

Recent History of Understanding the book of Revelation

Dear brothers and Sisters,

As a child I was raised in a Baptist Sunday School and it was here at the age of six that I first learned about a people called the Jews. The teacher taught us that the Jews were God's special people and that those who helped the Jews would themselves receive a special blessing from God, and those who treated the Jews badly would not be blessed. When I was nine in junior school I learned that the Jews were going back to their ancient homeland in Palestine, and that they did not refer to themselves as Jews but as Israelis. As I grew older I learned how the churches in Britain were sending out Missionaries to teach people in foreign lands about the Truth of the Bible and the Salvation available through Jesus Christ. Meanwhile other aspects of religion were brought to our attention by such people as the Jehovah's Witnesses, my parents were quite taken with them at one time. Another group took our attention who published a magazine called the Plain Truth. The publication was interesting because it delved in the meaning of prophecies in the Bible. Their articles triggered considerable discussion in our family, but their publications were dismissed by the Pastor of the Baptist Church as divisive. This, I found somewhat puzzling because I could not remember any Baptist pastors who, except for a few verses, actually mentioned the Book of Revelation from the pulpit. Well I grew up into my teens and I had set my mind on being a missionary. My father however thought otherwise and intended not to support me, unless I studied sciences. Well I tried but not with any enthusiasm and the upshot was that I left school and got a job far away from home.

My brother at the time had been discussing the Bible with his manager at his work place. The man turned out to be A Christadelphian of whom none of our contemporaries had heard. I visited my brother, who was a military Conscientious Objector at the time, working on the land, and he gave me a copy of a book entitled "Christendom Astray". This book written by Robert Roberts put me on the road of understanding what the Bible really taught and what was truly the Gospel of Salvation. (I would still recommend it today as a guide to the understanding the Bible). Having some misgiving I asked my brother if there was someone I could talk to who had the answers to my questions, not knowing at the time that the person he commended would turn out to be my future father-

in-law. In the meantime I was given a copy of 'Elpis Israel'. In those days the front page had a very interesting thought written by Bro. Thomas, the author. It ran like this:-

“For the Hope of Israel am I bound by this chain.”

Build by whatever plan Caprice decrees
with what materials, on what ground you please,
But know that Israel's Hope alone shall stand,
Which Paul proclaimed in Rome to every man”

This helped me to focus my attention on the writings of John Thomas and Robert Roberts, in those days, not so long after the Second World War, Britain's population was extremely poor, and books were scarce along with most things. I had been living and working in Southampton as a cartographer, but with my new interest I eventually changed my job, and found a room on my own in Dartford. On Saturday March the tenth 1962, I was baptised with two others into the 'One Saving name of the Son of God'. In those days the ecclesia in Dartford had three meetings on the first day of the week, Breaking of Bread in the morning, Sunday school in the afternoon and a Bible Lecture in the evening. During the week there was a Revelation Class on Tuesday's and a Bible Class on Thursdays. The Brothers took it in turns to introduce the subjects and the Presiding Brother asked the brothers in the congregation to contribute their views and then summarised the subject and then closed the meeting with a hymn and a prayer.

Compared with the churches we had known these meetings were intensive. It took some time to adjust to the requirements of the truth, as set forth by the brethren and to get so much information digested. But by and large there was general agreement and a good spirit among the members. In addition to the amount of study, the brethren and sisters did a monthly billing of printed Invitation to our Sunday Lectures, circulation among the population in Dartford, and also to Special Lectures supported by several Ecclesias in nearby towns. Once or twice I remember all seven Ecclesias came to support Special efforts in London. I particularly remember the distribution of 100,000 invitations to a Lecture in London, of which some were conveyed to Gamal Abdel Nasser the President of Egypt as evidence that Israel was planning to take over all of Palestine and eject the Arabs. It had been reported in the 'Jewish Observer'.

So in the concentrated efforts to draw attention to the Biblical proofs of the return of Christ being near at hand, it was also necessary to be sure that we were truly in the faith according to the scriptures, as the apostle Paul counseled the Corinthians (2Co 13:5-6) "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates".

It had been noticed that various brethren would use certain passages of prophecy to make a point of certain things that were related to newspaper reports in their "watching the signs of the times" which was put out, to prove that Bible prophecies were true". This was a very careless way of introducing Bible prophecy indeed, as time went by it became apparent that there was a weakness with regard to Bible prophecy which they had not actually researched, but had heard from other speakers.

For example consider Daniel's great prophetic understanding that was given to him in the third year of Cyrus (10:1) and he was given understanding of the future from his (Daniel's) day to the time of the end, when the king of the north would invade the Middle east just as Ezekiel's prophecy also describes (Ezek.38).

Now this prophecy in Daniel was well understood by Daniel to whom it was given and he writes about the history of the Holy Land from the time of Cyrus to the time in which we are now living. Now some lecturers used information in the Bible to prove a point that had nothing to do with the actual prophecy! An incident comes to mind, concerning the Russian leader Khrushchev and the U.S. President Kennedy, when they met to discuss the Cuba Crisis. It was referred to by a lecturer that scripture was being fulfilled when it prophesied "they shall speak lies at one table" Dan.11:27 when the actual prophecy was applicable, not to the 20th century but to Ptolemy Philometer on the one hand and Antiochus Epiphanes on the other around 170 B.C.

This came about in the Ecclesia of Christ, when the doctrine of unclean meats was brought in as a principle to be accepted, being supported by a much loved leading brother, who was respected by everyone because of his forthright stands against Christadelphian heresies. A vote was taken and a large majority accepted the proposal. Afterwards it became an accepted practice until one elder was asked of the differences between Christadelphians and the Ecclesia of Christ. He was informed of the restriction on unclean meat. In response he replied that "I can take you tonight and show you that John Thomas and Robert Roberts rejected that practice as heresy". This greatly upset the elder concerned, who had been a Christadelphian and still had a copy of the

Birmingham Statement of Faith, and there was the evidence that former Christadelphians had rejected the Doctrine of Unclean Meats as heresy. Some were more concerned than others and corresponding evidence was sort. It was found in the British Library in London which held a large number of Christadelphian books and pamphlets going back to the beginning of the movement. Here it was confirmed that the Ecclesia of Christ had been led into Heresy. The evidence was sent out to all members of the Ecclesia of Christ and eventually it resulted in division and only 50 or so separated from the Ecclesia of Christ.

When I was baptised I was presented with a five volume set of Brother Thomas's work he had called 'Eureka'. (meaning 'I have found'); that is he had found the key to understanding the Book of Revelation) This is a work which fully explains the meaning of the Book of Revelation, otherwise called "The Apocalypse", as it is described in the Greek Language in which it was originally written. At school I was fortunate enough to have studied the Greek language, which at one time I believed would be useful in studying Theology, before I was led upon a different path. From time to time it has been useful.

The Dartford Ecclesia's revelation studies continued, but over some time it became evident that the general interpretation of the Revelation differed quite significantly in several ways. When these things were queried, it was met with such statement as, "Oh! Dr Thomas was alright in his day but we can see so much further than he as time has moved on". So I tried to do mine own analysis by drawing up charts as to which part seemed to go where. With Daniel's prophecy it was much easier, but I got the impression that my efforts were regarded as a nuisance and religious mania was suggested.

However as time went on difficulties in understanding the Book of Revelation increased. For example when considering the 12th chapter we are introduced to *a 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: ² And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. ³ And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. ⁴ And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. ⁵ And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. (Rev 12:1-5)* This was interpreted as referring to Mary and the birth

of Jesus Christ because the description was so glorious and only Jesus had been caught up to heaven! What was not perceived was **that the woman was with child**, which conflicts with Paul's teaching that those in Corinth who had accepted the truth as it is in Jesus, had by their belief in the gospel, *been espoused to one husband*, that I may present *you as a chaste virgin to Christ*. (2Co 11:2). The woman crowned with 12 stars was not a virgin! She was **pregnant with child, a false woman**, representing the members of the '**false christianity**' the communities that were in favour with the Roman Emperor Constantine, who became the enemy of all true believers.

Brother Robert Roberts in 1872 wrote an article entitled, "The Apocalypse and the obedience of Faith," appended below:-

"A correct interpretation of the Apocalypse is of more importance than may at first sight appear. 1. It was given "that his servants MIGHT KNOW" (Chap. 1:1.) the things it treats of; and if a wrong view of it prevails, the object of its communication is to that extent frustrated. 2. The Spirit pronounces a blessing on those who understand it, (chap. 1:3.) from which it follows that a wrong apprehension of its import deprives the wrong apprehender of the blessing. 3. Jesus pronounces a curse on those who take away from its words (Chap. 22:19.); and no one takes away from its words more effectually than the man who misrepresents its meaning. That misrepresentation of its meaning which asserts its inapplicability to the present constitution of things in the world, and teaches that it has no fulfilment till the saints are removed at the coming of Christ, is especially mischievous in its effects; for it interferes with a scriptural attitude in relation to things and systems which are therein condemned, and participation in which is declared to implicate the participators in the doom awaiting them. The ecclesiastical systems and practices of Europe are exhibited under symbols perfectly intelligible to the student of God's word. A beast and its image, a ten-horned monster and a woman are introduced as representatives of the constitution of things in Papal Europe, and a peculiarity of the saints therein described is that they "worship not the beast neither his image, nor receive his mark upon their foreheads nor in their hands (20:4.), that they "obtain the victory over the beast and over his image and over the number of his name" (15:2); that unlike those dwelling on earth "whose names are not written in the book of life," and who worship the beast who makes war upon the saints, they "keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book," which declare, "If any man worship the beast and his image and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God." Now, if you regard

the whole matter as future to the Lord's coming, do you not loosen and undermine the terrible obligations arising from these sayings? Certainly; you place these obligations beyond the circle of a saint's duties, and leave him at liberty to imagine that he may safely take part with any system extant in his own day. Of course, you are at liberty, in this day of liberty, to think and act as you will: but such views are a serious impediment to the co-operation which you are disposed to ask on the part of the Christadelphians. They could not admit such an element of corruption among them. They could not identify themselves with so complete a neutralization of the last message of Jesus sent to his servants. They could not make themselves responsible for such a departure from his testimony which he himself has fenced with special imprecations. Your belief in the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, "the same as the Christadelphians," may justify you in being immersed; but with such a state of mind with regard to the important directions he has given for the guidance of his servants in the Apocalypse, it is impossible they could enter upon that co-operation which has for its basis an intelligent apprehension of the mind and will of Christ.

The idea that "Revelations" is future in its fulfilment, would be dispelled by the effectual realization of one or two points which we mention by way of conclusion. The angel interpreting to John the meaning of the seven heads of the scarlet-coloured beast, says 17:10: There are seven kings: *five are fallen*, one is, and the other is not yet come." Here is a proof that in the day when these words were addressed to John—nearly 1800 years ago—part of the symbolism had been realized in history. In connection with its developments (chap. 11:18) "the time of the dead comes that they should be judged," which is inconsistent with the theory that those developments do not take place till after the resurrection of the saints. A similar argument arises in the fact that the beast makes war upon the saints and overcomes them.—(13:7.) Surely this is not after the saints are raised from the dead! So also with the fact that saints, under the sixth seal, are seen in a state of death, and allowed to rest (6:9); that the scarlet woman is drunk with the blood of saints. (Surely she is not to kill them after they are made immortal.) "In her was found the blood of prophets and saints." (18:24.) The apostles were slain by her (Rome under the pagan constitution.) (18:20.) Surely the apostles are not to be killed a second time. In addition to these and many other points that might be mentioned, the general character of the book as to things said about to "shortly come to pass," and as to keeping the things written in the book, conclusively shows the fallacy of a theory which futurises everything except the messages to the churches, and reduces it to a thing of practical consequence whatever." Robert Roberts 1872.

Now for some history of what is known as the Protestant Reformation, which began in 1520 when Martin Luther wrote his book on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church. In his book he shows how the Babylon in the Book of Revelation is actually referring to the Church of Rome which over several centuries, has utterly corrupted the truth as taught by Jesus Christ by following the ideas of Paganism. As a result of Luther's stand the Protestant Reformation became firmly established in the reign of Elizabeth 1. The minds of the Protestant churches were expressed in what became known of the Westminster Confession of Faith which was confirmed by Parliament in 1682.

"There is no other Head of the Church but the LORD JESUS CHRIST; nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be the Head thereof, but is that Antichrist, that MAN OF SIN and SON OF PERDITION, that exalted himself in the Church against Christ and all that is called God".

Rome suffered a tremendous blow to her prestige for nearly two hundred years but just over 200 years later the Catholic Church decided to win back what she had lost. Slowly and steadily under the guidance of John Henry Cardinal Newman a former 'protestant vicar' many Anglican clergymen and the members of their congregations went over to Roman Catholicism. Other Catholic Jesuit priests invented means to attract Protestants back to Rome. They produced a book, apparently written by Rabbi Juan Josafat Ben Ezra in four volumes entitled as, "The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty". The objective was for the book to be read by Protestants, to undermine their trust in the interpretation of the Protestant reformers, who taught that the Papacy was the Anti-Christ and the Man of Sin. The Jesuits planted copies of this work in as many libraries as possible, including that of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Librarian's name was Dr. S.R. Maitland D.D. who decided to write and distribute a series of tracts on Bible Prophecy, beginning in 1826 and the effect was to shock the entire Protestant world. The works of "ben Ezra" achieved far more than its Jesuit authors had expected, especially when it was taken up by the leaders of the Plymouth Brethren. In 1901 a conference was convened in Long Island U.S.A. attended by many Plymouth Brethren type believers and publishers of Biblical prophecies. It was at this conference that the plan for a Reference Bible which would embody the entire Futurist System occurred to Dr. C. I. Scofield. He was able to carry out his idea and the fact is that no instrument has been more

influential than the Scofield Reference Bible in implanting the Futurist System into the thinking of millions of “Christians”.

When we study this book of Revelation, it is important to remember to whom this message is given. The very first verse shows how God (Yahweh) provided the Lord Jesus with this information in order to show to his servants the reality of certain things which must come shortly to pass. That is the information would very soon become an established fact. Clearly the information that is provided began to become fact in the Apostle John’s day. It is to be noted that God’s blessing is to rest on those who read the words of this prophecy, and on those who hear. In New Testament times not everyone could read, that is why scribes were needed. But whether they read or heard, the blessing would be upon those who kept the things which were written in the scroll. The Revelation concludes with a similar blessing. Affirming that the sayings are faithful and true and that Yahweh of the holy angels had sent his angel to show his servants the things that shortly be done, and the emphasis is given, behold I come quickly blessed is he that keeps the saying of the prophecy of this book. These statements are surely emphasising the necessity of reading, or listening to the information supplied and then keeping, putting into practice the instruction given.

It is necessary that before persons can be baptized into the Name, they must be examined to see that they have fully understand the significance of what it means to be a brother or sister of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to live accordingly. But once they have been baptized it is important that they live their lives according to the scripture. Paul taught the Corinthians that it was necessary that they should all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1Co 1:10) But when a person becomes a brother or a sister of Christ it is necessary that they apply themselves to the teaching of scripture, and understanding the Revelation comes under the same category. All must believe the same things.

Love to all our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Brother Derek.

THE ANTICHRIST THEORY

ACCORDING TO RIBERA, LACUNZA AND MODIFIED BY

DARBY, SEISS, LINDSEY, WALWOORD.

THE FICTITIOUS ANTICHRIST WILL:-

1. PROBABLY BE A JEW.
2. SET UP HIS POWER IN JERUSALEM AND DELIVER ISRAEL FROM THE POWER OF RUSSIA.
3. EXERCISE 'SATANIC' POWER
4. CLAIM TO BE THE MESSIAH.
5. ABOLISH THE JEWISH RELIGION
6. MAKE A COVENANT WITH ISRAEL FOR THREE AND A HALF YEARS, AND THEN BREAK IT.
7. COMMAND THE WORSHIP OF HUMANITY.
8. BUILD A TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM.
9. EMBARK UPON WORLD CONQUEST.
10. BE DESTROYED BY CHRIST AT HIS COMING.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES.

THE LORD JESUS AT HIS SECOND COMING WILL:-

1. BE REVEALED IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL; ACTS 1:11; ZEC.14:11
2. DELIVER THE NATION OF ISRAEL AND THE CITY OF JERUSALEM FROM THE RUSSIAN INVADER. EZ.38:21-23; DAN.12:1
3. EXERCISE DIVINE POWER, IS.11:4; 2 THES.1:7-8
4. CLAIM TO BE ISRAEL'S MESSIAH AND ACCEPTED AS SUCH, ROM.11:26
5. BE ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE JEWS, ZEC.12:10; MAT.23:39; LK.1:32-33.
6. MAKE A NEW COVENANT WITH ISRAEL, JER.31:33-34; ROM.11:27; HEB.10:16
7. DESTROY ALL FALSE INSTITUTIONS OF WORSHIP IN ISRAEL, ZEC.13:1-2.
8. REBUILD THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM AND INSTITUTE SACRIFICIAL WORSHIP, EZ.40-48; ZEC.6:12-13.
9. PROCLAIM JERUSALEM THE CENTRE OF WORLD GOVERNMENT, MIC.4:1-2.
10. DECLARE WAR UPON HIS ADVERSARIES, REV.19:11 AND 15.
11. BE ACKNOWLEDGED AS KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS, REV.19:16.