

WHAT DOES THE BOOK OF REVELATION MEAN?

**by the
Rev. Professor Dr. Francis Nigel Lee**

**Professor of Systematic Theology
and
Caldwell-Morrow Lecturer in Church History
Queensland Presbyterian Theological College
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*Dedicated to the Heroes of the Faith
throughout the Centuries.*

Foreword

The Historicism Research Foundation is pleased to bring you this booklet by the Rev. Professor Dr. Francis Nigel Lee.

I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Lee in May of 1999 during his tour of the United States. I was impressed with his commitment to the Reformed Faith and his bright outlook for the future of the Church.

This small volume, *What Does the Book of Revelation Mean?*, is a synopsis of the Historicist method of interpreting biblical prophecy through the eyes of Scripture, John Calvin, and the Westminster Assembly Commissioner, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Goodwin.

Here, Dr. Lee points out the rich, prophetic faith of our forefathers in succinct fashion. John's Revelation is a pre-written history of the Church and her struggle against the forces of Antichristian tyranny from 70 AD onward to the present. Finally, Dr. Lee presents us with the glorious hope of the Church's ultimate triumph over Antichrist (the Papacy) and the Islamic menace.

If the old adage is true that those who do not know history are destined to repeat it, then it is doubly true that those who do not know the prophetic history of the Church are bound to lose their bearings and fall into error. No where is this

more apparent than among modern evangelicals and the ecumenical movement in general.

The Jesuit interpretations of Preterism and Futurism have distracted us and removed prophecy from its historic context. Their plan has largely succeeded.

Historicism, as the view of virtually all of the Reformers and the Reformed Confessions, places the Church in the middle of a titanic struggle for the Truth of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ against the forces of Antichrist. Knowing the main characters in this epic will help us regain our moorings. For then we will know where we came from, where we are, and where we are going.

For Christ the King,



Val W. Finnell, MD
President
The Historicism Research Foundation
<http://www.historicism.org>

*“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”
[said Alice]*

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

*“I don’t much care where——”
said Alice.*

“Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat.

*“——so long as I get somewhere.”
Alice added as an explanation.*

“Oh, you’re sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk enough.”

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland
By Lewis Carroll

**WHAT DOES THE BOOK OF REVELATION
MEAN?**

Rev. Prof. Dr. John Calvin was an historicalist. *Cf.* his views on Daniel 7:7-27 to 12:13 and Second Thessalonians 2:2-8. If he had only lived long enough to write a commentary also on the very last chapters of the Bible, in the Book of Revelation -- it is clear (also from the insights of Calvinists after him) that he too would have shared many of their views even on that last Book of the Holy Scriptures. For his own views and predictions about God's destruction of Heathenism and Islam and Romanism and the entry of both Jews and Gentiles everywhere into His Kingdom, are adequately apparent. Those views can be collected from his *Institutes*, his *Letters*, his *Tracts*, his *Treatises* -- and especially from his Commentaries and/or Sermons on Deuteronomy, Job, Isaiah, Daniel, John, Romans, Galatians, Second Thessalonians, Second Timothy and First John (whose writer wrote also the Book of Revelation).

We wish to claim, then, that Calvin's own views on the above are not modified but rather very faithfully presented by subsequent Calvinists. Indeed, we claim that the Calvinistic understanding of the Book of Revelation is substantially and usefully summarized by the great Westminster Assembly Commissioner and very godly Calvinist theologian Rev. Dr. Thomas Goodwin. In his great work *An Exposition of the*

Revelation -- in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, rep. 1961, pp. 27-29) -- here then is how Goodwin sees the **historicalistic** sequence of events successively presented in the Book of Revelation.

"Christ, when He ascended up to heaven, found the **Roman Monarchy** whose room He was to possess, stretched both over east and west -- even over all those parts of the World where he was to seat His Church and Kingdom.... Hereupon Christ, the designed King, first sets upon the conquest of Satan's dominion -- and...**by the preaching of the Gospel** overturns that vast empire...and turns both it and its emperors to Christianity within the space of three hundred years. This is the sum and mind of the 6th chapter....

"But this empire, though wholly turned 'Christian' in **outward** profession -- yet, having persecuted His Church whilst idolatrous, and also after it was 'Christian' -- [became weakened] when **Arian**. Therefore...He further proceeds to ruin the civil imperial power of the empire itself by the trumpets in the 8th and 9th chapters. And the empire then becoming divided into two parts, the eastern and western empire as they were commonly called. First He ruins the imperial western state and power in Europe by the four first trumpets, the wars of the **Goths**, by four several steps, in the 8th chapter.... Then [He ruins] the imperial eastern state which stood after the other...,

first by the **Saracens** [and] then by the **Turks** (and these two are the fifth and sixth trumpets) which two possess all that eastern part unto this day....

"That eastern part of it is left possessed by the **[Islamic] Turks**, chapter 9.... This western part of it, in Europe -- being by the Goths broken into ten kingdoms -- they all consented to give their power to the Beast, the **[Romish] Pope**, chapter 13.... This Beast the 13th chapter describes and gives the vision of his rise, power, and time of his reign which the 17th chapter doth expound and interpret -- under whose **antichristian** tyranny, **as great as that of the Turks themselves** toward Christians, Christ yet preserveth....

"**The Pope and the Turk**, both enemies to Christ, thus succeeding in the [Roman] empire and sharing the two parts of it between them -- we see.... **Mohammedanism**, under the **Turk**, tyranniseth in the one; and **idolatry**, under **the Pope**, overspreads the other -- even as **Heathenism** had done over the whole empire.... So Christ hath a new business of it yet....

"Therefore **He hath seven vials, which contain the last plagues...to despatch the Pope and the Turk and wholly root them out....** The plagues of these vials are the contents of the 15th and 16th chapters. The **first five vials** do dissolve and by degrees **ruin the Pope's power in the west**. Then **the sixth vial breaks the power of the Turk in the east** -- so making way for the **Jews** (whom He

means **to bring into the fellowship of His Kingdom in their own land**).... Both the **Turkish** and **Popish** party **do together join**, using their utmost forces (and together with them **all opposite kings of the whole World**) against the **Christians**, both of the east and west -- who, when the **Jews** are come in and **converted** [Romans 11:25f] **do make up a mighty party in the World**....

"The 18th chapter sings a funeral song of triumph for the [Romish and Islamic] whore's ruin.... After this, comes in Christ's Kingdom.... This new Kingdom of His shall be made up...of eastern Christians who endured the bondage of the two woe-trumpets, the Saracens and the Turks, yet continuing to profess His Name.... It is made up of western **Christians**...who, therefore, after the rejection of the whore (chapter 19:1-9), are brought in singing in like **triumphant manner**.... It is also to be made up of **Jews** -- dispersed both east and west....With whom come in, as attendants of their joy, **other Gentiles too** who never had received Christ before. 'The glory of the Gentiles' is said to be brought into it [Revelation 21:26].

"And so both east and west, **Jew and Gentile** -- and the **fullness of both** -- do come in and become one fold under one Shepherd for a thousand years (chapter 20), and one Kingdom under this '**Root of David**' their king, **King Jesus the Conqueror**.... Isaiah 59:19 is fulfilled -- where, after the final destruction of all Christ's enemies foretold in verse

18, he says: 'They shall fear His Name from the east unto the west, and the Redeemer shall come unto Zion.' Which words Paul interprets of **the Jews' final call**, and this **restoration of the World with them** -- Romans 11:26. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" Cf. Revelation 22:20f

In my own first two paragraphs at the very beginning, I claimed that the above views of the famous Westminster Assembly Commissioner and godly Calvinist Dr. Thomas Goodwin were contained seminally also in the views of John Calvin (the father of Presbyterianism). Goodwin himself states (*op. cit.* p. 136): "I rest assured that **the light** which hath broken forth in many of our reformed churches **since Calvin's time**, and which still increaseth...until Antichrist be consumed -- is both in matter of doctrine, interpretation of Scriptures, worship, church government, &c., much purer." To clinch these two claims of both Goodwin and this present writer (Francis Nigel Lee) -- remembering the Calvinist Goodwin's concluding appeal to Isaiah 59:19 in our previous paragraph -- I would now close simply by quoting from Calvin's *Commentary on Isaiah* (at 19:25 and at the same 59:19f which also Goodwin cites).

In Isaiah 19:21-25, God predicts: "The Lord shall be **known to Egypt**, and **the Egyptians** shall **know the Lord in that day**.... The Lord shall smite **Egypt and heal it**; and **they shall return to the Lord**.... In that day, there shall be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria.... **The Assyrian shall**

come into Egypt, and the Egyptians into Assyria, and **the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians**. In that day, **Israel shall be the third** with Egypt and with Assyria -- even a blessing in the midst of the land.... The Lord of hosts shall bless, saying: ‘**Blessed be Egypt, My People**; and **Assyria, the work of My hands**; and **Israel, My inheritance!**’”

Here, Rev. Dr. John Calvin comments: “The Prophet says that the Lord will be gracious and reconciled to the **Egyptians**. He at the same time shows that as soon as they have been **converted**, they will obtain forgiveness.... It will therefore be a **true conversion** – when it is followed by a calling upon God.... There is no man who ought not to acknowledge in himself what Isaiah here declares concerning the Egyptians, in whom **the Lord holds out an example to the whole World**. The Prophet now foretells that **the Lord will diffuse His goodness throughout the whole World!** As if he had said: ‘It will not be shut up in a corner or be known exclusively, as it formerly was, by [but] a single nation.’

“Here, he speaks of two nations [**Assyria and Egypt**] that were **the most inveterate enemies of the Church** [both in Old and in New Testament times].... And if the Lord is so gracious to the deadly **enemies of the Church** -- that He pardons and adopts **them** to be[come] **His children!** – what shall be the case with **other nations?** This prophecy thus includes the calling

of **all** nations” – and hence of even **diehard Islamic nations, like Iran!**

“Through the undeserved goodness of God,” explains Calvin, “**the Assyrians and Egyptians shall be admitted to fellowship with the chosen People of God**.... There is a mutual relation between God and His People, so that they who are called by His mouth ‘a Holy People’ (Exodus 19:6) -- may justly in return call Him their God. Yet this designation is bestowed indiscriminately on Egyptians and Assyrians....

“By calling the **Egyptians the People of God** - - He means that they will share in the honour which God designed to bestow in a peculiar manner on the Jews [meaning the Older Testament’s Israelites] alone. When He calls **Assyrians ‘the work of His hands’** – He distinguishes them by the title peculiar to **His Church.**”

What a great day is coming! For the **Moslems of Egypt**, the **Judaists of Israel**, and the **Islamic nations** of the **Neo-Assyrian Iraq** -- will yet come to Christ, and join His Church!

God makes a precious promise in Isaiah 59:18-20. There, it is predicted that the Lord God "will repay according to their deeds -- fury to His adversaries; recompense to His enemies -- **to the islands He will repay recompense!** So shall they

fear the Name of the Lord from the West, and His glory from the rising of the sun [in the East]. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. **'Then the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob' -- says the Lord.**"

Here, Calvin comments: "This work of redemption shall be so splendid and illustrious -- that **the whole World shall...praise and celebrate....** Struck with fear, it shall render glory to God.... **He means the conversion of the Gentiles....** Even to the **utmost** boundaries of the **Earth**, the Name of God shall be revered and honoured, so that **the Gentiles** shall not only tremble but shall serve and **adore Him** with **true repentance....**

"A Redeemer shall come to Zion' [Isaiah 59:20].... Paul quotes this passage (Romans 11:26-29), to show that there is still some remaining **hope** among the **Jews**.... Because God is continually mindful of His Covenant, and 'His gifts and calling are without repentance' -- Paul justly concludes that it is impossible that there shall not at length be some remnant that **come to Christ** and obtain that salvation.... **The Jews [too] must at length be collected, along with the Gentiles** -- so that out of both, 'there may be one fold' **under Christ** (John 10:16).... He could not be the Redeemer of the **World** without belonging to...**Jews!**"