

RELIGION AND ART

The Apocalypse— Verbal and Visual Revelations—Part 2

As humanity has advanced by casting off the animal form while retaining the moral attributes associated with these forms (courage, constancy, aspiration), so the intelligence and reason which are individual to our epoch have been advanced by the extrusion or separating out of the horse form from the astral to the physical plane. The Trojan horse, the wise and humane Houyhnhnms (horses) in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and the centaur priest/ healer Chiron, Aesculapius' teacher, are legendary and intuitive references to this association between horses and intelligence ("horse sense"), which is also based on the fact that the etheric body of the horse extends beyond the area of the physical head, permitting a measure of etheric sight. The centaur itself is a reminder of work yet in progress as man seeks to spiritualize his reason.

Specifically, the sequence of four apocalyptic horses and riders portrays the gradual increase of material reason, of an intellect becoming more earthbound. Each of the four beasts introduces a horse and rider. The rider on the white horse (Indian Culture) represents pure intellect as the keen archer who hits the mark. The sublime wisdom of the Seven Rishis and the *Bhagavad Gita* come from this era. The red horse (Persian/ Chaldean Culture) indicates desire nature binding the mind and using it for invasive (sword-bearing) purposes. The mind represented by the black horse (Egypto-Sumerian Culture) has become material (opaque to spiritual light) and its rider uses it to measure and weigh the dense physical world. The pale (actually "putrid" in Greek) horse (Greco-



Pen, Indian ink, and watercolor on paper. William Blake. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, U.K.

Death on a Pale Horse

A potent Death, sword brandished and arm aiming at his prey, is augmented in his momentum by a second horse and rider and the angel of destiny unrolling his scroll of impending events.

Roman Culture) signifies an intellect that is self-defeating, morbid. Death rides the intellect that is used to dismember and anatomize reality, a form of mental vivisection, and exclusively to serve material needs and pleasures. As Emerson describes it, *things* are in the saddle and ride mankind.

Christ came into an earthly body during this Fourth Culture to conquer death. With the infusion of this cosmic life impulse into earth evolution for the spiritualization of the mind, the horse form can no longer represent the cultural ages. Thus inhabitants of the Fifth (current) Culture are (can be) clothed

in white robes. During the Sixth sub-Epoch man's form is furthered spiritualized by sun and moon forces, as given in simplified and inverse form by the black hair (sun) and blood (moon).

Prior to the opening of the Seventh Seal and the predicted havoc to be visited upon earth as its pilgrims are gradually conditioned to relinquish and transcend it, the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads with the number 144,000, the number of humanity (1+4+4=9) and the number of the area of New Jerusalem (12 x 12=144), where they shall live. With the opening of the seventh seal the sphere of the Apocalyptist's attention moves from the desire world to the world of thought, where a higher mode of cognition ensues. At the threshold between the worlds he enters the silence, which then is broken by the successive soundings of seven trumpets, signifying the seven powers or keys which give admittance to the inner worlds. The seven trumpet angels are the guardians or warders of the seven degrees. The trumpets also announce the Seventh Earth Epoch, whose future content is obtained by clairaudiently accessing the world of thought, where spiritual sound is the formative substance and basic medium of reality.

The serial visions introduced by the seven trumpets are among the most phantasmagoric and woe-laden in *Revelation*. It is clear that their function is to forcibly induce a recalcitrant humanity to release its earthly attachments, for eventually the physical earth shall be no more. In particular the plagues are designed to chasten and reorient the fallen and perverse members of humanity, but many shall refuse

to repent (*metanoia*), that is, change their thinking and receive Christ.

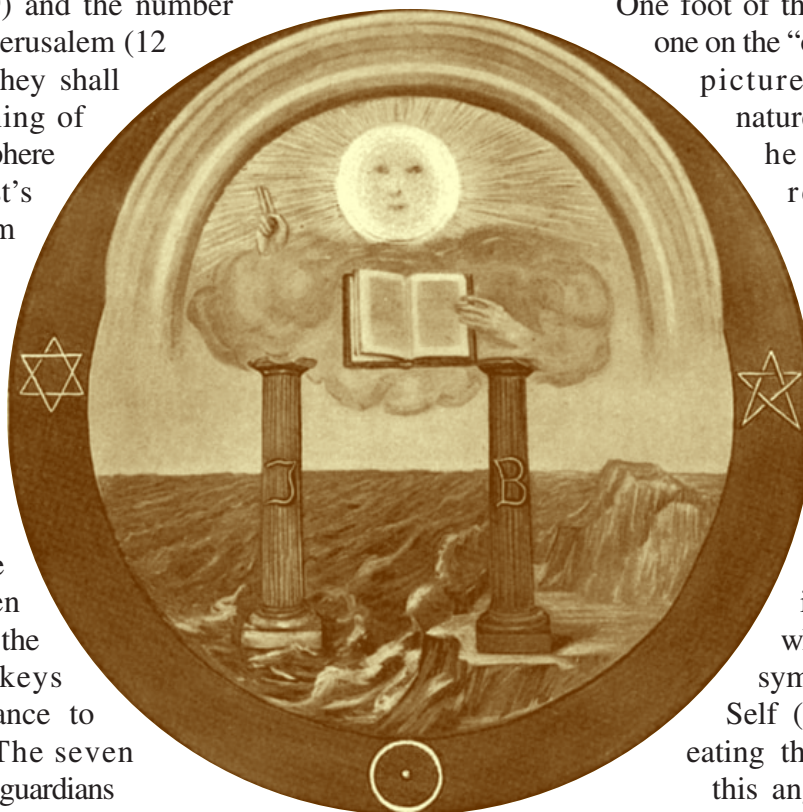
Hereupon (Chapter 10), interposed between the sixth and seventh trumpeting angel, appears a mighty angel, which may be construed as a representation of the greater Guardian of the Threshold, the Genius of man, the image into which the aspirant may grow, an individualized form of the seer's first vision of "one like unto the Son of man."

One foot of this angel on earth and one on the "ocean-Being of Spirit,"

pictures the amphibious nature of evolving man as he begins to leave the reliable ground of ordinary consciousness. The thinking nature is in the cloud realm, the feeling nature is expressed by the rainbow, and the will forces are shown by the fiery feet. This three-fold manifestation is organized by the countenance which shines like a sun, symbolizing the spiritual Self (Ego). By taking and eating the book proffered by this angel, John partakes of its spiritual substance which he shall in time manifest.

Involving man "stepped down" out of the desire world onto the solid ground of physical earth consciousness. Evolving man "steps

up" from the physical plane into desire world consciousness. While water forces prevailed in the first (Mars) half of Earth Period to middle Atlantis, earth forces provide the firm footing for Ego development in the second (Mercury) half. Two pillars also represent the Earth's heritage from the Sun and Moon Periods—the pillar of Strength (whose present planetary sources are the Sun and Mars) and the pillar of Wisdom (now sustained by



Clara Rettich, 1907, after sketches by Rudolf Steiner, from *Occult Pictures in Signs and Symbols*, Dornach, 1975

The angel's Chi Rho mudra signifies Christ. The feminine Boaz pillar rests on physical matter (mater). The rainbow represents the seven planetary energies and the book shall be the apocalyptist's spiritual nutrition, "bitter in the belly."

the Moon and Mercury), respectively. The overarching achievement or pediment to the human temple given in the Earth Period is Love, enshrined in John's Gospel of Love and embodied in Christ Jesus.

Biblical referents of the two pillars as "two witnesses" (11:3) are Elijah, whose power over the etheric elements is recorded in 1 Kings 17:1 ("there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word"), and Moses, who likewise has "power over waters to turn them to blood and smite the earth with all plagues" (11:6). Both individualities appeared at the Transfiguration personifying the Law (Truth) and the Prophets (the Way), order and evolution, conservatism and radicalism.

In Chapter 11 John is instructed to measure the altar of God's temple but to omit the outer court, or the outer man and his strictly earthly concerns, which will not pass on to the Jupiter dispensation. In the body of the initiate the two witnesses refer to the sympathetic (moon) and cerebro-spinal (sun) nervous systems, which are also the two olive trees and the two candlesticks mentioned in Zechariah (4:11). They are the fully realized and fully balanced masculine and feminine manifestations of the bipolar Ego, architecturally signified by the two pillars of Solomon's Temple, the pillar of Wisdom (Boaz) and the pillar of Strength (Jachin), a symbolism retained in occult masonry.

At this point time changes to space and temporal sequence is converted into a simultaneously occurring panorama of images. A distinction should be made between the realms into which the Apocalypticist enters in spirit to read future events and the sphere in which these events shall transpire, for the latter pertains principally to the transition from the dense physical to the etheric world, fully effected by the end of the Earth Period.

The sphere of the Seventh Trumpet actually carries the seer and the reader to the end of *Revelation* and has been described as "the apocalypse within



From *Die Bibel in Bildern*, 1860, Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

After the Lamb opens the Seventh Seal, silence ensues in Heaven. Then seven angels with seven trumpets sound forth truths from the world of thought. The elect are shown receiving white (etheric) raiment and the name of their Father.

the *Apocalypse*," the kernel within the nut. This trumpet, in fact, is sounding all the time, for its truths are ever being intoned for those who have (spiritual) ears to hear.

The sun countenance of the New Human shall be generalized to the entire light-irradiated etheric body, for in the Jupiter Period, humanity shall be manifesting the Body of Transfiguration. The attainment of Egoic consciousness, the bliss of love, while honey in the mouth of understanding, requires for its attainment the suffering incident to physical embodiment, essentialized in the ordeals of the Cross. First encounter with high ideas may be exhilarating, sweet indeed. It is one thing to "entertain" a thought, but making ideals of ideas, seizing upon them by force of will and implementing them, "fleshing them out" as accomplished fact, may require sacrifice and engender suffering—be bitter in the belly.

By the Seventh Epoch of Earth evolution, the physical body will fully reflect, as in a mirror, in fact, will let pass as through clear glass, the nature of the soul. At that time deceit and imposture will be impossible. Thoughts and feelings will be worn

on the countenance and will mold the outer form accordingly. The body will reveal the etheric Christ's presence or absence; that is, will show love or viciousness. The living force in the Gospels will be as that which man has consumed and become constituent of his being. He will be the living book as Christ is the living Word.

Chapter 12 might be called *Revelation's* heart-piece, being, with Chapter 11, its mathematical center. It holds the Seventh Trumpet's primary content and, as such, is similar to the 11th Chapter of St. John's Gospel, which details the raising (initiation) of Lazarus, the author of *Revelation*. At this time a prefiguring of the Jupiter condition will exist for many who have worked through to a desire world consciousness and an etheric existence. So it is said that "The kingdoms of this [material] world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (11:15).

The great wonder that John sees in heaven, the Woman, is man's soul as it has developed over three and one-half Periods. Saturn Period's work is represented by the circle of stars on her head. Sun Period's contribution is signified by the cloak around her shoulder, the raiment of light. The Moon Period's development is given by the crescent moon under her feet. The Earth Period portion of this composite soul image is the involved (gestating) Ego, a spiritual Self, the two-edged sword which becomes, as the child issues onto the earth plane, a rod of iron (12:5, 19:15), a wand of starry steel, a spiritual crook or staff to shepherd the purified individual soul and the composite soul of humanity, the Church.

It may also be said that the Woman clothed in the Sun projects a picture of redeemed humanity who have transcended the generational (incarnational) cycles of existence (moon under her feet) and is thus crowned by stars (regeneration or perduring, unbroken consciousness). She is the cosmic mate to "one like unto the Son of Man" (1:13), the archetypal Ego. As such she is the World Mother, Virgin of the skies, the cosmic feminine or heart principle, the Love aspect of God; she is emblematic of the universal power of attraction and cohesion on all planes of manifestation (Helene).

In the *Rosicrucian Christianity Lectures* (No. 9),



Woodcut, 1497-98, Albrecht Durer, State Hall of Art, Karlsruhe

The Woman Clothed in Sun and the Seven-Headed Dragon

The Woman (soul), in the wilderness of the physical world, beset by the dragon of her lower nature, will in time receive the Christed Ego (Child) from its heavenly safe-keeping.

Max Heindel explains the "astronomical solution" to the passage, "I saw a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet." "That phenomenon happens every September just after the New Moon; for viewed from our Earth, the Sun covers or clothes the sign Virgo all through September, and as the Moon is leaving the conjunction of the Sun, that appears to be beneath the Virgin's feet."

The Woman clothed with Sun is delivered of her Ego-Child, which is caught up into the incubatory haven of Third Heaven to await the will's definitive victory over the lower nature which has been infiltrated by the Devil and Satan (12:9). The Dragon attempts to flood and drown the soul in raging desires (water), but the earth acts as a ballast and buffer to block the desire world forces until they can be met "face to face" and mastered.

With the advent of the Ego necessarily appears the tempter, the red Dragon. This dragon has a dual nature, being the Devil (astral) and Satan (mental/physical). The angel Lucifer, “that old Serpent” (12:9), tempts: “You will be like God. You will know good and evil. You will create your own kind.” Ahriman (Satan), says “You may be like the beast, the animal, the natural creature, and need no longer bother about good and evil.” Ahriman, from the Archai life wave (the Lords of Mind), “reasons” with the mundane human mind and seeks to chain it to materialism by giving it magical powers. Lucifer, appealing to overweening pride, would have humans be premature and selfish gods. Ahriman would strip mankind of all spirituality and rouse the godless beast.

We are to understand that good always comes about through choice in freedom, as a creative act which strikes a proper balance between extremes, not as a compromise but as a deft passage between the red Devil (Lucifer) and grey Satan (Ahriman), between burning passion and icy cynicism.

The Apostle Paul’s words in Colossians (3:3) provide a gloss for the image of the Child being caught up to the Throne of God and protected while the Woman is besieged by the Serpent in the wilderness of physical forms: “Ye are dead and your life is hid in Christ in God.” Our true Ego is hidden with/in Christ in the spiritual world. When He makes Himself seen again (*parousia*), we shall be manifested in Him as our true Self. The ordinary self designated as I is the mirror ego, but a reflection of the real Self, as the moon reflects the sun. It is the glass seen through darkly. Our real spiritual Self is like the air breathed by the lungs. We are only conscious of the lungs and their movements, but the air gives them life, form and reason for being. Like the lungs, the worldly self is but a vessel, though its content can be clear or cloudy.

While the Dragon was cast down from heaven, a second beast (Chapter 13) rises up out of the sea as the embodiment of our unconsciousness, the history of our submerged earthly experience. Its precursor



Watercolor, 1805, William Blake, Tate Gallery, London

The four and twenty Elders casting down their golden crowns before the divine throne and seven creative Elohim: “We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned” (11:17).

can be found in Daniel: 7. Like the Dragon, it also has seven heads and ten horns and is both an image of the individual Dweller or Guardian of the Threshold and, as genus, it is the collective evil of mankind accreted from all the root races. The Beast rises out of the sea of the desire world of burning passions, whereas the prospect of “no more sea” (21:1) indicates the attainment of a purified desire nature. The fate for the defiantly malevolent soul will be confinement to a lake of fire, the creation of its own self-consuming passions.

While the cosmic Dragon, the Accuser (Satan) and the Tempter (the Devil), and their hosts both were and shall conclusively be cast down by the right hand of Christ (Michael, the Angel in the Sun), overcome by the Blood of the Lamb, that same Blood shall give power to many who appear individually as a ten-horned, seven-headed beast to be transformed and redeemed. How is this?

The Dragon and the first beast are perhaps the most compact and recondite of the apocalyptic creatures as they are a symbolic concentrate of humanity's earth evolution. A brief review is in order. The first four apocalyptic seals refer to the four sub-epochs of the First Post-Atlantean Epoch prior to Christ's entering the skull (Golgotha) and heart of the Earth. Each of these ages is characterized by an intellectuality (represented by the horse) lacking the spirituality provided by the Christ influence. Thus, in the loosening of the first four seals in the Sixth Culture (we are presently in the Fifth Culture as described by the Letters to the Churches), a lower world, a world of the abyss, will be opened up and inhabited by those souls who will refuse, on successive post-Golgotha incarnations, to accept the Christ Impulse and, lacking that transformative power, will manifest in the astral body the animal appearance all humans showed during the involutory period prior to individuation.

In fact, the apocalyptic Dragon and Beast continue to be mankind's desire world similitude, still natural to our era, but requiring transmutation by the end of the Earth Period. Its origin dates back to the Atlantean Epoch, whose first four ages are represented by condensations of the four Archangelic group soul prototypes of humanity, described as the four "beasts" around the Throne. During the last three Atlantean ages, humanity, by dint of its nascent Ego consciousness, developed a doubleness, a gender split, and appeared in two physical forms. Thus the etheric heads, when condensed to the physical, total $4 + (2 \times 3) = 10$ horns.

A horn is simply a hardening or concretion. Each time a person dies, the seven-headed and ten-horned nature can clearly be seen in his astral body. The assimilation of the Christ Principle by evolving man will enable him to overcome the six-horned sexuality and to appear as the "elect" in white garments. Those who refuse the Christ Impulse will retain the old form and shall appear as the beast with seven heads and ten horns, whose rudiments were laid down in the Atlantean Epoch. This nonacceptance of the Christ Principle will not be based on ignorance but on "a malevolent and unintelligent spiritual opposition energetically exercised." The form will be a lower astral manifestation.

Interpretation of the Beast symbolism in terms of occult anatomy suggests that the seven heads are etheric centers and the ten heads are the corresponding seven ductless glands (pineal, pituitary, thyroid, pancreas, parathyroids, adrenals and gonads/ovaries), the last three of which are paired. The Beast that emerges from the sea lives



Raphael. 1518. Oil on canvas. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain

The Archangel Michael Casting Satan out of Heaven

A humanized Renaissance version of the Being who demonstrates God's might, grandeur, and divine justice.

in our blood and bodily fluids. In medical parlance, a functional disease is inchoate. It is still confined to the etheric (from an emotional disturbance, for example) and manifests in vague, subjective symptoms. When the etheric works down into the physical body, the disease becomes organic and shows as a clinically verifiable disorder. (Continued) □

—C. W.