

An Interview With Naomi Weaver, C.S.

Author of

Study Notes on the Book of Revelation

Interviewed for Mulberry Press by:

Kristyn Shayon

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Note to the Reader

In 2007, Mulberry Press published a remarkable and insightful booklet, *Study Notes on the Book of Revelation*, by Naomi Weaver, C.S. Several authors have sought to offer insights to help people understand the narrative and symbolism of *Revelation*. *Study Notes*, however, goes beyond this to explain explicitly and in detail how *Revelation* is, as Mrs. Eddy says, on page 577 of *Science and Health*, "...the acme of this Science as the Bible reveals it."

There has been such interest in *Study Notes* by Mulberry Press readers that we asked Naomi Weaver to join us for an audio interview so we could ask many of the questions readers were sending along to us. The interview was hosted by Kristyn Shayon and posted to the Mulberry Press website in June 2007.

To aid those whose computers are not equipped with audio capability, we have prepared this transcript. Readers are welcome to distribute this PDF freely to any who may have an interest in Christian Science and *The Book of Revelation*.

Study Notes on The Book of Revelation is available as a 42-page soft-cover booklet on the Mulberry Press website.



It cannot be said too often that although an individual's understanding of Christian Science will continue to unfold, the full and complete statement of this Science is contained in the Bible and "*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*" by Mary Baker Eddy. No other writings can substitute for these.

The publications of Mulberry Press are motivated by the deepest love and respect for the life and work of the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science.

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An Interview With Naomi Weaver, C.S. Author of *Study Notes on the Book of Revelation*

Kristyn Shayon: What goals did you set out to achieve by writing *Study Notes*?

Naomi Weaver: I had been reading books of the Bible and some of Mrs. Eddy's shorter books straight through, from beginning to end in one or two sessions. Seeking a way to gain a better understanding of Christian Science through the Bible, I came across Mrs. Eddy's statement in *Science and Health* in the chapter entitled "The Apocalypse" that St. John's vision is the acme of this Science as the Bible reveals it.¹ That answered my quest perfectly, and so I decided to study *The Book of Revelation*. My initial reading of the book served to intrigue and mystify me in equal measure.

I created an outline of the sections of *Revelation*, its divisions into seven visions, and the sub-divisions of those visions into seven. I read several books on the subject and thought a great deal about it. Gradually I sketched the skeleton of John's book. Then I studied the symbols. It is essential to understand the symbols in order to follow the sense and understand the metaphysical meaning. I drew up a glossary of meanings of words as used in the Apocalypse. This became a set of code-breaking notes, which I called *Study Notes on the Book of Revelation*.

Several years later Mulberry Press suggested that I expand these notes into a book-

let, which could form a short-cut for readers who had not yet concentrated on *The Book of Revelation*. These study notes would enable them to get quickly into the narrative without going through mechanics of analysis which I had already done.

Initially I had intended to write a "neutral" set of study notes which would be helpful to the general reader. However, an interesting thing happened. I found that the more I looked into *Revelation* the more I found Christian Science. In the end it proved impossible to write about *Revelation* without uncovering the exceptionally close connection it has with Christian Science. Mrs. Eddy said in a conversation with the newspaper reporter Joseph I. C. Clark that she based her conception of religion and laid the foundation in Christian Science on The Ten Commandments, The Ninety-First Psalm, The Sermon on the Mount and The Revelation of St. John the Divine.²

My goal was to have a short but reasonably complete explanation of the symbolism with a synopsis of the book itself making a guide to reading and understanding *Revelation* fairly well on a first or second attempt.

Shayon: What should a reader expect to gain from reading and using *Study Notes*? How is *Study Notes* organized to help

1 S&H 577:30

2 Joseph I. C. Clark, *My Life and Memories*, (1915), page 337.

readers understand *The Book of Revelation* more easily?

Revelation is a book of prophecy, of spiritual insight. It is not a prophecy of material events or people, either in the past or in the future. It is extremely complex and deliberately opaque. *Revelation* recounts an entirely mental warfare. It is a revelation and it has to be understood by revelation. And this involves digging into the text to uncover the deeply metaphysical substance embedded in it.

Study Notes is a concise booklet, which gives some of the history behind the writing of *Revelation*, and some information about the Gospel of John. In his gospel John wrote chiefly of the light – a symbol for understanding. *Revelation* recounts the mental warfare between the darkness of ignorance and the light of the understanding of God. There is an explanation of the symbols which John used. It explains the symbolism of the numbers and a glossary of the word symbols. Mrs. Eddy has observed that the most eminent scholars have concluded that there is a dual meaning to every Biblical passage and that, in order to get at the metaphysical meaning it is necessary to read the inspired Biblical passages rightly.³

At the heart of the booklet is a chapter entitled "*Synopsis and Structure of The Book of Revelation.*" This synopsis shows the division of St. John's book into its component parts, based on the number seven. It gives a summary of each of the parts, namely, of the seven visions and prologue and epilogue. It shows the connections between each section.

There is a *Questions and Answers* section dealing with, for example, the nature of an apocalypse and whether or not the book should be taken literally. And all through

the booklet run the connections with Mrs. Eddy's writings and Christian Science.

Shayon: When a person receives his or her copy of Study Notes, what is the best way to start on what will most likely be a discovery of several parts?

Weaver: Study Notes includes a section entitled "*How to Use Study Notes*". This suggests a sequence of preparatory reading of, for example, the Gospel of John, before getting down to *The Book of Revelation*. The numbers John uses are very interesting and clarify the symbolism enormously. At the centre of the book, is a "*Synopsis and Structure*" of John's book. This summarises the divisions into the seven visions, the prologue and the epilogue, with the Bible references given so that they may be found easily.

Shayon: John wrote Revelation as an apocalypse rather than a straightforward narrative or exposition. As a type of "literature" or story format, what is an apocalypse and why did John use this form?

Weaver: Assuming that the author of Revelation is St. John who wrote the Gospel, it is fair to point out that John's Gospel is fundamentally different from the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. John seems to have been the only one who understood that Jesus's message could not be understood materialistically in terms of Orthodox Judaism. Unlike the synoptic Gospels, John's Gospel is not historical but explanatory. John realised that Jesus taught a kingdom that was spiritual, not physical, and that the day of judgement he promised had nothing to do with the supernatural convulsions of the Jewish apocalypses. John's Gospel ties the teachings of Jesus to his demonstrations of the perfect God, the God of light only, rather than an anthropomorphic God of light and dark. In John's

Gospel Jesus's healings of sin, disease, and death, are shown to be the natural consequence of his teachings.

Apocalypse simply means revelation, and, more precisely, God's disclosure or manifestation of Himself or of His will to man.⁴ The word as used today is generally taken to mean a great battle, the primary feature of which is destruction. The great battle is Armageddon, not apocalypse.

Apocalypses were in common use as a form of literature at the time John wrote his book. Apocalyptic literature is symbolic, using imagery and numbers to indicate God's *supernatural* intervention in the affairs of the world. Apocalypses were meant to comfort believers in times of trouble. Generally they forecast a literal day of judgement and the Messiah who would lead it. There are little apocalypses in the three synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, forecasting the imminent arrival of Jesus on a cloud with his angels round about him to make war upon sinners, with great upheavals, wars, dismay and the like. At the end the human souls would be divided, with the righteous going to paradise and sinners to perdition.

John had seen his Gospel misunderstood and become a breeding-ground for esoteric semi-Greek cults based on the Logos or Word. I surmise that John chose the apocalyptic form because it was familiar to the populace, and because it would best serve his purpose in setting out his story. I think a key factor could be that the apocalyptic form would require very close reading and could be understood only by spiritual perception. It would be either unfathomable or inspiring, but not open to easy misunderstanding.

Shayon: How is *The Book of Revelation*

different from other apocalypses?

Weaver: John did not write a typical apocalypse, and he does not recount a *supernatural* intervention. He tells the story of an entirely *mental* battle in which the individual is saved. When we consider that "individual" means undivided – one in substance, inseparable from its source,⁵ we can see how important this prophecy is. It is clear that John wrote a book which could only be understood by someone who was prepared to take the time and make the effort to understand it. It is dense and deliberately opaque. It is not intended to be easy reading. But it is immensely interesting and amply rewards the effort to understand it.

Rather than recounting a literal coming of the Messiah and his angels on a cloud, *The Book of Revelation* records a *mental* vision of Jesus's ministry and the warfare which tried to eclipse Jesus's explanation of perfect God and perfect man. John set out a clear exposition of the teachings of Jesus, but he placed this in a complex apocalypse form which would make it less susceptible to misunderstanding and adulteration. One might think, reading *Revelation*, that John made it less accessible, more confusing, and more subject to misunderstanding. This certainly seems to be the case until one breaks the code and begins to understand what is going on and who is masterminding it. John must have wanted to ensure that his book would be understood spiritually, since it makes no sense at all if interpreted literally and materially; and he intended that the book should have to be studied and pondered. Its message, when uncovered by spiritual revelation, would be all the more secure.

Shayon: What assumptions did John make about his readers' interests and capacity to

4 Webster's Collegiate Dictionary

5 Shorter Oxford English Dictionary

understand *Revelation* as an apocalypse. Would the readers of his day find *Revelation* to be as difficult to understand as many readers of today find it to be?

Weaver: John's readers at the time he wrote his book would have been familiar with apocalypses. His audience would have understood his use of symbols, and their knowledge of the Old Testament would have clarified for them the connections which his book makes with other books of the Bible. I think that *The Book of Revelation* would have been relatively easily understood by any reader of the day who was not determined upon a literal day of judgement. But I think the book would have required very careful reading nonetheless. *Revelation* needs to be interpreted spiritually, whereupon it shows itself to be a clear exposition of the key teachings of Jesus. The book is no less accessible to the readers of today, but it needs close attention and an open mind to follow it. It must be understood by revelation underpinned with a close study of the symbolism.

***Shayon:* In your view, why does Mrs. Eddy place such great importance on *Revelation*?**

Weaver: That Mrs. Eddy did place great importance on *Revelation* is apparent in her writings. Mrs. Eddy deliberately placed "The Apocalypse at the end of *Science and Health*", for she says that St. John's vision is the acme of Christian Science. In the same sentence, and rather surprisingly, she refers to her own "present feeble sense of Christian Science".⁶ From this one can infer that Mrs. Eddy regarded St. John's vision of Christian Science as being in advance of her own.

That Mrs. Eddy devoted a whole Chap-

ter to the apocalypse is further evidence of the importance which she placed on it. The only other book in the Bible to merit this attention is Genesis, Chapters 1 and 2. Mrs. Eddy states that "Genesis and the Apocalypse seem more obscure than other portions of the Scripture, because they cannot possibly be interpreted from a material standpoint".⁷

It is difficult to isolate a reason why Mrs. Eddy placed so much importance on *Revelation*, because there are so many. Her chapter *The Apocalypse* is full of inspiring observations which we encounter regularly in the Lesson Sermons, and which we use in our discussions on Christian Science. The same can be said of *The Book of Revelation*. Speaking of St. John in relation to his Book, Mrs. Eddy writes in *Science and Health*⁸ "With his spiritual strength, he has opened wide the gates of glory, and illumined the night of paganism with the sublime grandeur of divine Science....." and "He enthrones pure and undefiled religion...". One sentence which carries enormous implications is "Accompanying this scientific consciousness was another revelation, even the declaration from heaven, supreme harmony, that God, the divine Principle of harmony, is ever with men, and they are His people."⁹ This is reinforced in Mrs. Eddy's statement that "God's law is in three words "I am ALL"; and this perfect law is ever present to rebuke the claim of any other law."¹⁰

***Shayon:* Is *Revelation* too advanced for a typical reader today?**

No, it is not. But it needs an understand-

7 S&H 546:18

8 S&H 571:28

9 S&H 573.13

10 No. 30:11

ing of the language used. And the language of metaphysics requires careful consideration. The symbols in *Revelation* are spiritual symbols, not material references. Our language and the language of the Bible are necessarily developed from the everyday language of mankind. It is the language of human events, human passions and material realities. It is designed to cover our material needs while also enabling us to discuss more abstract concepts. But our language is not adequate for an easy discussion of metaphysics. Jesus taught by parables and Mrs. Eddy, in her chapter *The Apocalypse*, says that "Spiritual teaching must always be by symbols".¹¹ John wrote *Revelation* using a language of symbols. We have to decipher these symbols, and we have only human language with which to do it. So we have to define our terms constantly, to pay attention to the detail and to be open to understand the metaphysical meaning behind the words and symbols. Once these are understood, once the code is broken, it becomes much easier and, if I may say so, it becomes exciting, interesting and fun.

Shayon: What should a reader do if he/she has read *Revelation* and been confused by it? How can a reader use *Study Notes* to enable him or her to read *Revelation* a bit at a time and understand each section before going on to the next?

Weaver: I would think that *Revelation* confuses everyone in the first instance. Try again, would be the brief answer. It is well worth the effort. I would suggest that a reader should read through *Study Notes* to get a concept of what it includes. Then the reader could open the chapter entitled "*Synopsis and Structure*". This includes a summary of each section or division of the apocalypse. Taking each section in turn, one could read the corresponding verses in the

Bible. The summary in *Study Notes* makes it easier to keep track of what is going on and to follow the thread of the drama. It is not important to try to remember every detail of the narrative. But it is important to see who is speaking; who is controlling the narrative; and to note how each succeeding vision opens the way to the next. The end of the story, the recognition of the New Jerusalem, which Mrs. Eddy defines as "Divine Science; the spiritual facts and harmony of the universe; the kingdom of heaven, or reign of harmony"¹² depends upon John's working through and working out of each of the visions in turn.

Shayon: Some of the symbols as they are depicted in movies and literature conjure up a great fear for people – such as 666, the beast. How should symbol be interpreted based on your study and should Christians be afraid of it?

Weaver: The beast in *Revelation* is very interesting. He is minutely described in the text, and he is graphically illustrated in many illustrated apocalypses. He is always shown as terrifying, though, in my opinion, some of his images in the illustrated manuscripts are delightful. Nevertheless, the beast and the number of his name, 666, are widely feared throughout Christianity. He has become a symbol of something very threatening and malevolent. The number 666, like the number 13, is generally avoided.

Our suspicion and nervousness concerning the beast are understandable, given his description. He does sound very alarming indeed, with his scarlet red colour, his seven heads and ten horns and his nasty habits.

But this antipathy to the beast is based on two fundamental misapprehensions. St.

11 S&H 575:13

12 S&H 592:18

John uses the number seven throughout his apocalypse, except in the seventh vision, where seven disappears and the ruling number is twelve. Both seven and twelve are complete numbers. But they have this difference – seven is used to signify completeness which can be either good or bad (for example in the seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine in the Joseph story), but twelve is used only to signify complete good.

If we now look at the number of the beast, 666, we can see immediately that it is a counterfeit. Why? Because if it were genuine it should be either 7 or 12. John has used 666 to show that it is not 7: it is definitely not 7, as the use three times of 6 shows. And it is not 12, again as the use of 6 three times shows. This tells us, the readers of the book, that the beast is not to be trusted or even believed in.

There is a further fundamental fact about the beast, which should allay any fears we have of him or his number. He has no power. He has no power at all. He cannot do anything of himself. He is a delegate of the dragon. Without the dragon he has no use or function.

***Shayon:* Should we fear the dragon then, instead of the beast?**

Weaver: The dragon is equally weird-looking and nasty. Perhaps we should fear the dragon because he is so ugly and powerful and can make the beast and the second beast do dreadful things? Well, no. Why not? Because the dragon has been cast out of heaven where he was called “the accuser of our brethren”.¹³ The accuser is cast down and, therefore, there is neither accused nor accusation. There is no power to accuse us of being sick, or dead, poor, hungry or mor-

tal. The great red dragon has been seen to be a deceiver. Once the deception is seen he loses his power. One does not believe that a counterfeit note can be used to buy goods because one has seen that it is a fake. The dragon has been seen to be a fake and he cannot operate openly. Therefore, he delegates his power to the two beasts.

***Shayon:* The reader may object that, even though the dragon is a deceiver, and even though the two beasts have no power, they still stir up a great deal of mayhem in the story.**

Weaver: Indeed. But the underlying theme of John’s book is to discover the reality of the present perfection of God’s Being, to show the perfect God and perfect man which Jesus understood and demonstrated, and to show how anything which appears to be contrary to this perfect vision of the integrity of God and his perfect creation is uncovered, disarmed and destroyed.

All through the record of this mental warfare, the ruling symbol, the symbol which is uncovering, overcoming and controlling, is the risen Christ. St. John calls his book “The Revelation of Jesus Christ”.¹⁴ The writer of the letters to the angels of the seven churches is the risen Christ. The seven seals are opened by the Lamb – a symbol for the Christ. The trumpets, which unlock various disasters, are sounded by the angels which stood before God. The seven vials containing the seven last plagues are held and poured by these same angels. The beasts and the dragon are finally overcome by the second rider on a white horse, who has several names, including “Faithful and True” and “The Word of God”. Everything that happens is to the glory of God and brings to light the unchanging, changeless perfection of God’s own concept of His own

Being and man's undivided, inseparable relationship to God.

Shayon: Many readers try to interpret *Revelation* literally and thus wind up seeing this as a forecast of doomsday for mankind. Why should *Revelation* be interpreted spiritually and metaphysically rather than literally?

Weaver: Many people have tried to interpret *Revelation* literally and many still do. Near the end of the book there is the customary curse of apocalypses – an admonition not to add to, subtract from nor alter any of the words of the prophecy. This curse, common to and typical of apocalypses, was aimed at future copyists to safeguard the integrity of the author's work. If one abides by John's admonition, and makes no changes, then it is actually impossible to make a coherent literal interpretation of the book. It is clear that John has deliberately contrived that a literal interpretation would be nonsense. So, one has a choice. Leave the book alone entirely, or try to understand it from a spiritual and metaphysical standpoint.

Mrs. Eddy, speaking of the Bible as a whole says that "The literal rendering of the Scriptures makes them nothing valuable, but often is the foundation of unbelief and hopelessness. The metaphysical rendering is health and peace and hope for all. The literal or material reading is the reading of the carnal mind, which is enmity toward God, Spirit."¹⁵

The spiritual and metaphysical interpretation of *The Book of Revelation* is very comforting. The seventh vision, the vision of The City of Our God, is a liberating explanation of New Jerusalem, which Mrs. Eddy defines as "Divine Science: the spiritual facts

and harmony of the universe; the kingdom of heaven, or reign of harmony."¹⁶ City is a symbol for consciousness, and, as Mrs. Eddy says "All consciousness is Mind and Mind is God."¹⁷ So this revelation of the City of our God, New Jerusalem, shows us Mind's own consciousness of God's own perfection of being. It shows us that we are not separate or divided from this consciousness; that we are entirely one with it. Revelation is a supremely important book, meriting close study. In spite of all the ugly and threatening images which it contains, it is a joyful journey with great blessings.

Shayon: Thank you for being with us today. And thank you for for such a helpful and insightful guide to *Revelation*!

Weaver: Thank you, Kristyn, for inviting me.

Abbreviations

Writings of Mary Baker Eddy

Mis. *Miscellaneous Writings*

No. *No and Yes*

Ret. *Retrospection and Introspection*

S&H *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*

16 *S&H* 592:18

17 *Ret.* 56:18

15 *Mis.* 168-171

About Naomi Weaver

Naomi Weaver, C.S., spent her childhood in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and South Africa. She grew up in a Christian Science family, and her father was for many years a Journal-listed practitioner. She moved to London when in her teens and attended a school that trained her to be a corporate secretary.

After marrying an American, Naomi moved to Philadelphia, where she and her husband started an export business. After three years, the couple moved to London to further develop their company. Several years later, Naomi took a sabbatical from the business to earn a premier executive Masters in Business Administration on a Sloan Fellowship at London Business School. By 1997, when she sold the company, it had grown to be an international enterprise operating in seventy countries.

Naomi has maintained a lifelong interest in Christian Science and has studied the Bible and Mrs. Eddy's writings, as well as the writings of many other students and teachers of Christian Science. In particular, she has devoted a great deal of time to the study of *Revelation*.

Mrs. Weaver lives in London, where she continues her Bible study and research, as well as expanding her interest in the arts, literature, and music.

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*The wind bloweth where it listeth,
and thou hearest the sound thereof,
but canst not tell whence it cometh
and whither it goeth:
so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

John 3:8

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