THE REVELATION
—WHICH
INTERPRETATION?
THE REVELATION—WHICH INTERPRETATION?

PRETERIST CONTINUOUS HISTORIC FUTURIST

“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”

GRAHAM PEARCE
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Italics are used to indicate a reference to, or a logical extension of, or a paraphrase of, the four interpretations being rebutted by Bro. Pearce.
PREFACE

No man can say with persuasion that he loves God if he is disinterested in prophecy, for prophecy is an essential part of the Truth which has proceeded forth from the Father. Neither can a man love Truth and be indifferent to apostasy. The love of God, then, compels a saint to identify the Apostasy foretold by prophet, apostle and the Lord Jesus. “The wise shall understand”, Daniel was assured (12:10). Paul warns against the saints being deceived when he says the Lord will not return until “there come a falling away first and the man of sin be revealed” (2 Thess. 2:3). The identification of this system concerned the Apostle to such a degree that he spent time with the believers in Thessalonica to ensure these matters were known to them (v.5).

The greatest anxiety for comprehension of the words of prophecy is expressed by the Lord Jesus himself in the very opening of the Book of Revelation. “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass”. It is clear that our Master wants us to know, at the very least, the basic meaning of the Apocalypse.

Until the last two decades the Brotherhood has been essentially of one mind in comprehending the Apocalypse. There had been no serious doubt that the book provided a general precis in symbol of the significant events of the times of the Gentiles leading up to the destruction of the kingdom of men — especially the Apostasy — and their replacement by the thousand-year reign of Christ and the saints. The monumental work of Bro. John Thomas, ‘Eureka’, inspired a particular interest in Revelation from the early days of our Body. This comprehension of the subject has been responsible for much of the basic convictions we have towards the Truth and the Apostasy. The reader will note too, from the historical extracts of Bible students of earlier times (see pages 19-23), that the Apocalypse has served the same purpose for those who earlier had similar resolve for God’s Truth. Their appreciation and love of God was greatly strengthened because they
could see from His Word the end of that system which persecuted and ‘wore them out’. With what greater courage did they unfurl the banner of Truth when they saw their time in history and the presiding faithfulness of the Father towards them. “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

These considerations are very grave and belong to the foundation thoughts of our Brotherhood. More recent interpretations of the Revelation run counter to this basic thinking and, in the view of many brethren, are a matter of great concern. Matters of prophecy may be matters of discussion in respect to details, but the fundamental concepts of prophecy lie right alongside the main planks in the foundation of Truth. The Hope of Israel — the foundation of our faith — is a matter of unfolding prophecy throughout the Scriptures. It is the viewpoint of many that more serious attention should be given to the implications of views of the Apocalypse that overturn almost entirely the traditional understanding of the book and the general comprehension of the events of the latter days. There are many matters of prophecy in which the Father has spoken so forcibly and passionately that we can be sure He intended that we should not be confused.

We therefore pray that the approach of this work by Bro. Graham Pearce will appeal to many. Our attitude in publishing is one of brotherly concern. The text is personal only to the point that the reader is aware of the work to which the comment is made.

Included with this work (Appendix 1) is a condensed version of a series of three articles by Bro. L. G. Sargent as found in ‘The Christadelphian’ magazine, January - March 1960, entitled ‘Daniel and the Apocalypse’. There is no more compelling reason to interpret the Apocalypse as fulfilled through the centuries of Gentile dominion, than noting the unquestioned linkage between the two books. The Apocalypse removes the seals that had troubled Daniel (12:4, 8, 9, 13) and broadens the understanding of ‘the dreadful and terrible fourth beast’ (7:7, 19, 20). No one can question that Daniel’s prophecy is about progressive historical developments. The simple appreciation of this basic fact should set one’s mind along the right course of understanding for the Book of Revelation.

Our request is that the reader give the degree of serious study appropriate to this important matter. May the God of Truth help us all to a preservation of that unity of thought so desirable in the large issues involved in the interpretation of the Book of Revelation.

The Committee
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Chapter 1
A BOOK GIVEN
TO BE UNDERSTOOD

BLESSED IS HE THAT KEEPETH THE SAYINGS OF THE PROPHECY

The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is not easy to understand, partly because it is a book of symbol, and partly because its structure is rather complex. Nevertheless, it is part of the Word of God, to which the words of Paul should be applied: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:17, 18).

The canon of scripture closed in the first century, and the Revelation was the last book to be added. So it is a book addressed to those who have lived from the end of the first century through to the coming of Jesus Christ; it is in a peculiar sense ‘our book’. It demands our attention. Perhaps because it is not easy to understand, it carries an unusual insistence that it should be studied and understood. Yet so many brethren do not take it seriously: they put it on one side with the comment that they are not students, or some similar phrase. Most admit to not having made a serious attempt to understand it.

This attitude cannot be acceptable with God. He has graciously given it to be understood. He urges us to understand it by some very pointed words: “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein”. Such is the exhortation at the beginning of the book. And it is reinforced by similar words at the end of the book: “Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book”. How can we be indifferent to such words from the Master? Do we not want the blessing? Can we do without it? Are we satisfied with the reverse implication — if we do not understand and keep, there is no blessing of God? Note what surrounds this word ‘blessed’. It is used several times in Revelation. “Blessed are the dead
which die in the Lord” (15:3); “Behold, I come as a thief, blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments” (16:15); “Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (19:9); “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (20:6); “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (22:14). Yes, surely, we want God’s blessing, and to have it we must, along with other commandments, hear and keep the sayings of this prophecy.

‘Hearing’ is more than taking in the sound of words; the sense is better expressed by the old English word ‘hearken’. The sense is clear in the phrase used at the end of each of the seven letters: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches”. After responsive hearing, there is ‘keeping’. The Greek word for ‘keeping’ has the meaning — to watch, to guard; there is active attention and concern. We remember Jesus’ words, “If a man love me he will keep my words” (John 14:23); the sense is, knowing, attending to, and doing his commandments. Jesus in his parable of the sower illustrates the meaning of the words ‘hearing’ and ‘keeping’. The acceptable class are described in the words: “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). So, as Christ requires a hearing and keeping of the word of the gospel, so he requires the same hearing and keeping of what he says in his Last Message.

If we are to hear and keep what is written, clearly we must understand what is written. We are not expected to understand unaided. This is conveyed in the words: “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy. . .” “He” that readeth has the sense of being a teacher; “they” are those who listen. The RSV translates as follows: “Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and keep what is written therein”. Those who teach have a special blessing; and those who hear and keep have a blessing.

But where today shall we turn for help, for a teacher? In earlier times there was substantially only one interpretation, usually called the continuous historical interpretation; and this is what our brethren and sisters studied. Now there are many books and many interpretations; interpretations that are basically different one from another. In the past 30 years we have been presented with nine new interpretations. How confusing for the earnest seeker after truth; how discouraging for the faithful brother seeking to ‘hear’ and ‘keep’ the sayings of this prophecy. It is not that these various books present small variations in ideas; the more important ones set out basically different expositions of the prophecy. There can be only one correct interpretation. If we are expected to hear and keep what is written therein, we can be sure God has provided for us a right interpretation. That there would be false interpretations is implied in the solemn warning at the end of the book —
a dreadful warning to any who “shall add unto” or “take away” from the words of the prophecy of this book. Being a book of symbol, adding or taking away is not referring to material addition or removal of words; but rather to changing the meaning of what is written.

So with courage we must face the unhappy situation that prevails today, and prayerfully seek a right path. This book aims to help the seeker after truth. It first outlines the case for the traditional continuous historical interpretation; and then examines four of the new interpretations. At the end the situation is reviewed, and there are some reflections that may help to guide us along the right path.

As an introduction to the detailed examination of the several interpretations, we give here a brief outline of each.

THE CONTINUOUS HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

As in *Eureka*, J. Thomas; also *Thirteen Lectures on the Apocalypse*, R. Roberts; and *Apocalypse and History*, Boulton and Barker.

Brother Thomas interprets the Revelation as a forecast of history from the time of John to the full establishment of the kingdom under Christ. He gives the book a clear and understandable structure—see the diagram on page 16. As the centuries pass, the activities that make up history are seen to be groups of divine judgements in various parts of Europe and the Middle East. The Lamb undoes the seven seals on the scroll, revealing six Seal judgements, followed by the seventh Seal, within which are found seven Trumpet judgements. The seventh Trumpet is subdivided into seven final Vials of the wrath of God to be poured out. Additionally, the conflict between God’s people—called the Holy City and the Two Witnesses — and the apostasy, is described as a ravaging of wild beasts. The coming of Christ is a Lamb on Mount Zion, who is declared to be the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

The way in which the symbols shown to John describe what subsequently becomes history, is fascinating. The fit between the symbols and history provides assurance that this is the correct interpretation. Not only does the correspondence between the symbols and the onflowing history justify the exposition, but it will be found that this interpretation has no gaps; it is able to interpret all the very extensive detail of the book. This cannot be said of the other interpretations.

THE FUTURIST INTERPRETATION

As in *Apocalypse for Everyman*, by A. D. Norris.

The word Futurist means that the book is largely concerned with events still in the future. In Bro. Norris’ presentation, chapter 4 is a vision of heaven itself; chapter 5 is Jesus arriving in heaven; and the first four Seals of chapter 6, horsemen going forth, cover the general character of history from John’s day to ours. From the 5th Seal all is in the future. This means that under 5% of what follows from the opening of the scroll belongs to the past; 95% is in the future.
The 6th and 7th Seals, the Trumpets, the Vials, are all in the future. They describe waves of judgements still to happen. The proposed interpretation of these many judgements cannot be of much importance to us, because it is necessarily speculative and cannot be tested. Nor does it have a background of past judgements that have occurred, to guide us as to the nature of future judgements, as is the case with the future part of the continuous historical interpretation.

The peculiar nature of Bro. Morris' interpretation is expressed in the diagram on page 51. The diagram highlights a basic element of his interpretation that is hard to receive. It is, that God should leave our brethren over the past 18 centuries in darkness with no prophetic light to illuminate their path and encourage them in their patient waiting. This is out of harmony with the example of all previous ages. And it is out of harmony with God's promise: "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Further, this futurist interpretation results in crowding what seems an unreasonable number of prophetic items into a short space of time in the future, much of it into only $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, just before we are called to the Judgement Seat. There are over 200 prophetic items to be fulfilled in this short space of time; and yet no prophetic guidance for the previous centuries!

THE PRETERIST INTERPRETATION


Bro. Whittaker looks in the opposite direction to Bro. Norris. The Seals and the Trumpets were fulfilled in the first century, though some items have a triple fulfilment:

i) AD 70 to the Fall of Jerusalem
   ii) The 'continuous-historic' application ('Eureka')
   iii) The Last Days and the Coming of the Lord.

The Vials belong to the future. The other characteristic of this exposition is that the symbols are applied almost entirely to the nation of Israel. The Seals and the Trumpets were judgements on the land and people in the final AD 70 epoch. Thus the great mountain burning with fire cast into the sea in the 2nd Trumpet was a Jewish fleet encountering Roman ships on the sea of Galilee; the great star burning like a lamp that fell on the third part of the rivers and fountains of waters is associated with Haley's comet. As to the future, the Beast out of the abyss is identified with Russia. "All present indications are that the political power of the Church of Rome is as good as finished. Fantasies about political union between Rome and Communism are ventilated from time to time, but these lack even a vestige of Biblical support, and politically they certainly do not belong to the world of reality. The identification of the Beast with the great power of Russia has much to commend it" (p. 171). This exposition drives the author to identify the Harlot of chapter 17 with Jerusalem and modern Israel. Like Apocalypse for Everyman, the exposition provides no prophetic word for the brethren from the
2nd to the 20th century.

It is vital to the concept of this interpretation that the Revelation was given to John before the AD 70 epoch. Evidence does not support this. The evidence of the early Fathers points to the persecution under Domitian near the end of the century for the time John received the vision. Furthermore, if the strange symbols of the Seals and Trumpets had been fulfilled around AD 70, there surely would have been reference to them in the writings of Polycarp, Ireneus and others since Polycarp was personally acquainted with John.

ANOTHER FUTURIST THEORY

As in Exploring the Apocalypse and the Future, by P. Watkins.

Bro. Watkins has elements that are the same as those in both the interpretations just outlined. Like Bro. Norris he places the Revelation in the future; like Bro. Whittaker he associates it almost entirely with Israel, in his case modern Israel. The little Horn of Daniel 7; the little Horn of The Goat of Daniel 8; the Man of Sin of 2 Thess. 2; the Beasts that make war with the saints; these are all symbols of modern Israel, with occasional reference back to the nation in an earlier time. Most of the Seals, the Trumpets, and Vials are judgements on Israel. Israel is to become a world-dominating power, persecuting the saints, and fighting against Jesus Christ. His interpretation of the Revelation is summarised in the diagram on page 78.

THE ORIGIN OF THE PAST AND FUTURIST INTERPRETATIONS

One is not to suppose that interpretations of the Revelation either as largely fulfilled in the first century, or largely still future, are new. Both these ideas were propagated by the Roman Catholic Church to counter the Protestant charge at the Reformation and after, that the Roman Church and her civil supporters is intended in the symbol of the Harlot on the Beast. Alcazar, a Spanish Jesuit, started the idea of a first century fulfilment involving the Jewish nation; Riberia, another Spanish Jesuit, presented his futurist theory in 1580. But it was the writings of a cunning Jesuit, Lacunza, writing under the false name of ‘Rabbi Ben Ezra’, that turned the Protestants and Non-conformists away from the historical interpretation early in the 19th century. So the futurist ideas were popular in Bro. Thomas’ time. Elliott, who published his Horae Apocalypticae in 1844, some 5 years before Elpis Israel was published, wrote at the beginning of his exposition: “When first I began to give attention to the subject, some 20 years ago, it was the increasing prevalence among Christian men in our country of the futurist system of Apocalyptic interpretation,—a system which involved the abandonment of the opinion held by all the chief fathers and doctors of our Church respecting the Roman Popes and Popedom as the great intended anti-christian Power of Scripture prophecy, that suggested to me the desirableness, and indeed the necessity, of a more thoroughly careful investigation of the whole subject than had been made previously”. So the brethren of the last century were not unacquainted with the futurist interpretation.
Chapter 2

THE CLAIMS OF THE CONTINUOUS HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

This chapter sets out the reasons for accepting the continuous historical interpretation of the Revelation. In chapter five, headed ‘Does the sixth seal apply to Constantine?’, a basic criticism of this interpretation is examined. Further criticisms are considered in Appendix 3.

Five reasons are advanced for the continuous historical interpretation:

1. God promised a prophetic record.
2. This interpretation gives to the book a rational and comprehensive structure, or framework.
3. The phrase “things which must shortly come to pass” is appropriate to this onflowing interpretation.
4. Through the centuries students have correctly identified their position, on the basis of a continuous historical interpretation of events in the Roman world.
5. The ultimate test: the fit of history to the symbols.

1. A PROPHETIC RECORD PROMISED

We have already quoted the words of Amos: “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets”. So we know there is a prophetic record for the period after John’s time. If it is not found in the book of Revelation, where is it? Only by interpreting the Revelation on a continuous historical basis can we have prophetic guidance for believers over the past 18 centuries.

2. A RATIONAL STRUCTURE

With the historical approach one can give to the Revelation a structure which
THE UNLOOSING OF THE SEVEN SEALED SCROLL

Judgments on the Pagan Roman world, and spread of Christianity, leads to new world constitution embodying Christianity.

Judgments on the apostate Christian Roman world and church for their idolatry, murder and spiritual fornication—Rev. 9:20

The persecuting power of the catholic Church and State against the saints from the 6th to the 18th centuries.

Judgements in the 19th and 20th centuries particularly on western papal Europe, continued by Christ at his coming.

The end of Babylon the Great and the European Beast system. The Holy City community rules the world.
comprehends the whole and is satisfying. The diagram shows this structure. It represents the unrolled scroll, with a time scale of centuries along the top. The 7th seal area contains the seven trumpets, and the 7th trumpet is detailed in seven vials. One can identify five groups of events which follow in sequence as one proceeds through the book. This is indicated by placing the chapter numbers above the five groups.

Further details of the five main groups are as follows:

1st (Revelation 6), a group of six Seal happenings occupying the second and third centuries in which the new religion of Christianity spreads through the Pagan Roman world, and providentially controlled divine judgements reduce the prosperity and strength of the Roman world, so that the time arrives for the old Pagan Roman world to be swept away and replaced by a new world constitution embodying elements of Christianity in its laws and religion.

2nd (Revelation 8-9), a group of six Trumpet blasts stretching from the 5th to 15th centuries, these trumpet alarms of war bringing the invading nations of the Huns, Goths and Vandals, etc., into the Western Roman world; and later the Saracens and Turkish hordes into the Eastern Roman world, finishing with the sacking of Constantinople in 1453. These various wars were a sustained punishment of the Catholic Christians for their worship of idols and relics, their spiritual murders, fornication, and theft (Rev. 9:20-21). These wars also changed the map of Europe, and in particular contributed to the development of the tyrannical Papal Europe of the middle centuries.

3rd (Revelation 11-13), a group of beasts, based on the prophecy of Daniel, describing the power of the Roman Catholic world reaching its zenith in the 15th to 18th centuries, and making war on the two witnesses and the saints and overcoming them.

4th (Revelation 15-16), a group of six Vials of wrath poured out during the 19th and 20th centuries. The first five Vials are God's judgements particularly on Papal Western Europe, and the 6th Vial prepares the way for the manifestation of Jesus as Lord and Christ under the 7th Vial.

5th (Revelation 17-22). The events of the 7th Vial, in which the beasts, the harlot, the false prophet, and Babylon the Great, are destroyed, and replaced by the Holy City rulership of the Lamb and his bride.

At the ending of each of the groups there is inserted a picture of the consummation, the reward for overcoming, and these occupy the remaining chapters, 7, 10 and 14. In chapter 7, when the full symbolic 144,000 have been sealed, there are the palm-bearing victors in white robes before the throne; in chapter 10, Christ and the redeemed are seen as a mighty rainbowed Angel going forth to conquer the world; in chapter
the Lamb is in contrast with the wild beasts of the previous chapter, and the people of God are seen standing on Mount Zion as the 144,000 with the Lamb. This interesting feature of the book was no doubt introduced to give encouragement to believers all through the centuries. Those under the first group of events would hardly understand much of the later events, yet understanding the events of their own group, and seeing the vision of the consummation just beyond these events, they would be encouraged to hold fast.

So there is a definable structure to the book of Revelation, and it reveals the plan and purpose of God, as He controls the history of the world. History is not a series of chance happenings; there is an orderly and understandable progression of events. There is divine control, attaining definite objectives, and moving events to the appointed consummation when the kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdom of Christ.

3. THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS

The Revelation was given to show, or point out, to God’s servants those “things which must shortly come to pass” (Rev. 1:1). The phrase ‘shortly come to pass’ means that God’s servants would be warned of what lay immediately ahead. So it is certain that God’s servants in the centuries that were to come, would be able to see the outline of events immediately in front of them, from a study of the Revelation. They would not understand the distant future, but they would discern their own times in the appropriate part of the Apocalyptic record. For this to be so, the Revelation must cover the whole of the time period to the coming of the Lord; and this involves a continuous historical interpretation of the book.

4. FULFILMENT UNDERSTOOD IN EARLIER TIMES

History does not provide us with much information about that tiny minority, the true servants of God. We should not expect it to do so. We should not expect therefore much information about their understanding of the Revelation. Nevertheless there are three detailed situations that demonstrate a remarkable understanding of the Revelation on a continuous historical basis.

The first six Seals have a climax in the great earthquake of the 6th Seal. On the historical basis this applies to the time of Constantine. The detail of the birth of the man child to be caught up to heaven in chapter 12 belongs to this time. There is ample evidence that Constantine and the Christians believed this part of the Revelation was fulfilled in their time. The evidence for this is given in chapter 5. If the people living at the time could see the events they were witnessing were a fulfilment of prophecy, we should be wise to recognise they were competent judges; and not from our far off time say the record should be given another meaning, as do the other interpretations we are considering.

The second situation is the time of Joseph Mede in the 17th century. His ‘Key of
the Revelation’ was published about 1640. He understood the fulfilment of the Seals and Trumpets on the historical basis. This may not be thought to prove very much, but what is of significance is that he could correctly outline ‘things which must shortly come to pass’ before they came to pass; surely evidence that in broad terms his understanding was the correct one. Bro. I. Collyer in his book Vox Dei, chapter 16, gives detailed quotations from Mede. Writing some 150 years before the events, Mede predicted many of the historical events described by the Vials. He correctly understood the 4th Vial to be poured out on the Austrian empire, the sun; the 5th Vial to be poured out on Rome, the seat of the beast; the 6th Vial on the Turkish empire, ‘drying up the river Euphrates’. None of these events looked at all likely in the 17th century! Mede also understood that after the drying up of the river Euphrates, the ‘preparing of the way of the kings of the east’ involved the restoration of the Jews to their land. When such forecasts come to pass it surely means the forecasts were made on the basis of a right understanding of the apocalyptic scheme.

Still another illustration of correct anticipation is that of Peter Jurieu regarding the French Revolution. Commenting on the $3\frac{1}{2}$ days of the death-state of the witnesses, their resurrection, and the fall of the tenth part of the city, he says (English translation of his book 1687): “The Tenth part of the City which here fell, will, at some future time, appear to be the Kingdom of France, where a Revolution will take place about the year 1785, and a separation from the Papacy follow, when the Names of Monks and Nuns, of Carmelites, Augustines, Dominicans, etc., shall perish for ever, and all those vain titles and armorial bearings which serve for ornament and pride, shall vanish, and brotherly love make all men equal”.

What a remarkable, accurate forecast and understanding of the Revelation. He said there would be a revolution in France “about the year 1785”. In fact the French Revolution started 1789. He made this prediction about a hundred years before the event. He correctly interpreted the ‘tenth part of the City’ as France; he saw that the clergy and nobility would be overthrown, and that ‘liberty, equality and fraternity’ would be proclaimed. It is most remarkable that he should have correctly understood the ‘$3\frac{1}{2}$ days’ as representing 105 years ($3\frac{1}{2}$ lunar days is $30 \times 3\frac{1}{2} = 105$, see page 68). So with such knowledge the faithful believers, the down-trodden Holy City, would be sustained in hope, waiting and praying for this day of easement of their afflictions.

The following four pages contain quotations from older writings, compiled by Bro. Alan Eyre, which suggest a continued thread of prophetic interpretation. Bro. Eyre has written, ‘There is no question that an enormous amount of material is available to demonstrate that a substantial body of Bible scholars and believers held to the general historical school of prophetic understanding. . . I certainly would say that the true witnesses through the ages right from apostolic times have almost solidly followed this scheme and interpretation. Alternative schemes of interpretation have generally been promoted by those false churches which wished to avoid the teaching of Scripture’.
VOICES FROM THE PAST

Cyprian Of Carthage (200-258).

"We pray that our kingdom, which has been promised us by God, may come. . . that we who first are his subjects in the world, may hereafter reign with Christ when he reigns" (Treatise 4).

"Let not any one of you, beloved brethren, be so terrified by the fear of future persecution, or of the coming of the threatening Antichrist. Antichrist is coming, but above him comes Christ also. The adversary is enraged and threatens, but there is One who can deliver us. In the Apocalypse He instructs and forewarns, saying, 'If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, the same also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God'" (Epistle 55).

"It was predicted by the voice of the Lord, and by the testimony of the apostles, that now that the world is failing, and the Antichrist is drawing near, everything good shall fail, but evil and adverse things shall prosper" (Epistle 67).

Vaudois (Waldenses) (1120).

"(Antichrist) is not any one particular person, ordained to such a degree, office or ministry, but it is Falsehood itself, in opposition to the Truth, covering and adorning itself with a pretence of beauty and piety, not suitable to the church of Christ, as by the names and offices, the Scriptures, the Sacraments, and many other things may appear. Iniquity thus qualified with all the ministers thereof great and small, together with all them that follow them, with an evil heart, and blindfold: such a congregated comprised together, is that which is called Antichrist, or Babylon, or the Whore, or the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition. Antichrist could not come in any wise, but all these forementioned things must needs meet together, to make up a complete hypocrisy and falsehood, viz. the worldly wise men, the Religious Orders, the Pharisees, Ministers, Doctors, the Secular power, with the worldly people jointly together. And thus all of them together make up the Man of Sin and error completely" (Qual cosa da l'Antechrist).

John Wycliffe (1324-1384).

"Why is it necessary in unbelief to look for another Antichrist? In the 7th chapter of Daniel, Antichrist is forcefully described by a horn arising in the time of the fourth kingdom. For it grew from among our powerful ones, more horrible, more cruel and more greedy. . . the horn has arisen from the ten horns, having eyes and a mouth speaking great things against the Lofty One, and wearing out the saints of the Most High, and thinking that he is able to change times and laws. For so our people see the lord pope, as it is said of the eighth blaspheming little head" (De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae—‘On the Truth of Holy Scripture’).

Walter Brute (14th Century).

(At his trial in 1391, the record states, “The said Walter hath oftentimes said,
and commonly avouched, that the Pope is Antichrist, and a seducer of the people, and utterly against the law and life of Christ").

"For although the Christian church continued in the faith from the ascension of Christ even till this time: yet hath it not observed and kept the perfection of the Faith all this whole season. For soon after the departure of the apostles, the faith was kept with the observation of the rites of the Gentiles and not of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Wherefore seeing that this time of the error of the Gentiles is fulfilled, it is likely that Christ shall call the Gentiles to the perfection of the Gospel. Seeing therefore that Antichrist is known, which hath seduced the nations, then shall the elect, after that they have forsaken the errors of the Gentiles, come through the Light of God's Word to the perfection of the Gospel. Daniel, speaking of 62 weeks, doth not speak of the weeks of days but of years, taking a day always for a year, as commonly it is taken in the Prophets. Wherefore the power of the Beast, unto three years and a half, for the reign of that fantastical and imagined Antichrist. Also the Bishop of Rome doth make man to worship him as God. God doth require of us to be obedient unto Him in keeping of His commandments, but now the Pope's commandments be commanded to be kept, and be kept in very deed; but the commandments of Christ are condemned and rejected" (Registrum).

Sir John Oldcastle (1360-1417).

Tried in 1413 by Archbishop Arundle, he made the statement:

"As touching the Pope and his spirituality, I owe them neither suit nor service,foresomuch as I know him by the Scriptures to be the great Antichrist, the Son of Perdition, the open Adversary of God, and the Abomination standing in the Holy Place."

He was asked at the hearing, "What do you say of the Pope?"

He replied: "As I said before, he and you together maketh whole the great Antichrist, of whom he is the great head, you bishops, priests, prelates and monks are the body, and the begging friars are the tail, for they cover the filthiness of you both, with their subtil sophistry. Never will I in conscience obey any of you all, till I see you with Peter follow Christ in conversation".

William Tyndale (1484-1536).

"The bishop of Rome made a law of his own to rule his church by, and put Christ's out of the way. All the bishops must swear unto the bishop of Rome, and all curates unto the bishops, but all forswear Christ and his doctrine...Now though the bishop of Rome and his sects give Christ these names, yet in that they rob him of the effect, and take the significations of his names unto themselves, and make of him but a hypocrite, as they themselves be, they be the right antichrists, and deny both the Father and the Son" (Exposition of 1 John).

George Joye (?-1553).

"The Roman Empire, the fourth division, dispersed and decayed into Ger-
many, England, Spain, France et cetera shall be mixt together but yet they shall not cleave. They shall be confederate to make a new and all-one monarchy, but all in vain. The little horn was and is the Antichrist’s kingdom of the popes of Rome with all their unclean clergy. The ten horned beast ascending out of the sea is the spiritual Antichrist of Rome with all his laws, rites, traditions, decrees, and doctrine” (Exposition of Daniel).

William Sherwin (1607-1687).

“But from the time Antichrist’s forty two months begun, to the end of the sixth trumpet or second Woe, we have the fourth trumpet proceeding in the ruin of the Empire in the West, and the fifth trumpet is the beginning of the ruin of it in the East (ch.10) by the Mohammedan Saracens, those Locusts out of the bottomless pit hurting all but the green fruits sealed to be preserved from that first Woe trumpet. . . and after the other Mohammedan locusts under the sixth trumpet, namely the Turks, took away the other part of the Eastern Empire, whose 396 years are not yet expired, till the end of the sixth trumpet” (The Irenicon).

Thomas Beverly (1670-1701?).

“The 2300 days are a definite line of time, from the beginning of the Persian monarchy to the very end of the monarchies, and until the supreme monarchy of Christ, to the breaking of Antichrist without hand, by the stone cut out of the mountains without hands”.

“Every vision of Daniel’s except the vision of the 70 weeks which has the high and noble subject of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, runs expressly to the last End and Kingdom of Christ. The 1260 Days of Mourning and of the church in the wilderness, are not yet run out, the Beast is yet in power, the tenth part of the city is not yet fallen; the kingdom of Christ not yet proclaimed. . . the first act of Christ’s kingdom is recorded by the apostle Paul to be the putting down of all rule, authority and power, referring especially to these four Monarchies, the great Emblem of such rule and power, viz., when the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ” (A Scripture line of Time).

Edward Holyoke (?-1660).

“The Empire is described by one beast coming out of the sea, who hath seven heads and ten horns: yea also in this beast is comprised the Pontificality, being the reviver of the wounded head. This beast hath his arms, from the four Beasts in Daniel 7. For Rome having subdued all those countries that those beasts ruled, and being like them for idolatry and cruelty in afflicting the holy city, is a monster compounded of all four: being a beast of seven heads and ten horns, mouthed like a Lion, footed like a Bear and spotted like a Leopard. The four beasts are termed four kings, that is four Kingdoms, Daniel 7. So the ten horns of the Roman beast are ten kings that is kingdoms that give their power to the Beast. From Constan-
tine’s time, ecclesiastical teachers were never quiet, but still spired after supremacy, and drew princes to their factions till 600 years after Christ, then about that time, Boniface the third Pope of Roma, obtained by the help of the murderer Phocas, to be called universal Bishop. And this universal supremacy did so increase until the tenth century. The Pope’s canon law telleth that none may live under the Empire but by yielding to the Pope’s laws, in his subscribing to his Imperial and Ecclesiastical supremacy, and oath of fidelity as a mark on the hand, and some open token of communion with him, and profession of his decrees as a mark in the forehead” (The Doctrine of Life).

Increase Mather (1639-1723).

“The Turkish power is signified by Euphrates (Rev. 9:13, 14). The meaning may be that the Turks which lay on both sides of the River Euphrates and were divided into four sultanates or kingdoms, should be let loose, partly by composing their civil dissentions, and partly by being united under one Ottomanical head, to make a dreadful eruption upon the Roman Empire. . .our Lord will have a church somewhere or other in Europe until his second coming. The witnesses must there prophesy in sackcloth, there be slain, there rise again. The ten kings which give their power to the Beast are in Europe. That part of the world was to be principally the Seat of the church of Christ during the reign of Antichrist, who must continue until Christ himself shall destroy him with the brightness of his coming” (Ichabod).

Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803).

“So long the beast, the idolatrous persecuting power, exercised by the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, is to continue, during which time, the church of Christ is to be oppressed, afflicted and opposed, represented by the holy city being trodden under foot by the Gentiles; the two witnesses prophesy in sackcloth; and a woman persecuted and flying into the wilderness, to hide herself from her enemies, where she is fed and protected during the reign of the beast, which is to continue a thousand two hundred and sixty years, a prophetical day being a year” (Treatise on the Millennium).

5. THE ULTIMATE TEST: THE FIT OF HISTORY TO THE SYMBOLS

The Revelation is made up of hundreds of strange symbolic items, and in the major groups—Seals, Trumpets, Vials—these symbols are presented in a definite sequence. If history is found to correspond, not only with the character of each symbol, but also events follow accurately the sequence of the symbols, every rational mind will admit this is not a matter of chance. God with his foreknowledge must be behind it. We are despising God’s word if we do not accept this correlation of prophecy and history, and propose instead that the events have not yet
happened and belong to the future. So the ultimate ground of acceptance of the continuous historical interpretation is the correspondence we find between symbols and the subsequent history through 18 centuries. The detailed ‘fit’ of history to the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Vials, demands our acceptance. There is nothing comparable in any other interpretation. Some features of the Seals are presented in chapter 3. In chapter 8 it is shown how adequately the first six Vials describe the history of our time from the French Revolution. Here we will look at some of the detail of the other main group of events, the Trumpets, to illustrate the correspondence of the brief sign language with the great events of European history over many centuries.

A 1,000 Years History That Cannot Be Ignored

The symbol of trumpet blasts is appropriate to wars and is based on the blowing of trumpets when Israel went to war (Numbers 10:9). So in the Revelation each Trumpet summons new forces to operate with war and destruction on the Roman world. The Trumpets belong to the 7th Seal (8:1) and therefore are events following the Constantinian ‘earthquake’ of the 6th Seal. So we should be looking for events starting around the end of the 4th century. These events are the barbarian invasions of the western Roman world. The history can be checked from any appropriate history book or atlas. It is summarised on page 26.

1st Trumpet

During the years from AD 400-410 there was a general movement of tribes into the western Empire with dreadful devastation, conquest and including the sacking of the proud capital, Rome. Alaric and the Visigoths (i.e., West Goths) moved from the Danube westward and eventually took Rome, and Rhadagaisus with a host of Vandals, Suevi, and Burgundians “burst like a dark thundercloud” (Gibbon) from the Baltic. The flourishing and fertile provinces of Gaul and Spain were overrun. Quoting Gibbon: “The consuming flames of war spread from the banks of the Rhine over the greatest part of the seventeen provinces of Gaul; . . . The scene of peace and plenty was suddenly changed into desert; and the prospect of the smoking ruin could alone distinguish the solitude of nature from the desolation of man”. How would one present this widespread destruction, affecting the people and also the rulers in the governing city of Rome? The Revelation used the language of a storm of hail and fire mingled with blood destroying and burning up the grass and the trees (8:7). Could one suggest more graphic or more accurate language? There was a devastation of the wealth of the countryside, the “grass and trees”; and in a more symbolic sense the “blood” mingled with hail and fire was the suffering of the people — grass, and the rulers — trees. The storm affects “the third part”. We shall show later that this indicates the Western part of the Empire.
2nd Trumpet

After this first widespread destruction of the main territory of the Western Empire, the next happening was the sea wars of Genseric and the Vandals against the maritime provinces of Africa and the islands; the parts bordering on the Mediterranean. He sailed against the provinces of North Africa in AD 429, and resistance ended with the fall of Carthage in 439. Thereafter he dominated the Western Mediterranean with his fleets, and took Sicily, Sardinia and the other Western isles. In 455 he attacked and took Rome. The destruction of the combined fleets of Western and Eastern Rome at Carthage by fire-ships is famous in history.

 Appropriately, the symbols of the 2nd Trumpet are a great mountain burning with fire cast into the sea and it becomes blood. So the first and second Trumpet details are accurate in regard to history, and also are in the right sequence — sea invasions after earth invasions. How could this be so, without the directing hand of God? Was it just all chance, and these Trumpets belong to future events?

3rd Trumpet

Before the work of Genseric was finished a new scourge pressed in on the Western Empire, Attila and the Huns — names that still stand for savage destruction. Attila had established himself in the Thracian region of the Empire by defeating the Eastern Emperor. But instead of pursuing an eastward course he turned westward up the Danube, along the Rhine and back southward to the region we call Switzerland. Strangely, from a human point of view, he did not press on to Italy and Rome, but returned eastward, and in but a year was suddenly cut off in death, so his was a brief and catastrophic scourge lasting but three years.

And what are the symbols for this most unusual happening?

1. He is described as a shooting star;
2. He is projected from heaven;
3. He affects the rivers and “the fountains of waters”;
4. He made the waters bitter and men died.

How exact! How thrilling! Commenting on these points:

1. He was not a fixed star shining in heaven but a star “blazing as a torch” (R.V.) hurled against rivers and fountains of water. The Greek word LAMPAS was used of a meteor or shooting star. So Attila was like a ball of flame hurtling along with devastation and soon burnt out.
2. Unlike the earlier invaders, he was established by conquest as a ruler in the Roman heaven before he projected his power against the western “third”. So the symbology says there fell a great star “from heaven”.
3. Did he strike at the throne of the Western Empire at Rome, as well he might? No. His path was circuitous along the main rivers of Europe, and then to the region where all the great rivers rise. So the text says it fell on “rivers and fountains of waters”.

4. The waters are made bitter and men died of the waters, we read; surely an apt way of describing the character of his destroying work. Now how could it be revealed in approximately AD 100 that there would be a third invading power doing precisely these things? It is quite impossible for John to know such strange history beforehand. Men do not know the turn of events of the next week. It must be a matter of God’s foreknowledge and control.

BARBARIAN INVASIONS.

4th Trumpet

After the destroying and weakening effect of these three Trumpet invasions, of the Visigoths, Vandals and Huns — history shows several puppet emperors placed on the throne by barbarian chieftains; and then Oadacer, chief of the Imperial
regalia to Constantinople, and had himself installed as Governor of Italy. Thus
the old Imperial Roman rule came to an end in the west, to be followed by a
period in which Gothic kings were ruling in Rome. This climax of the wind
Trumpets is contained in the 4th Trumpet details, which says that a third of the
sun, moon and stars were smitten and shone not. "A third" signified that it was
only in the Western Empire that this eclipse had taken place; the old sun, moon
and stars, continuing to shine in Constantinople.

It may be questioned whether it is correct to describe the western Empire as a
third of the total. The division into thirds is recognised historically, and it also fits
the events of the Trumpets. The three parts are:
1. The Latin west—covered by Trumpets 1-4.
2. The Hellenised east—covered by the 5th Trumpet, the Saracens.
3. The Hellenic east—covered by the 6th Trumpet, the Turks.

"Hellenised east" refers to the eastern and southern parts of the Empire where
only a veneer of Greek civilisation existed. In Freeman's Historical Geography of
Europe this region is so defined: "In a few campaigns the empire lost all its posses-
sions beyond Mount Taurus, i.e., it lost one of the three great divisions of the em-
pire; that, namely in which neither Greek nor Roman civilisations had ever taken
root... Every province that was conquered by the Saracens was utterly lopped
off" (pp. 111-112. My emphasis, G.P.).
5th Trumpet

The first four Trumpets were a series, grouped as wind Trumpets; they brought devastation on the western Roman world. The 5th and 6th Trumpets are distinguished from the first four by calling them 'woe' Trumpets. Appropriately the scene of action is different. These Trumpets bring judgement on the eastern Roman world, soon after the particular judgements in the West have finished. The prophetic record and sequence accurately corresponds with history.

In the 5th Trumpet smoke and fire issue out of the pit of the abyss and darken the sun and the air. The language is appropriate to the effect of the Saracen conquests on the eastern Roman world. It might be said it could be given other applications. But the phrase “pit of the abyss, or deep” provides a geographical aspect appropriate to Arabia; just as the 2nd Trumpet had a similar geographical quality in “the third of the sea” representing the western Mediterranean coast lands. Then when one adds in the further features of “locusts”, “crown of gold”, “faces as men, hair as women”, “teeth as the teeth of lions” — descriptive phrases that are so appropriate to the Arab people, with their bearded faces and flowing hair, so different from the clean shaven Romans, their peculiar turban head-dress, their fierce courageous fighting; — one surely thinks this again is a description by the foreknowledge of God.

The symbolic locusts act in a way that is quite unnatural for real locusts. “And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads” (9:4). This strange symbolic behaviour is in strict accordance with the behaviour of the Saracens. They were fierce fanatical fighters, but they were under command from Mahomet to use their swords only against the Catholics, and to avoid general devastation of the countryside. Gibbon in his 51st chapter quotes the instructions given by Abubeker, the successor of the Prophet, to his captains: “Remember that you are always in the presence of God, on the verge of death, in the assurance of judgement, and the hope of paradise. Avoid injustice and oppression; consult with your brethren, and study to preserve the love and confidence of your troops. When you fight the battles of the Lord, acquit yourselves like men, without turning your backs; but let not your victory be stained with the blood of women and children. Destroy no palm trees, nor burn any fields of corn. Cut down no fruit trees, nor do any mischief to cattle, only such as you kill to eat. When you make any covenant or article, stand to it, and be as good as your word. As you go on, you will find some religious persons who live retired in monasteries, let them alone, and you will find another sort of people, that belong to the synagogue of Satan, who have shaven crowns; be sure you cleave their skulls and give them no quarter till they either turn Mohammedans or pay tribute.” So once again the unusual, the unexpected, is noted centuries before the event in God’s prophecy, showing to us that God foreknows and controls all the affairs of history to attain His ends; in this case the protection of true believers,
and the destruction of idolatrous catholics. One may ask, what other fulfilment can be found that fits the strange behaviour of locusts not destroying grass and trees, yet carrying out a work of destruction?

There is a still further element in the symbols of the 5th Trumpet that makes the application absolutely specific to the time of Mahomet and the Saracens. The last thing John is told in the symbolic description of the warfare of the 5th Trumpet is: ‘‘The sound of their wings—the locusts’ wings—was as the sound of scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months’’. What could this mean?

The military invention of the 7th century was Greek or Saracen fire. (The original secret appears to have been betrayed by a Saracen to the Greeks.) Gibbon in the early part of ch. 52 has several pages on the matter. The fire appears to have been burning crude oil (now so well known to us) mixed with some other secret chemical materials to intensify the burning. The burning mixture was contained in vessels with mouths and was hurled from an engine acting as a sling. “From this mixture, which produced a thick smoke and a loud explosion, proceeded a fierce and obstinate flame, which not only rose in perpendicular ascent, but likewise burnt with equal vehemence in descent or lateral progress” (Gibbon). The Saracens appear to have perfected portable engines pulled by cavalry for hurling this fire; these would be the horses tails like scorpions, in John’s vision. How apt is this symbol of “tails like unto scorpions”, will be appreciated from the dictionary definitions of scorpion. After giving the proper zoological definition, it adds as a further use of the word: “An ancient form of ballista or catapult for hurling stones, etc.” So, in this 5th Trumpet the “scorpions” had a new and powerful sting in their tails; the catapults hurled destructive balls of fire. Again we ask the question, did God by His foreknowledge reveal this to John as something to happen in the time of the Saracens, or is there just a chance correspondence between John’s record and history, and John’s record is in fact intended to deal with the future (or the events of AD 70)? When one adds together all the peculiarities of the 5th Trumpet, and their correspondence with the Saracen invasions, there can be no doubt that it was a prophecy by God of this time.

6th Trumpet

But the Trumpets have something more to say about military inventions. This belongs to the 6th Trumpet. First the historical development. Gibbon says, in closing his remarks about Saracen fire: “The use of Greek, or, as it might now be called, of the Saracen fire, was continued to the middle of the fourteenth century when the scientific or casual compound of nitre, sulphur, and charcoal effected a new revolution in the art of war and the history of mankind”. It was by the use of gunpowder that the Turks were able at last to take the well-fortified city of Constantinople, and bring about the ending of the eastern Empire AD 1453. Using gunpowder in cannons had been under development in the latter half of the 14th century, but its use in breaching the defences of Constantinople was the first
decisive occasion of its use.

The movement of the several Tartar races into the Roman empire is represented in the 6th Trumpet by the loosing of the four ‘angels’ bound by the river Euphrates. We should expect to find in the symbols used here some reference to this important factor in their success—the use of gunpowder. Remembering that gunpowder was quite unknown in John’s day, it would have to be symbolically described by its appearance and effect. Consider how they are said to have destroyed their enemies. In the description there are ‘horses’ with mouths issuing fire, smoke and brimstone, by which men were killed. And the frontal appearance—“breasts”—appeared as “fire, jacinth and brimstone”. Jacinth or hyacinth is a flower and also a precious stone, with colours in the range blue to red. Brimstone is the old word for sulphur. Gunpowder is a mixture of charcoal, saltpetre, and sulphur: it readily ignites and burns rapidly with a sulphurous smell and the characteristic blue-red colour from the potassium in the saltpetre. Hence “fire, jacinth and brimstone”. So the Bible description is very appropriate for the appearance of cannons using gunpowder. The text gives additional information: they “hurt” by their serpent tails with heads; again, a very apt description of the ball of fire sent hurtling through the air from the cannon mouth. This will be appreciated from the above illustration of a 15th century Turkish cannon (taken from Apocalypse and History, page 65, old edition).

So the Saracens in warfare had ‘scorpion-like tails with stings in their tails’, that is, Greek or Saracen fire projected by catapult; and the Turks some 800 years later had “fire, jacinth and brimstone”, that is, gunpowder to project the “heads of the serpents” far more violently than the Saracens could against the enemy. There is a
most remarkable agreement between history and the symbols; and the matters are related in the right order—the 5th Trumpet followed by the 6th Trumpet details. Is this all a chance happening, and does God really intend these Trumpets to describe something that is to happen in the near future? Let us beware of being intoxicated with Babylon's wine, so that our judgement is blinded to the working of God in the earth.

Taking the full span of the six Trumpets in Revelation chapters 8 and 9, we have symbols and history running side by side in harmony for a thousand years. This is the more impressive as one considers the many symbols used, each presented in the right sequence through the six Trumpets. In addition, the prophecy gives an inner meaning to the events: we are told God was measuring out his judgements on an increasingly wicked 'Christian' world. The record concludes: "Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts"—a true comment on the Catholic Church, and a warning to the brethren living at the time.

We reserve further comment on the claims of the continuous historical interpretation to be the correct interpretation until we have given the alternative interpretations a close examination.
Chapter 3

A PRETERIST INTERPRETATION


THE BASIS FOR OUR EXAMINATION

The above book has approximately 300 pages and covers all the chapters of the Revelation. The key chapter is No. 9 where the basis of exposition is set out. At the end of this chapter a conclusion is drawn:

"It can be said right away that in the main the use of the rest of the Bible to elucidate Revelation leads to the emphatic conclusion that practically all the book from chapter 6 onwards applies either (i) to the grim events associated with the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 and God's rejection of Israel, or else (ii) to the great events prior to and contemporary with the return of the Lord, or else (iii) to both".

So in Bro. Whittaker's interpretation, the Seals and Trumpets apply to the nation of Israel in AD 70. This gives us a solid foundation on which to test the exposition. We can measure historical facts against the detail of the symbols. The item (ii) above, the projection of the symbols to a future fulfilment, is necessarily speculative, and therefore of quite secondary importance in assessing the validity of this 'Israel' approach. If we are satisfied with the handling of the past — with the facts of history — then we can be interested in the author's future ideas. But if the past application is erroneous, and the foundation wrong, then we need not concern ourselves with the rest.

It will be apparent that Bro. Whittaker's exposition depends on proving that the Revelation was given to John before the events of AD 70. We will look at this matter first before examining the 'Biblical' ground for the Israelitish interpretation. So the matters under consideration in this chapter are:
Was the Revelation given before AD 70?
A critical examination of the proposed basis.
Is this basis 'Biblical' and the continuous historical basis 'Unbiblical'?
Does the Apocalyptic record fit the events around AD 70?
An interpretation that fails to provide the promised prophetic record.

THE DATE OF THE REVELATION:
NERO'S OR DOMITIAN'S PERSECUTION?

For Bro. Whittaker’s interpretation to have meaning it is essential for him to attempt to prove that the Revelation was given to John during the Nero persecution, AD 64-68. Even this date is hardly appropriate, for it would mean that the Seal and Trumpet visions were being fulfilled before, or while, the copies of the Revelation were being circulated to the ecclesias. But the question is: Was the Revelation given in the time of Nero’s persecution? No. There is ample evidence that it belongs to the later persecution under Domitian, around AD 96. If this is so, his whole case loses credibility. The matter is of such importance that we must take some space to present the evidence.

Elliott published his *Horae Apocalypticae* in 1844, and he occupies some 30 pages in establishing the date of the writing as in the reign of Domitian, and dealing with the arguments for Nero’s reign. The following arguments are taken from his first volume, chapter 1.

1. The testimony of Irenaeus (130-202): “for it was seen no very long time ago; but almost in our own age, toward the end of the reign of Domitian.”
2. Tertullian (155-222) says that it was Domitian’s persecution that was characterised by banishment, whereas under Nero the penalty was death (John was banished to the isle of Patmos).
3. Clement of Alexandria (202-232) describes John as an infirm old man at his exile, which could not describe John at the time of Nero’s persecution.
4. Victorinus in his commentary on the Apocalypse toward the end of the 3rd century twice says the Apocalypse was written when John was banished during the reign of Domitian.
5. Eusebius (260-340) “distinctly intimates more than once his agreement with the tradition of the ancients, that referred it (the date of writing) to Domitian's persecution: and indeed implies, as if it were perfectly evident, that he knew of no other tradition” (Elliott).
6. Elliott adds to the above quotation, as taking the same view, Jerome, Crosius, Sulpitus Severus and Primasius; and “other ancient testimonies of less importance might be added”.
7. Elliott then points out that there was not extant any contrary early tradition respecting the date, which surely would have been noted if it existed. He then says: “As to any contrary statement on the point in question, there appears to
have been none whatsoever until the time of Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis in the latter half of the fourth century."

The main external evidence for a Nero date is the heading of “a very ancient Syriac version” which says John was banished by Nero. But Elliott disputes the “very ancient”, and says the “generally admitted” date is about AD 500. Others suppose there was an earlier Syriac version; but if so, it does not follow that it had a heading referring to Nero.

8. The main evidence for a Nero date is said to be internal evidence. It is said that phrases found in the epistle to the Hebrews and in the epistles of Peter are similar to those in the Revelation, and this indicates that the Revelation was known when the epistles were written. Elliott comments on this that such similarities are quite satisfactorily explained by reference back to the Old Testament. If one examines Bro. Whittaker’s ‘comparisons’, it will be found to be a feeble argument. Because the writer to the Hebrews uses the phrase “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”, one surely does not have to conclude that he was conversant with the Revelation. Or again, if he writes “The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword”, do we have to assume he has in mind Revelation 1:16 “out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword”? Or again, because Paul writes in Hebrews 1:14 that angels are ministering spirits, do we assume he is thinking of Revelation 8:3 “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints”? In all these writings, the epistles and the Revelation, there is but one author, the Spirit of God, and this is sufficient reason for similar phrases, with no necessity for saying one was written before the other.

If one holds to the idea that phrases in the epistles similar to those in the Revelation prove that the Revelation was written before the epistles, then one would have to admit that the Revelation was written before the second epistle to the Thessalonians: the first and second chapters are clearly ‘apocalyptic’. It is generally believed that the epistles to the believers at Thessalonica were written while Paul was at Athens (see 1 Thess. 3) and therefore before he had established the truth at Ephesus; read Acts chapters 17 to 19. So if the Revelation was written before the epistles to the Thessalonians, it will mean that Jesus addresses his letter to the ecclesia at Ephesus (Rev. 2:1) before, or about, the time of the founding of the ecclesia. No one would agree with this; and it shows that the line of reasoning used to establish the date of the Revelation is not sound.

Even if we accept Bro. Whittaker’s internal evidence theme, it is most unlikely that the writer to the Hebrews was acquainted with the Revelation. Nero’s persecution was AD 64-68, making John’s banishment and receiving the Revelation about AD 66. The writer to the Hebrews several times exhorts
the believers to stand fast in the coming trial—it was still a short way ahead; so he must have been writing about AD 66 or earlier. There would not be time for the Revelation to be transcribed and circulated to the ecclesias before the epistle to the Hebrews was written.

Again, according to this Preterist interpretation the first and second Trumpets were fulfilled AD 67. Could we expect the Revelation to have been circulated to the believers in Judea by that time? A prophecy received after it had been fulfilled would not be of much use.

9. The state of affairs in the Ephesian ecclesia does not fit the Nero date. The ecclesia was founded about AD 55, and Paul’s epistle to the ecclesia was written about AD 62, with much commendation of the brethren. In the letter of Jesus to the ecclesia (Rev. 2:4), it is censured for having left its first love. Is this change likely to have occurred in a brief four or five years? A date for the Revelation around AD 96 is much more reasonable.

10. Finally, there is the evidence of Laodicea. It is generally accepted that Laodicea was destroyed by earthquake around AD 60. It is difficult to believe that by AD 66 the city was rebuilt and the brethren were so prosperous and settled after such trial and loss, that they could be described as “rich, and increased in goods, and in need of nothing”. Again, a date around AD 96 would give time for this state of things to develop.

There is additional evidence in connection with Laodicea. The epistle to the Colossians was written about AD 62, and in the last chapter Paul refers to the ecclesia at Laodicea in terms that show it was acceptable to him, and of a similar standing with the ecclesia at Colosse. He writes: “Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea” (Colossians 4:15, 16). One cannot suppose the ecclesia had so rapidly declined, that Jesus regarded it as “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17) some four years later, in AD 66 when it is alleged the Revelation was given.

In the light of all the evidence, one can be satisfied that the Revelation was given around AD 96 in the Domitian persecution, and not around AD 66 in the Nero persecution. This conclusion rules out Bro. Whittaker’s exposition; the symbols do not apply to the nation of Israel in the first century.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PROPOSED RULES OF INTERPRETATION

Bro. Whittaker sets out in chapter 9 of his book his ‘Biblical’ basis of interpretation. It can be presented in three simple steps.

1. The Revelation abounds with allusions to the Old Testament.

2. Jesus and the apostles teach us how to apply Old Testament allusions. Illustrations are given. Quoting: “Jesus applied Isaiah 61 to his own work of redemption; therefore Isaiah 61 must be given an interpretation on these lines.
In Romans 15 Paul quotes Isaiah 11:1, 10 applying the words to the gospel concerning Christ; therefore the conscientious exponent of the Word must follow where Paul has led. Peter and Paul both apply to Christ the two Isaiah prophecies of the stone of stumbling and the chief corner stone (Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16; 1 Peter 2:6, 8; Romans 9:33); therefore the Holy Spirit intended these as prophecies of Jesus” (p.65).

3. If, therefore we find in the Revelation phrases similar to those in the Old Testament, we should link the two and interpret the Revelation in the context of the Old Testament phrase.

Let us examine the logic of these steps. All will agree with items (1) and (2). But there is no logical sequence in the vital step from (2) to (3). Item (2) does not justify the conclusion (3). Step (2) is obvious—that if the apostles apply clearly expressed words of prophecy in the Old Testament to Jesus, we should so understand such prophecies. But this is far removed from making the Revelation a prophecy about the Jewish nation because of similarity of phrases in the Old Testament and the Revelation.

Bro. Whittaker’s thesis is faulty in a number of directions. First, the New Testament illustrations, which are made the proof of the thesis, are not matters of similarity of language between Old and New Testament. The Old Testament references are definite prophecies of Jesus Christ that had to be fulfilled; and the apostles showed that they were in part fulfilled in Jesus’ first coming. This is in a different class to an Old and New Testament passage using similarity of language. Secondly, Bro. Whittaker is not applying his illustrations properly: the illustrations are of the New Testament providing authority for understanding the Old Testament passage. But Bro. Whittaker is reversing the process, and taking an Old Testament passage to interpret an ‘unknown’ passage in the New Testament, in the Revelation. Thirdly, when one examines the detail of Bro. Whittaker’s interpretation of the Revelation, it is apparent that he does not distinguish between symbols of general application, and those which are specific—as in his illustrations. Zion’s foundation stone, Isaiah 28:16; the root out of Jesse, Isaiah 11:1; the Son of God established on Mount Zion, Psalm 2; these are quite specific matters, and whenever they occur elsewhere, they must be given the same interpretation. When Bro. Whittaker takes symbols like fire, sword, famine, etc., in the Old Testament in a context of the nation of Israel, it does not follow that the same symbols in the Revelation identify the situation as that of the nation of Israel. Let us make this perfectly clear by looking at a few of his Revelation interpretations.

Take the 4th Seal. A quotation is made by Bro. Whittaker from the end of Revelation 6:8: “and power was given unto them to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death and with the beasts of the earth” and he adds: “The very language used here is confirmatory of the restricted Jewish application which is now being suggested for this part of the prophecy, for — as already observed — the words are verbatim from Ezekiel 14:21 LXX which describes ‘my four sore
judgements on Jerusalem'}. But sword, famine and pestilence, are descriptive of divine judgements generally. They are not specific to the nation of Israel. They are used in Jeremiah against Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, etc. Referring to these nations God says: "That nation will I punish saith the LORD with the sword, and with the famine and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his (Nebuchadnezzar's) hand" (Jer. 27:8). On the basis of similarity of language one can argue that the 4th Seal applies to Edom, or Moab, or the Ammonites. All that can properly be deduced from similarity of language is that the quality of things in the one case will be similar in the other; it does not require a similarity of geography or people. Similarity of quality is the key to the Revelation's use of Old Testament phrases. 'Balaam' in the ecclesia at Pergamos means the qualities Balaam showed were there and not that we look for a repeat of Moab against Israel. Similarly, 'that woman Jezebel' in Thyatira means people behaving like Jezebel, not that we have a repeat of an Israelitish king marrying the daughter of the king of the Zidonians.

Bro. Whittaker's treatment of the 1st Trumpet is similar. The text reads: "The first angel sounded and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all the green grass was burnt up." Against this Bro. Whittaker quotes Jeremiah 7:20 "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched"; and he concludes that the 1st trumpet was a repeat fulfilment on the nation of Israel in AD 70. Here, as before, hail, fire, blood, trees and grass destroyed, are expressions of God's judgements, but not judgements specific to Israel. Hail, fire, blood, trees and grass destroyed apply to Egypt at the Exodus, but one does not have to conclude therefore that the 1st Trumpet was to do with Egypt.

In the 6th Seal the sun is black as sackcloth, the moon is as blood, stars fall from heaven, etc. Such language is used of Israel in Old Testament times; and is used by Jesus for Israel in AD 70 (Matthew 24:29). But the same language is used for the fall of Chaldean Babylon (Isaiah 13:10); and for judgement on Egypt (Ezekiel 32:7). The quality of things was the same in all cases—the figures of speech have the same meaning. The use of similar language in the Revelation means that the same kind of thing is happening, but it does not establish which — or indeed if any — of the previous occasions is being repeated. One has to examine the immediate context, and other significant matters to decide the nation or people involved.

We conclude, first, that Bro. Whittaker's New Testament illustrations regarding prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament do not provide a basis for his 'similar language' thesis; and secondly, symbols and language (like war, famine, death, pestilence, hail, fire, earthquake) are always descriptive of God's judgements, but the language could apply to Israel or to the Gentiles. Furthermore this justification that his interpretation is 'Biblical' we perceive is of no weight
when the processes of deduction are not sound. The continuous historical interpretation has far better claims to being "Biblical".

**WHICH INTERPRETATION IS THE BIBLICAL APPROACH?**

In claiming a Biblical approach for his interpretation, Bro. Whittaker labels the continuous historical method as un-biblical: "This ‘continuous-historic’ method of interpreting the Revelation is, of necessity, un-Biblical". He adds that there is no Biblical warrant for this method of interpretation. Such statements have the effect of putting the continuous historical interpretation in an inferior position. But the statements are not true. In showing the Biblical warrant for the historical interpretation we shall highlight the weakness of Bro. Whittaker's approach. There are at least two Biblical justifications for the historical method that associates the Revelation with the Roman world and the Roman church.

The first ‘Biblical warrant’ for the Roman interpretation is found in the book of Daniel. Daniel puts on record — as we are about to show — the continuing existence of the Roman power from the time of Christ's first coming to his second coming; also its change of religion, and its blasphemy and opposition to God and God's people. Therefore it is an expected development that when Jesus sent his Final Message, and the fulfilment of history was drawing near, the brethren should be provided with more detail than Daniel had given. This is what the Revelation provides (see Appendix 1).

It is in Daniel chapter 8 and part of chapter 11 that we are given quite a lot of detail about the Roman power. The first mentioned symbols in chapter 8 are explained as the Medo-Persian and Grecian supremacies. Then follows the next great power, that starts as the little horn of the Goat and grows to greatness. This power magnifies itself against the prince of the host (Jesus); takes away the daily sacrifice; casts down the place of the sanctuary and casts down the truth. Later in this chapter this power is described as "a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sayings", and is said to be mighty, to destroy wonderfully, to practise and prosper, and to destroy the holy people. This clearly, with so much detail, identifies the Roman power. Then follows the important evidence that this Roman power would continue until Christ returns: "He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand" (v.25). "Broken without hand" — by miraculous power. In chapter 11 more information is given concerning the long career of this 'King' power. Verses 1-33 of this chapter outline the calamitous events in the land of Israel from the time of Daniel to the Maccabean independence and the rise of the power of Rome. The ‘King’ is introduced at verse 36, and verses 36-39 describe his activities until we come to the Time of the End in verse 40. The record says the ‘King’ is allowed by God to prosper until the indignation against Israel is accomplished. It highlights the greatness and high pretentions of this Power — "he shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods"; and then it adds another very significant item. Verses 37 and 38 tell us "Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers . . . but in his estate shall he
honour the God of forces (margin — Mauzzim, guardians): and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things". Here is expressed the development of this Roman power and the change from pagan religion to a new religion, christianity; also the enmity against the God of heaven, an enmity which has manifested itself in christian Rome's long persecution of the saints.

If Daniel records such prophecies of Roman history and its development of a new religion and its enmity against God, it surely is not strange that God should later fill in the details. Here is a Biblical warrant for the interpretation of the Revelation.

Paul strengthens this Biblical warrant in what he writes to the Thessalonians. He warns them of the development Daniel had spoken about: "Let not man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, He that exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped. . . Remember ye not, that, when I was with you, I told you these things?" (2 Thess. 2:3-5 R.V.) Notice how concerned Paul was that they should understand, and be warned. He fills in Daniel's picture as far as it had developed. "For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: . . and then shall be revealed that lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming" (R.V.). Now if Paul should so concern himself to instruct the brethren on the coming of the lawless one and his enmity against God, should we not expect Jesus to show the same care to those who were to come after, and explain to them, in symbol, further developments, so that they were warned, strengthened and guided? This he does in the Revelation.

When we come to read the Revelation, it opens with warning and guidance to the believers in Christ living in the Greek-Roman world. This is in the seven letters. Should we not expect, as the record continues, that it would provide further guidance to the same class of people? If so, then the record will be about situations in the Roman world around the believers.

There is an additional scriptural warrant for the Christian-Roman interpretation of the Revelation, from a different direction. As Bro. Whittaker says, the Revelation has many phrases that one associates with the nation of Israel in Old Testament times; the lightstand, the ark, the altar, the tabernacle of testimony, the Lamb, the Holy City, etc. Attention to the New Testament writings shows that the Old Testament items regarding national Israel are transferred as figures to the new Israel in Christ. In the epistles, the believers in Christ are partakers of the circumcision in Christ; they are a "royal priesthood, an holy nation", offering up spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5, 9); they are a holy temple (Ephesians 2:22); they are the "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16); they belong to the "heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:22); they are the nation Jesus spoke of to the unbelieving Pharisees. . . "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a
nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43). Here is a clear pattern to guide us. Should we not follow the guidance of the apostles, and apply the same principle to the inspired writing that follows theirs, in the book of Revelation? This is a much sounder use of the authority of the apostles than that adopted by Bro. Whittaker. The Revelation takes Old Testament items concerning the nation of Israel, and makes them symbols for the believers in Christ, the true Israel in the times of the Gentiles. The Revelation is about the affairs of the saints, not national Israel.

THE SEALS AND TRUMPETS: DO THEY FIT THE EVENTS OF AD 70?

We have examined critically two aspects of Bro. Whittaker’s thesis that the Revelation concerns the nation of Israel — in the past in the events of AD 70, and also in the future. First, we have found that evidence strongly points to the Revelation being given near the end of the first century, not before the AD 70 events. This rules out his basic idea. Secondly, we have seen that his thesis of ‘similarity of language’ providing evidence for the Seals and Trumpets representing a repeat of Old Testament judgements on Israel, was not valid evidence. There remains the ultimate test, do the symbols and their sequence correspond with his proposed historical facts? As the continuous historical interpretation and the nation of Israel interpretation are rival presentations, we have set out the Seals and the two interpretations in column form for easy comparison. Not all the details of the Seals are included, and if the reader wishes to make his own comparison, it would not be a long study. In Bro. Whittaker’s book the Seals and Trumpets in their AD 70 application occupy under 30 pages. Likewise in the book Apocalypse and History (Boulton and Barker, Christadelphian Office) the same events occupy under 30 pages.

After this tabulation of the Seals, various features of interpretation of the Trumpets are considered.

COMPARISON OF TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SEALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Details</th>
<th>Historical Interpretation — Roman world AD 96-325</th>
<th>Preterist Interpretation — Israel, around AD 70</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Seal — White horse, arrowless Bowman, to conquer and win a crown</td>
<td>AD 96-183 Horse — a recognised symbol of Roman state — see below. White — a long period of peace and prosperity. Bowman — gospel preaching gradually overcoming Paganism</td>
<td>Christianity conquering Judaism. Comment. It did not — Judaism continued to grow in ecclesias. Embodied in Catholic church — salvation by works. Judaism is essence of Jewish faith today. What is white horse?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Details</td>
<td>Historical Interpretation — Roman world AD 96-325</td>
<td>Preterist Interpretation — Israel, around AD 70</td>
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</table>
| 2nd Seal     | Red horse 'peace taken away', kill one another, the great dagger | AD 184-221. A period of violence, particularly assassination of emperors. Accurately symbolised by the Gr. machaira—'dagger', (not sword) | Violence AD 65-70  
   Comment. What peace was taken away at this time? |
| 3rd Seal     | Black horse, rider with balance, very expensive wheat and barley, 'touch not oil and wine' | AD 222-235  
   **Balance holder**—magistrate and lawgiver (see coin of Emperor Severus). Laws enacted, with crippling taxation, resulting in farms deserted, shortages and distress. The last emperor of the period, Severus reduced tax to one-thirteenth —'hurt not the oil and wine, these being the last element in the harvesting year | Famine, especially in Jerusalem AD 67-70. The 'oil and wine' class—those whose wounds had been bound up by Jesus—they did not suffer.  
   Comment. Jesus indicated they would suffer. Read Mark 13:14-27. |
| 4th Seal     | Pale horse, rider Death, followed by Hell—4th part of earth killed by sword, hunger, death and wild beasts | AD 236-303  
   **Rider Death**. Succession of vile emperors who rode the empire and brought it to a state of 'Death'.  
   **Gibbon** “the ruined empire seemed to approach the last and fatal moment of its dissention” (ch.10).  
   Comment. Why should Jerusalem be described as a fourth part? |
| 5th Seal     | Souls under the altar, slain for their testimony, waiting for their fellow martyrs | AD 304-311  
   Well known severe persecution of Christians by Diocletian. **Note** the accuracy of sequence of Seals 1-5 with history | Jewish hostility to Christians from Stephen onwards.  
   Comment. cf. Luke 21:12, 16, 17 and Acts. Also Nero's persecution of Christians was not at Jerusalem. |
| 6th Seal     | Great earthquake, heavens depart; kings, great, rich, chief captains all hid in dens and rocks from wrath of Lamb, islands and mountains moved | AD 312-24  
   Constantine defeats pagan rivals, new Christian constitution for Roman world.  
   **Fearing wrath of Lamb**.  
   See Chapter 5. | End of Jewish constitution.  
   Comment. It would be difficult to identify symbolic 'mountains' and 'islands' for Israel, but appropriate to the vast Roman empire. |
THE HORSE SYMBOL

"Roman Coins, of early date and beautiful fabric, such as the reader now sees engraved before him, still remain to illustrate to modern eyes this recognised connection of Mars, the horse, and the Roman people. Besides that, a horse too was one of the ancient Roman war-standards" (Elliott Pt. 1 pg. 126).

In the above comparison, the AD 70 interpretation lacks precision relative to the detailed symbology; and in some cases does not fit.

WERE THE TRUMPETS FULFILLED IN AD 70?

Now let us look at the Trumpets. They contain so many features, strange features, that it provides a good testing ground as to whether the proposed history is an accurate fit to the symbols. We have already shown in chapter 2 how well the Trumpets follow the Seals in a continuous historical fulfilment; they describe events in western and eastern Europe in the time of the 7th seal, following the Constantinian earthquake of the 6th Seal. But what of Bro. Whittaker’s interpretation? As the Trumpets belong to the 7th Seal, we would expect the events to be after the 6th Seal, that is, after the AD 70 events. But no, Bro. Whittaker makes them a repeat story of the Seals, covering the same time and events. This is unlikely to be true; to have a second series substantially covering the same events; and covering them in the same style, not even looking at the situation from another angle.

In the first Trumpet the burning up of a third of the trees and all the grass is, according to Bro. Whittaker, a second fulfilment of similar language in Jeremiah 7:20, and results in the destroying of national Jewry.

In the second Trumpet there are in the text three features: (1) there is a great mountain burning with fire, (2) it is cast into the sea, (3) the result is a destruction of the third part. Bro. Whittaker offers this explanation: the great mountain burning with fire is Zion. How the remnant of the Jewish nation in AD 65-70 is a great mountain we are not told; nor how it was a destructive fire. On Bro. Whittaker’s basic principle of looking back to the Old Testament for a parallel, one might have suggested this was a symbol of Babylon, for Jeremiah describes Babylon as a destroying mountain that became a burnt mountain (Jer. 51:25). How is Zion cast into the sea to produce death to a third of the creatures in the sea? Quoting: 'Josephus supplies the answer. He tells of a tremendous encounter
on the sea of Galilee between a Jewish fleet and ships commandeered by the Romans'. We leave the reader to choose between this explanation and the continuous historical explanation which relates the symbols to the invasion of Genseric and the Vandals into the western Empire, and the maritime battles that established his supremacy over the coastlands of Spain, North Africa and Italy. The activities affected 'a third' — the western third of the Roman empire. One may ask what is Bro. Whittaker's "third" that is destroyed?

In the third Trumpet a great star falls on the rivers and fountains of waters. Bro. Whittaker associates this star with Halley's comet, which was said to stand over the city of Jerusalem for a whole year. The rivers and fountains of waters is the land of Israel; but how the star brought destruction we are not told, other than to quote the words of Jesus, "I beheld Satan fall as lightning from heaven".

In the fifth Trumpet the locusts in the smoke and fire from the great furnace in the pit of the abyss are the Roman army coming against Jerusalem. The text describes the locusts: "On their heads were as it were crowns of gold, and their faces were as the faces of men: And they had hair as the hair of women". This is certainly an apt description of the Arabians — turbanned, unshaven faces, flowing hair — but it is not a description of the Romans. Regarding locusts, on Bro. Whittaker's principle of looking to the Old Testament for guidance, one suggests he should have decided they represented the Assyrians. Nahum describes the Assyrian army — "Thy crowned are as locusts, and thy captains as great grasshoppers" (3:17).

The locusts were to operate for 5 months. Bro. Whittaker says this is precisely the length of the final siege of Jerusalem. But note the problem. In the symbology the locusts were not to kill, but only to torment; men would seek death and not find it. This, then, will be the situation at Jerusalem. How can Bro. Whittaker explain it? To propose the Roman army were commanded not to kill the Jews does not make sense; and if not taken literally, how can it be applied symbolically?

Again, note that the locusts were not to hurt the grass and the trees (9:4). How can this be applied to Israel and Jerusalem, when at the same time, in the first Trumpet, Bro. Whittaker has the grass and the trees burnt up! This is confusion, to have two Trumpet Judgements for the same situation containing opposite instructions. Bro. Whittaker is not able to provide a detailed correspondence between the many symbols involved in the 5th Trumpet and the events of AD 70. Instead he gives us 'a final and utterly conclusive proof' that the Seals and Trumpets all relate to the AD 70 period, by putting side by side verses from Jeremiah 8 and Revelation 8 and 9, and showing general similarity of language. He tells us these are 'such facts' as we need.

In the sixth Trumpet the symbology is a vast army of 200,000,000 horsemen released from the river Euphrates. This, Bro. Whittaker says, represents the 60,000 men of the Roman army that took Jerusalem. The Bible text has very strange features for the horses — heads as the heads of lions issuing fire, smoke
and brimstone, their tails were like serpents, and the tails had heads with which they do hurt. Bro. Whittaker has no historical counterpart for all of this. By contrast the language describes exactly the warfare of the Turks and the use of gunpowder in their cannons.

Sufficient has been brought forward to show that the events in the land of Israel around AD 70 provide a completely unsatisfactory interpretation of the symbols. But the application of the symbols to the Roman empire and christianity is a compatible and an accurate interpretation.

WHY SO VAST AN AMOUNT OF PROPHECY REGARDING AD 65-70 AND NONE FOR THE PERIOD AFTER?

Before the Revelation was given there was ample prophecy regarding the ending of the Jewish State that occurred about AD 70. Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks, chapter 9, had put on record the desolation determined on Israel following their "cutting off of Messiah the Prince". Jesus referred to the coming desolation of Israel a number of times in his addresses and parables; and at the end of his ministry he gave a comprehensive outline of events up to the overthrow of Jerusalem, with appropriate warnings and encouragement. This was ample guidance for believers at that time. Did they need these further series of Seals and Trumpets with strange and overlapping detail?

Is it likely that God would provide a superabundance of prophetic guidance for those living around AD 70, and then provide nothing for the centuries ahead? This is barely credible. An interpretation that applies the Revelation only to the 1st century and the distant future, leaving 18 centuries or more of prophetic darkness cannot be accepted (cf. Amos 3:7). The only reasonable position is to expect that as Jesus provided an outline of events for believers in the immediate future, he later through John provided a similar amount of guidance for the centuries to follow. The book of Revelation thus takes its proper place, for two groups of symbols—the Seals and Trumpets — would give the observant saint a continuing account of events which would start to happen in the Roman world at the beginning of the second century.

Much of Bro. Whittaker's book is concerned with proposals about the future. His ideas are based on the world as he sees it today — Roman Catholic power rapidly declining; Russia and Communism dominant; growing Arab power and independence in the Middle East. But this is not interpreting the Revelation on his Biblical basis! Does he not come under his own censure upon the historical method, that using history to interpret the Revelation is 'unbiblical'? We point this out in passing. As his exposition has failed when dealing with the facts of history in the past, it is not felt necessary to examine here his uncertain proposals for the future.
Chapter 4

A FUTURIST INTERPRETATION

As presented in *Apocalypse for Everyman* (issued serially),* Bro. A. D. Norris.

In this chapter we give a summary of Bro. Norris’ views followed by extensive comments. His main criticisms of the continuous historical interpretation are answered in the next chapter.

A SUMMARY OF THE INTERPRETATION

*Apocalypse for Everyman* aims to give a sequential interpretation of Revelation chapters 6 to 20 as a steadily unfolding series of events, but all in the future, except for the first four seals.

Ch. 4 A vision of heaven itself with the Almighty on his throne.

Ch. 5 Jesus arriving in heaven.

Ch. 6 **Seals 1-4:** A general description of the character of the past 18 centuries— the world “beset with evils which will plague it until the Lord returns”.

**Seal 5:** “very close to the time of Jesus’ coming again”; disillusioned believers as souls under the altar crying for vengeance.

**Seal 6:** The era of Christ’s return; the great earthquake and the wrath of the Lamb.

Ch. 7 **Sealing the 144,000:** Believers being assured of God’s care, in response to the cry of Seal 5.

Ch. 8 **Four Wind Trumpets:** These will bring the first of a series of judgements, probably miraculous, like the ten plagues on Egypt.

*A second edition has recently been published. This is referred to in Appendix 3.*
Ch. 8 **Fifth Trumpet**: Locusts out of the abyss — this will be an intense 5 months blitz, a reign of terror.

**Sixth Trumpet**: The loosing of the four angels bound by the river Euphrates — some 200 million soldiers in war; "massive warfare and vast carnage exceeding anything known before".

Ch. 10 **The rainbowed angel** standing on the sea and the land with the lion roar and the seven thunders — a messenger from Christ commissioning mortal Christadelphians to preach the gospel after the terrifying events of chapter 9.

Ch. 11 **The downtrodden Holy City and two Witnesses**: Following the commission of chapter 10, there will be 3½ years preaching supported by ‘fire devouring their enemies’, ‘power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues’. The Witnesses, mortal Christadelphians — will be killed at Jerusalem and lie unburied 3½ days. They come alive and ascend to heaven, that is to the Judgement Seat.

Ch. 12 **The woman clothed with the sun, the man-child, the dragon cast out of heaven**: This chapter is said to be out of sequence. The woman is said to be Israel giving birth to Jesus, who as the man-child goes to heaven. The Dragon is the power of sin, represented by having a third of the angels, God having two thirds — the Dragon is powerful, but not equal to God. Jesus’ death casts Sin out of heaven.

**The woman in the wilderness**: This is the nation of Israel scattered amongst the nations. "The nation from whose womb he was born was subjected to grievous oppression by the Romans, and with the desolation of Palestine from A.D. 70 onwards was indeed exiled into the wilderness". Whereas in chapter 11 the 1260 days are taken literally, the 1260 days in this chapter 12 are only commented on as ‘a limited period’ — historically some 18 centuries! “Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God” is not dealt with.

Ch. 13 **The Beast of the Sea**: This is a dreadful antichristian power yet to arise, supported by a new false religion, described as the God of the earth, and later as the False Prophet. The Christadelphians witness against it, and the Beast persecutes them.

Ch. 14 **The Lamb on Mount Zion with the 144,000**: Christ has not actually returned, it is a picture in anticipation. The preaching of the gospel (v.6) is the same as the work of the two witnesses.

Ch. 15 **Preparing to pour out the Vials**: Now no more opportunity of repentance.

Ch. 16 **Vials poured out**: Another series of terrific judgements— “miraculous events” — carried out by angels.

Ch. 17 **The judgement of the Harlot riding the beast**: Israel in the wilderness in ch. 12 now emerges as the harlot in the wilderness to be judged. Somewhat unhappy with this, it is also proposed that the harlot might be apostate christianity; or it may represent a union of apostate Israel and apostate christianity.
Ch. 18 The destruction of Babylon the Great: 'Babylon' may be centred on Rome, or on Jerusalem; it may represent wealth and power of the nation of Israel, or of the Catholic system, or both. She is destroyed by the nations over which she has ruled. Believers are warned to 'Come out of her'. Christ has not yet returned.

Ch. 19 The Hallelujah rejoicing: This rejoicing is by the angels.

The marriage feast of the Lamb: Christ has come; believers probably now being taken to the Judgement Seat.

The Faithful and True and his army on white horses: Christ and the angels, and possibly including the saints, waging war with the beast and the kings of the earth; the beast and his False Prophet destroyed.

Ch. 20 Thrones and judgement: The time for the believers to be judged. Those on the thrones (v.4) are doing the judging—"the Lord Jesus Christ and his angelic tribunal".

Ch. 21 New Jerusalem, the bride adorned for her husband: The saints made immortal and reign with Christ.

FOUR GENERAL CRITICISMS OF FUTURIST EXPOSITIONS

(1) The Promise Of Prophetic Guidance
A futurist interpretation leaves 18 centuries of prophetic darkness. This is illustrated in the diagram on page 51. The application of the first four Seals to these centuries, merely saying they will be like all other periods of history, provides no prophetic light and encouragement for believers. But God has promised his people they will have such prophetic guidance, as says Amos: "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets". From the days of Abraham and the prophecy in Genesis 15:13-21, one can follow this prophetic word down to the detailed account Jesus gave his disciples in the Mount Olivet prophecy; and we can be sure that He has provided for the disciples in the succeeding centuries. Where is that record? Only a continuous historical interpretation of the Revelation provides it.

(2) "Things which must shortly come to pass"
The Revelation opens with the words "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass". The opening words of any book are important; they set the stage for what is to follow. A futurist interpretation is ruled out by these words. The book must be interpreted so that it allows events 'shortly to come to pass'; and the only way to do this is on the continuous historical basis — events start to be fulfilled soon after John received the Revelation, and the symbols have continued to be fulfilled through the centuries. In every age, for the believer, there have been events 'shortly to come to pass', providing guidance and encouragement.

(3) "Keeping the sayings of the prophecy"
We have already emphasised the charge given at the beginning and the end of the book, that the servants of God are required to 'keep' those things which
are written therein. But if the prophecy, and its many associated exhortations, belong largely to the 20th century, how could our brethren of the 2nd or the 10th or the 15th centuries possibly 'keep' what is written therein? Only the continuous historical interpretation permits a steady fulfilling of the words of the book, so that each generation can look back on the part fulfilled, have some understanding of the signs that belong to their own time; and look for the next events to be unfolded. In particular, they keep the sayings appropriate to their time, receive encouragement in the knowledge that God is in control, are strengthened in their particular circumstances, and are admonished by the warnings given.

(4) An Improbable Grouping Of Symbols
The Revelation has several distinct groups of symbols and judgements, as the seven Trumpets, the seven Vials, the Witnesses, the persecuting Beasts, the reign of the Harlot-City. As our diagram on page 51 shows there are over 200 events to be fulfilled. If all these are in the future, they have to be fitted into a short space of time. It is as if each group was set out on a sheet of transparent paper, and the sheets superimposed, so that in looking through them one sees all the events at once. But this gives such a bewildering quantity of symbols jostling against each other in a small space, that it seems an incredible presentation of prophecy. This is the more incredible when by pushing them all into a short space of time, we are left with a long empty gap of many centuries with no symbols. It must strike every reader as unreasonable that in a revelation of 22 chapters, containing enough symbols to describe approximately 2,000 years, the correct idea is to push them all up into a small space at the end of that period. The logical result of the futurist theory is disinterest in the Revelation wrought by a deluge of symbols obviously inexplicable.

An attempt has been made to counter this criticism by pointing out that in Daniel's prophecies there are gaps of many centuries. But this is no justification, rather the reverse. Revelation clearly picks up the symbols of Daniel, and fills in those gaps! This is reasonable; it was not appropriate for Daniel to give all the detail; but when the time of fulfilment is approaching, God provides the Revelation and the filling in of the gaps.

TWELVE DETAILED CRITICISMS

(1) Chapter 6: The Sixth Seal—Portents of the Lord's Return?
Great events are portrayed under the 6th Seal — the earthquake, the heavens passing away as a scroll rolled up, sun black as sackcloth, stars fallen from heaven, mountains and islands moved, men hiding themselves from the wrath of the Lamb. Bro. Norris cannot accept this as belonging to the time of Constantine, and insists it belongs to the coming of Christ. This ground of disagreement with the historical interpretation is dealt with in detail in chapter 5.

If for the moment we accept Bro. Norris' view, then the great earthquake
and the heaven passing away, etc., signify the ending of the present Order at the time of the 6th Seal. Likewise the universal panic — kings, great men, rich men, every bondman, every free man — all fleeing from the wrath of the Lamb and the one sitting on the throne, indicates Christ is here. But on the basis of Bro. Norris’ sequential unfolding of the Apocalypse, this puts the end of the present Order out of place. It takes place before the opening of the 7th Seal, and the pouring out of the Trumpet judgements; before the great events of the Vials. Clearly Bro. Norris is in difficulty; for he wants the appearing of Christ to be near the end of the Revelation, in chapter 19. By applying the 6th Seal to the time of Christ’s coming and not to Constantine, Christ is on the scene too early. In an endeavour to escape this difficulty Bro. Norris calls the events under the 6th Seal ‘portents’ — signs and warnings of Christ’s coming. But the events set out in the 6th Seal are not ‘portents’ of Christ’s coming — events heralding his coming. As we have just seen, under this seal the ruling Gentile ‘heavens’ pass away; a great political earthquake occurs — not ‘is going to occur in the future’; universal panic happens — not ‘is something for the future’.* The only way out of the difficulty is to apply the 6th Seal to the appropriate time in history, the time of Constantine.

(2) Chapter 7: What is the Sealing of the 144,000?

John sees an angel ascending from the East, having the seal of the living God, and he seals the servants of God in their foreheads. Bro. Norris says this is God comforting and assuring latter-day believers in the midst of their trials. But this is not the idea conveyed by the symbology. Sealing in the forehead is implanting the truth of God in the mind. The Revelation gives us this interpretation. It is the mark distinguishing the faithful from the unbelieving world. So 9:4 — the locusts were to “hurt” only those men “which have not the seal of God in their foreheads”. The redeemed are so described in Revelation 14, “Lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an 144,000, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. . .these were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb.” Bro. Norris

*Strangely Bro. Norris himself describes the details of the 6th Seal as the great day of the Lord — not portents of it. Referring to Rev. 6:14, “the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up”: “It is impossible to understand the language here being used of any smalltime activity of some human monarch playing God before his friends and enemies (a reference to Constantine, G.P.). This in its context, in language, and in setting, is a message about the activities of God himself, directed towards bringing to an end the existing order of things and ushering in the new”.

Again, referring to “every mountain and island were removed out of their places”: “It is as though every obstacle which would hinder the triumphant march of God to victory is trampled down or brushed aside; as He plants His footsteps in the sea, the islands are nudged into place to provide His stepping-stones. And we might picture men fleeing to the islands for refuge, only to find the refuge withdrawn from them as, in a figure, God moves the very islands themselves where He wills.”

Referring to Rev. 6:15, men hiding themselves: “His terrors strike the world so that men enter into the rock and hide in the dust before the terror of the LORD (Isa. 2:10, 19, 21). Nothing less than the Second Advent can satisfy the language here before us”.


does not tell us who will be the angel ascending from the East. The historical exposition explains the detail here. After the 6th Seal and the Constantinian revolution, Christianity was so corrupt that God instituted a new preaching, calling people out from apostate Christianity. Whereas in the first three centuries the Truth had been largely in the Middle East and the Mediterranean, it now started a definite westward progress. The ‘angel’ ascending from the East represents those preachers of saving Truth found in North Africa — the Donatists; in Asia Minor and up the Danube — the Paulicians; and in western Europe — the Waldenses and Petrobruscians.

(3) Chapter 9: 200,000,000 Horsemen Engaged In A Future War
Bro. Norris speculates on a future army of the order of 200,000,000 men from the “Euphratean” region. He has, however, no substantial interpretation of the extensive detail of this Trumpet. The very precise period of time in which the armies operate—“an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year” is vaguely seen as “the thought of the ‘very instant’ which God has determined for this development”. The breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone; the horses heads as lions, their mouths issuing fire, smoke and brimstone; their tails like serpents with which they hurt — all these details are passed over. There is a very real danger that such loose treatment of Scripture could undermine our basic Christadelphian approach to interpretation. Again, let the reader see how accurately all the symbols of this chapter fit the continuous historical interpretation for the time of the Turkish invasions, and the use of gunpowder (briefly set out in chapter two).

(4) Chapter 10: Christadelphians Commissioned To Witness By The Mighty Rainbowed Angel
The rainbowed angel is interpreted by Bro. Norris as a messenger who will come from Jesus to prepare Christadelphians for their witnessing work (as in chapter 11) after the terrible judgements of chapters 8 and 9. How can this be an adequate interpretation of the language used here — a mighty angel standing on the sea and the land, face as the sun, feet as pillars of fire, roaring as a lion, uttering 7 thunders? This is a manifestation of great power.

In this chapter John is told he has to carry out preaching, and this preaching according to Bro. Norris is detailed in the 11th chapter. But, to Bro. Norris the resurrection does not take place until many events after this. How can John do his witnessing if he is dead? Clearly the witnessing of chapter 10 cannot be the witnessing of chapter 11. In Bro. Thomas’ exposition, the rainbowed angel is a symbol for Christ and his glorified saints descending on the European territory of the enemy.

(5) Chapter 11: Mortal Christadelphians Waging War
Bro. Norris has the witnessing of chapter 11 as a sequel to chapter 10. The witnesses are mortal Christadelphians — faithful witnesses to God’s word who will display His gospel in adversity. They support their witness with war and destruction. “That fire proceeds out of their mouths’ means, no doubt,
Diagram Based on 'Apocalypse for Everyman'

Bro. A. D. Norris

CENTURIES OF PROPHETIC DARKNESS

AD 100 300 500 700 900 1100 1300 1500 1700 1900

2 SEALS
Chs. 6, 7
36 EVENTS

TRUMPETS
Chs. 8, 9, 10
58 EVENTS

WITNESSES
Ch. 11
22 EVENTS

BEASTS AND LAMB
Chs. 12, 18, 14
48 EVENTS

VIALS
Chs. 15, 16
24 EVENTS

HARLOT AT CITY
Chs. 17, 18, 19
31 EVENTS

TOTAL approx. 220 EVENTS

3 1/2 YEARS
RESURRECTION
TODAY
that at their word the fire comes down from heaven to destroy their enemies as it did at the word of Elijah. . . ‘. At this time Jesus has not returned to the earth. Do we as a community genuinely believe in this aggressive role for brethren in their future missionary work? What will the tribunals say to such an idea?

(6) Chapter 11: Ascended Up To Heaven — To The Judgement Seat
These Christadelphians, their witness finished, are dead in Jerusalem for 3½ days, and then they ascend up to heaven — that is, to the Judgement Seat! Can one seriously interpret heaven as the Judgement Seat? Are verses 11 and 12 a description of going to the Judgement Seat? Verse 12 reads: “And they (the witnesses) heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them”. Will the world behold the saints assembled at the Judgement Seat? Does not Jesus say he comes as a thief?

The events of the French Revolution accurately fit these words and the rest of what we read in verses 13 and 14.

(7) Chapter 12: Israel As The Woman Clothed With The Sun And The Moon Under Her Feet
The sun is a figure for strength and rulership and glory. When Jesus was born Israel was subject to Rome, and it was declared at his trial, “We have no king but Caesar”. It is quite inappropriate to say Israel was clothed with the sun. Furthermore, the woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet is given as a remarkable sign at that time. We read “There appeared a great wonder in heaven”. So at the time of Jesus’ birth a situation must have developed fulfilling the words “clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet”; and this was to be a striking sign. Nothing like it occurred. We ask: How was Israel clothed with the sun at this time; what moon was put under her feet? The language does not fit the nation of Israel when Jesus was born. But it fits the development of formal Christianity at the time of Constantine.

The symbols of Revelation 12 are given further consideration in the following chapter of this book.

(8) Chapter 12: Jesus And The Dragon In Heaven
In Apocalypse for Everyman the woman in chapter 12 is Israel; Michael and the Man-child are Jesus Christ; the Dragon is Sin revealed in the Roman authorities; “caught up unto God and to his throne” is Jesus going to heaven. Bro. Norris has a problem here, in that the Dragon is also in heaven, and there is war in heaven between Jesus (Michael) and the Dragon. The best that Bro. Norris can say is: “Perhaps it is best to see the vision as one whose topography cannot be pictured in earthly, local terms, in which we distinguish those things which occur in God’s purpose (and are seen in heaven) from those things which concern His Son and His saints (who appear close before his throne); while the earth denotes the centre of operations on which God’s judgements and purpose are worked out amongst the inhabitants of the world
who have not accepted the call according to His purpose'. The reader must make the best sense he can of this. When an interpretation is not on sound lines, these problems will occur. There is no difficulty here with the continuous historical interpretation; "heaven" is the place of rulership; and in this Roman rulership there was indeed great warfare — between Constantine and the pagan rulers, i.e. between Michael and the Dragon. This is dealt with fully in chapter 5 of this book.

(9) Chapter 12: The Nation Of Israel Nourished In The Wilderness
The woman in the wilderness, we are told, is the nation of Israel scattered amongst her enemies, suffering God's punishment. Moses prophesied Israel's punishment in Deut. 28:63, "So the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought..."; and Jeremiah: "And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to destroy, and to afflict..." (31:28). It was the time when God hid His face from them, Ezekiel 39:23. In the light of these scriptures, how inappropriate for an interpretation of the Revelation to say that at this time the nation of Israel was 'nourished' and 'fed' by God. Such language does not fit the nation of Israel at this time. But it does fit God's providential care of the anti-catholic people and the 'remnants of the woman's seed' who were subject to Catholic persecution after the time of Constantine.

With the nation of Israel as his theme in this chapter, Bro. Norris can give no comment on the striking phrase in this chapter: "I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God... and they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb". Again, these words are applicable to the christians of the time; as we show in chapter 5 this is reflected in the sayings of Eusebius and others.

(10) Chapter 17: Israel The Harlot On The Beast
Bro. Norris takes a page or more in trying to establish that the woman that entered the wilderness in chapter 12 is the same woman that appears as the harlot in the wilderness in chapter 17. This would mean that Israel is to become the embodiment of ancient Babylon's myths and mystery religion, that she will deceive and 'intoxicate' the whole world with her teaching, or 'wine', that she will be fabulously rich and powerful as presented by the great city Babylon in chapter 18, and that she will disappear as a millstone dropped into the sea. An alternative is proposed that somehow the woman of chapter 12, Israel, has become apostate christianity in chapter 17; and it is further proposed that perhaps the symbols represent both. Such speculation needs no further comment.

(11) Chapter 19, etc.: Angels Carry Out The Judgements
Apart from the judgements carried out by mortal Christadelphians in chapter 11, all the judgements at the coming of Christ are carried out by angels, according to Bro. Norris, although the saints may be included with the angels
in Rev. 19:11-21. But the Bible evidence is that it is the saints who carry out the judgements. In Daniel 7:18 it is the saints that take the kingdom from the fourth beast and possess the kingdom for ever and ever. Notice they first ‘take’ the kingdom, then ‘possess’ it. Once cannot say these saints are angels, because the angels do not ‘possess’ the kingdom. In the same chapter, at the end, it is repeated that after the little Horn has worn out the saints, “the judgement shall sit and they (the saints) shall take away his (the little horn’s) dominion, to consume and destroy it unto the end”. So the saints are the destroyers both of the little horn (the harlot, the papal power) and the beast.

The Revelation itself is also quite clear on this important matter. Chapter 17 tells us the ten horns and the beast make war with the lamb, “and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful” (17:14). “Called, chosen and faithful” is a description of the saints: angels are not the Lamb’s “called and chosen” (see Ephesians 1:1-5).

It is appropriate and fit that those carrying out the judgements are those who have suffered. So the Psalmist declared: “Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgements written: this honour have all his saints” (Ps. 149:5-9).

(12) Chapters 20, 21: Punishment Of The Unfaithful

According to Revelation 20:15 and 21:8 the unfaithful at the judgement seat are punished by sharing the calamities expressed in the words: “cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone”. But in the sequential interpretation of Bro. Norris, destruction in this lake of fire has already occurred (Rev. 19:20), before the judgement seat of Rev. 20:4. How then can the unfaithful be cast into it? The scriptures quoted require that the resurrection and judgement has taken place before the ‘lake of fire’ is developed.

It is clear that Bro. Norris’ effort to piece together the Revelation throws up glaring faults and problems. What we have established is that because the saints carry out the future judgements, they must have been resurrected before these judgements occur. So instead of the resurrection taking place at the end of the epoch of Christ’s return, it takes place at the beginning. Let us accept the interpretation that the Vials have been fulfilled as far as the frog spirits of the 6th Vial (see the evidence in chapter 8). This means we now await the next item: “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth”. How we interpret the Revelation certainly affects our outlook — whether we are looking for Christ to call us to judgement; or whether we are looking for a whole series of dramatic world-shaking events before Christ actually comes.
Chapter 5
DOES THE SIXTH SEAL BELONG TO THE TIME OF CONSTANTINE?

TWO PROBLEMS TO BE FACED

In the continuous historical interpretation the 6th Seal fits satisfactorily into the sequence of history. The 5th Seal describes the severe Diocletian persecution of the christians at the beginning of the 4th century; and this is followed by the political and religious upheaval under Constantine, expressed by the 6th Seal and also by the symbols of Revelation chapter 12. Revelation chapter 7 follows the 6th Seal opening with the words “after these things”, and there is the sealing work before the Trumpet judgements under the 7th Seal begin. The Trumpet judgements fit accurately the course of history from the end of the 4th century onwards for a 1000 years. Bro. Norris was well acquainted with all this. Why then his Futurist interpretation?

He provides two reasons when dealing with this 6th Seal:

1. The language is too grand to describe the time of Constantine.
2. Men hiding themselves from the wrath of the Lamb on the throne must be when Christ comes.

His conviction is very strong. Quoting: ‘It is impossible to understand the language here being used of any small-time activity of some human monarch playing God before his friends and enemies. This in context, in language, and in setting, is a message about the activities of God himself, directed towards bringing to an end the existing order of things and ushering in the ‘new’. Later ‘Absolutely everything in Scripture cries out that Revelation 6:12-17 is pointing to the time of the end, but that it is that return to which this Seal points the way is one of the most certain things in all Scriptural interpretation’.”
In this chapter we give evidence showing that the remarkable language of the Seal is suitable for the Constantinian revolution, and also men hiding themselves in the rocks from the wrath of the one on the throne, taken symbolically, was also fulfilled then. In addition we shall show how the symbols of Revelation 12 were fulfilled at this time. The great obstacles raised by Bro. Norris being removed, we shall have complete confidence in the continuous historical interpretation.

**IS THE LANGUAGE OF THE 6TH SEAL TOO GRAND FOR CONSTANTINE?**

Consideration of similar language used to describe events in the time of the Old Testament will show that it is quite appropriate to apply the language of the 6th Seal to the time of Constantine.

Revelation 6:12-17:

"... And, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

And the kings of the earth, and the great men... and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

Isaiah 13: The Burden Of Babylon

"I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the LORD of hosts mustereth the host of the battle... Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land (earth) desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible... Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall be removed out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger... Behold I will stir up the Medes against them... . . ."

Zephaniah 1:14: Against Judah

"The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice
of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities. . ”

Ezekiel 32:5-8: Against Egypt

“And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height. I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou wastest, even to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee. And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon the land, saith the Lord GOD”.

The language of the 6th Seal is not, of course, identical with these quotations, but it is the same quality, depicting great happenings in the past. If the prophets use such language to depict the overthrow of Chaldean Babylon, Judah and Egypt, there can be no objection to such language to describe the decisive battles, and the political and religious upheaval at the time of Constantine. What follows will make this more apparent. This was a “Day of the LORD”, as in earlier times, when by human agency God swept away the existing order of things.

So our next question to consider is, did the events in the time of Constantine match up to the language in the 6th Seal?

THE GREATNESS OF THE CONSTANTINIAN REVOLUTION

A blackened sun, the moon turned to blood, heaven rolled away, etc., indicates great civil and religious changes of constitution. Evidence for this is adequately provided by Gibbon in his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, in chapters 17 and 20.

A NEW CONSTITUTION

The whole of Gibbon’s chapter 17, occupying over 60 pages, is devoted to the changes brought about by Constantine in the political and civil spheres. The heading of the chapter is “Foundation of Constantinople — Political System of Constantine and his successors — Military Discipline — The Palace — The Finances”. He emphasises in his opening paragraph that the new order was quite distinct from the old.

“After a tranquil and prosperous reign the conqueror bequeathed to his family the inheritance of the Roman Empire; a new capital, a new policy, and a new religion; and the innovations which he established have been embraced and consecrated by succeeding generations.”

Later in the chapter he introduces the description of the military and civil government and officers with the words:

“The foundation of a new capital is naturally connected with the establishment of a new form of civil and military administration”. 
Notice the frequent use of ‘new’ — the old Order had gone. His 17th chapter describes in great detail a different constitution; a new heavens with its sun, moon and stars.

FUNDAMENTAL RELIGIOUS CHANGES

But real as was the change in the civil and military rule of the Roman empire at this time, the change in the State religion was far greater and of a most fundamental character. It had its moral and political bearings. Morally the change was from the worship of the host of pagan gods, with temples of idols and altars of sacrifice, with sensuous and cruel rites, to the higher standards of morality contained in the Bible and to the belief in the forgiveness of personal sins by the death of Jesus, the Lamb of God. At this time the moral power of Christianity had not been spoiled by the later apostasy of image and relic worship, and other degrading practices. A quotation from Prudentius, a 4th century writer, will convey the ugly character of Pagan ritual, compared with the higher qualities of Christianity, especially at this time before it became much more corrupt.

“The high priest of the Great Mother, a golden crown on his head, his temples richly bound with fillets, his toga worn cincture, Gabino descends into a deep fosse which is completely covered by a platform of planks pierced by a great number of fine holes. On to this platform is led a huge bull, bedecked with garlands of flowers, his front gleaming with gold. His breast is pierced by the consecrated spear, and the torrent of hot, streaming blood floods the covering of the trench, and rains through the thousand chinks and perforations on the expectant priest below, who throws back his head the better to present cheeks, lips, ears, nostrils and even tongue and palate to the purifying baptism. When life has fled and left cold the body of the slain bullock, and the flamens have removed it, the priest emerges, and with hair, beard, and vestments dripping with blood, presents himself to the expectant throng of worshippers, who salute and do obeisance to him as to one who has been purified.” (Early Christianity and Its Rivals, Part III, G. H. Box).

Augustine in the “City of God” describes the vile immorality associated with the pagan worship:—

“that beastliness of obscene speeches and actions which the players acted in public before the (image of) the Mother of all the gods, and in sight and hearing of a huge multitude of both sexes (and which) they would be ashamed to act at home in private before their mothers”.

POLITICAL NATURE OF THE RELIGIOUS REVOLUTION

In chapter 20 of his Decline and Fall, Gibbon gives a very full account, 40 pages, of this tremendous revolution in religion in the Roman Empire. The heading of the chapter reads: “The Motives, Progress, and Effects of the Christian or Catholic Church”. The new laws that prohibited pagan rites,
demolished temples and established the Christian church, gave a privileged status to the many officers of the church. Here are a few quotations:

"While the civil and military professions were separated by the policy of Constantine, a new and perpetual order of ecclesiastical ministers, always respectable, sometimes dangerous, was established in church and state".

"The catholic church was administered by the spiritual and legal jurisdiction of eighteen hundred bishops".

"The bishop was the perpetual censor of the morals of his people. The discipline of penance was digested into a system of canonical jurisprudence, which accurately defined the duty of private and public confession, the rules of evidence, the degrees of guilt, and the measure of punishment".

"The arbitration of the bishops was ratified by a positive law, and the judges were instructed to execute, without appeal or delay, the episcopal decrees".

"The whole body of the catholic clergy, more numerous, perhaps, than the legions, was exempted by the emperors from all service; private or public, all municipal offices, and all personal taxes and contributions, which pressed on their fellow-citizens with intolerable weight".

"Under a despotical government, the bishops alone enjoyed and asserted the inestimable privilege of being tried only by their peers, and even in a capital accusation a synod of their brethren were the sole judges of their guilt or innocence".

What a change from 20 years earlier when Christianity was still a persecuted and despised sect.

These changes in constitution, government and religion were the amazing work of one man in his lifetime. Having conquered his numerous enemies and rivals, he became the supreme power in the Roman world, and could thus carry out his designs without effective opposition. Leaving Rome and the old senate behind, he started afresh at Constantinople, and laid the foundations of a new constitution in church and state that endured for many centuries.

So there is no reason to suggest that the language of the 6th seal is too spectacular for the changes in the time of Constantine. Gibbon in fact uses language that is strikingly similar:

"The ruin of the Pagan religion is described by the sophists as a dreadful and amazing prodigy; which covered the earth with darkness, and restored the ancient dominion of chaos and night."

This was the view of the departed pagans, and how similar the language of Rev. 6:12-13:

"...the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, etc."
THE PAGANS FLEETING FROM THE WRATH OF THE LAMB

"...hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (6:15, 16).

We next have to answer the criticism that the language just quoted could not apply to the time of Constantine. The remarkable thing however, is that history relates how the pagan people and rulers did fear the all-prevailing might of Constantine and the 'Christians' crusading in the name of Christ; just as the inhabitants of Canaan feared and fled before Joshua and Israel and their God Yahweh.

The second war of Constantine against Licinius was openly declared as a war between the pagan gods, on the one hand, and Christ and the God of the bible on the other hand. The pagans were well acquainted with the Christian belief that Christ was alive and powerful in heaven at the right hand of his Father. As Constantine won battle after battle in the name of Christ, the pagans really did fear Christ and the God of heaven.

Now to express these historical facts in symbolical prophecy what was more natural than to say they feared the wrath of the Lamb and the One sitting on the throne. We must remember that the Lamb and the One sitting on the throne are already symbols in the vision which John is seeing, and because they have been in view all the while John sees the seals being undone, they are the obvious symbols to use when reference is made to the power of Christ and God. To refer to these symbols in the 6th seal does not mean that the throne of Christ was established in the earth at that time, any more than the reference to the Lamb in the 1st seal means that Christ had returned to the earth in the 1st seal.

Without any doubt the pagans feared this power of Christ and God, and could say appropriately in symbolical prophecy what was more natural than to say they feared the wrath of the Lamb and the One sitting on the throne. We must remember that the Lamb and the One sitting on the throne are already symbols in the vision which John is seeing, and because they have been in view all the while John sees the seals being undone, they are the obvious symbols to use when reference is made to the power of Christ and God. To refer to these symbols in the 6th seal does not mean that the throne of Christ was established in the earth at that time, any more than the reference to the Lamb in the 1st seal means that Christ had returned to the earth in the 1st seal.

Without any doubt the pagans feared this power of Christ and God, and could say appropriately in symbol to the mountains and rocks: "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb". Gibbon gives adequate proof of this situation in his 20th chapter.

In the decisive battle of Adrianople, AD 324, when Licinius the defender of paganism was overcome by Constantine, Licinius declared his realisation that it was a conflict between paganism and Christ. Before the battle he assembled with his friends in a sacred grove with its idol-statues, lighted wax tapers, etc., and offered his sacrifices. He then said:

"Friends and fellow-warriors, these are the gods of our ancestors, whom, received from our earliest predecessors as objects of worship, we honor; but he who commands the army that is drawn up against us, having adopted an atheistic opinion, violates the customs of the fathers, venerating a god from abroad, I know not whence, and disgraces his troops with his ignominious standard (the Cross with the monogram of Christ) trusting in which he arms
not so much against us as against the gods whom he offends. This occasion therefore will show which of us errs in his belief, and will decide between the gods who are honored by us, and by the other party; for either by showing us the victors, it will show our gods are most justly regarded as auxiliaries and saviours; or, if the Deity of Constantine, come from I know not whence, shall prevail over ours, which are many, let no one thereafter doubt what Deity ought to be worshipped, but go to the strongest, and present to him the reward of the victory. If the foreign god, whom we now deride, should appear the mightiest, we must acknowledge and honor him, and bid farewell to those to whom we have vainly lit wax tapers. But if ours prevail, which is not to be doubted, then, after the victory, we must proceed to war against the atheists”.

The fear of Christ and God was expressed by the emperor Galerius in the agonies of his death-bed when he entreated the christians in a public proclamation to pray to their God (i.e. Christ) for him. Likewise Maximin soon after, confessed his guilt and called on Christ to show compassion on him. Thus were the pagans conscious that their gods had fallen before the power of Christ. A bas-relief still remains on Constantine’s triumphal arch at Rome and represents the terror of Maxentius and his army in their flight across the Tiber after defeat at the battle of Milvan Bridge, when Constantine became chief Emperor in Rome. Gibbon shows clearly that Constantine was regarded as the servant of Christ, fighting the battles of the Lord. He poured out the symbolic ‘wrath of the Lamb’:

“The piety of Constantine was admitted as an unexceptional proof of the justice of his arms and his use of victory confirmed the opinion of the christians that their hero was inspired and conducted by the Lord of Hosts.”

“The enthusiasm which inspired the troops, and perhaps Constantine himself, had sharpened their swords while it satisfied their conscience. They marched to battle with the full assurance that the same God who had formerly opened a passage to the Israelites through the waters of Jordan, and had thrown down the walls of Jericho at the sound of the trumpets of Joshua, would display his visible majesty and power in the victory of Constantine”.

Gibbon then refers to the alleged miracle, widely accepted, that Constantine was inspired by a vision of the Cross and a voice that told him to conquer in the name of this ensign. So the Cross became his military ensign.

“The same symbol (the Cross) sanctified the arms of the soldiers of Constantine; the cross glittered on their helmet, was engraved on their shields, was interwoven into their banners; and the consecrated emblems which adorned the person of the emperor himself were distinguished only by richer materials and more exquisite workmanship. But the principal standard which displayed the triumph of the cross was styled the Labarum. . .The summit of the pike supported a crown of gold, which enclosed the mysterious monogram, at once expressive of the figure of the cross and the initial letters of the name of
Christ...in the second civil war Licinius felt and dreaded the power of this consecrated banner, the sight of which in the distress of battle animated the soldiers of Constantine with invincible enthusiasm, and scattered terror and dismay through the ranks of the adverse legions”.

All these quotations taken together show the power of the name of Christ among the armies both of Constantine and his enemies; and how the pagans, losing battle after battle before the invincible Constantine, feared the Christ, and “the wrath of the Lamb”.

REVELATION CHAPTER 12 CONFIRMS THE APPLICATION OF THE 6TH SEAL TO CONSTANTINE.

In the continuous historical interpretation, chapters 12 and 13 describe the development of the Christian apostasy, and its persecution of the saints. The first part of chapter 12 runs parallel with the 6th Seal, the Seal giving the political side and chapter 12 the religious side. The chapter opens with a great sign of a woman in heaven, clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet. This is a summary statement — what will be attained when the man child reaches heaven and casts out the Dragon. Constantine, the manchild, as the champion of the Christians defeats his pagan rivals, and is the sole ruler in the ‘heaven’ of the Roman world. The Christian church, instead of being persecuted is now received into imperial favour; she is clothed with the sun, she is in heaven, the pagan moon is under her feet. It is not proposed to recount all the complex history of the time and show how it fits the symbols. The diagram (page 63) expresses the great change that took place.

Two criticism of this interpretation are made:
(1) Can we say that in symbol Constantine was “caught up unto God and his throne”?
(2) Could it possibly be true that at this time “a loud voice in heaven” declared “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God”?

We will take the second criticism first.

THE APPARENT COMING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

By Constantine’s time the millennial reign of Christ and his return to the earth was but a dim idea. The language of his return was taken as figurative and the rapidly growing concept was that the Church was the kingdom of God. The rapid change of fortune under Constantine encouraged the idea. The following quotations from Eusebius and Lactantius, who were contemporary with the scene, show that in the eyes of the ‘christians’ at the time, the kingdom of God had come.

“On the fall of Licinius”, says Eusebius, “the great conqueror Constantine and his son Crispus the Caesar, received the East as theirs, established one government as formerly over the Romans, and swayed the whole in peace from east to west, and from north to south. The people therefore being freed from all fear of the
CH. 12 AND THE GREAT EVENTS OF CONSTANTINE'S TIME

- **Man of Sin**
- **Wreath of 12 Stars**
- **Catholic Woman**
- **Pagan Moon**
- **Woman in Wilderness**
- **Man Child**
- **Woman in Travail 'Christians'**
- **Michael and Angels 2/3 of Stars**
- **War in Heaven**
- **Fiery Red Dragon and Angels 1/3 of Stars**

AD 312

AD 324
Court by which they had before been overwhelmed, held festal days of great splendour. There were illuminations everywhere. They who were before dejected, looked on one another with joyful aspects and smiles, and with choirs and hymns through the cities and country, gave honour, first to God the Supreme Ruler of all, as they were taught, and then to the pious emperor and his children. The miseries and impiety of the past were forgotten, joy and exultation prevailed at the blessings now promised, and happy anticipations of the future. Philanthropic edicts were everywhere published by the emperor, and laws that displayed his munificence and piety.”

“The event surpassed all words. Soldiers with naked swords kept watch round the palace-gate. But the men of God passed through the midst of them without fear, and entered the heart of the palace. And they sat down, some at the emperor’s table, the rest at tables on either side of his. It looked like the very image of the kingdom of Christ; and was altogether more like a dream than a reality.”

“On the occasion of opening a new catholic temple at Tyre, Eusebius said to the multitude assembled, ‘What so many of the Lord’s saints and confessors before our time desired to see and saw not, and to hear and heard not, that behold now before our eyes’. It was of us the prophet spake when he told how the wilderness and the solitary place should be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the lily. Whereas the church was widowed and desolate, her children have now to exclaim to her, Make room, enlarge thy borders: the place is too strait for us. The promise is fulfilling to her, ‘In righteousness shalt thou be established: all thy children shall be taught of God: and great shall be the peace of thy children’”.

Lactantius writes:

“Let us celebrate the triumph of God with gladness; let us commemorate His victory with praise; let us make mention in our prayers day and night of the peace which after ten years of persecution, He has conferred on his people”.

Woman with bow placing coronal wreath of victory on Constantine, holding the Christian monogram (Rev. 6:2; 12).
Such was the “loud voice” saying in the new Heaven of the Roman world “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ” (Rev. 12:10).

There was a remarkable coin minted at this time showing Constantine being crowned with a wreath of victory by a woman with a large bow. This shows that they understood his victory as the climax of two centuries of conflict by the first Seal rider on the horse (ch. 6:2). This will explain the appropriateness of the next verse in chapter 12: “They overcame him (the Dragon) by the blood ofthe Lamb”.

ASCENDING TO THE THRONE OF GOD

Constantine saw himself as God’s ruler, on God’s throne, as the kings of Israel were rulers on God’s throne. Previous quotations have shown that Constantine regarded himself as the servant of Christ, fighting God’s battles, like Joshua of old. The coin just referred to indicates that he saw himself as the victor receiving the crown. Eusebius says he recognised God as the author of his success. He writes, that “when the whole was, by the power of God, the Saviour, subjected to Constantine, he made known to all the giver of his prosperity, and testifies that God, not he, was the author of his victories.”

More specific than Eusebius’ words is Constantine personally applying to himself the very symbology of chapter 12. Constantine wrote to Eusebius: “that Dragon having been deposed from the governance of affairs, by God’s providence”. And in another letter: “But now that liberty is restored, and that Dragon driven from the administration of public affairs by the providence of the Supreme Deity, and our instrumentality, we trust that all can see the efficacy of the Divine power” (quotations from Gibbon).

Even more telling and specific than these quotations are two coins showing Constantine as overcoming the Dragon in the name of Christ. On the one side of each coin is the head of Constantine. On the other side of one coin there is his ‘symbol’ of Christ, the X with P super-imposed, as his standard and the dragon under his foot; in the other the christian standard is like a stake on the conquered serpent. No one can deny that, instructed by the christians, Constantine saw himself as fulfilling the symbols of Revelation 12 — he was the Michael, the Man child, in heaven and he had cast out the dragon.

In the light of the evidence of these coins, and the quotations from people living at the time, and the view expressed that God was reigning through Constantine, what is difficult in applying the symbolism of the man-child ascending the throne of God to Constantine? If the ‘christian’ of that time saw Revelation 12 being fulfilled before their eyes, why should we in the 20th century say this cannot be so?

EXTRACTS FROM THE HISTORIAN MICHAEL GRANT

In conclusion we quote a few words from the well-known historian Michael Grant in his latest book “History of Rome” 1978, page 213. This shows that modern historical research supports the assessment of Constantine’s great work by
1. COINS 1 AND 2: The symbol of Christ victorious over the Dragon (Rev. 12).

Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

"Indeed, he (Constantine) had brought a whole new world into being. Constantine himself was profoundly aware of the vastness and holiness of his task: he saw himself as the thirteenth apostle of Jesus, and as God's Messianic regent upon earth".

And regarding "The great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars", Michael Grant's conclusion is very appropriate:

"Its (church) elevation, therefore, to become the ruling section of the empire was one of the most surprising phenomena in Roman history" (page 212).
Chapter 6
‘1260’—DAYS OR YEARS?

A KEY QUESTION

A time period represented by ‘1260 days’ occurs several times in Daniel and Revelation, either as 1260; or 42 months; or time, times and a half where time = 360, times = 2 × 360 = 720, a half = 180, so that 360 + 720 + 180 = 1260 (3 1/2 × 360 = 1260). The period concerns a conflict between hostile parties — the people standing for God, and people opposed to God. In Revelation 11, the Holy City is trodden under foot 42 months, the Two Witnesses prophesy and wage war for 1260 days; in chapter 12 the fleeing persecuted woman is nourished in the wilderness for 3 1/2 times; in chapter 13 the beast has power to continue 1260 days and persecutes the saints.

The important question to be considered is whether this conflict is a long one through centuries, i.e., a conflict of 1260 years on the basis of a day for a year; or whether it is a brief conflict of 3 1/2 years (1260 literal days) in a final clash when Christ returns. In the Futurist interpretation the time periods are taken as 3 1/2 years. Bro. Norris gives no justification for taking literally a main item in a book of symbol; though understandably a 1260 year period would seem quite unreasonable for the period ahead of us for the judgements before the kingdom is established. In other words, having decided on a Futurist interpretation, 1260 literal days become a necessity. We have then a key question. If we find the 1260 should be taken as years, this will dismiss the Futurist interpretation.

Our section headings for this chapter are:—
2. The decorum of the symbols involves short for long.
3. Evidence from Daniel for 1260 years.
4. Exact historical fulfilment of 1260 years.

THE REVELATION A BOOK OF SYMBOL

The book of Revelation from beginning to end is a book of symbols. We read
of a lightstand, stars in the hand, a door in heaven, a glassy sea, souls under an altar, heaven departing as a scroll rolled up, servants sealed in the forehead, robes made white in blood, fire from the altar cast into the earth, locusts and smoke coming out of a pit, a woman fleeing from a flood of water, a beast with seven heads and ten horns, and so on to the end of the book with a Holy City, cubical in shape, and its height some 1,500 miles. If therefore the Revelation is generally a book of sign, we ought to make its time periods signs as well — that is, not literal periods [one notable exception being 1,000 years in 20:4]. It is unreasonable to take the time element as literal when the events associated with those time elements are symbols. It is not permissible for us to arbitrarily select some items and make them literal when the basis of the book is symbol.

The opening verse of the book has two different Greek words about the Revelation to be given. It was to ‘shew’ or point out things which must come to pass; and it adds — Jesus ‘signified’ it to John. The text does not say he shewed it to John, but signified it. The Greek word is that generally used throughout the New Testament for signs. The Pharisees and Sadducees sought a sign from Jesus, and he told them they would have no sign but the sign of the prophet Jonah. The sign was a pointer to something else; it was symbolic. So this word ‘signify’ at the opening of the Revelation tell us it is a book of sign or symbol. We are not free to ignore this and make some elements of an event have a literal character.

This criticism of the Futurist interpretation taking the time periods as literal, also applies to quite a number of other elements that are taken literally in order to make some sense in the interpretation. To have to do this indicates that the method of interpretation is incorrect.

THE DECORUM OF THE SYMBOL INVOLVES SHORT FOR LONG

By ‘decorum of the symbol’ is meant that the detail surrounding the main symbol shall be appropriate to that symbol. If the symbol is an earthquake then the time element is appropriate to earthquakes: “And the same hour there was a great earthquake” (11:13). It would be inappropriate to have a symbolic earthquake for, say, a year, because earthquakes do not last such a long time. If it is dead bodies lying unburied (11:9), then the symbolic time scale is reduced to 3½ days to represent 105 years (days are lunar days, so $30 \times 3 \frac{1}{2} = 105$). A symbol of 105 days to represent 105 years would be inappropriate, because exposed dead bodies corrupt and disappear long before 105 days. If ravaging wild beasts are the symbol, then a time of 1260 days is appropriate. It would be incongruous to have a wild beast active for 1260 years, because beasts do not live that long. Similarly for witnesses doing works, 1260 days is appropriate. Even if the actual time in history is 1260 years, it is inappropriate to state it so, because 1260 years is far beyond the life span of men. So, in general terms, the time mentioned in relation to a symbol must preserve a fitness in relation to the known character of the symbol; and the time used becomes itself symbolic and in need of interpretation.
The next point to observe is that the symbol generally is smaller than the thing it represents. A ravaging beast is representative of a vast community with military power; a woman in the wilderness represents a community, one representing many, just as the Lamb’s wife represents all the redeemed. Likewise, the time element used with the main symbol is representative of a period greater than itself, not less than itself. The visions of John are like many acts in a play, in which widespread events are condensed to the proportions of the stage of the theatre and the brief period of showing the play. This is not unique to Revelation as it also occurs in the Old Testament. In Ezekiel 16 the Jewish nation is represented by a woman. God has pity on her as a child, and when she is grown to womanhood, the time of love, he marries her. This represents the making of the covenant at Sinai. So the childhood and youth of natural life — some twenty years — represents the 400 years from Jacob to the covenant making at Sinai. Also in Ezekiel, the prophet is made to typify the nation, and he lies on his side 430 days to signify the nation’s prostrate condition until the time of the Maccabees, a period of 430 years.

So the ‘decorum of the symbol’ leads us to take the time periods in the book of Revelation as symbols needing to be interpreted, not as literal times. Note there is one time period that does not appear to be condensed, the 1000 year reign in Revelation 20. Why should this be? Again, it is a matter of the decorum of the symbol. The only appropriate time period to express the glorious long-lasting reign of Christ is 1000 years: if one were to say they lived and reigned with Christ a 1000 days it would be an anti-climax. For an ordinary monarch the reign of 1000 days would be a failure! We may also note that in Revelation 21:2 and 10, ‘heaven’ is used in a somewhat literal sense, and to distinguish this from the usual symbolic usage, the word is qualified by saying “out of heaven from God”.

**EVIDENCE FROM THE BOOK OF DANIEL FOR 1260 YEARS**

Daniel’s prophecies provide proof that the 3½ times are 1260 years and not days. It is generally agreed that the persecution in Daniel 7 for 3½ times is the same as the persecution in Revelation 13 for 42 months. In Daniel 7:25 we read concerning the little horn of the 4th beast that “he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time, times and a half”. In Revelation 13 the beast that arises and is given power by the dragon acts in the same way: “And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. . .And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations” (‘42 months’ is used here to correspond with the downtreading of the holy city for 42 months in chapter 11). Is this a brief conflict of 3½ years (1260 days) or is it a long drawn out conflict of centuries, 1260 years? The form of language used in Daniel 7:25 provides an answer. The key words used cannot
describe a brief persecution. The little horn power is said to 'wear out' the saints. The word here in the Chaldee has the meaning "to consume, to become old, to waste away"; and is therefore quite accurately translated by 'wear out'. The R.V. and the R.S.V. also translate as 'wear out'. The words describe a process taking time to accomplish, and must be applied to a long conflict and not a dramatic suppression carried out in a few years. Other phrases in the verse point the same way: "think to change times and laws", and "given into his hand".

The language in Daniel 12 also establishes that the 1260 period (3 1/2 times) is years and not days. The last chapters of the prophecy record "what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days". In 12:4 Daniel is told "...shut up the words (of the prophecy), and seal the book, even until the time of the end". Thereupon Daniel asks in v.6, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" And the angel replies, "...it shall be for a time, times and a half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished". The language 'accomplish to scatter the power of the holy people' is not an expression one would associate with a brief 3 1/2 years persecution; it suggests a long drawn out conflict. Daniel recognised this was the time of Israel's downtreading, and for the angel to convey to Daniel that there would be only 1260 days 'to the end of these wonders' does not make sense. But 1260 symbolic days, that is 1260 years, does make sense. It represents the latter half of their long downtreading, when they suffered equally with Christ's brethren at the cruel hand of Rome in the countries of Europe for many centuries—for the 1260 years of Papal power.

In the beginning of this last vision of Daniel it says that "the thing was true, but the time appointed was long" (10:1). There the events which Daniel was so concerned about stretch out over a long period; obviously not a brief period of 3 1/2 years.

We conclude that the scale of events in Daniel requires a 1260 years, not 1260 days, fulfilment; and this should be our guide in the Revelation, in the corresponding visions.

AN EXACT HISTORICAL FULFILMENT OF 1260 YEARS

The little horn of Daniel's prophecy and the beast of the sea of Revelation 'wear out' and 'make war with the saints and overcome them' for the 1260 period. The historical interpretation, 1260 years, is exactly right, and the fact that symbol and history correspond is evidence that we are intended to understand the symbol in this way. If we say the period is 1260 days, we are making this historical fulfilment a chance happening, which is most unlikely. Moreover the other details in the symbolism also fit the 1260 period, and make chance impossible.

It is recognised that the Roman Catholic Church persecuted heretics for many centuries: it "spake great things and blasphemies". This is illustrated by one of the terrible decrees of Innocent III about AD 1200. It has been translated in part as follows:
“Supported by the presence and energy of our beloved son Frederick, the illustrious Emperor of the Romans, by the council of our brethren, other patriarchs, archbishops also, and numerous princes, who have assembled from different parts of the world, we rise by this decree against all heretics, and by apostolic authority condemn every sect by whatever name it is designated. . . A layman, who is infected with that pest, unless abjuring the heresy and making satisfaction, he (thereby) instantly flies to the orthodox faith, is to be left to the will of the secular power to suffer a vengeance in correspondence with his crime. They moreover who shall be found marked by the mere suspicion of the church, unless they demonstrate their innocence in a manner suited to the nature of the suspicion, and to their rank, shall be subjected to the same sentence. But they who, after having abjured their error, or cleared themselves in a trial by their bishop, shall be convicted of relapsing to the heresy they have abjured, we order to be left to the severest sentence without further hearing, and their goods appropriated to the churches which they served, according to the canons . . . Each archbishop and bishop shall himself, or by his archdeacon, or other honest and suitable persons, once or twice a year, go through the parish in which it is reported that Heretics reside, and compel three or more men there of good reputation, or the whole population if it seem expedient, to swear that should any one know persons who are heretics, or any who hold secret assemblies, or differ in life or manners from the usage of the faithful, he will endeavour to point them out to the bishop or archdeacon. And the bishop or archdeacon shall call the accused before him, and unless they clear themselves to his satisfaction, or should they, after having cleared themselves, relapse to their former heresy, they are to be punished according to this judgement.”

Such ‘lion-roaring’ decrees would operate against our brethren, the true believers, as well as against the various sects of anti-Catholics, and the Jews because they were all heretics.

History shows that the laws of Rome that gave this power to the Catholic Church belong to the reign of Justinian. He revised and extended Roman law in the period AD 529-533. This great power of the Church was broken by the French Revolution 1789-93. Here then is the period of 1260 years.

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\begin{array}{cc}
1789 & 1793 \\
-529 & -533 \\
1260 & 1260
\end{array}
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The detail of this beginning and end is as follows. First, the beginning.

The interval from Constantine to Justinian saw a great change in the western part of the Roman empire, through the inroads of the barbarians, and the decline of the city of Rome. At the same time Christianity made great progress in the West amongst the Franks, Goths, Vandals, Burgundians, Suevi and Bavarians, and was a considerable factor binding these people to the Imperial Roman system. With
the Emperor residing far away in the East at Constantinople, the influence of the Bishop of Rome was increasing in the West. It was a stroke of policy for the Emperor Justinian to favour the bishop of Rome as the head of Christianity. It helped to maintain his hold over the West. In the circumstance of rivalry between church factions, Justinian declared himself on the side of the trinitarian bishop of Rome, and pronounced the "Apostolic throne" head of all the holy churches in a decretal epistle in AD 533. The elevation of the Bishop of Rome as head over both eastern and western churches was expressed in the words: "Rendering honour to the Apostolic throne and to your Holiness... Therefore we have hastened both to subject and to unite to the Throne of your Holiness all the priests of the whole eastern region...".

Justinian did two other things which contributed to the establishing of the power of the Pope to act as a despot and to persecute the "heretics". First he re-framed and revised Roman law; and his Code, Pandects, and Institutes became the law for all Europe, West as well as East, for a thousand years and more. Secondly, in addition to the well established pro-catholic features of the Roman law from the time of Constantine, Justinian added his own pro-catholic, anti-heretic views. Says Gibbon (ch. 47): "His Code, and more especially his Novels, confirm and enlarge the privileges of the clergy, and in every dispute between a monk and a layman, the partial judge was inclined to pronounce that truth, innocence, and justice were always on the side of the church." "But in the creed of Justinian the guilt of murder could not be applied to the slaughter of unbelievers; and he piously laboured to establish with fire and sword the unity of the Christian faith". "The reign of Justinian was a uniform yet varied scene of persecution; and he appears to have surpassed his indolent predecessors, both in the contrivance of his laws, and the rigour of their execution." In summarising Justinian, we see him establishing a form of Roman law which was accepted throughout Europe, a law which was intensely hostile to all who opposed the Church, and we see him giving to the bishop of Rome authority as head of the Church to use such laws against all heretics.

It is important to note how accurately the situation in the time of Justinian is reflected in the symbolism of the 13th chapter of Revelation. In the beginning of the chapter the western part of the Roman Empire is represented by a beast coming up out of the sea having seven heads, ten crowned horns and the name of blasphemy. This is the western empire after the barbarians had established themselves in the Roman empire, represented by crowned horns; and after 'Christianity' — the name of blasphemy — had been generally received. Verse 2 tells us that the dragon gave the beast his power and seat and authority; and as we have seen, the emperor (head of the dragon) saw fit to legalise this development in the West. Verse 3 deals with the brief time there were Gothic kings in Rome, in the symbol of a deadly wound, which was afterwards healed. Verse 4 tells us that both the power of the beast and the dragon were recognised and worshipped. Verse 5 then tells us the important item that a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies was given to this western beast; and in fulfilment we have seen how
Justinian particularly helped to create this dreadful lion-roaring mouth of the Papacy.

The next sentence in chapter 13 tells us that this beast with lion mouth was to have power to blaspheme and make war (A.V. 'continue' — Greek 'do his works') for 42 months. Taking Justinian as the starting point we come to the end of the 42 months in 1789 (1260 + 529 = 1789). This is the time of the French Revolution, and we find striking events happening by which the power of the Papacy to persecute is broken. The French Revolution, 1789-94, was a rising of the people against the Church and against the monarchy and aristocracy that supported the Church. Class privileges were abolished, the monarchy was replaced by the republic, the property of the Catholic Church was confiscated, priests were chased out and killed, religious toleration was established. Napoleon then comes on the scene; as the leader of the revolutionary forces of France he breaks the power of Austria and the Holy Roman Empire; he takes the Pope prisoner; and he promulgates the Napoleonic Code of laws, and its basic "Rights of Man", as a replacement of the Justinian Code of laws. Thus there is a legal and constitutional beginning and end to the 1260 years.

It is evident that there is a 1260 year period in which the Papacy had power to persecute all non-catholics, and history shows how she used that power. As we read the group of verses 13:1-7 and see how history has fulfilled them, we again ask the question asked several times already, is this all chance? Is the language really intended not to describe these past events, but some happening of 3½ years in the future?

The establishing and the finishing of the persecuting power of the Catholic Church in Europe must occupy a period of years. History shows that there was a 75 year period at the beginning and a 75 year period at the end; thus maintaining the 1260 year interval. After Justinian's laws and his Decretal epistle to John, Bishop of Rome, there was a conflict between the rival episcopal thrones in Rome and Constantinople. Near the end of the century Rome had the good fortune of a powerful and skilful occupant of the 'apostolic' throne, Gregory the Great. He certainly helped to consolidate Rome's position of primacy. Then a few years later his successor, Boniface III, extracted from the Emperor Phocas not only the recognition of the Pope as Universal Bishop but also the privilege of transmitting the title and authority to his successors "per secula", for ages. The edict is dated AD 606 or 607. So there is a 75 year epoch during which the Bishop of Rome is being legally established as the head and authority of the catholic church. Now when we come to the end of the 1260 years we find a similar 75 year epoch from the French Revolution during which the power of the Papacy to enforce her will against non-catholics declines. The 1860's mark the end of the epoch with the struggles of the revolutionaries under Garibaldi leading to the establishment of a united kingdom of Italy, ruled by a king in Rome. The last of the papal states was incorporated into the kingdom of Italy in 1870 and the Pope was confined to
his Vatican residence without temporal power or authority. So history shows a 75 year epoch of establishment, a 75 year epoch of decline, and 1260 year periods between.

These events in the first half of the last century were a source of great encouragement to the brethren of our later times. They perceived the long prevailing and wearing out was at an end; that they had reached "the Time of the end" and the coming of the Master with great power to destroy the evil system. But if we choose 1260 days in the future, they (our pioneer brethren) had no signposts to the day of Christ and neither have we.

With the '1260' established as years and not days, the continuous historical exposition follows inevitably, and the various symbols of the Revelation spread through the centuries. The Holy City community of the saints are downtrodden by the beast for the 1260 years; the witnessing community operates for a 1260 year period; and the many associated symbols take their respective places.
YEARS NOT DAYS

There is a powerful argument in support of the view that we must interpret each day as a year, in the fact that all the periods mentioned are solar-lunar cycles in years.

In our lives we have three units of time: a day, the duration of which is related to the earth’s revolution, a month, which as the name indicates, is the length of time from one new moon to another; and a year, the complete revolution of the earth round the sun.

In the combination of the three, larger units can be recognised. For example, if there was a new moon on the first of January, the time that elapses until there is another new moon at the same date would form a lunar cycle. The matter might be illustrated by the three hands of a watch. At 12 o’clock the hour, minute, and second hands all point exactly the same way. At frequent intervals the second and minute hand coincide; each hour the minute and hour hands coincide; but it takes twelve hours before all three are in line again.

Because of the regular division of the period of a day or night of twelve hours, we can easily calculate when these coincidences occur. But it is not so easy when the “hands” of the universe clock are inter-related. The day might be compared to the “second” hand, marking the smallest unit. The difficulty arises from the fact that the other “hands” — the moon and the sun — do not register multiples of days. A month is 29 days 12 hours 44 minutes and 3 seconds. A year is 365 days 5 hours 48 minutes and 49 seconds; or expressed in decimals, the year is nearly 365.2422 days and the month 29.5306 days.

If a new moon falls on January first, the thirteenth moon would be about ten days old at the end of the year; and a calendar based on the moon requires an extra month every third year to keep the months and the seasons in harmony. To adjust the fractions of a day in the year, an extra day is given to leap years, and as this adjustment is a little in excess, some century years are not leap years.

The average person would not readily arrive at the cycle at the beginning and end of which the moon is at the full on January first. More difficult is to determine the cycle when the three factors are brought in; and in fact it cannot be done apart from a very accurate knowledge of the length of the month and the year. A cycle of nineteen years during which there are 235 lunations was discovered by an Athenian astronomer, Meton, who lived in the fifth century B.C. and from whom the period is called the Metonic cycle. A similar cycle was known to the Chaldeans.

About two centuries ago a Swiss astronomer discovered that 315 solar years formed a very exact solar-lunar cycle. It follows that four times this period, or 1260 years, is also an exact solar-lunar cycle. Further investigation shewed that 2300 years were also a solar-lunar cycle, and the difference between 2300 and 1260 years, or 1040 years, is the most accurate solar-lunar cycle known.

It is evident that the figures used in Daniel denote lengths of time which are units fixed by the combined time periods of sun, moon and earth. We might speak of these cycles as units of God’s time measurements.

The fact that Daniel’s time periods are solar-lunar cycles leads to two conclusions:
1. The figures denote years and not days.
2. Since these cycles were not known to the ancients, the author of the book of Daniel must be the Author of Nature. We cannot otherwise explain their use.

J.C.
Chapter 7

IS THE REVELATION ABOUT MODERN ISRAEL?


A SUMMARY OF EVENTS.

Like Bro. Whittaker’s interpretation of the Revelation, the late Bro. Watkins’ makes the prophecy Israel-centred, only more so than Bro. Whittaker. Some of the prophecy is applied to the nation of Israel in the past, but the important parts refer to the nation in the immediate future. The emphasis is on Israel becoming the world dominant power, tyrannically oppressing all nations, persecuting the saints, and blaspheming and fighting against Christ when he returns. His interpretation of the book of the Revelation is summarised in the diagram on page 78.

ISRAEL AND THE BEASTS OF REVELATION AND DANIEL

The central feature of Bro. Watkins’ theory is that the various beasts in the Revelation, and also in the book of Daniel, refer to Israel. It will help us to appreciate what he is saying by summarising what the scriptures say about these beasts. This is set out in tabular form:—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODERN ISRAEL</th>
<th>will be the little horn of Daniel’s fourth beast (DAN. 7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pp. 55, 96, 99</td>
<td>—that has eyes and mouth speaking great things and a look more stout than his fellows;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—that makes war with the saints and prevails against them;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—that speaks great words against the most High, and wears out the saints of the most High, and they are delivered into his hand until a time and times and a dividing of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISRAEL</td>
<td>is the little horn of the goat (DAN. 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pp. 98-9, 109-112</td>
<td>that in the first century 'magnified himself even to (against) the prince of the host, took away the daily sacrifice, cast down the place of the sanctuary, cast down the truth to the ground, practised and prospered; will stand up against the Prince of princes; but... shall be broken without hand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODERN ISRAEL</th>
<th>is the King (DAN. 8:25 &amp; 11:36-39)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pp. 113</td>
<td>who shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of Gods, and shall prosper until the indignation be accomplished.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODERN ISRAEL</th>
<th>is the Man of Sin (2 THESS. 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pp. 56, 97, 99</td>
<td>who will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, sitting in the temple of God showing himself that he is God; whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODERN ISRAEL</th>
<th>is the beast that arises out of the abyss (REV. 11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pp. 74, 123</td>
<td>and will make war against the two witnesses (special Christadelphians) and overcome them and kill them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISRAEL</th>
<th>was the great red dragon (REV. 12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pp. 114-115, 168</td>
<td>that was cast out of heaven in AD 70; that is the old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODERN ISRAEL</th>
<th>is the beast of the sea (REV. 13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pp. 58-60, 91-98, 185</td>
<td>whom all the world will worship; having a lion mouth, blaspheming God, his name, and his tabernacle; who will make war with the saints and overcome them; who has power over all kindreds, tongues and nations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODERN ISRAEL</th>
<th>is the 8th head of the beast (REV. 17)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pp. 62-3, 104, 112-4, 120</td>
<td>it was the 6th head, and after the healing of its deadly wound becomes the 8th head; supported by ten horn kingdoms (Arabs) it will make war with Christ and the saints (v.14).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODERN ISRAEL</th>
<th>is the beast (REV. 19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pp. 178-9</td>
<td>who with his publicity agent (the false prophet) is taken by Christ and his army on white horses, and cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone; and shall be tormented day and night (Rev. 20:10).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Putting together all these references gives us an astonishing picture of how Bro. Watkins viewed Israel of the near future: its violence; its wickedness and
Blaspheming God making war on the saints
Israel is the beast
Power over all nations worshipped by all people Rev. 13

blaspahemy against the God of Israel; its vast power and world supremacy; and its total destruction. Such a picture is entirely out of harmony with what the prophets tell us, and it just cannot be a true picture. We will set out the contrast between what Bro. Watkins said, and what the Bible says.

The Bible contrasted with what Bro. Watkins wrote:

1. The nation welcomes Jesus on his appearance.

The Master put on record just before his crucifixion, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:38-9). So faithless Jewry that crucified Jesus will not fight against him when he appears to them, but will be ready to accept him. The Psalmist had prophesied the same thing: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my righthand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. . . .Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Psa. 110:1, 3). Both Malachi and Isaiah tell us that a work of reconciliation will have been started before Jesus is revealed: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (Mal. 4:5, 6). The previous verse has instructed them to give heed to the law of Moses and its statutes and judgements. These scriptures give an altogether different picture to that provided by Bro. Watkins with Israel as the little horn speaking great words when the Ancient of Days comes and sits in judgement, and the beast (Israel) is given to the burning flame (Dan. 7:9-11).

2. The restoration of Israel a slow process, under Divine guidance.

The restoration chapters in Ezekiel, chapters 34-37 and onwards, show a slow process with God's guidance of Israel, not a time of warfare between God and Israel. In chapter 34 the bad shepherds of Israel are replaced by the good shepherd; in chapter 35, Edom, the enemy of Israel, is rebuked; in chapter 36 the land is made to blossom and Israel is given a new heart; in chapter 37 the restoration is a step by step process from the dry bones scattered in the open plain, bone coming to bone, flesh coming on the body and then life from the spirit of God. We are not concerned with any sequential timing between chapters but only (i) it is a time of God's favour to Israel and their land, and (ii) there is a slow process of reconciliation. This has no similarity with the situation Bro. Watkins gives.

The contrast is very apparent in the way he handles the great siege of Jerusalem. In fulfilment of Zechariah 12 and 14, Bro. Watkins has all nations gathered together against Jerusalem; and the outcome is that Israel destroys all the nations, then becomes a world power terrorising the world, and as the beast and ten horns, fights against Christ. How completely different is the truth. Zechariah 12 tells us that when the nations are gathered against
Jerusalem, God 'opens his eyes upon the house of Judah' (a figure for care and favour), v.4, and pours upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem "the spirit of grace and supplications", v.10. So they come to look on him "whom they have pierced" and mourn (v.10). That a writer can ignore the words of scripture in this way is sad, and a danger to our community.

Joel provides the same picture as Zechariah in the siege of Jerusalem. "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land" (Joel 3:2). Here is God's care and favour to his people in distress, not a state of antagonism. After the destruction in the valley of Jehoshaphat by 'thy mighty ones', Joel adds, "The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel" (v.16). For 'hope' the margin gives 'place of repair'. This is the opposite of Israel glorying in its own strength and fighting against Christ.

3. **Israel is weak, not powerful when Christ returns.**

The prophets show Israel in a state of weakness when Christ reveals himself; not a tyrannical world power, persecuting the saints and fighting against Christ. Moses in his prophetic song sees them at the end of the days, "For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left" (Deut. 32:36). Then God pours out vengeance on his enemies, "and will be merciful unto his land and to his people". Isaiah through various chapters shows also that Israel is weak at this time. Isaiah 41:14; "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel". Isaiah 43:2, 3; "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee". We might add the testimony of Jeremiah. He gives the same situation regarding Israel at this time. Thus Jeremiah 31, "Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations...He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he" (vv.10, 11). In the previous verses they come from the north country, and the coasts of the earth, the blind and the lame, the woman with child; God leads them with weeping and supplications. Such is Israel in the latter days, weak, oppressed, captive, accepting the care of their Saviour.

4. **Israel and Babylon.**

The idea that the nation of Israel is so powerful that as the Beast of Revelation
17 it destroys the latter-day Babylon and then attacks Christ, is not what the prophets say. They present a picture that is the reverse of this. Israel is a captive people in the latter-day Babylon, needing God, through Christ, to deliver them. So says Zechariah: "Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD . . . deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwelleth with the daughter of Babylon. . . For behold I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of Hosts hath sent me" (Zech. 2:6, 7, 9, 10). Israel in captivity in Babylon receives help from Christ to deliver herself. Micah says the same: "Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion . . . thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies" (Micah 4:10). The context of Micah 4 shows that this is the nation of Israel in the latter days. Isaiah in his 14th chapter is even plainer; "For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land" (v.1). The next verse says "they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors". Then comes the important verse: "Thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! The golden city ceased! . . . He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth".

Nothing could be plainer. It is not the nation of Israel in the future who is the dominant world power, oppressing nations; it is the latter-day Babylon, Babylon the Great. Israel is in captivity and when redeemed, rejoices over Babylon. As Zechariah 10 tells us, Israel is strengthened by Christ to deliver themselves from the enemy.

So Bro. Watkins picture is altogether wrong. His whole concept is far removed from scripture truth. He has turned things upside down. This being so, it would not be profitable to use much more space on following in detail his various propositions and themes. We will therefore, conclude this chapter with four more illustrations of inappropriateness in his presentation.

Four more illustrations of inappropriateness:

1. The little horn of Daniel 7.

"I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots" (Dan. 7:8).

In Bro. Watkins' theory the ten horns are ten Arab kings, and Israel is the little horn that plucks up three of the ten. Let us note the sequence in v.8. The 10 horns are there—'I considered the horns' — and the little horn comes up afterwards. But is this what has happened in the Middle East? It is not. In general Israel and the Arab nations have come into being side by side, but in detail at least six of the Arab nations received their independence — became horns — after Israel became independent. They are Kuwait, Yemen, Morocco,
Tunisia, Libya and Algeria; Jordan and Syria obtained their independence about the same time as Israel. It is just not true that the Israel horn arose after the ten Arab horns. Nor is it true that Israel has ‘plucked up by the roots’ — totally destroyed — three Arab States in order to establish itself.

Daniel tells us that the saints take the kingdom from the little horn. Many of the saints are Jews; all are “Israelites indeed”; they are the coming rulers of the nation of Israel. It does not make sense to say that the rulers of Israel take the kingdom from their own nation, which is what is involved in Bro. Watkin’s saying the nation of Israel is the little horn.

2. The manchild and dragon of Revelation 12.

For Bro. Watkins the dragon is the nation of Israel at the time of Christ’s birth. The dragon is in heaven, which he says means that Israel was blessed of God. The man child caught up to heaven and to God’s throne is the Christian community at this time. The text tells us that the man child makes war on the dragon and casts it out of heaven. Does this detail fit the history of the time? Did the disciples of Christ make war on the nation of Israel and cast it out of ‘heaven’? Could Israel be described as a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns? Could Israel at the time be described as that old serpent, called the devil and satan which deceived the whole world? This does not sound reasonable and cannot be compared with the sober detailed fulfilment provided by the continuous historical interpretation at the time of Constantine (see Chapter 5).

3. The harlot and the beast of Revelation 17.

In explaining this chapter, Bro. Watkins has the harlot as the apostate Roman Catholic system, and Israel as the beast. Israel is said to have been the 6th head of the beast, which after its deadly wound was healed (Revelation 13) becomes the 8th head of this chapter. The Roman empire is the 7th head of the beast. This is saying that the beast of Revelation 17 is both the Roman system and the nation of Israel. This is not credible. Israel and the Roman empire are totally different constitutions; they cannot be represented by different heads on the same beast. Again, the beast that carries the harlot is the beast that ascends out of the abyss, and Bro. Watkins said this is an identification of modern Israel, emerged from the abyss of nations. So we have the nation of Israel carrying the Papacy and the Catholic Church. Surely this is confusion.

4. Ezekiel 38 will not be fulfilled until Revelation 20:8 is fulfilled.

Bro. Watkins believed the conditions described in Ezekiel 38:8-14 are “kingdom conditions”. He wrote “The people are enjoying the blessings of his (Christ’s) beneficient reign”. This means that the invasion of the land from the north by this great confederacy is after Babylon is destroyed, after the various beasts and the ten horns have gone, after the false prophet has been cast into the lake of fire, after the dragon, the old serpent, etc., has been bound in the
abyss; and the kingdom has been established. But where can this great confederacy come from? It cannot possibly exist if all the various symbols of opposition to Christ used in the Revelation have already been overcome!

Ezekiel three times emphasises the magnitude of this invasion: (1) “a great company, and a mighty army; a cloud to cover the land”; (2) “Art thou not he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied many years that I would bring thee against them”; (3) “Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD; this is the day whereof I have spoken” (Ezek. 39:8). So Ezekiel’s invasion is emphatically The Great Day of the LORD, about which other prophets have spoken. It just cannot be some strange extra event after the kingdom is established.

A study of the text in Ezekiel shows that Israel is not “enjoying the blessings of Christ’s beneficent reign” at this time. It is only as a result of the destruction of the great confederacy — that is afterwards — that Israel comes to fear and obey God. So reads Ezek. 39:7 “So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more”. And later in the chapter “So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward” (v.20). Chapter 40 and onward describes in detail the setting up of the Kingdom — the building of the temple, the law giving, the division of the land, and the institution of worship.

What will be the effect of this anti-Jewish attitude?

The nation of Israel is God’s nation, despite their continuing blindness and unbelief. After centuries of chastisement (‘I will correct thee in measure’) God is now working toward their restoration to favour and obedience — “for mine holy name’s sake” (Ezek. 36:22). This is a foundation principle of Christadelphian faith. We are linked with the nation in the common Hope of Israel. We Gentiles have been adopted into the Commonwealth of Israel, with the prospect of being part of the House of David (2 Sam. 7) that will rule over the nation. Though like the prophets we mourn at the unbelief and wickedness of ‘our’ nation, our attitude should be that of Daniel of old in his prayer for his people (Daniel 9).

Already in Christadelphian circles some are turning away from, or are indifferent to, this foundation element of the Truth. It is inevitable that this presentation of Israel by Bro. Watkins will encourage and increase this wrong attitude, and lessen our sympathy for the Jews. It is likely to develop among us the hostile attitude that is so common in the world.
Chapter 8
SAINTS THANKFUL FOR PROPHETIC GUIDANCE TODAY

PROPHETIC GUIDANCE IN THE TIME OF THE END

We have written so much about the past and the future, but what about the all important present? Can it be true, as the other interpretations infer, that Jesus has left this latter-day revival of the Truth without any prophetic guidance and encouragement — without that needed warning to be watching for the imminent return of the Master? The Old Testament tells us about the return of the Jews to their land, and this is a great sign, but it is outside the Revelation. We have reasoned extensively that every age has been given guidance, and have in some measure traced this through the 18 centuries from John’s day. We may confidently expect there to be prophecy covering the important period termed the Time of the End. This is found in Revelation 16 where the pouring out of the Vials usher in the last Trumpet. This falls naturally into place in the continuous historical interpretation of the developing purpose of God through the centuries. The Vials outline the history of Europe from the French Revolution to the present, and on to the events at the coming of Jesus Christ in the 7th Vial. It is an outline, not necessarily as man looks at history and what he considers important, but what is important from God’s point of view in leading up to the Kingdom.

In looking at the Vials and comparing history with the symbols, we are dealing with events that are sufficiently near to be familiar to most readers. This makes the impact of this marvellous control of God more telling, as we are able to see brief symbols so effectively describing what has come to pass. As we find that the many events portrayed in symbol have been fulfilled, and in the right order, we cannot believe this was all by chance, and this is the wrong interpretation. Rather we can
THE TELESCOPIC STRUCTURE OF REVELATION

INTERSPERSED VISIONS OF GLORY TO ENCOURAGE BELIEVERS
feel assured that God is still in control, and events are moving near to the great climax.

This fit between history and the Vials has been challenged. It has been said that the traditional interpretation set out by Bro. Thomas in the middle of the last century cannot be correct, because it does not provide for the great events of the 20th century; particularly the two World Wars. It is obviously true that writers in the 19th century could not know all the details of the 20th century. Yet on examination it will be found that the overall interpretation that was given remains sound, and covers the fundamentals of God’s work in the 19th and 20th centuries.

THE PERSPECTIVE

As we move towards the climax of 6,000 years of earth’s history, when the Creator is about to install his Son as the ‘heir of all things’ (Hebrews 1:2) and the rightful ruler of all this planet, we should expect that God has detailed the final happenings in the world that prepare His servants for the introduction of Christ on the scene. Like a play with its many Acts and Scenes, the stage has to be set for the final drama; the nations manipulated into their correct position; and archaic things have to be taken out of the way. It is not surprising that 150-200 years should be occupied in the ‘Time of the End’ — a short period compared with 6,000 years of Divine working. The first six Vials are this preparation period for the introduction of Jesus Christ to the earth again.

The Revelation has its integrated structure with 7 Seals, 7 Trumpets, and 7 Vials; the 7th Seal containing the 7 Trumpets, the 7th Trumpet containing the 7 Vials. The 6th Trumpet finishes with the French Revolution (11:11-13). During the 7th Trumpet the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ (v.15). The 7th Trumpet is described as the last ‘woe’. This climax of Divine wrath and human woe is detailed in the 7 Vials which are said to be “the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up the wrath of God” (15:1). So the pouring out of the Vials of wrath in the 16th chapter are the details of the 7th Trumpet that is so briefly defined at the end of the eleventh chapter.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE VIALS.

It will be found that the Vials divide up into three parts, which may be summarised as follows:
**PART 1 — THE OLD ORDER PASSES AWAY**

**Vials 1-5: Great changes in Western Europe**

The French Revolution is the key to the history of the 19th and of the 20th centuries. This is recognised in history books. The Larousse Encyclopaedia of Modern History (1964) opens the section headed THE PRESENT AGE with the words:

"In a political sense it is proper to date the age in which we live from the French Revolution. The shock carried by that Revolution and the spread of its principles has produced repercussions ever since. They will continue today, whenever people claim the rights of national determination and equality before the law... the republican ideal, launched by the 'insurgents' of the thirteen Colonies in America, now embroidered and developed by the theorists of France and tried out by the French nation in arms, would little by little spread over the whole world."

The French Revolution at the end of the 18th century was the rising up of the masses against the oppression of the privileged classes — the king, the clergy and the aristocrats. Its rallying cry, 'liberty, equality, fraternity,' has echoed round the world ever since, as the people in nation after nation have asserted themselves, and nations have claimed their independence.

The first major effect of the Revolution was the break-up of the long established feudal system in Europe and the dominance of the Catholic Church. Napoleon's military skill harnessed the fervour of the Revolution, and carried the revolutionary spirit throughout Europe in campaigns lasting a brief twenty years. The history of these exciting times is accurately described in the symbols of the first five Vials. It is not necessary to reproduce the historical detail and corresponding symbols because these are readily available in various books; as for instance, *Apocalypse and History* (Boulton and Barker), sections 8 and 9. The sketch map on the following page summarises the geography of these Vials. For those who will study the history and the symbols there will be the reward of appreciating the hand of God at work in our time. The fulfilment is so exact, everything is in its right order, that only the foreknowledge of God could have written the prophecy, and only His Almighty power and control could have brought it to pass.
Two matters should be noted: first, that although the first five Vials had their specific fulfilment, their effect spreads over a century and more. These five vials initiated a new course in history which has flowed on after Napoleon passed off the scene. After his death there was inevitably a reaction; but as can happen with a smothered fire, the flames burst out afresh in 1848 with the next wave of revolutionary zeal. And so it went on through the 19th century and on into the 20th century, as illustrated outstandingly with the Russian revolution of 1917. The revolutionary forces of ‘democracy’ surge on unabated throughout the world today.

The second matter to note is that the wars expressed by the Vials were the judgements of God on unrepentant nations. Thus under the third Vial we read, “True and righteous are thy judgements”. “They have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy”. And after the fifth Vial: “They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.” The European nations remain unrepentant to the end, for after the judgements of the last Vial it says, “and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail.” So we must not be deceived by the attempts of the Catholic system today to appear as a ‘christian’ gospel-loving leadership. Rather we must ask ourselves whether we could endorse that cry, “Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.”
VI AL 6, PART 1: EVENTS IN THE EAST

We have looked at the breaking down of the old order in the West, and now look for a similar development in the East.

The first part of the sixth Vial is the drying up of the river Euphrates 'that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared'. This, it must be remembered, is symbolic language, frequently taking its sense from earlier Bible events.

In Isaiah 8 the waters of the Euphrates are said to overflow their banks and sweep through the land of Judah. This represented the Assyrian power in its military conquest, as verse seven tells us.

Under the sixth Trumpet in Revelation 9 a similar figure is used. Four angels bound by the river Euphrates are loosed. This was fulfilled in the four waves of invasion from the east of the Euphrates into the Roman empire: The Seljuks in the 11th century; the Seljuks again in the 12th century; the Mongols in the 14th century; and the Ottomans in the 15th century. These people from Turkistan, called generally Turks, were the scourge by God against the idolatrous Catholics, and they followed up the earlier conquests of the Saracens. They conquered the whole of the Eastern Roman Empire, and held the vast region now called Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania and Greece. Their rule also extended through Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Algeria. This was certainly a great flood of water from the Euphratean regions.

It is reasonable that the symbol under the sixth Vial of the drying up of the water of the Euphrates takes its meaning from this earlier enlarging of the Euphratean power. The history of the last century shows a steady 'drying up' of the Ottoman empire. Starting early in the nineteenth century the weakening of power and the loss of land went on for over a hundred years, until at the end of the first World War (1918) Turkey was reduced to Asia Minor, an area about twice the size of Great Britain. The sketch map give the dates when the various lands were ceded. Such a slow steady process is well symbolised by the flood of a river drying up. The first item of the sixth Vial has been fulfilled.
PART 2: PREPARATION FOR CHRIST’S RETURN

Vial 6, Part 2: Preparing the Way for the Kings of the East.

Our first question is, ‘Who are the kings of the east?’ Here is an occasion when an accurate understanding of the original is needed. If one consults the Emphatic Diaglott, the translation of the Greek text is given as “so that might be prepared the way of the kings of those from risings of the sun”. Note the strange plural ‘risings’, and keep in mind that this is sign language that needs to be translated to literal sense. The idea is this: “All that springs up out of the earth is caused to rise by the power of the sun acting on the seeds therein. Everything therefore brought up from beneath, or from darkness into view, is a ‘rising (or raising) of the sun’” (Bro. J. Thomas, Eureka vol. 3, ch. 16). Jesus Christ is the Sun of righteousness. When he appears again, with healing in his beams (Mal. 4:2), he will cause the dead saints to come forth from the ground — they are the risings of the Sun. “Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven”, says the Psalmist (85:11). Here then, in Rev. 16:12, is a beautiful reference to the resurrection. After redemption from sin and death they are to become kings — “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God... and made us into God kings and priests” (Rev. 5:9, 16). So the saints with Christ are the kings from the RISINGS of the SUN.

The symbolic drying up of the river Euphrates is to prepare a WAY for these kings. The figure is modelled on the original taking of Babylon by Cyrus, when he unexpectedly made a way into the heart of the city by “drying up” the Euphrates, or diverting the river from its customary bed. It is apparent to all who read Isaiah 45 that the greater Cyrus is in view: “I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives” (v.13). In the antitype, Christ and his brethren are to enter the European ‘Babylon the Great’ and overthrow it. How does he enter? He first comes to Arabia and the land of Israel, and this provides the base from which to conquer Europe and the fourth beast of Daniel, apocalyptically Babylon the Great. For a fuller account of the original and the antitypical Cyrus entering Babylon see Eureka, vol. 3, pp. 540-542 (Old Edition).

So the “Way” is being prepared first by the removal of the Turk from that region, and then by the return of the Jews and the development of the land of Israel.

As watchmen figuratively on the walls of Jerusalem (Is. 62:6), we have been watching the preparing of the Way for over 50 years in the partial restoration of Jews to their land and Israel becoming a significant power in the world. This wonderful happening is a necessary preliminary to the coming of Israel’s king and princes. So the first part of the sixth Vial stretches from 1820 to our present time and beyond. How wonderful that a few words of prophecy can comprehend so great an event. A few words exactly in the right place in the prophetic word. Surely this is the Word of God.
We opened with a quotation from the Larousse Encyclopedia of Modern History which stated that the French Revolution is the key to the Present Age. This has been illustrated in the Vial judgements we have looked at. The first five Vials were a direct outcome of the Revolution; and the first parts of the 6th Vial that stretch forward to our time, likewise resulted from the French Revolution. The ‘drying up’ of the Turkish power was the asserting of national independence in the various countries. The social and political emancipation of the Jews in Europe was the direct outcome of the Revolution, allowing Zionism to develop, leading to their national independence in the land of Palestine. As we shall see in the next section the going forth of frog-like spirits, part two of the 6th Vial, is the present-day development of the French Revolution. Looked at broadly, there has been a build-up over nearly 200 years of the power and assertiveness of the peoples of the world, which will manifest itself in unregenerate mankind opposing Christ, as did Pharaoh of old oppose Moses, that the pride of man may be humbled and God exalted.


The Bible has two centres of interest in the Time of the End; Europe and the Middle East. As we saw in the previous section, in the Middle East the WAY has been preparing for Christ’s coming for half a century or more, in the establishing of the nation of Israel in their land. We turn now to Europe again, to follow the word of prophecy in preparations here for the return of Christ. We have noted that the first five Vials followed the French Revolution and were the breaking down of the ‘Old Order’ and the releasing of national energies to reshape the nations in the mould of republics and socialism. From this general assessment we now pass to specific activities preparing for Christ’s coming. In the third part of the 6th Vial, frog-like spirits go forth to the kings of the earth and to the whole world to gather the nations together for the war of the great day of God Almighty. To watch the detailed fulfilment of this part of prophecy is of the greatest interest to us, because it is immediately followed by the words, “Behold, I come as a thief”.

FROG-LIKE SPIRITS

‘Unclean spirits like frogs’ is sign language for the SPIRIT of the French Revolution — that socialist impulse under the banner of ‘liberty, equality and fraternity’ that first surged through Europe, and then like a spreading flame has passed to Russia, the Middle East, Africa, China and all the peoples of the world. The use of the frog as the symbol for France has been well documented by Elliott, and by Bro. Thomas in Elpis Israel, pp. 378-381 (14th edition). The frog symbol is peculiarly suitable to France when she became a Republic after the Revolution. Before the Revolution she was a monarchy, and had the heraldry of three lilies. The frog symbol goes back to earlier times, to the 5th and 6th centuries, when the national leader was chosen by popular acclaim. It therefore suits France as the source of the socialist impulse — the voice and power of the people.
The frog-like spirit covers not only the socialist impulse, but all that was developed by it in transforming the status of the masses. There was education of the masses, with tremendous increase in knowledge, inventions, industrial progress, communications and widespread wealth. In Europe first, and then in the rest of the world this is manifest in modern society — schools, roads, harbours, libraries, factories, institutions, etc.

**THEY ARE THE SPIRITS OF DEMONS WORKING SIGNS**

In Greek mythology demons were the lower gods who mediated between men and the supreme gods (clearly a corruption of the position of the angels). So in symbol they aptly represent the leaders and officials in the political and ecclesiastical heavens. The spirits of the demons are the policies they formulate and which go out from the ‘mouth’ — with the authority of the government. They are unclean or unholy spirits — ‘earthly, sensual, demoniacal’ (James 3:15). They work ‘signs’ as the Greek word ‘semeion’ properly means; that is, they manipulate events and affairs that delude the people and cause them to conform to their policies. This is particularly true of the activities of the Catholic missionaries in their frog-like activities. It is also true regarding the technological marvels that amaze the peoples of undeveloped countries.

**OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE BEAST AND THE DRAGON**

The frog-like spirits emanate from three centres, the Beast, the Dragon, and the False Prophet. The Beast concerns Western Europe and the Dragon, Eastern Europe. This geographical identification comes from a study of the various beasts in Revelation 12 and 13. For those who have not previously studied the matter, the most concise presentation will be found in section 6 of *Apocalypse and History*: entitled “The beasts of the sea and earth and the image of the beast”. In the past 30 years we have seen Europe forming into two politically active groups. We watch with great interest the re-forming of the beast in the West. After three major German-French wars, 1887, 1914-18, 1939-45, we have seen in the past 25 years a new spirit, guided behind the scenes by the Vatican, integrating Western Europe. This will mature into that state described in Revelation 17, “And the ten horns... receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them.”

In Eastern Europe also we see a grouping of nations under Russia and the Comcon — the equivalent of the E.E.C. in the West. It does not at present include Turkey and Greece. The Dragon in a full sense will not exist until Russia moves south into these two countries.

The going forth of a concerted frog-like spirit from the Beast, the Dragon and the False Prophet is probably an event of the future, as part of the final assembly of the nations against Christ. At the present time, however, we see the frog-like spirit going forth from eastern and western European groups in the great economic drive of the two groups into the under-developed countries of the world.
It is manifest in schools, hospitals, roads, factories, harbours, dams, agricultural machinery, etc. — all the elements of education and economic progress associated with the liberation of the masses; socialism and the spirit of the French Revolution surging into all the world. Russia and her Satellites have built great dams on the river Nile and Euphrates; they have erected steel mills in India, Nigeria and Egypt; they have supplied civil and military planes to many of the newly independent African States as well as Asia and South and Central America. ‘Progress’ is by no means limited to material activities; they supply teachers, journalists and cinema facilities. Great efforts are made to ‘educate’ the masses in socialism, creating trade unions and the like. They take Africans to Europe for ‘education’. Leipzig Trade Union College, for instance, has a special institute for foreign study. An eight months course is taken by people from Ghana, Guinea, Congo, Nigeria, Somalia, Togo, Cameroon, Zanziba, Ivory Coast, Angola, Morocco, Algeria.

There is an almost identical pattern for Western Europe, usually in rivalry to Eastern Europe. The Common Market (the nucleus of the beast) has given special attention to developing a policy of aid to the underdeveloped countries. By 1967, 18 African States had been made associate members of the Common Market. The following was a newspaper report (Daily Telegraph) dated 4.4.67: “The association system, initiated by the French when the Roman Treaty was negotiated, is creating a free trade zone enbracing the 18 and the Six, and a community aid system in which the Common Market countries are giving their African associates more than 500 million pounds for building schools, hospitals, roads and ports and for other projects. The 18 and the Six meet to plan and share out technical and financial aid in common institutions”. By 1979 the Common Market had an association with 57 developing countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (the ACP countries). The news report was that they were objecting to the E.E.C. aid of 3,500 million pounds, and wanted twice as much (D.T. 28.5.79)!

OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE FALSE PROPHET

The False Prophet occurs only in this 6th Vial, and in Rev. 19 where it is destroyed. It would appear, therefore, it is a symbol for something particular to the Vials and the time of the End.

Paul defines a prophet as one who teaches the word of God (1 Cor. 14:3). A false prophet will be a teacher of false Christianity. In the book of the Revelation, a false prophet must be understood as a symbol, and it will signify something greater than an individual false prophet. The Roman Catholic hierarchy is the outstanding “false prophet” of our time. The Pope, cardinals, bishops and many other officials who make up the hierarchy, promulgate the false teaching of the Catholic church on all matters of faith and practice.

The False Prophet symbol is particularly suitable for our time. By the dogma of Infallibility (1870) the Pope forced upon the world-wide Catholic Church the absolute acceptance of the idea that in his official pronouncements he is infallible, his utterances are God-inspired, he is God’s prophet. In truth we know he is a FALSE prophet.
A frog-like spirit working through the Papacy is a very remarkable sign. For the French Revolution was primarily aimed against the Papacy, and the privileged classes. It provoked a very anti-frog spirit in the mouth of the False Prophet. She hurled anathemas against the new leaders, carried on intrigue and stirred up wars to counter the revolutionary spirit. After suffering, complaining and resisting through the first half of the 19th century, she saw that the new forces of the Revolution were permanently established, and there could be no going back to the pre-Revolution situation. In the second half of the century she began slowly to adapt herself to the new spirit and power of the masses. This development of the frog-like spirit in the mouth of the False Prophet is a fascinating story.

OUTLINE OF THE DEVELOPING SOCIALIST BIAS OF THE VATICAN

The Vatican's first expression of coming to terms with socialism was the Encyclical 'Rerum Novarum' (1891) in which the Pope declared himself the champion of the oppressed and exploited working class in the rapidly growing industrial scene. This was the beginning of a frog-like spirit in the mouth of the False Prophet.

In the first half of the 20th century, the Vatican was involved in a form of socialism that aimed to counter the socialist Communism in Russia and Eastern Europe. The aim was socialism under Church guidance — what might be termed 'God and the people' — as opposed to Marxism and the relegation of God and religion to the discredited past. In this period, Christian democratic political parties grew up in Italy, France and Germany, and dominated the political scene. Also strong Catholic Unions were formed in France and Italy. All this was socialism controlled by the Church and protected by the virtual dictatorships of Fascism and Nazism. It was in fact a growing frog-like spirit in the mouth of the False Prophet.

After the defeat of Germany a second time, in World War 2, the Vatican hastily changed sides and created the Washington-Vatican axis, harnessing the American hostility to Communism. But nothing effective was done to stem the growing tide of Communism in Europe and the Third World. It was in this period, however, that a powerful world-wide movement was stepped up by the Vatican known as Catholic Action, or the Lay Apostolate. Its object is the promotion of the Catholic Church by the ordinary believer, under the control of the Catholic hierarchy: editors, councillors, magistrates, teachers and shop stewards, all work under the direction of the Catholic hierarchy. So the church works through the people more effectively than by the direct influences of the priest. This is part of the frog-like spirit in the mouth of the False Prophet.

With the death of the 'anti-Communist' Pope, Pius XII, in 1958, the time had come for a radical change; it was time for the Vatican to put itself on the winning side, and draw near to its Communist rival. Cardinal Roncalli, known to have socialist leanings, was elected Pope (Pope John 23) in 1958 and immediately began to set a new course. His Encyclical 'Mater and Magistra' (1961), approved 'socialisation', asserted the worker's right for a just wage, and championed the
peoples of underdeveloped countries. He started a dialogue and practical co-operation with the Soviet by issuing his Encyclical ‘Peace on Earth’ (1963). The important section was at the end, headed, ‘Relations between Catholics and non-Catholics in social and economic affairs’.

From this time the newspapers started to report comings and goings of officials between the Vatican and the Kremlin. Kruschev’s son-in-law had a private audience with the Pope. Pope John also initiated the now famous Second Vatican Council that aimed to give a new image to the Catholic Church. The 2500 cardinals and bishops were in session during 1963-5, and issued documents on the Church’s position to all aspects of life. The popular appeal sought by the Church is well expressed in the following quotation from the book “The Changing Vatican” (A. Cavalleri):

“Other declarations go still further. There are some which definitely mean, as one theologian has written, a Catholic reconciliation with the ideas of the French Revolution which only yesterday were unconditionally condemned. Liberty, fraternity and equality are in fact the keynotes of the council doctrine concerning the Church in the modern world, towards the non-christian religions, and towards the atheists”.

Here indeed, is the False Prophet sending out a frog-like spirit!

The next Pope, Paul VI, (1963-1978) pursued this leftward movement of the Church; some bishops and priests, especially in South America, openly espousing Marxism as not incompatible with the Christian gospel. In Italy there was open co-operation between the Vatican and the Communist mayors and civil authorities in Rome and other main Italian cities. In the satellite countries the Communist rulers and the Catholic Church in general came to terms with each other. Priests and missionaries in Africa and South America readily espoused the cause of the people as the only way to make progress in the face of the Communist advance. So we see the frog-like spirit in the mouth of the False Prophet getting stronger and working out into the whole world.

THE PRESENT POPE

The present Pope, John Paul II, is well aware of the need of the Roman Catholic Church to come to terms with the Soviet. He sees that Socialism-Communism is gripping the world — Western Europe, China, India, Africa and the Middle East, all have their differing brands, and the Soviet is the dominant power which could rally them all together. But he does not intend yielding to Marxism. He is intent on restraining the Marxist liberal element in the Roman Catholic Church. He is insisting that traditional Church teaching must be obeyed. He insists on the infallibility of the Pope ex cathedra. His object is to strengthen the Roman Catholic Church as the world authority in religion. By asserting the authority and dogma of the Church, he appears to be aiming to be in a position, when the time comes for a Vatican-Soviet alliance, to assert the supremacy of the
Church in the religious field, with the Soviet supreme in the civil and military spheres. So for the present his policy varies between careful antagonism and practical co-operation with the Soviet, as we are witnessing in Poland.

Pope John II is a very powerful personality. He has already established himself as the world’s ‘moral’ leader. His persistent theme ‘Justice and Peace’ has a popular appeal, especially to the poor and oppressed in the Third World. He is able to present himself with charm, piety and humility that wins men’s hearts. People of various religious persuasions look upon him (and therefore his Church) with favour. When not insisting on the dogmas of the Church he presents his other face and spreads the doctrine of ‘Christian humanism’ and ‘the dignity of man’ (phrases used by the editor of the Daily Telegraph). How the Roman Catholic Church has changed; and yet has not changed! It is providing ‘religion’ for the people — the frog-like spirit — yet still maintains its age-old authority. In half a century it has built up a new position resting on the old foundations, and we see fulfilling before our eyes a frog-like spirit going forth from the False Prophet to Europe and the rest of the world.

GATHERING THE NATIONS, REV. 16:15

So in our time we are seeing a frog-like spirit going forth from Eastern Europe, Western Europe and from the Vatican. It is not difficult to see how this can ‘gather together’ the nations for the war of the great day of God almighty. Christ will demand the submission of all nations to the laws of the God of Israel, and worship of the God of Israel. This will appear an outrageous challenge. It defies the power and authority of the PEOPLE; their right to self-determination. Under the banner of socialism most of the world will unite against Christ. The Socialist-Communist tentacles that have spread throughout the world will grip all nations, and the ‘JUSTICE AND PEACE’ banner unfurled by the Papacy will rally the world crusade against the hated Jewish upstart in the land of Israel.

It will be apparent from this brief consideration of the Vials how marvellously the symbols cover the history of the past two centuries. With remarkable brevity they set out the objectives and principles of the Divine control. We should be very grateful that God has provided us with such abundant evidence of his hand at work, and telling us in 1982 that we are reaching the critical point in the prophecy — “BEHOLD, I COME AS A THIEF, BLESSED IS HE THAT WATCHETH”.
Chapter 9
THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON—BY THE BEAST OR THE SAINTS?

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME.

We cannot know the future in detail. If, however, we have grasped correctly the general principles of the Revelation, we will know the outline of the future course of events. And this can be of help to us now, in enabling us to see affairs taking shape in preparation for that future including the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The setting up of the Kingdom at the return of Christ is presented to us in the latter part of the Revelation as a conflict between two great cities, “great Babylon” and “that great city, the holy Jerusalem”. Babylon the Great is the present rulership that is to be destroyed; the holy city, New Jerusalem is the future rulership that shall enlighten the world. Regarding the fall of Babylon, there is a fundamentally different approach between the interpretation by Bro. Thomas, and practically all the other recent interpretations. In Bro. Thomas’ exposition, it is Christ and the saints who carry out the destruction; in the other expositions Babylon is destroyed by the Beast and ten horns. These different interpretations carry two important implications for the future:

1. If the saints carry out the destruction of Babylon they must at that point in time have been raised from the dead. Therefore, the resurrection must take place at an early stage, that is, before the great judgements begin. But if it is thought that the destruction is by the Beast and the Ten Horns, and that this event is before the resurrection and marriage, then several events would have to take place [according to this theory, e.g., Bro. Whittaker, p. 219] before the return of Christ. What we shall be looking for in each case will be different. In
one case there is expectancy of Christ's early return; in the other case there must be a feeling that the time is not yet, with all the doubtful effects this can have on our diligence.

2. If the saints do not carry out the judgement on Babylon, there would be a violation of a principle of Divine justice. We will enlarge on what this means later.

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND NOTORIETY OF BABYLON

The importance we have just attached to Babylon the Great is not recognised in the recent interpretations. This disregard is understandable if a person thinks Babylon is destroyed by the Beast as it is only one of a number of events. So before we proceed further we think it desirable to show how Babylon pervades the latter chapters of the Revelation. Chapter 14 opens with the Lamb on Mount Zion, and after the warning to fear God because the hour of judgement is come, another angel declares: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication". Here is the dominant world power with 'all nations' under her spell, at this time. In the 16th chapter, in the 7th Vial that carries the judgements associated with Christ's return, great events are expressed — "so mighty an 'earthquake' such as was not since men were on the earth"; "every 'island' fled away, and the 'mountains' were not found". In this context it says "and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath". So Babylon is to be the chief recipient of the Divine wrath: — "the fierceness of his wrath". In chapter 17 Babylon is described as "that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth". Chapter 18 describes the power and greatness of Babylon, and how her evil influence would be paramount; "All nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication"; "By her sorceries were all nations deceived"; "for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities". Her destruction is a process, and this is covered in chapter 18 as "the smoke of her burning" which continues until the Kingdom. The universal influence of Babylon at the time of her destruction is expressed in chapter 18 by the lamentations of the kings of the earth bewailing her as they see the smoke of her burning. They are joined by the merchants, shipmasters and sailors afar off weeping and wailing and casting dust on their heads, as they see the smoke of her burning. All this is symbolic language, but very graphic and expressive of the vast influence Babylon has. Lastly, that Babylon stands as the opposite to the Holy City, New Jerusalem, which is to govern all nations (21:24-25; cf. 18:21-23), is itself a proof that it will be the chief element of rulership amongst the nations as they oppose Christ.

BABYLON AND THE HARLOT ON THE BEAST: ROME OR JERUSALEM?

Babylon the Great, and the "harlot" (RV) on the beast, are symbols of the same system, expressing different aspects of it. This identity is stated at the end of
chapter 17: "And the woman thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth"; it is also apparent from v.5 that Babylon of the Old Testament, which ruled the then known world, is similarly described as a woman, "the lady of the kingdoms", who said in her heart, "I am, and none else beside me" (Isaiah 47:8).

What does this Babylon the Great, this harlot, represent? Bro. Thomas identifies the harlot as the Roman Catholic Church, or more precisely, the leaders who govern the Church. The city of chapter 18 is the final phase of the kingdom of men. Bro. Whittaker has the harlot as Israel, centred on Jerusalem. Bro. Norris cannot decide which of these two ideas is correct. Bro. Watkins has the harlot as the Roman Church and the beast as Israel!

The harlot and the beast on which she rides are given a very full description, and it ought not to be difficult to find the counterpart to the symbols in the past and the present. It will be found that all the various details are appropriate to the Roman Church and its leadership, at the present and in the developing future. Seven identifications are now given for the harlot being the Roman system.

1. The Roman Church is a harlot

   In the Revelation the "bride" is a virgin, faithful to Christ; so that which is presented as a harlot has an unfaithful character—unfaithful to Christ. This cannot be applied to Israel, who has never accepted a relationship with Christ. It fits the apostasy of the Christian churches, headed up in the Roman Catholic system.

2. Sitting on seven hills, 17:9

   In John's day Rome was known as the city of the seven hills, because the boundaries enclosed seven hills. This was so well established that a coin of the emperor Vespasian, issued about AD 70, shows a woman sitting on seven hills with the legend 'Roma'. Jerusalem is not a city of seven hills, and has never been known as such.

3. She sits upon many waters, 17:15

   'Waters' are interpreted as "Peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues". They represent a world-wide system. Of her claimed 500 million adherents, the Roman Church has half of them outside Europe. When her cardinals assemble at Rome they come from all over the world. Her world-wide growth has been rapid in the 20th century. Although there are many Jews throughout the

FIG. 1: Sestertius of Vespasian, 71 AD. Rome, personified as a woman, sitting upon seven hills.

FIG. 2.: Artist's Sketch of Statue Found at Corinth of Rome. Unearthed in 1927, the statue had the names of the seven hills of Rome carved upon it, showing this was a characteristic by which the city was known in the ancient world.
world, Jerusalem cannot be said to ‘sit’ upon many waters; that is, have jurisdiction over them in some sense.

4. *Her wine intoxicates kings and peoples of the earth, 17:2; 18:3*

Rome’s dogmas and mysteries must be accepted by all her adherents; this is skilfully maintained by her priestcraft administering the Confessional, Penance and Mass. Relative to God’s Truth, her adherents are intoxicated, they cannot think straight. Israel has no such intoxicating wine that beguiles the world.

5. **Drunk with the blood of the martyrs, 17:6; 18:24**

“Drunken with blood” is a frightening symbol. The extent of the crime is expressed at the end of chapter 18: “And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth”. This is very sweeping. Here is murder of God’s people not for a brief 3½ years in the future, but over many past centuries. Foxes Book of Martyrs describes the papal Roman tyranny against the heretics through the centuries in this country and in Europe. But the language is not true of Israel. Indeed, the Jews suffered equally with the saints at the hand of Rome. Their blood has been shed; they have not been shedders of blood.

6. **The name ‘Babylon’**

On the harlot’s forehead is the name ‘Mystery, Babylon the Great’; and the great City of the nations is called ‘Babylon’. Like other Revelation symbols, such as Balaam, Jezebel, tree of life, it derives its meaning from an Old Testament situation. There was a Babylon the Great in the past, with her priestcraft and mysteries, deceiving the then known world. Jeremiah describes her as “a golden cup in the LORD’s hands, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine, therefore the nations are mad” (Jer. 51:7). Like a stone cast into the water, Chaldean Babylon was to sink and not rise again (51:64). These phrases are reproduced in the description of the symbolic Babylon the Great. So the latter-day Babylon will have the characteristics, and the quality of the original Babylon. That the Roman Church is the embodiment of the spirit and practices of ancient Babylon has been well documented.

Ancient Babylon was the enemy of Israel, and the Roman Church maintains this hostility to the Jews to this day. It does not even recognise the existence of the State of Israel. Therefore to define Israel and Jerusalem by ‘Babylon’ is turning things upside down. The reverse of Israel being ‘Babylon’, Israel is scripturally the enemy of the latter-day Babylon. In the same chapters already referred to in Jeremiah, Israel is made the battle axe against Babylon (51:19-24). These words must refer to latter-day Babylon, for Israel has never yet been victorious over Babylon. This being so, we cannot have Israel as Babylon and also the enemy of Babylon.
7. Sitting on a beast with seven heads and ten horns, 17:3.

The beast in Revelation 17 is similar to the beast of the sea of chapter 13, they both have seven heads and ten horns. It is generally agreed that the beast of the sea of chapter 13, with its lion mouth speaking against God and the saints, is the same as the beast of Daniel 7 with its little horn speaking great things against the most High and wearing out the saints. Now the context of this 4th beast, following the three beasts, requires that it represents the Roman power. Daniel's 4th beast exists when Christ comes, because it says the saints take the kingdom from the 4th beast. So, working forward from Daniel's prophecy, we should expect to find in the Revelation a Roman beast with ten horns making war on Christ and the saints. This is what we find in Revelation 17. This establishes that the beast ridden by the harlot is associated with Rome and not Jerusalem.

Adding together the evidence of these seven items, it must surely be agreed that the harlot and the city Babylon are to be associated with Rome and not with Jerusalem.

WHO DESTROYS 'BABYLON': THE BEAST OR THE LAMB TOGETHER WITH THE SAINTS?

Accepting the evidence just given, that the harlot on the beast, alias Babylon the Great, is the last phase of the Roman Christian system, the next question is, 'Who finally destroys it, the beast or the Lamb and the Saints?' This question may be examined by considering another question, 'Is the harlot/Babylon finally destroyed before or after the resurrection?' If before the resurrection, then the saints cannot be involved in the destruction. So the question of when the resurrection takes place is important to us, both in a personal sense, and in determining the course of future events. We believe there is ample evidence to show that the resurrection has taken place before Babylon finally falls for the saints are on the scene at that time. Here are seven points of evidence.

1. Revelation 14.

In Revelation 14:4 we are told that the redeemed "follow the Lamb wheresoever he goeth". There follows in this chapter a sequence of three 'angels': the first declares that the hour of God's judgement is come; the second announces the fall of Babylon; and the third follows saying that the worshippers of the beast will be punished in the presence of the Lamb. As the redeemed are with the Lamb (v.4), it follows they are with Christ when Babylon falls (v.8) and the beast worshippers are punished.

2. Revelation 16.

The 7th Vial events belong to the future when the temple is opened in heaven. This may be established by comparing the language of the 7th Vial with Revelation 11:15-19. In Revelation 11:18 the resurrection takes place; and in verse 19 the temple is opened in heaven and there follows "lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail". It will be found
that these elements are the characteristics of the 7th Vial: a great voice out of the temple of God in heaven, thunders and lightnings, a great earthquake, and hail. And it is during this 7th Vial that Babylon comes up for remembrance before God. So Babylon is about to be destroyed: it has, therefore, not been destroyed already. Also chapter 11 has told us the resurrection has already taken place.

This sequence of events is also established by the sequence of symbols in chapter 16. At the end of the 6th Vial we have the announcement: “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth...” This is the point in time of the resurrection. The 7th Vial and the judgement of Babylon follows.

The fall of Babylon is announced in verse 2. The previous (opening) verse has, in symbolic language, a mighty angel coming down from ‘heaven’ to the ‘earth’; and the earth is enlightened with his glory. So the enlightening work of the ‘angel’ is in hand before the announcement of Babylon’s fall as in 14:6, 7. The enlightening of the nations is the work of Christ and the saints; they are the mighty ‘angel’ coming down from the new ‘heaven’ to the Gentile ‘earth’.

So once again, the sequence of events requires that the saints are resurrected and on the scene before the fall of Babylon. It is through the enlightening work of the saints that Babylon “is become the habitation of devils and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (v.2) — the nations now see her in her true light.

4. Revelation 18:6: Reward her as she hath rewarded you.
As Babylon is about to be destroyed, the words are heard “Reward her even as she rewarded you”. Are they addressed to the beast, or to the saints? They are appropriate to the saints who have suffered at the hands of Babylon. They are obviously not appropriate to the beast. It is the saints therefore who are going to destroy Babylon. The RV variant, “Render unto her as she hath rendered”, does not alter the sense: to ‘render’ is to requite back.

Later in this chapter we read: “Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her” (v. 20). The saints must be there to be ‘the heaven’ and to make the rejoicing. As to carrying out the avenging, this is a principle of God, expressed by the Psalmist: “Let the saints be joyful in glory... a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments on the people... To execute upon them the judgement written: this honour have all his saints” (Psa. 149:5-9). So there can be no doubt that the saints take part in the overthrow of Babylon; the resurrection must take place at an earlier stage.

At the beginning of chapter 19 there is a great rejoicing at the judgement on the harlot-City. We read: “And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour,
and power, unto the Lord our God". Much people in ‘heaven’ means the saints are in power. This is confirmed by the 24 elders and the four living creatures being before the throne (v.4). Clearly the saints are alive, not still sleeping in the dust.

We have several times already pointed out that the saints take the kingdom from the fourth beast and its little horn. The little horn with its eyes like the eyes of a man, and speaking great words against the most High, is the Roman papal system. This is equivalent to the harlot in the Revelation. The saints must have been resurrected to carry out the work of taking the kingdom from the beast and its little horn.

7. Israel conquers Babylon.
We have already quoted from Jeremiah chapter 51, that the nation of Israel in the future is God’s battle axe against Babylon. The saints will be the head of Israel in the future. Therefore it is the Lamb together with the saints and Israel who destroy the latter-day Babylon.

SOME DIFFICULTIES TO BE SOLVED

There are three difficulties [i.e., objections raised in the modern interpretations] to be considered in maintaining that the saints carry out the destruction of Babylon:

1. The horns burn the harlot with fire (Rev. 17:16).
2. The call in 18:4 — “Come out of her my people”.
3. The marriage of the Lamb takes place in chapter 19.

1. The horns burn the harlot with fire (Rev. 17:16).
This verse reads: “And the ten horns...shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate, and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her utterly with fire” (RV). Burning with fire is also used in chapter 18 regarding Babylon: “Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her” (ch. 18:8). It is not unreasonable to assume these two burnings are the same event; and as all agree that the Harlot and the City are the same system, it would follow that it is the horns that burn the City Babylon with fire, not the saints. In other words if the horns burn the Harlot, it is the horns that burn the City. Further, it will be contended, does not the phrase ‘utterly burn’ denote complete destruction, so that when the horns utterly burn the harlot, she is destroyed?

In considering this difficulty we will first examine whether the two burnings are the same situation and occasion. Careful comparison shows they are not. a) In chapter 17 the horn-kings hate the Harlot; in chapter 18 they have affection towards her: “and the kings of the earth who have committed fornication
and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning” (v. 9). Living deliciously with her, and lamenting her fall is the opposite of hating her and eating her flesh. Again, at the time of the destruction of the City she “reigns over the kings of the earth”. This is different from being hated and burned by these kings.

b) In chapter 17, she is desolate, her flesh eaten — she has lost her temporal power, she is widowed; but in chapter 18 she is again supported by temporal power, and says: “I sit a queen and am no widow”. Surely these are two different situations, belonging to different times.

c) Though the character of the judgement in the two cases is similar, it is not identical. There is no doubt that in chapter 18 it is a final judgement and destruction: “And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall the great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all” (v. 21). There is not this finality about the judgement in chapter 17. ‘Made desolate, naked, flesh eaten’ represent severe judgement, but there is still life. Even the phrase ‘burn her utterly with fire’ that is added, does not necessarily mean final destruction. In Old Testament times Jerusalem was ‘utterly burned with fire’, but that was not her end. Jeremiah says she was subjected to a fire “that cannot be quenched” — extreme language like utterly burn. But after 70 years captivity Jerusalem revived in a weaker form and continued for centuries.

What then is the relation of these two ‘burnings’ in chapter 17 and chapter 18? The structure of chapter 17 needs careful attention. It appears at first sight that the horns hating the harlot (v.16), occurs after the beast and ten horns have made war on the Lamb, and the Lamb has overcome them (v. 14). This of course, cannot be, and on closer examination it is found that verses 8-14 inclusive, are a parenthesis about the beast, and is introduced to help explain the ‘mystery’ of the harlot. If we remove the parenthesis, we are left with the clear sequence regarding the harlot, reading verses 1-6 and following on with 15-18; and verse 18 links the two chapters. According to the continuous historical interpretation, the hating of the harlot, making her desolate, burning her with fire, occurred in the last century; the destruction of the City in chapter 18 belongs to the future. The hating of the harlot making her naked, burning her with fire, has already been described in Revelation 16, in the judgements of the first five Vials, particularly the 4th and 5th. The 4th was poured on the Sun, the civil power supporting the Papacy, and it was given unto it “to scorch men with fire.” And men were scorched with great heat”. The 5th Vial turned the kingdom into darkness. These judgements poured out by Napoleon on Catholic Europe, on the horn kingdoms that had been under the feudal system for a thousand years, certainly brought distress to the Catholic Church; the Church lost most of its vast lands and wealth, and influence. This was the first stage of the Harlot’s judgement. She has been allowed to revive for the final conflict with the Lord Jesus himself, and her final judgement.
2. 'Come out of her my people'.

In the recent interpretations that claim Babylon is destroyed by the horns of Europe before Christ reveals himself, support is sought in the words of Revelation 18:4 exclaimed just before Babylon falls: "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins". It is said that this proves that the saints have not been gathered at the point when Babylon falls.

Such a proposal is erroneous in two respects. Firstly, Christ's brethren, those truly in the Name, are never in Babylon, and so cannot be called on to come out of her; therefore these words cannot apply to them. Revelation 14:4 says that they are "not defiled with women" — they have no association with the harlot and her daughters.

Secondly, there is a class of people to whom the words properly apply. Before the fall of Babylon the gospel is preached to every nation, kindred and people (ch. 14:6, 7), calling on them to fear God and worship him because the hour of judgement is come. Those who respond to this call must come out of Babylon, and repudiate her teachings and practices; they will be 'my people'. Jews are included in this call, for not only do they hold Babylonish ideas — the immortal soul and heaven going — but they will at this time be held captive in Europe; in the Great City in a geographical sense. Zechariah had prophesied of this situation: "Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon" (Zech. 2:6-7).

3. The Marriage of the Lamb, Chapter 19.

The marriage and the marriage feast of the Lamb is referred to in chapter 19, and it is proposed that this means that the resurrection does not take place until chapter 19. If this is so, it is asked — how can the saints take part in the destruction of Babylon, which has already taken place in the previous chapter? But it is not true that the resurrection occurs in chapter 19. First, a study of the appropriate section in chapter 19 will show that the event in view in chapter 19 is the marriage supper or feast of the Lamb, rather than the marriage.

It should be noted that the translators have not rendered the tense correctly in verse 8. The diaglott reads: "the marriage of the Lamb came, and his wife prepared herself. And it was given unto her that she should be clothed with fine linen. . .". The past tense is used; and the marriage, in as far as it concerned resurrection and being arrayed in white linen were things of the past. Clothing in white linen is the symbol of putting on immortality — see 3:5; 6:11; 7:9. In the phrase of Rev. 19:8, fine linen is "the justification" of saints. So at the time at which we have arrived in chapter 19, putting on immortality is something in the past. The time has come for a Hallelujah rejoicing, and an invitation to the marriage feast of the Lamb. The marriage feast marks a great step forward in the developing situation in which the saints are taking the
kingdom and subduing human rule. It will probably mark the inauguration of the New Jerusalem rulership, at the great administrative centre built at Jerusalem. A harmonious piecing together of all relevant scripture could never arrive at the conclusion that the saints only come from the dust of death at this point in time. It would be quite contrary to the clear picture of Revelation chapter 14, where the redeemed are with the Lamb before the aionian gospel is preached and the angel declares that Babylon has fallen.

The question of when the resurrection took place is not involved in this chapter; the marriage supper does not define when it occurred. We have shown that resurrection takes place at an early stage, to allow the saints to carry out the judgements that bring about the fall of Babylon. In chapter 19 they are “the much people in heaven” (v. 1) — in a ruling position — rejoicing because the harlot has been judged, and the city destroyed.
Chapter 10
ANOTHER 'HISTORICAL' INTERPRETATION

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ", Sister Ray Walker and Associates

This interpretation is quite different from those we have considered. Some readers will find it difficult to follow as there is a weaving of many Old Testament themes into the book. To provide completeness to this present book, an outline will be given of Sis. Walker’s book, followed by some comments upon that view.

A BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE KEY IDEAS.

Chapters 6 to 9
The SEALS AND TRUMPETS bring the Old Roman Empire, centred on Constantinople, to a final end, AD 1453.

Chapter 10
THE RAINBOWED ANGEL: As Ezekiel first sees the glory of Yahweh in his first chapter, and is then commissioned to witness to Israel, so John first sees the Rainbowed Angel and is then commissioned to preach.

Chapter 11
The HOLY CITY represents faithful christians; these are also the TWO WITNESSES. Their 1260 years of witness stretches from AD 70 to the 14th century, prior to the fall of Constantinople. The Witnesses do not actually carry out the wars and judgements but they pray to God and God does it by other agents. The DEATH OF THE WITNESSES is the harsh treatment by the Turks.
DEAD BODIES LYING IN THE STREET OF THE GREAT CITY—"reminds one of the unpleasant Mongol habit of leaving dead bodies piled up in the streets
of the cities they sacked. Those who beheld the dead bodies were the western crusaders in Palestine; the Greek eastern peoples rejoiced at their death.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE WITNESSES represents the resurrection of Bible truth in the West, following the Renaissance.

THE WITNESSES ASCEND TO HEAVEN and their enemies beheld them: this is a request by believers at the time for God to bring judgement on a persecuting world.

THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE IN WHICH A TENTH OF THE CITY FELL: this is the end of Christian Rome when Constantinople fell in 1453.

Chapter 12
THE WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN is described as follows: “The woman is particularly the Roman world, trading queen of the whole earth. She is crowned and clothed in glory, because in John’s day the people ruled the empire... The woman was in heaven because she, as the Roman State, ruled the world.”

THE DRAGON is “the pagan Emperor-system, corrupting the woman with his lies”.

The MAN CHILD represents the faithful Christian Church born out of the Roman world by preaching.

The WOMAN IN THE WILDERNESS is thus described: “The woman Rome, having given birth to a true seed, goes into the political wilderness for 1260 days, i.e., for 1260 years dated from AD 193, which brings us to the end of the State of Rome in 1453”.

Chapter 13
The BEAST OF THE SEA is the succession of the empires in the West, including the Holy Roman Empire.

ITS LION MOUTH: “the mark of African superstition which corrupted the western churches”.


The BEAST OF THE EARTH: the eastern Empire of Rome based on Constantinople.

The IMAGE OF THE BEAST THAT KILLED ALL THAT WOULD NOT WORSHIP: the Eastern Church under the control of the eastern Emperor, up to the time of Phocas about AD 600. After this the Mohammedans and the Islamic religion take over the eastern Roman Empire, and the Earth beast changed its form and became the False Prophet.

The NUMBER OF THE BEAST, 666: This “is related to the history of Edom”.
Chapter 14
The LAMB ON MOUNT ZION is explained as follows: "The 144,000 are not conscious people. They are a symbolic group representing all the faithful of the trumpet era; their appearance before the throne is a symbol showing that their lives and deaths require judgement by God against the systems which have persecuted them."

PREACHING THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL is a revival of Bible Truth associated with the Renaissance and the Reformation, which "eventually came to fruition in some of the Anabaptist churches of the 16th centuries." "The rebirth of Bible truth, beginning a little before the fall of Constantinople" is a further description.

BABYLON IS FALLEN (14:6): This is taken as the fall of Constantinople in 1453. It is explained as follows: "This is the announcement to western Edom (Europe, GP) that the great city which has been her strength was gone, that great city Constantinople, by whose trading and religion all nations have been made drunk".

REAPING THE HARVEST, GATHERING THE VINE INTO THE WINEPRESS OF THE WRATH OF GOD (vv. 14-20): this is the Turkish invasion of the lands of the eastern Roman Empire.

Chapters 15-16
FIRST VIAL: 'A MALIGNANT ULCER': This is the Turks in the East ill-treating their conquered lands and causing distress to Catholics.
SECOND VIAL: THE SEA BECOMES THE BLOOD OF A DEAD MAN: Civil wars in the West, chiefly between Protestants and Catholics.
THIRD VIAL: RIVERS AND FOUNTAINS OF WATERS BECOME BLOOD: The mis-rule of the Turks in Egypt and North Africa.
FOURTH VIAL: POURED OUT ON THE SUN: "This new judgement is the revival of the Roman system in the Russian Empire".
FIFTH VIAL: POURED OUT ON THE SEAT OF THE BEAST: The impact of 'reason' on Catholic darkness, bringing total darkness, demanded judgement on Rome and her adherents.
SIXTH VIAL: DRYING UP OF RIVER EUPHRATES: Decline of the Turkish Empire.

KINGS FROM THE EAST: The Christadelphians, brought into being by the work of Dr. Thomas.
THE FROG-LIKE SPIRITS: (The present writer could not find an explanation for this important symbol in Sis. Walker's book).
BEHOLD I COME AS A THIEF. WATCH: This is an exhortation, but the resurrection does not take place until many events later; in chapter 20 of the Revelation.
Chapters 17-18
THE SCARLET COLOURED BEAST: a vast confederacy, equivalent to Nebuchadnezzar's Image, ruled by Russia.

THE HARLOT: Quoting, "The woman, in her last phase of western Christian Europe, is decked with the spoils she has gained by worshipping rulers who have given her a 'high standard of living'. The golden cup contains abominable doctrines and beliefs, as Roman Catholicism, Solafideism, Humanism, Capitalism, Socialism, etc.

BABYLON: This is a 'new' Babylon. "A new city 'Babylon' rose on the ashes of the old (destroyed AD 1453 GP), while outside the city a new dragon was climbing step by step out of the bottomless pit of the Russian steppes. These two, the 'city' of western Europe and the Russian 'dragon' develop into the harlot on the scarlet beast of Revelation 17".

Chapters 16-20
EVENTS OF THE LAST DAYS: The following is the sequence proposed:
16:14 Gathering of Dragon, Beast and False Prophet into the Scarlet beast.
16:15 Living saints warned to watch.
18:1 Collapse of Western World.
   Christadelphians persecuted.
   Captivity of Israel.
18:4 Call to Christadelphians to 'come out'.
19:11 RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST.
19:19 Defeat of hosts at Armageddon.
20:1-3 Chaining of Russian dragon.
20:4, 12 RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.
   Judgement of nations.
   Redemption of Israel.
   Living Christadelphians probably raised to immortality early in the kingdom.

COMMENTS ON THE INTERPRETATION OF SIS. WALKER
In the various interpretations we have been examining, the most important part, from our point of view, has to do with the present and the future, because this gives us guidance as to the coming of the Master and the resurrection. In the interpretation we have just summarised, the outline of the future has a similar sequence to that of the other interpretations — there is the fall of Babylon, then the return of Christ, and as practically the last item, the resurrection. What we have written in chapter nine will suffice as an answer to this wrong sequence.

Confidence as to an interpreter's ability to indicate the immediate future depends very much on the accuracy of the interpretation of earlier events. Relative to this, we offer a few comments on the interpretation given of chapters 11 to 16 in this "Revelation of Jesus Christ".
Chapter 11

1. We are told that the testimony of the Two Witnesses started AD 70 and finished in AD 1330 (70 plus 1260 equals 1330). Historically this proposal is not true. There is probably more evidence of witness against apostasy in the century following AD 1330 than in the previous centuries. The western Paulicians, Albigenses, Waldenses, and Petro-bruscians belong to this time.

2. To say that the Turks, as the beast of the abyss, made war on the faithful christians, overcame them, and killed them, has no serious historical support. They may have suffered with 'christians' generally, but this does not amount to a specific war against 'faithful christians', who are said to be the Two Witnesses.

3. Let us consider the resurrection of the Two Witnesses. The details are in verses 11-13. The Witnesses came to life after 3½ days; great fear fell on all them that beheld them; the same hour there was a great earthquake; 7,000 men were slain; the remnant were affrighted and gave glory to the God of heaven. In Sis. Walker's interpretation the great earthquake is the fall of Constantinople. So at this time “in the same hour” — the ‘faithful christians’ became powerful; great fear fell on their enemies; a frightened remnant gave glory to God. Where can one find this in the history of the time of the fall of Constantinople? The symbols do not fit; there is no historical support. One detail in these verses is “the tenth of the city fell”. It may be asked why Constantinople should be called the tenth of the city?

   All the details of the symbology in these verses fit the events of the French Revolution so well, that to infer that this is just chance, seems to be despising God’s gracious guidance to us, and to those living at that time.

4. The 7th Trumpet, or third Woe, follows quickly after the earthquake and its related events; and as the 7th Trumpet sounds, great voices announce that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of Christ (11:14, 15). So at the fall of Constantinople in AD 1453 we are approaching the setting up of the kingdom. But is this so? No. Sister Walker’s interpretation is about to start a new era of 500 years of European history! This interpretation is on the wrong track.

Chapter 12

1. In the interpretation we are considering, the woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and crowned with twelve stars, is the Roman world. The text says that when this sign appears, it is a great sign or wonder in heaven. How can the Roman world be called a great wonder appearing in heaven at the time christianity is born?

2. The man-child, we are told, represents “faithful christians” born out of the Roman world, and they do not come to the birth until about AD 193 when there is recognition of the Christian Church. This would infer that the
Christian Church, recognised and tolerated by Rome, are ‘faithful christians’ still. This is not true. It was an apostate Church that was tolerated and recognised.

3. Then it is proposed that the man-child caught up to God and his throne, was a petition of the faithful to God for vengeance on their persecutors. While the language is admittedly, symbolical, this interpretation is not giving sensible meaning to the words.

4. The response to the petition for vengeance is said to be that Michael the archangel (Dan. 10:21), in heaven above, puts in motion events on earth to cast out the Dragon from the Roman ‘heaven’. There is no justification for making ‘heaven’, in the same verse, literal for Michael and symbolic for the Dragon.

5. The proposition that the Roman world (the woman) went into the political wilderness from AD 193 to AD 1453 — 1260 years — is very strange: it highlights the difficulties that a wrong interpretation creates.

6. The important words in verse 10, “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God”, do not appear to be dealt with. They would be difficult to fit in.

Chapter 13

1. The beast of the sea and the beast of the earth: The beast of the sea is interpreted on similar lines to that in Eureka — the warfare against the saints is associated with the Papal power starting with Phocas’ decree in AD 607 approximately, and passing through 1260 years to the loss of temporal power by the Papacy in 1867-70.

The beast of the earth is introduced with the words “and I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth” (verse 11). This beast is said to be the Eastern Roman Empire about AD 600. No explanation is given as to how the Eastern Roman Empire at this time could be “another beast coming up out of the earth”. No history is given to support the arrival of a new Eastern Roman Empire at this time. Nor is any history given to justify the words of verse 13, that the eastern Empire, or the Emperor, “doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men”. History shows the Papacy in the West did this.

2. The earth beast instructs “them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast” (that is, to the sea beast), verse 14. This image that is made is said to be the eastern Catholic Church. Did the people of the time make the eastern Catholic Church? Nothing like it occurred at this time. Was the eastern Catholic Church an image of the sea beast in the West? Is not the true situation the reverse of this, that the Papal power and church in the West became an image of the Imperial Rome?

3. The image of the beast was a terribly oppressive power as we read in verses 15-17.
In the interpretation we are told that chapter 13 finishes about AD 600. So this tyrannical image of the beast must have been operating at this time. Is it true that the eastern Catholic Church at this time developed into a persecuting power so terrible that it put in bondage all who had not the mark of the sea beast in the hand or forehead? History does not support this. The eastern Catholic Church in the 7th century as the Image of the beast does not fit the detail of the symbols.

Chapter 14

1. The proposed gospel preaching at the fall of Constantinople: Chapter 14 has the Lamb on Mount Zion with the Redeemed and then there follows a sequence of three angels. The first preaches to all nations, “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgement is come”. Then follows the second angel saying, “Babylon is fallen”; and a third angel says that the worshippers of the beast, and those that have the mark, will be “tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence. . . of the Lamb”. In the interpretation under review this great event, the fall of Babylon, belongs to the 15th century; it is the fall of Constantinople and the end of the old Roman Empire. Note the sequence, first the preaching of the gospel to all nations, verse 7; then the fall of Babylon, verse 8. So we ask, Who preached to all nations this gospel of coming judgement before Constantinople fell? We were told in the interpretation of chapter 11 that the faithful christian witness ceased about 1330, and the Turks made war on the witnesses and killed them. On their own showing, there can be no preaching of the gospel before the fall of Constantinople. Nor does history provide evidence of such a witness in the Eastern Roman Empire, so bold and emphatic as to be described as a ‘loud voice’, preaching ‘to every nation, kindred, tongue and people’. If this did occur, it would be noted in history. In truth, this preaching is a preaching when Christ returns, and has nothing to do with Constantinople.

2. Continuing with the detail in verses 10 and 11 of this chapter, we ask, How could those at the time of the fall of Constantinople who worshipped the beast, be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the Lamb? The language of these verses can only be given sensible meaning by applying them to the time when Christ returns, and there is a world-wide call to repentance before the great city Babylon is destroyed, as detailed in chapter 18. The language used regarding the judgement on Babylon and her worshippers in chapter 14 and chapter 18 is so similar, that we should take ‘Babylon’ to be the same system in both places. It is most unlikely that God intended to have two Babylons in the Apocalypse.

Chapter 16

1. In the exposition we are considering, the first five Vials have to span some 400 years from the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The third Vial, we are told,
concerns the treatment of the Egyptians and North Africans by the Turks. How does this fit the symbols used? The Vial is poured out "upon the rivers and fountains of waters. There is nothing in Egypt and North Africa to fit this description; rather the reverse: both in geographical and spiritual terms they are dry, arid regions.

But more important than this failure to fit the symbols, the further elements under the third Vial are inappropriate. The pouring out of the Vial brings the response from the angel "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy" (v.6). Does this intense wickedness attach to the Egyptians and North Africans? Should they be picked out specially in this way? Where is the evidence that the Egyptians and North Africans have been the chief shedders of the blood of the saints and prophets? There is no evidence and to propose this is to ignore the actual evil power, the Papacy, which did shed the blood of the saints and witnesses; especially in the region of the 'rivers and fountains of waters' — the Alps.

In the continuous historical exposition by Bro. Thomas and others, the second half of the Revelation focuses on the West rather than the East; on Rome rather than Constantinople. This is historically appropriate; the Truth had moved from the East to the West, and the warfare of the faith was being fought in the West. The attempts to centre so many symbols on Constantinople must be rejected as not in harmony with historical development.

The more one studies these various attempts to provide an alternative to Bro. Thomas' exposition, the more apparent it becomes that his is the only one that fits the many detailed symbols, whether in the Vials, or the earlier Seals and Trumpets.
Chapter 11

WHICH INTERPRETATION?

OUR EXAMINATION REVIEWED

Such a variety of ideas have been under review, that a brief survey is needed. The starting point, indeed the guiding principle, is given in Amos 3:7—

"Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets".

We should therefore expect to have been given a prophetic record covering the time the Master is away in heaven. That such a record should have been provided is the more to be expected, because in this time of his absence there has been no living voice of "Holy men of God" speaking as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Without such a prophetic record, believers through long centuries would have been without a guiding light. Therefore, when the last book of the Bible outlines, in symbol, events leading to the setting up of the kingdom under Christ, we should expect it to be an unfolding prophecy of events from John’s day to the coming of the Lord. And this is its opening claim. It is concerned with "things which are, and [the] things which shall be hereafter" (v.19). It claims therefore, to be a prophetic record which would soon start to be fulfilled. And for each subsequent generation they would find in this record "things which must shortly come to pass" (v.1) in their own day. When the various symbols are studied in the light of past history it becomes apparent that the symbols did, wonderfully, in a condensed way, outline that history. Down through the centuries there is a remarkable fit between the symbolic events in the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Vials, and the history they foreshadowed. This fit is on too vast a scale to be ignored. The fit between history and the symbols cannot be a matter of chance. It must be by the foreknowledge of God. To propose that the symbols are all related to the future does infer that the fit of the symbols and history was a matter of chance. This is not only unreasonable, but is a despising of God's gracious guidance provided for his children.
On examination, the Preterist interpretation, having the Seals and Trumpets fulfilled around AD 70, was found to give a vague and poor correspondence between prophecy and the proposed history. The claim to a special virtue of being a 'Biblical interpretation' was found to be faulty in its reasoning. But the chief failure centred on the date of the Revelation. The evidence for a time before AD 70 was slight and unconvincing, and contrary to so much evidence for the Revelation being given later, in the time of the Domitian persecution. The pre-AD 70 date is fundamental to the Preterist interpretation, and failure on this ground justifies dismissing the interpretation.

The Futurist interpretation, as with the Preterist, is an unlikely basis because it leaves the believer without prophetic guidance over many centuries; in fact there would be over eighteen centuries of prophetic darkness with no guidance and encouragement. On reflection one can see that it is unreasonable in a book with enough symbols to cover eighteen centuries of history, to propose that these symbols be interpreted so as to cover a few years in the future. It means the future is tremendously overcrowded with symbols and events. We are given repeated series of future judgements to 'use up' the symbols. And the great weakness of all this is that, being in the future, it is not verifiable. It has to be recognised as speculation. With the continuous historical interpretation there is so much of the symbols already verifiable from past history that one can have reasonable confidence in outlining what is still future.

The other Futurist interpretation makes modern Israel the great enemy of God, it is symbolically the dragon, the devil, the beast of the sea, the harlot, the coming world despotic power; and in the book of Daniel it is the little horn of chapter 7 that will speak great words against the Ancient of Days, and wear out the saints. Such a concept is so contrary to the purpose of God in the Law and the Prophets, that no one aware of the God’s purpose will be led astray. It is a serious matter to so misrepresent God and His nation. This view is likely to develop an anti-Jewish attitude in our community; whereas we ought, like Daniel, Ezra and Paul, to grieve over the present waywardness of 'our' nation, and plead with God for His work of restoration of faith to begin.

All these Futurist interpretations give us a 3½ year period in the future for the emergence of a tyrannical world power, persecuting the Christadelphians. A whole chapter has been given in this book to show that the 1260 days (or 42 months or 3½ times) must be taken symbolically as 1260 years. This fact undermines the theoretical plan of the future set out in these alternative interpretations.

It may be that the reader will agree with the writer, that a consideration of the alternative interpretations greatly strengthens the conviction that the interpretation generally accepted among us until recently, is the correct one. We should feel grateful that God has provided us in the Revelation with such evidence of His hand at work in the past that we can be confident the present is also working out according to His plan.
THE VOICE OF OUR EARLIER BRETHREN

We now draw attention to how our Christadelphian community has looked at the book of the Revelation. The various 'new' interpretations have only arisen very recently — in the past 30 years. For nearly a 100 years before this, several generations of our brethren and sisters held to the continuous historical interpretation provided by Bro. Thomas. At least a proportion of these brethren were students of history and some would be acquainted with the Futurist and Preterist interpretations. Yet our community was satisfied with the interpretation and extremely grateful for it. It would be wrong for us to think of our earlier brethren as 'unlearned and ignorant' people, and to think that today we have so much greater wisdom and intellect in our midst. Nor can it be claimed that new evidence, or developing circumstance, require a radical change of interpretation. Nor, again, ought it to be said, with regard to divine matters, it is out of date because it is over a hundred years old. At the very least these reflections suggest every one ought to give the 'old' interpretation a fair hearing and a patient study. This needs emphasising, because the new books are inevitably much to the fore, and the old books lie unheeded on the shelf.

Looking back to the beginning of our community there is good reason for expecting that our traditional interpretation is the correct one. Take our minds back to the time of Bro. Thomas. Under the good hand of God he made plain the Truth — the gospel of the Abrahamic promises — and dispelled the darkness of Church teaching on immortal souls, heaven going, the devil, hell torments, etc. His expositions, brought into being groups of believers. They realised they ought to understand Jesus' Last Message, with its admonition, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein" (1:3). The question arises, would God only half do His work, and leave those whom He had called out of darkness into light, in ignorance regarding His final book of instruction? Should we not expect God to encourage the one who had faithfully carried out the basic work, to continue and complete the needed exposition of the last scripture? Equipped with a clear understanding of the gospel, he was in a position to understand the Revelation, and interpret it in harmony with his understanding of the Old Testament writings.

How much the general understanding of the Revelation was regarded as part of "the Truth" may be appreciated by a glance at the book Elpis Israel. This was the chief medium for enlightening men and women at that time; and we note it has three parts, "The Rudiments of the World"; "The Things of the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ"; and "The Kingdoms of the World in their Relation to the Kingdom of God". In this third part, the outline of Daniel and Revelation is before the reader, dealing with past, present and future events. In those days Elpis Israel was read by practically all brethren, and so a general understanding of the Revelation was part of "the Truth" they held to. As we have said, the brethren were grateful for the exposition. It gave them great encouragement in appreciating that so much of the prophecy had already been fulfilled, and they were living in
the time of the Vials when, under the 6th Vial, Jesus announces, "Behold, I come as a thief". Our community would be greatly invigorated if we made the same study as our earlier brethren, and were made expectant of the appearing of the Master. It is admitted that Bro. Thomas did not perceive the full development of the drying up of the Euphrates, the preparing the Way, and the going forth of the frog spirits under the 6th Vial. This was hardly possible. But we can readily follow the further fulfilment from his time, as outlined in chapter 8 of this book. In holding to the traditional interpretation we have more confidence, not less, as to where we stand because we realise that we are about to see the Master return to the earth.

TRUTH IS PRECIOUS

Many who read these new interpretations recognise that they are not sound expositions, but they maintain a tolerance toward them, and continue to hold those who thus write in high esteem. This comparative indifference to the Truth is not good. With these mutually contradictory interpretations before us, our rising generation will adopt the view that there is no certain truth. With this loose attitude on one of the books of the inspired word of God, it will inevitably follow that a similar attitude will grow toward the rest of God’s word. Uncertainty and debate will increase, and our standing as the people that have the TRUTH will be lost.

It is a false idea that we can allow the book of Revelation to be a pleasant debating ground, and at the same time say there is but "one faith, one hope, one baptism, one Lord", etc. The last book of the Bible is the embodiment of God’s Truth as much as the first book. It is all equally inspired and to be included in Paul’s description of the earlier writings: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

God intended us to understand the book of Daniel and its companion the Revelation. In the last chapter of Daniel it says, “None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand” (Dan. 12:10). And regarding the book of Revelation, Christ expects us to ‘hear’ and ‘keep’ the sayings of the book. Its closing words have a solemn warning to those who destroy the meaning of the book. A right understanding of it is important to us. Just as the Acts of the Apostles unfolded God’s will and purpose for the first century, so the Revelation gives His purpose and instruction for our situation in the 20th century. A right understanding moulds our conscience and course of action. Our duty is to join our faithful brethren of past centuries in witness against the Christian apostasy, headed up in Rome. This witness is being undermined by the new interpretations. A tolerant friendly attitude to the Churches is growing rapidly in our community. We are ceasing to be God’s witnesses, because we have ceased to respond to the Revelation, to keep the sayings of the Book.

‘Hearing’ and ‘keeping’ the “words of this prophecy and those things which are
written therein” (Rev. 1:3) means much more than understanding how events foreshadowed in the Revelation have come to pass. There are seven letters giving us personal and ecclesial guidance; there are several visions of the glory of the kingdom; there is the emphatic distinction between the ecclesia and the world, portrayed at every stage as antagonistic to each other; there is the warfare of the faith maintained by our earlier brethren as an example to us. In addition there are so many symbols based on Old Testament situations which in their study and exposition enrich the mind — the hidden manna, the apocalyptic urim and thummim, the tabernacle of witness, the water of life, pillars in the temple of God, etc.

We finish with the words of the Master in the last chapter of his Last Message:

“And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (Rev. 22:6, 7). Do we understand and keep the sayings (logos) of this book? Do we stand in the way of the blessing?

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14).
Appendix 1

DANIEL & THE APOCALYPSE—A SHORT COMPARATIVE STUDY*

"The object of prophecy was always to reveal God to men and to keep men with God. For this purpose prophecy is a witness to God's foreknowledge both to Jew and Gentile, but it is above all an instrument in the preparation of a people for the Lord, it is given primarily for the benefit of those with whom God is working out His purpose of redemption".

There are many points of comparison between Daniel, "the man greatly beloved" (Dan. 9:23, 10:11) and John, the beloved disciple. Both were in exile, separated from the land of God's promise and both had survived the destruction of Judah's commonwealth and the destruction of the Temple. The ecclesia was once more scattered throughout the domain of its oppressor and, as with the prophecy of Daniel, the Apocalypse was given to strengthen the saints of the new Israel to endure a long period of time. For them, too, the vision would speak only as age by age unfolded in fulfilment, so that in every age the ecclesia of God would gain some sense of perspective in relation to their Master's return.

"In His revelation the future of His people is shown as God sees it and therefore time is transcended; the future can mould the present and He who is coming can also be in the midst of the ecclesias. This is only another way of saying the purpose of God is a present fact controlling the events which are to lead to its fulfilment."

Old Testament examples show the same principle at work. The cherubim of Ezekiel's visions show the future glory of the perfected and ideal Israel. But since

*This is a summary of the salient points taken from three articles written by Bro. L. G. Sargent and published in 'The Christadelphian' in January, February and March 1960. Direct quotations are enclosed within quotation marks.
the future glory was the ground of present judgements for the nation, the prophecies of judgement on Israel are depicted as emerging from the very visions of the cherubic host.

In Daniel 10 the vision of the "One Man", a figure for the multitude of saints in future perfection, introduces the prophecy of chapter 11 which depicts events in the Middle East up to the time of the end. Chapters 10, 11 and 12 "thus give an example of continuous historical prophecy, having its starting point in the prophet's own day and opening out of a vision of the future glory and leading up to that glory as the culmination. The distant future precedes in the vision the events leading to it, and is in fact their source."

This is exactly the principle which governs the structure of the Apocalypse. Each section is introduced by a vision of the future from which there emerges the events leading to it. The future is shown as in the present as well as being the standard by which the present is judged. Thus in chapters 4 and 5 the redeemed of the future acclaim the Lamb who receives a scroll which contained, from John's view in Patmos, a series of historical events leading to the kingdom. From God's point of view the beginning is in the end.

Daniel commenced his visions in the time of the Babylonian "head of gold" dominion and in chapter 2 revealed that four empires would follow one another in succession with the fourth undergoing a number of changes before being destroyed by the Kingdom of God. "Comparison with the exposition of the dream and with the prophecy of the Ram and He-goat leaves no doubt what powers would follow Nebuchadnezzar: they were the Medo-Persian and the Greek or Macedonian. After this, it is a commonplace fact of history that Rome succeeded to the dominion of the known world. It can scarcely be questioned that the Four Beasts of Daniel 7 correspond to the four metals of the Image."

The Fourth Beast with its 10 horns is the same as the Iron part of the Image with its 10 toes, that is the Roman Empire. The point to be noted is that John came within the Fourth Beast phase. It might be expected, therefore, that his prophecy would cover events from that point to the end and correspond closely with the developments shown in the later stages of Daniel's Fourth Beast.

The structure of the Apocalypse can be sketched in the following brief analysis:
1. **The Christ Body** (chapter 1) and its development in the ecclesias (chapters 2 and 3).
2. **Introductory Vision** (chapters 4 and 5):
   (a) The end to be attained—God manifest in the redeemed;
   (b) The means by which it is attained—the Slain Lamb and his control over the events of history.
3. **The Worldly Setting** in which the Christ-body develops:
   (a) Seals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 (chapter 6).
      Prefatory vision to the seventh seal — the sealing of the tribes and vision
of the redeemed, Seal 7, opening into
(b) Trumpets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 (chapters 8 and 9).
Prefatory vision to the seventh trumpet:
(i) The climax—the Angel of the Rainbow in judgement;
(ii) The means leading to it—affliction during the witnessing period, cul-
minating in the Great Earthquake which leads into
(c) Trumpet 7 (chapters 10 and 11).
[Mention of the Ark in the Holy Place under Trumpet 7 (11:19) leads back to a
parenthetic survey of the ecclesia in the world and its changing relationships with
imperialism (chapters 12 and 13) and the final triumph of the true ecclesia over the
false (chapter 14)].
(d) Trumpet 7 continued—Prefatory vision to vials (chapter 15); Vials 1, 2,
3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 (no prefatory vision to vial 7) (chapter 16).
4. A. Judgement on the Harlot of Babylon and defeat of the Roman system, ec-
clesiastical and political (chapters 17, 18, 19), contrasted with
B. Marriage Supper of the Lamb and his Bride—the spiritual climax of the
book—followed by war against the hostile world, and triumph (chapter 19).
5. Millennial Reign (chapter 20), post-millenial revolt and judgement.
6. The Age Beyond (chapters 21 and 22)—redemption completed in Paradise
regained.
This provides the framework for understanding the Apocalypse and the changes
they represent give the broad outline of the historical setting. Chapter 11 shows
one aspect of the life of the ecclesia (represented by the down-trodden holy city)
whilst chapters 12, 13 and 14 are a kind of parenthesis introduced to explain a
number of symbols which arose in the vision of chapter 11. When chapter 12
reviews these symbols it commences with events which go back to a period much
earlier than that represented in chapter 11.
John sees in the symbolic heaven of Rev. 12 a woman arrayed with the sun
which is a symbol of the counterfeit ecclesia and with her is a man-child who
maybe identified as Constantine—opposed to the woman is “a great red dragon
having seven heads and ten horns” (12:3). The likeness to Daniel’s fourth beast is
self-evident (Dan. 7:7). Hence the events in chapter 12 describe circumstances in
the Roman empire in which the counterfeit ecclesia under the leadership of Con-
stantine (symbolized by Michael) took a major role in ejecting paganism from
power.
Rev. 13 takes the symbol of the dragon-phase of Daniel’s fourth beast a stage
further. Adopting the reading of the R.V., John says the dragon “stood on the
sand of the sea” (13:1) and witnessed the emergence of another beast. This was the
same Mediterranean shoreline where Daniel witnessed the rise of empires (Dan.
7:2, 17), and in fact this latest beast has a close connection with Daniel’s fourth
beast and with the dragon, for this too had seven heads and ten horns. It is also a unique system because it combines the features of all four of Daniel's beasts showing that it was a natural sequential development in the presentation of powers. This beast was not independent of the dragon for the dragon endows the beast with its own power, throne and authority. This is nothing else but a further development in the Roman empire where two powers share their interests in the same empire.

The beast of the sea shows many points of comparison with Daniel's fourth beast, particularly the little horn phase. Both had a mouth speaking great things (Dan. 7:8, 20; Rev. 13:5). Both made war against the saints and prevailed (Dan. 7:21; Rev. 13:7), Daniel's Beast for $3\frac{1}{2}$ "times" (Dan. 7:25) and John's Beast for 42 months (Rev. 13:5) — the same length of time differently expressed. Both powers are clearly the same and they represent the development of the Papacy in Western Europe.

Another beast comes out of the earth (Rev. 13:11); it had two horns like a lamb but spoke as a dragon. It exercised the power of the first beast in its presence and therefore once again represents a development within Roman Imperialism and not a substitution. It gives breath to an image of the first beast which men are commanded to worship. This lamb-like and dragon-like beast suggests a power which deceives (cp. Rev. 13:14) and yet enforces the ways of the old dragon Imperialism. The Holy Roman Empire was just such a combination. Its relations with the Papacy form a long and checkered story, yet neither could at the time exist without the other. It was the historic function of the Empire to maintain Papal authority and some measure of Roman unity in Europe.

Both Daniel's fourth beast and John's beast are destroyed by God (Dan. 7:20; Rev. 14:14-16). The picture of judgement is expanded in Rev. 17; where the Scarlet Woman rides on a beast, once again to be identified by its seven heads and ten horns. Who is represented by the woman? "No expositor questions that Rome is intended."

The comparison between Daniel and the Apocalypse continues to the end. To the prophet it was said, "At that time they people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1) who are permitted entry into the holy city. The "book of life" is a characteristic feature of both.

Many students are therefore convinced that, whatever modifications may be needed in detail, the older Christadelphian approach to the Apocalypse was sound in principle. Like Daniel, John had a prevision of the course of history from his own time to its climax in the Kingdom of God. He begins in the day of the Iron Kingdom, when the power of the Fourth Beast was at its height. He foresees the changes which that power would undergo until at last it is swept away by Divine judgement.

The grand theme in Daniel was the instability of all forms of human government in contrast to the one Kingdom that shall "never be destroyed". Medo-Persian
succeeds the Babylonian Empire, Greek the Medo-Persian, Roman the Greek; and
the Roman passes into a weakened and divided state until at last all the metals are
ground to powder and swept away "as the dust of the summer threshing floor". John shows that this same principle of instability which applies to the successive
empires is also exemplified within the Fourth Beast phase itself; and in doing so he
shows the causes which brought about the divided state of the Image's feet. The
three sets of sevenfold symbols — seals, trumpets and vials — show the forces of
disruption which break down an existing order and allow anew order to grow in its
place; this in its turn breaks down by the effect of Divine judgements, and is
replaced by yet another, until at last the Kingdom of God comes.

"The Apocalypse is the essence and crown of all the prophets; but it is in a
special degree a sequel to the book of Daniel, covering in more detail a part of the
ground of his prophecy. Whatever principles are applied to the interpretation of
Daniel must also be applied to the Apocalypse; and one would think it could hardly be in doubt that both portray continuous historical developments up to the time of the end."
## DANIEL'S 4TH BEAST & THE 4 BEASTS OF THE APOCALYPSE

This table shows the characteristics which the 4 Beasts of the Revelation share in common with Daniel's 4th Beast, the Beast which spans the period from the Greek Empire to the Kingdom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTERISTIC</th>
<th>7 HEADS</th>
<th>10 HORNS</th>
<th>PERSECUTES SAINTS</th>
<th>PERSECUTES 1260 YEARS</th>
<th>BLASPHEMES GOD</th>
<th>JUDGED AT TIME OF KINGDOM</th>
<th>SAINTS ASSIST DESTRUCTION</th>
<th>DESTROYED BY FLAMES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel's Fourth Beast</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Red Dragon (Pagan Roman Empire)</td>
<td>7:7</td>
<td>12:3</td>
<td>7:21</td>
<td>7:25</td>
<td>7:8, 25</td>
<td>7:22</td>
<td>7:22</td>
<td>7:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beast of Sea (Western Roman Empire-Papacy)</td>
<td>12:3</td>
<td>12:3</td>
<td>12:13</td>
<td>12:14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beast of Earth (Holy Roman Empire)</td>
<td>13:3</td>
<td>13:3</td>
<td>13:7</td>
<td>13:5</td>
<td>13:1, 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scarlet Coloured Beast (Communist-Catholic Confederacy)</td>
<td>17:3</td>
<td>17:3</td>
<td>17:6</td>
<td>17:3</td>
<td>17:14</td>
<td>17:14</td>
<td>18:6</td>
<td>19:20</td>
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**CONCLUSION:** Apocalypse beasts set out in greater detail the history of Daniel's 4th Beast. They represent successive phases of Daniel's 4th Beast until the Kingdom. A most powerful proof of Continuous Historical interpretation of the Apocalypse. Futurist views compress all the symbols into 3½ literal years.
Appendix 2

IS THE APOCALYPSE A CHRONOLOGICAL PROGRESSION?*

Bro. Whittaker writes: "One finds an almost obsessive determination to seek an interpretation of Revelation which puts the fulfilment in chronological order demanding (for example) that Seal 3 be fulfilled before Seal 4 begins to operate and Trumpet 6 only after Trumpet 5 has come and gone."

He continues, "It cannot be too strongly emphasised that much Bible prophecy does not follow this pattern at all. The sequence of the "in that day" prophecies in Zechariah 12, 13, 14 is anything but chronological... The long-received continuous-historic exposition itself could be somewhat more consistent in this respect. For instance, chapters 11, 12 (the two witnesses, the seventh trumpet, the woman and man-child) are hardly in chronological sequence if they refer to the Huguenots, the resurrection, and the Christian take-over in the time of Constantine. Similarly with chapters 14, 16." He then goes on to say that the visions of Revelation present a series of "snapshots" of big developments in the Divine purpose, without special regard to time sequence.

It is certainly true that not all Old Testament prophecies are presented in chronological order (Dan. 2 and 7 being notable exceptions), but this does not necessarily mean that Revelation is presented in the same way. On the contrary there are a number of points which indicate a progression in the sequence of events.

Firstly there is a natural progression in the ordinal numbers, "first", "second", "third" and so on. This is a unique way of presentation and one which follows the

*The appendix was written by Bro. C. Parry.
example of Daniel's image in chapter 2 and particularly chapter 7 with its ordinal "first", "second", "third" and "fourth" beasts which unquestionably have a sequential fulfilment. In contrast when Zechariah was given his night visions in chapters 1 to 6 the visions were not numbered for the obvious reason that they were not sequential fulfilments. On the basis of this Old Testament practice we might expect that if the visions of the seals, trumpets and vials were not numbered sequentially they should be interpreted in the same way — non-sequentially. The fact that they are listed in this precise ordinal way suggests a different approach to many of the normal Old Testament presentations.

On examining the structure of the Apocalypse we find that there are a number of phrases employed which suggest a chronological progression. In the first seal, a white horse is presented with a mounted conqueror going forth. White is a symbol of righteousness (Rev. 19:18) and the subsequent effect of righteousness — peace and quietness (Isa. 32:17). Now the conditions in which this horse ventured forth were therefore conditions of peace. In the second seal we note that a red horse appears and "power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth". This can only be considered sequentially. It would be impossible to have the two horses fulfilling the same chronological point of time because they are opposites — one representing a time of peace, the other taking away that peace. An interpretation which fails to see a chronological time sequence here is fraught with confusion.

Another hint of a natural continuous sequence can be seen in Rev. 15:1. After the seal and trumpet judgements had passed off the scene we read, "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God".

These judgements are styled "seven last plagues" which clearly implies that some plagues had to precede them. "Last" usually means there must be something coming "first", "second" and so on until the end is reached. It cannot mean the last plagues described in the Revelation because further judgements are described in chapter 18. The only logical interpretation as we see the unfolding of the Seals and Trumpets and then the Vials is that the Seals and Trumpets precede the Vial plagues in continuous sequence. Since the sixth Vial ends with Armageddon (16:16) and the first Seal commenced shortly after the Revelation was given (1:1), the only logical interpretation is to see a natural progression of events from the first to "the last" in chronological order.

But what about Rev. 11, 12 and 13? Do not these seem to be out of chronological order when compared with the natural order of historical developments? At first glance they seem to be, but there is a very good reason for their position in the middle of these sequential occurrences.

If we examine the structure of the Apocalypse we find that frequently the judgements described are introduced by a vision of the kingdom in symbol. The following diagram illustrates this.
REV. | VISION | TIME PERIOD OF THE INTERPRETATION
--- | --- | ---
4:1-5:14 | Throne and elders | In the Kingdom with the earth at rest.
6:1-17 | 6 seals—judgements | Events in Western Roman Empire (AD 96-324).
7:1-17 | Sealing of 144,000 | Preaching of the Truth (AD 96—latter days). Description of the righteous in the kingdom.
8:1-13 | 4 trumpets—judgements | Events in Western Roman Empire (AD 395-476).
9:1-12 | 5th trumpet (1st woe) judgement | Events in Eastern Roman Empire (AD 1062-1453).
10:1-11 | Rainbowed angel | Description of the righteous judging and teaching the nations.
11:1-14 | Holy City and 2 witnesses | Events in Western Empire (AD 312-1794) (2nd woe)
11:15-19 | Wrath of God on the nations (7th trumpet, 3rd woe) | Events in the earth leading to establishment of the kingdom.

Up to this point the structure is not difficult to follow. There is a continuous unfolding of developments in both eastern and western sections of the Empire. Note how the events in the Western empire are covered right back from AD 96. Each time there is a major break in the sequence of judgements a section is introduced to encourage the believers with a vision of the future.

It is important to note that the events of 11:1-14 are classified as part of the second woe and because they are not connected with the contemporary events of the same woe in the eastern portion of the Empire (9:13-21) they are separated by the vision of chapter 10 dealing with the future.

Having brought us up to the time of Armageddon in 11:15-19 the Revelator now pauses to explain and define more accurately the terminology used in the first section of chapter 11. Up to this time there has been no mention or allusion to any of the beasts in Daniel but now the Revelator has introduced four new characters into the sequence and he digresses to explain them. In 11:1-2 we are introduced to the “holy city”, in v.3 to “the two witnesses” and in v.7 to “the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit”. Two time periods of “forty and two months’ and “a thousand two hundred and three score days” are also mentioned.

If no further information had been supplied we would have been at a loss to understand the exact significance of these new symbols. It was the purpose of chapters 12 and 13 to unlock the meaning of these symbols and chapter 14 to tell us what happens to these newly mentioned characters.

Who is the beast of 11:7? Rev. 12:3, 7-9; and 13:1-18 describe, using the language of Daniel’s fourth beast, the development and successive phases of this beast — the Roman Empire. The Empire in its pagan constitution is described in 12:3 as a great red dragon with seven heads and 10 horns. Its pagan constitution was removed in a severe conflict (vv.7-9) and so “the great red dragon” became
known as simply “the dragon” (vv.13, 17), referring to the military aspect of the same Roman empire centred in Constantinople. It was this power which supported the development of the beast (13:3) which in turn, through successive phases described in chapter 13, began to dominate the Empire. The beast, supported by the Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, describes the western section of the Empire dominated by the Papacy and western Europe.

Who is described by the terms “the holy city” and “my two witnesses” in 11:1-3? Rev. 12:1, 13-17 describes who is referred to. In these verses we have the religious community of the fourth century described as a woman who, following the time when Constantine changed the religion of the empire from paganism to Catholicism, was persecuted and caused to flee to the extremities of the Empire. As she fled she was helped by a class of people called “the earth”. There was also a class which broke away from those symbolised by “the woman”—a smaller community called “the remnant of the woman’s seed”. In these three classes, “the woman”, “the earth” and “the remnant of the woman’s seed”, we have our explanation of the three classes in chapter 11. The “holy city” refers to the true believers, or “remnant of the woman’s seed”, and the “two witnesses” constitute “the woman” (those religious groups who opposed the state religion on Scriptural grounds but were not sufficiently enlightened to become true believers) and “the earth” (those secular groups who opposed the authoritarian practices of the State religion on non-religious grounds).

Thus the same time periods outlined in chapter 11, are repeated in chapters 12 and 13 because these latter chapters amplify the information supplied in connection with the witnesses. Hence “the holy city trodden under foot for forty and two months” (11:2) is subdued for the same time of existence as the beast which continues “forty and two months” (13:5). The existence of the witnesses lasts 1260 day/years (11:3) which is the same time period in which the “woman” and “the earth” remain active (12:6, 14).

Our diagram can now be completed a few more chapters, knowing that the “flashback” of chapters 12 and 13 are designed to explain the new symbols given in chapter 11.

<table>
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<th>REV: VISION</th>
<th>TIME PERIOD OF THE INTERPRETATION</th>
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| 12:1-17 Great Red Dragon  
War in Heaven  
Persecution of Woman | Events in Western Roman empire describing development of the beast, the religious communities and ecclesia outlined in 11:1-14 (AD 107-1572). |
| 13:1-18 Beast of the Sea  
Beast of the Earth  
Image of the Beast | Successive developments in Western Roman Empire describing the character of the beast mentioned in 11:1-14 (AD 324-1870). |
| 14:1-5 Lamb on Mt. Zion  
Judgements on the final phase of the Beast—  
Babylon the great—and the world | Destiny of those against whom the powers defined in chapters 12 and 13 have waged war. This is an introductory vision. More details are given in 16:19; 17:1-19:21. |
After this digression we would expect that if the Revelator was to continue a sequential unfolding of events, the next visions would either be an expansion or continuation of the last events mentioned in 11:15-19, that is, the 3rd woe. Chapters 15 and 16 fall exactly into this pattern. They form an amplification of the events outlined in the third woe.

Rev. 11:18 describes the nations being angry because God's wrath is come and v.19 describes the temple of God being opened in heaven and the subsequent manifestation of lightnings, voices, thunderings, an earthquake and great hail. Chapter 15 expands this summary. Verse 5 describes the temple of the tabernacle being opened in heaven and in v.7 we have the angels having seven vials full of the wrath of God. The final result of all these vials culminates in the seventh vial where there appears voices, thunders, lightnings, an earthquake and great hail (16:17-21).

This seventh vial mentions (as did 14:8) the judgement on "great Babylon" (16:19) and again the Revelator in chapters 17 and 18 takes another digression to explain who this new power is and what specifically are the judgements she will receive.

Our diagram for the continuous and sequential development of the historical interpretation could thus be concluded.

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<th>VISION</th>
<th>TIME PERIOD OF THE INTERPRETATION</th>
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<td>Events in the Western and Eastern section of the Roman Empire culminating in Armageddon and the establishment of the kingdom (AD 1795-?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>17:1-18:24</td>
<td>Judgment on the harlot (RV)</td>
<td>Description of the development of the Harlot and the destruction of the Catholic System</td>
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<td>19:1-21</td>
<td>King of Kings and Lord of Lords</td>
<td>Future subjugation of the beast, the false prophet and the whole world to the victorious armies of Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:1-15</td>
<td>Chaining of Dragon and final rebellion</td>
<td>The introduction of the Millennium and the subsequent rebellion at the end of the 1000 year reign of Christ.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here is an ordered and logical structure of sequential events from chapter 6 to chapter 20 interspersed with a number of visions given of the future glory and a number of visions given of past developments to explain the introduction of new symbols. When we contrast this to the confusion and uncertainty of preterist and future interpretations, we can well see why past generations of Christadelphians were well satisfied with the continuous-historic exposition of Bro. J. Thomas.
Appendix 3
NOTES ON THE SECOND EDITION OF ‘APOCALYPSE FOR EVERYMAN’

1. The summary at the beginning of chapter 4 (pages 45-47) was originally based on the 1st edition of “Apocalypse for Everyman” by Bro. A. D. Norris, and has been slightly revised so as to conform to the 2nd edition.

2. In the 1st edition the view was maintained that the armies in heaven with Christ in Revelation chapter 19 are almost certainly angels, not saints. In the 2nd edition this matter is dealt with extensively and the writer’s opinion is more in favour of including the saints (though this hardly fits with his view that the judgement seat is not until chapter 20).

3. An extra feature of the 2nd edition is the inclusion of criticism of the continuous historical interpretation, based on notes provided by Bro. J. B. Norris. These cover the Seals, Trumpets, Beasts, and Vials.

4. The type of criticism is illustrated with the first Seal. In the historical interpretation the white horse is taken as a symbol of the peaceful and prosperous condition of the Roman Empire between AD 98 and AD 180—in contrast with the 2nd Seal red horse whose rider was given power to take peace from the earth. Bro. J. B. Norris refers to various wars and rebellions during this period, and he concludes “It is hardly true that peace... prevailed to a great extent during the First Seal period”. This view is to be contrasted with Gibbon’s broad assessment of the period, despite its various wars and victories. Elliott summarises various quotations from Gibbon in the following paragraph (Horae Apocalypticae, part 1, chapter 1):

“He represents it (and his representations are well confirmed by the original histories remaining to us) as a ‘golden age’ of prosperity, union, civil liberty,
and good government; a period ‘unstained with civil blood’ (like the white of
the first Apocalyptic horse, in contrast with the red of the second), and ‘un-
disturbed by revolution’; a period remarkable, both at its commencement
and at its close, for very wonderful and almost uniform triumphs in war,
whereby the glory of the empire was illustrated, and its limits extended; and
of which the middle period, though not without occasional wars (always suc-
cessful) on the frontiers, was generally a time of profound and happy peace.
In short, he thus sums up his view of it:— "If a man were called to fix the
period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human
race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name
that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Com-
modus" (Elliott gives full references to Gibbon’s ‘Decline and Fall of the
Roman Empire’ for all the expressions in the above paragraph).

5. Bro. J. B. Norris rejects the view that the features of the 2nd Seal are par-
ticularly appropriate to the next period, AD 183-211 approximately, a period
which was characterised by assassination of the several emperors. He says a
red horse signifies war, and this could apply to almost any period. But a fur-
ther symbol is introduced into the 2nd Seal; the weapon carried by the rider
was, in the Greek, a ‘machira’. This is a dagger or dirk, such as would be used
for assassination; it was not the ‘rhomphaia’, the usual sword used in war. So,
far from being inappropriate, the details are very appropriate to the period.

6. The assassinations continued with succeeding emperors, but now more general
ills were apparent in the Roman Empire — famine, plague and much distress,
expressed by the black and pale horses, the rider of the latter being Death and
Hades. After the periods of these two horses, there was a revival in the Roman
Empire, and we come to the 5th Seal, the souls under the altar crying for
vengeance, fitting in with the persecution under Diocletian AD 303-311. Bro.
J. B. Norris tries to minimise the persecution under Diocletian; also saying
there had been various similar persecutions before; and inferring there is no
good reason to fix the Seal on the Diocletian persecution. But his comments do
not alter the historical facts concerning the intensity of the Diocletian persecu-
tion. Here is the detail from a paragraph from Elliott:

"On the 23rd of February the mission of armed force to destroy the great
church of Nicomedia, and burn the sacred books on it, was the signal for
commencing persecution:— a persecution the longest, the most universal,
and the fiercest, that ever yet raged against the Christians. History, alike
secular and ecclesiastical, agrees in thus representing it: . . .Churches to be
demolished, the Holy Scriptures burnt, church property confiscated, the
holders of religious assemblies put to death, and Christians generally put out-
side the protection of the law — such were the heads of the first edict. Then
followed others, imposing penalties of imprisonment, tortures and death, first against the Christian bishops, presbyters, and other ecclesiastics, then against all Christians, if obstinate in their faith. In this series of cruel edicts, Diocletian declared "his intention of abolishing the Christian name". The fury of the populace readily, for the most part, seconded the declared intention of the emperor. And thus, with the partial exception of the western provinces, under the rule of the Caesar Constantius Chlorus, (I say partial, for Spain and Britain too furnished many victims), Christian blood was shed throughout the extent of the Roman world. And, long before the nine or ten years of the persecution expired, such had been its effect that the three other emperors, Diocletian, Maximian, and Galerius, united to raise pillars commemorative of their success; on which pillars inscriptions, not long since and perhaps still extant, recorded their vain boast of having extirpated Christianity. For church-service the Christians now met in caves and catacombs. Their only way of visibly and publically witnessing for Christ was by martyrdom."

Gibbon and Mosheim support this description. Gibbon begins his account with the words, "Notwithstanding this seeming security, an attentive observer might discern some symptoms that threatened the church with a more violent persecution than any which she had yet endured" (ch. XVI). In the light of these descriptions the language of the 5th Seal is very appropriate — souls of them that were slain for the word of God crying for vengeance; vengeance that soon came by the hand of Constantine.

7. One can feel pleased that Bro. Norris has included the criticisms of the historical interpretation. If nothing more powerful can be brought forward, there is nothing to fear. Further, these criticisms become insignificant when one takes a broad view of the six Seals and the corresponding Roman history. It is inescapable that, like painting a picture with a few broad strokes of the brush, these six Seals describe in broad terms the history of the Roman empire from AD 100 to Constantine — a period of peace and prosperity in which the gospel could be extensively preached (the rider and his bow); followed by decline and calamity; then a revival of the empire in which the Christians benefitted, only to come under severe persecution, and then to be dramatically associated with the great revolution carried out by Constantine (as depicted in Revelation chapter 12).

8. Criticisms of the Trumpets are similar to those of the Seals. For instance, it is pointed out that the Goths attacked south-east Europe as well as western Europe. But this in no way invalidates the historical interpretation, which is concerned with western Europe. The effect of the first Trumpets, taken to represent the barbarian invasions of western Europe, are presented in the 4th Trumpet as bringing an eclipse of a third of the empire — the western third. The prophecy here is not concerned with the eastern part of the empire. It may be noted that Bro. J. B. Norris admits the general appropriateness of the first three Trumpet details to the Goths, Vandals, and Huns, and their behaviour.
As to his criticism of the three-fold division of the empire being the Latin west, the Hellenised east, and the Hellenic east, justification for this is given in chapter 2 page 23; also there is evidence in Elliott.

Repeating the point made regarding the Seals; in the sweep of history, the first four Trumpets undoubtedly sketch what one will find in any historical atlas displaying the various barbarian invasion of the West at this time. “At this time” is an important phrase. The Trumpet events are in the right place historically — the end of the 4th century and into the 5th century. Is it all coincidence, unintended by God, that the events of the Trumpets follow on correctly from the times of the Seals, and the Trumpets are in the right sequence relative to the historical events they portray?

9. The 5th Trumpet starts a new series of events, indicated by calling it “a woe”, the first of three woes. Appropriately, in the historical interpretation, the scene is changed to the eastern empire. Bro. Norris makes various comments as to how he sees things; the reader is advised to read the careful and full account given by Bro. Thomas in Eureka, as the best response to what Bro. Norris says.

One matter not fully dealt with by Bro. Thomas is the ‘scorpions’ of Revelation 9:10. There is a criticism both by Brethren J. B. Norris and A. D. Norris pointing out that ‘Greek fire’ (for a description see page 29) was a successful weapon of the Romans against the Saracens, and it is inferred that it is quite wrong to interpret verse 10 as Greek fire used by the Saracens against the Romans and their other enemies — in other words, the interpretation does not fit history. It is agreed that the Romans used Greek fire to repel the Saracen attacks on Constantinople. But this misses the point of verse 10. The characteristic of the Saracens was the new way they used Greek fire, as Gibbon relates in his chapter 52. They developed ‘scorpions’ — catapults (see page 30) that hurled vessels containing the ignited Greek fire. This gave a far greater range and accuracy in the use of this destructive material. It was a distinct military advance. This is what the text in Revelation 9:4 is about: “They had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails”. Again, how accurate is the prophetic record to the historical interpretation; how unimportant the criticism.

10. Finally, under the Trumpets there is a criticism directed against the interpretation of verses 17-19 of this chapter 9: the use of gunpowder by the Turks. Bro. J. B. Norris substantially answers his own criticism. He admits cannon and gunpowder were the decisive weapon of the Turks when they conquered Constantinople. It is agreed, as he says, that some of the cannon were so tremendous that they could not be drawn by horses; but this does not mean that the Turks did not also have horsedrawn cannon in use. The illustration on page 30 shows a mortar hurling Greek fire by the use of gunpowder, and this could be as destructive as heavy cannon. Similar equipment could be drawn by horses.
As we have said about the Seals, so with the Trumpets: they are brief, broad, sketches of history leading to major changes — under the first four Trumpets to the eclipse of the western empire; and under the 5th and 6th Trumpets to the overthrow of the eastern empire. In the taking of Constantinople, the capital of the eastern empire, gunpowder and cannon were decisive. How fitting therefore that the Bible text concentrates on this matter of gunpowder as the chief element of the Trumpet (vv. 17-19). Is the correspondence of prophecy and the history of this time just chance, and this Trumpet belongs to the future?

11. In leaving the Seals and the Trumpets, we would remind the reader that the historical interpretation of them has been acceptable to a great number of competent men over several centuries. Joseph Mede’s Apocalyptic Scheme (1632) details this historical interpretation quite clearly. (His chart is shown at the beginning of volume 3 of Eureka.) From then onwards through many writers including Isaac Newton, Daubuz, Bickersteth, to Elliott’s Horae Apocalypticae (1844) this understanding has been maintained. And in our own community, we have had various capable students over a century or more who were satisfied with the interpretation. Some readers may recall the words of Bro. Islip Collyer in his Book Vox Dei, chapter 16:

“it may be stated quite definitely that at least since the days of Joseph Mede no serious and capable exponent of the book of Revelation has felt the slightest doubt as to the application of the fifth and sixth trumpets. There may have been other expositions put forward by egotists who at all costs have aimed at originality. . .”

12. Referring now to the Vials, there is a similar style of criticism of the historical interpretation which applies them to the events of the last and the present centuries. The criticisms have little impact on the way the broad sweep of events correspond with the symbols. This has been set out in chapter 7. The break-up of the old Order in western Europe under the first five vials; the drying up of the Turkish power over the last century and the early part of the 20th century to allow the restoration of Israel in part to their land, as preparing the WAY for the saints to enter the latter-day Babylon; the socialist impulse that has swept the world, as represented by the frog-like spirits, preparing the nations to band together against Christ: this is too grand and clear a sweep of prophecy fulfilled in history for us to be much concerned with the comments of Bro. Norris. The broad fit should be apparent to all. There is little point, for instance, in Bro. Norris telling us that the decline of the Turkish power could be traced earlier than 1820, or that Turkey still exists. This does not invalidate a ‘drying up’ over the past century, and the removal of the Turk from Palestine by General Allenby in 1917; allowing the development of the nation of Israel in their own land ready for those great events in the land when Christ returns, as set out in the Prophets.

The criticism about the 1260 time period is answered in chapter 6, pages 68-71.
Appendix 4
A PRINCIPLE
OF INTERPRETATION

It is of utmost importance to our understanding of the Apocalypse that we pursue our studies along the way in which the opening chapters of the book direct our attention. This is a foundation principle because of the wording of 1:19, “the things which thou hast seen” (chap. 1) and “the things which are” (chap. 2, 3), form an integral part of the whole book; therefore the interpretation of “the things which shall be hereafter” (chap. 4-22) must build upon the foundation already Divinely established in the first 3 chapters.

The text of Revelation 1 includes an interpretation of one of its details which is especially worthy of attention in this context. John is granted a vision of seven lampstands which are Divinely interpreted as signifying seven representative ecclesias (1:12, 20). This interpretation forms an important precedent to aid our study of the book as a whole. Firstly, it focuses our attention firmly on the community represented by the seven ecclesias and consequently away from the Jewish nation. Secondly it provides a “worked example” of the way in which apocalyptic symbols can be understood as applying to the new constitution of primarily Gentile believers, despite the fact that the Old Testament context of those symbols has to do with the constitution of the Jewish nation. So, when we find other symbols and figures in the Apocalypse drawn from a Jewish context in the Old Testament, we may, on the basis of this Divine precedent, have no hesitation in interpreting them as relating to the Ecclesia of Christ.

The Apocalypse is concerned, therefore, not with the fortunes of Israel, but rather with unfolding history relating to that community, represented in the first chapter by the seven golden lampstands which collectively represent the Bride of Christ.

A.C.
FURTHER READING

‘Apocalypse Epitomised’, H. P. Mansfield, Logos Publications, South Australia 5024


‘Daniel’, M. Stewart, V.C.E. Publications, P.O. Box 5, Vancouver, B.C. V6C 218, Canada. Available from the Christadelphian Scripture Study Service, 17 Braemar Road, Torrens Park, South Australia 5062


‘Revelation’, A. Bull, V.C.E. Publications.

‘Revelation’, J. Knowles, Menorah. Available from C.S.S.S.

‘Revelation Chart’, D. Clark, 28 Chaucer Street, Moorooka, Queensland 4105 Australia. Available from Logos.


‘The Man of Sin’, R. Abel, C.S.S.S.

‘The Unveiling of the Lord Jesus Christ’, H. D. Bartholomew, P.O. Box 5, Vernon, B.C., Canada.
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