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WISDOM AND PASTORAL THEOLOGY

Walter J. Harrelson

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S. MacLean Gilmour

'LAZARUS MOTIF' IN PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN PREACHING?

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The Use and Abuse of the Book of Revelation

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There is a general ignorance and a widespread suspicion of the books of Daniel and Revelation on the part of ministers of the old-line churches. Consequently, since they have been offered no alternative explanation, church members are often attracted to, and even convinced by, the bizarre interpretations presented by one or other of the millennial sects.

The Book of Daniel is the greatest of the Jewish writings of its type, and the Book of Revelation the greatest of the Christian genre. The Book of Daniel was written in 165 or 164 B.C., and the Revelation to John in A.D. 90, give or take a few years. In between we know of at least a score of similar tracts or documents, among them I Enoch, The Assumption of Moses, IV Ezra, Baruch, and the War Scroll found at Qumran. Taken together this body of literature is called "Revelation" or "Apocalyptic" literature.

Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah had proclaimed that God's purposes would work themselves out in and through the processes of history. Purged by punishment, a faithful remnant of Israel would inherit God's promises, and the age of God's rule would come upon earth, an age when justice would roll down like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream. This new era would be established by God himself, or by God acting through a descendant of the Davidic house, his messiah or vicegerent.

With the passage of the centuries, however, many Jews became disillusioned. One historical catastrophe succeeded another—the Babylonian conquest, the Persian, the Greek, the Roman. How could God possibly establish his rule within the historical process?

Paralleling this process of disillusionment with history as the plane of God's action came an exposure to a way of thinking that was a feature of Persian religion—Zoroastrianism. From the time of Cyrus' capture of Jerusalem in 546 B.C. to the defeat of Darius by Alexander in 331 B.C.—for over two hundred years—the Jews were a subject people of the Persians. It was inevitable that Persian ideas should affect Jewish ways of thinking, and they did so in terms of half a dozen beliefs that came increasingly to displace the older prophetic philosophy of history. These can be briefly enumerated: The doctrines of (1) the two ages; (2) the imminence of the end of this present evil age; (3) the catastrophic nature of the end; (4) the signs of the end; and (5) a general resurrection, a final judgment, and eternal reward or punishment.

From the time of the Book of Daniel Jewish apocalyptic writings also had three other general characteristics. They were (1) visions of the future, dealing with the present, and set in the framework of the distant past; (2) pseudonymous (Enoch, Elijah, Moses, Daniel, Baruch); and (3) written to provide an answer to the immediate situation at the time of their composition. (They were tracts for their times, or tracts for bad times.)

The Book of Revelation conforms to the apocalyptic pattern in all but two respects. (1) It is not pseudonymous. The writer identifies himself as John, a companion in distress of the Asiatic Christians. (2) It does not employ the device of visions set in the framework of the distant past. The visions recounted in the book purport to illuminate, to use the author's words, "what must soon take place."

John of Revelation wrote during the reign of Domitian, probably in the early nineties of our era, at a time when the imperial authorities were attempting to compel Christians to participate in the cult of emperor worship. John's message is iterated and reiterated: Hold fast! Refuse to deny Christ and pay obeisance to Caesar's statue! Very shortly the Roman Empire and the priesthood of the imperial cult will be visited by unprecedented disasters, and in the end—the very near end—will be overthrown and destroyed. Satan, the old dragon that is the real power behind the persecution of the Church, will be bound. The beast from the sea, representing the ruling Caesar, and the beast from the land, representing the imperial priesthood, will be cast into the lake of brimstone and fire. Those faithful Christians who have suffered martyrdom for their faith will be raised from the dead to rule with Christ for a thousand years. Then Satan will be released. He will gather allies from the four corners of the earth, but Christ and his hosts will overthrow them at Armageddon, the last great battle. Satan will join the beast from the land and the beast from the sea in the lake of brimstone and fire, the old heaven and the old earth will pass away, and the Christians who have been faithful will be raised from the dead to reign with Christ and the martyrs in the new heaven and the new earth.

It is clear that John of Patmos expected the return of Christ and the inauguration of the millennium within a matter of weeks or months. At the end of his book, just prior to the benediction, he

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declares, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.'"

When John's expectations were disappointed, readers of the book undertook to relate its predictions to contemporary situations and contemporary events—a process that could be traced, had we the time, from the Montanist movement in the early second century to the newest millennial sect in Southern California.

When John wished to identify the beast of his symbolism with the ruling emperor so that the reader would make the identification while it remained hidden from the uninitiated pagan, he employed the familiar device of what is called gematria, that is, a method of conveying meaning by the sum of the numerical equivalents of the letters of the individual's name. In Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin, each letter of the alphabet stood for a number. By adding the numbers represented by the letters of his name the person in question could be referred to in code. When Pompeii was excavated late in the eighteenth century, a graffito, inscribed on one of the walls of the city before it was overwhelmed with lava from Vesuvius in A.D. 79, was discovered to read, "I love her whose number is 545."

John's famous identification reads: "This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number is six hundred and sixty-six." That he was referring to a first-century contemporary is beyond doubt, though we cannot be sure that we today have the requisite wisdom to interpret the reference—the wisdom that John could assume on the part of his first Christian readers. The best guess is that 666 referred to the emperor Domitian, who was popularly believed to be a reincarnation of the hated Nero. The sum of the numerical values of the Hebrew letters that go to make up the name Neron Caesar is 666.

Down through the centuries interpreters who have used the Book of Revelation as a code bearing on persons and events of their own times have puzzled over the number 666 until they have succeeded in discovering in it the person they most feared or hated: the Pope in general, or some medieval Pope, and, in my own time, Mussolini or Hitler or Stalin or Khrushchev.

The millenarianism of some contemporary fringe groups in American church life goes back to movements of early Reformation days, to various Anabaptist groups and the early followers of Menno Simons, but for the most part the Millennialists of our day trace their origins to the middle of the nineteenth century. The most influential misinterpreter of the Book of Revelation a hundred

years ago was a certain William Miller, whose studies of Scripture led him to predict the return of Christ and the end of the world in 1843. Tens of thousands of his followers in upper New York State and parts of New England awaited the awesome day, only to be disappointed by its non-arrival. Mrs. Ellen Harmon White was to begin with a follower of Wm. Miller, and the Seventh Day Adventists are therefore an offshoot of Millerite enthusiasm.

The most vigorous and by far the most rapidly growing millennial movement of our day is the sect that now calls itself Jehovah's Witnesses. It claims to be growing at the startling rate of over 10% per year.

The sect took its rise with the activities of a certain Charles Taze Russell. In 1872, in the town of Allegheny in Pennsylvania, Russell, a Presbyterian, defended the Calvinistic doctrine of hell in a debate with a fast-talking opponent—defended the doctrine, but lost the debate. He then studied Scripture with phenomenal energy to find an unbeatable answer to everything. He concluded, among other things, that the wicked would be exterminated rather than eternally punished, and he and his followers later boasted that he was the man who had turned the hose on hell.

The key that Russell found to Scripture was the doctrine of Adventism—the second coming of Jesus Christ—and soon he was able to make a firm prediction. He started with the verse in Luke 21:24, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down . . . until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." In other words, the end of the world would come a certain number of "times" after Jerusalem's destruction. Russell took the reference in the Gospel of Luke to be to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian, an event which he dated in 607 B.C. (Orthodox historians place it in 586 B.C.) Russell now searched the Scriptures for a definition of a "time." Since the Book of Leviticus asserts in 26:18 that Israel was to suffer seven times for its sins, the length of one time had to be determined. In the Book of Revelation, Russell found a reference to 1,260 days as "times and a time, and half a time," or three and a half times. Double that, and seven "times" becomes 2,520 days. Coming forward 2,520 days from 607 B.C. Russell drew the discouraging conclusion that Christ had come again in 600 B.C., or that his second coming had occurred six hundred years before his first! A practical man, Russell concluded that he must have made some error. He therefore renewed his studies until he came upon a verse in Ezekiel that read: "I have appointed thee each day for a year" (Ezek. 4:6). Changing his 2,520 days to 2,520 years, he subtracted 606 B.C. (omitting the last two months

of 607 B.C.) and concluded that the end would come in October, 1914.

Russell, known to his followers as Pastor Russell, founded Zion's Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society in Brooklyn in 1896. His followers were variously known as Millennial Dawnists or Russellites, and later as the International Bible Students.

Among Russell's followers excitement built up as 1914 approached. I can recall certain staid Presbyterians in my father's congregation in Southern Saskatchewan at that time who had deserted the Kirk to become International Bible Students and who sold their farms and awaited the dawn of the last day in the Moose Mountains, apparently believing that cold cash would be more portable or negotiable in the new age than a half-section of prairie gumbo!

The outbreak of the first Great War in August, 1914, gave a certain fillip to Russell's hopes of Armageddon, but a great disenchantment followed the failure in October of the prediction of the end. Searching the Scriptures again, Russell revised his theory to assert that Christ *had* returned in 1914, but that his return had been invisible. In October, 1914, Christ had assumed his throne in heaven and Satan had been hurled from heaven to earth to wreak vengeance upon mankind. The final end of the world would occur within the lifetime of the last generation alive in 1914—in other words, sometime before 1984, when a child born in 1914 would have lived his allotted span of seventy years. Hence the slogan, familiar to those of my age in their youth, "Millions now living will never die."

In the later years of Russell's leadership the Watch Tower Society survived several near catastrophes. In 1912 Russell was exposed in a Hamilton, Ontario, police court as a liar. He had claimed to be an ordained minister of high scholastic standing, versed in theology and in the languages of Scripture. Under cross-examination he was compelled to admit that he had never been ordained, had no training in philosophy or theology, and could not even recognize the letters of the Hebrew and Greek alphabets. In 1913 came the nasty publicity of Mrs. Russell's divorce suit. And still later there was the court action that put an end to the sale on the prairies of so-called "miracle wheat"—seed grain that was represented as having been grown from grain found in the pyramids.

Pastor Russell died in Texas in 1916 aboard a private Pullman supplied him by the Watch Tower Society. His successor was a Missouri lawyer known to his followers as "Judge" Rutherford, a

tall, portly gentleman with a string tie and black-ribboned glasses who looked like the cartoonist's stereotype of a U.S. senator. It was Rutherford who, in 1931, renamed the society "Jehovah's Witnesses."

According to the developing doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the billions who had died between the time of Adam and the founding of their sect will be offered the chance of conversion after Armageddon, and those found worthy will return to earth. In preparation for the return of prominent biblical figures, notably King David, the Watch Tower Society built a twenty-room Spanish-style villa at San Diego, California, and, pending David's return, Judge Rutherford made it his home and was buried there in 1942. His successor was a publicity-shy organizational genius by the name of Nathan Homer Knorr, whose headquarters are in Brooklyn and who is re-elected each year by the seven directors, men whom Witnesses believe are chosen by Jehovah. A Lancashire Englishman by the name of Percy Chapman heads Jehovah's Witnesses in Canada and directs operations from a million-dollar headquarters in North Toronto.

According to Witnesses, isolated "Witnesses of Jehovah" have existed all through history, and the first of them was the Abel of the Genesis story. Jesus Christ was a created being and served as Jehovah's executive officer. The Holy Spirit is Jehovah's radar—the means by which he keeps informed and detects the approach of his enemies. The Bible is treated like a cook book, with a recipe for every belief.

All Witnesses make much of the reference in Revelation chapter 7 to the 144,000—12,000 drawn from each of the ideal twelve tribes. The 144,000 are what the Witnesses call "the little flock," and these are they that will rule in heaven at the right hand of Christ. Most of the 144,000 are already dead, among them Abel, David, the original twelve apostles, founder Russell, and Judge Rutherford. At last count something less than 14,000 of this "little flock" are alive, including the directors of the society in Brooklyn and Percy Chapman in Toronto, and it is estimated that the remaining vacancies are few. How does a man know that he belongs to "the little flock?" Such privileged people just know it. Once a year they come forward and take the elements at the Memorial Feast, a sacramental meal that more or less coincides in time with the Jewish Passover. Members of the "little flock" respond according to a kind of divine honor system.

In addition to the "little flock" of 144,000, there are "the other sheep," Witnesses who have died since 1872 and the million or

more that meet in the twenty-four or twenty-five thousand Kingdom Halls in the U.S., Canada, and some one hundred and ninety other lands. During the holocaust that will mark the end—some time before 1984—living Witnesses, whether of “the little flock” or “the other sheep,” will stand aside and watch the slaughter in a friendly way. At the last drop of blood, the millennium of the earthly paradise begins. The 144,000 of “the little flock” begin their reign with Christ in heaven. “The other sheep,” over a million of them, live a life on earth, free from old age, illness, and anxiety in a land flowing with milk and honey.

The first task of “the other sheep” will be to clean up the two or three billion bodies recently fallen in battle. Then they will be free to engage in the much more pleasant occupation of replenishing the earth.

At the beginning of the millennium there will be a resurrection of the dead billions who never had a chance to hear the true gospel. This would seem to create a space problem, but ingenious Witnesses can speak of the draining of the Pacific Ocean or the central heating of the Arctic as possible solutions. When interrogated on this problem, Pastor Russell once ventured the opinion: “Two billion people could fit into an area the size of Texas if they stood elbow to elbow.”

In a happy solution to the servant problem, Witnesses believe that the newly-risen billions will serve them as domestics. In return, the servants get a final chance at the gospel.

The sole interruption to the heavenly paradise of “the little flock” and the earthly paradise of “the other sheep” comes at the end of the millennium. Drawing once more on the Book of Revelation, Witnesses believe that Satan will break his bonds and, like Napoleon after Elba, will lead one final rebellion, aided by those of the risen dead who refuse a second chance. At the end of this final battle—a latter-day Armageddon—Satan and company will be annihilated.

The million or more Jehovah's Witnesses distribute more than 100,000,000 magazines a year, more than 15,000,000 books, and more than 250,000,000 tracts, all produced in the sect's printing plant at Bethel in Brooklyn, purportedly the largest printing plant in the world. In 1957 more than 20,000 Canadian Witnesses gathered for a rally on the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. In 1958 American Witnesses staged the greatest rally in the history of New York City—at least, the greatest until the visit of Pope Paul in 1965. Over 250,000 Witnesses filled the Yankee Stadium and overflowed into the Polo

grounds; 2,600 volunteers manicured the ball parks after each meeting, washing each seat with soap and water; 6,600 volunteers served 70,000 meals per hour; and thousands of yellow-tagged ushers won the respect of New York's veteran traffic police. On one day of the Conference thousands were baptized by mass immersion in the Harlem River, and throughout the week the aggregation of well-dressed conventioners fanned out to give New York City a thorough door-bell pushing.

It is an enlightening experience for a conventional Protestant to pay a visit to a Kingdom Hall. The Jehovah's Witnesses' meeting-house in any Canadian or American center of any account is a far cry from the store fronts or rented halls of fifteen or twenty years ago. A modern lumber or red-bricked building is often set off by a two-story picture window. Inside, a good-sized auditorium has rows of comfortable theater seats which stand below a one-step platform where the central lectern is flanked by two microphones. Left and right are two huge bulletin boards covered with figures: magazines, no. of; back calls, no. of; total hours, no. of; etc., etc. Plastered on the walls are mottoes drawn from the Society's New World Translation of the Bible.

Witnesses do not meet for weekly worship in the sense understood by Protestants. Instead, members of the society gather on a week-day evening for what is called a "service meeting"—more properly, a training school for witness. That same evening each of the 25,000 Kingdom Halls all over the world follow the identical procedure, laid down for them in a printed brochure called the "Kingdom Ministry."

The session begins with the distribution of a fill-in exam that will later be carefully graded—an exam designed to test the Witness's knowledge of propaganda methods, practical psychology, the sect's history, and the Bible in the New World or Jehovah's Witnesses' translation.

Following the written quiz comes a song from a paper-back collection. Then there is a role-playing session of door-to-door tactics. This in turn is followed by a couple of sermons, each by a "pioneer"—a Witness who gives over a hundred hours a month to preaching, teaching, and calling. One sermon may consist of a review of doctrine, followed by questions from the group, and another, separated from the first by a second song and by readings from Scripture, may deal with the Witnesses' interpretation of a passage from the Bible—an interpretation laid down by the Witnesses' headquarters and accepted without question or demur.

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The meeting will end with work assignments—new calls, back calls, and so forth.

In earlier days a Witness would tote a portable gramophone from door to door, seeking permission to play a short sermon by Pastor Russell or Judge Rutherford. These tactics have long since been abandoned in favor of a direct approach.

A well-dressed Witness now knocks at the door and announces that he is calling in the interests of a back-to-the-Bible campaign. In twenty-four out of twenty-five cases he is denied entrance, sometimes politely but more often with the door slammed in his face. In such instances he moves on to the next house, smilingly undiscouraged. On the rare occasions on which he is invited in, he explains a passage of Scripture by Witnesses' exegesis, sells a book for fifty cents—possibly *Your Will Be Done on Earth*, sells a copy of *Awake!* for a nickel (4,500,000 copies of each issue are now printed!), and lines up an appointment for a back call.

The door-to-door work is done by ordinary members, known on one level as "publishers," and on another as "pioneers." A publisher works at a normal job, attends three to five Kingdom Hall meetings per week, and puts in an average of three to five hours' calling per week. He buys copies of the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* for three cents and sells them for five cents on his rounds. A pioneer puts in about four hours' canvassing a day. He gets his copies of the magazines free and the proceeds of the sales help to support him. Full-time "special pioneers" do administrative, office, and printing work. They live free on the Witnesses' premises at Bethel in Brooklyn or at the H.Q. in North Toronto, and all, including Knorr in Brooklyn and Chapman in Toronto, draw a salary of \$14 a month plus traveling expenses.

The U.S. branch of the Society has increased its membership 2500% over the last twenty-five years and claims to have grown thirty-one times as fast as the other two hundred and sixty American denominations put together. The goal of the Witnesses is to call at every home in Canada and the U.S. at least four times a year, and in many areas that goal is reached or exceeded. Continents are divided into zones under "zone servants," nations into branches with "branch servants," states and provinces into circuits with "circuit servants," and each local congregation has its "congregational servant."

Like other millennial sects, the Jehovah's Witnesses have no place for any social gospel. The outbreak of a war between Israel and Syria, the escalation of the war in Vietnam, bloodshed in the Congo, a revolution in the Argentine, an earthquake in Alaska,

race riots in Cleveland, a typhoon in Hong Kong, the threat of nuclear warfare—all these are occasion for rejoicing, for they witness to the activities of Satan and are signs of the nearness of the end.

Outsiders often speculate that the invention of the hydrogen bomb gave an impetus to the Witnesses, but they themselves would deny this. Asked whether a nuclear war between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. would be the battle of Armageddon, a Witness replied: "No. Such a war would be the last gasp in this world's symphony of agony." Undeterred by his mixed metaphor, the Witness continued: "The real battle will make atomic explosions look like firecrackers. Jehovah God will throw curtains of fire across the nations; there will be floods and earthquakes and anarchy."

According to the Civil Liberties Union, the Jehovah's Witnesses in the U.S. have passed through the bloodiest persecution of any minority group since the Mormons a hundred years ago. This persecution arose chiefly because of the refusal of Witnesses to salute the flag, which for them is a "graven image," and their refusal to be drafted into the army, not because they were pacifists—far from it!—but on the grounds that, because of their street preaching and their door-to-door solicitation, they were all ministers of the gospel. During World War II, 4,500 of their men were sent to federal penitentiaries and countless others were burned out of their homes, mobbed, beaten, stoned, and tar-and-feathered by over 2500 separate mobs in forty-four separate states. Over the years they have taken court action again and again to defend their civil rights and have won over forty of the fifty odd test cases that have been adjudicated by the Supreme Court. As a consequence a Witness in the U.S. can no longer be compelled to salute the flag, to serve in the army, or to do jury duty, and they may preach on the streets and solicit converts from door to door without interference.

The persecution of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Canada was if anything more violent and more sustained than in the U.S. Shortly after the outbreak of World War II the sect was declared to be illegal by a Canadian order-in-council. Mr. Lapointe, then Minister of Justice, reported that the society was "considered to be of a subversive character." Under Defence of Canada regulations, police seized copies of the *Watchtower*, broke up meetings, and jailed Witnesses across the country. In my memory no sect has been persecuted more violently by Provincial and Dominion governments and by Canadian mobs, unless it be the Sons of Freedom in British Columbia.

The Jehovah's Witnesses thrive on persecution and regard it as further proof that the end is drawing near. With the help of able lawyers, only some of whom are members of the sect, the Witnesses fight back in the courts. Reference has already been made to the phenomenal success of their appeals to the American Supreme Court, and it is said that they have yet to lose a case that has reached the Canadian Supreme Court. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately from the Witnesses' point of view, many Canadian cases originate in the Province of Quebec (where the Jehovah's Witnesses' attack on the Pope as the Beast with the number 666 of Revelation 13 raises Roman Catholic hackles), and ways and means have been found in French Canada to delay appeals from conviction to higher courts, sometimes for years.

Today the only cases involving Jehovah's Witnesses that hit the headlines in Canada and the U.S. tend to be those concerned with the so-called blood issue. This matter was not raised by Witnesses until 1946, when the directors of the Watch Tower and Tract Society decreed that a Witness could not accept a blood transfusion, on the grounds that this was forbidden by the decree in Leviticus against eating blood. The first case I recall was that of a Manitoba boy who was accidentally shot in the thigh. His father, a Jehovah's Witness, refused to allow a transfusion and, though a successful operation was performed, the boy died from lack of blood. In 1959 the press across Canada reported another case—in most instances accompanying its reports with angry comments. A girl who was born to Witness parents in the Toronto General Hospital had a blood disorder, and her doctors said that it would be necessary to drain and replace the blood. The parents refused to allow any transfusion. A special court was hurriedly convened, the custody of the baby was temporarily transferred to the Children's Aid Society, the transfusion was given, and the healthy child in due course was returned to its parents. Other similar cases have been reported in the U.S., and I understand that the legal issues at stake have not yet been fully resolved. Can Witness parents condemn a child to death for reasons of religious conviction? As the Manitoba Witness father said, a Witness would rather see his child die as a consequence of obedience to the Witness faith than lose him forever as a consequence of a deliberate infraction of the biblical injunction.

In 1950 the Jehovah's Witnesses published their *New World Translation of the New Testament*, and the preparation of the New World Old Testament translation is now far advanced. The New Testament translation was made by a committee whose member-

ship has never been revealed—a committee that possessed an unusual competence in Greek and that made the Westcott and Hort Greek text basic to their translation. It is clear that doctrinal considerations influenced many turns of phrase, but the work is no crack-pot or pseudo-historical fraud.*

Early in this lecture I spoke briefly on the use of the Book of Revelation—a document that reflects the historical situation in Asia Minor late in the first century, and in particular the late first century struggle between Church and state. The book's message to its first readers was an appeal to loyalty and endurance to the point of martyrdom, and its promise was God's speedy victory through Jesus Christ and his triumph over the Church's supernatural and natural enemies. Later in the lecture I spoke of the misuse of the Book of Revelation by millennial sects over the centuries, and in particular of its misuse by the Jehovah's Witnesses during the last one hundred years. Let me conclude my remarks with a few general observations.

The Book of Revelation is drama of a high order, set on a cosmic stage. Despite its author's faulty Greek, his book rises again and again to heights of sublimity and grandeur that have inspired some of the world's greatest literature, poetry, art, and music. One needs only to reflect on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, and Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus*. Although John drew heavily on Old Testament symbolism and imagery (especially from the books of Ezekiel and Daniel) and occasionally on pagan mythology, he made his borrowed material his own and created a work of singular vividness, charm, and power.

John represents Christianity as a moral religion. He condemns the sins of idolatry, theft, fornication, and falsehood, and stresses the virtues of chastity, loyalty, patience, endurance, faith, and zeal. But the reader will note that there is in the book scarcely an echo of the Sermon on the Mount. On the contrary, there is hatred, bitter and unalloyed. The situation for which the book was written will help in part to account for this bitterness, though it cannot condone it.†

The Revelation to John as an apocalypse was concerned with events of its own time and with those that its author expected to take place in the immediate future. We can understand its

*See Robert M. McCoy, "Jehovah's Witnesses and Their New Testament," *Andover Newton Quarterly*, Jan., 1963, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 15-31.

†For an intriguing interpretation of the Book of Revelation see C. G. Jung, *Answer to Job* (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1960), pp. 142-182.

message to the extent that we keep its literary and theological affiliations in mind and to the extent that we can relate it to the historical and religious situation in the Roman Empire, and in particular in the Roman Province of Asia, toward the close of the first century.

Apocalypses were not written for a world or a Church hundreds or thousands of years later than their time of writing. They were written for their own day and generation. John of Patmos, like other apocalyptic seers, believed that history had about run its course. The historical process was about to be interrupted by the dramatic and catastrophic introduction of the Kingdom of God. John could not have conceived of a second Christian century, let alone a twentieth. His message for us is therefore indirect, rather than direct. A hundred years ago the first editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* put it this way:

Though the cause of evil prosper,
Yet 'tis truth alone is strong,
Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne.
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above his own.

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This is a study written primarily for layfolk and Church School teachers.

The Jehovah's Witnesses:

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Overmuch concerned with attacking the beliefs of the sect.