

## ***The Spurious Book of Revelation Revisited***

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**T**he book of Revelation does not belong in the bible. Comparisons of the contents of Paul's writings and those from the author of the book of Revelation reveal stark contrasts. And, church history reveals that the John who authored Revelation was a different person than the John who wrote the fourth gospel that does contain elements supporting Paul's revelation. Further church history and Revelation's content itself identify the anti Pauline community that spawned its author and that has fundamentally distorted Christian doctrine.

The four gospels were universally accepted as authoritative during the second century Christian church. By the end of the second century, although diminished in relation to the gospels, the Pauline writings were widely considered as apostolically genuine. As such the gospels and the Pauline writings formed the basis for the developing canon.

On the other hand, the book of Revelation was widely rejected as canonical until the seventh century. It was not until the late fourth century that the book first gained a foothold of official acceptance in the Latin speaking West as a result of a regional synod in Carthage. In the distant Syriac Middle East little attention was paid to the Council of Carthage's decision. In the Greek speaking churches of Macedonia, Greece, Asia Minor and Syria the book continued to be rejected as authoritative and in Egypt the validity of its authorship was to be questioned. After the synod in Carthage Jerome wrote this in a letter to Dardanus, the prefect of Gaul:

This must be said to our people, that the epistle which is entitled "To the Hebrews" is accepted as the apostle Paul's not only by the churches of the east but by all church writers in the Greek language of earlier times, although many judge it to be by Barnabas or by Clement. It is of no great moment who the author is, since it is the work of a churchman and receives recognition day by day in the public reading of the churches. If the custom of the Latins does not receive it among the canonical scriptures, neither, by the same liberty, do the churches of the Greeks accept John's Apocalypse.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that the book of Revelation has always been the only New Testament book absent from Greek Orthodox lectionary may be based on their early rejections of the book. The same present absence is true of the Eastern Orthodox Church which did not generally accept the book of Revelation into their canon until the fifth century. Of Eastern Orthodox churches, neither the Armenian nor the Georgian Eastern Orthodox churches included the book of Revelation in their bibles until after the ninth century.

The Syriac speaking churches of the Middle East did not recognize the book of Revelation as canonical until after the sixth century when the books of 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Jude and Revelation were added to the revisionist Peshitta of the sixth century. Prior to that addition of Revelation, Hebrews, as the authorized eschatological belief, was the final book of the Eastern canon. Even today Nestorian churches of the Middle East retain Hebrews as the final book of scripture and do not include the book of Revelation.

When comparisons of Paul's writings are made with the contents of the book of Revelation, a reason for the centuries' long rejections of Revelation seems evident.

Paul wrote, in his second letter to the church in Thessalonica, that any who said that the day of the Lord was at hand in the early church were deceivers.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

On the other hand, the author of Revelation emphasized that the day of the Lord was at hand both in his introduction and in his conclusion.

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. Revelation 1:3

And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. Revelation 22:10

The apostle Paul wrote to those zealous for the Old Testament law in Galatia that in the church of faith there was no difference between Jew and Gentile.

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:27– 29

He also stated that Gentiles of faith had been grafted into the prophetic root of Israel where branches of unbelieving Jews had been broken off. (Romans 11)

On the other hand, the author of Revelation only gives credence to being a Jew.

And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan. Revelation 2:8-9

Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Revelation 3:9

By these two statements, the contents and the terms used in the book of Revelation its author implies that there is a unique salvation reserved for Jews.

The apostle Paul wrote that the only unique salvation was for those who believed.

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. 1 Timothy 4:10

The book of Revelation ends with a curse.

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book. Revelation 22:18-19

Curses were standard practice in the Jewish synagogues. For example, both second century Justin Martyr and fourth century Jerome wrote that a formal curse against those that believed in Jesus as the Messiah was a ritual practice in Jewish synagogue services. <sup>2</sup>

The apostle Paul admonished the churches against using curses.

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Romans 12:14

The historical record of the early church seems to provide more answers for this reason the book of Revelation was widely rejected as authoritative during the first six centuries of Christianity.

Based on the contrasts in content and style, both third century Dionysius of Alexandria and fourth century Eusebius of Caesarea doubted that the author of the John's gospel and the author of the book of Revelation were the same. One glaring contrast is the fact that the author of John's gospel included Jesus' answer to a Gentile request to meet him that verified the inclusion of the Gentiles on the same basis as the Jews.

And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it **bringeth forth much fruit**. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If **any man** serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if **any man** serve me, him will *my* Father honour. John 12:20-26

Out of the muddle of second century discordant historical myths and legends, scholars have found that there were two different notable John's who successively resided in Ephesus in the latter first

century and in the early second century. These various traditions have the life of the second John, to whom the Book of Revelation is attributed, spanning the divide between the first and second century. If true, the second John could not have been any of those mentioned in the earlier gospels or the book of Acts.

In his book, *The Enigma of the Fourth Gospel*, Robert Eisler historically identifies two very different graves that, from the second century, have been known as John's grave. One grave honoring John resides under the ruins of a basilica built in the sixth century by the last Latin speaking Eastern Roman Emperor, Justinian the first. The other historical gravesite is said to be inside an unmarked hillside cave.<sup>3</sup> On the feast day of Saint John, while other Christians honored Saint John at the basilica, the local Greek Christians did so at the hillside cave until the early 1920's when they were expelled by the Turks.

In a lecture on the subject of two Johns delivered during the year of his retirement, honored Pauline scholar, F. F. Bruce, stated:

To readers of the English Bible the designation "John the divine" is associated with the last book of the New Testament, entitled in the Authorized and Revised Versions "The Revelation of St. John the Divine" –following the precedent of a number of medieval manuscripts. But when the designation, "the divine" was attached to St. John in particular, not earlier (so far as one can tell) than the third century, it was attached to the Evangelist, the author of the Logos-prologue, rather than to the seer of Patmos.<sup>4</sup>

Who then was this second John in Ephesus-the seer of Patmos who mentions the twelve and 144,000 Jews to be redeemed but never mentions the body of Christ and Paul, the founder of the churches from both Jews and gentiles in Asia Minor? The book of Acts and the Pauline epistles first shed light on the community from which this John was spawned.

After thirteen years of ministry to Jews and Gentiles in the predominately Gentile regions, Paul went to Jerusalem to report to the church leaders. The presentation was disrupted by some of the church Jews who had refused to abide by the earlier decisions of Peter and James to accept the Gentiles based on faith in Jesus Christ rather than faith, the Mosaic Law and bloodline. (Acts 15) In an account of this meeting in his Galatian letter Paul stated:

And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:  
Galatians 2:3-4

Years later when Paul made his final attempt to reconcile the Jerusalem church to his revelation of the great mystery that included the Gentiles on the same footing of faith, James, who was the only church leader recorded by name as being present, asked Paul to take a purification vow to appease those church Jews who were still zealous for the Mosaic law. Apparently to accomplish his intended mission, Paul accepted. When Paul entered the temple to present the accomplishment of the vow he was falsely indentified as a Jew who had brought a Gentile into the temple. The crowds would have beaten him to death had not the Roman soldiers who monitored temple activity from their adjoining Fortress of Antonia rescued him. (Acts 21:17-40)

When Paul had been on his way in this final mission to Jerusalem he had stopped in Miletus on Asia Minor's western coast and invited the elders from the nearby church in Ephesus to meet with him. He prophetically delivered a startling message. He said:

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Acts 20:29-30

It appears that some of those who later entered into the fellowships of Ephesus and those of the surrounding regions were zealous Christian Jews who, after Paul's death, under the pressures arising from the ensuing Jewish Roman war of 66-73 AD, emigrated from Palestine to Asia Minor.<sup>5</sup> These Jews, in seeking their primacy, to one degree or another, rejected the apostle Paul's revelation and forged lies to personally discredit him among the gentiles. Fourth century heresy chronicler Epiphanius reported that second century Jewish Christians attributed Paul's practical disregard for the Mosaic law to the fact that he had once been rejected as a suitor for the hand of the high priest's daughter.

Nineteenth century protestant theologian, F. C. Baur, in his book, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries* wrote of the rejection of Pauline doctrine by one of the leaders of the Jewish Christians.

Hegesippus, a Jewish Christian writer who lived about the middle of the second century, while not mentioning the apostle's name, refers only to the words used by him in 1 Cor. ii. 9, and says they are untrue and in conflict with divine scripture, opposing them to the words of Jesus, Matt xiii. 16. Here he gives utterance to the view regarding the apostolic qualifications of the apostle Paul which compels us to number him among the apostle's most pronounced opponents. According to the words of Christ cited in the passage, those only are called to be blessed who have seen with their eyes and heard with their ears. His cannot be said of Paul, and accordingly he cannot be called to be an apostle. What we know in other ways of the character of this representative of the Jewish Christian party fully bears out this view. Between the years 150-160 he visited foreign Churches as the envoy of that party and conversed with a number of bishops among whom those of Corinth and Rome are specially mentioned. From this journey he brought back the satisfactory report that the doctrine prevailed everywhere according to what was declared by the law, the prophets and the Lord. From this we may concluded that even in such a Church as that of Corinth that the Jewish Christian or Petrine party had gained a decided ascendancy over the Pauline.<sup>6</sup>

By the mid second century this anti Pauline opinion had spread to some gentile leaders. Papias, the bishop of Heiropolis in western Asia Minor, held the book of Matthew and John's Apocalypse in the highest regard, as the Jewish Christians did, and never mentions the apostle Paul by name, reference or quote although his bishopric is in the region where Paul's churches had once flourished. Justin Martyr the prolific second century Christian apologist never mentions the apostle Paul by name or epistle nor does he mention the fourth gospel but he does mention the name of a John and the Apocalypse.

On the other hand Polycarp bishop of Smyrna, who was known as a Pauline supporter, was martyred as a heretic.

So he put forward Nicetes, the father of Herod and brother of Alce, to plead with the magistrate not to give up his body, "lest," so it was said, "they should abandon the crucified one and begin to worship this man" -- this being done at the instigation and urgent entreaty of the Jews, who also watched when we were about to take it from the fire, not knowing that it will be impossible for us either to forsake at any time the Christ who suffered for the salvation of the whole world of those that are saved -- suffered though faultless for sinners -- nor to worship any other. For Him, being the Son of God, we adore, but the martyrs as disciples and imitators of the Lord we cherish as they deserve for their matchless affection towards their own King and Teacher. May it be our lot also to be found partakers and fellow-disciples with them. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 17:2,3

It appears that the Jews who supported the martyrdom of Polycarp were Jews who believed in Jesus, otherwise, why would they care if Polycarp would become worshipped more than that of the "crucified one" and why would the author emphasize that the supporters of Polycarp believed that the Christ, who suffered, suffered for the salvation of the whole world of those that are saved in contrast these critical Jews who believed that only they, as Jews who believed, were the inheritors of salvation?

By the fourth century, among more thoroughly educated churches in Greece, Asia Minor and the Levant, the tide had turned against the overt influence these Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah for only themselves. The more stringent sects of Jewish Christians were declared heretics. However, in the fifth century, without regard and/or respect for the truth of the Pauline revelation, the Latin West under the bishops of Rome, allied with the political influence of the Roman state, began officially incorporating John's Apocalypse into their orthodoxy. Over time, in the Roman drive for hegemony, Christian areas that had resisted the inclusion of the book of Revelation in their canons succumbed.

After years of founding and establishing churches Paul wrote that the mystery of iniquity was already working. In the preceding verses he writes of the falling away that is to occur first before the second coming of the Lord. The original Greek word for "falling away" is *apostasia*. It means defected from or rebelled against at a distance for an interval of time.<sup>7</sup> Peter wrote of a time period between the sufferings of Christ and the glories of Christ. Later, in his second letter, he implies thousands of years. Today there are many who say we have just entered the time period of rebellion or *apostasia*. With Revelation's anti Pauline content and the history of the persistent push for and eventual realization of universal canonization, it may be wiser to consider that the falling away began after the death of the apostle Paul and the death of Peter who, as he was passing from this world, provided his eschatology as one in harmony with the apostle Paul's.

And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. 2 Peter 3:15-16

Today, in opposition to the Pauline revelation that fulfilled the word of God two thousand years ago and against the historical record since, we are left, as if spiritually credible, a heretical book endorsed as

the seemingly final reference for things to come. The book and its incorporation into the canon is, at the best, a historical study on the loss of understanding and application of the Pauline revelation. At the worst it is an avenue of deceit leading to the strong delusion designed to take away those of unbelief as the Lord is sending out his glorified saints to gather the elect who do believe.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael D. Marlowe, *Internet Resources for Students of Scripture*, 2001-2012 <http://www.bible-researcher.com/jerome.html>

<sup>2</sup> Allan Nadler, *Do Jews Curse Christians?* Jewish Ideas Daily July 17, 2012 <http://www.jewishideasdaily.com/4489/features/jews-curse-christians/>

<sup>3</sup> Robert Eisler, *The Enigma of the Fourth Gospel*, Methuen & Co., London, 1938 p. 126 [https://archive.org/stream/MN41506ucmf\\_0#page/n181/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/MN41506ucmf_0#page/n181/mode/2up)

<sup>4</sup> F F Bruce, *St. John at Ephesus*, A lecture delivered in the John Rylands University Library, October 26, 1977. [http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/bjrl/ephesus\\_bruce.pdf](http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/bjrl/ephesus_bruce.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, Sigler Press, Mifflinton, PA, 1971 p. 86,87

<sup>6</sup> F C Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, Williams and Norgate, Edinburgh, 1878 p. 88,89 <https://archive.org/stream/churchhistoryoff01baur#page/88/mode/2up>

<sup>7</sup> George Liddell & Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1891 *apostasia* fem. of #5332 *apostasis*