

Through the Prophet's Eye by Marshall Best.

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Through the Prophet's Eye is a rather large work comprised of the author's personal impressions, inventions, and speculations concerning the Second Coming of Christ. Mr. Best states, "The study of Bible prophecy is not a true science. Neither is it a true art. It is the formation of opinions based upon logical analysis of Scripture. Let me restate this again. The study of end-times issues is a formation of opinions....Logic, open-mindedness, creativity, thoroughness, and as my mother would say, 'stick-to-it-iveness' are all much more significant contributors to the drawing of reasonable conclusions than the finest theological training." (p. viii) In the author's own terminology, then, this book could be characterized as 750 pages of uncorroborated personal opinion. It is amateurishly written and poorly edited, containing numerous grammatical errors.

It is also poorly footnoted and sparsely documented. For a work of this magnitude (750 pages) one would expect to see an extensive bibliography, but there are only thirty-three referenced sources. Eleven of these are various English translations of the Bible, with an additional eight being secular works such as "*The Art of War*" by Sun-tzu, "*Who Built New England's Megalithic Monuments*," the Time-Life "*Lost Civilizations*" series, and "*The Next War*" by Caspar Weinberger. The author quotes the Watchtower Society's *Emphatic Diaglott* as authoritatively as the NASB, and the only actual biblical commentaries are cited more in derision than for scholarly support. The author's treatment of the rapture comes almost exclusively from Dave MacPherson's book *The Rapture Plot*, which has been conclusively refuted by many conservative scholars and will not be dealt with here. There are so many interpretive and doctrinal problems with *Through the Prophet's Eye* that a review of such limited size cannot attempt to deal with all of them.

In the introductory chapter the author gives the impression of understanding some of the basic principles of prophetic interpretation, but afterward he consistently violates, contradicts, or negates even the most basic principles of hermeneutics. He states, "Too many theologians cut whatever scriptures they find interesting and paste them wherever they want to put them. From this poor style of study, someone can prove anything." (p. viii) Yet this is exactly what the author does throughout this book. In several places the author makes statements such as, "To understand prophecy, we must shed all preconceived ideas," (p. vii) and "The most important decision to be made in trying to understand Biblical prophecy is first to abandon every idea one has already been taught." (p. 34) These types of statements will certainly appeal to gullible and undiscerning readers with an independent spirit, but they fly in the face of the admonitions of Scripture and the examples of Church history and orthodox scholarship.

The mainstay of the author's interpretive methodology involves creating an independent paraphrase of the Scriptures. Instead of judging the worth of a Bible version based on its faithfulness to the original language, the author creates his own translation by picking and choosing verses from pre-selected English translations. For example, when discussing Daniel 9:24 the author prints this verse from the NIV, NEB, Thomson *Septuagint Bible*, and Lamsa *Bible from Ancient Eastern Manuscripts*. He then states, "A more proper translation may be

derived from the four versions by selecting phrases from each that most accurately reveal the true intent of the writer. Some people may challenge this method as not scholarly. They would be right, for it is not a direct retranslation of the Scriptures. This method, though, is not entirely without merit. Since each translation has its strengths and weaknesses, as do the various ancient manuscripts, it should prove to be a valid tool. We will lightheartedly call this pick-and-choose compilation the 'New Homogenized Version.'" (p. 77) No work in the original languages of Scripture is evident in any part of the book, and the author presents no objective basis for determining the "true intent of the writer" of Scripture. On the contrary, the so-called "merit" in his approach is that it allows him to subjectively choose verses which support his own preconceived notions.

The starting point for the book's treatment of prophecy involves an effort to demonstrate that "virtually all of Daniel's prophecies have been fulfilled in their entirety centuries ago. They play no role whatsoever in describing Jesus' return." (p. 47) The author spends seven chapters in a dubious attempt to correlate Daniel's prophecies with the writings of Josephus and the Apocryphal books, quoting these sources as often and with the same authority as the inspired canon of Scripture. He does recognize that the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament contradicts his view, so he devotes a chapter to hermeneutical gymnastics in an attempt to show that when Jesus declared the "abomination that causes desolation" was still future, He really did not mean what he said. In the author's own words, "We will have to go way around the barn to get to the root of this," and he attempts to show that Jesus' words must be interpreted in a way that affirms the author's preconceived idea that Daniel's prophecies have all been completely fulfilled.

In an attempt to formulate a foundation for his approach to biblical prophecy, the author states that, "Certain scriptures must be selected to become the building blocks from which the entire mosaic of prophecy will develop....Many have chosen Daniel's seventy weeks. As discussed earlier in this book, this foundation was misinterpreted, since Daniel's prophecies have already been fulfilled. This frees us to select a better, more stable foundation: the Day of the Lord. This day is the key pivotal event around which all prophetic scriptures find their place." (p. 123) The author believes that the "Day of the Lord" is the final day of battle between a Russian alliance and the forces of God's people. Upon this foundation, the remainder of the book manufactures nearly one thousand interpretive speculations that the author draws from his so-called logical and chronological arrangement of Bible prophecy. Once again, no objective basis for this arrangement is given, and the resulting conclusions are outlandish inventions.

The author states "Unfortunately for most Christian students of prophecy, we have been programmed to look for spiritual or hyperliteral interpretations, rather than simple, practical fulfillment." (p. 239) However, his own speculations are quite fanciful and go well beyond what is stated in the text of Scripture. The author says, for example, that Revelation 8 indicates the forces of God's people will use Napalm on the enemy forces; there will be a nuclear strike against a Russian allied fleet; a biological or chemical warhead on a missile will detonate near the path of the invading Russian-led army. Similarly the author says of Revelation 9, "This event begins with a missile descending upon an underground target. The sentence, 'The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss,' means that the missile

penetrated the target buried deep in the earth.” (p. 238) According to the author, the two witnesses of Revelation 11 are actually military advisors who are killed by the invading Russian force but subsequently rescued in a military mission. “As soon as the two military advisors are cleared of the area, the Mount of Olives will be split in half, the hostages will run to the hills and Jerusalem will be liberated. Jesus finally will appear.” (p. 250) The 144,000 witnesses are supposedly members of an elite military fighting force led by a commander whose secret identity is Jesus Christ. Revelation 16-19 allegedly describes the nuclear destruction of the city of Babylon. “There is one, and only one city existing today that fits the description of the city John saw. Its name is New York City....New York City is John’s Babylon the Great. She will die.” (p. 288, 295) He later states (p. 741) that one of the main clues for the timing of the Lord’s return will be the destruction of New York City by a nuclear device.

The author’s opinions throughout the book are fanciful and speculative to the point of absurdity, but his interpretive conclusions regarding God Himself are far more dangerous. He states, “We have biblical evidence that Jesus will be on earth prior to this descent upon Jerusalem, and we also know that his identity as Jesus will be withheld until the victory at Jerusalem is complete.... He will already be here on earth. When the time comes for Jesus to be revealed, at the battle of Jerusalem, he will come to the scene through the sky and descend to the earth. If he flew in aboard an attack helicopter, he would still be fulfilling the prophecy....Saying he will be revealed indicates he is hidden. He will be hidden in plain sight. Using a new name, he will not be recognized until that day. He will fly in with his troops to rescue Jerusalem....If Jesus does not fly out of the spiritual realm, then how else could he get here? How about him being born like everybody else?...Jesus was born here once. He can do it again. No biggie. What biblical reason is there for this to not be a possibility? There is none. Must it be through a virgin birth? Sure, it could be, but no scripture teaches that in the end times his birth would be of a virgin. It is therefore not a requirement, in spite of all the theological justifications and reasoning that this is the only way he could possibly be born.” (p. 486-488) The author is alleging that the risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ will experience a reincarnation. There are no Scriptures teaching that “in the end times His birth would be of a virgin” because there is no Scriptural support *whatsoever* for a second incarnation! Not only does the author insist that Jesus will be reincarnated, but “He will marry and have the children he was denied in his first life!” (p. 494)

And not only Jesus, but “God himself will also be born as a human. He will be older than Jesus. He will have a human name, a social security card (if he is an American) and eat pizza with the guys on Saturday night. We should expect him to look just as natural as we do. He will occasionally get sunburned. He will get blisters on his hands, bits of spinach will get stuck in his teeth during dinner, and he could suffer from an ingrown toenail....He will be in a position of national leadership. He may be in the military. He will be in a position to see that Jesus, new name and all, will receive the finest military training available....Jesus will be born into a family again here on earth prior to coming under the care of God. God will polish him into a fine military leader.” (p. 496) As the author himself suggests, this is sheer heretical doctrine.

The “fictional” stories and anecdotes periodically included by the author are actually the most well written parts of the book, and that field of literature might be a more fruitful focus for the author in the future. This work is more on par with “Chariots of the Gods” or “Raiders of the Lost Ark” than a serious treatment of Bible prophecy. On the whole, it is a book that should be exposed for what it is and decisively rejected by orthodox, conservative Christians.

Reviewed by Steve Lewis, *High Peaks Bible Fellowship*