pastor and commentator has recorded the reactions of his flock thus:

Most readers of the Bible have a love-hate relationship with the last of its sixty-six books. Revelation is full of mysteries, in the modern sense of the word as well as in the special biblical sense of it, and like all mysteries they alternately repel and attract. Certainly friends in my own congregation at St Faith's, Maidstone, have expressed both the exasperation of 'I can't understand a word of it!' and the curiosity of 'Do let's have a shot at it!'<sup>3</sup>

Among the learned many have felt what only Dr. South would say--"The study of Revelation either finds or leaves a man a little cracked." More reverent scholars, even among the Reformers of the sixteenth century, have seemed almost to endorse such a

negative comment by their own neglect of John's book. It has often been remarked that Calvin showed his extreme good sense when he left this book of the Bible without a commentary from his pen--the sole exception. Luther wrote, "My spirit cannot accommodate itself to this book. There is one sufficient reason for the small esteem in which I hold it--that Christ is neither taught in it nor recognised."<sup>4</sup> Zwingli denounced it as an intrusion into the canon.

Many moderns have been similarly negative. In our own day, C. H. Dodd has been almost as severe. His judgment is that "if we review the book as a whole, we must judge that this excessive emphasis on the future has the effect of relegating to a secondary place just those elements of the Gospel which are most distinctive of Christianity. . . ." Neither does Dodd stop here. He adds, . . . we are bound to judge that in its conception of the character of God and his attitude to man the book falls far below the level not only of the teaching of Jesus but of the best parts of the Old Testament."<sup>5</sup> Loisy's verdict is similarly unfavourable. He pulls no punches when he says:

The best that can be said of it is that for centuries men have taxed their wits to find in it a meaning which is NOT there, for the simple reason that the meaning which IS there was immediately contradicted by the course of events.<sup>6</sup>

N. Turner says that in the book of Revelation:

There is too much unassimilated second-hand material, and often it is employed pointlessly -- obscure to us, to many early Christians, and to vast numbers of readers who decline to make it support their peculiar notions. . . . the relevance of Revelation today can hardly be as great as it was in the 1st century. . . . John does not really live and move in our intellectual sphere. We sometimes experience what we think may be symbolically described in his word-pictures, but that does not tell us what his symbols mean. Did he really know himself? The number three means heaven, four means the earth, and the number seven is the blending of these two, or God dwelling with man: but most of the rest is as obscure as the Jewish literature on which it is based.<sup>7</sup>

Twentieth century commentators often begin like Charles R. Erdman, whose opening lines describe Revelation as "the most perplexing book of the Bible" and continues:

This volume . . . is published with diffidence because of the difficulties and mysteries involved, with a plea for tolerance of divergent views, and yet with a deepening confidence in the practical and imperishable values of this portion of sacred Scripture.<sup>8</sup>

Compare the comments of Leon Morris and John Walvoord, who represent strongly divergent schools of theology and hermeneutics.

The book of Revelation is, I fear, a very neglected book. Its symbolism belongs to the first century, not to our own age. Twentieth-century men accordingly find it difficult and tend to dismiss it as irrelevant. This is unfortunate because its theology of power is of the utmost importance to an age as preoccupied with the problem of power as is ours.<sup>9</sup>

No other book of the New Testament evokes the same fascination as the book of Revelation. Attempts at its exposition are almost without number, yet there continues the widest divergence of interpretation. Because the book reveals truth relative to every important fundamental of Christian theology, it is inevitable that its interpretation be influenced by the contemporary confusion in biblical scholarship especially in the realm of eschatology. In some sense, the book is the conclusion to all previous biblical revelation and logically reflects the interpretation of the rest of

the Bible. The expositor is faced with innumerable hermeneutical decisions before beginning the task of understanding the peculiar contribution of the book of Revelation, an undertaking made more difficult by the fact that his decisions not only colour the exposition of the book itself but also in a sense constitute an interpretation of all that precedes it in the Scriptures.<sup>10</sup>

Let us note that even many who confess the difficult nature of the task of interpreting Revelation also assert the worthwhileness of the project. Jerome wrote that the Apocalypse "has as many secrets as words" and that it is "beyond all praise." In our own century, G. Campbell Morgan wrote:

The Revelation is a summation of all the past, all the present, all the future. It is the celestial capstone to all God's handiwork. What the Book of Genesis is to the story of God's redemptive grace, the Book of the Revelation is to the fruition of our Lord's atoning mercy. The first is meaningless without the last. Almost literally, in preaching through the Revelation, I preached again through the Bible itself. Every promise, every theme, every hope, every dream of the Holy Scriptures, finds its fulfilment and consummation in the glorious pages of the Apocalypse.<sup>13</sup>

Bishop Wordsworth in his famous commentary on the Scriptures wrote on Revelation as follows:

. . . Henry More observes 'that there never was a book penned with that artifice as this of the Apocalypse, as if every word were weighed in a balance before it was set down.' Those remarkable specimens of careful composition in its earlier chapters may have been designed to remind the reader that every sentence of it is pregnant with meaning, and that in order to understand its Visions, the best method is to examine diligently every word of the Apocalypse.<sup>14</sup>

In a much more recent time, Caird has summarised the situation aptly:

No other book can have aroused such equally passionate love and hatred. It has been the inspiration of poetry, music, and art, the fountain of worship and devotion, the comfort of the bereaved, and the strength of the persecuted. But it has also been roundly denounced by more critics than Luther as a work of vindictive and unchristian spirit.<sup>15</sup>

It is thus true as W. G. Scroggie reminds us, "The book has been a storm-centre of controversy from the 2nd century A.D., and, no doubt, will continue to be so."<sup>16</sup>

What shall we say to such a melange of conflicting appraisals? First, we should observe that as with Christ Himself, so the Revelation of Jesus Christ leaves no man neutral who is confronted by its claims. Second, the history of the church as a whole testifies to its value. Says H. Grattan Guinness:

We have now to study THE INTERPRETATION AND USE [sic] of these marvellous prophecies by the Christian Church. How has the Christian Church understood and employed them? Of what practical benefit have these prophecies been to her during the last eighteen centuries? It is evident that they were written for guidance, protection, and sanctification. The prophecies of Paul and John are addressed to Christian Churches. The voice of inspiration expressly invites the whole Church to study them, and the Church has obeyed this command. She has read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested the "sure word of prophecy." What moral effect has it had upon her? To what extent has it guided her footsteps and sustained her hopes? If these prophecies have proved to be a mighty power in her history; if they have preserved the faith of the Church in times of general apostasy; if they have given birth to great reformation movements; if they have inspired confessors, and

supported martyrs at the stake; if they have broken the chains of priest-craft, superstition, and tyranny, and produced at last a return on the part of many many millions of men to a pure, primitive Christianity,--they have answered their purpose, and justified their position in the sacred Scriptures of truth. Nor may we lightly esteem that interpretation which has produced such results.<sup>17</sup>

Third, we should say what Spurgeon said about difficult passages of Scripture the harder the kernel, the sweeter the nut inside. Contrast the wealth in the carefully guarded Bank of England with the accessible coins of a child's piggy-bank. In this book all the books of Scripture meet and end. It is a compendium as well as a seal but for this reason can only be understood by those who have grasped the essence of the preceding Scripture. Particularly does the Old Testament in its historical, legal, and eschatological elements here live again. But the treasure is only for the diligent, the prayerful, and the careful.

Fourth, we should remember that "what does not torment does not bless." This comment by Hengstenberg on Revelation 11:10 (the prophecy that the witnessing church would "torment" the unbelieving world) reminds us that the task of Christianity has ever been "to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable." Difficult Scriptures are intended to awaken and challenge those who assume they "understand it all."

Fifth, we must keep in mind the legal maxim that "abuse does not prohibit use." To illustrate this, Christianity has often been murdered in the house of believers. Voltaire's words are appropriate. "God deliver me from my friends, I can look after my enemies myself." Probably no Bible book has suffered so much in the hands of its interpreters as Revelation. For the unlearned who seek to understand it, no experience could be more frustrating than to randomly seize from the shelves of a great library twenty books or so purporting to explain the Apocalypse. Some of these written last century will trace the story of Napoleon Bonaparte amid the seals, trumpets and vials of Revelation. Others written after World War 1 find the Kaiser there as surely, and following World War 2, Hitler came into equal prophetic prominence. But go back prior to the 19th century and all sorts of wonders unfold.

For example, the famous prophetic commentator E. B. Elliott soberly informs us that the half hour's silence in heaven (Revelation 8:1) was fulfilled by the seventy years that intervened between Constantine's victory over Licinius, followed by the dissolution of the pagan heavens, A.D. 324, and Alaric's revolt and the invasion of the empire, consequent on the death of Theodosius, A.D. 395. In other words, he seventy years of peace in the Roman world of the fourth century cast thirty minutes of silence into the grateful heavens. The seven thunders of Revelation 10:4 are applied by Bishop Barnes to Papal anathemas against the Reformation. He explains that the prohibition addressed to John commanding him not to tell the content of the thunders was because there was nothing worth recording in those anathemas. Albertus Pieters comments that as an example of Protestant humour this suggestion may have merit, but not as exegesis.<sup>18</sup>

We cannot help being reminded of the wise words of Farrar:

A book less sacred would have been discredited by the dangerous uses to which it has often been perverted; but no aberrations of interpreters have been suffered to weaken, much less to abrogate, the essential revelation which has been exercised from the first, and will "to the last syllable of recorded time" continue to exercise a unique power over the hearts and consciences of men.<sup>19</sup>

Sixth, if ever an age needed particular guidance amidst its shoals, and a special prophylactic for its ills it is this one. If we are indeed living on the borders of eternity we might expect increasing light on "the last things." The present is not only shaped by the present but by the future. What one anticipates has a reflex influence on one's immediate

choices. Eschatology, with its key doctrines of the Judgment and the Advent, acts as a warning against antinomianism, and a deterrent to carelessness. Kant once spoke to this effect. 'You who say you cannot change your ways--if I warned you that there would be a gallows awaiting you at the end of this day if you did not change--would you not suddenly find new moral energies to correct your wrong habits? I prophesy you would indeed!' New Testament eschatology not only promises an end of evil, and redress for the oppressed, but it also warns professed believers of a judgment for them.

By no means, however, does this mean that Christians have no further interest in or concern about the judgment still to come. How little this would be correct may be seen from the fact that by far the majority of instances where the last-judgment-idea occurs speak of believers.<sup>20</sup>

The judgement effected by God through Christ is universal. All men must stand before God's judgement bar (Romans 2:6-10). This includes Christians (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10), as well as non-Christians (Revelation 20:15).<sup>21</sup>

Awareness of this truth does two things. (1) It reminds the believer that the decision of faith has constantly to be made anew until the end of this life. (2) It shows the indispensable nature of the everlasting gospel, for only the imputed merits of Christ can avail in a Judgment which investigates not only outward behaviour but inner desires and motives. Romans 7:7-10; Luke 17:10; Romans 8:1.

Furthermore, an age of mass media is intensely aware of the problem of evil. Eschatology is also a study in Theodicy, the vindication of God.

If the doom of each individual is really fixed at death--fixed by Him who knows the history of every life, as He knows all things--why, it may be asked, should there be a day of judgment afterwards? What further end is to be accomplished thereby? This final, public act of judgment is the complete vindication of God's justice both to those who are judged and to the moral universe. The absolute righteousness of God in all His dealings through life, and in the destiny awarded, is now brought home to those who are judged as never before. Those who are condemned feel in their inmost beings that the sentence passed upon them is according to their desert; and, though salvation is entirely of grace, those who are adjudged righteous would see that the reward bestowed upon them is, in every case, according to their works.

But what presents itself first to the mind when we think of the ends served by the final judgment is the public vindication of Divine justice--the vindication of God's righteousness in the sight of men and angels, of all moral beings. This certainly is a very high end. The manifestation of His own glory--i.e. of the excellency of His own perfection --is an end than which none can be higher. In the whole of His works and in the whole history of His administration God is revealing Himself, and to learn of Him as His perfections are thus manifested is the highest blessedness of the creature. To know Him is the constant aim of all holy beings, and of all who are seeking to be holy. To make known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God, to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, enters into the eternal purpose which God has purposed in Christ Jesus.

The righteousness of God's administration and His justice in recompensing both the righteous and the wicked have at no time and in no place been without attestation. But looking back broadly over the field of human history no one would say that complete proof of God's equity in His dealing with individual men has been presented to the eyes of His creatures. The confidence of faith can ever say: "That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: shall not the

Judge of all the earth do right?" But how often in thinking of God's providence while His work was unfinished have the best men in all ages longed to see the good man freed from oppression and the proud oppressor rewarded according to his wickedness--to see the aspersions cast upon God's faithful servants removed and the hypocrite unmasked. It is not in the spirit of revenge that saints of earth have joined with the souls under the altar in crying to God that He would avenge the blood of His martyrs. But patience must have its perfect work. No shadows of iniquity will finally rest on the Divine administration. The whole creation will see that God is just in all His ways, and holy in all His works.<sup>22</sup> [emphasis ours]

Most of all, if indeed the world is nearing a final crisis, and its last rebellion against God, we would expect a divine warning to that effect and heavenly counsels as to how to prepare. This is exactly what Revelation offers. See particularly Revelation 13 and 14:6-12.

Seven, a major cause for the wide-spread failure to interpret this book aright (and let it be remembered that if any specific hermeneutical approach and its conclusions are correct then the vast majority must be wrong) is not a cause inherent in the book but in its readers. Aquinas said, "If an ass looks into a book, you can't expect an angel to look out." The trouble is that we are all donkeys, and our only consolation is that the Lord Himself at least once had need of one.

Because all, including notable exegetes, are far more influenced by the spirit and prejudices of the times than they are ever aware of, there have been successive fads and fashions in interpretation--especially of the present book. We will content ourselves with an example concerning one of the most influential interpreters of the Apocalypse. R. P. Casey writes concerning Revelation:

This disquieting document has caused much searching of hearts in recent criticism. A generation ago it was still possible to regard Revelation as a work of scissors and paste which included (1) the seven introductory letters; (2) the central action, the apocalypse proper, which differed as little from similar compositions by Jews and Christians that it, like Mark 13, might be conjectured to be an originally Jewish source retouched by Christian hands, and (3) an editorial conclusion. R. H. Charles' monumental work was the last great effort in this direction.<sup>23</sup>

The greatest problem of all education and encountered in all efforts towards progress is not helping people to learn but teaching them to unlearn. It is our presuppositions which are at fault, and which chiefly cause inadequate exegesis. To this problem we now turn. But first, pause a moment to think on Bengel's words. "The Apocalypse was not written without tears, neither without tears will it be understood."



## CHAPTER 3 [\(TOC\)](#)

### THE DEAD-END VALLEY OF PRESUPPOSITIONS

'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces  
That miss the many-splendoured thing.

A recent work on how to study the New Testament has a chapter on presuppositions. It begins with the following:

Why do the conclusions of New Testament scholars differ so widely? Anyone who begins to read books about the New Testament soon becomes aware that competent scholars defend with equal vigour and sincerity widely differing approaches to the New Testament. The variety of viewpoints often causes great perplexity both to theological students and to the church at large. Occasionally bewilderment leads to abandonment of serious historical critical study of the Scriptures in favour of a supposedly simple and direct "devotional" approach.<sup>1</sup>

F. W. Farrar has written at length to prove that the history of exegesis is a history of error,<sup>2</sup> and if black and white really mean different things, then the statistics are in favour of the one-time Dean of Canterbury. H. Riesenfeld asserts:

. . . it is inevitable that the innumerable contributions devoted to Gospel research are stamped to a greater or lesser degree by the attitude of the writer in question toward the person and character of Jesus. The fatal thing is that there is no such thing as research without presupposition. The more emancipated a scholar thinks he is, the less he is in actual fact.<sup>3</sup>

One of the best illustrations of these words is found in the history of the theology of Baur. Despite his protestations to the contrary, it does seem that the influence of Hegel's dialectical triad worked as a leaven amidst all his research. Stephen Neill suggests that:

. . . it is in the field of its presuppositions, which in themselves have nothing to do with critical or historical method, that the whole great structure of the work of Baur comes to grief. Again, and again, when the presuppositions are exercising their unfortunate influence, critical method is for the time being abandoned.<sup>4</sup>

No one who has read Mark Pattison's delineation of Warburton as a Baurlike scholar can readily forget the beacon light offered by the "brilliant example of a false method."<sup>5</sup> And who, reading the following from Albert Schweitzer, being aware also of Weiffenbach's main thesis on eschatology, can fail to ask himself significant questions regarding the brilliant work of scholars such as Bultmann, Dibelius, Martin Werner, Hans Conzelmann, T. F. Glasson, and J. A. T. Robinson?

The whole history of Christianity, down to the present day, that is to say, the real inner history of it, is based on the delay of the Parousia, the non-occurrence of the Parousia. .<sup>6</sup>

A. L. Moore blames presuppositions for what he believes to be the wrong stance of many scholars regarding the topic of his choice. At the opening of his work on a topic similar to the present one, he says:

Behind these views one can discern the pressure of evolutionistic materialism and of the whole secular climate of thought. Even more apparent is the pressure of a secular philosophy behind the reinterpretation of eschatology in terms of existentialism.<sup>7</sup>

Just a few years previous to Moore's statement, James Martin set out to study the history

of Protestant thought with reference to eschatology, and came to the same conclusions.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, there are grounds for believing that both Moore and Martin began their research with presuppositions basically contrary to those they criticise. Riesenfeld does rightly in reminding us that the more free of assumptions we each hold ourselves to be, the more in slavery to such we are. It would seem that philosophy, and not theology, has become the queen of the sciences, Weltanschauungen determining Biblerklärungen. Inasmuch as epistemology assures us that no man can even begin to think without presuppositions and that to some extent all thinking is done in a circle, it becomes important at the outset of any study to remind ourselves of our own personal prejudices and then to seek to counterbalance the distortion of these as far as possible. The present writer, remembering Riesenfeld's caveat, confesses that his own prejudicial entanglements are legion.

This issue is best illustrated by displaying the diametrically opposed positions that some scholars have held regarding the value of what has been called "the Olivet discourse," or sections thereof. The extreme, one could almost say, emotional, statements in some of the following estimates suggest the presence of a factor or factors other than the facts. If several people survey the same scene or object and report it as possessing opposite characteristics, the fault probably does not lie with that which is beheld.

These comments are particularly relevant to our study of Revelation, for all scholars acknowledge that Mark 13 (and its synoptic parallels in Matthew 24 and Luke 21) constitute the seed of the literary plant we call the Apocalypse. Those prejudiced against the content of the Second Advent sermon might certainly be expected to have similar prejudices as regards Revelation, and their category is legion. The following quotations also illustrate graphically the words of McCown:

No matter how original a scholar's imagination, no matter how penetrating and critical his judgement, society does far more of the writing of any book that lives than does the author himself.<sup>9</sup>

**D. Strauss:** Such a thing as He has here prophesied of Himself cannot happen to a man. If he prophesied the like of Himself and expected it, then to us He is a fanatic; if He uttered it of Himself without any real conviction, then He was a braggart and a deceiver.<sup>10</sup>

**C. H. Weisse** (re: Mark 13:24-27): an utterance constructed out of the most narrow and superstitious belief in the symbolic sayings of a fantastic book (Daniel) which ignorance or deceit attributed to a renowned old prophet, and out of the most extravagant, half-insane imagination.<sup>11</sup>

**Timothy Colani:** It contains the eschatology of Jewish Christians. . . Jesus could not have shared their opinions.<sup>12</sup>

**Wellhausen:** It can be safely asserted that if Jesus did not once speak beforehand to His disciples of His suffering and resurrection, He certainly did not of His parousia.<sup>13</sup>

**C. G. Montefiore:** It has very slight interest for us today, and little or no religious value.<sup>14</sup>

**Francis A. Henry:** So then: Jesus, whose Good Tidings told of the heavenly Father and forgiveness of sin, who called men to the higher righteousness of love and a new life in union with the Divine, whose religion was so inward and spiritual, so pure from all earthly alloy--crowns all with an eschatology so gross and so grotesque! Jesus, . . . can only repeat when he touches on mankind's destiny what the vulgarest rabbi had long been preaching in the synagogue! Jesus. . . whose

outlook on the world was ever sane, calm, clear-eyed -- yields to these fantastic dreams of his misguided people, and solemnly predicts as close at hand a startling series of preternatural events which have never come to pass! One who can believe that will believe anything.<sup>15</sup>

**T. Francis Glasson:** . . . this picture of a mistaken fanatic bringing the message that millions now living will never die.<sup>16</sup>

**F. C. Grant:** For any human being to identify himself with the Son of Man of the visions of Enoch, taken literally and without reinterpretation, could suggest little else than an unsound mind -- certainly not the supreme and unquestioned sanity of the Man of Galilee.<sup>17</sup>

**Holscher:** Any specifically Christian element is lacking in the discourse. The whole derives from Daniel.<sup>18</sup>

**J. A. T. Robinson** (re: Mark 13:24-27): . . . a secondary compilation reflecting the expectation of the early church.<sup>19</sup>

**C. C. Torrey:** The great eschatological discourse of Jesus, which we see reported by the three Synoptics, is a marvellously perfect composition in its detail and its conciseness, solidly and skilfully constructed by a writer who was worthy of His task. The Second Gospel, with all its planned brevity, could not more condense here than in the subsequent chapters. There was nothing in the discourse that could be omitted, and it was adapted entire.<sup>20</sup>

**D. Schenkel:** The most impressive and powerful utterance that Jesus made.<sup>21</sup>

**J. Schniewind:** . . . jedes einzelne Wort hat eine solche Prägung, wie sie nur von der Wirklichkeit "Jesus: her möglich ist. . . .<sup>22</sup> (. . . each single word has such a character as is only possible from the reality of Jesus.)

**B. Vawter:** That Jesus actually made such a prophecy, in view of his consistent eschatological teaching on the soonness of a divine visitation on Jerusalem and Judea, his conviction of the decisiveness of his own role in the workings of salvation history, and his reading of the temper of the times, there is absolutely no reason to question. His words are in the tradition of Israel's prophecy (cf. Jeremiah 7:1-15; Ezekiel 24:15-23) and have not been simply made up by Christian writers in the light of later events.<sup>23</sup>

**D. E. Nineham:** . . . the climax to that whole part of the Gospel he [Mark] was responsible for composing. As such it brings out the infinite significance the Evangelist saw in the events of the ministry.<sup>24</sup>

**Lambrecht:** Das 13 Kapitel hat im Mk-Evangelium einen ganz besonderen Platz; am Ende des öffentlichen Lebens Jesu und vor dem Beginn der Passion. Dieses Kapitel mag eine geschlossene Einheit bilden; doch kann man nur schwer a priori unterstellen, dass diese apokalyptische Rede rein zufällig und ohne besondere Gründe und Absichten an diese Stelle gesetzt wurde. . . auf diesem Höhepunkt des Evangeliums?<sup>25</sup> (The thirteenth chapter has a very special place in the Gospel of Mark; at the end of the public life and before the beginning of the Passion. This chapter may form a closed unity; yet can one only with difficulty a priori suppose, that this apocalyptic speech was purely coincidentally and without particular grounds and goals placed in this position. . . at this highpoint of the Gospel?)

**Beasley-Murray:** It has long been recognised that the discourse holds a significant place in the Gospel of Mark in that it forms both a conclusion to the teaching ministry of Jesus and an introduction to the passion narrative immediately afterwards. The horror of the betrayal and execution is not minimised, but the

proportion of the tragedy is changed. The cross for Jesus is the pathway to glory; he knows whither he goes, and the shadow of impending judgment falls upon the people that reject their King.

This has been admitted by writers as different as Loisy and Dodd, Guignebert and Lightfoot.<sup>26</sup>

**E. F. K. Muller:** Dann aber stehen wir wieder vor der Frage, ob nicht dieses christliche eschatologische System, das sich trotz zahlreicher Einzelparallelen zur jüdischen Apokalyptic als ein Neubau mit originaler Grundlage ausweist schliesslich auf Jesus selbst.<sup>27</sup> (But then we face again the question whether or not this Christian eschatological system, which, in spite of numerous individual parallels to [the] Jewish apocalyptic, identifies itself finally with Jesus himself as a reconstruction with an original basis.)

**J. P. Lange:** The eschatological speech of the Lord, the germ of John's Apocalypse; the New Testament exposition and form of the Old Testament ideas and symbols; the opposite and corrective of all apocryphal Apocalypsis.<sup>28</sup>

**J. J. Van Oosterzee:** We should have good right to wonder at the eschatological conceptions which are found, for instance, in Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians and Thessalonians, if they had not the least Christian historical foundation in just such sayings of our Lord as we meet with in this discourse.<sup>29</sup>

We suggest that the factor of presuppositions has vitiated the study of all apocalyptic even beyond its unfortunate influence on other parts of Scripture. The wise advice of Milligan must ever be kept in mind:

We must not, therefore, allow ourselves to be startled by the fact that in the case of no other book of Scripture has interpretation been marked by so much unsettledness and diversity of view as in the case of the Apocalypse, that the wildest theories have been assigned with the utmost confidence to times and places separated from each other by many centuries or by half the circumference of the globe. These things prove no more than the weakness and blindness of men. We dare not allow them to lessen our estimate of the definiteness of the Word of God."<sup>30</sup>

The presuppositions in the minds of all commentators on Revelation (including the present writer, of course) vary according to temperament, training, and culture. But there are some basic positions that have been unwittingly shared by a majority of even those favourable to the book. Several of these are quite indefensible.

Take, for example, the idea that Revelation is an "underground" work, and therefore written in symbols so as not to be understood by the civil authorities. From scores who so affirm we offer but one who is typical.

. . . the literature was always written in disguised or cryptic or symbolic language. Its meaning was not literal but hidden. . . . Remember, when these writings were being produced, a persecution was taking place, the people were immediately and murderously exposed to the activities of enemies. What would have happened to any author who wrote clearly, not in disguised words. . . ? The answer is obvious! In the first place, the author would be killed, and, second, the writing would be suppressed!

Therefore apocalyptic writing developed the way it did, written in camouflaged or concealed language. . . .<sup>31</sup>

Though this myth is cited again and again, it is quite erroneous. 'There is not the slightest foundation for the statement.'<sup>32</sup> Herder protests similarly.<sup>33</sup> And Kiddie writes:

In a word, John was honestly endeavouring to explain, not to obscure; to guide, not to perplex; to enlighten, not to darken. Whenever he thinks it necessary, he explains carefully and simply the significance of what he saw. . . it is an instance of the irony of the misunderstanding to which REVELATION is still liable that modern commentators are often inclined to the opinion that such explanations must be the work of an early interpolator. 34

A whole store of presuppositions of exegetes have emerged from another cardinal position--namely that Revelation is a type of political tract with its main import centreing around Rome, Nero, the Parthians, etc. See our comments on Revelation 13 and 17:9. Alan F. Johnson reviewing Mounce's otherwise splendid commentary had this to say:

Mounce and other preterist-futurists think that the interpreter can throughout the book read Rome into the descriptions of John and also "more than Rome." Can this really be done? (Certainly 17:9 does not refer to Rome, contra Mounce and other preterists and futurist-preterists.) Have not Mounce and others ignored the almost certainly correct criticisms of Barclay Newman (1963) and Paul Minear (1968), who have pointed out that the recent interpretations of the Apocalypse have turned the original theological treatise of John into a political "tract for the times"? Does not this mixture of preterist and futurist views partially fall under the same judgment and obscure the actual message of John at numerous points from chapter six onward?

35

Yet another popular assumption is that the primary purpose of prophecy is intellectual rather than moral and spiritual, being first and foremost identical with that of a crystal ball unfolding of the future with all its minutiae. No truly classical commentary has erred here, but the classics on Revelation are few indeed. A prophet is shown by Scripture to be more of a spokesman than a prognosticator. John the Baptist, the greatest till Christ's day of all who had ever been born to the prophetic calling, uttered few predictions. A true prophet was a for-teller (i.e. a spokesman for God), a forth-teller (a teacher), and only lastly a fore-teller. Thus their words were meant to lead men to God, and to humble opinions of themselves, quite incompatible with the arrogance which accompanies assumed insight into all the minute particulars of that future which is veiled to lesser mortals.

Scriptural testimony about the prophetic writings affirm that "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, . . ." (2 Timothy 3:16) ". . . but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31)." This does not deny the purpose set forth in other Scriptures such as 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2; 2 Peter 1:19; John 14:29; 13:19; but it does overshadow that purpose in importance.

It was Sir Isaac Newton who observed that the folly of interpreters has been to foretell times and things as if God designed to make them prophets. Prophecy is of chief use in many cases after its fulfilment as demonstrating God's foresight and providence.

In harmony with the moral and spiritual purposes of prophecy is this fact, that the biblical forecasts are rarely understood with clarity until the time of their accomplishment and often the latter is such that it could never have been anticipated in precise detail.

The usual view on this subject has been that prophecy is not intended to be fully understood before its fulfilment, that it is only when God "establishes the word of his servant and fulfils the counsel of his messengers," that the meaning and import of their words becomes fully manifest. The reason for this is to be found, as Patrick Fairbairn has so admirably pointed out, in the fact that these disclosures of things to come are made known to men by One who has made man and knows his human

frailty and how much knowledge of the future is for his good. Prophecy, in the words of Sir Isaac Newton, is not given to make men prophets, but as a witness to God when it is fulfilled. Prophecy is a wonderful combination of the clear and the obscure. Enough of God's purpose is revealed to act powerfully upon the heart and conscience of those to whom the heavenly message is sent, but not enough to make fatalists of them, to paralyse human effort, or to coerce the human will: enough to prove the message to have been a true word from Him to whom alone the unknown future is fully known, but not enough to enable man to foresee with certainty when and how that purpose is to be realised.<sup>36</sup>

From a practical standpoint, the clearest indication that prophecy is not "prewritten history" consists in the fact that there is in many cases such a wide difference of opinion among commentators as to whether certain predictions have been fulfilled, and whether, if fulfilled, this fulfilment is to be regarded as complete and final or as only partial or "germinant."<sup>37</sup>

It is vital to remember that because of the failure of the Jewish nation, New Testament writers were forced to reinterpret most of their Old Testament prophetic sources. Israel became the church and Israel's enemies lose their national and geographical distinctiveness being now applied in a worldwide sense.

This matter of reinterpretation applies in principle even to New Testament prophecies. Those things which could have been fulfilled in the first century had the church fulfilled the Great Commission (conflict with the Roman government would have been involved) ultimately will find an accomplishment identical in principle but of necessity different in detail. See Jeremiah 18:1-10.

The presupposition most common to interpreters and most devastating to their exegesis is that the New Testament in general, and Revelation in particular, assumes that a gap of many centuries must necessarily intervene between the two advents of Christ. This view minimises the significance of the first advent and the cross, however unwittingly, and assumes that the major purpose of Revelation is to predict twenty centuries of political and ecclesiastical events. J. H. Newman, from whose soteriology we strongly differ, wrote much worthy of consideration. Consider the following on the matter of discussion.

Though time intervenes between Christ's first and second coming, it is not recognised (as I may say) in the Gospel scheme, but is, as it were, an accident. For so it was, that up to Christ's coming in the flesh, the course of things ran straight towards that end, nearing it by every step; but now, under the Gospel, that course has (if I may so speak) altered its direction, as regards His second coming, and runs, not towards the end, but along it, and on the brink of it; and is at all times near that great event, which, did it run towards it, it would run into. Christ, then, is ever at our doors; as near eighteen hundred years ago as now, and not nearer now than then, and not nearer when He comes than now.<sup>38</sup>

Anyone who reads the New Testament from the viewpoint just expressed will find a complete harmony in its chronological statements. Such a reader will discover that the New Testament writers viewed the first Advent of Christ as the beginning of the end of the world. They did not deny the literalness of another coming of Christ but they viewed that event as an imminent completion of the End already begun. Consider the following passages of Scripture. ". . . he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26, last part). ". . . but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, . . ." (Hebrews 1:2, first part). "Children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that Antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour" (1 John 2:18). "Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages

has come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). "I mean, brethren, the appointed time has grown very short; . . . For the form of this world is passing away" (1 Corinthians 7:29, first part, 31, last part). "Besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. . . ." (Romans 13:11-12, first part). ". . . the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. . . ." (Romans 16:20, first part). ". . . behold, the Judge is standing at the doors" (James 5:9, last part). ". . . he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14, last part). ". . . and now has manifested through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; . . ." (John 12:31).

In the last generation the study of realised eschatology has become popular among New Testament scholars. C. H. Dodd, Oscar Cullman, George Eldon Ladd, and many others could be named. Such scholars have clearly spelled out the New Testament evidence that Christ fulfilled the Old Testament promises, and ushered in the kingdom of God at His first advent, and that the Christ event of Bethlehem to Calvary is essentially eschatological in quality.

As Luther once said, man is like a drunken peasant on horseback--prone to fall out of the saddle on one side or the other. While some, such as Dodd, Glasson, J. A. T. Robinson have denied the reality of the biblical teaching of the second advent, so absorbed have they been by the truth of realised eschatology that the "end" came with Christ in the first century; others, particularly the sects, have denied the truth of the eschatological nature of the first advent. It is chiefly the latter who have fathered the popular commentaries on the book of Revelation and have subsequently erred throughout because of their failure to see the "end-time" nature of the Cross event, and the New Testament teaching that God intended that the church should hasten the speedy return of the Saviour, an event possible in the first century itself.

Thus all the sects and even a large number of more reputable scholars, particularly in earlier times, have failed to give Calvary its true place as an eschatological event--indeed, THE eschatological event. Such have assumed that Revelation sets out to predict an end at least twenty centuries away and all the minute events leading up to that great day. Happily we now find welcome exceptions to such commentaries, even though not written for scholars. For example, note the following from Vernard Eller:

. . . God's final victory is guaranteed, because the completely decisive battle already has been fought and won. Jesus did the fighting on Good Friday; God confirmed the victory on Easter. There lies the turning point of world history; all that went before was prologue, all that follows (including the coming of the end itself) is epilogue. Jesus' death-and-resurrection was "it"; thereafter, God's war for the world can go to its appointed end. . . .

Finally, because the important victory already has been won and because the Victor is himself present and active, it follows that the end-state right now is proceeding out of the Christ-event, the kingdom at this moment is in process of becoming actual. This is not to discount the importance of or expectancy for "that day," the time when the heretofore "coming" kingdom shall in all truth "be" as it is in heaven. However, it is to affirm--as Revelation most certainly does--that eschatological reality is to be tasted as well as waited for. And this, in the final analysis, is why the Christian can afford to be perpetually expectant, can be happy in his eschatology whether God has named this as the last generation or not. Right now we are in the Eschaton which he is, no matter when the Eschaton of "that great gettin'-up

morning" arrives. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!<sup>39</sup>

Authors such as Eller not only put the Cross of Christ as an eschatological event primary in their interpretation of the Revelation, but they also see the necessity of recognising in its symbols reflections from God's mighty acts in other ages as recorded in the Old Testament. Thus Christ the living Word, and Scripture the written word, become the controls for interpreting the last inspired message. When we keep in mind that Old Testament history and law pointed to Christ and His salvation, then and then only will we be saved from abusing rather than using God's last word to His church. Thus the following comments from Ezell:

. . . Revelation is highly vulnerable to being used for either confirming or denying any figurative reading of world events which an expositor may desire to promote. Luther saw this practice of reading the present into the symbols as a threat to the simple gospel and the reformation movement. Such a procedure, then or now, is not an interpretation of the book but a process of "event substitution." The apocalyptic images of Revelation are not interpreted in light of their usage in the sources of Revelation. Rather, a modern event with similar features is located and then put forward as the meaning of the first century symbol. Most often the modern event is one that conjures up fear that the zero hour is near.

For example, present-day followers of this method of event substitution see the symbols of Revelation as references to Red China, Russia, the European Common Market, drugs, and the revival of the occult. The conclusion drawn from this identification is that the end is at hand since the events in the Book of Revelation are finally being fulfilled. But the question must be asked--what meaning would the Book of Revelation have had for a first century audience if it spoke of events which would not occur for 2,000 years? Not only would the events be so far in the future as to be irrelevant, but furthermore, the first century reader would have had no ability to understand the Book since he knew nothing about rockets, atomic bombs, tanks, Red China, the Common Market, etc.

This method of seeing Revelation as addressed to the interpreter's own day has been practiced throughout the history of the Christian church. Melchior Hofmann, a German Anabaptist, interpreted his time (the Reformation) as the time of the end. He supported his interpretation by the "fact" that the Turkish throng threatening Europe could be identified as Gog and Magog.

Only in a comic strip or science fiction movie can the fantasy of a time machine be used to project an ancient man from his century into a future century. John did not see himself in such a light. He says he is seeking to unveil "what must soon take place" (Revelation 1:1). An ethical issue has been raised at this point by Gerhard Ebeling when he says, "It is not at all a good thing to exploit the justified fears of mankind in order to restore a more interesting note to preaching that has otherwise become dull and meaningless, and thus to see our essential preaching task as proclaiming the fact that it is five minutes to zero hour." Ebeling goes on to state that the essential issue, the decisive issue, is that in the name of Jesus we proclaim the time of God. . . .

The contemporary fascination with the Revelation as God's "programmatic essay of future events" feeds a basic obsession--the desire to know the future."<sup>40</sup>

Eller in similar vein applies yet another "control." He insists that Revelation de sense, for the most part, to its original readers.

The recognition of the New Testament's insistence upon Jesus as the ultimate and final fulfilment of the Old Testament hope affects our study of Revelation in another



direction. Since Jesus is the fulfilment (and he Himself declared that to be the case), John was able to read the Old Testament prophecies and events. Rather than trying to impose Old Testament concepts and structures upon Revelation, we must determine how John interprets these concepts in light of the cross-resurrection event. It appears rather self-evident, but we must remember that Revelation was written after the Old Testament and its fulfilment. This will prevent us from trying to recast Revelation in the framework and structure of an Old Testament book such as Daniel or Ezekiel. We must see these Old Testament books in light of Revelation, not forge Revelation into the mold of Old Testament patterns, which, though complete for their day, lacked the full light of the fulfilment.<sup>41</sup>

By these quotations we have warned against another presupposition--implied in the foregoing ones, namely that the book of Revelation was chiefly written for the cultured, twentieth century occidental rather than for its original recipients in first century Asia. All these suppositions referred to imply the same mind-set and the same lack of biblical understanding. We wish to point out that the Scriptural presuppositions are otherwise, and that the New Testament's last book was written to spiritually arm and prepare first century Christians for the task of the universal spread of the gospel that the end of the world might be consummated in their day!

Let us notice some plain statements from Revelation.

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John. . . . Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near. Revelation 1:1,3

But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay upon you any other burden; only hold fast what you have, until I come. Revelation 2:24,25

Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you....Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth....I am coming soon; hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown....Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. Revelation 3:3,10,11,20

And behold, I am coming soon....And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near...He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! Revelation 22:7,10,20.

What is the meaning of these statements written in the first century?--"I am coming soon"; "the time is near"; "what must soon take place"; "if you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you,"

Many are the expedients which have been invented--not to explain these statements, but to explain them away. The most popular explanation is to say that the events foretold are to begin soon. A similar line is to suggest that the end will be sudden when it comes. Another is to affirm that it is merely the certainty of the issue that is foretold, rather than the time. Yet a fourth expedient is to assert that God is speaking from His perspective which is vastly different from our own. A more scholarly stratagem is to admit the difficulty and then negate it by assigning all such statements to a special, prophetic, apocalyptic terminology, i.e. to say that it is the manner of prophets to always affirm that the end is near. This, of

course, is true. But did they always thus affirm because of a prophetic "mind-set" or could they have intended at least some of their statements to be understood at face value?

Simcox would have us believe that the purpose of the "soon" statements "is to assure us of God's practical readiness to fulfil His promises, rather than to define any limit of time for their actual fulfilment."<sup>42</sup> Swedenborg reasons in a circle as he writes, "The Apocalypse was given in the first century, and seventeen centuries have now passed away; from which it is manifest that by 'shortly' is signified that which corresponds, which is certainly." Lange makes "soon" to mean "in swift succession" implying that the events to come will follow each other with great celerity.

Other commentators, either from honesty or prejudices of their own, have protested against such misinterpretation. Consider the following:

The subject-matter of this revelation comprises the events of the future--the near future. The argument that Greek *en tachei* implies that the events will not take place 'soon', but will be completed speedily once they begin, cannot be sustained; it is not what the original readers of the work would have naturally understood.<sup>43</sup>

We cannot, however, do justice to his very plain opening statement (cf. 1:3; 4:1; 12:10) by saying that he foresaw a long series of events covering centuries, which could be described as imminent because they were to begin shortly. Whatever earthly realities correspond to John's symbols, he expected them to be accomplished quickly in their entirety.<sup>44</sup>

The fulfilment of what is announced in the Revelation is here placed in the immediate future. So also in other passages. According to verse 3, and Revelation 22:10, the time is near. "I come quickly," says the Lord in Revelation 22:7, 12, 20, 3:11, 2:5, 16. These declarations are opposed to the view of those who would convert the entire book into a history of the time of the end, and confirms the view which treats it as our companion through the whole course of history. Neither do those do it justice who remark with Bengel, "therefore did the fulfilment begin immediately after the date of the book." Not merely was the beginning in general ascribed to the immediate future, but such a beginning as was to be the beginning of the end. . . .

It is nothing but a shift to say, as numbers do here, that the measure of time we are to think of is not, the human, but the divine, with which a thousand years are as one day (Psalm 90:4, 2 Peter 2:8). The remarks made respecting this in my Christology on Hosea 2: 6, 'Yet once it is a little while, and I shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land,' are equally applicable here: "Whoever speaks to men, must speak according to the human mode of viewing things, or give notice if he does otherwise. It is for the purpose of consoling us, that the prophet declares the shortness of the time. But for such a purpose, that only was suitable which might appear short in the eyes of men. Only in mockery or by deception could the prophet have substituted that, which was short in the reckoning of God." We have there shewn, that the shaking spoken of began to take effect in the immediate future. The axe was already laid to the root of the Persian kingdom (as in the time of John to that of the Roman), and its subsequent visible fall was only the manifestation of a much earlier latent one. De Wette's remark, that the shortness must not be taken too stringently, that it was used to encourage the suffering and warn the impenitent, represents the Seer's God and the Lord himself, who in Luke 18:8 likewise promises a speedy deliverance to his faithful people, as acting like the worthless physician who feeds his patients with false hopes. That Luke 18:7 can only be quoted in support of such a view on a wrong interpretation, is manifest. And in refutation of it, as also against the notion of its being the divine measurement of

time that is to be understood, there is the circumstance that in the fundamental passage, Ezekiel 12, to which the expression in verse 3, "the time is near," refers, the declaration "the days are near," in verse 23, corresponds to "in your days, ye rebellious house, will I do it," in verse 25. On the "what must shortly come to pass," compare 4:1, 12:6.<sup>45</sup>

The Greek designates neither figuratively the "certainty" of the future, nor the swiftness of the course of things, without reference to the proximity or remoteness of time in which they were to occur. . . . by the Greek in verse 3, it is decided that the speedy coming of what is to happen is meant. . . . The evasion that the Greek is to be understood "according' to the divine method of computation," as in 2 Peter 3:8, is contrary to the context.<sup>46</sup>

As regards the use of 2 Peter 3:8, "But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," we point out that it is quite wrong to link this Scripture with the clear statements in Revelation about the soon end of all things. Scripture never gives any examples of thus interpreting warnings about time. Such an approach is purely a human device for avoiding difficulty.

Secondly, the passage in its context is an affirmation that delay in judgment does not negate its certainty but rather indicates the long-suffering mercy of God. Peter is certainly not wishing to imply to his readers that God disregards all distinctions of time, or that He does not mean to be understood according to the human time expressions He uses. Indeed, Scriptural prophecy has frequently been very precise in its chronology. See Genesis 6:3; 15:13; 40:1; Numbers 14:33; Jeremiah 30:11; 29:10.

Again, when we compare Revelation 1:3; 22:10 with Daniel 8:26 the meaning of the time reference is plain. Fulfilment is not to be distant but near. The entire book (thus bounded at both ends by "soon") we are told has special meaning for the existing seven churches of Asia and has reference to their experience just ahead.

Revelation 17:10 is significant in this discussion. ". . . they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a little while." The world power is on its last legs. But one more phase is to be manifested and it will exist only for a little time. Readers in the first century would have understood this verse exactly as it reads. We repeat--the evidence is overwhelming that the book of Revelation was written to nerve the church of that day to complete the gospel commission. Heaven intended that faithful believers of that generation might see Christ come in the clouds and be caught up to meet Him without passing through the portals of the tomb.

## CHAPTER 4 [\(TOC\)](#)

### HOW LONG IS A GENERATION?

We have suggested that to assume that Revelation sets out to embrace twenty centuries of events great and small is an unbiblical position. There is another line of evidence on this matter which is clearly demonstrative for all who have not made up their minds beforehand. In a nutshell it is this--Revelation is the expansion of the Olivet discourse (as shown specially by the prophetic chain of chapter six, but also by the overall contents of its visions), and this discourse promised the consummation of all things for Christ's own contemporaries. Therefore, Revelation also sets forth a course of events which could all have been fulfilled in a single generation. 'Truly, I say to you, this *generation* will not pass away before all these things take place" (Mark 13:30). Let us consider this Markan key.

Lagrange, Busch, and others apply verses 28-31 to the first crisis, that of A.D. 70, but surely this must be on a par with the behaviour of one of Lewis Carroll's characters who practised believing sundry impossible things every morning before breakfast. Such an application has been rightly described as the most arbitrary of exegesis, and a veritable feat of strength.

Various and ingenious are the stratagems, both exegetical and philosophical, which have been devised to explain away Christ's "hard saying." The first tack usually adopted is to find a broader meaning for *generation* (*Gk. genia*). But, wherever we read of *genia* in the New Testament, it is the contemporaries of Christ who are signified. See Matthew 11:16; 12:39, 41, 42, 45, 23-26; Mark 6:38; Luke 11:50 f., 17:25. Especially compare Matthew 23:36 and 24:34. E. Ellis' suggestion is that *genia* here has a similar connotation to that found in some Qumran texts, namely, that of an indefinite period sometimes involving a number of literal generations, somewhat akin to the New Testament's usage of such eschatological expressions as *the last time* (*Gk. eschatos hōra*) in 1 John 2:18.

This has much to recommend it, but hardly meets the need when the repeated linking of the two crises into one throughout the chapter is considered, and the usual meaning of this *genea* throughout the gospels is remembered.

A. L. Moore is one of the most recent scholars to repeat an old expedient with reference to this troublesome verse. He contends that the expression *all these things* (*Gk. tauta panta*) could apply to the entire discourse of verses 5-27, but that on the other hand *tauta* in verse 30 must have an identical reference to the same word in verse 29, where it is clear that only the events prior to the end are in view. He says, ". . . if the reference of *tauta* (*all things*) in verse 29 is taken as being the events preceding the End only, that *panta* (*all*) of verse 30 can be understood as emphasising that all the "signs" of the End (verses 5-23) are to come upon the contemporary generation."

But this really will not do. It is understandable that *tauta* verse 29 can mean the signs listed in verses 5-23, because verse 29 itself detaches the Parousia from the *tauta* by saying *otan tauta idntē. . . yinwskete oti eggus estin*. The statement that follows and verse 32 means that *all these things* on two counts cannot mean just the fall of Jerusalem. One, the expression is far too solemn to be limited to that event, and secondly, the Greek expression *that day* (v. 32) is a technical term for the end. Besides, how incongruous to teach that all the signs of the imminent event would take place, but the event itself tarry for centuries! The signs surely cease to be signs if this be the case. The position taken by Moore destroys the very purpose of the fig-tree parable.

Moore replies to Beasley-Murray's objection that the addition of *panta* (*all*) in v. 30 rules out any limitation of the reference to exclude vv. 24-27, but he has not presented or

countered the whole of Beasley-Murray's case. The latter points out that Luke omits *tauta* (*these things*) altogether (Luke 21:32), and thus makes *panta* (*all*) embrace the whole discourse. Furthermore, Christ evidently regarded the fall of Jerusalem as part of the judgments of the end, and therefore the time of the final tribulation would also witness the final deliverance.

Mark 13:30 may be understood as belonging to a similar genre as Jonah's "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Here was the fiat of the Almighty to Nineveh. Hardly could a prediction be more definite as to what and when. The whole book of Jonah revolves around it. Yet the forty days passed, and according to the narrator, Nineveh still pointed its proud towers to the heavens. Jonah was certainly angry, but he was not surprised. He seems rather to have anticipated it. "I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repentest of evil."

An unusually frank commentator was Hermann Olshausen. It seemed his habit to acknowledge difficulties, and to confess the inadequacies of current explanations. Concerning Mark 13:30, he wrote, ". . . we do not hesitate to adopt. . . the simple interpretation -- and the only one consistent with the text -- that Jesus did intend to represent his coming as contemporaneous with the destruction of Jerusalem, and the overthrow of the Jewish polity."<sup>2</sup> His editor did not agree with him, and saw fit to indicate this by a footnote. But the same Olshausen took pains to introduce his exegetical comments on Matthew 24 by a preparatory note regarding the contingent nature of prophecy. His measured statements afford a reasoned philosophy for his own approach--a philosophy which he felt was drawn from Scripture itself.

It is certain that Christ and His contemporaries were well aware of contingent promises recorded by Moses and the Prophets. Had not Yahweh promised to take the captive Israelites direct from Egypt to Canaan--a distance requiring less than two weeks' journeying? And had not that same generation wandered outside Canaan for forty years and then failed of entrance?

We submit that the exegesis of Mark 13:30 is only complete if we allow for the possibility that Christ, as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, may have used an absolute statement with less than an absolute meaning, in harmony with those Scriptures He so implicitly trusted. He believed that if the early church proved faithful to its missionary commission, and if the chastened Jewish nation repented, the end would transpire in that same Age. It is this linking of the gospel proclamation to the world with the end of the age that provides the hint of the contingent element. Such proclamation would be dependent upon the whole-hearted dedication of the church. An uncertain human element is involved.<sup>3</sup>

Note the words of Berkouwer:

. . . These remarks of Jesus are directly and immediately addressed to His disciples. "You will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed" (Matthew 24:6); "They will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death" (vs. 9); "if any one says to you, 'Lo, here is the Christ'. . . do not believe him" (vs. 23). Thus Luke talks about armies surrounding Jerusalem and flight from Judea to the mountains (21:20 f.). "These are the days of vengeance, to fulfil all that is written" (vs. 22). Eschatological preaching cannot be divorced from this contemporaneity. The signs are too concrete to be interpreted as an explanation of catastrophes to take place in some remote "end-time"; they appear on the horizon of the lives of the apostles.<sup>4</sup>

Dale Moody agrees. "All the fourteen passages in the teaching of Jesus about 'this generation' had reference to the people who lived at the time of Jesus. It takes only a concordance and open eyes to see that this is true."<sup>5</sup>

This evidence harmonises perfectly with the danielic prophecies regarding the end of sin and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness within the seventy prophetic weeks after the decree to restore and build Jerusalem. See Daniel 9:24-27. It also harmonises with other clear New Testament statements, such as Matthew 10:23; 16:28; John 21:22; 1 Corinthians 7:29; Romans 13:11-12.

Consider the following points which summarise the distinctive essence of this commentary:

1. There is no basic subject in the book of Revelation which is not present in seed-form in the Olivet sermon.<sup>6</sup> The Revelation is an address to the seven churches of Turkey, and thus to the church universal. The discourse of Mark 13 (Matthew 24, Luke 21) was given to the nucleus of the church in Christ's day, and was intended for all believers. Both have as their theme the last days as mirrored in the microcosm of His own passion week. Both point to the final spread of the gospel, antichrist, persecution, apostasy, and signs in the heavens end on the earth. The Apocalypse fills out these topics with imagery from the law, the prophets, and the psalms.

2. This sermon of Mark 13; Matthew 24-25; Luke 21 is but a commentary on Daniel 4:24-27, employing the same concepts of the destruction of Jerusalem, the suffering of the Messiah, the coming of the antichrist, and the end of all things. (We will discuss in another place the fact that even the Olivet discourse is modelled on the events of Christ's passion, in harmony with Gabriel's words to Daniel which comprehended both advents.) Thus Revelation enlarges that address by Christ which itself expanded the key eschatological passages of the Old Testament apocalypse, particularly Daniel 9:24-27.

3. The key to the timing of Christ's return has been given clearly by Him. See Mark 13:10; Matthew 24:14, and compare Acts 3:19 ff. His return is conditional on the finishing of the Great Commission. The delay of the second advent is because the church has never fully grasped the nature of the gospel, and thus has been unmotivated, and unable to spread it as she should have done. Revelation 10:1-7; 14:6-12; 18:1-4 teach the same truth as Mark 13:10; Matthew 24:14.

4. Many of the experiences which will overtake the church in the last days have happened to the church of each generation, usually on a scale less in intensity, and always less in geographical extent. Thus the church through the centuries has not been left without a guide. Prophecy is apotelesmatic in nature repeatedly fulfilling itself until the final flowering of its consummative accomplishment. This means, of course, that such prophetic outlines are general rather than minutely detailed in application. Therefore all interpretations of the Apocalypse limiting its predictions to specific events subsequent to John's generation, and prior to the time of the end, are erroneous. Only fulfilments in principle are warranted.

As presented in prophecy, it is the world-wide spread of the good news of the gospel, leading all to decide for or against Christ and His cross, that will precipitate the end. It will be the universal proclamation of the offer of the gifts of forgiveness and righteousness which will light the fuse of all the final events foretold.

Revelation 6:10-11 teaches this clearly. ". . . they cried out with a loud voice 'O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?' Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been." Note the words of commentator Herman Hoeksema on this passage:

. . . this time that these souls must wait before their blood shall be avenged in the day of judgment publically as also further defined, and defined materially. How long must they wait? The answer is:

until their fellow servants and brethren that should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled their course. This is plain language. It simply means that the time is as yet not ripe for judgment. The world has not yet shown its real character in all the hatred of its corruption. And before the world is ripe for that day of judgment, the Lord cannot and will not come. We find this phenomenon time and again in Holy Writ. The prediluvian period lasted about sixteen hundred years before the measure of their iniquity was full. And even when the climax was almost reached, the Lord still gave them one hundred twenty years in which they might hear the testimony of God through Noah, so that it might become fully evident that the day of judgment was a day of righteousness and justice. The same is true of the history of Israel. That history shows us that they had killed the prophets and stoned the messengers of God who had been sent against them. And it seemed as if the Lord would never visit them for their iniquity. But the time was not yet ripe. Not until they had revealed their hatred to the full, not until they had clearly shown that they rejected the Son of God, could the day of judgment come and Jerusalem be destroyed. These judgments, so the Bible tells us, are but typical of the great day of the Lord that is to come. And therefore, also for that day the time must be ripe and the measure of iniquity must be filled. The witnesses of Christ also in the future must let their testimony go forth. They must witness against all that rises up against Him. And over against this testimony the world must reveal its hatred still more plainly than already it has done in the past. In the past all these things were mere local affairs. In the future the Christian world in general, so-called, will rise up against the church. In the past the witnesses of Christ were butchered, but the enemy was not so directly conscious that they rose up against the name of Jesus Christ. In the future the enemy will do so fully conscious that it is the hateful name of Jesus Christ that is the great obstacle to all their plans for the world. And thus the world becomes ripe for judgment. There are still a certain number who must be killed for the Word of God and for the testimony which they hold. And when they are killed, then the Lord will come and avenge His holiness and truth and establish His kingdom forever.<sup>8</sup>

Hoeksema has well summarized the biblical teaching that judgment does., It fall until warning has been pronounced and rejected on as wide a scale as the impending judgment is to be. The second advent which is to affect the whole world must be preceded by a warning to the whole world. It was the generation which was warned of the coming Flood which experienced it. It was the generation which heard the warning of the imminent end of Jerusalem which likewise experienced that event. God does not warn one generation and destroy another. Neither does He destroy any generation by catastrophic intervention until it has been warned. The world will not perish until all its inhabitants have been warned of the coming judgment.

Scripture sets forth the harvest principle in some passages where the end is in focus. See Mark 4:26-29 and Revelation 14:15; Revelation 22:11. These passages affirm that there will be no reaping of earth until the harvest is ripe, and the fruit both good and evil has been manifested on a worldwide scale. Apparently this world is a lesson book to the universe. God has loved not only this runaway earth, but also the ninety and nine other worlds which have never rebelled. He has permitted sin, only in order to safeguard His infinite worlds from ever again repeating such an experiment. The church here below demonstrates to the principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God. We are a theatre to the universe, to angels, and to men. See Ephesians 3:9,10; 1 Corinthians 4:9. The great controversy between good and evil on earth began in one place with one man and one woman. Only when the whole globe with all its inhabitants have taken their stand for or against the Creator, only when all everywhere have shown their

response to the love of God manifested at Calvary--only then will the end come. Men will judge themselves as they hear the gospel, and their decision will be confirmed by divine acknowledgement in the great judgment day.

These insights cast light on God's permission of Satanic activity, particularly as manifest in antichrist during the last days. Antichrist will be God's instrument to polarise the world into two camps--one of which will reflect the seal of God, the likeness of Christ, and the other, with the mark of the beast reflecting Satan. One company from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, will be threatened with a repetition of Calvary (not in its atonement sense, but as the flowering of fidelity to the law of Jehovah). The other company, by its murderous decrees against the saints, will reveal to the universe that following sin leads only to the ultimate development of satanic characters hardened by lying and murderous intent.

Do we mean that the early church failed in its mission and took God by surprise? In answer, we must first point out that truth in Scripture is often expressed in terms of paradox. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility illustrate this fact. The same applies to this matter of the Lord's return. Some passages of Scripture, the majority on the topic, emphasize the privilege of believers to hasten the advent, and the ideal will of God, that it shall soon take place. Other passages hint at possible failure and delay. On the one hand, believers ever since the death of the apostles, could have asserted, "We might have been in the kingdom long ago. Had every trumpeter on the walls given the trumpet a certain sound, Christ would have come ere this, and His children been gathered home." On the other hand, believers in all ages could assert that, like the stars in their appointed courses, God's purposes know no haste and no delay. Known unto God from the beginning of the world are all His works.

A curve can be described as concave or convex. All depends upon the viewpoint. This illustrates the truth under consideration. Of course God knows the exact day and hour of His return to this world. But just as surely He speaks ever to His people in terms of the ideal, encouraging them with promises of glory if they will but respond with all their hearts. All His warnings and promises are alike conditional. Prophecies that could have been fulfilled in days have been fulfilling in years, just as Israel, which could have been in Canaan in less than forty days, spent over forty years in pilgrimage. God was not taken by surprise when the church of John's day failed to take the gospel to all nations. He had given all the encouragement a loving heavenly Father could have given, and having done that, He loved them still even in their failure. As the all-wise One, He saw to it that the prophetic pattern portraying what could have been fulfilled in the first century remains appropriate for the continuing experience of the church in all ages, and particularly so for the last generation. The real, as well as the ideal, was in the mind that inspired the Apocalypse.

The sad record of church history is that the loss of first love at Ephesus speedily spread and intensified. Both the law and the gospel were quickly distorted, and the consequent lack of Christian assurance and joy sundered the nerve of missionary witness. That nerve has not yet been fully healed, but church history is a record of revivals of the original Pauline gospel, revivals which in every instance have led to zealous, evangelical witness. We have yet to see the revival foretold by Joel 2:28-29; Revelation 10; 14:6, and 18:1-4, which will evangelise the whole earth. It will inevitably come when the everlasting gospel is seen and experienced in its height and depth, length and breadth.

In summarising the theme of this chapter we quote quite a provocative passage from James P. Martin's work, *The Last Judgment*. It has been discussing the theology of Jonathan Edwards, and now proceeds as follows:

If the work of Christ really ended at the Cross, and if the age between the



Resurrection and Parousia is only the working out of what was there accomplished, the question arises as to the place of this age in the cosmic perspective of Christ's work. Edwards asked why the establishment of the Kingdom should require so much time after Christ's humiliation on the Cross.<sup>9</sup>

Edward's question is one we all should ask. Ephesians 3:10; Matthew 24:14; Revelation 6:10-11; 14:6-12; 15:3-4; 16:5,7 give the right answer.

## CHAPTER 5 [\(TOC\)](#)

### A BUNCH OF KEYS

The twentieth century has too often been not better, but worse than preceding centuries in its attempts to exegete Revelation. Fanciful and fantastic speculations are woven without the limits of sense or Scripture. One thing is certain--if any single interpretation of biblical passages about the future is correct, then the vast majority have been wrong. It is as certain as night follows day, that the majority of sectarian commentaries on Revelation are not worth the paper they are written on. Only this awareness can prevent a modern writer adding to the confusion.

All of which gives point to the necessity of an adequate hermeneutical approach to Revelation. Wilbur Smith claims that "the study of the book of Revelation calls for more preliminary consideration than that of any other book in the Bible. The better a reader has fixed in his mind certain fundamental principles of interpretation the more readily will he understand these confessedly difficult chapters."<sup>1</sup> Commentators have always waxed eloquent in superlative vein, in describing the difficulty of interpreting the chapters they face and sometimes unwillingly.<sup>2</sup> Therefore we propose at this juncture to submit some hermeneutical principles which spring from the book itself, and which can therefore with safety be employed as a legitimate exegetical approach.<sup>3</sup> These are supplementary to, and not substitutionary for, well-known standard exegetical procedures.

The first principle requiring attention is not supplementary. It is basic for all interpretation, but doubly so for this particular book. Inasmuch as all the writings of the New Testament are occasional pieces, more representative, of persuasive oratory than of enduring literature, they are to be recognised as Tracts for the Times, and the vital question asked--"What times?"<sup>4</sup>

The first page of Revelation gives an adequate answer. John testifies that he was in the isle of Patmos "on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." The most obvious meaning of the words is that as a result of the persuasion of government the writer found himself in a new habitat.<sup>5</sup> That this is right interpretation seems evidenced by the references to persecution and martyrdom which permeate the rest of the book. Any interpretation which would be irrelevant to the persecuted Christians of the first century is thereby invalidated.

So much for the times. Now we ask, "What sort of tract is this one? How does John meet the needs of the time"? And again John himself gives us the answer. His work is an **OmoxdAulpts**. This classifies the book as within a certain class of literature.<sup>6</sup> Writings of this kind are usually written in prose not poetry, and describe the existing crisis against the background of world history, and they usually do so in the language of symbol.

It follows, therefore, that in order to explain an apocalypse, we must first identify the earthly realities to which the heavenly symbols correspond, and then see how by the use of this symbolism the author has tried to interpret earthly history.<sup>7</sup>

That this judgment of the symbolic nature of John's tract for the times is correct is indicated at the close of his introduction. There he says, for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."<sup>8</sup>

Thus John asserts: "In this my opening vision I saw stars as the symbols of angels, and lampstands as the symbol for churches." The literary context adds its endorsement, for the following verse speaks of One who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who walks

among the seven golden lampstands. It is certain that the literal meaning is unintended. Incongruous indeed would be the mental image of one large enough to hold stars like the sun in his palm, and yet small enough to thread his way between lampstands.

The book is full of symbols.<sup>9</sup> But do the symbols chiefly belong to a common source or do they have diversified origins? The answer again is found on the first page. Here we have frequent references to the Hebrew prophets, and to Hebrew ritual and history. Daniel, Zechariah, Isaiah, et al., are repeatedly cited, as if designed to lead the reader to regard the Apocalypse "as a sequel to, and continuation of, Hebrew prophecy. . . ." Israel's experience when called to become a nation of kings and priests, and the institution of the sanctuary and the priesthood are also alluded to.

W. Milligan has it right when he sums up his conclusions regarding the symbols of Revelation. He says:

(1) They are for the most part suggested by the religious position, training, and habits both of the writer and his readers. The Apostle had been a Jew, in all the noblest elements of Judaism a Jew to the very core. ...We may expect that what is written from such a point of view will breathe the very essence of Old Testament prophecy, more especially in its apocalyptic parts, will be moulded by its spirit, be at home amidst its pictures, and be familiar with its words.

(2) . . . . Similar remarks may be made with regard to the historical events referred to in the Apocalypse. Such events often lie at the bottom of its symbols, but it may be doubted if there be a single instance in which the incident taken advantage of by the Seer was not both well-known and of the deepest interest to his readers. . . . But the symbolism of the Revelation is wholly and exclusively Jewish.

(3) The symbols of the Apocalypse are to be judged of with the feelings of a Jew, and not with those of our own country or age.<sup>10</sup>

Note also the comments of Austin Farrer:

The ancient scriptures are authoritative with him, but their authority is that of starting-points, rather than limits. The unique status of what we now know as the canonical books is unaffected by such a manner of using them. He works from the Old Testament as he works from no other writings. His way of developing scriptural themes may often seem to be influenced by secondary works such as First Enoch. But Enoch itself is dependent on the Old Testament much as St. John is. It is a case of one preacher or expositor following another in his line of exposition. By so doing, he does not set his predecessor on a level with the scripture they both expound. There is much in the Revelation which presupposes a knowledge of scriptural texts and is scarcely meaningful without it. There is nothing which requires of St. John's reader an acquaintance with the Enochian visions. . . .<sup>16</sup>

. . . It has frequently been held in recent years that he embodied whole passages from lost books, whether Christian or Jewish; or again, that his Revelation is essentially a re-editing of earlier work. No such hypothesis is tenable. The book, just as it is, grows and branches out of itself, like a tree. The incoherence formerly explained by the presence in the text of imperfectly digested older fragments were the products of scholarly misunderstanding. Only see what St. John is doing, and you have refuted every hypothesis of the kind.<sup>17</sup>

Having said that the symbolism of this book is primarily Jewish, we must next enquire whether John was now applying the things of Israel to that nation still, or to the Christian church as the new Israel. Our conclusion here, also, will vitally affect our interpretation of many passages.

We believe that the whole trend of the book, from the introductory reference to the Christian churches in Asia under Jewish sanctuary symbolism, to the final vision of the New Jerusalem, testifies to the fact that in the thinking of the seer, the Christian church has taken the place of literal Israel.<sup>18</sup> This fact may be the explanation for the phenomenon often commented upon--the strange Hebraic Greek used by the seer--"unlike any Greek that was ever penned by mortal man,"<sup>19</sup> according to R. H. Charles. This Greek, however, "is not the product of incompetence, for he handles it with brilliant lucidity and compelling power. . . ." <sup>20</sup> One has commented thus:

The diction of the Book of Revelation is more Hebraistic than that of any other portion of the New Testament. It adopts Hebrew idioms and Hebrew words. It studiously disregards the laws of Gentile Syntax, and even courts anomalies and solecisms; it christianizes Hebrew words and sentiments, and clothes them in an Evangelical dress, and consecrates them to Christ.<sup>21</sup>

We do not find in John's book the evidence that we have in Paul's epistles of a hope for Israel's conversion to Christ. He seems rather to look upon those who were circumcised as part of "the synagogue of Satan." They have become tormentors of Christ's followers, and as such they now belong to the great city of Babylon responsible for the crucifixion of Christ and the martyrdom of His followers. In John's eyes the proud name of Jew, with all its ancient associations, had become the prerogative of those who gave allegiance to the true Messiah."<sup>22</sup> Commenting on Revelation 7, Kiddie says:

. . . John makes what amounts to a twelvefold assertion that the Christian churches are the chosen people, complete heirs to the ancient Jewish heritage (cf. James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1); it was as the elect nation that they must both suffer persecution and enjoy vindication.<sup>23</sup>

Carpenter sums up the matter:

The Christian Church absorbs the Jewish, inherits her privileges, and adopts, with wider and nobler meaning, her phraseology.

The historical basis of the Apocalypse is the past history of the chosen people; God's dealings with men always follow the same lines. The Apocalypse shows us the principle working at high levels and in a wider arena. The Israel of God, the church of Christ, takes the place of the national Israel.<sup>24</sup>

We feel that the principle here expressed is mandatory for a correct exegesis of Revelation. For failure to observe it consistently, many have made shipwreck of their task. Even such a classic commentary as Beckwith's forgets it to some extent when commenting on the key chapter of Revelation concerning the two witnesses. Ladd, more recently, has followed his example.<sup>25</sup>

From this principle emerges yet another. If the things of Israel are now applied to the Christian church they must thereby automatically have a worldwide application rather than merely a local.<sup>26</sup> The true Israel is scattered throughout every nation, and similarly Babylon also has become worldwide. The seven lampstands point to a worldwide body of believers, but the original seven-branched candlestick resided in a Palestinian holy place.<sup>27</sup>

Throughout this book John takes materials from the visions of the Old Testament prophets originally couched in a local setting, and he applies them to worldwide events. For example, Revelation 1:7 applies the original mourning of some in the land of Palestine, and gives to it an eschatological universal application. In Revelation 3:4,5 the "white raiment" of Israel's priest is promised to the faithful in all the world. Revelation 6:14 takes a passage from Isaiah's description of the destruction of Idumea and applies it to the end of

the world. The following verse alludes to Isaiah 2:10-22, originally levelled at impenitent Judah, but in its new setting the significance has reference to an impenitent world at the time of the second advent of Christ. And Revelation 6:16 similarly takes words of threatened judgment upon Samaria and refers them to the wicked of all the world at the end of time. The following chapter of Revelation uses the vision of Ezekiel regarding the marking of some in Jerusalem, but now its usage applies for protection for Christians in the four quarters of the earth. Examples could be multiplied, but these are sufficient to illustrate the principle. The words of Wilbur Smith are pertinent though not originally intended to make this particular point.

This is supremely the book of one world, and surely now, in the middle of this twentieth century, we are approaching a one-world condition. Frequently in the Apocalypse we come upon such a phrase as "many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (10:11; 11:9; 17:15), which suggests the universal scope of the vision. When kings are introduced, they are the "kings of the whole world" (16:14; 17:2,18; 18:19 19:19). Of Satan, it is said that he is "the deceiver of the whole world" (12:9). All the nations commit fornication with the harlot (18:3,23). The economic boycott enforced by the beast covers all mankind (13:16,17). In fact, the beast from the sea has given to him "authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation" (13:7); and of him it is said, "All that dwell on the earth shall worship him" (13:8). There is great significance in the fact that when the time comes for Christ to assume his rightful place as King of kings and Lord of lords, the word for the government of his world is in the singular, "the kingdom of this world" (11:15).<sup>28</sup>

What has already been said underlines the fact that the entire book of Revelation is a mosaic of Old Testament passages, and therefore any solitary interpretation which ignores this fact must inevitably founder.<sup>29</sup>

Closely integrated with the foregoing is the usage in the Apocalypse of the rituals and festivals of Israel's sanctuary.<sup>30</sup> This too is not without significance for interpretation of the book, and we have enlarged upon it in our chapter on the structure of Revelation.

A vital principle for any hermeneutic is the Christ-centred nature of the work, and this in ways beyond the obvious. The life of Christ, particularly His ministry from the baptism on, is a vital key to the visions.<sup>31</sup> John assumes the truth of the New Testament teaching that the church is the body of Christ, and therefore it is to be expected that the body will share the experience of the Head. Chapter 11, in particular, illustrates this.

But not only the life of Christ as regards events is significant for the interpreter. His teachings also play their part. It cannot be too strongly stressed that Christ's sermon on the Mount of Olives is the seedbed of the Apocalypse in a special sense.<sup>32</sup> All the key concepts of Mark 13 are also to be found in an enlarged form in this book. The spread of the gospel, the persecution of its adherents, international disasters such as war, famine, and earthquake, the time of trouble such as never was, the appearance of Antichrist including false Christs and false prophets, and His own return in glory to rescue and reward the saints--all these which figure so prominently in the Olivet discourse are found again in symbolic yet more detailed form in the Apocalypse.

Most of what has been said in the immediately preceding pages amounts to the fact that the book with which we are concerned revolves around Christ,<sup>33</sup> His ancient testimony through the prophets, and His own more recent revelation, and His worldwide church--the new Israel. Note how Piper has summarised these emphases.

Was steht im Mittelpunkt der Botschaft, die der Seher verkündigen will? Negative kann man sagen: nicht Gott. . . . tätig ist nicht er, sondern Christus oder Jesus, wie

ihn Johannes mit Vorliebe nennt. . . . Mit gleichem Recht könnte man aber auch sagen, die J. Beschäftige sich in erster Linie mit dem Gottesvolk. . . . Genauer aber wird man sagen müssen, dass die J. die Wechselbeziehung zwischen dem himmlischen Herrn und seinem Volk auf Erden beschreibt, wobei das letztere alle Auserwählten durch die ganze Geschichte hindurch umschließt. Das zentrale Geheimnis, das Johannes zu verkündigen hat, ist das Teilhaben der Glaubigen an Christus und seinem Wirken und Leiden, und daher auch an seinem schliesslichen Triumph.<sup>34</sup>

Thus Piper rightly sees that in this book the church is seen doing the same work of proclamation as her Lord, and as sharing His sufferings and victory. This truth casts light not only on the symbols of the people of God such as the temple, the witnesses, the twelve tribes of Israel, the woman clothed with the sun, the new Jerusalem, etc., but also on the opponents of Christ and His church--the dragon, beast, and false prophet, and Babylon. Thus the interpreter can be saved from novel and erroneous applications of the symbols.

While it has been emphasised that the recognition of the book as apocalyptic literature is a guiding principle, it should also be pointed out that the book claims to be more than just a typical apocalypse.<sup>35</sup> Its oft-repeated claim is that it is also prophecy.<sup>36</sup> It is not for us to endeavour to analyse John's psychical state while illuminated, but it is for us to recognise the nature of the claims he makes.<sup>37</sup> According to his own statements the book is not the product of coolly reasoned literary art. He believed himself to have been "in the Spirit" and to have received from heaven such vital messages that all who dare to tamper with them are anathematised.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, John claims that his book has for its theme the eschatological crisis.<sup>39</sup> G. B. Caird translates the last sentence of Revelation 1:3, "For the crisis is near," and thereby he does justice to the constant implications of John's assertions. Beasley-Murray goes further than some in making reference to this matter, but in essence his words reflect the claims of the Apocalypticist himself.

John was more than a poet setting forth in vague images the triumph of God over all evil. He wrote for the churches under his care with a practical situation in view, viz., the prospect of the popular Caesar-worship of his day being enforced on all Christians. . . . Grasping the principles involved, John was given to see the logical consummation of the tendencies at work, mankind divided to the obedience of Christ or antichrist. On the canvas of John's age, therefore, and in the colours of his environment, he pictured the last great crisis of the world, not merely because from a psychological view point, he could do no other, but because of the real correspondence between his crisis and that of the last days. . . . this 'foreshortened perspective' no more invalidates his utterances than it does those of the OT prophets and of our Lord Himself, for it is characteristic of all prophecy.<sup>40</sup>

It seems to us that only the recognition of these features which characterise the book, can lead to an adequate exegesis of its contents.<sup>41</sup> Some of these features are so indispensable to an interpreter that we propose to enlarge upon them in the following pages. We refer the reader to the section on the Structure of Revelation, for the format of the book is also a valuable key to its exegesis.

## CHAPTER 6 [\(TOC\)](#)

### A SKELETON SPEAKS

Many and varied have been the suggestions for outlining the structure of the Apocalypse. Some of these outlines are too cumbersome to be useful, while others are too vague. Several err by being excessively refined, and are clear only to those who framed them. (Lohmeyer, for example, divides the book into seven divisions, and then divides each of these into seven. Many have seen the legitimacy of the first, but few the second.) Simcox is representative of many as he urges all to sense the connection between the structure and correct exegesis:

It is quite certain, that that order is not arbitrary nor accidental, that the arrangement is (if we may apply the terms of human criticism) as elaborate, as artistic, and as symmetrical as any of the descriptions: and consequently it may fairly be held, that the arrangement forms an essential part of the Seer's teaching, and that no interpretation can be adequate which does not give a reason and a meaning for the arrangement.<sup>1</sup>

We offer what seem to us the best analyses, and urge the reader to study all possible variants.

### *An Analysis of the Apocalypse by W. J. Erdman, D.D.*

#### I THE SEVEN CHURCHES

1:1-8	The Prologue
1:9-20	The Son of Man
2:1-3:22	The Seven Churches

#### II THE SEVEN SEALS

4:1-5:14	Introduction	The Throne, the Lamb, and the Book
6:1-17	Progression	The Six Seals
7:1-17	Episode	The Sealed and the Saved
8:1	Consummation	The Seventh Vial

#### III THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

8:2-5	Introduction	The Angel and the Incense
8:6-9:21	Progression	The Six Trumpets
10:1-11 to 11:14	Episode	The Angel, the little Book, the Two Witnesses
11:15-19	Consummation	The Seventh Trumpet

#### IV THE SEVEN PERSONAGES

12:1-13:1a	Introduction	The Two Signs in Heaven
13:1b-18	Progression	The Great Tribulation
14:1-13	Episode	The First Fruits and the Three Angels
14:14-20	Consummation	The Harvest and the Vintage

#### V THE SEVEN VIALS

15:1-8	Introduction	The Overcomers and the Seven Angels
16:1-12	Progression	The Six Vials
16:13-16	Episode	The Gathering of the Kings
16:17-21	Consummation	The Seventh Vial

#### VI THE SEVEN DOOMS

17:1-18	Introduction	The Babylon and the Beast
18:1-24	Progression	The Doom of Babylon
19:1-10	Episode	The Four Hallel's
19:11-20:15	Consummation	The Six Final Dooms

## **VII THE SEVEN NEW THINGS**

21:1-8	Introduction	New Heaven, Earth, Peoples
21:9-22:5	New Jerusalem	City, Temple
22:6-21	The Epilogue	Luminary, Paradise

## ***F. W. FARRAR'S OUTLINE<sup>3</sup>***

After the Prologue, which occupies the first eight verses, there follow seven sections:

1. The letters to the Seven Churches of Asia (i.9-iii.22).
2. The Seven Seals (iv.-vii.).
3. The Seven Trumpets (viii.-xi.).
4. The Seven Mystic Figures--the Sun-clothed Woman; the Red Dragon; the Man-Child; the Wild Beast from the Sea; the Wild Beast from the Land; the Lamb on Mount Sion; the Son of Man on the Cloud (xii.-xiv.).
5. The Seven Vials (xv.-xvi.).
6. The Doom of the Foes of Christ (xvii.-xx.).
7. The Blessed Consummation (xxi.-xxii.7). The Epilogue (xxii.8-21).

Note also Kenneth Strand's outline.

## ***CHIASTIC STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS***

### ***PART ONE (History)***

#### **PROLOGUE:**

1:1-11

#### **A**

Church in Present Earth

Church Militant

Promises made to Overcomers

1:12-3:22

#### **B**

Ongoing Activity of God

Throne, Living Creatures, 24 Elders, Lamb

"How long...do you not judge and avenge?"

4:1 to 8:1

#### **C(a)**

Trumpet Warnings to the Wayward

7 Trumpets

8:2 to 11:18

#### **C(b)**

Evil Powers Oppose God and His People

Dragon, Beast and False Prophet - Babylon



11:19-14:20

## ***PART TWO (Last Judgment)***

### **C(a)'**

Vial Pagues on th Wicked

7 Last Plagues

15:1-16:21

### **C(b)'**

Evil Powers Judged by God

Babylon, False Prophet, Beast and Dragon

17:1-18:24

### **B'**

Judgmental Finale by God

Throne, Living Creatures, 24 Elders, Lamb

"You have judged and avenged"

19:1-21:4

### **A'**

Church in New Earth

Church Triumphant

Promises Fulfilled to Overcomers

21:5-22:5

## **EPILOGUE**

22:6-21

Obviously, number has determined much of the plan of Revelation. There are 54 sevens in this book, and it is not strange to find whole sections dominated by that number, such as the Seven Churches, the Seven Seals, the Seven Trumpets, and the Seven Bowls. We might also expect that this dominant number would characterise the overall structure as the above outlines indicate. Preston and Hanson suggest that "in view of his preference for sevens a sevenfold division has the most plausibility."<sup>4</sup>

It should also be noticed that in each chief division of sevens such as the churches, seals, trumpets, and bowls, there is a distinction between the first three and the last four, or between the first four and the last three. Again, it is characteristic of the divisions to be prefaced by an introductory vision which is thematically linked to the content which follows. Furthermore, in the chief prophetic chains we find a parenthetical interlude just prior to the last section. Thus, after the sixth seal we have a parenthesis of cheer; after the sixth trumpet we have a similar parenthesis, though this one is stamped more by the note of warning which makes it homogeneous with the tone of the whole trumpet series. Finally, in the series of the seven last plagues, once more we find a parenthesis just prior to the end, and this, as that of the seals, is of consolatory nature. See the following diagram.

## ***THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE CHIEF PROPHETIC CHAINS OF REVELATION--THE SEALS, TRUMPETS, AND PLAGUES***

Chronologically, the seals and trumpets begin and end at the same time, covering the whole Christian era, and also recurring from age to age. The seven plagues are called "the last," because "in them is filled up the wrath of God," and they succeed the preliminary and partial plague-judgments of the trumpets. The characteristic form of each series is an introductory vision, six members of the series followed by a parenthesis of consolation,

and the seventh member as comprehending the next series.

**SEALS** - Christ - the Goel Redeemer

Introductory Vision: Rev. 4:1 to 5:14: Throne, Lamb Book

Seal One     White Horse

Seal Two     Red Horse

Seal Three   Black Horse

Seal Four    Pale Horse

Seal Five    Martyrs, White Raiment

Seal Six      Earthquake, Sun, Moon, Stars

Parenthesis of consolation: Rev. 7: Sealing of Saints

Seal Seven   7 Trumpets

**TRUMPETS** - Christ - Goel Avenger

Introductory Vision: Rev.8:1-5: Intercession of Christ

Trumpet One        Hail, Fire, Blood

Trumpet Two        Fiery Mount. 1/3 Sea to Blood, Ships Destroyed

Trumpet Three       Star Falls on Rivers, Founts. Wormwood

Trumpet Four       1/3 of Sun, Moon, Stars Darkened

Trumpet Five       Smoke and Locusts from Opened Pit

Trumpet Six        Euphrates. Angels Loosed Myriads Demonic Horsemen

Parenthesis of consolation: Rev 10 to 11:14: Final Proclamation and Results

Trumpet Seven     7 Last Plagues

**PLAGUES** - Christ - Goel Avenger and Judge

Introductory Vision: Rev. 15:1-8: Christ's Intercession Ceases

Plague One        Foul Sores

Plague Two        Sea to Blood. Death of Sea-life

Plague Three       Rivers and Founts. to Blood. Death of Sea-life

Plague Four        Scorching Sun, Men Blaspheme, No Repentance

Plague Five        Beast's Kingdom Darkened. Blasphemy Intensifies

Plague Six        Euphrates Dried Up Before Kings of the East. 3 Unclean Spirits

Parenthesis of warning: Watch, Keep Garments

Plague Seven      Lightning, Earthquake, Hail, Babylon Falls

A close study of the various series shows that as with the visions of Daniel they are repetitive, and chronologically simultaneous (with the exception of the bowls which are described as the "seven last plagues"). The scenes associated with the climax of each chain are almost identical--earthquake, thunders, hail, and voices.

This fact is vital for interpreting Revelation lest we make the mistake of many early commentators, and conclude that the trumpets do not begin till the seals are over.<sup>6</sup> Of similar help is the observation that in each great series, the fifth set of symbols point to the special form of the eschatological crisis, while the sixth is the actual culmination of that crisis. The seventh consummates the preceding, and in all but the last chain of the bowls, is the bud from which the following chain of seven issues.

Lange suggests that we should notice that having divided the book into its two chief sections, 1-11, 12-22 (recognised by most commentators), we should also observe that the first sets out the course of the world to the end, and the second the course of the world in the end.

Strand's analysis is very similar, as he applies up to the end of the fourteenth chapter as historical, and then the remainder as eschatological. This eschatological high point of the second part of the book agrees with the ascending climax found in each of the great chains. As Mounce says: "Each new vision intensifies the realisation of coming judgment. Like a mounting storm at sea each new crest of the wave moves history closer to its final destiny."<sup>7</sup>

Returning to the main outline, let us observe the reason for the superiority of Strand's pattern over others. He, as with Moulton and others, has observed the chiasmic nature of the inbuilt pattern whereby the first and the last are parallel, the second and the second last, and so on. It is the parallel nature of the prologue and epilogue which gives the clue to this phenomenon. The epilogue repeats all the main emphases of the introductory verses of the book. Compare 1:2 and 22:6; 1:3 and 22:7; 1:4-6 and 22:16; 1:7,8 and 22:12,13; 1:9,10 and 22:8.

A simple outline which fulfils the anticipated septenary arrangement and also recognises the principle of chiasmus follows. This is the outline we will follow in the present volume, without any claim to its superiority, for the book is purposefully capable of a variety of structural summaries.

## **OUTLINE SHOWING PRINCIPLE OF CHIASMUS**

The Church Militant, chs. 1-3

The War Begins, ch. 4:1-8:1

Trumpet Calls to Surrender, ch. 8:2-11:19

Synopsis of the War, ch. 12:1-14:20

Amnesty ends, and Judgments fall, chs. 15,16

The War is Won, chs. 17-20

The Church Triumphant, chs. 21-22

We have referred to the parallels between the prologue portion of section one and the epilogue portion of section seven. Let us now observe the relationships existing between the remaining portions of each section.

Church Militant		Church Triumphant
2:7	The tree of life	22:2
3:5	The book of life	21:27
2:11	The second death	21:8
3:12	The new Jerusalem	21:10

3:12 God's name written 22:4  
on His people

3:21 The throne 22:3

3:14 faithful and true 21:5

2:7,11, the overcomers 21:7  
17,26;

3:5,12,21

This characteristic of prolepsis is common in Revelation. Consider the following:<sup>8</sup>

Christ's second advent: Revelation 1:7; 3:3,11,20; 6:14-17; 11:17,18; 14:14-20; 16:12;  
19:11-21

The wailing and destruction of the wicked: Revelation 1:7; 6:14-17; 19:11-21

The seven stars: Revelation 1:16,10,13--compare Revelation 2:1

The first and the last: Revelation 1:8,11,17; 2:8; 22:13

Was dead, and is alive: Revelation 1:18; 2:8

A sharp, two-edged sword: Revelation 1:14,15; 2:16; 19:15

Eyes as a flaming fire: Revelation 1:14,15; 2:18; 19:12

The seven Spirits: Revelation 1:5,18; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6

The faithful Witness: Revelation 1:5; 3:7; 6:10; 19:11

The true Witness: Revelation 1:5; 3:14; 19:11; 22:6

The tree of life: Revelation 2:7; 22:1

Jews: Revelation 2:9; 7:1-8; 14:1; 21:12

Saints have power over the nations: Revelation 2:26,27; 17:14; 20:4; Ps. 149:5-9

Coming as a thief: Revelation 3:2; 16:15

White raiment: Revelation 3:5; 6:11; 7:14; 19:8

The synagogue of Satan: Revelation 2:9; 13:6,8,14-18, etc.

Where Satan's seat is: Revelation 2:13; 13:3; 18:2

Queen Jezebel, who influenced her husband at the head of the state, to lead Israel into  
sun-worship: Revelation 2:20; 18:7

Hour of test: Revelation 3:10; 13:8-18; 14:6-12

Warning of the Judgment: Revelation 3:14-21; 14:6-12,14-20; 15:16

The 24 elders: Revelation 4:4,10; 5:8,14; 11:16; 19:4

The four beasts: Revelation 4:6; 5:8,14; 6:1,3,5,6,7; 19:4

The temple: Revelation 3:12; 7:15; 11:1,2; 14:15,17; 15:5-8

The holy city: Revelation 3:12; 11:1,2; 14:20; 21; 22

Kings and priests: Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:4

The kings of the earth: Revelation 1:5; 6:15; 16:14; 17:13,14; 19:19

Section two and six also echo each other. Edwin R. Thiele has noticed this, and comments:

Striking similarities will be noticed between the symbolism of Revelation 4-7 and that of Revelation 19 where the closing events of the great struggle against the hosts of evil are pictured. In both scenes there is a picture of heaven opened (4:1; 19:11); God is seated on His throne (4:2,9; 5:13; 19:4,6); salvation, glory, honours, and power are ascribed to the Lord (5:1; 7:10,12; 19:1); there is a noise of thunder (6:1; 19:6); God is Judge and Avenger of the blood of His servants (6:10; 19:2); the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fall down in worship (4:10; 5:8,14; 19:4); a great multitude arrayed in white stands before the throne (7:9,13,14; 19:6-8); a white horse goes forth in battle (6:2; 19:11); crowns are on the heads of the riders of the horses of white (6:2; 19:12); and there is a sharp sword for the smiting of the nations and the taking of peace from the earth (6:4; 19:15).

If Revelation 4-7 pictures God as both Judge and Warrior, Revelation 19:11 specifically mentions the fact that "He doth judge and make war." In Revelation 6:10 the question is raised, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood"?--whereas in ch. 19:2 it says, "He hath judged" and "avenged the blood of His servants."<sup>9</sup>

The parallels between section three and five are even more marked, for the symbols of the trumpets and bowls correspond even as to sequence. The question might well be asked, "What value does an understanding of the book's structure hold for the interpreter"? In answer, we would point out that if the structure makes plain the parallel nature of some of the prophetic chains, then the interpretation of one must inevitably cast light on the others. Similarly if the chiastic insight is correct, again we have sections reflexive to each other, and therefore contributory to the interpretation of each.

An important illustration can be found in the first seal. Commentators have in recent decades been divided as to whether this represents a righteous or a wicked power. While ancient interpreters were agreed that the first seal points to the conquests of Christ and His church, later commentators have often suggested either the Parthians or Antichrist. But if the chiastic structure suggested is correct and the second sequence (on the end of the war) is parallel to that of the first (the beginning of the war), then grounds for equating the symbolic intent of the white horse in chapter 19 with that of ch. 6 are greatly strengthened. Similarly, if the seven trumpets and seven plagues are thematically connected, as their inherent symbolism and chiastic relationship suggest, then our interpretation of each is automatically made easier. Each chain will cast light on the other. Extreme dispensationalist positions on the rapture of the church find no support, but evidence to the contrary, is found in the outlines recommended, As Kenneth Strand comments:

A basic interpretational consideration which derives from the chiastic structure of the Apocalypse is the importance of observing which of the two major parts of the entire book any particular item appears--whether the historical or the eschatological (or in prologue or epilogue, if such be the case). Moreover, two cautions arise as corollaries: First, care must be taken to avoid any methodology which would make the messages of Revelation either entirely historical or entirely eschatological, for such would do violence to the book's division into major historical and eschatological parts. Second, it would likewise be inappropriate to adopt a system of interpretation which would set forth the messages of the Apocalypse as if they portrayed an absolutely "straight-line" or completely sequential chain of events or developments. This caution applies regardless of any particular interpretational stance taken, whether preterist, continuous historical, futurist, or "philosophy of

history."

. . . A second basic hermeneutical consideration which derives from the literary analysis provided in the preceding chapter is that in interpreting the Revelation there is need to recognise the book's recapitulatory sequences. This consideration would also constitute a further caution against any methodology which attempts to interpret the book's messages according to a strictly or even primarily "straight-line" pattern.

Finally, it must not be overlooked that the very division of the book into two main parts with paralleling subsections can prove helpful as a guide towards proper interpretation of specific passages. For whenever a passage in one main part of the Revelation is understood, it can provide clues towards the meaning of the correlative passage in the other main part of the book. In following up such clues one must, of course, keep constantly in mind the frame of reference of the major part of the Revelation in which each passage occurs--whether it is the historical or the eschatological.<sup>10</sup>

Certainly here as elsewhere truth is polygonal though our human perception is linear. This wonderful book is capable of resolution into many acceptable patterns of structure and no single approach should end the search for others. Carrington and Glasson, for example, have shown the close relationship between the sequence of Revelation and Ezekiel. It has been illustrated as follows:<sup>11</sup>

- (1) EZEKIEL: Ezekiel in captivity sees a vision of God (ch. 1)
- (1) REVELATION: John in captivity sees a vision of Christ (ch. 1)
- (2) EZEKIEL: Messages to the Jewish people (chs. 2-24)
- (2) REVELATION: Messages to the seven churches (ch. 2-3)
- (3) EZEKIEL: Judgements upon the nations (chs. 25-32)
- (3) REVELATION: A series of judgements (chs. 6-19) (introduced by visions of God in chs. 4-5)
- (4) EZEKIEL: The Messianic kingdom (chs. 33-37).
- (4) REVELATION: The Messianic kingdom (20:1-6)
- (5) EZEKIEL: The attack of Gog (chs. 38-39)
- (5) REVELATION: The attack of Gog and Magog (20:7-10), followed by the Last Judgement (20:11-15).
- (6) EZEKIEL: A vision of the final glory and peace of the redeemed people of the Lord, closing with the words, "The Lord is there." (chs. 40-48).
- (6) REVELATION: A vision of the final glory and peace of the redeemed people of the Lord in the new Jerusalem. . . . "God himself shall be with them." (chs. 21-22).

Says Carrington:

The Revelation is a Christian re-writing of Ezekiel. Its fundamental structure is the same. Its interpretation depends upon Ezekiel. The first half of both books leads up to the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem; in the second they describe a new and holy Jerusalem. There is one significant difference. Ezekiel's lament over Tyre is transformed into a lament over Jerusalem, the reason being that St. John wishes to transfer to Jerusalem the note of irrevocable doom found in the lament over Tyre. Here lies the real difference in the messages of the two books. Jerusalem, like Tyre, is to go for ever.

It is now worth noting that there is a whole section which is not based upon Ezekiel at all; it is chapters 12 to 14, the Great Interlude, as I have named it. Its independence on Ezekiel still further justifies the title. If it were omitted, the Revelation would flow continuously on, and it would be more than ever obvious that the great city whose destruction it portrays is Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup>

A different structural form should here be mentioned—one that is interwoven through the text rather than consisting of a series of blocks of material. Many commentators such as Philip Carrington, D. T. Niles, J. Massyngherde Ford, Austin Farrer, and Preston Hanson, allude to the Hebrew liturgy which can be traced in its sequence through the visions of Revelation. Edersheim noticed the same and wrote:

There is a marked peculiarity and also a special charm about the allusions of the 'beloved disciple' to the 'Temple and its services.' . . . to John the presence and the words of Jesus seem to render luminous the well-remembered services of the Temple. This, as we shall have frequent occasion to show, appears in his Gospel, but much more in the Book of Revelation. Indeed, the Apocalypse, as a whole, may be likened to the Temple services in its mingling of prophetic symbols with worship and praise.

But it is specially remarkable, that the Temple-references with which the Book of Revelation abounds are generally to minutiae, which a writer who had not been as familiar with such details, as only personal contact and engagement with them could have rendered him, would scarcely have even noticed, certainly not employed as part of his imagery. They come in naturally, spontaneously, and so unexpectedly, that the reader is occasionally in danger of overlooking them altogether; and in language such as a professional man would employ, which would come to him from the previous exercise of his calling. Indeed, some of the most striking of these references could not have been understood at all without the professional treatises of the Rabbis on the Temple and its services.<sup>13</sup>

The liturgy sequence can be read in many sources,<sup>14</sup> but it is Niles who knows most closely the daily service with the Revelation visions.

The daily liturgy in the temple began with various activities designed to prepare for the service. Then, when everything was ready, the priest presiding directed one of the other priests to ascend a "pinnacle" and report the rising of the sun. Soon would be heard the cry, "The morning shineth"; then the lamb would be brought and tied ready to be sacrificed. Also, the elders would give the order for the temple gates to be opened, whereupon priests would enter into the Holy Place to clean and trim the great seven-flamed lamp.

Through an open door into heaven, John comes to attend the service. The lamps are burning and the lamb is ready for the sacrifice.

The opening of the gates was the signal for the slaying of the lamb. When the lamb was slain, its blood was caught up in a golden bowl, sprinkled on the altar, and then poured at the altar's base. Then followed all the details completing the sacrifice.

The sacrifice completed, the incensing priest and those assisting him approached the altar of burnt offering. Burning coal from the altar was placed in a golden bowl, incense was put into a golden censer, and the priests proceeded into the Holy Place. Here on the golden altar, the coal was spread and the priest stood ready to offer incense. The signal was given that the time of incense had come, whereupon the people fell down before the Lord spreading their hands in silent prayer. For a half hour silence was observed, while the smoke of incense rose unto the Lord.

"I stand at the door and knock"--the Lamb is amidst the throne--the service begins. Soon, the blood of the martyrs is being poured at the base of the altar. At the close, when all the seals are broken, there is silence in heaven for a half hour. On the altar in heaven, the prayers of the saints are offered; incense and coal are brought there from the altar of burnt offering on earth.

Then the trumpets were blown, the meat of the sacrifice was thrown into the fire, and as the sacrifice was burning the Levites sang the psalms.

The incense offering in heaven too is followed by the blowing of trumpets. But that which is slain and burned is not the followers of the Lamb but of the beast. As this judgment takes place, the song of deliverance is sung, the temple is filled with the smoke of incense, the bowls of wrath are poured out.

The libation took place along with the singing of the psalms, and then when the sacrifice had been completely consumed by fire, the psalmody rose to a great crescendo.

So it is also in the heavenly service. The song of deliverance is followed by the great hallelujah. With that, the service is over, God and man are reconciled; and through the day, with all its daily duties, God and man will dwell together.

"Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people."<sup>15</sup>

Thus we see the slaying of the Lamb and the sprinkling of blood linked with the seals, the solemn silence and offering of incense linked with the trumpets, and the burning of the sacrifice, the libation, and music are associated with the judgment scenes of the bowls and later chapters. The dominant ideas are those of sacrifice, intercession, and consummation, marvellously appropriate to the prophetic chains thus illuminated. Carrington discusses this theme on pp. 384ff. He suggests that it "seems to have been neglected and yet to be all-important."<sup>16</sup>

Both Niles and Carrington, as well as J. Massyngherde Ford, also draw from Israel's festal year. Niles, for example, links the first chapters of Revelation with the Passover. The letters to the churches parallel the hunt for and expulsion of leaven. In the next major section of Revelation, we have the vision of the Lamb, but in imagery reminiscent of Pentecost, the time of the first fruits, the celebration of the giving of the Law. "Moses brought the tablets of the Law, Jesus breaks the seals of the scroll of life; and when the seals are broken the sons of God are revealed. They are the first fruits of the new age."<sup>17</sup> After Pentecost came the growth of the harvest, and ultimately the New Year celebrated by the blowing of Trumpets. This day was also a memorial of the fall of Jericho. The relationship of this to the Seven Trumpets is easy to perceive.

The message of the book of Revelation too moves from Pentecost to New Year. The prayer "How long" is heard again, the prayer of the people in exile. But soon the trumpets are sounding, the open scroll is read, Law and prophecy bear witness, and the Kingdom comes. "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."<sup>18</sup>

After the Trumpets, and in quick succession, came the Day of Atonement.

**Day of Atonement:** New Year ushered in a period of fasting, on the tenth day of which came the day of Atonement. Israel never forgot that in spite of their dedication to the Law, they had broken it again and again. At Mount Sinai itself, they had worshipped the golden calf, and Moses had to make atonement for their sin. Thus the day of Atonement became the fitting sequel to the feast of the New Year. It also stood between New Year and the feast of Tabernacles. Tabernacles celebrated the close of the harvest season, but before the joy of harvest must come



the time of repentance and atonement. The harvest will also be the harvest of tares which is gathered and burned.

So, the final section of John's vision opens with the vision of Him who came to atone. The dragon is out to destroy Him. But though the period when wheat and tares grow together seems long, and those who bear the mark of the beast seem to rejoice over the sorrows of those who bear the mark of the Lamb, the harvest certainly comes. Then the wheat is garnered and the tares burned. Also, at the end of the harvest season the grapes are gathered and trodden in the wine press.<sup>19</sup>

Following the Atonement was the festival of rejoicing and holiday. Tabernacles, and the added feast of Dedication, are both mirrored in the closing chapters. The wilderness pilgrims go up to the New Jerusalem for holiday.

So the pilgrimage comes to its end. The wilderness and the exile are left behind. There is a final conflict. And then it is the New Day. When Judas Maccabeus rededicated the altar after setting his people free, and restored the worship of the Lord in the temple, it did seem that the New Day had dawned. Israel celebrated this day as the feast of Lights. They celebrated it on the day (December 25) when the sun after its long winter sojourn began its return journey in the heavens.

John closes his book, too, with the dawn of the New Day. The great hallelujah is heard as the nations are gathered into Zion. The final battle is fought and victory decisively won. The last judgment is over and the eternal city is established.

This Jewish festival year running from Passover to Dedication is fulfilled in the Christian story. At the Dedication, the old temple was restored for worship, at Christmas the new temple was set in the midst of men. God had become flesh. The chief rite in the celebration of the Dedication festival was the lighting of the sevenfold lamp; the opening vision in John's message is the Christ as He stands in the midst of His Church. The feast of Dedication closed the Jewish festal year; Christmas begins the festal year for the Christian Church.<sup>20</sup>

Comblin and others have shown that the festivals of the seventh month are specially important for the interpretation of the second half of the book. Sir Isaac Newton recognised this centuries ago. The imagery of the seventh month was distinctively eschatological in import. For example, Day of Atonement imagery is frequent through these chapters where judgment is the prominent scene.<sup>21</sup> The Pseudepigrapha also culls images from the Day of Atonement when foretelling the last things.<sup>22</sup>

As one meditates upon this subtle interweaving of the emblems of Israel's liturgy and festal year, one cannot but be again impressed with the extreme care with which the book has been composed. Jerome seems to have been right when he wrote that every word was weighed in a balance before being set down. Interpreters need to exercise similar care as they scrutinise every comment and, allusion.

(See over page for interesting examples of the chiastic arrangement in Revelation as suggested by Thomas Austin.)

## ***THE KHIIMMIHK ARRANGEMENT OF REVELATION***

(by Thomas Austin)

ch. 1 **a.** The Advent (Apocalypse) of Jesus Christ.

ch. 1 **b.** Blessed the Scroll-Reader: Grace to You.

ch. 1 **c.** He Cometh with Clouds--to divide Sheep and Goats.

ch. 1 **d.** The Alpha and Omega--First and Last.

ch. 1:12 **e.** In the Kingdom of (Grace and Patience).

ch. 1:12 **f.** Descriptions of Jesus.

ch. 1-3 **g.** Promises to the Overcomers. They live with Christ.

ch. 4 & 5 **h.** The Throne and the Lamb. 4 Zoa, Elders, 4 Songs, 4 Horses, War.

ch. 6:1 to 7 **i.** Kings and Great Men. Traffickers in Wheat, Wine, Oil.

ch. 7:1-v.8 **j.** Nature held back. 144,000 sealed in Forehead.

ch. 7:9-17 **j.** Judgment--Multitude clothed in White out of Tribulation--Heat, Blood.

ch. 4 & 9 **k.** Temple and Altar, Smoke. Church Leaders attacked.

ch. 10 & 11 **l.** Daniel's Book. Time finis. Mystery ends, Voice of God.

ch. 11 **m.** Temple and Worshippers Measured. Outer Court left.

ch. 11 **n.** God's Two Witnesses. 1260 Days. One Mouth.

ch. 11 **o.** Fire, Plagues, Blood, etc. Slain Beast raised.

ch. 11 **p.** Heaven's Voices of Authority.

ch. 11 **q.** World's Kingdoms become His Kingdom. Seventh Angel.

ch. 11 **r.** 24 Elders worship God.

ch. 11:17 **s.** Lord God--Great Power--Reigned. Wrath, Finis Earth.

ch. 11 **t.** Heaven opened. Ark of Testimony seen in Temple.

ch. 12 **u.** The Seed of the Woman.

ch. 12 **v.** Satan and the Woman.

ch. 12 **w.** Woman fed 1260 Days.

ch. 12 **x.** Devil's Host, lost (in Heaven).

ch. 12 **y.** Great Dragon, Serpent, Devil, Satan--Cast Out.

ch. 12:10 **z.** Now is come Salvation--Authority of Christ--by

12:10 is the centre text

ch. 12:10 **z.** the Blood of the Lamb

ch. 12 **y.** The Dragon Cast Out, Forever, from Heaven.

ch. 12 **x.** Hosts on Earth Persecuted.

ch. 12 **w.** Woman fed 1260 Days (in Wilderness).

ch. 12 **v.** Satan furious with the Woman--Wars.

ch. 12 **u.** The law-keeping Seed of the Woman.

ch. 12 **t.** Testimony of Jesus Christ.

ch. 12 **s.** The Lord- the God of this World  
 ch. 13:1-7 **r.** All on Earth pay Homage to the Beast (Papacy)  
 ch. 13:13 **q.** World Kingdoms make an Image to Beast.  
 ch. 13:15 **p.** Image Voice (Breath, Margin) of Authority to kill.  
 ch. 13 **o.** Sign of Fire. Papacy marks all through Image.  
 ch. 13 **n.** Satan's Two Witnesses after 1260 Days have Number 666. :1  
 ch. 14:1 **m.** Temple Throne and Worshippers.  
 ch. 14:1 **l.** Last Gospel Message. Time Finis. Mystery (Babylon) to End. & 16  
 ch. 15 & 16 **k.** Temple and Smoke. The Seven Plagues.  
 ch. 17 **j.** Whore judged--her Clothing, Forehead, Blood. 10 Kings burn her.  
 ch. 18 **i.** Chaos for Babylon. Kings, Great Men, Wheat, Wine, Oil, Ships.  
 ch. 19 **h.** Throne and Marriage of Lamb. 4 Songs, 4 Zoa, 24 Elders.  
 ch. 20 **g.** Overcomer's Rewards. 1000 years judging with Christ.  
 ch. 21 **f.** City described, the Lamb and His Glory, His Face.  
 ch. 22 **e.** They reign forever in the Kingdom of Glory.  
 ch. 22:13 **d.** The Alpha and Omega, First and Last.  
 ch. 22:14 **c.** His Advent divides the 'Blessed' and those 'Outside.'  
 ch. 22:14 **b.** Curses on the Detractors of this Book.  
 ch. 22:14 **a.** "I come with Speed--even so come Lord Jesus. Amen."

## THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION. FIRST LINE OF PROPHECY

(by Thomas Austin)

ch. 1:1 **a.** The Revelation which God gave.  
 ch. 1:1 **b.** To show. . . Things which must shortly come to pass.  
 ch. 1:1 **c.** To His Servant John. . . John.  
 ch. 1:4 **d.** To the Seven Churches in Asia.  
 ch. 1:5 **e.** From Him and the Seven-fold Spirit.  
 ch. 1:5 **f.** The Throne.  
 ch. 1:5 **g.** Prince of the Kings of the Earth.  
 ch. 1:6 **h.** The Amen.  
 ch. 1:7 **i.** He cometh with Clouds.  
 ch. 1:8 **j.** The Alpha and the Omega: Beginning and End.  
 ch. 1:9 **k.** In the Kingdom and Patience of Jesus.  
 ch. 1:11 **l.** Write in a Scroll to the Seven Churches.  
 ch. 1:13 **m.** A Voice midst Seven Candlesticks.  
 ch. 1:13 **n.** The Son of Man, Eyes of Flaming Fire.  
 ch. 1:15 **o.** Feet like to Fine Brass, Burned.

ch. 1:15      **p.** The Two-Edged Sword.  
ch. 1:17      **q.** The I am First and Last.  
ch. 1:18      **r.** I was dead, . . . Alive for Evermore.

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ch. 1:20      **s.** 7 Stars, Churches, Candlesticks.  
ch. 2:1        **s.** 7 Stars, Churches, Candlesticks

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ch. 2:1        **r.** Overcomer, Eats of the Tree of Life.  
ch. 2:8        **q.** First and the Last.  
ch. 2:8        **p.** Sharp Sword with Two Edges.  
ch. 2:8        **o.** Feet Like unto Fine Brass.  
ch. 2:8        **n.** Son of God, Eyes like Flame of Fire.  
ch. 3:1        **m.** He who has the Seven Spirits and the Seven Stars.  
ch. 3:4        **l.** Names written in Sardis in Scroll of Life.  
ch. 3:4        **k.** Patient Philadelphians, hold Fast.  
ch. 3:4        **j.** The Amen, the Beginner of the Creation.  
ch. 3:4        **i.** I stand at the Door and Knock. . . I will come.  
ch. 3:4        **h.** To reign always--to Last Man.  
ch. 3:4        **g.** I also overcame.  
ch. 3:4        **f.** Am set down on His Throne.  
ch. 3:4        **e.** Let Him hear what the Spirit saith.  
ch. 3:4        **d.** Unto the Churches.  
ch. 3:4        **c.** I, John. . . .  
ch. 3:4        **b.** Things which must be hereafter.  
ch. 4:1        **a.** I was in the Spirit, a Throne. . . and (One, He) sat.

### ***THE CENTRAL CHAPTER (12) OF REVELATION***

(by Thomas Austin)

ch. 11:19      **a.** Temple and Ten Commandments seen.  
ch. 11:19      **b.** The Wrath of God--Lightnings, etc.  
ch. 12:1,2      **c.** Pregnant Woman with Man-Child.  
ch. 12:1,2      **d.** The Great Red Dragon.  
ch. 12:1,2      **e.** Satan's War against the Woman and Her Seed.  
ch. 12:1,2      **f.** Woman in Wilderness. 1260 Days.  
ch. 12:7        **g.** War in Heaven. Angel Aid for Michael (and Satan)  
ch. 12:8        **h.** Michael prevails. No place for Dragon.  
ch. 12:9        **i.** The Great Deceiver Cast Out.

ch. 12:9      **j.** He was cast to the Earth, Angels too.  
ch. 12:10     **k.** A Loud Voice in Heaven, saying,  
ch. 12:10     **l.** Now is come Salvation & Strength, etc.

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ch. 12:10 - centre text      **m.** The Accuser of the Brethren is cast down.

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ch. 12:10      **l.** Overcoming Power in the Blood of the Lamb. **k.** Heaven rejoices therefore.  
ch. 12:10      **j.** The Devil is come down. Woe to People on Earth.  
ch. 12:10      **i.** Deceiver limited to a Short Season.  
ch. 12:13      **h.** The Earth the Only Place for the Dragon.  
ch. 12:14      **g.** War against the Woman, aided by Eagle's Wings.  
ch. 12:14      **f.** Woman in Wilderness. 1260 Days.  
ch. 12:15,16 **e.** Satan's Warfare. The Woman. Earth swallows Flood.  
ch. 12:17      **d.** The Dragon was Wrath,  
ch. 12:17      **c.** With the Woman.  
ch. 12:17      **b.** Final War with the Seed.  
ch. 12:17      **a.** The Commandments of God and the Testimony.

### **REVELATION THIRTEEN**

ch. 12:17      **a.** The 144,000 and Jesus.  
ch. 13:1       **b.** 7-headed, 10-horned, dragon-spawned Beast.  
ch. 13:1       **c.** Its Forehead Names of Blasphemy.  
ch. 13:2       **d.** Power, Seat, Authority from Dragon.  
ch. 13:3       **e.** Wounded, Healed; Worldwide Power revives.  
ch. 13:4       **f.** Beast-worship is Satanic.  
ch. 13:4       **g.** Who is like the Beast? Who can wage War?  
ch. 13:5       **h.** Its Mouth and Blasphemies--42 months.  
ch. 13:6       **i.** Against God's Name, Dwelling, People.  
ch. 13:7       **j.** Power Against all Nations, etc.  
ch. 13:8       **k.** Book of Life of Slain Lamb.  
ch. 13:9       **l.** The Righteous hear the Spirit.

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centre text    **m.** The Spearer will get the Spear  
                    **m.** The Killer will get the Sword 113:10

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ch. 13:10      **l.** Righteous have Faith, Patience.  
ch. 13:11      **k.** Lamb-like Horns, Dragon's Roar.

- ch. 13:12      **j.** Earth-shattering Control--Degrees. 3:13
- ch. 13:13      **i.** Miraculous Fire before Men on Earth.
- ch. 3:14        **h.** Deceitful Decree to make Image.
- ch. 3:15        **g.** Likeness to First Beast revived.
- ch. 13:15      **f.** Image-Worship--Papal Worship = Satanic
- ch. 13:15      **e.** Death Threat to Ones who refuse Worship.
- ch. 13:15      **d.** Its Authority enforces Mark of Beast. 3:16
- ch. 13:16      **c.** Mark received on Forehead is Blasphemous.
- ch. 3:17 f      **b.** Number of His Name is 666 (Man's Number)
- ch. 14:1        **a.** 144,000 and Lamb, Father's Name on Forehead.

## ***REVELATION SEVENTEEN***

(Thomas Austin)

- ch. 17:1        **a.** One of the seven temple angels interprets.
- ch. 17:1        **b.** The Great Whore.
- ch. 17:2        **c.** Kings and all Peoples of Earth.
- ch. 17:2        **d.** The Whore in the Wilderness (sits). Her Colour, Riches, Cup name=Babel.
- ch. 17:6        **e.** Drunk with the Blood of Saints. Wonder.
- ch. 17:6        **f.** Holy Ones and Witnesses of Jesus.
- ch. 17:7        **g.** Mystery of Woman (Union).
- ch. 17:7        **h.** Beast.
- ch. 17:7        **i.** Seven heads, support the woman.
- ch. 17:7        **j.** Ten Horns, support the woman.
- ch. 17:8        **k.** Beast, was, is not, will ascend, goes to perdition.
- ch. 17:8        **l.** Beast was, is not yet is.
- ch. 17:8        **m.** Seven Heads are Seven Hills.

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ch. 17:8        **n.** The Woman sits.

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- ch. 17:8        **m.** 7 Kings, 5 fallen, one is, one to come, Short time.
- ch. 17:8        **l.** Beast was, is not. Is eighth.
- ch. 17:8        **k.** Is of the Seven. Goes into Perdition.
- ch. 17:8        **j.** Ten Horns receive Power as Kings.
- ch. 17:8        **i.** Support from Babylon drawn off.
- ch. 17:8        **h.** The Beast--all Powerful = Satan himself.
- ch. 17:8        **g.** Plots against the Woman formed.
- ch. 17:14       **f.** They with Him--called Chosen and Faithful.

- ch. 17:14     **e.** The Desolation of the Whore. Hatred leads to Persecution.
- ch. 17:14     **d,** Eat her Flesh and burn her with Fire.
- ch. 17:14     **c.** Kings will serve the Beast, until. . . .
- ch. 17;18     **b.** That Great City--the Woman.
- ch. 18;1 ff.   **a.** Another Angel from Heaven.

## CHAPTER 7 [\(TOC\)](#)

### A THREAD FOR THE MAZE The Theme of Revelation

In the previous chapter, we have indicated that erroneous interpretations, for the most part will be avoided, if we keep in mind the historical setting of the book--the who of its authorship and readership--the when and what of the times. Heaven directed John, a good shepherd, to write a pastoral letter, one as Christ-church-salvation centred as any of Paul's.<sup>1</sup> The whole of Revelation is an epistle, and this fact should act as a safeguard for any intelligent interpreter.

For example, what value could there be in informing the church of the first century concerning some esoteric fringe event in Europe to occur a thousand or more years later? The whole book had meaning for the people to whom it was addressed, as with the Pauline letters. We do not mean that their understanding exhausted the significance of the book, but that any exegesis which makes the meaning of even a single chapter redundant for the original readers must be erroneous.<sup>2</sup> As surely as Galatians, Thessalonians, and Corinthians had their origin in specific emergencies, so with this closing letter of Scripture. Similarly, as certainly as God saw in the local dangers at Galatia, etc., a mirror of future threats to the Christian church universal, so with the problems confronting the seven churches of Turkey. They were faced with the crisis of Caesar-worship, and in subsequent ages Christians would be forced to choose between intolerant commandments of proud contemporaries and the moral requirements of the Most High. And in a special sense, the time of trouble expected by Smyrna, Thyatira, Philadelphia, etc., mirrors the great final tribulation of the worldwide church referred to by prophets, apostles, and Christ.

Let us now observe how the special vocabulary, the introduction, general contents, and conclusion of the book, make crystal clear its theme and specific elements. Thereafter, we must match every suggested interpretation with this theme, and all that is incongruent with it must be rejected.

**SPECIAL VOCABULARY:** Sakae Kubo's *Reader's Greek-English Lexicon* of the New Testament lists the words which occur between five and fifty times in Revelation. The chief English equivalents include the following: thunder, sulphur, smoke, wrath, passion, Almighty, plague, war, trumpet-sounding, earthquake, finish, stamp, seal, lion, sickle, sun, woe, throne, lamb, until, dragon, restrain, white, witness (testimony), blood, serpent, temple, conquer, resembling, woe, crown, endurance, golden.

These speak for themselves. The vocabulary of judgment, of eschatological salvation, predominates in the Apocalypse. The judgment of the Cross of Christ now applied to the whole world--this is the theme of the Apocalypse. Most of the terms found in the special vocabulary of Revelation point to the eschatological wrath of God poured out because men have rejected the "so great salvation" symbolised by the blood referred to in v. 5. On the usage of "blood" and "Lamb," note the following:

. . . a book of very definite teaching on redemption by blood. This which is expressed or implied in all the Scriptures, has in the Revelation a marked and solemn emphasis. This holy Apocalypse in the midst of its most heavenly scenes, celebrates the atoning blood. Saints sing and angels speak of redemption by the blood, cleansing in the blood, and victory from the blood of the Lamb. From the beginning to the end through the long conflict and in the midst of the glorious issue, there is still one title for him who conquers and judges and reigns. It is the Lamb who makes war and overcomes, and from the wrath of the Lamb kings and nations flee. It is the Lamb in whose blood his servants also overcome; in whose blood they



have washed their robes; before whom they stand in white raiment; and to whom they ascribe salvation. In the Lamb's book of life the names of the saved are written. The Holy City is the bride, the Lamb's wife. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it, and the light of it; and the river of the water of life flows forever from the throne of God and the Lamb. In the peculiar title, thus studiously employed and illustrated by the repeated mention of the slaying and the blood, we read the doctrine that the ground of the personal is the ground of the general salvation; that the place which the sacrifice and the death of Christ holds in the consciousness of the believer, is the same which it also holds in the history of the Church. . . . 3

**INTRODUCTION:** Most commentators of note have recognised that the opening chapter is a key to the entire book. "The key lies at the door" is a proverb worth remembering by all who search the Scriptures. Most Bible books offer valuable clues for their exegesis in their introduction. Such is certainly the case here. The reader should read the first chapter of Revelation at this point.

Immediately, we observe the prominence given to Jesus. The revelation is "of" Him--it proceeds from Him and concerns Him. He is referred to at least five times in the first eight verses, both of His advents are mentioned, and emphasis falls on His work as Redeemer on the cross, and the judgment that must fall on all who do not respond to that work.

Prominent terms in the prologue of the first eight verses include revelation (apocalypse), signify (i.e. symbolise), testimony (or witness), prophecy, grace, peace, blood, kings, priests, glory, dominion, clouds, wail, the Almighty. Such words tell their own story. What follows belongs to the literary genre of apocalyptic, which is characterised by symbolic portrayals of coming eschatological vindication for God's people--this is intimated by the first two words above--revelation, signify.

The third word--testimony--has become the subject of close attention in recent scholarly study. A. Trites has written a classic monograph on the topic. Says Caird:

The repeated use of the words 'witness' and 'testimony' is one of the many points of resemblance between the Revelation and the Fourth Gospel. In Greek as in English these words could be treated as dead metaphors, without any conscious reference to the lawcourt, which was their primary, forensic sense. The author of the Fourth Gospel, perhaps inspired by the example of Second Isaiah, presents his argument in the form of a lawcourt debate, in which one witness after another is summoned, until God's advocate, the Paraclete, has all the evidence he needs to convince the world that Jesus is the Son of God, and so win his case. In the Revelation the courtroom setting is even more realistic; for Jesus had borne his testimony before Pilate's tribunal, and the martyrs must face a Roman judge. What they have to remember as they give their evidence is that the evidence is being heard in a court of more ultimate authority, where judgments which are just and true issue from the great white throne.<sup>4</sup>

And Trites relates this term to the *Sitz im Leben*:

Christians are about to face a time of severe testing and persecution, and John as a faithful pastor seeks to prepare them for it. He directs his campaign at both the enemy within and the enemy without. The churches have many sins and defects, so they are summoned to repentance (2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19). They have external foes, so they must be given reassurance (2:10). They need to be reminded that God is still on the throne. The conflict does not separate them from their Lord, for he is leading them and it is essentially his battle. The demonic forces will indeed 'make war on the Lamb', but he will conquer them; as 'Lord of lords and King of kings' his victory is assured, and they are in vital contact with him--'called and chosen and

faithful' (17:14). John knows that the Roman proconsul of Asia possesses great judicial power, symbolized by the 'sword' (compare Romans 13:4), but he writes to remind his fellow Christians that it is Christ, not Caesar's representative, who has the 'sharp two-edged sword' (Revelation 2:12). Soon some of them will be hauled into lawcourts and sentenced to martyr's deaths (6:9; 13:10; cf. Matthew 10:18; Luke 21:12). Already Antipas, Christ's faithful witness, has been slain (Revelation 2:13), and the seer sees him as the first of many Christians who are about to make the supreme sacrifice for holding 'the testimony of Jesus'.<sup>5</sup>

Revelation 12:7-9 portrays a heavenly judicial scene, wherein accused Christians are vindicated. They "overcome" by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony. "In other words, the prosecutor in the heavenly lawcourt has been defeated by the legal victory of Christ on Calvary (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:33) and this explains the repeated use of the form *ebblatha* to refer to his ejection. . . ." "The real victory. . . may be a forensic one. . . but it takes open war to clinch it. . . . If the world is to hear and accept God's amnesty, there must be witnesses; and if evil is to burn itself out to the bitter end, their testimony must be the testimony of suffering."<sup>7</sup>

Trites reminds us that one can easily see how important this concept of witness is for John, if he compares the prologue with the contents which follow. Believers are called to reign even in their martyrdom, as Christ reigned on Calvary's gibbet.<sup>8</sup> The entire book is a challenge to Christians to witness to the gospel throughout the world, at whatever cost, that Christ might return.

We should not skip over the term "prophecy" in this prologue. This book is not only a drama, but also an apocalypse, an epistle, and a prophecy. Due weight must be given to each term. This introduction of John's claims repeatedly to foretell what is to happen to believers on earth, and in particular emphasises the church's reunion with its Lord at His soon return.

Grace, peace, blood, priests, kings, dominion, glory--these words tell of the redemptive blessings made ours through the cross. The covenant of Sinai, and its promises are also thus referred to. The clouds, the wailing, and the portrayal of God as the Almighty warn that the ultimate revelation of divine glory will take the form of wrath for all who have rejected the salvation so dearly purchased for them. This wrath is but the curses of the violated covenant of grace.

The introductory vision of the book with its plethora of symbols of light (lampstands, fire, stars, sun) assure us that the great overarching theme is the conquest of the Light of the World over the darkness of evil. Even the sword, coming as it does from Christ's mouth, points to that Word which is a light and a lamp. Simultaneously, it is implied that the warfare symbolism subsequently found in the book points to the conflict between truth and error--not the antagonism of nation against nation. This should guide us particularly for exegesis of the seals and trumpets.

We would invite the reader to check how prominent, at the very doorstep, so to speak, are the exegetical keys to this book. Compare the respective verses of the prologue with the hermeneutical implications here listed.

### **Theocentric**

- v. 1 God gave
- v. 2 the word of God
- v. 4 him who is and who was and who is to come 6 God and Father
- v. 8 the Lord God, the Almighty
- v. 9 word of God

## **Christological**

- v. 1 the revelation of Jesus Christ
- v. 2 the testimony of Jesus Christ
- v. 5 from Jesus Christ to him who loves us
- v. 6 to him be glory
- v. 7 Behold, he is coming. . . every eye shall see him
- v. 9 I share with you in Jesus. . . on account of the testimony of Jesus

## **Church-centred (Ecclesiological)**

- v. 1 to show to his servants - made it know to his servant
- v. 3 Blessed is he who reads aloud (in church) the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear (in church)
- v. 4 . . . to the seven churches
- v. 6 made us a kingdom, priests
- v. 11 send it to the seven churches

## **Soteriological**

- v. 1 etc. Jesus (i.e. Saviour)
- v. 4 grace...peace from him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood
- v. 7 pierced

## **Eschatological**

- v. 1 What must soon take place
- v. 3 for the time is near
- v. 4 who is to come
- v. 7 he is coming with the clouds...all tribes will wail
- v. 8 who is to come
- v. 9 the kingdom

## **Imminent**

- v. 1 What must soon take place
- v. 3 for the time is near
- v. 7 Behold, he is coming

## **Symbolic**

- v. 1 Made it known (Greek word means to signify by signs).
- v. 10 like a trumpet. Compare v. 20
- v. 11 seven churches (compare 53 other uses of 7 in book)

## **Scriptural**

See continual allusion to Old Testament books

## **Pragmatic**

- v. 3 those who hear and who keep what is written therein
- v. 9 in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance. . . on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus

## **Trial and Persecution-centred**

- v. 9 I, John your brother who share with you. . . the tribulation. . . and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God

Judicial, i.e. Judgment-centred, a Theodicy

- v. 2 witness. . . testimony

- v. 5 the faithful witness
- v. 7 he is coming with the clouds. . . and all. . . will wail
- v. 8 who is to come, the Almighty

Note it is not intimated that the burden of the book has to do with the far distant future, or the minutiae of a long history, political events, esoteric matters, or that only a special few will ever be able to understand it.

**CONTENTS:** We suggest that the reader take the prominent terms listed and trace them either linguistically or conceptually through the following chapters of Revelation. He will find, for example, that nine out of the ten times the New Testament uses "Almighty" are in this closing volume. Other terms point to concepts which recur even more often than the specific words. The "wail" of Revelation 1:7 has a whole chapter (18) devoted to it, as the destruction of impenitent Babylon is portrayed. The reference to "blood" in v. 5 is an introduction to the theme of sacrifice, and points onwards to the twenty-eight references to the sacrificial Lamb.

To understand the reference to the kingdom and priesthood of the saints, one must revert to the story of Melchizedek, the first priest-king of Scripture, and also to the story of the Exodus, where Israel was promised that she would fulfil both roles. See Genesis 14 and Exodus 19. Psalm 110 foretold that Christ would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. He exercises both kingly and priestly rights on behalf of His people. But Revelation tells us that all believers similarly have such privileges, and the rest of the book will enlarge this hint of their present and future honours, until chapter 20:4-6 sets the capstone by its picture of millennial glory for the saints as they reign with Christ as "priests of God. . . ."

The concept of testimony, as previously shown, characterises the church's pilgrimage sketched in chs. 2-19. The seven opening letters tell of imprisonment and martyrdom, of unflinching opposition from men and devils, and the necessity of holding forth the word of Christ without fear or compromise. The seals describe the cry of the souls under the altar, and later enlargements praise the endurance of witnesses to Christ who love not their lives unto the death.

**EPILOGUE:** 22:6-21. This section confirms all that has been already said in John's record. It refers to Christ's soon coming (v. 7), admonishes all believers to worship God only (v. 9), to be ready for the close of human probation (vs. 11-12), by having their robes cleansed through the blood of Christ (v. 14), and drinking deeply of the water of life (v. 17). Much of the epilogue is repetitive of the chief ideas of the prologue.

Thus the contents of Revelation, as its prologue, epilogue, and special vocabulary, proclaim that the theme of the book is the judicial consummation of Christ's redemptive work--His return to establish forever all secured by the Cross. It is a theme which is Christ, church-salvation-centred. Christianity is Christ, and every Christian book whether inspired or not bears the hallmark of His prominence. In Revelation, He is both the Revealer and the One revealed, prophet, priest, king, sacrifice, temple, the All and in all.

The symbols echo our Lord's words in John 14:6, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."

## **CHAPTER 8** [\(TOC\)](#)

### **DECODING THE SYMBOLS**

#### **The Message of Apocalyptic--Old and New**

Having stated the theme of Revelation in general terms, we wish to be more specific, and also to indicate the chief Old Testament source of the New Testament apocalyptic teachings. Thomas Dehany Bernard, in his nineteenth century Bampton lectures, gave an analysis of the theme of the Apocalypse which, if heeded by subsequent commentators, would have prevented the unleashing upon the world of a mass of confusing and erroneous prophetic interpretations.

Bernard's analysis has recommended itself to many Bible scholars and can be readily summarised. He says that his outline comprehends the leading characteristics of the doctrine of Revelation, but this doctrine, as he expounds it, is easily recognised as the shining garments of Christ, the Redeemer and Lord.

1. The doctrine of the book is a doctrine of the cause of the consummation. "It educes the result from one source--the atoning death of Jesus."<sup>1</sup> "This book exhibits the connection between the personal and the general salvation, in the identity of their common cause."<sup>2</sup> While we might expect with the advent of victory and the kingdom, that Christ's titles would now be only those of majesty, such is not the case. The first doxology is "to him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood," thereby striking the note of all that follows. Similarly, before the vision of history is given in Revelation 6 ff., we are shown the "Lamb as it had been slain," and the anthem which resounds through heaven is one of praise to Him who shed His blood. Later, it is the Lamb that the wicked flee. The saved are so because of the writing of their names by the Lamb in His book of life, and the eternal city is the Lamb's wife. Bernard concludes on this point:

. . . the place which the sacrifice of the death of Christ holds in the consciousness of the believer, is the same which it also occupies in the history of the Church. . . he conquers for us, and reigns among us, and achieves the restoration of all things, because he has first offered himself for us, and is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.<sup>3</sup>

2. Next, Revelation contains a doctrine of the history of the consummation i.e. "an exposition of the nature of the history."<sup>4</sup> The reader learns that the connection between earth and heaven is close and decided. He gains such views of the open courts of glory as to charm his heart and prepare him to endure. It is evident that earth is the battlefield of the kingdoms of heaven and hell, but also that nothing happens here which has not passed through the sieve of providence.

3. The doctrine of the coming of our Lord Jesus. Revelation 1:7: "Behold he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him," is the keynote of the whole. The time is at hand, the closing events are to happen rapidly, for the Lord promises to "come quickly." His last words are to the same effect. "Surely I come quickly" (Revelation 22:20).

This second coming is now presented with the whole world in view, and not merely our individual salvation. It, like the Cross, is a cosmic event, but even more obviously so. Not our individual entrance into the kingdom of glory, but the glorification of all creation is the focus.

4. The doctrine of victory is inevitably linked with the preceding. The saints are shown to be more than conquerors, though they wrestle not against flesh and blood. Every promise in the seven epistles is "to him that overcometh." Even the opening of the sealed book is

the result of a victory, even the victory of the Lamb who overcame. The first horseman is one who goes forth "conquering and to conquer" and in ch. 19, he reappears on the horizon of eternity.

5. Victory is ever associated with judgment, and this also is a key-note of Revelation.<sup>5</sup> The coming of Christ is attended with wailing from all nations. Great Babylon comes into remembrance before God and is judged. The dead are judged out of those things written in the book. In righteousness does the rider on the white horse judge and make war. The decree of judgment soon to go forth is, "Let the evildoer still do evil, and the holy still be holy." "Behold I am coming soon bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done." Revelation 22:11,12. Says Bernard:

Things do not melt quietly into the peace of the kingdom of God. There is a crash of ruin, and a winepress of the wrath of Almighty God, and a lake that burns with fire and brimstone. And this judgment falls, not only on principles and powers of evil, but on nations of men; and not only on nations, but on separate persons, even on "every one who is not found written in the book of life." He who does not accept the reality of the world's rebellion and ruin, and of the wrath and judgment which it brings, must certainly reject this whole book from the canon; and, with it, must tear away large and living portions of every preceding book of Scripture.<sup>6</sup>

6. The doctrine of Revelation is ultimately and pre-eminently one of restoration. "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. . . And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:1,2). A city represents society in its maturity. All human cities have failed because of the taint of sin in every builder and inhabitant. But it shall not be so in the city to come--the garden city of eternity. Without this picture from John, the Bible would present an unfinished plan. We would not see the fulfilment of the promise that all human capacities are to find their full realisation.

Here, then, is the doctrine of Revelation, a doctrine of consummation, of Christ's coming, of the victory of the Lamb and His church, of judgment for men and nations, of restoration of all things.

This, of course, is eschatology in a nutshell, but it is also apocalyptic eschatology. It has to do with the catastrophic inbreaking of the kingdom of glory attended by war, judgment, and victory. And this outline, while a summary of all prophetic Scripture, can be particularly traced to the apocalyptic book of the Old Testament--Daniel. Andre Feuillet not only says that "without the Apocalypse the New Testament would be incomplete," but he goes on to call this book the "Daniel of Christianity."<sup>7</sup> He agrees with H. H. Rowley "that it is by no means an accident that these are the only two apocalyptic works to be included in the Canon."<sup>8</sup>

It is vital to remember that Revelation is an expansion of the Olivet discourse, which itself is a commentary on the prophecies of Daniel, especially Daniel 9:24-27. John alone of the evangelists did not record the sermon of Christ on the last things." For him, an enlarged edition was reserved. There is nothing in Revelation which does not exist in seed form in the Olivet prophecy. Consider Revelation's portrayal of religious deceivers; of the love of the church waxing mad; of Christian compromise and the resultant apostasy; of worldly and religious opposition; of Antichrist standing in the holy place precipitating a great tribulation upon the saints; wars, famines, pestilence, earthquake, and signs in sun, moon, and stars, the proclamation of the everlasting gospel; the coming of Christ and His angels in clouds of glory--all of these, though more fully developed in Revelation, are first to be found in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, as previously shown. No wonder Carrington writes:

. . . we also possess some prophecies of Jesus about the future. These prophecies form the basis of St. John's apocalypse. . . .<sup>9</sup>

St. John in re-arranging the Old Testament prophecies is avowedly interpreting them in the sense of the prophecies of Jesus. The complete ruin of Jerusalem and its supersession by a heavenly or spiritual religion is not drawn from the prophets, but from the Gospel. The Revelation might be summed up in the words, "Destroy this temple which is built with hands, and in three days I will build up another not made with hands" (Mark 14:58; John 2:19).<sup>10</sup>

But it is not enough to say that this book is an expansion of Christ's second advent sermon. We need also to say that the Olivet discourse itself was a *peshet* of the apocalyptic presentations of Daniel, especially Daniel 7,8,9,11,12.<sup>11</sup> It is from this latter source that we find the clearest Old Testament statements on the consummation, on the coming of the Son of Man, of His victory over the beast, and His judgment of the world in connection with the restoration. Moorehead states: "It is not too much to say that the Apocalypse is the expansion, with marvellous additions, of the Olivet Prophecy and the book of Daniel. He who studies both these until he comes to understand them, will find the study of our book [Revelation] greatly facilitated."<sup>12</sup>

In support of Moorehead, we would point out that all apocalyptic is theodicy, and both the image of vindication--the Son of Man--and the root term for vindication are found in Daniel. See 7:13 and 8:14. The disciples like John under inspiration echoed the thoughts and words of their Master. But He Himself proclaimed that which He had earlier given prophets and sages of Old Testament times. The eschatology of Christ has its roots in that book which, of all previous sacred volumes, most influenced the New Testament and the New Testament church. Some may feel that Kusemann exaggerated when he set forth apocalyptic as the mother of Christian theology, but his essential thesis that the concepts of the kingdom of God, the end, the Son of Man coming in the clouds, of the antichrist, and the judgment and resurrection--that all these find their source in Daniel is undeniable. None can ever hope to explain Christ's teachings about the future without Daniel, and similarly the final apocalypse of Scripture must never be divorced from the first great apocalypse.

Daniel is the only Old Testament book which uses Messiah as a personal name. Christ is present as the Son of Man, as Michael, and as the stone which becomes the kingdom of God. Only in Daniel in the Old Testament do we find the kingdom of heaven set forth in clarity. It is declared to be the reign of the Messiah, and is accompanied by judgment, resurrection, and restoration. The theme of the new temple, so central to the teachings of the later prophets and of Christ and the apostles (including John the Revelator), has its foundation in Daniel, especially Daniel 8:14.

No wonder, then, that we find that Daniel is proportionately more used by Revelation than any other book of the Old Testament. More than fifty times, the writer of the Apocalypse alludes to the contents of the Old Testament seer. Isaiah and Ezekiel are the only prophets which competed with Daniel for prominence in Revelation, but consider the fact that Isaiah has more than sixty chapters, and Ezekiel almost fifty, while Daniel contains but twelve, and only half of these are prophetic. Thus from six chapters of Daniel, the Revelator draws as much as he does from Old Testament sections many times the size of Daniel, and containing over 110 chapters between them.

If we wish to understand the theme of Revelation, and thus interpret throughout accordingly, it is necessary to continually compare this book with its Old Testament counterpart, though ever giving the final interpretive vote to the later work because of its post-Cross nature.

Right at the commencement of Revelation we find the same motif that closed the book of Daniel. The concluding prophecy of the Old Testament apocalypse, chapters 10-12, presented God's seer in captivity for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus which is the spirit of prophecy. Subject of Babylon, his heart was yet in Jerusalem, and the Prince of the latter city visited him in exile. The descriptions of Christ in Daniel 10 and Revelation 1 are almost identical. Daniel, at this time about 90 years of age, falls at the feet of his visitant, but is gently touched and encouraged. Then came the revelation of what was to befall the people of God in coming ages. See Daniel 10:14. The unfolding prophecy told of conflict and war, of persecution and apostasy, of a treading down of the renewed sanctuary of God, and the taking away of those daily services which prefigured the gospel. Antichrist would devastate the holy place and wear out its worshippers until the coming of the Son of Man, the standing up of Michael. He would replace the daily with his own abominable idols. But the beleaguered city of God on earth would be delivered, and Antichrist come to his end with none to help him. The sanctuary would be cleansed, or restored to its rightful estate, as all those found written in the book of life were raised to glory and made to shine as the brightness of the heavens for ever and ever.

This final prophecy, vouchsafed Daniel in Babylon by Christ, was but an enlargement of previous outlines recorded in Daniel chs. 2,7,8,9. The last three revelations (chs. 8,9,10-12) revolve around the sanctuary, its people and its prince, and its great Adversary, Antichrist. In Daniel 8, instead of the ravenous beasts of Daniel 7, we find the sacrificial tame animals of the sanctuary brought to view. The symbols give place to literal interpretation in the final chapters and that which was symbolised by the sanctuary's defilement and cleansing is revealed to be the attack by Antichrist on the gospel and its believers, and the subsequent vindication by the true Christ at His coming. The judgment and the kingdom of God more than undo the worst that Antichrist had done, and the eschatological blessings, prefigured by the sanctuary services, are at the advent of the sanctuary's prince consummated forevermore. God the Father and the Lamb tabernacle among their people. Thus the sanctuary is cleansed, restored, anointed. Now transgression is finished, sin made an end of, iniquity atoned for, everlasting righteousness brought in, and every vision fulfilled. What was realised at Calvary is consummated at the coming.

Thus the frequent images from Daniel incorporated throughout Revelation--the anointed prince of the sanctuary, and the wilful king his opponent, the holy city and the sanctuary, the books of judgment, the typical day of atonement, the beast with the ten horns, the time, times and a half, the great image and the great tribulation, the coming of Michael, and the resurrection from the dead--all these stand on their feet again in the artistry of the seer of Patmos, and walk to the glory of Christ and the consolation of His people.

These facts are of tremendous importance in the task of exegeting Revelation. One reason why some commentaries on Revelation are practically valueless is that they were written in an age when scholars desperately did all they could to relieve Christ from the "shame" of apocalyptic.<sup>13</sup> The Olivet sermon was regarded as non-dominical by most leading scholars of the second half of the nineteenth century, and the first half of the twentieth. Scholars such as C. H. Dodd found the book of Revelation repugnant, because it was so much harder to eviscerate it of apocalyptic content than the sayings of the gentle man of Galilee. In recent years, scholars have had to think again about the apocalyptic teachings of Christ. Beasley-Murray, in his monumental study, *Jesus and the Future*, vindicated the Olivet discourse as genuine, and showed that it could no longer be regarded as a Jewish fly-leaf, introduced into the Gospels by the early church.

We repeat the emphasis of this chapter: Christ took His key eschatological themes of the kingdom, the judgment, the advent, the resurrection, the Antichrist, etc., from Daniel the prophet. What connection is there between Daniel and the passion? We answer--much



every way. It is Daniel who foretells that Messiah the prince would be cut off and apparently have nothing, though in reality He had made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness. And this was to take place in the restored Jerusalem, which subsequently and consequently would be destroyed again. See Daniel 9:24-27. Secondly, Christ ever linked with His death His title of Son of Man, and this too comes from Daniel. See Daniel 7:9-13.

The Son of Man motif is one symbolising vindication as it is made clear both in Daniel 7 itself and in Christ's use of it.<sup>14</sup> Thus we can see the connection between the crises in both Daniel and Revelation for the vindicating intervention of God. Compare the "how long" of Daniel 8:13 with the "how long" of Revelation 6:10. Study of the relationship between Daniel 7:9-13; 8:14; 9:24, shows that it is the judgment of Calvary's cross which allocates the destiny of all men, and vindicates God's holiness and His oppressed saints.

While the Old Testament never separates clearly the two advents of Christ, and views the kingdoms of grace and glory as one, the New Testament borrows its imagery, and traces the fulfilment, in both inaugurated and consummated eschatology. When we see the relationship between the prophetic promises of the Old Testament, their fulfilment at the first advent, and their consummation at the second, then indeed we have found the key to all prophecy, including apocalyptic prophecy. Looking again at Bernard's thematic summary of Revelation we recognise in it a compendium of all the good things foretold by Daniel, the first apocalypse.<sup>15</sup>

## **EXCURSUS ON THE USAGE OF DANIEL BY THE OLIVET DISCOURSE**

Marken passages compared with parallels in Daniel.

**MARK 13:** And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down." v. 2.

**DANIEL:** ". . . shall destroy the city and the great sanctuary." 9:26.

**MARK 13:** ". . . when these things are all to be accomplished"? v. 4.

**DANIEL:** ". . . all these things would be accomplished." 12:7.

**MARK 13:** . . . the end. . . vv. 7,13.

**DANIEL:** ". . . the time of the end." 8:17; 9:26; 11:40; 12:4,13.

**MARK 13:** ". . . wars and rumours of wars." v. 7.

**DANIEL:** ". . . tidings. . . shall alarm him, and he shall go forth with great fury to destroy. . . ." Daniel 11:44. See also 9:26.

**MARK 13:** ". . . this must take place. . . ." v. 7

**DANIEL:** ". . . what will be. . . ." 2:28.

**MARK 13:** "And the gospel must be preached to all nations." v. 10.

**DANIEL:** "And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." 12:3.

**MARK 13:** . . you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved." v. 13.

**DANIEL:** ". . . they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder, for some days . . . to refine and cleanse them and to make them white, until the time of the end. . . ." 11:33,35. ". . . your people shall be delivered. . . ." 12:1.

**MARK 13:** . . the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be. . . ." v. 14.

**DANIEL:** ". . . the transgression that makes desolate. . . ." 8:13. ". . . upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate. . . ." 9:27. . . the abomination that makes desolate." 11:31. ". . . the abomination that makes desolate. . . ." 12:11.

**MARK 13:** . . let him that readeth understand . . . ." v. 14.

**DANIEL:** Daniel uses the thought of understanding over a score of times. See particularly 8:15,16,17; 9:2,22,23; 10:1; 11:33; 12:8.

**MARK 13:** . . such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation until now. . ." v. 19.

**DANIEL:** "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation. . . ." 12:1.

**MARK 13:** . . if the Lord had not shortened the days. . . ." v. 20.

**DANIEL:** "Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people. . . ." 9:24 See footnote 16.

**MARK 13:** "False Christs and false prophets will arise and show signs and wonders. . . ." v. 22.

**DANIEL:** "He shall give no heed to the gods of his fathers." 11:37. See footnote 17.

**MARK 13:** ". . . the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory." v. 26.

**DANIEL:** ". . . behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man. . . . And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, . . ." 7:13. ". . . then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful estate." 8:14.

**MARK 13:** "And then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven." v. 27.

**DANIEL:** "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to ever-lasting life, and some to shame and ever-lasting contempt." 12:2.

## CHAPTER 9 [\(TOC\)](#)

### THE MAN OF THE BOOK

The opening words of this book are: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." The context, which deals with the unfolding of the future, indicates that this expression primarily means an unveiling of the coming events by Christ, but because the times ahead are inextricably linked with Him, the book is also an unveiling of His glory, and that glory is His love revealed at the Cross. See John 12:30; 17:1,5.<sup>1</sup>

Christ Himself is thus the main key to the apocalypse. The book is not only the revelation of Jesus Christ in the sense that it comes from Him, but also in that it is a revelation of Him. (Compare 1 Corinthians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; and 1 Peter 1:7). This awareness will save the exegete from many an error.

Christ has fulfilled by His life and death the prophecies of the Old Testament. See Daniel 9:24: "To seal both vision and prophet"; Matthew 5:17; "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them"; 2 Corinthians 1:20: "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God." Compare Acts 13:27-33. Christ is the *autobasileia*--the kingdom in Himself, the alpha and omega--the first and the last and all in between, in all things, including divine revelation. Moses and all the prophets wrote of Him (Luke 24:25-27,44-46; John 5:46), and "in the roll of the book it is written of Me," He claimed through David (Psalm 40:6). He is the summation and goal of all that preceded His incarnation as well as the Archtype of all that follows. Romans 10:4; Revelation 1:8,17; 22:13.

On His first appearance as the Messiah to His kinsmen of Nazareth, it is written that after He read to them from the scrolls, and rolled up the latter, then "the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him." Luke 4:20. Thus it is ever meant to be, when we unroll the scroll and read. When the Book is shut, the eyes of the reader have become riveted to Him--the great theme and personal Heart of the book.

Very pertinent to our study of Revelation is Matthew 5:17-18. Not one jot was to pass from the Old Testament law or prophets till they had all been fulfilled in Jesus. Both law and prophets have met their accomplishment in Christ. He is Himself the Passover Lamb, the Priest, the Temple, the Exodus. He is the Wave-sheaf, the Incense, the Candlestick, and the Shewbread. He fulfills the Jubilee, Tabernacles, and the Day of Atonement, etc. Unless all has been fulfilled in Him, we should still practice circumcision, believe in ceremonial uncleanness, and obey the civil and ritual laws of the Pentateuch. He is the "end" of the law, according to Romans 10:4. In Him all the types, both of history and law, find their objective and termination.

We are saying that Revelation must not be studied as an independent book. It is part of Scripture, the capstone, seal, and summary of the whole Bible. Just as the first volume of the New Testament sets forth Christ as the fulfiller of the law and the prophets, so with the last volume. Matthew shows Christ as the second Moses, saved in childhood from the cruel king, returning to his home after the death of his persecutors, redeeming slaves from captivity, on their behalf governing the waters and providing bread. Christ is set forth in Matthew as the new Israel, in the wilderness for a period of 40 after passing through the waters; as Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness after her Red Sea baptism; then at the mount for the proclamation of Jehovah's law--the law of the new kingdom. He is also the second Adam who is with the wild beasts, tempted by the Tempter through the lusts of the eyes, and the flesh, and the pride of life. He too has his side opened, and falls into

a deep sleep, that He might have a bride. The New Testament sets forth our Lord's death as the ultimate Exodus, and explains it in terms of Israel's festivals. See particularly Hebrews 9 and 10, and Luke 9:31.

Thus those who wish to apply Old Testament prophecies to worldly governments of our day, and to read such a fulfilment into the prophecies of Revelation unwittingly deny the Lord who bought them. Calvary, by such interpreters, is not recognised as the fulfilment of both law and prophets, and they place themselves with the Jewish expositors of the centuries rather than with the apostles of the New Testament. There is nothing in Old Testament prophecy but what has already met its fulfilment in principle in Jesus. It must be said again and again that the second coming is the second coming of Christ. It but unveils the full significance of His first coming and the atonement there accomplished. All the prophecies of the Old Testament used in Revelation pass first through the prism of the Cross. To fail to see this is to interpret in the dark.

A similar error is the natural (but not spiritual) pursuing in the here-and-now of a theology of glory, and none who do so can rightly interpret Revelation.

The Apocalypse is, accordingly, the revelation, in the case of the members of Christ's body, of the three great ideas which St. John had already beheld exemplified in the history of Christ Himself,—those of conflict, preservation, and triumph. These ideas he does not describe: he sees them; and he tells us what he saw.

. . . . The Apocalypse, therefore, is full of the thought of war and suffering for the children of God. We misunderstand it if we think only of its pictures of judgment on the wicked. It contains a thought prior, deeper, more intimately bound up with its whole structure, than even the punishment of sin; and that thought is the cross, which every follower of Christ must bear when he listens to the words, "Follow thou Me." It is the idealised expression of what the Christian feels more and more powerfully in proportion as he enters more fully into the spirit of his Master,—that the world, constituted as it is, whatever it may be to others, must be to him, not a place of rest and peace, but of struggle, of suffering, of discipline, of longing for a better. This stamp is impressed upon all its visions. Those to whom it is written are partakers with the writer "in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus."<sup>2</sup>

The false apostles of Corinth, those "superlative" leaders, advocated the grasping of heaven's rewards in the here and now. They had no time for the theology of the Cross, the theology of weakness, pain, shame, and humiliation. Not for them the confessions of a struggle and failure. Not for them the admission of residual sinfulness of nature. Not for them anything but the crown. Such has been the hallmark of false religion in all ages. The true Church, as her Lord, must suffer before it reigns. It exists in weakness before it exults in glory. It now belongs to the two aeons, the two Adams, and the resulting tension can only be surmounted by faith. Only in Christ, can we now claim all spiritual blessings, and see ourselves as seated in heavenly places. The physical eye sees, and the torn flesh feels, otherwise.

The church in Revelation dwells where Satan's seat is. It is pursued into the wilderness. It is in prison ten days, and taken from thence to martyrdom. It includes false brethren, foolish brethren, and failing brethren. It must fight to retain its first love, and beware lest it has a name that it lives while it is dead. Lukewarmness is more natural to it than zeal, and compromise than loyalty. It hungers and thirsts, is smitten by sun and frost, and is subject to the hatred of all men and nations. The repast of the Gospel brings sweetness, but bitterness must also be ever present in this life. So declares John in Revelation, and seals his declaration with a threat for all who pervert or truncate his testimony. See Revelation 22:18,19. In other words—the Revelation of Jesus Christ is first of all the Revelation of

Jesus, the slain lamb. This book again and again says that the body of Christ has the experience of her Head--suffering, trial, the Cross, the grave--all this before glory. We will interpret Revelation, aright only if our eye is ever on Jesus and Calvary, even when reading concerning the experience of the church.

The principles just discussed "outlaw" all commentaries on Revelation by dispensational Futurists. Though written by devout men who love the Christ of the Book, they have missed the heart of the Revelation prophecy when they (1) literalise it in such a manner as to read the destiny of the modern Jew therein, and contemporary related nations, as though the Cross which marked the high tide of Israel's iniquity, and the fulfilment of its cherished prophecies, had never taken place; (2) speak of the Christian church as raptured to heaven before the fulfilment of the great bulk of the prophecies of Revelation. This is to espouse a theology of glory rather than *theologia crucis*. It is to miss the very point of the warnings about the continual cross ahead for all followers of the Crucified.

The doctrine of the "secret rapture" was unknown to the church till last century, and it is even more unknown to the New Testament. All dispensational hair-splitting distinctions between the "coming" and the "revelation"; the "kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of heaven," etc., will not stand up to a single hour of biblical investigation. Many have bravely put aside presuppositions, tried the experiment, and left their dispensationalism.<sup>3</sup>

While temporarily living in U.S.A., I have been staggered by the flood of radio broadcasts on religion incorporating dispensationalism. Other forms of Christianity seem to come a poor last, and most listeners are continually regaled by that which is earnest, devout, but non-biblical. This is a plea that all might prayerfully consider the suggestion of Oliver Cromwell, "I pray you, by the bowels of Christ, consider whether ye might not be mistaken."

The unveiling of Christ (Revelation 1:1) implies a previous veiling, that is, it implies the incarnation. The king of glory stooped low to take humanity, veiling His glory lest it, rather than truth should motivate the world to accept him. Similarly, the kingdom of Christ has been veiled, and only by faith can its glory be perceived. This book tells us not only of the unveiling of the King who came in disguise, but also of the coming disclosure of what hitherto has been a reign invisible to the eye of sense. Again, the church, the body of Christ, has been present on earth in obscurity. The church visible is attended by blemishes, inadequacies, reproach, but soon the glories of the church invisible will be revealed to the whole universe. Christ, His kingdom and His church are inseparable, and thus the unveiling promised in Revelation 1:1 includes all three.

There are some twenty-five names or titles given to Christ in the Revelation. Some of these testify to His deity, as in 2:18, "the Son of God"; 19:13, "the Word of God"; 3:14, "the Beginning of the creation of God" (NASV), or "the prime source of all God's creation" (NEB), "the ruler of God's creation" (NIV); other titles stress Christ's humanity, as 1:13 "Son of Man"; 14:12; 22:16, "Jesus"; 1:1, "Jesus Christ." In 22:20 His deity and humanity are linked, as He is proclaimed to be "the Lord Jesus." Similarly we have in 22:21, "the Lord Jesus Christ."

Other titles speak of Christ's official work. In 11:15; 12:10; 20:4,6, He is "the Christ," the Messiah of Israel. In 3:14, He is "the faithful and true Witness." In 17:14; 19:16, He is "the King." 6:10 reveals Him as "Sovereign Lord," i.e. Master. Yet other titles relate Him to time and eternity. 22:13 declares Christ to be "the Alpha and Omega," "the First and the Last," "the Beginning and the End." He is in 1:5 "the First-born," and in 22:16 "the Morning Star," as well as "the Lamb," "the Lion," and "the Root and the Offspring of David." See Revelation 5 particularly, and also 22:16.

Thus this book, as none other, shows Christ's relationships to God and man, to heaven,

and earth, to penitent and impenitent sinners, to past, present, and future. With the hymn-writer we can confess, "Thou, O Christ, art all I want, More than all in Thee I find." This was the Father's attitude as He beheld Christ at Calvary, and it must ever be ours.

The most significant title of the above list is LAMB--found twenty-eight times in Revelation.

The "Lamb" took the Sealed Book, and opened it (5:6,7; 6:1).

The Living Creatures and Elders worship the "Lamb" (5:8,14).

100,000,000 Angels worship the "Lamb" (5:11-13).

The Great day of the "Lamb's" wrath is come (6:16,17).

Multitudes from all nations worship the "Lamb" (7:9,10).

Their robes were washed in the blood of the "Lamb" (7:14).

The "Lamb" leads them to fountains of living water (7:17).

They overcame Satan by the blood of the "Lamb" (12:11).

The 144,000 follow the "Lamb" (14:1,4).

They sing the song of Moses and the "Lamb" (15:3).

The "Lamb" is Lord of lords and King of kings (17:14).

Marriage of the "Lamb" to His Bride is come (19:6,9; 21:9).

12 foundations of City are 12 Apostles of the "Lamb" (21:14).

The "Lamb" is the Temple and Light of the City (21:22,23).

Only those in the "Lamb's Book of Life" shall enter (21:27).

Water of Life from Throne of the "Lamb" (22:1,3).

Such references only introduce the topic of Christ's prominence in Scripture's last book. In the first three chapters alone, we find His name or equivalent 137 times--49 in the first chapter, 39 times in the second, and 49 in the third. Not only is He referred to at least five times in the prologue, but the following verses of the first chapter are devoted to a symbolic description of Him as the royal priestly Warrior, judging both His church and His enemies. The seven epistles of chapters two and three draw from this portrayal, in every instance setting forth Christ appropriately, before counselling the local company of worshippers.

As the seven church letters were prefaced by a vision of Christ, so with the seven seals. Chapter five presents Him as the *goel*--the Avenger and Redeemer of Israel. He, and only He, can open the sealed book, the title deed to man's lost inheritance. After the sixth seal, which has told of the fear of those who cannot stand before the wrath of the Lamb-Avenger, we read of the Lamb-Redeemer leading the saved besides the crystal stream of the heavenly country.

The introduction to the trumpets similarly sets our gaze first upon Christ, as the mediator offering His merits to God on our behalf. A parenthesis after the sixth trumpet, as after the sixth seal, again focuses upon Him, this time as He proclaims the last Judgment.

The second half of the book similarly revolves around Christ. He is Michael, as well as the child born of the glorious bride, the One caught up to God and His throne. It is He who comes on the clouds of heaven to rescue a people oppressed on earth. Even in the chapter devoted to Antichrist, the latter is portrayed as a parody of Christ. Antichrist also works for 1260 days, is wounded to death, and then rises again.

In the nineteenth chapter, the One whose coming had been promised in chapters 14, 16, 17, rides forth leading the armies of heaven. Then He fellowships with His people through the millennium, and on into the eternal state. The New Jerusalem is but the house for "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:3). Thus the whole of Revelation proclaims Christ's glory--the glory of the Lamb that has taken away the sin of the world by His own death and resurrection. The Lamb motif here found is entirely consonant with the rest of Scripture as the following references show.

Gen. 3:21 The Lamb typified

Gen. 22:13 The Lamb prophesied

Ex. 12:13 The Lamb's blood applied

Isa. 53:1-12 The Lamb personified

John 1:29 The Lamb identified

Revelation 5:6-14 The Lamb magnified

Revelation 21:22,23; 22:1-3 The Lamb glorified

This truth that the Apocalypse is all about Christ is a vital interpretive key. Both the true and the false church are described in figures related to our Lord's earthly history. Professor Torrance was right in affirming regarding our book that "its essential scheme and content is taken from the evangelical records of the life and work of Jesus, from His birth to His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension."<sup>4</sup> The future experiences of the church are set forth in Revelation, as based on the pattern of Christ's experiences. Entire chapters revolve around the analogy between Christ and His people. For example, in the very heart of the book, chapters 11, 12, and 13 consider the parallels between events in the life of the Saviour and events in the history of the saved. In chapter 11, we read of the church witnessing for 1260 days, clothed in sackcloth, but armed with the mighty power of the Divine Word, which can work miracles of grace and judgment. When the church finishes its testimony, war is made upon it. The power of the state is allowed by Jerusalem to rise and slay Christ's witnesses. They are placed in an open grave for 3 1/2 days, and the people of earth rejoice and send gifts to one another, for those who tormented them are dead. But next comes earthquake, resurrection, and ascension, and the murderers are struck with terror, as they see those they killed taken to heaven in a cloud of glory. The parallel with the Head of the Church could hardly be more complete. His 1260 days of witnessing as a rejected Man of sorrow is rehearsed, likewise His death, resurrection and ascension.

In the following chapter, Christ is born to the woman clothed with the glory of the sun. He is immediately menaced by a great red dragon, but escapes it, and disappears into the heavens, whence He is to rule all nations, but first we see the great red dragon making war on the saints, as it did on their Lord. Milligan comments as follows:

Again, in chapter 12:4, the attitude of the great red dragon towards the woman delivered of the man child is thus described, "And the dragon stood before the woman which was about to be delivered, that when she was delivered, he might devour her child." Whatever else may be implied in this, it surely reflects that fact in the history of Jesus with which St. John, though he does not mention it in his Gospel, must have been perfectly familiar,--that Herod sought the young child's life to destroy him--a fact again repeated in the history of the church. And when, at verse 5 of the same chapter, the child is caught up to God and to His throne, what is this but the catching up of the faithful (for they are included in the child) to the heavenly places, after the manner of Him who ascended to "His Father and our Father, to His God and our God."<sup>5</sup>

Having set forth Christ's triumph and taking of the kingdom by the power of His cross (chapter 12), and sketched the simultaneous rejection of Satan from the heavenly places,

we are told in the following chapter that Satan's emissary has one of his heads fatally wounded. This concept is several times repeated. See Revelation 13:3,12; 17:8,11.

What is this but the symbolic reminder to us that all our foes have been overcome by the Lord of Calvary? Satan was wounded to death by the Cross. See Hebrews 2:14. We fight a defeated foe, but by confidence in what the blood of Christ has done, we too are more than conquerors. Surely this is a precious encouragement for a pilgrim people besieged at every turn in their journey! Revelation 17 has the same assurance in its portrayal of the beast as one that "was, and is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition." (v. 8). The twentieth chapter acts out the same motif. We behold the devil cast into the bottomless pit. For a thousand years he "is not." But at the close of the millennium, he ascends to deceive the nations once more. All who know the significance of the Cross have no cause for fear before the devil or his henchmen, as their resurrection is known to be but a final splutter of their dying life. Only those not written in the Lamb's book of life are deceived and overcome. Even where the Lamb is not referred to, the Cross is often in focus, as in the reference to "the deadly wound." Twice we read, "It is done," 16:17; 21:6;-- an allusion to the cry from Golgotha. See John 19:30.

The real fulcrum of the book is not the description of the New Jerusalem in the closing chapters, but the vision preparatory to the seals, where the book of destiny is taken by the once slain Lamb now standing victoriously amidst the acclamation of the heavenly hosts. It is not intended that the church should merely take note and rejoice. No, His Cross is also to be theirs, and this introductory vision is a fitting preface to the ensuing chapters which describe the church on the Cross. Milligan and Guinness and many others have seen the implications quite clearly.<sup>7</sup>

The parallel between Christ and His church is more detailed than we might suspect. For example, all who have closely studied Passion Week have seen how full it is of the theme of Judgment. Christ's pronouncement of divine visitation upon Jerusalem at the time of His triumphal entry, the cleansing of the temple, the cursing of the fig-tree, the utterances of judgment parables--vineyard and rejected stone, the marriage of the King's son, the woes on the Pharisees; all take place as a series of thunder-claps of Judgment. Note particularly the following verses: Luke 19:41-44; Matthew 21:12,19,41-44; 22:7,11-14; 23:32-39. See Mark chs. 11 and 12. Add to all these the great Judgment sermon recorded by Mark 13; Luke 21; Matthew 24-25.

With all this in mind, read Revelation 14:6,7--the prophecy that the church also must proclaim a message of judgment to the world before she closes her pilgrimage. (Compare Revelation 10-11, and 18:1-4, which speak to the same effect as 14:6-7.) Indeed, the whole book of Revelation is in this respect an enlarged Passion Week, for it is the book of judgment.

Of similar import is the fact that Christ cleansed the sanctuary of Jerusalem at the beginning and end of His ministry. This also is a theme in Revelation. In 11:2 we read of the holy places of the temple, and the outer court is so defiled that it must be "cast out," or excommunicated. This is a work of judgment, and the chapter closes on the same note, as the open temple is seen amid the thunders and lightnings of the last great Judgment Day. Daniel's "cleansing (vindicating), of the sanctuary" (8:14) is shown in Revelation to be the final assize and its aftermath.

Divine judgment in Revelation is a vindication of God and His oppressed people. This is why in the first chapter the Old Testament vision of the Son of Man, the vindicator from heaven, is brought to the reader's attention. Christ told His judges that, from that time forth, He would continually be to the world the vindicating Son of Man coming in judgment. See Luke 22:69. Revelation sets forth His comings in the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls, and ultimately as King of kings leading forth the armies of heaven. Thus the



threatened church of John's day was given light amid the darkness, hope in a time of discouragement. Eschatological judgment is but the judgment of the Cross consummated. See John 12:31.

As one more example of the Judgment theme, and its relationship to Christ and His people, consider the chapters on Babylon--17 and 18, in particular. What is in John's mind at this point, as the inspiring Spirit portrays the downfall of the great harlot? He would remember the Old Testament denunciations of Israel for her spiritual harlotry, and he would remember how Jerusalem instead of crowning her Lord betrayed him to the Roman "beast" and thus destroyed herself.

She is seated upon a Scarlet Beast full of names of Blasphemy; that is to say, her pride and prosperity are built upon her unnatural commercial alliance with Rome, and Rome will now turn and destroy her.

This unnatural alliance between two powers who ought to be enemies is also shown in a second way: she is drunk with the Blood of the Saints and the Blood of the Martyrs of Jesus. The Cup of her Abominations and Harlotries is certainly full, when she is found persecuting the Messiah and his followers in harmony with the god-emperor.

One point remains. She is seated upon Many Waters. Geographically this is more untrue of Jerusalem even than of Rome; but St. John found it in Isaiah's prophecy against the original Babylon, which was situated on a network of canals; later on he explains it: the Waters are Peoples and Multitudes and Nations and Tongues, and symbolise, therefore, the "Diaspora," the vast number of Jews scattered throughout the known world, from all of whom Jerusalem drew her power and riches.

On her forehead is placarded her Name, as was the custom with Harlots; but it is prefaced by the word MYSTERY, which implies warning. "Stop to consider; the word Babylon does not mean what you think it does." Had it meant Rome, the identification would have been simple; it lies deeper. The Great City is not only called Sodom or Egypt, it is also called Babylon the Great, the Mother of the Harlotries and Abominations of the Land.<sup>8</sup>

And why did Jerusalem become Babylon, the oppressor of the Messiah and His people? Christ and the Pharisees agreed on most of the doctrines of Scripture, but they vitally disagreed about the character of God. They believed God fellowshiped with them on the basis of their piety, but Christ declared that all men were so depraved, that the only possible ground for acceptance was the grace and mercy of a forgiving God. Christ "received sinners and ate with them," and this the Jewish leaders could not tolerate. Wherever their legalism led them to oppress the people, Christ defied their teachings. Particularly did He clash with them over the observance of the Sabbath, which to Him symbolised the rest brought by the gospel. (See Matthew 11:28-30.) They had made this emblem of true religion a travesty and a burden. He worked seven recorded miracles on that day, to show it as an institution of mercy and love. One chapter in ten of the gospel record alludes to one or another of the sabbath controversies. Time and again, we read that the Jews took counsel to kill Christ after such conflict. It was His proclamation of the gospel--God's forgiving love for sinners--which precipitated the final murderous plot of the Pharisees. So it will be again for Christ's body, the church.

Towards the close of His ministry, Christ did more than merely proclaim and practice the truth. He openly attacked the false religion of the popular church. Read His denunciation in Matthew 23. He predicted that multiple woes would be poured upon that generation. (See vv. 13-36). It was now agreed upon by the Pharisees that it was expedient that one man, the man Jesus, should perish.

Christ separated from the Babylon of His day those willing to walk with Him, the Truth. He called His own sheep by name and led them out. Revelation 18:1-4 predicts a similar call to separation, proclaimed by the church, before the final woes descend. As in the record of Sodom the flight of God's people signalled the coming of His judgments, so it is to be at the end of the world. See Gen. 18:20 to 19:25. Matthew 2 to 4:15ff. illustrates the same truth.

The Cross was the outcome of the clash between two different concepts of God, between the false gospel of good advice and the true gospel of good news. When it was demonstrated that even the law of God was intended to reflect His love and mercy, some darkened souls, imbued with legalism, could stand the light no longer.

All this mirrors the final history of the church and is reflected in the apocalypse. The gospel and the Judgment are both to be proclaimed to a Babylonian world. See Revelation 14:6-12. But the beast ascending from the bottomless pit will make war on the witnesses and sentence them to death.

According to Revelation 13:11-18, the whole world is to become a Calvary. The scenes of the betrayal, the rejection, and the crucifixion of Christ have been re-enacted continuously throughout history, but their chief reenactment is yet ahead. On an immense scale, the events in the judgment halls of the Sanhedrin and Pilate's Pretorium are to be repeated. The cry will ascend, "Whom shall we release unto you, these or Barabbas"? Once more the world will choose Barabbas, and cry, "Crucify them!" There is no other way of reading Revelation 11; 13, 17:14, than to see there the forecast of the greatest pogrom of history, a pogrom which will be Calvary magnified (in quantity, though not of course in quality). The closing scenes of earth's history will be a portrayal of the Cross so that "through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 3:9). The universe will never again need any further demonstration of the abhorrent nature of sin. They will have witnessed first, the God-man crucified, and those of earth most like Him in character similarly assaulted by men conformed to the image of Satan. The heavens will cry as the last judgments fall, "Just and true are thy ways, O King of the ages! . . . for thy judgments have been revealed" (Revelation 15:4). "Just art thou in these thy judgments" (Revelation 16:5,7).

Thus the events of the life of Christ are the paradigm for the history of the Christian church. If we take in the broad outline of the entire Christ-event, (not just His last days), as the eschatological reality, the picture will show more details along with its increased depth. We behold the coming of the special Messenger at a time of religious formalism and hypocrisy, and worldly despotism and despair. After the anointing of the Spirit came a preliminary series of temptations to entice the Messenger to use the weapons of the world, or to misuse His divine power.

Following climactic signs and wonders including the feeding of the 5,000, and the 4,000, and the raising of Lazarus, the Sanhedrin declared Him worthy of death. Legalism and liberalism of that day ultimately united with the power of the state and its gilded antinomianism to silence the tormenting Messenger. A betrayer of His own band is a convenient tool. Straight testimonies, like the sermon of John 6, had already caused many who were curious about the Galilean to turn away from a religion that was too spiritual and demanding. The tension mounted to crisis, and the people who had rejected the infant king at the beginning and later the infant kingdom, came to the place where its mob representatives cried out: "Crucify Him, crucify Him. We have no king but Caesar." But the ensuing murder of the submissive God-man became the redemption of the world. From His Cross, Christ gave eternal largesse to a thief as the pledge of the same gift to millions. Simultaneously, He gave His robe to his crucifiers, as since the Cross, He has offered the robe of His righteousness to all the guilty of earth. He also divided the lost from the saved,

the impenitent from the penitent, for His Cross was a judgment bar. "Now is the judgment of this world," He had declared. Such was the Christ event. It fulfilled the salvation shadows of Israel's history and ritual, as well as the forecasts of the prophets. Creation, the Flood, the Exodus--all were recapitulated in Christ. As the second Adam, the second Noah, the second Moses, and the second David, He accomplished deliverance. All that follows can only mirror what has already happened in Him. It was particularly emphasised in Christ's chief sermon on the end of the world.

The practical purpose of the Christocentric nature of this book is supremely important. Those who behold the sun for a brief moment see its glory still reflected when they look elsewhere, and it is intended that the suffering church should be nerved for endurance by steadfastly beholding the glory of its slain and risen Lord. This is the reason why each prophetic chain in Revelation is prefaced by a vision of Christ.

In view of these facts, it must be said again that popular methods of exegeting this book stand condemned. The vast majority of commentaries issuing 'from fundamentalist groups have much to say about Palestine, Russia, China, a restored Roman empire, a future Jewish tyrant from the tribe of Dan, a literal Armageddon, and related themes. One best-seller gives minute instructions regarding survival in the great tribulation ahead. It seems to us that the Apocalypse is shouting the message that the only way to survive is to be committed body and soul to Him who suffered in our place. Such survival has to do with eternity--it is not a guarantee against partaking of His sufferings in this life.

Revelation, by its Christocentric nature, has something to say to all religious groups today who claim a special message for the world. Unless that message centres upon the gospel of the atoning death of the Lamb of God, it certainly is not heaven's last call. When John portrays the final warning, proceeding to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, he describes it as "the everlasting gospel" (14:6). Those who speak chiefly on doctrines, rather than on Christ, forget that doctrines are merely the spokes that radiate from a personal hub. They are but the outshining of Christ's glory, and if the living centre is passed by, the mere verbalising of doctrinal truth will lose its power. Doctrines are significant only as related to Christ, His nature and His work. The world is not to be converted by legalistic religion, or by the gift of tongues, but by preaching Christ crucified. He has promised to draw all unto Him, if we will but lift Him up. There is no book of Scripture which elevates the Saviour more than this closing volume of the sacred canon. We will do well to follow the example of the inspiring Spirit.

The crucial question concerning the Christian nature of Revelation is its teaching concerning God. No future event, not even the return of Christ, is the interpretive centre of any of the New Testament documents. Revelation is no exception. The cross-resurrection event is the pulse of the whole New Testament. The Book of Revelation, like the Epistle to the Romans, exalts the righteousness of God, and His ultimate victory revealed in the cross-resurrection event. The difference between Romans and Revelation is not Revelation's emphasis upon the future. The difference is in the language used to express the same truths we find in Romans. Revelation uses apocalyptic or picture language to symbolise the same uncovering of the righteousness and victory in Christ Jesus stated by Paul in Romans. Both books proclaim that the consummation of the time-changing event has not yet come, but the change has begun. The age to come (God's time) has broken into this present evil age. The redemption is not completed, but the victory is sure. . . .

. . . John is interpreting the significance of the cross and the resurrection for the future. John is not looking at a sneak preview of history down through the corridors of time to the end; he is declaring God's revelation of the meaning of the cross-resurrection for time and history until the end.<sup>9</sup>

## **CHAPTER 10** [\(TOC\)](#)

### **THE DRAMA IN MINIATURE**

When Christ on the eve of Calvary gave His great prophecy from the Mount of Olives, He sketched the future of the church in terms of His approaching Passion. The body would endure the same afflictions, the same trials, the same antagonisms, as its Head. The key words of that discourse include "hour," "watch," "betray," and its topics include war, persecution, famine, pestilence, earthquake, apostasy, religious deception, signs and wonders from above and beneath, the worldwide proclamation of the gospel, and the advent of the abomination of desolation.

Before that week had ended, His "hour" came, and He was "betrayed." His disciples who had failed to "watch" forsook Him and fled, and left Him alone in His great tribulation. Through seven court-trials He passed, through scourging and abuse. The terror of the Garden was replaced by the malice and fiendishness of men. The abomination of desolation, idolatrous, persecuting Rome, as well as apostate Jews, showed their hatred of the Light of men. On the Cross came plagues of thirst, darkness, desolation, and earthquake. But Friday gave way to the silence of sabbath, and then came the second earthquake--one of liberation from the opened tomb. Resurrection, reunion, and ascension followed.

Those who fail to connect the Olivet sermon with the Passion miss much. Not only did Christ on that Tuesday take the great Daniel prophecy about the first advent and the Cross (Daniel 9:24-27) and show that it pointed also to the end of the world, but in discussing the latter topic He continually alluded to the former. Thus He warned the disciples that the route ahead was not one of glory, but of crucifixion, and He also showed that the second coming should always be seen through the lens of the first.

It may seem strange to some readers, but today many scholars enquire as to whether this sermon is really predictive. Many have suggested that its true nature is that of paraclesis--warning and admonition, and that only. Certain it is that Christ's presentation, while alluding to apocalyptic signs, is yet poles apart from typical Jewish apocalyptic matter. In many respects the sermon is both surprising and disappointing. There is no horoscope for mankind, no lucid description of the bliss of the saved, or the terrors of the lost. But what is present from beginning to end is the note of warning, the admonition to be right rather than merely to know or profess the right. The first and last words of Christ and His imperatives throughout Mark 13 amount to nineteen. It is evident that His prophecy has primarily a moral purpose, as was the case also with most Old Testament predictions.

Having said that Christ's primary purpose was pastoral and admonitory, should Busch be followed in holding that there is no true succession of events delineated? We feel Kummel is more accurate at this point. The various terms of chronological significance throughout Mark 13 cannot be ignored. Some of them definitely imply a sequence of events. Furthermore, this sequence, for the most part, is preserved in the threefold Synoptic record. The pattern looks somewhat like the following: religious agitation and persecution; increasing confusion on national and international scales, accompanied by terrestrial signs such as earthquakes; worldwide proclamation of the gospel; increasing religious intolerance; apostasy; onslaught on Jerusalem; the great tribulation with its accompanying intensified deceptions; cosmic signs climaxed by the revelation of Christ to gather His elect.

While the notes of time which are scattered through the discourse cannot be ignored, we do not feel that there is any marked emphasis by Christ on chronological precision. For the

most part, this address falls neatly into a threefold time division; preliminaries to the tribulation, the tribulation itself, and deliverance of the elect by Christ from tribulation. Any chronological delineation that is more specific than this is liable to distortion, but any presentation that is less precise is also unfaithful to the evidence. What categories can be used to house the specifics of this sermon?

Wars and their concomitants--famine, pestilence, etc.;

Distress of nations with perplexity. International, as well as national upheavals.

Society becomes a polluted carcass, like Sodom and the antediluvian world, pursuing pleasure.

Even the church is chiefly asleep, and only a little flock lets its light shine.

Opposition to and persecution of the faithful remnant.

Religious counterfeits including miraculous signs--men suggest a religious "cure" for the ills of the world. This will include the silencing of non-conformists John 11:50.

As Christian fidelity led to persecution, so now persecution acts as a bellows on the gospel flame.

Worldwide proclamation of the gospel.

Increasing number of false Christs and false prophets. Spiritistic signs and wonders.

Union of apostate religion with political power (the abomination of desolation--Antichrist).

Tribulation and martyrdom spread.

Flight of believers from the great centres of population.

Warning signs in the heavens, and on earth, the sea and the waves roaring.

All men are polarised by their attitude to the gospel and those who have proclaimed it.

Christ comes to execute the judgment men have passed on themselves.

The sheep and the goats separation.

When we link Christ's own experience with His oral warnings, and add the details found in the prophecies of 2 Thessalonians 2, Revelation, and other Scriptures, it is not difficult to sketch the future in broad outline. The categories listed above are not necessarily in perfect chronological sequence, and several may overlap. What follows is suggestive only, and is not intended to contradict our repeated emphasis that prophecy's primary purpose is spiritual rather than intellectual, and that prophetic words are fully luminous only after their fulfilment.

First must come revival, true and false, in the religious world scene--a scene like that of the Roman world of the first century with all its evil and despair. It will be a time of increasing international tension and national degeneracy, attended by physical phenomena in earth, sea, and sky. See Luke 21: 10,11. We do not here list wars first, because war is always with us, and it has ever been so. It is doubtful whether the world has in millenniums known even 250 peaceful years.

The future will be existence under hothouse conditions. Everything good and evil will rapidly mature with an intensity that is geometric. As the gospel is proclaimed to every

nation, the resistance stirred up will be equally widespread. The excitement of Christ's Palm Sunday is to be repeated everywhere.

On the counterfeit religious scene, spiritism will become more and more dominant, offering heathen deities, and religiously varnished panaceas of self-help systems, theosophy, pantheism, and a variety of options--some crude and some sophisticated, depending upon locality and culture. It will be reminiscent of the first century, when pagan religions fought for their lives as the gospel stormed all entrenched systems of belief.

Those who are not established in the truth of Scripture will landslide to the error of their choice. Others who have been soul-hungry, will hear the voice of the true Shepherd, and take hold of the gospel. They will echo what they have received. According to church history, about six million people of the Roman world had taken hold of Christianity by the time of the death of John, and Scripture foretells that multitudes will respond to divine mercy in the last hours of grace. Messengers going into the highways and byways will "compel" the needy to come in. The whole earth will be lightened with the glory of God, as an anointed people with faces lighted up, tell of the matchless charms of Christ.

As in Christ's day, opposing religious and philosophical groups will ultimately unite in order to influence the world towards a monolithic religious system designed to solve international problems. Pagan and communist lands, for economic reasons, will receive the mark of false religion "in the hand," though not in the intellect. They unite temporarily to give their power to the beast monolith. Then all nonconformists will be threatened, economically penalised, and finally outlawed. Religionists thus enlist the strong arm of the state to enforce its panaceas. Spiritism will dominate the majority of earth's inhabitants. Its forms will be manifold but essentially idolatrous, offering false gods, and false gospels. The veneer will remain respectable--a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Much of the law of God will be outwardly upheld, yet the Creator dishonoured by failure in spirit and form. Like Pharaoh of old, willing to give up much but not all, like Herod who did many things gladly but martyred John--so it will be with the religious world. But the abomination of desolation--the union of church and state--will eventually attack the despised few who, like Christ, refuse all counterfeits, and are guided only by the Word of God.

The Spirit of God pleads less and less because of impervious hearts, and the world is left open to strong, almost overmastering delusion, as Satan himself counterfeits Christ's coming in various places around the globe (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). Now the remnant is proscribed, and all are sealed for eternity, according to the decision made for, or against, the gospel and those who proclaim it. The tribulation of the remnant becomes a tribulation for the world, as the unmingled wrath of God begins to fall. The universe beholds two companies. By far the larger group is possessed by devils, and show forth the image of their master Satan. Like him, they are now murderous and lying.

The smaller company, which in order to proclaim the good news has been prepared to endure Calvary, reflects more and more of the image of Christ. The universe beholds good and evil ripened for the harvest. Then appears the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens, and all nations wail because of Him--all except the scattered, eager, expectant minority, who know that the hour of their deliverance has come.

Carrington has shown the parallel between this sermon and Christ's enlarged revelation to John:

## **GOSPELS**

### **This Age:**

Prophets killed, etc.  
Innocent blood

## **REVELATION**

### **Part 1 (4 to 11)**

Souls under altar.  
Earthquakes, etc.  
Prophets killed.

**This Generation:**

Crucifixion.  
 Earthquakes, etc  
 Spread of Gospel.  
 False Christs.  
 False Prophets.  
 Persecution.

**Interlude (12 to 14:14)**

Birth, etc. of Christ.  
 (cf. Three Messages).  
 The Beast.  
 The Second Beast.  
 Persecution.  
 Three Messages.

**The Age to Come**

Abomination of  
 Desolation  
 The Son of Man.  
 The Harvest  
 Fall of Jerusalem  
 Coming of Christ  
 in power.  
 Coming of the kingdom  
 in power.  
 With a trumpet

**Part II (14:15 to end)**

Earthquakes, etc.  
 Gathering for Armageddon.  
 The Son of Man.  
 The Harvest.  
 Fall of Jerusalem  
 (Babylon).  
 Coming of Christ in victory.  
 Descent of the New Jerusalem.  
 Seven Trumpets.

Two signs predominate in the Olivet sermon and its enlargement in Revelation. The sign of the worldwide spread of the gospel, and the sign of a church-state union ("the abomination of desolation"--i.e. an idolatrous persecuting power), employing force to bring conformity. See Matthew 24:14-15; and compare Revelation 14:6-12; 13:11-18; 17:13-14. This conflict is the Armageddon of the Apocalypse, and the eight references to war in its pages refer to the same war in its various stages.

Such is the New Testament portrayal of the days to come--but it is also the portrayal of the broad course of history wherever the gospel has been proclaimed. The central eschatological elements of worldly troubles, the offered gospel antidote, religious counterfeits, war on the gospel, and divine judgments--there are the chessmen of the ages.

All in all, the prophetic page of the Bible's last book but repeats the typical pictures of the Old Testament, and the narratives of the gospel. We should not look for in Revelation's prophetic history of the church anything which did not transpire in Christ its Head, or in His ancient body of believers. This principle also outlaws all attempts to find minute reference to details of world history between John's time and time of the end. Just as surely, it condemns all attempts to limit the meaning of this marvellous book merely to the first century, or the last. The Word of Life is ever pertinent, and we should gather up the fragments that nothing may be lost. Every century has its Exodus, its Antichrist, its prophetic call, and its deliverance.

Thus it is that preterist, historicist, futurist, and idealist are all right and all wrong--right in finding applications of prophecy to the time they designate, wrong in denying the same privilege to the others. There can be no perfect matching, however, till the final flowering, the worldwide scale of ripened good and evil which brings the End and the new Beginning.

## **EXCURSUS ON THE APOCALYPSE AND CHRIST'S OLIVET SERMON**

(Mark 13; Matthew 24; Luke 21)

It is not enough to say that John has used the Olivet discourse. A more important question, not usually asked by commentators (not even by R. H. Charles who stressed the first point), is--how has he used it?

We submit that John, in harmony with his prevailing symbolic style, has wherever possible "spiritualised" the contents of the sermon. In accordance with the nature of his book, he has turned the "literalities" of the discourse into symbols. The failure to observe this leads commentators to frequently misinterpret the visions of Revelation. The following are examples of John's practice.

**Jerusalem:** The city to be destroyed by the wrath of God reappears as Babylon the great, under the ban of destruction. The judgment theme of this Sermon of our Lord becomes the warp and woof of Revelation and it is particularly judgment on professed religionists that is emphasised throughout. Like Jerusalem of old, Babylon is burnt up with fire by the kings of the world (see Revelation 17:16 and all of chapter 18). Particularly observe 18:4,8,24 and compare Matthew 24; 15:7; Luke 21:11; Matthew 23:35. According to Christ, all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, the blood of saints and prophets, will be required of Jerusalem. John says the same, but he says it of Babylon. As Carrington inquires, "If the Babylon of St. John is not Jerusalem, what has happened to that central prediction of our Lord"? The very language of Daniel and Christ about Jerusalem being trodden underfoot reappears, but it is now used not of physical armies, but of a symbolic trampling. Revelation 11:2; Matthew 24:1,2; Mark 13:1,2; Luke 21:5,6.

**The Temple:** The temple in Revelation becomes the symbolic temple of the church. See Revelation 11:1. Its worshippers are now spiritual Israelites. See Revelation 1:6,12,20; 2:9; 2:9; 3:9; 7:1-8; 14:1-5.

**The Abomination of Desolation** of Mark 13:14 and Matthew 24:15 becomes Antichrist and his image in Revelation. See 13:5-8,15. It surrounds the holy city (the church) to destroy it. Not literal but spiritual Israel is threatened. John now has much more than literal Rome in mind, and much more than idolatrous banners. The banner of the abomination, about which he warns, is the symbolic mark of a symbolic beast.

**Flight from Jerusalem** (Mark 13:14). This becomes flight from Babylon. On Revelation 18:4, Vos writes:

. . . our Lord also gave a similar command to depart from Judea in the times of the abomination. . . . Jesus warned the people of great wickedness and persecution which would be present in the Judean area. . . . Moreover, false prophets shall arise and attempt to deceive even the people of God. . . . When such wickedness prevails in the city and when the false prophets are attempting to lead God's people astray there is only one way to escape. . . . And that is to leave the city. . . . Many of these thoughts lie behind the command in Revelation 18:4 to flee from Babylon. This city is likewise full of wickedness. . . . her hands are stained with the blood of martyred Christians. . . . Moreover . . . there is the implicit association of Babylon and the false prophet. Thus the two situations which our Lord pictures in his apocalyptic discourse, and which John relates in the vision of Revelation 17-18 are, *mutatis mutandis*, rather similar. And the command of Christ to leave Judea in view of the tribulation and wickedness undoubtedly contributes to the form of the thought and expression in Revelation 18:4.<sup>3</sup>

It is not a physical flight from a geographical area, but a spiritual withdrawal from error in belief and practice.



**Great Tribulation** (Matthew 24:21). No longer is this the tribulation induced by the invasion of a literal army, but the religious persecution of the last days. Revelation 7:9; 13:1-18.

**Earthquake** (Matthew 24:7,29). Compare Revelation 6:12; 11:13; 16:18. The earthquakes of the Olivet sermon become great shakings in human society, as well as earth's upheavals.

**Darkening of the sun and moon** (Matthew 24:29). In Revelation 8:12, a symbolic darkening is intended as the numerical proportion indicates as well as the context. John in Revelation 6:12-14, while certainly alluding to the physical concomitants of the advent, wishes to make these symbolic as well. Thus we not only have the darkening of the sun, but the moon becoming as blood--a feature not found in the synoptic references, though present in Joel 2:31. He sees the former as an eclipse of truth, with apostasy dark as sackcloth of hair, and resultant martyrdom for the church symbolised by the moon bathed in blood. The falling stars are similarly transposed. See Revelation 8:10; 9:1. Cf. 1:20.

**The Body and the Eagles** (Matthew 24:28). This proverb of the polluted carcass and the scavenging vultures is enlarged and spiritualised by John. The body becomes the apostate earth, and the eagles which cry "woe" represent the descending judgments of the last three trumpets.

**Trumpet Call** (Matthew 24:31). The trumpet calls of Revelation are also symbolic. The seven trumpets are not proclamations to be heard, but something to be experienced.

**That Wicked Servant** (Matthew 24:48). He is made a class in Revelation. See all its references to apostasy.

**The Virgins** (Matthew 25:1). Compare the symbolic virgins of Revelation 14:1-5.

**The Midnight Cry** (Matthew 25:6) becomes the lightening of the whole earth by the church's fulfilment of the gospel commission. Revelation 18:1; 14:6.

**The Marriage Feast** (Matthew 25:10) reappears in Revelation 19. Certainly, Christ speaking in parable here, intended that a deeper intent of His words should be perceived, as with the proverb of Matthew 24:31. But John can have no use for the usual parabolic form, inasmuch as his whole presentation being apocalyptic is parabolic in intent. While Christ tells a story about virgins, lamps, a proclamation at midnight, a marriage feast and a shut door, John lifts these out of their story setting and places them in a larger drama, deeply symbolic throughout.

**Wars, famines, pestilences** (Matthew 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:10,11). These too reappear in Revelation in the second, third, and fourth seals. But as surely as the conquering of seal one is the spiritual conquering of the gospel, and the slaying of seal two is the spiritual antagonism to the gospel, and the cry in seal five is but a symbolic cry and its altar symbolic, and the wild beasts of seal four indicate the wild beasts used as symbols for Antichrist in Revelation 13, so all the seals must be understood symbolically. As the war is not primarily that of nation against nation, but the impenitent against believers, so the famine is not for bread but the Word of the Lord, and the pestilence is that of the soul, induced by heresy and departure from the Gospel found in the Word.

John, of course, nowhere denies the literal meaning of the Olivet discourse. That would have been impossible. He takes it for granted and knows his reader will also. He and they believe in the sun being literally darkened, and meteoric showers, and a great earthquake to come; but for his purpose, in harmony with his whole literary style, he turns all the key elements of the Olivet sermon into symbols. In this dispensation of the Holy Spirit all the things of Israel have been consecrated to the service of the church and symbolically applied. Thus John is in harmony with this principle found operating throughout the whole

New Testament after Pentecost. See 1 Peter 2:5,6; James 1:1; Galatians 6:16; Romans 2:28,29; Galatians 3:28,29.

Neither should we expect entire consistency in any symbolic treatise. As Carrington says, such is impossible.

. . . no sustained symbolic narrative of any artistic or spiritual merit has ever been able to keep up a system of "meanings" successfully; and indeed what would be the value of a narrative whose symbolism merely consisted in substituting one set of words for another throughout? It would hardly reach the level of a cryptogram.

We are forced back on the old simple idea of the early prophets, that spiritual processes can best be described symbolically. Sin is called a dragon, because sin is much more like a dragon than it is like a doctrinal definition. God is called a king, because God is much more like a king than he is like the first of the Thirty-nine Articles. The dragon and the king are helpful symbols as long as it is remembered that sin is not a dragon and God is not a king: that would be mythology. They are helpful symbols until we begin asking what the dragon's claws or the king's crown "mean"; for that is allegory.<sup>4</sup>

For example, while Jerusalem the apostate (an adulterous bride of God), becomes the harlot of Babylon in Revelation, and its destruction made an eschatological destruction of all apostates, it is also true that the inner temple can be consecrated to represent the faithful remnant. Revelation 11:1. But even here John has most of the temple courts overrun by apostates. Similarly some things in the Olivet sermon already spiritual, such as the gospel, cannot be applied otherwise in the Apocalypse, but even in this instance, our Lord's plain promise of Mark 13:10; Matthew 24:14 is symbolically expressed by the pictures of angelic proclamations to the world. See Revelation 10:1-3; 14:6; 18:1.

## CHAPTER 11 [\(TOC\)](#)

### MUST ESCHATOLOGY BE PANIC THEOLOGY?

. . . an incredible army emerges from the Euphrates. . . it numbers "200 million" (Revelation 9:16). The four demonic spirit-beings somehow incite this great army to invade the Middle East and apparently they are the ones who make the river dry up so that the army can quickly cross this ancient barrier of east and west.

A terrifying prophecy is made about the destiny of this Asian horde. They will wipe out a third of the earth's population (Revelation 9:18). The phenomena by which this destruction of life will take place is given: it will be by fire, smoke (or air pollution), and brimstone (or melted earth).<sup>1</sup>

The conflict will not be limited to the Middle East. The apostle John warns that when these two great forces meet in battle the greatest shock wave ever to hit the earth will occur. Whether by natural force of an earthquake or by some super weapon isn't clear. John says that all the cities of the nations will be destroyed (Revelation 16:19).

Imagine, cities like London, Paris, Tokyo, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago--obliterated! John says that the Eastern force alone will wipe out a third of the earth's population (Revelation 9:15-18).

He also predicts that entire islands and mountains would be blown off the map. It seems to indicate an all-out attack of ballistic missiles upon the great metropolitan areas of the world.<sup>2</sup>

Books such as Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* purporting to explain the prophecies of Revelation and other Scriptures, set forth what has been characterised as "panic theology."<sup>3</sup> The impact for many is poles apart from what one finds in the New Testament proclamations of the end of the world. The latter implies that because the advent is "the blessed hope," its contemplation automatically leads to increase in faith, hope, and love. This is a far cry from apocalyptic fever such as is frequently associated with modern, particularly dispensationalist, presentations of the End.

But how can one contemplate the appearance of Christ the great Judge, being aware of one's own residual imperfections, and not panic? The answer is that the second advent must always be viewed through the lens of the first. It is a cardinal principle in theology that many things which can and must be distinguished, should never be separated. This is true of the members of the Trinity (for the Father was not crucified for us, neither did the Spirit lie in the tomb for three days before resurrection), the two natures of Christ (it was not His divine nature which died, for deity cannot die), justification and sanctification, law and gospel, faith and works, etc.

In the area of eschatology, while the second advent must, of course, be distinguished from the first, it should never be separated. Only those who have by faith been crucified with Christ, those who have perceived that they already have exhausted the wrath of God in their Substitute and Surety, only these can contemplate the return of the King of kings with equanimity. They are "complete in Him," "accepted in the Beloved," and for them there is no condemnation, neither today, nor at the hour of His appearing. Colossians 2:10; Ephesians 1:6; Romans 8:1,33-34.

Here again we should recognise the drunken peasant syndrome referred to earlier. Many churches have separated the second advent from the first by failing to proclaim it. Others have erred in reverse, particularly sectarian groups, in stressing the second coming, but

paying only lip-service to the pre-eminence of the Cross of the first advent. The principle of theology which demands distinction but no separation suggests that those who look to the second advent as the great saving act have failed to rightly distinguish that event from the hour when, concerning our reconciliation with Heaven, the Saviour declared, "It is finished."

We wish now to illustrate this principle, not only as a prophylactic against panic theology, but as a vital hermeneutical key. What is here repeated is of the first importance both as to Christian doctrine and Christian practice.

When Christ from the Mount of Olives gave His revelation of events associated with the second advent, as mentioned previously, He drew largely from the Messianic prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, "the foundation stone of the Christian religion," a passage often understood as applying only to the first coming of Christ. Our Lord's exposition of this passage makes it clear that He saw it as embracing His second advent as well as the first. But as He used the specifics of Daniel 9:24-27 applying them to the Parousia. He did so by interweaving allusions to His approaching passion. Thus when we look at Daniel 9:24-27 through the eyes of Christ, a great prophecy about the first advent is seen to embrace the second (illustrating again that some things distinct must yet never be separated). More than this, however, for when we contemplate the second advent discourse of Matthew 24-25 (Mark 13; Luke 21), we suddenly discover that it heralds an end time which will rehearse Christ's own last days.

The following chart illustrates the first point, but also casts light on the second:

#### **The Olivet Sermon and Daniel 9:24-27**

What will be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world? Matthew 24:3; Luke 21:7; Mark 13:4; (Compare Daniel 9:24-27)

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place. . . . Matthew 24:15; Daniel 9:27,26

You will hear of wars. Matthew 24:6; Daniel 9:26

". . . the temple. . . . there will not be left here one stone." Matthew 24:3; Daniel 9:26,21.

"the end" ... Matthew 24:6,13,14; Daniel 9:24,26

". . . its desolation has come." Luke 21:20; Daniel 9:27.

"these are days of vengeance to fulfil all that is written." Luke 21:22; Daniel 9:24.

"your redemption" Luke 21:28; Daniel 9:24

"the kingdom of God" Luke 21:31; Daniel 9:24.

Commentators on that gospel, which is usually accepted as the first written (Mark), have pointed out the correspondence in motifs and terminology between Mark 13 and the succeeding passion chapters. The most prominent include the following:

"betray"	three times--ch. 13:9,11,12
	ten times--chs. 14,15

"watch"	Mark 13 <i>passim</i> . cf. 14:34,37
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"hour"	13:32--cf. 14:35,41
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Thus 13:32-37 acts as a transition to the narrative of the Passion,<sup>4</sup> particularly the section of 14:33-42. In Gethsemane, three of the same four disciples mentioned in 13:3 are given the command to watch. The word "watch," occurring in both passages indicates that the

Passion began the troubles predicted in chapter 13, thus placing the apostles in Christ's succession on the path to glory via sorrow and crucifixion. Says Hendrikus Berkhof:

. . . in all synoptic Gospels, statements about the future are summarised right before the Passion story. The themes dealt with are watchfulness, oppression, decrease of love, flight, and finally spectacular natural phenomena and the coming of the Son of Man in glory. It is conspicuous that all these themes recur in the following chapters which deal with Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. . . the meaning is obviously that the future will show--on a larger, and eventually world-wide scale--a repetition of what has happened in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus."<sup>5</sup>

Compare Austin Farrer's statement--". . . the substance of the Last Things and the substance of the passion are one and the same."<sup>6</sup>

Why did Mark originally include in his gospel the second advent sermon? The answer is that this ancient tract has long been recognised as "the martyr's gospel." Many parts of it point out that there is a Cross for every believer as well as for the Master. It was written for a believing community in an alien and hostile world, needing catechetical instruction and strengthening exhortation.<sup>7</sup>

So much for the purpose of the Gospel as a whole. But why did the Evangelist include his thirteenth chapter? It is the only place in Mark where we find Christ delivering a long speech on a single theme. It is the only lengthy discourse that is recorded by all three of the Synoptics, and all three use it as the climax to that section of the Gospel they were responsible for writing; that is, it comes just before the Passion narrative which already circulated as a separate entity. Mark's tract would have seemed tolerably complete without the Olivet discourse. But, on the other hand, there was no more appropriate time in the ministry of Christ when such instruction could be given.<sup>8</sup>

Nineham agrees with Loisy, Guignebert, Dodd, Lightfoot, and Beasley-Murray in recognising the strategic relief in which the events of Christ's life and death are placed by this interposed address on the return of Him who seemed but another Rabbi. He suggests that this discourse "brings out the infinite significance the Evangelist saw in the events of the ministry."<sup>9</sup> It is only because the ministry of Christ is God's ultimate saving intervention in time that it will be followed by the End and the coming of God's kingdom. Says Beasley-Murray:

It has long been recognised that the discourse holds a significant place in the Gospel of Mark in that it forms both a conclusion to the teaching ministry of Jesus and an introduction to the passion narrative immediately afterwards. The horror of the betrayal and execution is not minimised, but the proportion of the tragedy is changed. The cross for Jesus is the pathway to glory; he knows whither he goes, and the shadow of impending judgment falls upon the people that reject their King.

This has been admitted by writers as different as Loisy and Dodd, Guignebert and Lightfoot.<sup>10</sup>

Just as the Gospel as a whole seems to have catechetical purposes, and, in particular, aims at strengthening those who must suffer for Christ's sake, so with this chapter. It gives Christ's own instructions regarding the anticipated end of Jerusalem and the world, but in particular, it displays a *theologia crucis* rather than a *theologia gloria*.<sup>11</sup> This would act as an appropriate rebuke to those whose zeal outstripped their good sense as they fervently expected Christ's imminent appearing but shunned daily duty. And simultaneously the admonitions would have encouraged the more balanced believers.

R. P. Martin has suggested that this Gospel sets forth "the paradox of Jesus' earthly life in which suffering and vindication form a two-beat rhythm" and S. Schulz speaks of the

"pattern of humiliation and exultation."<sup>12</sup> This pattern is obvious in the Olivet discourse. While the first two-thirds of Mark 13 speaks of evil times, of seducers, betrayal, and suffering, the account is balanced by the picture of the vindicating Lord coming in the clouds of heaven to gather His oppressed elect. Mark 13:26 would convey to the early Christians the same consolation as did Daniel 7:13 to the persecuted remnant in Maccabean times.

The various key-words of the chapter reappear in the following description of the Passion in such a way as to teach that the disciples' course must be similar to their Lord's, and that there is no path to glory except via the Cross.

Certain truths should now stand out. Jesus teaches us clearly as He expands the Daniel prophecy of His first advent that that event forensically embraced the second advent also. Therefore, to rightly understand the Cross, we must see its impact on God, man, and the universe as a whole. It was, in a real, though not materially manifest sense, "the end of the world." Compare Hebrews 9:26; 1 John 2:17; John 12:31; Hebrews 1:2; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 13:11,12; 16:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; James 5:9.

Secondly, our Lord tells us that if we would understand the events awaiting us, we should keep in mind the pattern of the Cross, for it is the Cross event climaxing the first advent which is the paradigm for the experience of the church in the last days. These truths, implicit in this first "Revelation of Jesus Christ" about the future, are sounded again through His last revelation made to John on Patmos. The Bible's closing book is the book of the second advent. It stresses judgment and all associated therewith more than any other part of Scripture. But for the consolation and assurance of the believer, it never sets forth the second advent as separated from the first distinct, yes--but separate, no. Any commentator or preacher on the Apocalypse who fails here, fails everywhere.

Thus Revelation opens with allusions to Christ's being pierced for us, His having been dead, and His passage through the grave. That keynote is struck again and again in the succeeding chapters. It is the Lamb that was slain Who sits upon the throne, and Who is coming once more to deliver His people. That Lamb is so named twenty-eight times in the book. Therefore, there are no grounds for panic theology as we study this book about the Parousia. The coming One is He who once hung upon the Cross for our sakes. Our future is in His hands.

## CHAPTER 12 [\(TOC\)](#)

### COMMENTATORS BY THE TON

All find suspense hard to bear. It is usually linked with fear and a crippling of energies. For this reason the human mind ever seeks rest by the process of pigeon-holing. The principle of categorising is a mental shorthand which makes it easier for most of us to function. We cannot say that it guarantees our functioning efficiently, for inherent in this practice are obvious dangers. Pigeon-holing often involves cutting off in Procrustean fashion protruding parts which will not fit our categories. Pigeon-holing demands simplification, but oftentimes the simplifiers become the mystifiers, and do great damage.

The relevance of these psychological truths to the task of interpretation should be apparent. As men cannot rest in a world uninterpreted, neither can they approach exegetical challenges without schemes which can be used to ease the mental stresses involved. With each scheme comes built-in dangers, and the more rigid one's adherence to a preconceived scheme, the less accurate the conclusions are likely to be.

It was Herder who inquired, "Was there a key sent with the book Revelation, and has this been lost? Was it thrown into the sea of Patmos, or into the Maeander"? Because there was no such key sent, interpreters have been forced to invent several. All have operated with a measure of success, but none of them have been able to unlock every door. Commentaries of all schools are replete with evidence of forced locks, leaving enquiring minds to that suspense which must to some extent attend honest investigation.

Most of the schools are characterised by the relationship of their method to time. The preterists affirm that most of Revelation has, and has had for centuries, its main reference to the past. The futurist contends that most of the book is still to be fulfilled. The historicist is sure that the book has been fulfilled in part, is fulfilling still in the present, and that only the future will complete the matching of the prophecies and time. On the other hand, the idealist interpreter rejects all three schools in their specific applications of the prophetic symbols, and calls for a more spiritual, philosophical, or poetic method of exegesis. Let us listen to Hendriksen and note how reasonable is his argument.

. . . although it is true that we must take our starting-point in the age in which John lived, and must even emphasise the fact that the conditions which actually prevailed during the last decade of the first century A.D. furnished the immediate occasion for this prophecy, we should give equal prominence to the fact that this book was intended not only for those who first read it but for all believers throughout this entire dispensation.

We submit the following arguments for this position:

First, the affliction to which the church was subjected in the days of the apostle John is typical of the persecution which true believers must endure throughout the entire dispensation, 2 Timothy 3:12, and especially just before Christ's second coming. Matthew 24:29,30.

Secondly, many of the predictions in which the book abounds concern principles and happenings which are so broad in their scope that they cannot be confined to one definite year or century--e.g., the seals, trumpets, bowls--but span the centuries, reaching out to the Great Consummation.

Thirdly, the epistles--chapters 2 and 3--are addressed to the seven churches. Seven is the number which symbolises completeness. It clearly indicates that the admonitions and consolations of this book were meant for the entire church

throughout the centuries.

Finally, all those who read and study this book in any age are called blessed, 1:3. As at the beginning so also at the close of the book the author addresses himself not merely to one group of men living in one decade, but to "every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book," 22:18.<sup>1</sup>

A more left-wing approach of the idealist school is given by Calkins.

If we understand the emergency which caused the book to be written, the interpretation of it for its time, for our time, and for all time, it becomes as clear as daylight. In the light of this explanation, how far from the truth becomes that use of it which finds the chief meaning of the book in the hints it gives us about the wind-up of creation, the end of the world, and the nature of the Last Judgment. . . . To use Revelation in this way is to abuse it, for the book itself makes no claim to be a key to the future.<sup>2</sup>

Calkins affirms that the chief message of the book can be summarised in five general propositions:

1. It is an irresistible summons to heroic living.
2. The book contains matchless appeals to endurance.
3. It tells us that evil is marked for overthrow in the end.
4. It gives us a new and wonderful picture of Christ.
5. The Apocalypse reveals to us the fact that history is in the mind of God and in the hand of Christ as the author and reviewer of the moral destinies of men.<sup>3</sup>

The first impression a reviewer receives as he studies the various hermeneutical approaches, is that none of them can lay claim to monopoly of talent or piety. Brilliant minds are to be found in each group, men of undoubted ability, integrity, and Christian conviction. Secondly, it becomes apparent that each school includes a right wing and a left wing, a moderate group and an extreme group. By moderate and extreme we refer, of course, to the conclusions reached, and not necessarily to those who reach them.

**IDEALISM** This method cannot lay claim to a great heritage (unless we permit the giant figure of Augustine to overshadow most others). However, it must not therefore be counted invalid. There is no evidence that the early or mediaeval church saw in the Apocalypse only a philosophy of history rather than a prophecy. The very claims of John seem to deny such an approach. Repeatedly, the book represents itself as a "prophecy." See 1:3; 22:9,10,18.

The school of idealism regards Revelation as a pictorial unfolding of great principles. Its purpose is not to speak of specific events to come, but only to teach spiritual truths which can be applied or derived from all situations. Professor Milligan is perhaps the most well-known advocate of this system, and his volumes are of priceless value to the interpreter of any school. Most idealists look upon the dragon as Satan, the beast as the state, and the harlot as the apostate church system. Benson makes a representative statement for this group as follows:

In the mind of St. John I seem to see mirrored a comprehensive and penetrating view of the principles which maintain the self-deceiving half of human nature in its death-struggles with a Divine Wisdom which slowly vanquishes it. . . . He is the giver of truth about all those most potent influences which work under the life of all society, making merchandise of virtue and vice, of truth and policy; influences which work wonders in the life of civilisation as we know it, and seem bright with undying fire, influences which have their seat not only in hostile anti-Christian religions or in



old Rome, but in powerful churches, reformed or unreformed, and not less in sects which have revolted from dogmas, and which do not permit their apostles to declaim against selfishness and greed.<sup>4</sup>

But it is difficult to see a purpose in the Apocalypse if only pictorial portrayal of principles elsewhere, and previously clearly taught, is intended. Why make mysterious those truths already proclaimed? Erdman asks, ". . . do not principles become even more impressive when embodied in events which the writer saw, and in still more momentous events which in prophetic visions he beheld on the horizon of a brighter era which was yet to dawn"?<sup>5</sup>

Absolute consistency is for this school, as with the others, impossible. It must grant, for example, that the second coming of Christ is depicted in Revelation, and if the climax is an actual historical one, why cannot some of the preceding portrayals be likewise? It is impossible to divorce any book from its historical setting, and doubly so for the biblical book we are studying. Furthermore the genre of apocalyptic literature deals with history, not abstractions. As Carrington says of the idealistic approach, "It overlooks the fact that the Revelation was decidedly a message to its own age, that its tone is too fierce to be the product of a philosophical interest in the general laws of history, and that a Hebrew never thought of the spiritual except as an actual living force in present history."<sup>6</sup>

A very competent exponent of the idealist hermeneutic is Boyd Carpenter. He sets forth the system at its best when he writes:

But, though the time-interpretation of the book is thus to be placed in the background, it must not be so done as to imply that the book has no reference to occurrences which will happen in time. If some of the Historical school of interpreters have so forced the question of time into prominence as to ignore the more important ethical bearings of the book, it is no less true that critics on the other side have erred in removing the application of the book wholly out of the sphere of history, and giving it only the force of a fairy tale with a possible and doubtful moral. This is to set aside the value of the book to the Church of Christ as she moves across the vexed and stormy sea of this world's history. The visions of the book do find counterparts in the occurrences of human history: they have had these, and they yet will have these, fulfilments; and these fulfilments belong neither wholly to the past, nor wholly to the future: the prophecies of God are written in a language which can be read by more than one generation: what was read here helped the early Christian to whom imperial Rome was the great Babylon which absorbed to herself the wealth, and the wickedness, the power and persecuting spirit of the world, to whom the emperor may have seemed as a wild beast, savage and relentless, rising out of the tumults of peoples and nations, fickle and ruthless as the sea. No less have the visions of this book consoled the mediaeval saint or poet, who felt that the most influential seat of the Church had become the metropolis of worldliness when "The Prince of the New Pharisees" was seated in St. Peter's chair, and when out of a professedly Christianised Society had arisen a power aspiring to some religious culture, but fierce, wild, and wanton as the wild beast of ancient days. (Comp. Dante, *Inf.* xxvii.85; and Rosetti's *Antipapal Spirit of the Italian Poets*--passim.) Nor is the force of the consolation exhausted; in the future, the visions of this book, showing the certain triumph of all that is good and true, in the final consummation of Christ's kingdom, may hereafter serve to console men and women groaning under a tyranny of ungodliness more terrible and more specious than any which have preceded it, because built up of a pride which worships physical laws, while it treads under foot all moral laws, and spurns contemptuously all spiritual laws. In the past, the book has had its meaning: in the future, its meaning may grow fuller and clearer; but in the present also there is no doubt that it has its practical value for all who will reverently and patiently hear and keep the

sayings of this book.<sup>7</sup>

**PRETERISM** Certainly the most popular approach in critical and scholarly circles is the preterist. This school is also known as the contemporary-historical, or to use the German term, *zeitgeschichtlich*. Its advocates include such brilliant exegetes as Beckwith, Swete, Ramsay, Simcox, Moses Stuart, and F. F. Bruce. These writers see the chief prophecies of the book as fulfilled by the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of the Roman Empire. Frequently preterists (though neither Ramsay nor Swete) favour the early dating of the book, and have much to say about Johannine allusions to the myth of Nero *redivivus*.

It is unfair to damn any viewpoint by argument *ad hominem*. Nevertheless, it can often be helpful to enquire regarding the origin of a debatable concept. Preterism had its origin with the Spanish Jesuit, Luis de Alcazar, and probably with the motive of removing the sting from the Protestant use of the Antichrist prophecies against the Papacy. Alcazar's *Investigation of the Secret Sense in the Apocalypse* was first published in 1614. He saw chapters 5-11 of Revelation as applying to Christianity's victory over Judaism, and chs. 12-19 as the defeat of heathen Rome. The Protestant Grotius published his *Annotations* in 1644, following Alcazar's method. He was the first Reformed scholar to deny the popular application of "the beast" to the Papacy. Since that time, the trickle of followers has become a flood. Bossuet, Rome's great polemicist, pursued the same tack as Alcazar and Grotius.

The strength of this system lies in the fact that it is based upon a considerable measure of truth. John's book must have had meaning for his contemporaries. What pastor writes a letter to his flock that is completely without some immediate relevance for their needs? As Strand comments:

Preterist interpreters--especially those in the liberal tradition--follow certain hermeneutic principles which are too frequently neglected by other interpreters. Among these principles are careful notation of the historical setting and backgrounds for the Revelation, interpretation of symbols in harmony with the conventional meanings of those symbols at the time of writing, and alertness to the fact that the book of Revelation belongs to the genre of literature called "apocalyptic" (the Revelation is, of course, often called the Apocalypse").<sup>8</sup>

The fact that some preterists seem to have little confidence in the inspiration of the Apocalypse should not lead any to therefore discount the contemporary-history approach. There can be no valid exegesis without granting the primary assumption of preterism--the direct application of the scriptural contents to the local and temporal needs of the persons addressed.

The main defect of this view is that it seems to leave the church throughout the ages without specific guidance for its needs. Says Milligan:

. . . the book bears distinctly on its face that it is not confined to what the Seer beheld immediately around him. It treats of much that was to happen down to the very end of time, down to the full accomplishment of the Church's struggle, the full winning of her victory, and the full attainment of her rest. The Coming of the Lord so frequently referred to was certainly not exhausted in that destruction of the Jewish polity which we now know was to precede by many centuries the close of the present Dispensation; and the enemies of God described continue their opposition to the truth not merely to a point near at hand, when they are checked, but to the last, when they are overthrown finally and for ever. There is a progress in the book which is only stopped by the final advent of the Judge of the whole earth; and no just system of interpretation will permit us to regard the different plagues of the Seals, Trumpets, and the Bowls as symbolic only of wars which the Seer had

beheld in their beginnings, and which he knew would end in the destruction of Jerusalem and Rome. Against the idea that St. John was limited to the events of his own day the tone and spirit of the book are a continuous protest. Nor can it be pleaded that he combines these with those that were to happen at the last, leaving, for reasons unexplained by him, a long interval of time unnoticed. There is no trace of an interval. The lightnings flash and the thunders roll in close succession from the beginning to the end of the book. Judged even by its general character, the Apocalypse cannot be interpreted upon this modern system.<sup>9</sup>

Specifically, reference should be made to the Nero views of many preterists. The first application of Nero in connection with prophecy was made by Augustine, but he had 2 Thessalonians in mind. Using Nero as a key to Revelation 13:8 is open to many objections. As James Orr has protested, "On the modern Nero-theory, to which most recent expositors give adherence, it is a farrago of baseless fantasies, no one of which

came true."<sup>10</sup> He continues:

It does not matter for this theory that not one of the things predicted happened--that every anticipation was falsified. Nero did not return; Jerus was not saved; Rome did not perish; 3 1/2 years did not see the end of all things. Yet the Christian church, though the failure of every one of these predictions had been decisively demonstrated, received the book as of Divine inspiration, apparently without the least idea that such things had been intended. . . .<sup>11</sup>

Only by considerable juggling can the name Nero be made to yield 666:

. . . in order to arrive at the number 666, it is necessary to cut out the second letter of the name Caesar, which represents the e, and which in Hebrew is a consonant, and therefore forms part of the body of the name itself. M. de Vogue has proved by a Nabathean inscription of the year 47, that the name Caesar used to be written in Hebrew with four letters (k e s r), and not with three only (k s r), which agrees with the inscription on the Asiatic coins where we find this name (NERON kaisar). It is said, it is true, that in the Talmudic writings, and in some inscriptions in the third century, that the word Caesar is reduced to three letters by simply cutting off the e; and that in the word Caesarea, the second letter, which ought to be ai, is abridged into e, which leads to its suppression as a consonant; and that consequently it may be omitted in the same way in the name Caesar. But in the word Caesara, this abbreviation arises naturally out of the lengthening of the name, just as in the word *aromatique*, the letter o loses the circumflex which it bears in *arome*; or as in the word *suprematie*, the e becomes short, while it is long in *supreme*. Does it follow from that that we might write, *arome*, *supreme*? This example, therefore, proves nothing; and as to the inscriptions of the third century, they scarcely prove anything, particularly in the face of the instance quoted relating to the orthography which was received in the first century. The true sum of the letters of the name Caesar Neron is therefore 676, not 666.<sup>12</sup>

Other interpretations very much open to doubt are applications made to the Parthian threat, and such assumptions as that Revelation 11 teaches that the temple at Jerusalem was still standing. But having said all that can be mustered against the preterist position, the honest scholar must also tip his hat and express gratitude for the reminder that revelation does not take place in a vacuum. There can be no dodging of the fact that Revelation "is rooted in a concrete, historical situation."<sup>13</sup> Neither can exegetes fail to recognise that the literary form of Revelation is that of an apocalypse, and such a genre demands a relationship between its theme and the immediate crisis at the time of writing. On the other hand, the assumption by some preterists of the purely naturalistic origin of

the Bible's concluding book should be given no more credit than other guesses. Says Carrington, "The value of this method was exhausted when it had adduced all the illustrative historical material at its command; the Revelation was not yet explained."<sup>14</sup> Some conservatives, however, have adopted the preterist view in a noteworthy manner. See commentaries by Pieters, Beasley-Murray, and F. F. Bruce. For such works all should be deeply grateful.

We leave for a time the discussion of preterism with the words of the prophet John echoing in our thoughts--"Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter"; (4:1)--and the memory of Tenney's criticism:

The weakness of this view is its terminal limitation. Obviously the judgments predicted have not been fulfilled, and however figuratively one may interpret the conquest of the world by Christ and the picture of a final judgment, neither has appeared yet. The preterist has an interpretation which has a firm pedestal, but which has no finished sculpture to place on it.<sup>15</sup>

**FUTURISM** At the other extreme of interpretation lies futurism. This school believes that the book of Revelation, with the possible exception of the first three chapters, applies wholly to the future. It points to the final tribulation of the church, and therefore is chiefly relevant for believers in the last few years of history. We say "chiefly" relevant, for no futurist denies the present value of the promises and principles implicit in this prophecy. Says Todd about the Apocalypse:

. . . We are therefore to look for the fulfilment of its predictions neither in the early persecutions and heresies of the Church nor in the long series of centuries from the first preaching of the Gospel until now, but in the events which are immediately to precede, to accompany, and to follow the Second Advent of our Lord and Saviour.<sup>16</sup>

Futurism's founder was another Spanish Jesuit, Francisco Ribera in about 1580. He probably wrote with the same purpose of Alcazar--to remove the shame of the Protestant application of the beast to the Papacy. The last century has seen a strong reversal in Protestantism's attitude to futurism. Bible scholars in Great Britain--Maitland, Todd, Burgh, Williams, Darby, etc. were chiefly responsible for the change, as well as the new wind of tolerance in matters relating to Roman Catholicism. The Scofield Bible has spread futurism like the leaves of autumn. Today, many respectable scholars, to whom the Christian church owes much, espouse this system.

Futurism too has its left wing. Dispensationalists who proclaim the secret rapture, the return of the Jews, the restoration of the temple, and an east-west Armageddon, are in this category. John Walvoord represents such, and the great majority of popular writers on prophecy follow in his steps, though usually evincing considerably less ability and research. Best sellers like Hal Lindsey's books are examples of left wing futurism. Our objection to dispensationalism are indicated elsewhere in this book.

Futurists tend to be literalists and follow that rule which most expositors of Revelation claim should be reversed when interpreting the Apocalypse--"All prophetic statements are to be interpreted literally unless contextual evidence, or common sense indications make that course impossible.

Our objections to this system as a whole are similar to those against preterism. It makes Revelation of little value to the vast majority of Christians throughout most of history, and narrows its perspective beyond all reasonable limits. Says Milligan:

Let us look at one or two clauses particularly depended on--"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show unto His servants, even the things which must

shortly come to pass"; "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, for the time is at hand"; "He which testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly." Upon what principle of interpretation, we may well ask, is it possible to find in expressions such as these no more than an intimation that the events which are to precede and accompany the Second Advent of the Lord shall take place in a short and rapid space of time? On what principle can we imagine that, in thus speaking, the Seer intended to throw himself forward hundreds of years; and to say only that, when the winding up of the drama came, it would be brief? We must start from the circumstances amidst which he was placed when he wrote, and from that point measure the time that was to elapse to the end. When he said, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy," he certainly had in view the readers and the hearers of his own age; and when, therefore, he immediately added "for the time is at hand," he not less certainly intended that the course of "the time" thus spoken of was to take its beginning from their day. Throughout the whole book the Church is addressed as she was when the Apostle wrote, and is told what was to be done to her and for her at the instant when she first read the prophecy.<sup>17</sup>

A basic position taken by dispensational futurists is that after chapter 4:1 in Revelation, the church is never seen on earth. Only a Jewish remnant is viewed from chapter 6-19. But the answer must be that Revelation represents the church in heaven mystically through union with her ascended Lord. Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:1, etc. all view the church this way, though undoubtedly the church members reading them were physically still on earth. Revelation 7, 11, and 12 each picture the Christian church on earth, though admittedly under the symbolism of the ancient covenant people of God. That exegetical stratagem which takes literally the Jewish symbolism of Revelation makes nonsense of a work avowedly apocalyptic whose very stuff is necessarily pictorial and emblematic.

The entire book of Revelation is addressed to Christ's servants, i.e. to Christian churches. Under the fifth seal are those slain for confessing the gospel of Christ. In Revelation 8, we read of the prayers of all "saints," and "saints" in New Testament phraseology always means either Christians or angels. The term is never used of Jews, unless some wish to press the difficult passage of Matthew 27:52. Guinness is undoubtedly correct when he writes:

. . . we observe these "saints," who are thirteen times mentioned in the Apocalypse, doing and bearing exactly what we know from other Scriptures, the saints of the Christian church must do and bear in this dispensation. We find them watching, waiting, praying, enduring tribulation (chap. xiii. 10), resisting unto blood (chap. xvi. 6), resting in heaven (chap. xiv. 12, 13), and at last manifested as the bride of Christ, and as "the armies which were in heaven," clad under both emblems with the "fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints"; we find them associated with the martyrs of Jesus, (chap. xvii. 6), a clear proof that they cannot be Jewish saints.

In short, so far from the church being actually and exclusively in heaven, at the commencement of the prophetic drama of this book, she is seen on earth during its entire course. She is seen collectively under various symbols, such as the one hundred and forty-four thousand, the two witnesses, the sun-clad woman, the armies of heaven, the New Jerusalem; and her members are seen severally as "the saints." They are seen first in their sufferings, and then in their glory; first slain for Jesus' sake, then enthroned beside him.<sup>18</sup>

But, of course, we have been dealing here with left wing futurism and should therefore rely

more on the objection posed by Milligan which fits moderate futurism.<sup>19</sup>

**HISTORICISM**--Lutheran commentator C. H. Little says:

Three methods of interpreting the prophecies in Revelation have been proposed. The first of these regards the prophecies as already fulfilled in the past. The second regards them as attaining fulfilment only at the end of the world, in close connection with Christ's second advent. The third looks upon the prophecies as being progressively fulfilled during the history of the present dispensation. This last method is the one adopted by the vast majority of Protestant commentators. This, as adhering most closely to the text, is the only proper method of interpretation.<sup>20</sup>

We think his comment is rather sweeping, but it does represent a group which cannot be ignored. Because this school has been the most influential over the sweep of centuries, we plan to speak at length regarding it.

The term itself (historicism) is one which has stronger emotional connotation than probably any of the preceding. Too often it has been linked with unchristian sectarian hatred, an attitude of bigotry and prejudice which denies the spirit, which according to Christ, would or should characterise His followers. See John 13:34, 35. Yet the same is true of the word Protestant. The responses evoked by this word in the minds of hearers have often been just as intense. The linkage is significant, for it signifies that historicism is truly the Protestant system--that is, it has marked the Reformed churches far more than any other interpretive system. For centuries historicism meant Protestantism, and Protestantism, among other things, meant historicism.

The reason is to be found in the interpretation of the Antichrist prophecies. While the word Antichrist is not found in Revelation, most scholars have seen at least in Revelation 13 the classical concept of Antichrist. And it is certain that one of the main springs of the religious revolution in the sixteenth century was the identification of the papacy as Antichrist on the basis of the prophecies of Daniel, Paul, and John, specially the last. L. E. Froom's exhaustive four volume study, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, and any thorough study of church history proves this to be the case.

Why did Protestants link the Antichrist prophecies so strongly with their soteriological emphasis on righteousness by faith alone? The last two words are the key. To Protestants, newly in love with the theme of Romans, Galatians, and I the New Testament as a whole, any religious system opposing the gratuitous and objective nature of salvation had to have its origin from beneath. Protestantism stood for Scripture alone, grace alone, Christ alone, faith alone. It believed with Paul that man was totally depraved, and therefore entirely dependent for salvation on the grace of God as manifested through Christ, the Representative and Substitute of the human race. Luther taught that the righteousness required of God in the judgment was not something to be earned or achieved. It could be found only through the accepting hand of a spiritual beggar. Righteousness was the perfect obedience of Christ to the divine law, and His atoning death for its violation. His merits alone could make a guilty sinner acceptable to God. These merits could not be bought by works of any kind, and therefore a ( religion which promised merit through obedience to its requirements must be Antichrist.

Of course, even Catholics believed in grace alone. But not faith alone. They believed that the grace of God working through the sacraments (i.e. through priestly work) could convey internal goodness. This meant that justification to Rome was always a "making" righteous rather than the scriptural view of "declaring" righteous. It meant that the priesthood of believers was nullified, and that all men were dependent upon the Mother Church for eternal life. These views were anathema to Bible-believers of the sixteenth century, as they remain to evangelical Protestants of the twentieth century.

James Orr, in his *Progress of Dogma*, summarises the case thus:

It was not by accident that at various centres--for it should never be forgotten that the Reformation has not one, but several independent centres--the minds of men awoke, as it were simultaneously, to the clear apprehension of this great doctrine of justification, so long obscured in the official teaching of the Church; or that, amidst minor differences, so remarkable a harmony should have prevailed among the Reformers and the Churches which they founded regarding it. Then, although, as we shall discover, in its essence nothing new, it broke on men's minds with the force of a revelation; wrought too, on the old corrupt Church with the force of a revolution. That this doctrine was the real citadel round which the battle of the Reformation was fought, and had in it the power to revolutionise the whole theological as well as ecclesiastical scheme of the Papacy, is evident from nothing so much as its treatment by the Church of Rome itself. When the Papal Council met at Trent, it was understood by everyone that the doctrine of justification was the chief matter to be debated.<sup>21</sup>

The chief points in the doctrine of justification at the Reformation, viz.: (1) that justification is of God's free grace, and not of works; (2) that it is through faith alone; (3) that it includes the forgiveness of sins and the pronouncing of the sinner righteous before God; (4) that it is to be distinguished from the internal change we designate regeneration and sanctification, and does not proceed on the ground of this change; (5) that it is nevertheless not a mere amnesty, but has its ground in the perfect righteousness of Christ, and the atonement made by His for sin; and (6) that it is instantaneous and complete, an act of God never to be repeated,--these cardinal points in the doctrine, on which all the Reformers were at one, were then fixed, I believe, beyond the power of future recall.<sup>22</sup>

Edward J. Carnell writes:

Roman Catholicism merges justification and sanctification, but this does not have the hallmark of Scripture. Justification is declaratory; sanctification is constitutive. Justification takes place once; sanctification is a lifelong process. Justification is a change in the sinner's relation to God; sanctification is a change in the sinner himself. Justification is objective; sanctification is subjective. Justification is an act done for us; sanctification is an act done in us.<sup>23</sup>

R. H. Horn says, It is no exaggeration to say that the whole Christian life hinges on whether 'justify' means 'make righteous'."

Let us define our term. Historicism is that system of prophetic exegesis which affirms that Revelation is a prophetic history of the church and the world from John's time till the second advent. The predictions set forth not just general movements but even specific matters associated therewith. Prominent historicists include Bengel, Mede, Newton, Elliott, and Guinness. L. E. Froom's *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* is a splendid historical compendium and apologetic for historicism, and lists the names and expository positions of hundreds of interpreters. Today a small number of Protestant scholars, particularly among some isolated groups such as Seventh-day Adventists are known for their historicism.

But this understates the case. We can only be true to the facts if we admit that the vast majority of Bible-believers from the time of the writing of Revelation till now have been historicists. H. G. Guinness made his brief well when, as quoted earlier, he affirmed:

We have now to study THE INTERPRETATION AND USE of these marvellous prophecies by the Christian Church. How has the Christian Church understood and employed them? Of what practical benefit have these prophecies been to her during

the last eighteen centuries? It is evident that they were written for her guidance, protection, and sanctification. The prophecies of Paul and John are addressed to Christian Churches. The voice of inspiration expressly invites the whole Church to study them, and the Church has obeyed this command. She has read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested the "sure word of prophecy." What moral effects has it had upon her? To what extent has it guided her footsteps and sustained her hopes? If these prophecies have proved to be a mighty power in her history; if they have preserved the faith of the Church in times of general apostasy; if they have given birth to great reformation movements; if they have inspired confessors, and supported martyrs at the stake; if they have broken the chains of priest-craft, superstition, and tyranny, and produced at last a return on the part of many, many millions of men to a pure, primitive Christianity,--they have answered their purpose, and justified their position in the sacred Scriptures of truth. Nor may we lightly esteem that interpretation which has produced such results.<sup>25</sup>

These words should not be glossed over. We would prefer in our refined age not to use words so strongly. But perhaps this is part of the disease of our times--because we stand for nothing, we fall for anything. We suggest Guinness' statement be re-read.

He assumes that readers believe in the "everlasting gospel" of the Scriptures. He assumes that they understand that the issue of the Protestant Reformation was the issue of how righteousness could be obtained. He assumes that all understand that the one area where all Reformers were agreed doctrinally was that of justification by faith alone. Not that this ever meant justification without sanctification, or faith without works. Rather it meant that while justification and sanctification could not be separated, they always had to be held distinct.

While justification was by faith alone, the faith that justified was never alone. Faith was not a substitute for works but its foundation. While not saved by faith plus works, true faith worked. God ever gave His gifts with both hands, and justified none that He did not sanctify. Indeed, justification and sanctification were chronologically simultaneous, though logically successive. Or, to sum up the matter another way; the righteousness of justification was one hundred per cent, but not inherent; the righteousness of sanctification was inherent, but never one hundred per cent, while the righteousness of glorification would be both. Thus if justification and sanctification were distinct, but never separate (as with the two natures of Christ, and the members of the Trinity), then confidence could be cherished in the former alone, as uniquely adequate to meet the one hundred per cent demands of the eternal law of God. Furthermore, justification is not just an admission to candidacy for eternal life, but the absolution of the last judgment anticipated and forever upon him who trusts wholly or solely in the merits of Christ. Guinness assumes that we understand all these matters and more.

He also assumes that we know our history. He has no wish to make Protestants hate Catholics. He did not hate them himself, but worked for their eternal good. He knew there is no difference whatsoever between Protestant human nature and that of Catholics. But he wished men to remember the course of history lest they repeat it. He would have us recognise that. . . Well, we will let him tell it himself.

It is important that we should clearly grasp one great historical fact; i.e. the rule of Rome has never, since it first commenced, ceased to exist, save once, for a very brief period during the Gothic invasions. It has changed in character, as we have seen, but it has continued. Rome ruled the known world at the first advent of Christ, and still rules hundreds of millions of mankind and will continue so to do right up till the second advent of Christ. So this prophecy teaches; for not until the Son of man takes the dominion of the earth, and established that kingdom that shall never pass



away, is the monster representing Roman rule destroyed. The rule of Rome, we repeat, has never ceased. It was a secular pagan power for five or six centuries. There lay a brief period between these two main stages, during which professing Christian emperors ruled from Rome, followed by an interval when, for a time, it seemed as if the great city had received a fatal blow from her Gothic captors. It seemed so; but it was not so, for the word of God cannot be broken. The rule of Rome revived in a new form, and was as real under the popes of the thirteenth century as it had been under the Caesars of the first. It was as oppressive, cruel, and bloody under Innocent III, as it had been under Nero and Domitian. The reality was the same, though the forms had changed. The Caesars did not persecute the witnesses of Jesus more severely and bitterly than did the popes; Diocletian did not destroy the saints or oppose the gospel more than did the Inquisition of Papal days. Rome is one and the same all through, both locally and morally. One dreadful wild beast represents her, though the symbol, like the history it prefigures, has two parts. There was the undivided stage, and there has been the tenfold stage. The one is Rome pagan, and the other Rome Papal; the one is the old empire, the other the modern pontificate; the one is the empire of the Caesars, the other is the Roman Papacy.<sup>26</sup>

Now, on at least two counts, Guinness is wrong--not in his facts but in his assumptions. Most Protestants today do not know these things. Nor do most Catholics. The righteousness by faith of Holy Writ is an unwhispered secret for the most part. Even in evangelical circles, what poses as that is often not that. A multitude of other gospels prevail in the twentieth century world. The justification of Scripture is called a legal fiction, or an outmoded forensic model. Men condescendingly grant that they are not whole, but make it clear that they prefer almost any other way to God than that which He has devised to lay the glory of man in the dust that He might do for them what they could never do for themselves.

Justification cannot be a living doctrine unless the law of God in all its relevance is acknowledged. It cannot be a living doctrine unless the deity of Christ, and the substitutionary nature of His atonement on Calvary is clearly understood. Furthermore, it is quite unnecessary, unless Creation was a divine work rather than an outcome of chance plus time plus matter. If there is no longer any man in the twentieth century but only potential fertiliser, only enlarged protein molecules, or fortuitous concourses of atoms, there is no God either, and of course no justification, for there can be no guilt for creatures of chance. Here is the explanation in part for the neglect of those truths for which our spiritual forebears fought and died.

As we consider historicism we must keep in mind the fact that the decision to align oneself with any religious position, for all of us, has other causes than merely the facts of the case. Temperament and education play a vital role. For example, one temperament is instantaneously attracted to historicism for the same reasons that another is immediately repelled by it. Those whose heredity and environment incline them to fight for their convictions at the risk of almost seeming unchristian may either accept or reject this system with vigour. Others, whose heredity and home backgrounds were different, may view such enthusiasm with contempt or apathy. Some of us are tolerant of anything save intolerance, and others vice versa. Let us therefore not take for granted our personal inclinations in this matter and be prepared to question our most cherished assumptions. One thing is certain--unless the twentieth century sees a revival of Christian conviction that parallels the zeal of non-Christian groups such as Communism, the future is bleak indeed.

Thus far we have tried to appeal for a listening to Guinness, though not necessarily for agreement. What else should be said? It should be made clear that the chief criticism against historicism--its vastly varied menage of interpretation, not only disparate but

contradictory--may not be quite as valid as most critics assume.

Let us first illustrate the criticism:

The greatest work based on this theory is the four-volume study by Elliott (E.B. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*), which may be taken as an illustration of this scheme. He says that the trumpet judgments cover the period from A.D. 395-1453, that the first trumpet refers to the invasion of the Goths, the third to the Huns under Attila, the fifth to the hordes of Moslems pouring into the West in the sixth and seventh centuries, etc. To take another illustration, Mede, in his famous work, says that the sixth seal predicts the overthrow of paganism under Constantine, that the second vial refers to Luther, the third to events in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I,-etc. Many of those who belong to this school insist that the earthquake in 11:19 refers to the French Revolution; others find Napoleon Bonaparte in the book of Revelation, etc., etc.

Now, apart from all other objections to this scheme, it is admitted on every hand that it offers no fundamental principle or criterion of judgment by which we are able to determine exactly what historical events are referred to in a given passage. And this has led to a vast morass of confusion and contradiction among those who hold this view.<sup>27</sup>

Pieters, with his usual care, is quite detailed.

Perhaps the fairest way to give the reader an idea of this system is to transcribe, in outline, the fulfilments traced by Barnes, as follows: (p. XXXIX)

**First Seal:** fulfilled in the state of the Roman Empire from the death of Domitian, A.D. 96 to the accession of Commodus, A.D. 180.

**Second Seal:** from the death of Commodus, A.D. 193, and onward.

**Third Seal:** the time of Caracalla, A.D. 211 and onward.

**Fourth Seal:** the time of Decius to Gallienus, A.D. 243-268.

**Fifth Seal:** fulfilled in the Roman Empire in the persecutions, particularly in the time of Diocletian, A.D. 284-304.

**Sixth Seal:** the invasions of the barbarians, A.D. 365 and onwards.

**Seventh Seal:** fulfilled in the Trumpets, as follows:

**First Trumpet:** Invasion by Alaric the Goth, A.D. 395-410.

**Second Trumpet:** Invasion by Genseric the Vandal, A.D. 428-468.

**Third Trumpet:** Invasion by Attila the Hun, A.D. 433-453.

**Fourth Trumpet:** Final conquest of the Western empire by Odoacer, king of the Heruli, A.D. 476-490.

**Fifth Trumpet:** the Mohammedans.

**Sixth Trumpet:** the Turks.

**Chapter 10**, the Great Angel--the Reformation. The Little Book open is the Bible restored to general reading. That the angel cries with a loud voice is symbolical of the Reformation. The seven thunders heard, but not recorded are the anathemas hurled against the Reformation by the Pope.

**Chapter 11**--The Measuring of the Temple: the determining of what constituted the true church at the time of the Reformation. The two witnesses represents those who testified against the errors of Rome.

**The Seventh Trumpet:** the final triumph of the church.

This is considered to be the end of the first series of visions. What follows is not a chronological continuation, but a view of the church internally. This second section, in the view of these interpreters, is concerned almost exclusively with the Roman Catholic church. The woman in chapter 12 is the true church. Her fleeing into the desert represents the condition of the church while the Papacy was in the ascendancy. The wrath of Satan against the "remnant of her seed" represents the attempt of the Papacy to cut off individuals when open and general persecution no longer raged.

**The first Beast:** The Roman secular or civil power that sustained the Papacy.

**The Second Beast:** The Papal ecclesiastical power.

**The Seven Vials:** All interpreted as blows at the power of the Papacy. The first vial, the French Revolution, the second, its scenes of blood and carnage, the third, the French invasions of northern Italy, the fourth, the overturning of the governments that sustained the Papal power, the fifth, the capture of the Pope himself and the seizure of Rome by the French, the sixth, the decline of the Turkish power, the seventh, the complete and final overthrow of the Papal power (still to come). The Great Harlot--the Papacy. The Destruction of Babylon: the fall of the Papacy.

Godet is more pungent:

How can we feel any confidence in this method of interpretation when we see, for instance, one and the same vision--that of the locusts with the tail of a scorpion (ix.)--interpreted by some of the Arabian invasion in the seventh century; by others, of the incursion of the Persians under Chosroes; by a third party, of the introduction of the Talmud among the Jews; and by others again, of the establishment of monasticism? Is not the arbitrariness which gives birth to such a method of interpretation most glaring? and can we help asking ourselves what object the Holy Spirit could have had in view, in writing, according to the malicious expression of M. Reville, "a history of the church in riddles"? If this vision is intended to serve as a guide to the caravan during its march, must it not be made more intelligible? If it is not to be understood until the end comes, and when the goal shall have been reached, of what use will it be then?<sup>29</sup>

Note also Leon Morris:

Historicist views also labour under the serious disadvantage of failing to agree. If the main points of subsequent history are in fact foreshadowed it should be possible to identify them with tolerable certainty, otherwise what is the point of it? But there are many historicist views, and no real agreement.<sup>30</sup>

And we finally listen to the strictures of Tenney:

There are several objections to an interpretation of Revelation by a complete historicist view. First, the exact identification of the events of history with successive symbols have never been finally achieved, even after the events occurred. It is reasonable to suppose that during the lapse of 1900 years at least a portion of the predictions would have been fulfilled. If they were to be of value to the reader of Revelation as an indication of where he belonged in the total historical process, they should be identifiable with certainty. Such, however, seems not to be the case. The points of interpretation on which the majority of the doctrinal interpreters agree can be interpreted as trends quite as intelligibly as events. Since trends may be evident in any period of history, such prophecies do not point to any one era.

Second, historical interpreters have not satisfactorily explained why a general

prophecy should be confined to the fortunes of the western Roman empire. The historical interpretation stresses chiefly the development of the church in western Europe; it takes little cognizance of the East. Yet in the first few centuries of the Christian era the church increased tremendously in the East, and spread as far as India and China, though it did not gain a permanent foothold in all sections of those countries. If a continual-historical method is to be followed, it must have a broader scope.

Third, if the continuous-historical method is valid, its predictions would have been sufficiently plain at the outset to give the reader some inkling of what they meant. If the fire and hail of the first trumpet (8:7) really did refer to the Gothic invasions, it is hard to see how any first-century Christian could have understood the prediction in such a way as to give it any value for his thinking.<sup>32</sup>

In answer two things may be pleaded. One, the heart of historicism, as already demonstrated, is not those prophecies where such disagreement abounds, but rather the Antichrist prophecies where essential agreement is present. Secondly, does peripheral obscurity bring condemnation to the whole system? Over a century ago, when T. R. Birks was discussing the year-day principle of historicism, he used an argument which while it does not prove the principle under discussion, nevertheless has definite relevance for any study of historicism. Birks affirmed:

. . . there are only three alternatives God could have adopted with reference to revelation of the times and seasons to His church: He could keep the church in total ignorance till the end, translate it suddenly from complete ignorance to complete knowledge, or third, give gradually increasing light, till at length the Sun of righteousness actually arose. Suppose God had adopted the first alternative and had given the church nothing but the most general statements for her guide through the centuries. As century after century passed, would not believers have been lulled into slumber, believing that the return of the Master was a vague, indefinite possibility, infinitely afar off? After ten centuries of waiting, could not the church rationally realise there could quite easily be ten centuries more, and therefore relax? Each generation would have had a still weaker expectation of the Advent.

Consider the next possibility--that the light be given suddenly in its completeness. How then could the church fulfil the instruction "Watch and pray; for you know not when the time is"? The testimony of the ages is that always and on every subject the increase of knowledge has been gradual. "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." The gradual unfolding of the light of prophecy is in exact accord with God's purpose of sustaining His church in anticipation of His return.<sup>33</sup>

Guinness argued similarly. We quote his comments on the Daniel passage (12:4) 4 which we have just referred to.

This passage seems to warrant three inferences of importance.

1. That though God for certain reasons saw fit to give this revelation of the future to Daniel at a certain date, He did not intend it to be understood for centuries; since, whatever may be the exact limits of the "time of the end," it could not include more than the course of this dispensation, and the commencement of this dispensation was several centuries distant, when Daniel wrote.
2. That even when in the lapse of ages the meaning of this prophecy should become apparent to some, even when "knowledge" should "be increased" and the wise understand, it was the will of God that it should still remain a dark mystery to others, that "none of the wicked should understand."

3. And thirdly that the comprehension or ignorance of this prophecy, when the time for its being understood at all arrived, would depend rather on the moral than on the intellectual state of those who should study it. The wise alone should understand it; the wicked should not.

The first of these inferences is confirmed by 1 Peter 1:10: . . .<sup>34</sup>

The second of these inferences, that even when light was vouchsafed it would be partial, is confirmed by the words of our Lord, "it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes."

The third inference, as to the moral character of those who receive prophetic light, is also confirmed by his words, "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." It is "scoffers walking after their own lusts" who are represented as saying "where is the promise of his coming?" and as being "willingly ignorant" of the purpose of God as expressed in type, and in prophecy about the future.

It is evident therefore that there may be such a thing as blameless ignorance of the meaning of prophecy, as well as a blameworthy and guilty ignorance of it. The prophets were not to be blamed, for not understanding what God did not intend them to understand. Jews and infidels now, are to be blamed for a guilty unwillingness to perceive the accomplishment of Old Testament prophecies, in New Testament events.

Take as an instance of blameless ignorance, that of the apostles, even after Pentecost, as to the calling of the Gentiles. This, though in one sense a hidden mystery (Ephesians iii.9), had as a matter of fact, long been a revealed purpose of God.<sup>35</sup>

It is obvious that knowledge of God's other book--nature--has been indeed progressive. Science has in this Christian era been ever onwards, particularly since the Renaissance. However, its progress has been that of the tide coming in--progress on the whole. The fact that many errors are unconsciously cherished and only gradually shed does not invalidate the method of investigation. Says Ramsey:

A second characteristic of the Apocalypse is its exceeding difficulty. It is true that almost every enthusiastic interpreter maintains that it is all plain enough, provided the reader gets the right clew [sic] and follows the path which the commentator points out. Nevertheless, to other persons the book remains as much an enigma as ever. The main source of this difficulty is, that so much of it consists in unfulfilled predictions. Such predictions were intended to be obscure. How could the first great promise of redemption, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," be understood before Christ came, as we now understand it? How could the promise to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," which Paul says contains the Gospel, be understood before it was accomplished? How was any one to know that "thy seed" referred to one man, when almost everywhere else in the Bible it means the natural descendants of Abraham? How natural it was for the Jews to believe that it was their nation that was to bless the world, to be the means of extending the true religion, to conquer all nations, and bring them into subjection to themselves and their Messiah: that they might at least feed on the crumbs which fell from their own overlaid table. The Messianic prophecies, the predictions concerning the person, work, and kingdom of Christ, were all but universally misunderstood until they were fulfilled. Then they became clear as day. It seems to be very unreasonable to expect that the New Testament prophecies relating to the future should be read with the certainty which belongs to

history, when those of the Old Testament were so sadly and so generally misinterpreted.<sup>36</sup>

It is not irrelevant to stress at this point that perhaps the main problem of spiritual education is not learning but unlearning. Many enlightened teachers of the church have warned that where there is no controversy or agitation, it should not be concluded that the church is holding fast to sound doctrine. On the contrary, there is reason to fear that the majority are not clearly discriminating between truth and error. When no new questions are begun by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises, many now, as of old, will hold to tradition and worship they know not what. Age alone does not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine stands to lose a jot or tittle by close investigation. Let the true learner make up his mind that it will ever be true in this life that the Bible is but 'dimly understood, and that therefore this very day there is much to learn and much to unlearn. To hold that a position once taken, an idea once advocated is not under any circumstances to be relinquished, is to surrender the task. There is but One who is infallible, and frequently leading men of the church have taken their position on the wrong side of a dispute.

Furthermore, basic landmarks are few, and those who, in alarm, condemn others for shifting the foundation, should be sure they know what the foundations are.<sup>37</sup>

We would suggest that this objection against historicism (its variety of interpretations in secondary areas) does not carry sufficient weight to discredit the system. What other objections are significant? One of considerable importance is the criticism that historicism makes much of prophecy comparatively useless to the majority of its readers, especially its original recipients. Here, the strength of idealism and preterism is shown to be the weakness of historicism. Note the complaint of Hendriksen against a left-wing historicist work:

On my desk lies a recently published commentary on the Apocalypse. It is a very "interesting" book. It views the Apocalypse as a kind of history-written-beforehand. It discovers in this last book of the Bible copious and detailed references to Napoleon, wars in the Balkans, the great European War of 1914-1918, the German ex-emperor Wilhelm, Hitler, and Mussolini, the N.R.A., etc., -- our verdict? Such and kindred explanations must at once be dismissed. . . . Tell me, dear reader, what good would the suffering and severely persecuted Christians of John's day have derived from specific and detailed predictions concerning European conditions which would prevail some two thousand years later?<sup>38</sup>

This criticism is valid, unless the historicist interpreter joins the philosophy of history school (and thereby ceases to be a strict historicist) in seeing that history is cyclical, and that in all ages, Satan and God follow the principles appropriate to their respective characters, though these are manifested in different degrees of development. Says Ramsey:

A third reason that has prevented many from securing the blessing here promised is the very general error that the symbols so mysterious and unique with which the book abounds, must find their corresponding realities, their true fulfilment, each in some one specific event, instead of in vast series of events of a similar character repeating themselves throughout the history of the church, and all together tending to one grand definite result--the eternal triumph of the Cross, and the eternal ruin of all that oppose it. Now, the very nature of a symbol is such that it can represent its correspondent reality only by presenting as in a picture some one or more of its characteristic traits. If these characteristics are so perfectly distinguishing that there is but one event or object to which they can apply, then of course it must have this specific application. But if these traits are such as to characterise with equal clearness whole classes of objects or events, then must the symbol be applied to

the whole, unless in some other way such application be definitely restrained. But in such a case the symbol is imperfect. In other words, symbols are representative of character and of principles, and of events and objects just so far as they embody these. Now, as the symbols of this book are pictures of the church's sorrows and triumphs, and of the overthrow of the powers of the world, it arises from their very nature as symbols, and from the very nature of man and of God, which constantly secure the repetition of the same sins and judgments and deliverances, that there will be an almost endless variety of applications of which they are capable, if regard be had to specific events. Accordingly, learned commentators, well read in the history of the church, have each found peculiar applications of these symbols, according as the mind of each has been peculiarly impressed, some by one, some by another event in that history, or by the peculiar and stirring events of his own times; and by insisting upon this as the specific event designed in the symbol, and the scheme of interpretation required by this as the only true one, there has arisen a great variety of conflicting theories, and a great number of various applications of the same passages in this book to events separated by ages from each other.<sup>39</sup>

Yet another objection to historicism is that it requires too much extra-biblical knowledge on the part of the Bible student. He is dependent on Gibbon, or D'Aubigne, or Wylie, etc. Are not Moses and the prophets, the Gospels and the Epistles sufficient? Yes, they are sufficient. But if the historicist, as suggested above, also sees the truth implicit in the philosophy of history school, this argument need not bother him particularly. If history is cyclical, and if Satan and God must ever reflect their distinctive characters in their dealings with earthlings, then every age should be able to find its key to the prophecy that concerns it in its local and temporal situation.<sup>40</sup>

We have left the strongest criticism till last. Does not the time calculation schemes of historicism deny the plain evidence of the New Testament that it was never God's intention that many centuries should divide the two advents? Does not the Protestant prophetic method go contrary to the case argued in earlier chapters--that no more is to be expected by the church than those factors indicated by that sheet anchor of apocalyptic interpretation--the Olivet discourse?

And here we think the opponents of historicism do have a case too little regarded by those under scrutiny. But not all historicists believe that God intended many centuries should divide the two advents. Note the following:

In one way or another the thought that the various events foretold in the book of Revelation were to take place in the not distant future is specifically stated seven times--"things which must shortly come to pass [or, "be done" (chs. 1:1; 22:6), "the time is at hand" (ch. 1:3), and "Behold" [or, "surely"), I come quickly" (chs. 3:11; 22:7,12,20). Indirect references to the same idea appear in chs. 6:11; 12:2; 17:10. John's personal response to these declarations of the soon accomplishment of the divine purpose was, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (ch. 22:20). The concept of the imminence of the return of Jesus is thus both explicit and implicit throughout the book.

. . . . At any one of various critical points in the history of this world, divine justice could have proclaimed, "It is done!" and Christ might have come to inaugurate His righteous reign. Long ago He might have brought to fruition His plans for the redemption of this world. As God offered Israel the opportunity to prepare the way for His eternal kingdom upon the earth, when they settled the Promised Land and again when they returned from their exile in Babylon, so He gave the church of apostolic times the privilege of completing the gospel commission.

. . . although the fact of Christ's second coming is not based on any conditions, the

repeated statements of Scripture that the coming was imminent were conditional on the response of the church to the challenge of finishing the work of the gospel in their generation. The Word of God, which centuries ago declared that the day of Christ was "at hand" (Romans 13:12), has not failed. Jesus would have come very quickly if the church had done its appointed work. . . .

Thus the statement of the angel of Revelation to John concerning the imminence of Christ's return to end the reign of sin are to be understood as an expression of divine will and purpose. God has never purposed to delay the consummation of the plan of salvation, but has ever expressed His will that the return of our Lord be not long delayed.

These statements are not to be understood in terms of the foreknowledge of God that there would be so long a delay, nor yet in the light of the historical perspective of what has actually taken place in the history of the world since that time.<sup>41</sup>

The present writer agrees.

Historicism certainly errs if it declares that, of necessity, millenniums had to transpire after the Cross and before the Coming. There can be no demonstration of such a position. But what if advocates argue that while time could have been brief, yet God in His omniscience veiled the possibilities of delay by symbols? Only with the lapse of time would such factors as the year-day principle be invoked, and the delay thus not cause discouragement.

That is to say, what if God's ideal plan and His ultimately real plan are like the vessels fashioned by the potter of Jeremiah 18? Known unto God are all His works from the foundation of the world. Though the end could have come in the first century, it did not, and He knew it would not. Did He make no provision for this? Note how one representative of a foremost modern historicist church makes this case:

. . . if certain conditions had been met, Jesus would have come earlier, seemingly as early as the generation specified in Matthew 24:34.

If this explanation is accepted, and Jesus had come long ere this, what would have happened to the long-term prophecies, the 1260 days and the 2300 days?

It should be noted that these prophecies were not understood as referring to long periods of time until many centuries after the birth of Christ. According to the researches of Leroy Froom, the year-day principle (a day in prophecy represents a solar year in fulfilment) was not understood until about the ninth century A.D. Therefore no one would have detected any breaking of prophecy if Jesus had come earlier.

It should also be noted that these prophecies were expressed in terms such as "days" (Daniel 8:14; Revelation 12:6), "times" (Daniel 7:25), "months" (Revelation 13:5). There is no indication in the prophecies themselves that any scale measure ought to be applied to the "days," "months," or "times." The Holy Spirit gave directions to do this only after the time was postponed. At whatever time the fulfilment would have come, the Holy Spirit could have provided the appropriate scale.

Some have felt that Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 establish the year-day principle as needing to be applied to all time prophecies. But a careful examination of these passages shows that the principle is applied only to specific cases and that there is no general statement in these passages suggesting that a universal principle is set forth. In fact, Seventh-day Adventists do not apply the principle consistently to all time prophecies. For example, the length of the millennium is stated in Revelation 20:3,5, and 7 as being a "thousand years." This is accepted literally. If the year-day



principle were applied, the length would be 360,000 or as much as 365,000 years.<sup>42</sup>

Even more needs to be said in support of historicism. Because the purpose of prophecy is primarily moral rather than intellectual, because God is more concerned with making Christians than crystal-ball gazers, will not prophecy be so delivered and so understood that the conclusions of believers will be adequate rather than precise?

Let me illustrate. I confess to being a jogger. I am so lazy that only the habit of exercise at a definite time, of a definite amount, at a definite pace, can save me from sickness and an early death. Yesterday afternoon, as I ran along a fire-trail among beautiful valleys and hills, I appreciated the distant scenes after hours of close work that day. It was restful to gaze across the valleys to the distant wooded hills, and to focus upon the pine trees miles away. But, of course, I could not actually distinguish the leaves, nor see their shape. The trees were easily discerned, and the mass of leaves. But particular leaves were beyond my visual capacity. The situation was similar when I looked ahead rather than to the side. As I jogged, vision was adequate to dodge stones and logs, but not so precise as to guarantee that I would readily discern any partly hidden rattlesnake fifty yards ahead. All things became clearer only as I came up to them.

Is that not a parable of life for all, and certainly a parable of the church in its pilgrimage as regards its spiritual vision and perception of truth? Saints, yes, even prophets, have not been promised omniscience, nor even inerrancy. All are shaped by their heredity, environment, education, and other factors. God never engages in overkill when He wards off our personal and churchly enemies. He gives us day by day our daily bread, and the steps, not the miles, of a good man are ordered by the Lord. For saints and prophets, omniscience has never been promised, nor inerrancy, only adequacy.

Historicism has been right in affirming that the book of Revelation was intended by heaven as a guide for the entire pilgrimage of the church. We consider the essence of the argument by Guinness to be indisputable.

. . . New Testament prophecy may therefore be expected to throw its light, on every event of importance to happen to the church of Christ, from the fall of Jerusalem to the second advent, that is, from the end of the Jewish, to the end of the Christian age.

Among the events made subjects of prophecy in the Old Testament were the birth of Isaac, the rapid increase of Israel, the descent into Egypt, the sufferings of the Israelites under the Pharaohs, the duration of their bondage, the exodus, the forty years in the desert, the possession of Canaan, its very division among the tribes; the characters of Saul, David, Solomon, and many other individuals; the building of the temple, the division of the kingdom into two, the Assyrian invasion, and Israel's captivity; the Babylonian invasion and the seventy years' captivity of Judah, the return from Babylon, the time to elapse, and many of the events to occur, between it and the coming of Messiah the Prince, his birth, character, true ministry, sufferings, and death; the ministry of John the Baptist, the rejection of Israel, the call of the Gentiles, and the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus.

Was Israel ever left during a long period, full of momentous changes, and events of solemn national importance, without the light and guidance of prophecy? If such be the case there will be a distinct analogy, on which to base the theory, that the Apocalypse is still wholly unfulfilled. But such is not the case. The chain is almost unbroken, and though four hundred years elapsed between the last of the prophets and the coming of Messiah, Daniel's prophecy fills in the events of the interval, so that no gap of even a century occurs in the long series.

Is it likely that there should be no analogy, but a perfect contrast, in the history of

the antitypical Israel? Has she no Egypt to leave and no wilderness to traverse, no land to inherit, no oppressors to tyrannise over her, no evil kings to mislead her, no reformers and deliverers to arise, no BABYLON to carry her captive, no temple to rebuild, no Messiah to look for, no judgments to apprehend, no rest to inherit? Are hers less important than theirs? Are her foes so much more obvious, her dangers so much more patent, that it should be superfluous to supply her with prophetic light to detect them? Because they were an earthly people, and she a heavenly church, is she therefore not on earth, and not amid the ungodly? Are her enemies heavenly because the church is so? Nay, but most earthly, for the wicked spirits against whom the church wrestles, wage their warfare incarnate in earthly, sensual, devilish systems, and in actual men, as did Satan in the serpent in Eden. Every conceivable reason would suggest her greater need of prophetic light. Now the Apocalypse is the book of the New Testament which answers to "the prophets" of the Old. If then it contain predictions of the first spread of Christianity, of the hosts of martyrs who sealed their testimony with their blood, during the ten pagan persecutions, of the reception of Christianity by Constantine and the Roman empire, of the gradual growth of corruption in the church, of the irruptions of the Goths and Vandals, and the break up of the old Roman empire into ten kingdoms, of the rise and development of popery, of the rise and rapid conquests of Mohammedanism, of the long continued and tremendous sufferings of the church under papal persecutions, of the fifty millions of martyrs slain by the Romish Church, of the enormous political power attained by the popes, of their Satanic craft and wickedness, of the Reformation, of the gradual decay of the papal system and the extinction of the temporal power of the popes: if it contains predictions of these events, which we know to have taken place in the history of the antitypical Israel, then we have a perfect analogy with the Old Testament. If on the other hand, the Apocalypse alludes to none of these events, but passing them all over in silence, gives only the history of an Antichrist who has not yet appeared, and of judgments not yet commenced, nor to be commenced until the church is in heaven, then instead of a striking scriptural analogy, we have a glaring and most unaccountable contrast.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, historicism has been right in seeing that the fourth empire of Daniel 7 reappears in the first beast of Revelation 13, and that both chapters warn of great religious apostasy as well as civil oppression. Correct at its heart, historicism has often erred when it wandered into secular history, or became too minute even in its ecclesiastical interpretations, or forgot that history is cyclical and prophecy apotelesmatic. Historicism would do well to accept some insights of the philosophy of history school, without surrendering its own distinctive contribution.

We are reminded of some words by Guinness about prominent Greek scholars of his day. Not being one himself, it is probable he would have used Augustine as a venerable example of the fact that spiritual productivity is not necessarily dependent upon knowing biblical languages intimately. Here are Guinness's words:

I would warn you against the snare into which many have fallen, of trusting themselves implicitly to the guidance of Greek scholars such as Alford, Tregelles, and Ellicott, in the study of prophecy. These students of the letter of sacred writ have their place and value, and should stand high in our estimation; but their special work did not qualify them for the comprehension of the far-reaching system of prophetic truth. The instrument they employ in their researches is the microscope, not the telescope. You cannot scan the starry heavens, or the breadth of the earth, with a microscope; you need a telescope for that. Greek scholars of such eminence are naturally short-sighted. They pore over manuscripts, words, letters, points. They seldom grasp the meaning of history or prophecy as a whole. They generally

neglect the philosophy of history, and the light which astronomy has cast on the chronology both of history and prophecy. Besides this, they are too much influenced by traditional testimony, by the views of antiquity. The notions of the Fathers as to an individual, short-lived antichrist, notions which grew up in the twilight of early times, weigh more with them than the teachings of ages of subsequent experience. Wedded to the past, they are blind to the progressiveness of prophetic interpretation. They do not grasp the simple principle that the true interpreter of prophecy is neither tradition nor speculation, but ever-evolving history that prophecy must be studied in the light of its fulfilment, and the future in the light of the past. Prophecy is vast, mountainous, and far-reaching sight is needed for its elucidation.<sup>44</sup>

We think this comment, like varnish, should be applied, but certainly not swallowed completely. We are all like these Greek giants to some extent--we all have talents in certain directions, but are not so talented as to be free from error. Of course, it is also true that there have been giants in biblical languages, who have also had the "telescopic" vision which Guinness refers to. But they are lamentably few.

A little philosophy is needed to reconcile the gap between the real and the ideal. Because God is dealing with imperfect people, even the privileges bestowed upon them have been conditioned by that imperfection. The sun which lights our world has spots on it, yet we choose to live by its light rather than in the bowels of the earth. The air we breathe has been polluted by our greedy factories, yet it still sustains life. The food we eat, and the water we drink, have contaminants, but none of us fast continuously because of that. The Bible which is a light unto our path and a lamp to our feet is not pure luminescence, for it is the Word of God through men.

Through men--that's the problem, but it is not an insuperable one. Scripture is sufficient for our needs, though it does not speak with precision on earthly matters, nor does it set forth theology with infinite verbal accuracy--only with adequacy.

Is not the story the same in regeneration? When the divine Spirit touches the heart of the penitent and it is made anew, how new is it made? New enough that sin which remains might not reign. So it is with error. It remains, in the church, but it does not reign. The revelation of truth is progressive, which means that till the end of the journey, error must be continuously displaced.<sup>45</sup>

It's no use our complaining at God's methods. We adopt them ourselves in most of our relationships. There are no perfect husbands, or wives, or children. The best of them are adequate at the best. Besides, would it be good for us sinners to be able to boast of our possession of anything untainted --anything at all--even our doctrinal creeds? We think God is too wise to let us boast of anything less than Himself, too wise to permit us to glory in anything here below, even our formulation of revealed truth. His desire for us is not intellectual growth that outstrips our character growth, but rather the reverse. I need faith more than I need perfection of knowledge. This is obvious because the things which worry me most in Scripture are not those things I don't know, not the esoteric passages, but rather the clear lucid words I do understand. For example, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Returning from my jog yesterday, as I descended from the hills, I noticed how different things looked on the return journey. I was covering the same terrain, but seeing it from another angle. Is not truth like that? Truth is polygonal, not linear. My perceptions are linear, but the things to be perceived are not.

What then shall we conclude about the schools of interpretation. We shall thank God for all of them, but practice eclecticism ourselves. We should see these various approaches as

fragmented reflections of the whole truth. Let us see again the necessity of affirming what is affirmed but denying the denials. Let us always begin our exegesis by looking at the times and the people addressed. To understand what was written to them, we must understand what it meant to them. But along with that let us acknowledge the wisdom of Him whose years have no end, and who has promised never to leave nor forsake His church. The One who declared through Amos, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing save that He reveal his secret through his servants the prophets," can be trusted to keep His promise. And because He changes not His ways, He will be the same in all ages, and His work will ever reflect the same stamp though it be in different degrees of development.

Because addressed first to a threatened church in the first century, Revelation must be relevant to that era; and because the book of Revelation is a special book on eschatology, we should expect to find the last crisis vividly depicted, and though mirrored in other times, only fully fulfilled in the last time. Scroggie sums up the matter thus:

That John spoke to the Church and world circumstances of his own time is certain; and it is equally certain that in so doing he spoke to circumstances far beyond his time, circumstances relating to the Church and the world to the time of the Second Advent. This plant has a root--the past; a stem--the present; and a blossom--the future; and no one part of the plant is the plant. There is, not only an element of truth in every responsible theory, but also a subtle error. Comprehensiveness is safer than exclusiveness, and integration is sounder than disintegration. Relating to this Book, he who is preterist, historicist, and futurist is most likely to understand it.<sup>46</sup>

Strand makes good sense when he says:

I would simply call attention here to one somewhat embracive approach which might loosely be called "philosophy of history." The particular type of "philosophy of history" which I have in mind correlates in a certain sense with both preterist and continuous-historical interpretation, but it does so in a way that allows for repeated historical fulfilments beyond the writer's own time or beyond any other specific time in history. From a certain viewpoint, this approach may be considered essentially a variation of the continuous-historical mode of interpreting the book of Revelation.<sup>47</sup>

This kind of approach gives full recognition to the characteristics of apocalyptic and to the important historical element in the Biblical perspective. It also goes beyond the preterist and historicist views in making the book of Revelation relevant to all time and even to the individual Christian life. Thus, it carries interpretation beyond a mere mechanical historical exposition. There is good reason to question whether any interpretation that fails so to broaden the perspective does not also actually do injustice to the intent of the book of Revelation. But this sort of approach is meaningful; it helps us to realise how the book contains "so much that is large with immortality and full of glory" and why a study of it reveals "that the connection between God and His people is close and decided."<sup>48</sup>

Finally, if it is true that only the pure in heart shall see God, and if it is true that the wicked shall do wickedly and not understand, should not every exegete enquire, "How is it with my soul"?<sup>49</sup> "Have I yet understood that everlasting gospel which changed our world in the first century, again in the 16th, and which is the only factor that can yet transform our sad and sorry time? Has it transformed me?" When it is well with my soul, I shall accept with equanimity whatever the times in His providence shall unfold, and continually adjust my thinking with advancing light.

Indeed, even my inadequacies as a prophetic interpreter will work together for good, laying me low in dependence before Him who alone is the truth, who alone can enable me to see

truth more clearly, and strengthen me to walk in it.

## **CHAPTER 13** [\(TOC\)](#)

### **OCCAM'S RAZOR, AND THE "THROATS" OF COMMENTATORS**

Ages ago, when philosophies were both many and conflicting, William of Occam proposed that a simple solution to a problem was usually to be preferred to a complex one. This principle (known as Occam's Razor) applies also to hermeneutics.

We wish now to apply in more detail a concept previously stressed. While it may be revolutionary to some, it is nonetheless indispensable for correct interpretation of Revelation. If the reader takes care to grasp its implications and apply them, many problems in exegeting the Apocalypse will find a ready solution. The New Testament emphasis on the imminence of the Parousia is an Occam's Razor for the ideological throats of a host of commentators.

As already pointed out, the vast majority of interpreters work on the assumption that at least two thousand years of time had necessarily to pass before Christ's promise to return could be fulfilled. (Most first-class commentaries do not make this assumption, but tragically they are often the least read.) The entire New Testament teaches otherwise, but only since the days of Albert Schweitzer has the Church begun to understand this fact. Paul everywhere assumes that the church is on the borders of the eternal world. As Schoeps has written:

We should misunderstand the apostle's letters as a whole, and the governing consciousness from which they sprang, if we failed to recognise that Paul only lives, writes, and preaches in the unshakeable conviction that his generation represents the last generation of mankind.<sup>1</sup>

Says Roetzel, ". . . it should be noted that references to the parousia appear throughout Paul's letters, and there is little evidence that the expectation of an imminent, though unpredictable Day fades into the background in Paul's later letters."<sup>2</sup> Divine promises and warnings are alike conditional. The clear condition for the return of Christ has always been the fulfilment of the Gospel Commission. See Matthew 13:47-49; 24:14; 28:19,20.

The disciples who heard Christ's Olivet sermon expected Him to return in their day. How else could the following be understood? "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." "Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. . . ." Matthew continues, "Therefore you must also be ready: for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect." "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?" "Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions."<sup>3</sup> See also verses 15,16,20,21,23,26, 29,30.

Note, it is the disciples who are to see the desolating sacrilege which precipitates the last great tribulation. They will hear the deceptive cries, and then they will see the sign of the Son of man. He admonishes them "when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates." v. 33.

It is equally clear that when one of those disciples wrote the enlarged edition of that sermon, he expected its fulfilment at any moment. Thus he could declare in his opening sentence that the end "must soon take place," "for the time is near." Revelation 1:1,3. And as he finished his book, again he asserts, quoting His Lord, "the time is near. . . Behold, I am coming soon. . . Surely I am coming soon." Revelation 22:10,12,20. We suggest that John meant exactly what he wrote. And all of Revelation is written with the imminent end in mind. It is not the primary purpose of any section of John's book to suggest that long

centuries would separate the two advents. Let any who think otherwise, search and see.

What events then would John and his fellow Christians have anticipated? Drawing from their memory of the Olivet discourse, the disciples after the ascension of their Lord would have expected wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, false religious teachers, the worldwide proclamation of the true gospel, deceptions, apostasy, Antichrist (the abomination of desolation), the last great tribulation, then the appearance of the Saviour in the clouds. And they expected all of these in their own generation. This was John's belief, as the prologue and epilogue of Revelation clearly shows.

Can we summarise from this perspective the sequence of events portrayed in Revelation? Can we locate the chief themes of the book and their relationships? We can. The early chapters portray the light-bearing church witnessing. The church lamps gleam in a dark world, some more brightly than others. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has overcome it," but it does.

Christ foretold that His gospel would bring not peace but a sword. He promised His disciples that the world would attempt to kill them, and be successful to a great degree. "They will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake." Matthew 24:9. This persecution would lead to apostasy. "And then many would fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another." Heresies would abound. "Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray." Culminating that succession, the abomination of desolation would appear in the holy place, precipitating the great tribulation which would lead to widespread chaos of deception and death. But next would appear the vindicating Christ--the sign of the Son of Man, the New Temple incarnate, in answer to the sign of the abomination of desolation menacing the holy place. This is the very sequence found in Revelation.

After the presentation of the witnessing churches come the seals of violence and apostasy. The white horse of the gospel is succeeded by the red horse of persecution as Matthew 10:34 foretold. Next come economic pressures symbolised by the balances of scarcity. Shortage of the true bread is even more certainly intended, as the white horse has turned to black, and apostasy has set in. Famine leads to pestilence, and the lack of the bread of life causes the cancer of heresy. Men who refuse to believe the truth that they might be saved, will believe lies and be damned. Soul-destroying pestilence is accompanied by the heat of added persecution from the corporate powers symbolised by wild beasts. See Revelation 13. Truth becomes more scarce still as it becomes perilous to profess it.

Antichrist, i.e. its final manifestation, the wild beast with seven heads and ten horns, makes his debut accompanied by signs and wonders--this "abomination of desolation" is the strong, almost overmastering, delusion which takes the world captive. The blood of the martyred saints cries to God, apostasy becomes as black as sackcloth of hair, and many a star admired among the believers falls to earth. The whole church militant is mightily shaken as by an earthquake. Then out of the darkness, God's light shines. It is as the lightning from the east even unto the west. At the coming of the Son of Man, all nature trembles, and sun and moon withdraw their shining. The multitudes cry out, "Who shall be able to stand"?

We have briefly reviewed the first six seals which climax in the second coming of Christ. Now we wish to emphasise that this picture is implied in the subsequent chains of Revelation. The persecution of the gospel witnesses, the cry of the martyrs for vindication, leads to the outpouring of trumpet plagues to lead men to repentance. As the seals are consecutive in their unfolding, but then contemporaneous, so the trumpets sound in response to the initial persecutions of the second seal, and intensify as Antichrist does his worst. Thus after the sixth trumpet, and before the seventh which portrays the

advent, we have a parenthesis picturing Antichrist's attack upon the witnessing church--the same great tribulation foretold by Christ and sketched in the seals. Thus far, the sequence in Revelation has been witnessing, persecution, and warning judgments on the persecutors. These last are meant to work repentance (so they are not the final judgments; the seven last plagues fulfil that role). But between the trumpets and the plagues, the Revelator goes over the same ground once more.

Chapter 12 pictures the radiant church which loves not its life to the death. It testifies of God's grace to the world. The dragon, then the beast, and ultimately the false prophet, all persecute the bride of Christ, and the last great tribulation involves the remnant who keep the commandments of God and cherish the testimony of Jesus. In mercy, God sends three angels proclaiming the everlasting gospel that some might yet repent before the unmingled wrath of heaven falls upon the persecutors. When this fails, the last plagues fall. Now we see the sequence to be again witnessing, persecution, warning judgments on the persecutors, and finally judgments without mercy. It is highly significant that each outline, each prophetic chain, stresses first the witnessing church, then persecution and judgments.

Revelation indeed does follow the pattern of Christ's second advent sermon, but it also like that sermon, has implicit within it the expectation that the end could come upon the generation addressed. This being the case, the inadequacies of popular schools of interpretation become apparent. These work chiefly on the assumption that the time-table of Revelation necessarily involves centuries, whereas only years were needed. Therefore commentators frequently suggest detailed and minute fulfilments at specific times. When read a generation or two later, such commentaries are obviously dated and in error. For example, the greatest work on historicism, the monumental *Horae Apocalypticae* was published in the first half of the nineteenth century. One cannot but be impressed on reading it by two things: the prodigious learning of Elliott, and the irrelevance of many of his conclusions. Let it, however, be emphasised, that his conclusions are no more irrelevant than many of those interpreters who lose themselves in the political scene of the first century, or who suggest such wonders for the twentieth century, as certainly neither John, nor the Holy Spirit, ever thought of. These errors exist chiefly because of the failure to take Matthew 24:34 at its face-value.

Did God deceive His church? Did Christ deceive His listeners on the Mount of Olives? No. Bible prophecy, whether promise or warning, is conditional. See Jeremiah 18:1-10. In true Semitic fashion it is capable of setting forth that which sounds absolute although contingencies are implicit. Furthermore, the New Testament is emphatic that the Christ event brought the end of the world forensically, and that since the Cross, the church has been living in the last days.

Was it necessary that there be such a gap between the first and second advents? Did God intend that once the sins of the world had been removed by the Cross that men should yet endure the scourge for pain-filled ages? Once Satan had been destroyed by Christ on Calvary (Hebrews 2:14), did his tail have to writhe and flail in dying agonies for so long? Did Christ ever set forth a condition vital for His return, which if unfulfilled would delay the advent? As stated earlier, Matthew 24:14 sets forth such a condition.

What actually happened to the early church, and what has happened since that our Lord should tarry so long? Man's native legalism quickly squashed the gospel of Christ. By the end of the second century, the gospel of grace in its purity is almost totally absent.<sup>4</sup> With the loss of the gospel in its completeness, that constraining love which had moved the apostles was also diluted. Into the vacuum came error and sloth. Paul's warnings about apostasy were fulfilled. See Acts 20:28-30. The true faith went into eclipse, and has never since blossomed on a worldwide scale.



Note that the last sign--Antichrist--results from the recovery of the gospel. As in the first century, its proclamation by a light-filled church will precipitate persecution--this time on a global scale. This is taught in Matthew 24:14,15; Daniel 11:44,45; Revelation 6:2-11; 11:3-7; 14:6-12; 18:1-4.

Christ admonished His would-be followers that unless they loved Him more than their own lives, they could not be His disciples. But no one can love Christ more than his own life unless he is convinced that Christ has loved him to the same extent. Only the gospel brings such a conviction. Thus there can be no triumphant remnant emerge from the final persecution until the gospel of grace has been proclaimed with a loud voice in all the world.

If these things be so, how do they effect our interpretation of Revelation? The fact that Christ could have returned in John's generation means that his book sets forth certain basic events only,<sup>5</sup> namely the ones foretold by Christ Himself. Says Berkouwer, "Our difficulties with the New Testament proclamation of the future are not because of its complexity, but because of its simplicity."<sup>6</sup>

Revelation does not major in minors, and certainly does not intend to be a history book of the ages, describing all the convoluted trauma of coming centuries. But the principles implicit in the divine, the human, and the satanic natures mean that similar causes will ever provoke similar results, and that therefore the issues which arose on a small scale in the first century (which could then have blossomed into global dimensions), have repeatedly come to the fore throughout church history. The Revelator's portrayal of what was meant to take place in his generation has had minor fulfillments through the centuries, but yet awaits its climactic consummation.

Because the major themes of the Apocalypse are the Judgment and Second Advent, and the great tribulation and warning message before the Advent, Revelation necessarily concentrates on the broad themes of witnessing, persecution, reformatory judgments and warnings, and the final outpouring of divine wrath prior to the restoration of all things. To search for prediction of specific minor and local events in history is to miss the significance of the whole.

Only the principles here suggested solve the inconsistencies of most traditional exegesis. The present approach makes it possible to see how the Apocalypse would indeed have meaning for John's contemporaries, but also for all successive believers throughout the ages, specially those who will witness the great consummation. 1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:4.

## FOOTNOTES [\(TOC\)](#)

### FOOTNOTES FOR PREFACE

1. A. T. Hanson, "Eschatology," *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. A. Richardson, p. 113.
2. Bruce Barton, *What Can A Man Believe?* pp. 113-14.
3. James Denney, *Studies in Theology*, pp. 239-40.
4. L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 665-66.
5. Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (hereinafter referred to as *Rediscovery*), p. 14.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
8. L. Gaston, *No Stone on Another*, p. 118.
9. "The 'abomination' in Daniel seems much worse than that of 1 Maccabees 1:54. . . . We must beware of reading Daniel too much in the light of what actually happened according to 1 Maccabees. In particular the cleansing measures which satisfied the Maccabees would surely not have satisfied Daniel. . . . It is significant that there is in Daniel no mention of a hoped-for rebuilding or rededication of the temple. In Daniel 2 a great stone "not made with hands" shatters the fourth kingdom and becomes a "kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (2:44). In 7:14,27 it is again a kingdom which is given to the people of the saints of the Most High, when the fourth kingdom is destroyed. Accordingly it may very well be that we should interpret 9:24 "to anoint a holy of holies" in accordance with the usage of the Dead Sea Scrolls, to refer to a community. The strange statement of 8:14 "the sanctuary will be justified. . ." will then refer to "the many" who are "justified" . . . .'  
*Ibid.*, pp. 118-19. "We find in Daniel a combination of "the saints of the Most High" and the idea of the "new temple" which is to be established in the last days. On the subject of the evil to come it is said that one of the "horns" of the "he-goat" shall. . . defile the temple. . . . But the good to come also stands related to the temple; atonement shall be made for the evils of the people and eternal righteousness shall be established, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. . . . The vision of the future has sometimes been interpreted in spiritual categories, the implication being that "the saints" make up a new temple, a spiritual temple. It is the kingdom of "the saints" which is called an anointed sanctuary upon which rests the presence of God (vii: 13,14). . . . It is important to note that the concept of the "anointed sanctuary" is connected with the ideas of the Son of Man and the "saints of the most High." *Ibid.*, pp. 175. "The concept of the Son of Man in Daniel is very close to that of the Kingdom of God." *Ibid.*, p. 381. "The old Biblical Son of Man apocalyptic has not, therefore, been foisted upon the teaching of Jesus by later tradition; it represents the substance of His teaching about the coming Judgment" (underlining supplied). Matthew Black, "The 'Son of Man' in the *Teaching of Jesus*," *The Expository Times*, Vol LX (1948), p. 33. ". . . les trois oracles de vii,13-14; viii,14 et ix.24 se complètent mutuellement et contribuent à exprimer la même réalité." ("The three oracles of 7:13,14; 8:14; and 9:24 are mutually complementary and contribute to explaining the same reality"--translation from the French). A. Feuillet, "*Le Fils de l'homme de Daniel et la tradition biblique*," *RB*, LX (1953), 197-98. ". . . in the third vision the imagery is laid aside. . . . The fourth vision, the last and longest of them all, drops the symbolism entirely. . . ." S. B. Frost, *Old Testament Apocalyptic* (London, 1952), 183. On Daniel 8:14, in particular, Frost says: ". . . he was not prophesying when the re-dedication as such was going to take

place, but . . . the eschaton. . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 199.

10. K. Koch, *Rediscovery*, p. 76.

11. Stace, *The Destiny of Western Man*, cited by Ana O'Neill, *Ethics for the Atomic Age*, p. 52.

12. Edward J. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, p. 333.

13. Ana Maria O'Neill, *Ethics for the Atomic Age*, p. 74.

14. Edward J. Carr, *Conditions of Peace*, p. 113, cited by O'Neill, p. 389.

15. P. A. Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age*, p. 22.

16. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 528.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 528 (emphasis ours).

18. *Ibid.*, p. 529.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*.

22. See *The Troubled Land* by Elbert Stewart.

23. Paul Tournier, *The Whole Person in a Broken World*, p. 118.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

1. Bernard Shaw, *Sixteen Self Sketches*, quoted in Gerald Kennedy, *The Christian and His America*, p. 12.

2. Preston comments, ". . . with a dramatic reference to the coming of the Lord ends the last book in the Bible. The very fact that it ends on a note so much at variance with the prevailing outlook of Western civilisation should make us think. Even more significant is the fact that this note is one which occurs constantly throughout the N.T. Christianity is not a faith which bids us look for a gradual upward march of man till he reaches an ideal state of civilisation. Rather it bids us believe in an active, living God, whose love and whose wrath are alike revealed in the events of human history, a God who has played the decisive part in that history when he sent Jesus Christ among us, and in whose ultimate control of events lies our sole confidence. Only if we hold this faith can we retain any real hope in this present world, and answer courageously with John: 'Come, Lord Jesus.' It is the only faith that can dare to hold its own in the atomic era." *The Revelation of Saint John the Divine* (hereinafter referred to as *Revelation*), p. 145.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

1. See appendix on authorship of *Revelation* (in volume 2 of *Crisis*).

2. R. H. Charles, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*, p. 1. Preston and Hanson agree. "There is no doubt that the *Revelation of St. John the Divine* is both the least read and at the same time the most misunderstood of all the books of the New Testament. The ordinary Christian simply does not know what to make of it." *Revelation*, p. 9.

3. Michael Wilcock, *I Saw Heaven Opened*, Preface.

4. Cited by G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St John the Divine*

(hereinafter called Revelation), p. 2.

5. C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development*, p. 86ff.

6. Alfred Loisy, *The Origins of the New Testament*, p. 11, cited by N. Turner, "Revelation" (Peake new edn.), p. 1044.

7. N. Turner, "Revelation," pp. 1043-44.

8. Charles R. Erdman, *The Revelation of St John* (hereinafter referred to as Revelation), p. 9.

9. Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St John* (hereinafter referred to as Revelation), p. 13.

10. John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (hereinafter referred to as Revelation), p. 7.

11. G. Campbell-Morgan, *Westminster Bible Record*, Vol. 3 (1912), pp. quoted in *The New Testament and Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison, p. 1046.

12. Frank Stagg, "Interpreting the Book of Revelation," *Review and Expositor*, LXXII, No. 3 (Summer '75), p. 331.

13. W. A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation* (hereinafter referred to as Revelation), foreword of fifth volume.

14. Christopher Wordsworth, *Commentary on the New Testament*, II, p. 172.

15. Caird, *Revelation*, p. 2.

16. W. G. Scroggie, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*, p. 357.

17. H. Grattan Guinness, *Romanism and the Reformation from the Standpoint of Prophecy* (hereinafter referred to as Romanism), p. ill.

18. Albertus Pieters, *Studies in the Revelation of St John* (hereinafter referred to as Revelation), p. 49.

19. Frederick W. Farrar, *The History of Interpretation*.

20. Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, pp. 269-70.

21. W. Wessel, "The Resurrection of the Dead and Final Judgment" quoted in C. F. H. Henry (ed), *Basic Doctrines*, p. 287.

22. William Caven, quoted in Wilbur M. Smith, *Therefore Stand*, pp. 458-60.

23. R. P. Casey, "Gnosis, Gnosticism and the New Testament," *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, eds. W. D. Davies and D. Daube.

### FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

1. Graham N. Stanton, "Presuppositions in New Testament Criticism," *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall, p. 60.

2. F. W. Farrar, *The Bible, Its Meaning and Supremacy*, p. 145.

3. The Gospel Tradition, p. 51. See also Robert H. Stein, "The Proper Methodology for Ascertaining a Markan Redaktionsgeschichte" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton, 1968), 22-98 and article under the same title in *NovT* XIII (3, 1971), 181-198.

4. *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, p. 27.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
6. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 358.
7. *The Parousia in the New Testament*, Supplements to N.T. vol. XIII, p. 2.
8. "In the age of crisis at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, forces were set in motion which were destined to result in the triumph of subjectivism in theology. This was an age which laid claim to the whole of reality in the name of reason, but historical reality did not include the Last Judgment. The methods employed led to the rejection of eschatology. Since the modern world is still patterned much after this outlook, the problem of whether the Last Judgment is essential for New Testament theology as proclaimed in the Protestant churches is raised in acute form. The basic question is whether rationalistic and secularistic principles shall be allowed to control biblical exegesis within the Church so that the New Testament eschatology is rejected on the basis of these principles. The entire outlook upon man and the world, and God's relation to both, which forms such an essential part of the idea of the Last Judgment and indeed of the Christian substance itself, were in the late seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century formulated with such boldness and completeness that without a frontal attack upon the Last Judgment, it was, nevertheless, rendered inoperative and quite superfluous." James P. Martin, *The Last Judgment* (Grand Rapids, 1963), p. 87.
9. C. C. McCown, *The Search for the Real Jesus*, p. 18, cited by G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Future*, p. 1. See Bultmann's "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" *Encounter* XXI (1960), pp. 194-200. And for a further illustration of the theme consider Kftemann's exegesis of Hebrews with the emphasis on gnostic influence so characteristic of KMseman's own great teacher.
10. D. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu fur das deutsche Volk bearbeitet* (1864), p. 236, cited by G. R. Beasley-Murray, "A Century of Eschatological Discussion," *ET*, LXIV (1953), p. 313.
11. Johannes Weiss, *Die evangelische Geschichte kritisch and philosophisch bearbeitet*, pp. 594-95; cited by G. R. Beasley-Murray, "A Century of Eschatological Discussion," p. 312.
12. Timothy Colani, *Jesus-Christ et les croyances messianiques de son temps*, cited by G. R. Beasley-Murray, "The Rise and Fall of the Little Apocalypse," *LXIV* (1953), p. 346.
13. J. Wellhausen, *Einleitung*, p. 96, cited by G. R. Beasley-Murray, "A Century of Eschatological Discussion," p. 315.
14. C. G. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, p. 296.
15. *Jesus and the Christian Religion*, p. 78, cited by B. W. Bacon, *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 63n.
16. T. Francis Glasson, *His Appearing and His Kingdom*, *The Christian 180 Hope in the Light of its History*, p. 3.
17. F. C. Grant, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 63.
18. G. Hdlscher, "Der Ursprung der Apokalypse Markus 13," *Th81*, XII, pp. 193-202, cited by G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Future*, p. 74.
19. J. A. T. Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming*, pp. 118-19.
20. C. C. Torrey, *Documents of the Primitive Church*, p. 13.
21. D. Schenkel, *Das Charakterbild Jesu*, p. 183ff., cited by G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Future*, p. 13.
22. J. Schniewind, *Das Fvangelium nach Markus* (DNTD), p. 168.

23. B. Vawter, *The Four Gospels*, p. 322.
24. D. E. Nineham, *The Gospel of Saint Mark*, p. 341.
25. J. Lambrecht, *Die Redaktion der Markus-Apocalypse*, p. 15.
26. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Future*, p. 216.
27. E. F. K. Muller, *Real-Encycloppie FUr Protestantische Theologie and Kirche*, 3rd ed., XXI, p. 264.
28. John Peter Lange, "The Gospel according to Luke," trans. and ed. by Philip Schaff, in *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, VIII, p. 138
29. J. J. Van Oosterzee, "The Gospel according to Luke," trans. and ed. by Philip Schaff and Charles C. Starbuck, in *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, VIII, p. 321.
30. William Milligan, *The Revelation of St. John* (hereinafter referred to as Revelation), p. 13.
31. James Kallas, *Revelation, God and Satan in the Apocalypse*, pp. 43-4.
32. "St. John, it has been said, uses symbolical language in that book on purpose to conceal his meaning from the heathen, especially the Roman, authorities; and to his dread of drawing down fresh persecutions either upon himself or his fellow-believers we owe in no small degree the obscurity of the book. There is not the smallest foundation for the statement. So far is it from being correct that we not only find the Apostle often telling us what his figures mean, as in the case of the stars and of the candlestick in chap. i.20, of the white-robed company in chap. vii., of the great dragon in chap. xii., and of the New Jerusalem in chap. xxi., but that the very vision in which, according to these interpreters, he ought to have been most reserved, that relating to the beast and the harlot in chap. xvii., is precisely the vision of which he gives the fullest explanation. Besides which, such words as those of chap. xiii. 18, "He that hath understanding let him count the number of the beast," are obviously used not to favour concealment of the mystery, but to provoke to the investigation of it, as one to be known, either then or in due season, by the spiritual mind. The figures of the Apocalypse flow from no effort at concealment, and from no dread of the danger. They are the natural result of the Seer's own temperament, training, circumstances, and mood of mind at the time he writes; and they are designed to lend a force and vigour to his style which would not have been gained by simpler speech." W. Milligan, *Revelation*, pp. 11-12.
33. "They (the prophets) have all one spirit, one design. One builds upon another; one explains another; and as gold have all been preserved. No imagery-language has remained purer or been better preserved. None is in any measure so deeply embedded in the genius of the people, its writings and its idiom. Hebrew poetry is as it were all symbol, imagery, holy and lofty diction. Even the prose-writers and historians must needs speak in a tropical way because their language demands it; still more must this be done by teachers and prophets. No language loves and furnishes imagery like this. Here a fiery glance, there a breathing full of the spirit of the Lord. In this way speak the Old and New Testament; and so speaks the Apocalypse which contains the sum of both. It is an anile fable that a peculiar key belongs to it, or that the key is lost. Who ever writes a book without an adequate key? Specially, who writes such an one for seven churches? Did John attach a peculiar key to it when he sent it to them? How did it look? Who has seen it? How came it to be lost? Is it in the sea near Patmos, or in the Maender? John writes a book for others, for man; a book about whose contents he was so seriously anxious that he arrays curse upon curse against any one who detracts from it, and blessing upon blessing for him who reads, hears, and obeys it; and yet this book is said to be an unintelligible enigma, a kind of raving wholly sealed up, which no one except its author can

understand, and which even he himself perhaps did not understand. Can anything be more absurd? J. G. Von Herder, *Werke*. xxxix, p. 371, quoted in W. Milligan, *Revelation*, p. 10.

34. Martin Kiddie, *The Revelation of St. John*, p. xix.

35. Alan F. Johnson, book review in *Christianity Today*, Jan 5, 1979, P. 37.

36. Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, pp. 25-26.

37. Ibid., p. 31.

38. Carl E. Amerding and W. Ward Gasque, eds., *Handbook of Biblical Prophecy* (hereinafter referred to as Prophecy), p. 9.

39. Vernard Eller, *The Most Revealing Book of the Bible--Making Sense out of Revelation*, p. 32.

40. Douglas Ezell, *Revelations on Revelation--New Sounds from Old Symbols* (hereinafter referred to as Revelation). Quote from Gerhard Ebeling is taken from On Prayer, trans. James W. Leitch, p. 67.

41. D. Ezell, *Revelation*, p. 23.

42. William Henry Simcox, *Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges--the Revelation of St. John* (hereinafter referred to as Revelation) p. 40.

43. F. F. Bruce, "The Revelation to St. John," *A New Testament Commentary*, ed. G. C. D. Howley, F. F. Bruce, H. L. Ellison, p. 633.

44. G. B. Caird, *Revelation*, p. 12.

45. E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Revelation of St. John*, trans. Patrick Fairbairn, Vol. I, pp. 47-49.

46. Friedrich Dusterdieck, *Handbook to the Revelation of John*, transl. Henry E. Jacobs, p. 96.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

1. A. L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, p. 132.

2. H. Olshausen, *Matthew, Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 222.

3. "Other Adventist authors have also stressed the conditionality of prophecy, J. N. Andrews in *The Sanctuary and Twenty-three Hundred Days*, second edition, pp. 5, 9, quotes Bliss's *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, pp. 7, 8, 4 which sets forth the principle of conditional prophecy. J. H. Waggoner in *Refutation of the Doctrine Called the Age to Come*, second edition, p. 92, refers to conditional prophecy. E. A. Sutherland in *Living Fountains or Broken Cisterns*, p. 81, suggests that had Israel been faithful, earth's history would have been shortened by at least 2,000 years.

"Martin Buber calls conditionality the 'prophetic theologem' of Hebrew prophecy, though Buber refuses to apply the contingency principle to apocalyptic literature (*Pointing the Way*, pp. 197, 198).

"The deterministic element which scholars see in apocalyptic does not necessarily vitiate conditionality in the genre. For example, certain rabbis held both concepts in tension when explaining why Messiah had not come. 'Rab said: All the predetermined dates [for redemption] have passed, and the matter [now] depends only on repentance and good deeds' (Sanhedrin 97b). 'R. Samuel b. Nahami said in the name of R. Jonathan: Blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end [Messiah's advent]. For they would say, since

the predetermined time has arrived, and yet he has not come, he will never come. But [even so], wait for him. As it is written, Though he tarry, wait for him. . . .What delays [his coming]?--The attribute of Justice delays it [footnote: because of Israel's unworthiness of it]' (Sanhedrin 97b).

"Furthermore, numerous commentators point out that determinism is not as prevalent in the Revelation as in other apocalypses. 'The book of Revelation is not a book to satisfy hungry curiosity. The extent to which it reveals what will happen is related structurally to the revelation of how what will happen will happen to men according to their choices and loyalties in the present' (David W. Cain, *Religious Studies*, March, 1972, p. 40).

"There are. . . in the Apc exhortations and threats that do not harmonize perfectly with a purely deterministic or mechanistic conception of human history' (Pierre Prigent, *Theology Digest*, Spring, 1975, p. 56).

"The deterministic element, though present in Revelation, never suggests man's helplessness, nor does it threaten man's freedom or responsibility. The letters to the seven churches show that John thinks that man's decisions and responses in the world do shape history as well as personal destiny' *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 12, p. 245)." Richard W. Coffen, *Spectrum*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1977, p. 21.

4. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ*, p. 245.

5. Dale Moody, "The Eschatology of Hal Lindsey," *Review and Expositor*, Vol. LXXII, No. 3, summer 1975, p. 272.

6. William G. Moorehead, "The Revelation," *Outline Studies in the New Testament*, p. 19. William Milligan, *Revelation*, pp. 42-3.

7. See author's commentary on Daniel (Nashville, Southern Publishing Assoc., 1978).

8. Herman Hoeksema, *Behold He Cometh, An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (hereinafter referred to as *Behold He Cometh*), pp. 230,231.

9. James P. Martin, *The Last Judgment*, p. 85.

## FOOTNOTES ON CHAPTER FIVE

1. Wilbur Smith, "Revelation--Introduction," *The New Testament and Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1046.

2. Caird, *Revelation*, p. 2.

3. E. g. N. Turner, "*Revelation*," p. 1044. "It is certainly very difficult to interpret the book in detail to the modern Christian. Assuming that the first readers knew the meaning of the details, the secret perished with them and cannot be recovered." See also Preston and Hanson, *Revelation*, p. 9f., and W. Milligan, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*, pp. 7-10 (hereinafter referred to as *Lectures*). Milligan protests against the neglect of the book due to its difficulties and says: "That it should be obscure or mysterious would in no way startle us. Obscurity and mystery meet us everywhere. We have no reason to complain of such arrangements. It is an altogether different thing when we are told, not that a part of Revelation is difficult, but that it is from its very nature unintelligible, and that it is constructed with so little reference to common processes of thought and rules of language as to place a distinct conception of its meaning beyond our reach. . . . Man may not immediately comprehend it, just as thousands of years passed before he comprehended the structure of the earth, or the movements of the heavenly bodies. But the voice both of the earth and of the heavens was never in itself less fixed or certain than it is now. They were capable of being interpreted; and at last they received their interpretation. It is the same with the book before us." p. 9.



4. This is axiomatic, and scarcely needs documenting. However for excellent treatment see introductory materials in Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (hereinafter referred to as *Apocalypse*), pp. 197-208; Kiddie, *Revelation xxxvi-xliii*; H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (hereinafter referred to as *Apocalypse*), lxvi-xcviii; R. H. Charles, *Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (ICC) (hereinafter referred to as *Revelation*), I, p. xci-xcvii. Every modern commentary asks the question we have asked. Reicke's *The New Testament Era* is helpful in answering it.

5. See Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, pp. 434-35.

6. Various writers claim so much for apocalyptic and eschatology that definitions are essential, but reading on these topics in modern works can be confusing because of the present diverse use of the terms. "'Eschatological' is used by scholars in half a dozen senses, often without definition. . . ." Stephen Neill, *Interpretation of the New Testament* (hereinafter referred to as *Interpretation*), pp. 195-96. Similarly, Gerhard von Rad says of apocalyptic; "it is necessary to remember that no satisfactory definition of it has yet been achieved." *The Message of the Prophets*, p. 271.

"Apocalyptic" is commonly used to signify the sudden catastrophic intervention of God in the affairs of earth to right all wrongs and to terminate history. When Albert Schweitzer wrote his *Quest* he unfortunately selected the term "eschatology" for the description of his main thesis. "The Apocalyptic element in the teaching of Jesus is a very large element, the eschatological, very small. At least one half of all that is recorded is professedly along the lines of Apocalyptic, as the two phrases, 'Son of Man' and 'the Kingdom of God' abundantly show; and the strictly ethical teaching, which is at once a correction of debased ideals and the formulating of the moral law of the Kingdom, is permeated with the thoughts and phrases with which current Apocalyptic had made the minds of the people so familiar," F. W. Worsley, *The Apocalypse of Jesus*, pp. 24-25. "Apocalyptic" may have been better, and led to less confusion thereafter, for whereas eschatological has been diversely interpreted, and not always with reference to the catastrophic, apocalyptic when applied to events ever has the sense of dramatic intrusion by suprahistorical forces.

"Apocalyptic" in most modern technical discussions is used with reference to two different phenomena: a type of literature, and the special kind of eschatology therein embodied. Thus Dodd can refer to "the Apocalyptic Discourse" of Mark 13, and yet point out that "its literary form is not that of an apocalypse. . . ." *More New Testament Studies*, pp. 70, 69. Cf. Ladd: "The apocalyptic type of eschatology found expression in literary forms which were not apocalyptic in character." *Jesus and the Kingdom*, p. 79. See also H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, p. 23. See also the article by W. Bousset, *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia*, I, pp. 209-210; E. Lohmeyer, RGG (2nd. ed.), I, col. 402-404; Ladd, "Apocalyptic," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, p. 52. In his *Jesus and the Kingdom*, Ladd says: "Most discussions of 'apocalyptic' fail to point out that the word is used to describe two different kinds of eschatology embodied in this literature." p. 73. Hans Dieter Betz urges that "a religio-historical clarification of the concept and nature of apocalypticism has recently been demanded on several sides. G. Ebeling has requested it in his discussion of Kasemann's thesis. G. von Rad concludes. . . . 'This, however, seems to be clear: our concept of apocalypticism urgently needs a critical revision since its sweeping use as a definition of a literary as well as a theological phenomenon has become a problem.'" "On the Problem of the Religio-Historical Understanding of Apocalypticism," *JThCh*, VI (1969), p. 135. See also *ibid.*, p. 52. As a literary genre apocalyptic separates from prophetic literature in several respects, but nevertheless, no sharp break exists between the two. See George Eldon Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom* (hereinafter referred to as *Jesus*), p. 75. Isaiah 24-27; Joel 2-3; Zechariah 9-14; embody certain aspects of apocalyptic, but not others.

Apocalyptic literature has the following characteristics. (1) It is revelatory in a special sense. By means of dreams, visions, or heavenly journeys, the apocalypticist is given knowledge of the future, and other matters not normally accessible to human knowledge. (2) Usually, the visions or dreams described in apocalyptic are a mere literary form, that is, they are fictitious, not real. (3) Pseudonymity is a typical characteristic of apocalyptic, but not necessarily of biblical apocalyptic.

As Ladd points out, Daniel is not akin to most apocalypses at this point. Apart from the stories of the book itself, he is not known in the Old Testament, unless Ezekiel 14:14,20; 28:3 are interpreted as applying to the Jewish hero of exile. Similarly, the authorship of the last New Testament book is still a matter of dispute, and can hardly be used to support or deny this characteristic. (4) Pseudo-prophecy usually stamps apocalyptic, though as with points (2) and (3) not necessarily biblical apocalyptic. Not only names from the past, but historical facts are borrowed to be used in the guise of prophecy. The writer poses as living in the distant past, and history is rewritten from that period to the actual present, at which time it becomes vague, except for its portrayal of the imminent kingdom of God. (5) The use of symbolism is a further characteristic implied by the previous reference to visions. The metals and animals, employed by the writer of Daniel to represent empires, is the classic example.

When we turn our attention from the characteristics of apocalyptic literature to those of the apocalyptic eschatology found therein, the following must be included. (1) That kind of dualism which contrasts the present age of suffering and incompleteness with the perfect age to come. The future glory is promised as vindication for all who are now unjustly ravaged. (2) A non-prophetic concept of history. The future is related to the present only by way of contrast. The God who now seems to sleep will "awake" with dramatic suddenness to turn the tide of earthly existence. Once more, the book of Daniel is atypical at this point. It stands nearer to the prophets, with considerable affinity to Wisdom literature, and thus indicates that a sharp division between apocalyptic and prophetic literature is not always possible. (3) Pessimism and determinism. This age with its cast of evil must run its course to a predetermined end. Ethical passivity often grows from such a viewpoint. The apocalyptic eschatology found in Scripture, while pessimistic in the sense of disclaiming confidence in human efforts alone, nevertheless rings with optimism because God is soon to intervene. (4) Apocalyptic eschatology is usually cosmic in scope, rather than restricted to Israel or neighbouring powers. Ladd summarizes: "The apocalyptic eschatology can be understood as a historical development of the prophetic eschatology as the latter is interpreted against the background of the historical evils of the post-Maccabean times. Both prophetic and apocalyptic eschatology can conceive of the establishment of the Kingdom only by an inbreaking of God; both are essentially catastrophic. In both the Kingdom will be a new and transformed order, redeemed from all corruption and evil. The apocalyptic dualism results from a sharpening of concepts found in the prophets.

"However, apocalyptic eschatology has lost the dynamic concept of God who is redemptively active in history. The apocalyptists, contrary to the prophets, despaired of history, feeling that it was completely dominated by evil. Hope was reposed only in the future. The harsh experiences of the last two centuries B.C. left the apocalyptists pessimistic of any divine visitation in history. God would visit his people to deliver them from evil only at the end of history." *Jesus*, p. 97.

George Eldon Ladd, D. S. Russell, and H. H. Rowley, are agreed on the main characteristics of apocalyptic, except that Rowley does not always carry through his own recognition of the distinction between apocalyptic as a type of literature and a kind of eschatology.

7. G. B. Caird, *Revelation*, p. 10.

8. Revelation 1:20.

9. See W. Milligan, *Lectures*, p. 14-40. R. H. Charles writes; "A literal description would only be possible in the case of the simplest visions, in which the things seen were already more or less within the range of actual human experience. . . . in our author the visions are of an elaborate and complicated nature, and the more exalted and intense the experience, the more incapable it becomes of literal description. Moreover, if we believe, as the present writer does, that behind these visions there is an actual substratum of reality belonging to the higher spiritual world, then the seer could grasp the things seen and heard in such visions, only in so far as he was equipped for the task by his psychical powers and the spiritual development behind him. In other words, he could at the best only partially apprehend the significance of the heavenly vision vouchsafed him. To the things seen he perforce attached the symbols more or less transformed that these naturally evoked in his mind, symbols that he owed to his own waking experience of the tradition of the past; and the sounds he heard naturally clothed themselves in the literary forms with which his memory was stored. Thus the seer laboured under a twofold disability. His psychical powers were generally unequal to the task of apprehending the full meaning of the heavenly vision, and his powers of expression were frequently unable to set forth the things he had apprehended." Revelation, I, cvi-cvii.

10. W. Milligan, *Lectures*, pp. 25-30.

11. Cited by Philip Mauro, *The Patmos Visions--A Study of the Apocalypse* (hereinafter referred to as *Visions*), p. 3.

12. Otto Piper, "Johannesapokalypse," col. 831. (The pictures and symbols are furthermore not to be interpreted according to their original mythological meaning, but on the one hand in the light of their use in the Israelite-Jewish literature. . . with regard to their visionary character they are also not to be treated as descriptions to be understood literally.)

13. Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images*, p. 7.

14. Isbon T. Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, p. 613. Otto Piper on this subject has written: "Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule hat auf die Hine mythologischer Stoffe hingewiesen, die in der J. auftauchen. Wenn aber das Buch nicht vdlig falsch gedeutet werden soil, wie das bes. bei Boll der Fall ist, muss man zwei Gesichtspunkte im Auge behalten; Zu einem grossen Teil handelt es sich bei diesen 'Mythen'. . . um gemeinsemitisches Material, das der Seher im AT vorgefunden hat and das ihm deshalb bereits in einer israelitischen Deutung gegeben war (zB das Tier als Symbol der gottfeindlichen politischen Macht). Auch kann von einer einheitlichen Gnosis, in der damals die Mythologien des Nahen Ostens und Persiens zu einer Art Weltreligion vereinigt waren, keiner Rede sein. Die Siebenerreihen zB haben ihren astrologischen Ursprung

in der J. vdlig verloren, und wenn auch der Gedanke einer eschatologischen Schlacht seine Wurzel in einem babylonischen Mythos von der Gdtterschlacht haben mag, so kam er dem Seher durch das Medium des AT zu. Die Weise, in der die mythologischen Bilder in der J. benutzt werden, zeigt, wie sehr dem Verfasser ausschliesslich als Ausdrucksmittel fUr seine christlichen Gedanken dienen." "Johannesapokalypse," col. 829. (The history-of-religions school has pointed to the wealth of mythological material which emerges in the Apocalypse of John. But if the book is not to be completely falsely interpreted, as is particularly the case with Boll, one must keep in mind two points of view; To a large extent in the case of these myths it has to do with general Semitic material, which the seer in the OT lighted upon and which therefore was already given to him in an Israelite meaning (e.g., the animal as symbol of [the anti-god political power). It is also impossible to talk about a uniform Gnosis, in which at that time were united the

mythologies of the Near East and Persia into a kind of world religion. The series of seven, for instance, have completely lost their astrological origin in the Apocalypse of John, and even when the idea of an eschatological battle might have its roots in a Babylonian myth about a battle of the gods, it nevertheless came to the seer through the medium of the OT. The manner in which the mythological pictures in the Apocalypse of John are used shows how much they serve the author uniquely as a means of expression for his Christian ideas.)

15. Philip Carrington, *The Meaning of the Revelation* (hereinafter referred to as *Revelation*), p. x-xi.

16. Austin Farrer, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (hereinafter referred to as *Revelation*), p. 30.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

18. See Caird, *Revelation*, pp. 131-32; Farrer, *Revelation*, pp. 109-10, says: "Now this picture (xxi.9-xxii.2) taken literally, is sheer Judaism. . . . St John keeps the picture, because it is in the prophets; he does not take it literally. The pouring in of the nations does not await the world to come; the cadres of God's Israel were filled out with Gentile recruits. . . ." "Such is St John's way of saying that the triumph of God's people and their blessed future are secured by his promises to Israel, and that the Gentiles are nevertheless brought in to share the promises. How purely symbolical such a way of speaking is can be judged from the equalisation of numbers sealed from the twelve tribes." The best test case for commentators in this regard is their exegesis of Revelation 7.

19. R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, I, p. xlv. Charles affirms that "no literary document of the Greek world exhibits such a vast multitude of solecisms. It would almost seem that the author of the Apocalypse deliberately set at defiance the grammarian and the ordinary rules of syntax. . . . The reason clearly is that, while he writes in Greek, he thinks in Hebrew. . . ." *Ibid.*, I, cxliii.

20. Caird, *Revelation*, p. 5.

21. Christopher Wordsworth, "Revelation," *Commentary on the New Testament* (hereinafter referred to as *Revelation*), p. 149.

22. Kiddle, *Revelation*, p. 26. See also John Wick Bowman, *The Drama of the Book of Revelation*, p. 29.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 136

24. W. Boyd Carpenter, "Revelation," *Ellicott's Commentary.*, VII, pp. 526, 578.

25. George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (hereinafter referred to as *Revelation*), ad loc.

26. For a typical example of the application of this principle see A. Farrer, *Revelation*, p. 178. In every case where commentators have applied the things of Israel to the church this principle is implied.

27. It should be stressed that John's initial and primary purpose was to address seven specific local churches. All conjectures based on John's most comprehensive levels of meaning should issue from the sure "pegs" of the local, historical, situations to which he alludes.

28. Wilbur Smith, "Revelation," *The New Testament and Wycliffe Bible I Commentary*, p. 1047.

29. "It is impossible to enlarge without going over every chapter, verse, and clause of the book, which is a perfect mosaic of passages from the Old Testament, at one time quoted

verbally, at another referred to by distinct allusion, now taken from one scene in Jewish history, and now again from two or three together." W. Milligan, *Lectures*, p. 76. Revelation also alludes to statements found in the N.T., but whether their source was literary or oral is an open question.

30. Sir Isaac Newton recognised this feature and employed it in his commentary. In more recent times it has been stressed by Farrer. He says that the apocalyptic week runs "from Christ the birth of light (Apoc. 1) to Christ the fulness of light (Apoc. XXII). On the way, however, it runs through all the quarters of the year, and this brings within St. John's scheme all the symbolical riches of the Jewish sacred calendar." *The Rebirth of Images*, p. 93. See also D. T. Niles, *Seeing the Invisible*, pp. 108-11.

Not quite as strongly supported is the possibility that behind the structure of this book is to be found a primitive form of the Paschal Vigil. See Massey H. Shepherd's *The Paschal Liturgy and the Apocalypse*. See also Carrington and Edersheim on this topic.

31. W. Milligan, *Lectures*, p. 61. ". . . the life of Christ, remembered as St. John remembered it, supplies the type to which the history of His people shall be conformed. . . ." And on p. 69 we read, ". . . the Apocalypse is penetrated in a remarkable manner by the tendency to present the history of the Church as corresponding in every respect to the history of the Church's Lord."

32. See Charles, *Revelation*, I, p. 158; A. Farrer, *Revelation*, p. 4-13. W. Milligan, *Lectures*, p. 42f.

33. Thus even what is said about Christ's enemies, and the foes of His church, is related to Him by way of parody.

34. O. Piper, "Johannesapokalypse," col. 832.

35. See G. Eldon Ladd, "The Revelation and Jewish Apocalyptic," *Eg*, XXIX (1957), pp. 94-100; T. Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 437. This apocalypse is not pseudonymous, neither does it retrace history under the guise of prophecy. It is not pessimistic, but rings with prophetic hope.

36. Revelation 1:3; 22:7,10,18,19. Says Piper: "Der Verfasser will göttliche Offenbarung mitteilen, nicht nur seine persönlichen Ansichten. . . . in der J. beschreibt der Verfasser seine pneumatischen Erlebnisse, in denen ohne bewusste Vorbereitung die Gesichte plötzlich in sein Bewusstsein eintraten. Sie sind nicht als des Verfassers religiöse Deutung zeitgeschichtlicher Ereignisse zu verstehen." "Johannesapokalypse," cols. 830-31. (The author wants to communicate divine revelation, not only his personal views. . . in the Revelation of John the author describes his spiritual experiences, in which the vision suddenly entered his consciousness, without conscious preparation. They are not to be understood as the author's religious interpretation of contemporary experiences.)

37. But see Charles, *Revelation*, I, cii-cix.

38. Revelation 22:18-19.

39. See Charles, *Revelation*, I, clxxxiii-xlxxxiv; Beckwith, *Apocalypse*, pp. 208-213; Farrer, *Revelation*, p. 4f. et al.

40. G. R. Beasley-Murray, "Revelation," *New Bible Commentary Revised*, p. 1280.

41. Other minor principles to guide exegesis of this book could be listed, particularly as regards stylistic forms such as contrast, prolepsis, recapitulation, etc. As one of these, in particular, is vital for our study in these pages, reference to it, in the words of another, will be made. "The principle of contrast. In their broader features the contrasts of the Apocalypse at once strike the eye. No reader can fail for a moment to perceive that, like Aaron when he stood between the dead the living, St John stands in this book between

two antithetical and contrasted worlds. On the one hand he sees Christ, life, light, love, the Church of the living God, heaven, and the inhabitants of heaven; on the other he sees Satan, death, darkness, hatred, the synagogue of Satan, earth, and the dwellers upon earth. . . . It is not enough, however, to observe this. The contrasts of the book are carried out in almost every particular that meets us, whether great or small, whether in connexion with the persons, the objects, or the actions of which it speaks.

"If, at one time, we have an ever blessed and holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, at another we have that 'great anti-trinity of hell,' the Devil, the Beast, and the False Prophet. If we have God Himself, even the Father, commissioning the first beast and giving him 'his power. . . . If the Son. . . appears as a Lamb with seven horns, the dragon. . . has two horns like a lamb, though he speaks as a dragon. If the name of the one is Jesus or Saviour, the name of the other is Apollyon or Destroyer. If the one is the bright, the morning star shining in the heavens, the other is a star fallen out of heaven into the earth. If the one in carrying out his great work on earth is the Lamb 'as though it had been slaughtered,' the other, as we are told by the use of the very same word. . . has one of his heads 'as though it had been slaughtered unto death.' If the one rises from the grave and lives, there cannot be a doubt, when we read in precisely the same language of the beast that he hath the stroke of a sword and lived, that here also is a resurrection from the dead. If the description given of the Divine Being is 'He which is, and which was, and which is to come,' that given of diabolic agency is that it 'was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss'; . . . .

"Many other particulars meet us in which the same principle of contrast rules. Believers are sealed with the seal of the Living God; unbelievers are marked with the mark of the beast. . . . The 'tribes of the earth' are in contrast with the tribes of Israel. . . . and the harlot Babylon with the bride. . . in the binding of Satan. . . in the casting him into the abyss, in shutting it, and sealing it over him, we have a counterpart of the binding and burial of our Lord, and of the sealing of His tomb." W. Milligan, *Lectures*, pp. 110-14.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER SIX

1. William Henry Simcox, *Revelation*, pp. lx-lxi.
  2. Cited by William G. Moorehead, *Studies in the Book of Revelation* (hereinafter referred to as *Revelation*), p. 45.
  3. F. W. Farrar, *The Messages of the Books*, pp. 519,-20.
  4. R. H. Preston, and A. T. Hanson, *Revelation*, p. 21.
  5. Kenneth Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation, Hermeneutical Guidelines with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis* (hereinafter referred to as *Interpreting Revelation*), p. 52.
  6. Wordsworth includes in his canons of interpretation Anticipation, Repetition, Amplification, Recapitulation, and Verbal Identity (catchwords linking the same themes in different chains). "The Apocalypse is, as has been observed already, a sequel to Hebrew Prophecy. It is the continuation and consummation of the Prophecies of Daniel and Zechariah. It is the Work of the same Divine Author. It may therefore be presumed to have been composed on a plan similar to that of those Prophecies.
- "Now, if we examine the prophecies of Daniel and Zechariah, we find that they are not progressive prophecies. The predictions and visions in the Book of Daniel are not riveted together like links in a continuous chain. They form a system of collateral chains, not, indeed, all of equal length.

"Or, to adopt another figure, they are like a succession of Charts in a geographical Atlas.

"The first vision in the Book of Daniel anticipates the end. It represents a prophetic view of all the Four great Empires of the World, following on another in succession, and ending in the consummation of all things, and in the glorious sovereignty of Christ. It is like the Map of the two Hemispheres which stands first in our books of Geography.

"By a process of repetition and amplification, the same Four Empires are afterwards displayed under another form, and are delineated with great minuteness of detail. . . .

"The Prophecies of Zechariah are framed on the same principle.

"It might have been anticipated, that the Apocalypse, which was dictated by the same Divine Spirit who inspired the Hebrew Prophets, and Who is a Spirit of order, would be constructed in the same method as those other Prophecies of Daniel and Zechariah, of which it is the sequel and the completion. 'As Daniel,' says Dr. Lightfoot, 'gives a general view in his second chapter, of his own times to the coming of Christ, and then handles the same thing in another scheme in the seventh chapter, and then doth express at large and more particularly, some of the most material things that he had touched in those particulars, so does St. John in the Apocalypse.'" "Revelation," II, p. 152.

7. Robert H. Mounce, "The Book of Revelation," (hereinafter referred to as Revelation), *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. F. F. Bruce, p. 46.

8. Louis F. Were, *The Certainty of the Third Angel's Message*, p. 310.

9. Edwin R. Thiele, *Outline Studies in Revelation* (hereinafter referred to as Revelation), p. 105.

10. Kenneth Strand, *Interpreting Revelation*, pp. 53-54.

11. T. F. Glasson, *The Revelation of John*, pp. 12-13.

12. Philip Carrington, *Revelation*, p. 65.

13. Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple*, pp. 140-41.

14. See *Ibid.*, pp. 152-73.

15. D. T. Niles, *As Seeing the Invisible*, pp. 112-13.

16. Philip Carrington, *Revelation*, p. 393.

17. D. T. Niles, *As Seeing the Invisible*, pp. 109-110.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 110-11.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-12.

21. See A. Farrer on Revelation 11:19; P. Carrington and J. Massyngberde Ford on ch. 16f. Too often the New Testament application of Yom Kippur to Christ's death and ascension has been taken as exhausting the significance of the type. But the New Testament (in Revelation) also applies the Day of Atonement to the final judgment--the eschatological vindication of Daniel 7:9-13; 8:14; 9:24. See author's commentary on Daniel, Southern Publishing Association, 1978.

22. 1 Enoch 9; 10:4; 55:3ff.; 90:20ff.; see also the Apocalypse of Abraham XIII, XXII, XXXI.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER SEVEN

1. "What John is writing is in form a letter to a group of first-century Christians, but in fact a message to all Christians without distinction. Its beginning and ending place it in the same

category as the Letters of Peter and Paul, of James and Jude, written in the first instance to situations in the early church, yet containing apostolic truth intended by God for the church in all ages. Revelation is no mere appendix to the collection of letters which makes up the bulk of the New Testament. It is in fact the last and grandest of those letters. As comprehensive as Romans, as lofty as Ephesians, as practical as James or Philemon, this 'Letter to the Asians' is as relevant to the modern world as any of them." Michael Wilcock, *I Saw Heaven Opened*, p. 28. "The writer's interest was strictly pastoral, first and last." Martin Kiddle, *Revelation*, p. xviii.

2. Note how Preston and Hanson's summary of the theme of Revelation avoids evanescent matters, and concentrates on the ideological needs of the first century Christians and all later believers. "John has used symbols to describe the end of the world which express the following truths: (1) That God is in control of history and has the initiative; (2) that there is a real struggle in history between good and evil; (3) that the supreme clue to the understanding of God's character, actions, and purpose, is to be found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and that these events have a direct bearing on everything that happens in history; (4) that the struggle will go on to the end of time and that no power in history itself can cure the evil: 'both grow together till harvest'; (5) therefore God himself must in the end cope with evil, and history be 'swallowed up in eternity'; (6) heaven is the most real place and state of all." *Revelation*, p. 28.

3. Thomas Dehany Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament*, pp. 210-11.

4. G. B. Caird, *Revelation*, pp. 17-18.

5. Allison A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (hereinafter referred to as *Witness*), *Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series*, pp. 155-56.

6. Caird, *Revelation*, p. 238.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

8. A. Trites, *Witness*, p. 174.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER EIGHT

1. T. D. Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament*, p. 210.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

5. See H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, pp. 188-89.

6. T. D. Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament*, p. 216.

7. Andre Feuillet, *The Apocalypse*, p. 77.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

9. P. Carrington, *Revelation*, p. 54.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

11. See excursus at end of chapter eight.

12. W. G. Moorehead, *Revelation*, p. 19.

13. H. H. Rowley comments, "That Jesus accepted much of the apocalyptic thought seems to me hardly to be denied. But with it He combined much else. The very idea of the



kingdom of God, so deeply embedded in His thought, came from the apocalyptists." *The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, p. 192.

14. "This vindication-theme attaches to it more readily than any distinctively redemptive association." C. F. D. Moule, "From Defendant to Judge-and-Deliverer," *SNTSB*, III (1952), 40. Concerning Daniel's usage of the term Morna Hooker comments: "The saints who are now crushed on earth are already recognised in heaven as those to whom the dominion belongs, and stand even now before the throne of the Most High. The appearance and enthronement of the Son of Man are thus seen to be integral parts of the whole book of Daniel, for the author's conviction that God will intervene on behalf of his saints, and that he will end their sufferings and give them the kingdom, is here given its most dramatic expression." *The Son of Man in Mark*, p. 29. Cf. M-J. Lagrange, *Le Judaïsme avant Jésus-Christ*, p. 69: ". . . des le moment ou le grand ennemi de Dieu sera frappe, Dieu va commencer son oeuvre, son regne est dans la perspective prochaine "; efrom the moment when the great enemy of God was shattered, God has begun his work, his reign is in the next perspective. . . .") Gaston, *No Stone on Another*, p. 449. The pattern implicit in Daniel 7 and 8 regarding the vindication of the oppressed saints by the judgment of God is presented in rather similar terms elsewhere in the prophets, the Gospels, and the book of Revelation. Examples are Zechariah 3, Luke 18:1-8, and Revelation 6:9-11. We would draw particular attention to the second of these passages, as not only being an instance of divine vindication but being also a case where the expression "the Son of Man" is found in appropriate connection.

The parable of Luke 18 represents the elect as an oppressed widow who pleads for vindication against her adversary. Christ finishes the story by saying: 'Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?' (Luke 18:8)

Matthew Black rightly points out that the reference to the Son of Man in this context is very illuminating. There have been many willing to discount the phrase in this place as a redactional supplement for its connection with the parable is not immediately obvious. But what we have here actually is 'all the essential features of the old Biblical Son of man apocalyptic.' Black concludes that 'the old Biblical Son of Man apocalyptic has not, therefore, been foisted upon the teachings of Jesus by later tradition; it represents the substance of His teaching about the coming Judgment." Matthew Black, "The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus," *ET*, LX, (1948), p. 37.

Much has been said here about the theme of vindication in the book of Daniel. This theme unifies the various sections of the book, the visions, and the narratives. Its emblem is 'the Son of Man,' but its actual statement is found in 8:14. Here is the one place where the actual term for vindication appears. We wish to underline the fact that this verse which strikes the keynote of the book by its reference to vindication is also the climactic point of the symbolism of the book.

The arrival of the Son of Man in Mark 13 is connected, as in Daniel, with the theme of present suffering and future vindication. "Although chapter 13 begins with the theme of judgment upon Israel, it is equally concerned with the fate of the disciples; its theme, in fact, is very largely the trouble which is in store for those who are not ashamed of Jesus and who do not deny him. Before the time of judgment and condemnation for the enemies of Jesus, there is a period when they will be in a position to judge and condemn his followers; the disciples must be prepared for persecution before the final vindication. The whole of chapter 13 is thus an elaboration of the theme found in 8:34-38: those who wish to follow Christ must expect to follow the same path of suffering, for they will be hated by all because of his name; but those who are ashamed of Jesus and who do not endure to

the end, will not be saved. It is against this background we must understand the climax of the chapter in vv. 24-27. . . its relevance to the general theme of the chapter is clear: the revelation of the Son of man is synonymous with judgment: for all who have rejected Jesus this means disaster: for those who have been faithful it means vindication." *The Son of Man in Mark*, p. 156.

15. G. B. Caird, *Revelation*, p. 9; M. Kiddle, *Revelation*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

16. Lohmeyer and Lagrange, et al., make this association of texts.

17. See L. Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted*, p. 155. This book is exhaustive in its treatment of allusions to Daniel in Mark 13 and Matthew 24. With Hartman's conclusions those of Karl Heim should also be considered. He declares: . . at least in its main features Jesus accepts the vision of the future of the world given by Daniel. For he solemnly adopts the principal part in the final act of the cosmic drama seer in the book of Daniel. . . . the 'Kingdom of heaven' also, which He announced in His first call to repentance, is the eternal Empire that according to Daniel is to follow the terrestrial empires." *Jesus, the World's Perfecter*, p. 142.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER NINE

1. Preston and Hanson, *Revelation*, p. 46.

2. W. Milligan, *Lectures*, pp. 165-66. 195

3. See accounts in George Eldon Ladd's *The Blessed Hope*.

4. T. F. Torrance, *The Apocalypse Today*, p. 5.

5. W. Milligan, *Lectures*, pp. 65-66.

6. "Considering the great importance given to this death wound of the beast, the fact that it was something that had already taken place when John saw the vision, and the further fact especially that the dragon and the beasts are so closely identified as to be virtually one (v. 2), it is clear that the death stroke referred to could have been nothing else than that which befell the dragon and all that is associated with him through the death of Jesus Christ. It is another pictorial representation of the truth that our Lord by death destroyed him that had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14); or as another Scripture that speaks of Christ and the Cross puts it, "having slain the enmity thereby" (Ephesians 2:16). This latter passage is seen to be specially pertinent when it is observed that the phrase "as wounded to death" in Revelation 13:3 is literally "as slain to death" (see margin). According to the words of the Lord, recorded by this same John, the Cross was the stroke of judgment upon the prince of this world. It is most fitting then that this vision should display conspicuously the effect of the Cross of Christ upon the Devil in his character of world ruler." Philip Mauro, *The Patmos Visions*, pp. 402-03.

"When the wild beast rose from the sea, the seer saw the deadly wound on the head: the wound was really unto death; the beast which had waged war against the true kingdom of righteousness and faith has received his death-blow. This is the historical point from which the vision starts. This being so, the death-blow is that which has just been dealt: the seed of the woman has bruised the serpent's head. The blow which casts down the dragon inflicts a deadly wound upon the wild beast, which is his agent. When Christ overthrew the wicked one He gave the death-blow to the world-power--to all systems founded on passion, or self-sufficiency. or inhumanity. But the death-blow is apparently healed. What is this but telling the Church of Christ that the fruits of Christ's victory will not be seen without delay? The world-power is smitten unto death; but the actual death does not follow immediately." W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (hereinafter

referred to as Revelation), p. 169.

7. ". . . union with Christ not only in inward spirit but in outward fortune is the abiding mark of the Church, one of the deepest and most essential characteristics of her life; that the Church must tread the same path as that which her Redeemer trod; that she must drink the same cup and be baptised with the same baptism. Hence the life of Christ, remembered as St. John remembered it, supplies the type to which the history of His people shall be conformed; . . ." W. Milligan, *Lectures*, p. 61. "The lowly birth of the Church, its humble growth, its spiritual baptism, its witness to truth, its ministry of love, its conflicts with the powers of evil, its temporary defeat, its unjust condemnation, its cruel martyrdom, its joyful resurrection, and its glorious reign, have all been typified in the personal history and experiences of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"In the Apocalypse the prophetic sketch of the history of the Church resolves itself into the story of a double conflict with Satanic power, in the first of which the Church overcomes, while in the second it is overcome, but from which vanquished condition it rises by the quickening power of the Spirit, and ascends to the symbolic heavens in the sight of its enemies. The actual history of the Christian Church exhibits such a twofold conflict: first, under the cruel persecutions of Pagan Rome in the days of the Catacombs, and secondly, under the even worse persecutions of Papal Rome, chiefly in the time of the Inquisition.

"It is remarkable that the history of Israel, which the Apostle Paul tells us was a type (Tupos) of that of the Christian Church, exhibits two great analogous conflicts, an initial one under the external oppressions of heathen Egypt, and a later one under the internal persecutions of conjoined Priestly and Kingly Israelitish power become apostate, and warring against the truth and people of the Most High.

"This twofold conflict is seen in its Prototypal form in the earthly history of our Lord. In His infancy, Herod, representing the purely civil power, sought His life, and in the attempt to destroy 'the young child,' slew all the children in Bethlehem 'from two years old and under.' Matt. ii. 16. From this destruction the new-born child was saved by the flight to the wilderness. Later on the conjoined ecclesiastical and civil powers (the latter acting under the instigation of the former) succeeded in putting Christ to a cruel and shameful death upon the Cross. But God raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him to His right hand in heaven. The history of Christ, then, in its twofold conflict, is the Prototype of the history of the Church; while the history of the Church, in its twofold conflict, is the archetype of the history of the natural Israel." H. G. Guinness, *Creation Centred in Christ*, pp. 128-30.

8. Philip Carrington, *Revelation*, pp. 277, 80.

9. Douglas Ezell, *Revelation*, pp. 21,22.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER TEN

1. P. Carrington, *Revelation*, p. 197.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

3. Louis A. Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions in the Apocalypse*, p. 161. "So ist der himmlische Befehl an die Christen zum Auszug aus Babylon Apk 18,4 einerseits durch Js 48,20; 52,11; Jer. 50,8; 51:6 uN vorgebildet anderseits aber auch sicher durch Matthew 24,15ff. par mitbestimmend" (Thus is the heavenly command to the Christians to come out of Babylon in Revelation 18:4, on one side modeled on Isa. 48:20; 52:11; Jer. 50:8; 51:6, etc., and on the other side as certainly determined by Matthew 24:15ff.) Kuhn, *TWNT*, I, p. 511.

These suggestions from Vos and Kuhn also throw light on the identity of the woman of

Revelation 17, particularly when we take into account the principle for exegeting this book which is found in recognition of Revelation's close kinship with the eschatological discourse of Mark 13.

4. P. Carrington, *Revelation*, p. 40.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (hereinafter referred to as *Planet Earth*), p. 83.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

3. "Where the academic and apocalyptic 'theology of hope' has slain its thousands the fundamentalist Dispensationalism of Hal Lindsey has slain its ten thousands. . . ."

"Lindsey is certainly correct in saying that those who traffic in 'the future' are in 'big business' (p. 16), for more than 4,000,000 copies of his first book have been printed thus far." Dale Moody, "The Eschatology of Hal Lindsey," p. 271.

4. "When he comes to tell the passion story it will be understood against a certain background, which is essential for a full understanding." Lloyd Gaston, *No Stone on Another*, p. 479. "By making use of the light the eschatological discourse and the passion story throw light on each other. Mark is able to suggest without explicit mention the judgment in ch. 13 (= parousia)." *Ibid.*

5. Hendrikus Berkhof, *Well-founded Hope*, pp. 23-4.

6. Austin Farrer, *A Study in St. Mark*, p. 285. See also R. H. Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St Mark* (London, 1950); W. Grundmann, *Markus* (ThZNT), p. 259; H. W. Bartsch, "Early Christian Eschatology," *NTS*, XI (1964-65), p. 396; Gaston, *No Stone on Another*, pp. 469, 477f.

7. ". . . his [Mark's] gospel was written for the purpose of consoling a persecuted church. . . ." Gaston, *Ibid.*, p. 468.

8. Torrey sums up the matter well when he says: "The material which constitutes ch. 13, also, could suffer no curtailment. The first response of any hearer of the great announcement would be the question, What have we now to expect? What program did the Messiah leave to his disciples? How are the promises of the God of Israel, given through his prophets, to have their fulfilment? The answer must have been provided immediately, it could not possibly have been delayed. This was a matter of the very first importance, and as such it had, of course, been recognised by those who sent out the written propaganda into the cities and towns of Palestine." *Documents of the Primitive Church*, p. 13.

9. Nineham, *The Gospel of St Mark*, p. 341.

10. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Future*, p. 216.

11. Chas. B. Cousar: "Eschatology and Mark's Theologia Crucis," *Interpretation*, XXIV (1970), p. 335. James L. Price, *Interpreting the New Testament* (New York, 1971), pp. 196-99.

12. "A Gospel in Search of a Life-Setting," *ET*, LXXX (1969), pp. 361-64. (R. P. Martin cites S. Schulz, *Studia Evangelica*, II, p. 144.)

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER TWELVE

1. W. Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors* (hereinafter referred to as *Conquerors*), p. 15.

2. Raymond Calkins, *The Social Message of the Book of Revelation*, cited in Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (hereinafter referred to as *Revelation*), p. 143.
3. Tenney, *Ibid.*, p. 143.
4. Archbishop E. W. Bensen, *The Apocalypse--An Introductory Study of the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, cited in Pieters, *Revelation*, p. 40.
5. Charles R. Erdman, *Revelation*, p. 25.
6. P. Carrington, *Revelation*, p. vii.
7. W. Boyd Carpenter, *Revelation*, pp. 13-14.
8. K. Strand, *Interpreting. . . Revelation*, p. 11.
9. W. Milligan, *Lectures*, pp. 141-42.
10. James Orr, "Revelation," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, p. 2582.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 2584.
12. F. Godet, *Studies on the New Testament* (hereinafter referred to as *Studies*), pp. 351-52.
13. Merrill C. Tenney, *Revelation*, p. 144.
14. P. Carrington, *Revelation*, p. viii.
15. M. C. Tenney, *Revelation*, p. 144.
16. J. H. Todd, *Six Discourses on the Apocalypse*, cited in W. Milligan, *Lectures*, p. 135.
17. W. Milligan, *Lectures*, pp. 137-38.
18. H. Grattan Guinness, *The Approaching End of the Age* (hereinafter referred to as *Approaching End*), pp. 135-36.
19. See footnote 16.
20. C. H. Little, *Explanation of the Book of Revelation* (hereinafter referred to as *Revelation*), p. vi.
21. James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma*, p. 244.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 268-69.
23. Edward J. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology*, pp. 73-4.
24. R. M. Horn, *Go Free*, p. 25.
25. H. G. Guinness, *Romanism*, p. 111.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 24,25.
27. Wilbur Smith, "Revelation," *The New Testament and Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (hereinafter referred to as "Revelation"), pp. 1053-54.
28. A. Pieters, *Revelation*, pp. 43-6.
29. F. Godet, *Studies*, p. 358.
30. Leon Morris, *Revelation*, p. 17.
31. Samuel Cartledge, *A Conservative Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 206, cited in L. Morris, *Revelation*, p. 17n.
32. M. C. Tenney, *Revelation*, pp. 138-39.
33. T. R. Birks, *First Elements of Sacred Prophecy*, pp. 415-16.

34. H. G. Guinness, *Approaching End*, pp. 82-3.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-3.

36. James Beverlin Ramsey, *Revelation--an Exposition of the First Eleven Chapters* (hereinafter referred to as *Revelation*), p. xxxii.

37. E. G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pp. 33-41.

38. W. Hendriksen, *Conquerors*, p. 14.

39. J. B. Ramsey, *Revelation*, pp. 28-29. Says Lee, "The most usual method has been to seek in successive historical events--past, present, or future--the fulfilment of its predictions. This problem, which has attracted to itself genius of the highest order, and intellects of the most varied character, has, from the first, engaged the attention of theologians: and yet, is it presumptuous to maintain that, hitherto at least, the solution, on such principles, has been sought for in vain?

Nor should the remark be omitted that there seems to be a general tendency among Commentators to regard the Predictive element of the Apocalypse as applicable to but one, and that a very limited field of history. . . .

. . . the events which come to pass in this world are neither fortuitous nor isolated. Divine Providence directs, coordinates, and controls them all, causing everything to concur towards one and the same end--the triumph of purity and holiness, of truth and justice. . . .

If this central thought be kept in mind, many interpretations, seemingly opposed to each other, will be found to harmonise; it being assumed that the successive events which are taken to be the complete accomplishment of an Apocalyptic prediction, are but illustrations merely--specimens, so to speak,— of God's dealings with the Church and with the world. Thus, to give one or two instances, we see in the Seven Churches of Asia (*Revelation* i-iii.) not only literal Churches existing in St. John's own day, but also examples of different conditions of the Church Catholic throughout all future time;--the "Locusts" and their king Apollyon under the fifth Trumpet (*Revelation* ix.1-11) may apply very closely to Mohammed and his creed, while this same Vision may also foreshadow different epochs of history;--the indications of Antichrist which are given in *Revelation* xi-xix, may not be fully realised before the Last Days; and yet, in what age of the world may we not see fulfilled the saying of St. John concerning the age in which he himself lived: "Even now are there many Antichrists" (1 John ii.18)?

. . . Ebrard brings his commentary to a close:--"The Book of the Revelation does not contain presages of contingent, isolated, events; but it contains warning and consolatory prophecies concerning the great leading forces which make their appearance in the conflict between Christ and the enemy. So full are its contents, that every age may learn therefrom, more and more, against what disguises of the Serpent one has to guard oneself; and also how the afflicted Church at all time receives its measure of courage and of consolation."

. . . how naturally the imagery of the Book describes, in accordance with the whole spirit of Prophecy, the various conditions of the Kingdom of God on earth, during its successive struggles against the Prince of this world. The figurative utterances of the Seer are specially suited for this purpose, owing to the latitude of application which all symbolism allows; and this, without distorting the sense or offering violence to the language, of a single passage. Reuss indeed objects that this system does not really differ from the "Historical," inasmuch as it merely substitutes the religious history of the Kingdom of God, for the political history of the Church:--but this objection is manifestly unsound. As already pointed out, the "Spiritual" application is never exhausted, but merely receives additional illustrations as time rolls on; while the "Historical" system assumes that single events, as

they come to pass in succession, exhibit the full accomplishment of the different predictions of the Apocalypse."

These statements are in harmony with the apotelesmatic principle of which the present author has spoken at length in his commentary on Daniel. All groups actually embrace this principle as shown by their refusal to limit such passages as Joel 2:28; Malachi 4:5,6; and Matthew 24, to a single application. See the volume *Problems in Bible Translation*, on Isaiah 7:14, for other examples.

40. "Althaus correctly observed that the New Testament proclamation of the antichrist is not an irrelevant prediction of some remote future, but an alarm signal: "The church must always look for the antichrist as a reality present among it or as an immediately threatening future possibility."

. . . the "anti" can, during the course of history, assume a multiformity of shapes and manifestations, not mere ideas but concrete realities. The systematiser is bound to run aground on 1 John 2 and 2 Thessalonians 2. Systematisation here misses the point of what is revealed about the antichrist. When the light of the eschaton falls on time, it calls forth the "anti"--in its various forms. To say this is not to dehistoricise the idea of the antichrist. Quite the contrary, simply because the times and the circumstances into which the "anti" makes its inroads change, there must be continuous reinterpretation of the idea of the antichrist." G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ*, pp. 267,274.

41. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, IV, pp. 728-29 (passim).

42. Don F. Neufeld, *This Generation shall not Pass*," *Adventist Review*, April 5, 1979.

43. H. G. Guinness, *Approaching End*, pp. 123-25.

44. H. G. Guinness, *Romanism*, pp. 179-80.

45. "It is as much an evil to say that we know the truth perfectly as it is to say that there is no truth to know."

"The doctrine of necessary fallibility is the philosophical equivalent of the religious doctrine of original sin. This latter doctrine asserts, with much factual evidence to support it, that a chronic sinfulness dogs our steps at every point, especially in our claims to virtue, which are tainted with the sin of pride. Every human institution, no matter how noble its aims, is inevitably involved in the struggle for power and prestige, and this, so far as we can see, is not likely to be lessened with the passage of centuries. In short, sin is not a matter of cultural lag but is intrinsic to the situation, part of the price which man pays for his self-consciousness and relative freedom from external constraint. Just as all our efforts to be virtuous are tainted with sin, so all our efforts to achieve the truth are liable to error. We correct some errors only to make others, frequently making one in the very act of correcting another. We are very small; our grasp of reality is very slight; to claim anything else is to be arrogant and presumptuous. . . ."

"Any religious doctrine which claims infallibility, whether it be that of Biblical inerrancy or papal claims or any other, is bound in the end to fail to sustain itself intellectually because it runs head on into the fact of human failure. We are always in the finite predicament, even when we are most religious, and often especially when we are most religious. If our human capacity to err needs any demonstration, it is given to us constantly by the fact that we have to reconstruct our theories and reassess our facts. The changes that are necessary, as result of further insight, include not only the physical world but the spiritual world also.

It is conceivable that, by some miracle, God could make an exception to liability to error by creating an infallible Bible or an infallible papacy, but how could we ever know that this is the case? Infallibility necessarily includes not only an infallible revelation but the infallibility

of the human mind to judge that revelation. It is helpful to realise that the Bible never asserts its own infallibility. Even if there were some institutions which had never made any mistakes, in precisely defined areas of inerrancy, how could we know that must always be the case or is intrinsically the case? In the nature of things the future is not yet, and the evidence is never all in." D. E. Trueblood, *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 42-43.

46. W. Graham Scroggie, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*, p. 387.

47. Kenneth Strand, *Interpreting Revelation*, p. 14.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

49. "The fact, that many persons do not acknowledge the fulfilment of prophecies, does not prove that those prophecies have not been fulfilled. We know assuredly, that the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah, have been fulfilled in the actions, teaching, and sufferings of Jesus Christ. But the fulfilment of those prophecies is not universally acknowledged; although the evidence of that fulfilment has been open to the world for nearly two thousand years. The Jews themselves, to whom those Prophecies were given, and who heard those Prophecies every week in their Synagogues, did not recognise their accomplishment in Jesus Christ. They themselves "fulfilled them by condemning Him." Some even who are called Christians do not own that fulfilment. Even those prophecies which have been most clearly fulfilled do not exercise much practical influence over a great mass of Mankind. And to Heathen Nations, who make the greater part of Mankind, the fact of their fulfilment is unknown.

"The Prophecies also, which related to the destruction of the Old World by the Flood; and of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire; and of the City of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, have been fully accomplished. Those fulfilments are pledges and warnings of the universal Judgment to come. They therefore concern the eternal interest of all men. And yet they seem to have little effect upon the practice of the world at large.

"The fact is, that many men pass their lives in a dream. They do not duly reflect on what it most concerns them to consider. They do "not discern the signs of the times." They do not meditate upon them. They are engrossed with the affairs of this world; absorbed with its cares, and allured by its pleasures. They do not apply themselves with an attentive mind, and a teachable spirit to examine the evidence of the case. And it is the nature of Prophecy that it requires such examination. Otherwise, it is like music to the deaf, or pictures to the blind. It is therefore an admirable instrument of moral discipline in God's hands. It proves men, whether they have those moral qualifications of forethought, seriousness, earnestness, patience, docility, meekness, obedience, self-denial, love of God, and perfect submission to His Will, which are requisite for admission into the Kingdom of God." Christopher Wordsworth, "Revelation," p. 155.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Paul, The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, p. 102, cited by Calvin J. Roetzel, *Judgement in the Community*, p. 12.

2. C. J. Roetzel, *Ibid.*, p. 106.

3. Matthew 24:42,44-47.

4. "As the struggle with Judaism abated, the simpler and more natural philosophy of salvation through obedience became more and more prominent." N. Pease, *By Faith Alone*, p. 81. "The Church did not guard the message of justification as carefully as she should have. The momentous dissolution and disintegration of that truth began very early and has continued to the present day as human activities and demonstrable experiences



are mingled with the Gospel or of the forgiveness of sins. Instead of the final, complete promise of God, that requires no supplementing, there is a gain substituted a gradual transformation reached by an habitual infusion of righteousness. Whether this infusion be of a sacramental, mystical, or spiritualistic sort, in every case in the place of God's pardoning word, which establishes a new relationship, there is substituted a dynamic process by which our certainty of the possession of an unshakeable bases of justification is again lost. In this connection we can place side by side Thomas and Osiander. Schwenkenfeld and Weigel, Schleiermacher and the leaders of the "Christengemeinschaft." All too easily this view results in the accommodating idea of a meritoriousness that by the consequences of its teaching must of necessity completely destroy the *gratis justificari propter Christum*.

"Even Martin Luther in his monastic life travelled the road of sacramental purification of the soul and of obligatory eucharistic offerings. When his awakened conscience had failed to find relief in the means of grace that the Church was offering he turned to the Bible in his bitter extremity and found there the solid rock of an unconditional divine promise of grace on which he could rest securely. Since the days of the Apostles no one had understood so fully as did he the uniqueness of the Gospel and its utter unlikeness to any form of synergism. ...The medieval as well as the sectarians attributed a glorious part in the realization of human salvation to Christ. But in spite of that the the Reformer breaks with the current scholastic teachings concerning justification and likewise combats the teachings of the fanatics concerning salvation because a grace whose efficacy is in any wise conditioned by human participation cannot assure him of real certainty." Koberle, *The Quest for Holiness*, pp. 58-9. "It is well known how soon after the Apostle's death a Hellenising process set in that exercised a widespread and questionable influence in the development of dogma and in apologetics, as well as in philosophical thought, and that brought about a dubious mingling of diverse forms of expression." *Ibid.*, p. 24. "There is no question, then, from the Protestant, and I believe also from the Scriptural standpoint, but that the Church, from a very early period, went seriously astray in its doctrinal and practical apprehension of the divine method of the sinner's salvation. Many beautiful utterances, I know, can be cited to show that the thought of acceptance through God's grace, on the ground of Christ's merit alone, was never absent from the consciousness of the Church -- nay, was its deepest note all through. But these cannot overbear the fact that ideas early crept in, and came to have controlling influence, which were in principle antagonistic to that consciousness. Partly, no doubt, this was due to the inevitable blunting of Pauline ideas in their passing over to the Gentile world, imperfectly prepared, through lack of training under the law, to receive them; partly, also, is attributable to the fact already noticed, that, in order of time, the doctrines of sin, grace, and atonement, which are the presuppositions of this doctrine of justification, had not yet been theologically investigated. But the main source of error must unquestionably be sought in the early introduction into the Church of, and the place given to, the sacramentarian principle, which, wherever it enters, is bound to exercise a disturbing influence on doctrine. The chief stages in the development of this principle in its bearing on our subject are logically, and to a large extent also historically, the following. First came the connection of regeneration and forgiveness of sins with baptism -- the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. In train of this, as its natural consequence, came the use of the term "justification" to cover the entire change supposed to be effected in baptism -- both the divine forgiveness and the divine renewal; in other words, the taking of justification to mean, not, as in Pauline usage, the absolving of a sinner from guilt, and declaring him to be righteous in God's sight, but peculiarly the making of the sinner righteous by infusing into him a new nature, then, on the ground of this *justitia infusa* declaring him righteous. We have next the still more serious restriction of this benefit to the cleansing away of sins committed before baptism, so that post-baptismal sins, as not covered by the initial justification, had to be expiated in

some other way, by good works and satisfactions of the sinner's own. On the ground thus laid was built in due course the whole elaborate system of penance in the Romish Church." James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma*, pp. 247-49.

"In the patristic age, the great New Testament idea of justification by faith, although not denied outright, was very imperfectly understood. It can hardly be said to have been understood at all." Mackintosh, *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness*, p. 113. ". . . the tragic absence of the greatest biblical emphasis on righteousness, that of Romans 3:21." S. Laeuchli, *The Language of Faith*, p. 99.

"Language after Paul is drowned again in nomism because the Christians who use it have not experienced the agony and triumph in Paul's question to the Galatians: 'Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?' (Galatians 3.2)." *Ibid.*, p. 106. "There exists, however, in the extant remains of Patristic literature, abundant evidence to show, that the doctrine of a free Justification by grace, through faith in Christ alone, was obscured and corrupted at a very early period in the history of the Church." Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification*, p. 111. Luther. . . "the first great, clear preacher of the righteousness of faith sent to the church since the days of the apostle Paul." Koslin, *The Theology of Luther*, pp. 77-8.

5. "There really are not very many different themes in the Gospel of John. Instead, only a few themes, each examined, laid aside, returned to later from a heightened and altered point of view and examined anew from this revolving heightened perspective, much like mounting that winding, climbing, staircase, looking at the same thing, but always from a changing viewpoint." James Kallas, *Revelation: God and Satan in the Apocalypse* (hereinafter referred to as *Revelation*), p. 66.

6. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ*, p. 256.

7. Though excessively preterist, James Kallas says some relevant things to all students of the Apocalypse. In commenting upon the likeness of the Apocalypse to John's Gospel, he writes, ". . . Revelation is much like the Gospel, a spiral staircase style, a style in which there are very few themes, and absolute minimum of central ideas. It is a style in which those limited themes are reviewed again and again, each time from an altered or heightened perspective. An idea is introduced, laid aside but never abandoned, returned to in depth (or from greater height) later on. The substance, as in the Gospel, is tightly locked together. Each part hangs together with the whole, there are a few loose ends. A theme of one section must be remembered when one reads another section. . . .

"Failure to recognise that fundamental fact [of the few basic themes of the book] is precisely why many contemporary commentators find an incredible variety of meanings behind the multiple images of the book. The beast of chapter 13 can be Adolph Hitler, and Gog and Magog of chapter 20 can be Red China and Russia. Such interpretations are sheer nonsense, the uninspired fantasies of the interpreter himself. Certainly God could, if he would, unlock the events of the far future for his faithful, but would he? There is nothing in all of biblical literature to indicate that he would--no parallel, no precedent. God meets people where they are, in their own immediate existential circumstances, in the middle of their concrete problems and their need, speaking specifically to their actual times in which they live. What good would it do to one under sword of Domitian, threatened with death for his devotion to Jesus, to learn that perhaps in the year 1984 all of human history is to come to a close and Russia will use Egypt as a springboard to attack Israel? Those kinds of interpretations, like the church at Laodicea, ought to be spit out of one's mouth, distasteful and unacceptable. Exotic, yes; esoteric, yes; appealing to man's insatiable lust for glimpses of tomorrow, yes; but true to the thrust of all other Scripture, no! There are few thoughts in Revelation, not many, and the few that are found there speak with power and directness to the situation of those who first read the words." *Revelation*, pp. 94-5.