

REREADING PROPHECY

The Forthcoming Edition

SERIALIZED

By Homer Kizer

Introduction Are They Understandable?

A question asked by a country music song is what part of "no" don't you understand. The same can be said for the prophecies of Daniel, of Jesus, of most of the prophets: what part of "the time of the end" do you not understand? The prophecies of Daniel are secret and sealed until the time of the end (Dan 12:4, 9; Dan 8:17, 26; Dan 10:14). They were not given, if their mimetic language is comprehensible, as a historical roadmap of even major events between Daniel's stay in Babylon and the coming of the Messiah in all of His glory. They are not understandable until "the time of the end." And if today is not a part of that period, they are still not understandable.

What I will write might be useful as a linguistic primer, but if we have not entered *the time of the end*, what I write about Daniel's visions will be as wrong as my predecessors have been.

The argument of this book is that the prophecies of Daniel are now understandable. You will decide the truth of my argument. You will assign meaning to the prophetic texts— this is what all readers do— and you will determine if you hear the words of Jesus in my assignments. You will locate yourself within a community of readers, one of many, with your assignments of meaning to both words I use and their accumulation, this book.

Returning to my initial sentence, the word "no" has parts. There is first its sound, or sound image, usually called its *icon* or *signifier*. Then there is the thing identified by the sound image: in the case of "no," the thing is the simple negation of another noun or verb. That "negation" becomes the word's *object* or *signified*. In the French philosophical paradigm, a word consists of only its signifier and its signified, the assignment of one to the other being arbitrary, with only a cultural trace linking the word's two parts. In the Prague paradigm with its adoption of the philosophy of the American Charles Peirce, a word consists of its icon, its object, and an element of thirdness, or its interpretant, which unites icon and object in a three part diagram if one were to draw the relationships.

The word "no" can be used as an adverb, as an adjective, and as a noun. As a noun, it will be used metaphorically and/or metonymically when a parent tells a child, "That's a 'No' [or 'no-no']!" As a metaphor, *No* becomes the object for which the child reaches. In its metonymic usage, *No* represents the entire action of touching or playing with a prohibited object. And this distinction between metaphor and metonymy becomes crucial when dealing with complex language usage.

Words are used mimetically, metaphorically, or metonymically, all three uses described in Greek philosophy, with all that is real in heaven with the gods and with everything here on earth being only manifestations of the "reality" of the gods. Thus, a table on which Plato ate dinner wasn't a "real" table— the real table was in heaven— but a representation of the real table. A painting of a table then becomes a representation of a representation. In describing the painting, that oral or inscribed description becomes an additional level of representation. Thus, language is always distant from reality, that distance assigned a descriptive term. So the same linguistic icon (i.e., combination of letters) can have several differing objects depending on how far away the icon is from reality. This makes for differing readings of the same text within the same reader community. And I realize I am oversimplifying the concept. For my purpose, however, simplification has become desirable as I attempt to distill clarity from the linguistic muck that has been tracked through two millennia of biblical exegesis.

Mimetic word usage is treating words like the table on which Plato ate. When the purpose of one's word usage is to mimic tangible things or actions— to convey the sense of a thing or a deed

through the detailed description of the thing or of the deed— then one's words are said to be *mimetic*. Words become imitators of reality. At best, that is all words can be although some postmodernists have played with words being the ultimate reality in self-aware metatexts.

The description of the tabernacle in the wilderness is the application of mimetic word usage to the construction of the tabernacle, and as such, close to Plato's use of *mimesis*. However, the tabernacle became a physical imitation of the heavenly throne, and as such a metaphor of the reality of God's throne in heaven, for nothing inside the creation will be the same as those things which are outside of the creation, or in spatial-time dimensions beyond our four dimensions. Plus, the description of the tabernacle is the abstract for the entirety of the plan of God, which Jesus confirms when He says that He is the way, and the truth, and the life (John 14:6), the three gates or doors or veils going from outside the tabernacle into the sanctuary, then into the Holy of holies. Thus, the description is metonymy.

Narrative likewise is can both be mimetic, and metaphoric at the same time— and by extension, metonymic. This layering of meaning creates literary texture, which is usually revealed through verbal clues that the storyteller discloses as he or she relates the narrative. Thus, texture is always an aspect of the narrative that is not contained within the inscription of the narrative. It is the metaphoric and metonymic assignments of meaning to a mimetic text. It is communication that reaches beyond the literal sense of the passage. And it is as valid a form of communication as is the literal assignment of meaning.

When an illiterate reader is handed any inscribed text, the uninformed reader can make no sense of the black and white structure represented by paragraphs. This uninformed reader cannot assign, with any degree of reliability, meaning to the text. And a mischievous individual can easily deceive our uninformed reader by fabricating fascinating but fanciful stories and telling our reader that the text means *such 'n such...* this is the recent history of biblical prophetic understanding. Many individuals have deceived an uninformed laity with fanciful tales about the Roman Church being the endtime beast power, or about the armies of a united Europe under the Roman Church surrounding Jerusalem after attacking the United States and Great Britain. The Roman Church isn't Babylon. Neither is New York City Babylon. For endtime Babylon isn't a geographical land or landscape, but a mental or spiritual nation and land and landscape that has taken the world captive. Its king is the prince of the power of the air, who rules all sons of disobedience, of whom I was once one (Eph 2:2-3 & Isa 14:4-20).

When God was asked who He is, His response, "I AM," is mimetic; for the two words, *I AM*, are an attempt to imitate "existence" or "timeless existence" through language. But God's response *I AM* is also metaphoric: as most everyone was taught in school, a metaphor is where one thing is named another thing, usually done to reveal meaning by describing the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar. The usage can also be employed to conceal meaning, as was done by Nathan when he confronted King David over David's affair with Bathsheba. The rich man of Nathan's parable was David, and David didn't recognize himself until after he had rendered his judgment that the rich man deserved death. Thus, *I AM* becomes, by metaphor, a substitute name for God, one not too sacred to pronounce.

I AM also reveals an important aspect of the heavenly realm. Time, or better space-time can be written as a function of gravity, thereby revealing that time has been created. Time is part of the physical creation, and the passage of time is a function of the expansion of space through the decay of heavy mass particles, this decay providing the consistent temperature of three degrees Kelvin of deep space in all quadrants. Thus, the heavenly realm is outside of time: it is of another dimension. And outside of time, the presence of life and the absence of life cannot coexist. To have life is to have everlasting life, for the moment lasts forever regardless of the activity within the moment. Therefore, everything that is must coexist with everything that was and with everything that will be. This is why finding lawlessness in an anointed cherub (Ezek 28:15) produced the necessity of a death chamber where one moment became another, where time passed, where that which was living at this moment could die in the next moment.

The creation with all of its beauty is a death chamber. Every living entity within its confines will die. This includes Satan when he is cast to earth (Rev 12:9-10 — compare with Ezek 28:18-19). No choice is afforded to these entities, for the nature of change through the passage of time both allows

for death and produces death. The nature of change also allows for repentance of all living entities, the reason why glorified saints will judge angels.

So the linguistic icon *I AM* becomes a metonymic revealer of what everlasting life in the heavenly realm means. Eternity isn't endless time, but timelessness.

Metaphors are routinely employed to give names associated with things inside the creation to things that exist outside the creation, especially where no exact counterparts exist. Unlike divinely inspired renaming of individuals to reflect attributes of the individuals (hence, the mimetic application of naming), Satan has no direct physical counterpart. Thus, Satan becomes the devil, the old dragon, the Adversary. Even the name "Satan" is a metaphor.

The same situation applies concerning the Holy *Pneuma*, or Breath. It is by metaphor called the Comforter, or the Advocate by Jesus. But that is attaching a metaphor to a metaphor; for we have assigned it the metaphoric icons of the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit. Even the Holy Breath, the most direct translation of *Pneuma* is metaphoric, and not a mimetic representation of God's creative power or force. The icon *Breath* is perhaps as close as we can come in English to mimetic language; for we can do a little creative work with our breath, and by extension, we can speak things into existence by directing the work of others. Our breath is our life force. Breath doesn't convey personhood, nor should the icon used to translate *Pneuma* convey personhood. The person making love to the Holy *Pneuma* is messing around with a familiar spirit, not with the Breath of God.

Again, texture is always part of a text but not contained within the text: texture occurs when words with valid mimetic assignments of meaning also possess metaphoric and metonymic assignments. Words and word trains or clusters that are not recognized as having mimetic assignments but are initially identified as metaphors or as symbols lack texture, for the word is believed not to represent what the word seems to, but to represent a symbol rather than a thing. In another phrasing, words and word trains within a text that defy a common assignment of meaning are disregarded as nonsensical, or are regarded as being metaphors or metonymy. Those words fall into the literary condition of being *grotesque* until either dismissed or an assignment of meaning is made. The reader's mind involuntarily struggles with grotesques until the condition is resolved. And in the case of biblical prophecy, grotesques have usually been given metonymic assignments, in which the grotesque represents geographically-located kingdoms. These assignments are capriciously made, but have become the bases of denominational understandings of prophecy.

An example of a prophetic vision being understood as metonymy occurs when a winged lion stands for Babylon (Dan 7:4), or a four-headed leopard for the armies of Alexander the Great (v 6). Metonymical language is word usage in which an idea is evoked or described by the usage of an associated term. Babylon has more to it than just being a winged lion. There isn't a direct one thing is another thing correspondence, so the assignment isn't metaphorical. Rather, a winged lion serves as a symbol that evokes all of the associations that can be made with Babylon.

However, in mimetic word usage the icon phrase *a winged lion* would represent a real winged lion, which isn't a creature many big game hunters have added to their trophy walls. So the mimetic assignment is dismissed as nonsensical— but because we haven't seen many winged lions roaming around in the wild doesn't mean that one cannot exist in the heavenly realm. Faith now enters the domain of icon/object assignment, not that faith hasn't been there before. The faith that now enters divides audiences into the intended audience for the text, and the greater public audience to whom the text is available. If a person believes that the icon phrase should receive a mimetic assignment, the person has mentally defied the logic and experience of the greater public audience. The person makes him or herself part of a reader community that is, necessarily, faith-based and faith defined.

At a subconscious level, human beings understand that language has a figurative usage, or better, a more distant level of representation than to mimic reality as closely as possible. In metaphorical usage, *a winged lion* could represent a person, such as King Nebuchadnezzar or the Shah of Iran. It would be a single entity standing in for another single entity. Again, a metaphor is one thing being named another thing in a one-to-one correspondence, whereas in metonymical usage, *a winged lion* might represent the Babylon Empire or a Babylonish system, or the nation of Iran, or Britain, or any larger entity, such as in the phrase "the White House said blah, blah, blah" where the White House represents the Executive Branch of the U.S. Federal Government. Buildings don't speak in our reality, so we don't consider the possibility of mimetic usage.

In metonymical word usage, an attribute of "the whole" is used to name "the whole," such as Paul does when he uses the icon phrase "the law" (Rom 7:6) — that part of the Sinai covenant spoken by God — for the entirety of the old covenant, whereas Paul's use of "the old written code" (also Rom 7:6) becomes a metaphor for the first covenant. Thus, readers have to be especially careful with Paul's use of the icon phrase "the law," for he uses the phrase mimetically, metaphorically, and metonymically. Context usually clarifies the level of representation Paul intends for the phrase, but often the level of representation Paul apparently intended conflicts with how the passage has traditionally been read. Thus, debate over "words" can occur when it shouldn't (2 Tim 2:14), since every reading community assigns its own objects to the linguistic icons. This means that each reading community determines by its traditions which level of representation Paul intended for the phrase in whatever context. The biblical text is left without any absolute meaning, which is what any literary critic worth her salt will tell you. The icons can arguably be infallible; the text is not and cannot be. A person proclaims his or her ignorance by stating otherwise, the reason why debate over words is prohibited by Paul, whose words are the ones most debated about. Serious biblical scholars should agree that Jesus taught disciples to keep the law (Matt 5:19), but Peter says of Paul's teaching that "the ignorant and unstable twist [them] to their own destruction" (2 Pet 3:16). Why they do this is that *the ignorant* are poor readers and are unable to discern levels of figurative language representation. For too many of them, "the law" means "the law," when context will determine whether it means the commandments spoken by God, the Sinai covenant, the entire old covenant (both the Sinai and the Moab covenants), or all of the covenants that come forward from Abram (from before his name was changed). Likewise for these ignorant readers (Peter's words), "the law of Moses" means "the law of Moses," when all of the above are at play, plus the Pharisaic traditions that had been added to the old covenant after the remnant of the house of Judah returned from Babylon.

When relating a classic Cynic narrative to mocking Pharisees, thereby placing them in the role of being Greek students and Him in the role of being their Master, Jesus said that if someone will not hear Moses and the Prophets, the person would not be convinced by one raised from the dead (Luke 16:31). These Pharisees were certainly reading Moses and the Prophets, but apparently they were not hearing the spiritually intended texture of Moses' writings. Apparently the Pharisees were so focused on getting their mimetic assignments correct they couldn't see that they were children of bondage (Gal 4:21–31) just as their ancestors were in Egypt. Now stepping forward in time, the greater Christian Church today doesn't see that it is also in bondage to the law of sin and death that dwells in its members (Rom 7:25) just as the circumcised nation was in physical bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt, and as the circumcised nation was in spiritual bondage in its mind at the time of Jesus' earthly ministry. With Jesus' death at Calvary, liberation of the mind became possible through crucifying the inner *old man*. The Apostle Paul's *new man* has been liberated, but this new man dwells in the tabernacle of the crucified old man— and crucifixion doesn't kill instantly. By strength, a crucified person could hang around a few days before expiring. The strength of a born-from-above disciple's old man determines how long the new man will have to deal with the habits and foibles of the old man before fully taking possession of his inherited tabernacle of flesh.

Even though the old man was crucified at Calvary with Christ Jesus, human beings are still consigned to disobedience— sin and death reigned and still reigns in the flesh. Babylon is now the mental landscape in which the Apostle Paul's new man dwells as the prophet Daniel dwelt in physical Babylon. The new man seeks his welfare in the welfare of spiritual Babylon (Jer 29:7). To rebel against spiritual Babylon is to commit the sins of Ahab, son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah, son of Maaseiah (*vv.* 21–23). And without consciously thinking about the level of figurative representation employed, we have arrived at what the Apostle Paul writes in Romans chapter thirteen about obeying governing authorities. Literary texture causes one portion of Scripture to support every other portion. Scripture is not to be studied at the word level, or line upon line, precept upon precept (Isa 28:13). Such study will cause a person to spiritually fall backwards, be broken, snared and taken (same verse). And the many fellowships that employ *precept upon precept* exegesis inevitably identify Daniel's winged lion as Babylon.

The firstborn sons of God remain in need of spiritual liberation as much as did the firstborn sons of God need physical liberation from Pharaoh. The prince of the power of the air, under whom

the sons of disobedience have been consigned to bondage, becomes the spiritual equivalent of Pharaoh. Spiritual Babylon becomes the equivalent of both geographical Egypt and geographical Babylon, the land to which God sent Israel captive. And to believe that a spiritual Babylon exists requires faith.

The difference between metaphorical usage and metonymical usage is as great as the difference is between the two words— and this difference becomes important when assigning meaning to an icon phrase. I cannot stress this too much, words have only the meaning a reader or a reading community assigns to them. They do not carry their meaning with them (except as the weak link of thirdness provides, or as cultural traces allow). Dictionaries are relatively modern inventions, with their roots in late 17th and early 18th Century neoclassic attempts to "fix" the language [*fix* used in the sense of fastening a thing down so the thing cannot move]. Dictionaries for difficult words had been available for a couple of centuries, but Dr. Johnson's 1755 publication was the first for common words. And dictionaries are acknowledgments that words carry no meaning of themselves within themselves, for a dictionary is the record of how a word has been used in the past. A dictionary is a recording of some words' cultural traces, or of some words' elements of thirdness.

The great debate among prophecy scholars has been about the assignment of a historical event to a prophetic event bearing the linguistic marker "at the time of the end." Should the prophecy be read as being fulfilled by the historic event, or is a future event the fulfillment of the prophetic icon phrases? Herbert Armstrong entered this debate and said, Yes, both; prophesies have *type* and *antitype* fulfillment. The popularity of his prophetic teachings has since caused many theologically unrelated scholars to expound his type and antitype paradigm. However, usually both the type and antitype fulfillments have been metonymical assignments of events and future events to the prophecies.

I should also mention that (and warn against) assigning a prophetic event to a nation not mentioned in the biblical text. The introduction of an unnamed nation is adding to the text in a manner unlike that of literary texture. In the case of the Book of Revelation, this "adding to" is strictly prohibited (Rev 22:18); for Revelation uses the literary trope of attributes (i.e., how the named icon functions in the plan of God) as appearance. The book also employs the additional trope of John's vision not occurring until the day of the Lord, or Lord's day (Rev 1:10). Thus, the person who introduces the Roman Empire into biblical prophecy (the Roman Empire is nowhere mentioned in endtime prophecy) has taken upon him or herself the plagues described in the Book of Revelation, for inevitably this person will identify the whore of Babylon as the Roman Church. Inviting the plagues onto oneself should scare the *watchmen* who loudly proclaim that a resurrected Roman Empire will attack America, but these *watchmen* have so little prophetic understanding that they don't know enough to be scared. Therefore, I will, because my opinion here is trustworthy, add them to Peter's list of ignorant and unstable readers of the Bible.

In the type and antitype paradigm of Herbert Armstrong, prophetic events have an earlier and a later fulfillment; thus, a prophecy about the house of Israel going into captivity will pertain to both the nation at Samaria and to the modern physical descendants of the scattered house of Israel. For him and for those who continue his teachings, Israel as an icon doesn't reference the house of Judah once the nation separated into a northern and a southern kingdom. Therefore, for him Israel doesn't refer to rabbinical Judaism, or to the Jewish nation of Israel that presently rules a portion of ancient Judea. As such a prophecy about Israel must be understood as metonymy, since the phrase *house of Israel* only represents the nation that includes ten tribes of the Israelite peoples who have descended from the patriarch Jacob, or Israel, after his name was changed.

However, one major problem exists: as with Paul's use of the icon phrase "the law," God uses the phrase "the house of Israel" for the *polis* of Jerusalem (Ezek 12:24, 27 among other passages), and He uses the phrase for that portion of the house of Judah that had gone into captivity at Babylon (Ezek 12:9). In addition, God also uses the phrase for the descendants of the ancient house of Israel (the northern kingdom of Samaria). Consider the following two uses by God for the same icon phrase: "'Thus says the Lord God: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and *all the house of Israel in it*" (Ezek 12:10), as compared to "The word of the Lord came to me: Mortal, take a stick and write on it, 'For Judah, and the Israelites associated with it'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and *all the house of Israel associated with it*'" (Ezek 37:15-16). God's uses of the icon phrase lacks the mimetic precision the biblical *watchmen* ascribe to the phrase.

Inscribed context, not the phrase, must be relied upon to determine the mimetic referent identified by the phrase.

Typological exegesis occurs when the texture of Scripture is read: the icon phrase Israel references the woman of Revelation chapter twelve. She is both the physical nation that gives “birth to a male child, one who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron” (Rev 12:5), and the spiritual nation whose offspring “keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (v. 17)— the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev 19:10). Thus, the icon Israel references both the physical firstborn son of God (Exod 4:22) and the spiritual firstfruits, of whom Christ Jesus was first. At Sinai, the circumcised nation was the holy nation of God (Exod 19:6). Today, the Church is the holy nation of God (1 Pet 2:9). Therefore, the mimetic account of the circumcised nation’s liberation from bondage to Pharaoh and its rebellion in the Wilderness of Sin, only to be rejected and replaced by their uncircumcised children, becomes through texture the account of the Church’s liberation from bondage at an individual level, and at the collective level. At the individual level, the Apostle Paul’s old man is liberated from sin by being crucified at Calvary and dying on the cross because of his unbelief. This old man figuratively dies at baptism when the Israelite had been keeping the law of God and has righteousness that comes from faith (Rom 10:6–8 — compare with Deu 30:10–14). This old man, within the wild olive branches grafted onto the root of righteousness [referents are being expressed in figurative language and as such are without mimetic assignments of meaning], doesn’t have a fixed date of death. For within the wild olive branches, baptism represents the new man accepting judgment upon him or herself (1 Pet 4:17). Both the impaled old man and the born-free new man will share the same tabernacle of flesh for some period of time just as the uncircumcised children of the liberated nation dwelt together in family booths in the Wilderness of Sin.

Typological exegesis, now, requires a mimetic narrative that through literary texture represents an un-inscribed narrative, which is actually a metaphoric assignment to the inscribed narrative. Thus, the history of physical Israel becomes the mimetic history of unseen spiritual Israel (i.e., the Church) as well as the course of individual growth within every disciple. This un-inscribed narrative is a faithful replication of the inscribed narrative (i.e., a metaphor is a one-to-one correspondence) so there is no adding to Scripture, but the un-inscribed narrative additionally has metaphoric and metonymic assignments of meaning. Yes, the metaphor has a metaphoric assignment of meaning, thereby making Holy Writ a many-layered narrative clothing a circumcised nation.

Returning to Armstrong’s type/antitype paradigm, typology prophesies events that occurred to the circumcised nation become equally prophesied events that either have occurred or will occur to the spiritual nation. The antitype fulfillment isn’t necessarily another physical fulfillment of the prophecy as Armstrong taught, but a spiritual fulfillment of the prophecy. This isn’t to say that an additional physical fulfillment will not occur. Rather, it is to say that an additional physical fulfillment will be metonymic, meaning that direct one-to-one correspondences will not likely occur. The one-to-one correspondence will be in the spiritual realm, with the spiritual nation of Israel being the referent.

To say that a phrase is used metaphorically is somewhat problematic because of the cultural imprecision with which the icon “metaphor” has been used. In other words, we use the icon *metaphoric* with the same varying levels of representation that Paul uses *the law* and God uses *the house of Israel*. And if all of this seems confusing, it is, as evidenced by the dozens of readings every biblical passage supports today.

Returning to the icon phrase *the house of Israel*, in its expanded application, it can mean the Samaritan nation of Israel that fell in 721 B.C., and earlier. But the peoples of the tribe of Dan weren’t a part of that nation, and those peoples are included within the ten tribes that rebelled against Rehoboam following Solomon’s death. Plus, because of the long drought during King Ahab’s reign, tens of thousands of Israelites had migrated both east and west of Samaria. So a difference exists even between the expanded metaphoric application of the phrase *house of Israel* and its metonymic application to all peoples of Israelite descent. So in the case of this icon phrase, it can be said that metaphorically the *house of Israel* means the northern kingdom of Israel, while metonymically the phrase means all of both the house of Israel and the house of Judah. This latter distinction is one that most scholars and historians of the modern nation of Israel don’t fully

appreciate; for some prophecies in which the phrase *the house of Israel* is used are about all the tribes, while some are about the descendants of the northern kingdom. And where this distinction is most evident is in prophecies about the return of *the house of Israel* to the glorious land: those prophecies are not about the return of scattered Jews to modern day Israel, which is the gathering of the house of Judah and for which another set of prophetic icon phrasing exists. Rather, the return of the house of Israel, using typological exegesis, means the liberation of the Church from death through glorification.

Less educated readers tend to encounter a phrase (any phrase) and believe that every time they encounter the same phrase, the referents are the same. This is akin to them encountering a pronoun (say, *they*) and believing that the pronoun represents the same antecedent every time it is encountered. That makes no sense at all. Yet, they will do the same thing for an icon phrase that is itself like a pronoun in that it stands as a substitute for a reality at a level of linguistic representation only one, two, or three degrees greater than a common pronoun.

An example of the above would be writing the letters "C" "O" "W" on a piece of paper and trying to get milk from the letter combination, or icon. Obviously, that's not possible. The icon represents a female bovine in common English usage. When this icon is encountered in a piece of reading, the reader must determine whether the icon actually represents a female bovine (the mimetic usage), or whether it represents a person who possesses cow-like qualities (the metaphoric usage), or whether it represents something else, such as in the expression, *The cows all came home*, where what could have come home is children, or politicians, or wealth (the metonymic usages). So a "cow" doesn't necessarily mean "a cow." But in every usage, the icon "cow" first stands as a substitute for that cud-chewing animal out there in the field. Thus, when the icon is encountered, the reader has not encountered the reality of the thing. And this inherent problem of language (of assigning objects to icons) prohibits infallibility, since tradition and by extension culture determines what constitutes the text. Therefore, the icons of the text stand between humanity and God.

Inspired doesn't mean infallible: *inspired* is the global condition in which the text was produced, while *infallible* is the state in which the text is received. Paul was inspired to write, "Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess 4:17). Paul clearly believes he will be alive when Christ returns. The context is, "For the Lord himself . . . will descend from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise first" (verse 16). But Paul is now among the dead in Christ; he is not alive. If the text were infallible, we will have to twist these words to our own destruction to have them make any kind of sense. Luckily, the text is merely inspired: Paul's order of resurrection is correct, the dead first, then the living, but Paul isn't still here with us, which he would have to be for the text to be infallible.

Meaning for any icon phrase can only be assigned in relation to context, and then that assignment is by tradition. A person can appear foolish by saying that prophetically *the house of Israel* means the United States and Britain. Such was the case in Armstrong's Church of God. And a great many devoted Christians still subscribe to that assignment of referents.

So for each of us, our assignment of linguistic objects to inscribed icons is mimetic, metaphoric, or metonymic. When coupled to the arbitrary nature of initial assignments of objects to icons, words can mean whatever a person wants them to mean before uninscribed icons have meaning assigned to them. No word has a definitive meaning. No text has a definitive reading. Rather, meaning is assigned to a text by a reading community. Within the scope of language, every text will support more than one reading, but will not support every reading because of Peirce's element of thirdness, or Derrida's cultural traces.

Someone will argue that words really have meaning, that I am trampling on the very Word of God when I insist that readers assign meaning to words, when I insist that words have no meaning of their own. My answer to my critic is, simply, tell me what a "malix" is; I harvested one again last year [i.e., 2001]. It is an icon we regularly used on the portion of the Oregon Coast where I reached maturity. We assigned an object to the icon to conceal the object from Outsiders, especially grade school teachers during show & tell. The strategy was informal, never verbalized, but widespread and effective until the code was revealed to these Outsiders. By that time, enough of us had emigrated to Alaska that the icon didn't need continued employment. Instead, the icon "Outside" was applied to

everywhere beyond Alaskan borders, which brings me to another example: at a glance, can you tell a *dog* from a *pink*?

All of the above linguistic discussion, complete with jargon, circles back to the concept of circumcised Israel being the shadow of and example for spiritual Israel. Shadows are lifeless and exist in one less dimension than their realities. The circumcised nation was spiritually lifeless and existed in one less dimension (in that it hadn't received life in the spiritual realm through birth-from-above) than its reality, the Church. So the calling of Israel out of humanity to be the first-born son of God (again Exod 4:22) becomes the shadow of disciples being called by God to be in the world, but not part of the world. And by extension, circumcised Israel was redeemed by God, who gave the first born of Egypt as Israel's ransom (Isa 43:3). Spiritual Israel was redeemed in the spiritual realm by the physical death of God's firstborn Son; spiritual Israel will be redeemed in the physical realm when God gives the first born of spiritual Babylon as Israel's ransom. There will be another Passover slaughter of firstborns when spiritual Israel is redeemed from the law of sin and death that still dwells in its members. The mind has already been liberated, was liberated when the old man was crucified at Calvary with Christ Jesus. But Jesus will not be crucified a second time. The firstborn of Babylon, like the firstborn of men and beasts in Egypt, will be the ransom for Israel's liberation as the Church gives birth to many heirs of God.

Augustine spent far too much energy trying to explain *signs* without enough understanding of the subject to fully grasp the vanity of his endeavor. Likewise, biblical scholars ever since have spent too much energy trying to fracture a code for which the linguistic objects for the icons have been concealed. The icons exist for everyone to read; the objects and the thirdness that unites objects to icons have restricted access, that access limited to only those individuals who have been drawn by the Father, and limited to a certain time period for even those individuals.

If humanity has entered the period known as *the time of the end*, then the limitation of *when* objects can be validly assigned to the linguistic icons has been lifted. These icons have produced more confusion, more contortion of logic than anything else for two millennia. But if this is the time of the end, then objects can be assigned to the icons of these prophetic passages that are reflective of the mind of God.

I use "meaning" for the pairing of divinely inspired linguistic objects to the public icons. As in the case of Poe's "Purloined Letter," God hid His messages to the saints by placing those messages in the most public of places after first separating their sound images from the "things" those images should represent. This is a convoluted way of explaining why reader communities exist, only one of which comprises the saints or holy ones. Someone not in that community can examine the public icons, can for him or herself assign meaning to the text, then can teach as an expert but be absolutely clueless as to what meaning God intends for the saints to take from the same text. Sometimes this person can, through his or her own intellect, come close to the divinely inspired objects. But every sustained reading of the text by someone not in the community of saints will deviate from the divinely inspired reading even though the person can pronounce the icons far better than can every saint.

The pronunciation of the public icons is not a test of inspiration. Believing that God exists is not a test; neither are miracles even to casting out demons and raising the dead. Rather, the test is in how a person reads Scripture, with the sheep knowing the voice of the Shepherd, and the Shepherd knowing His sheep.

The circular nature of exclusionary reader communities and the reasoning that produces them tends to cause the Church to focus upon itself, with two tendencies emerging. The first tendency is to deify the teachings of a man or woman, and the second is to make an idol of the man or woman.

Although the Messiah will bring a new language, a pure language when He comes, He won't arrive before the prophecies of Daniel have been fulfilled. They and other prophecies must be attacked, if this is the time of the end, with the foible of that double-lipped sword received in a flawed language and deciphered by equally flawed saints. Perhaps the flaws will cancel each other out, certainly a possibility whenever the Most High wants His will understood.

Again, so there is no mistake: my argument is that we entered the generic time of the end in January 2002 when a forty-year delusion ran its course. Prophetic understanding has been given to a few since that January. Hopefully, you will be among those few by the time you finish this book.