

## RELIGION AND ART

### *The Apocalypse— Verbal and Visual Revelations—Part 3*

**T**HE RED DRAGON (12:3) as the representation of a legitimate phase in human spiritual development is to be distinguished from the Beast (13:1-2) that also has seven heads and ten horns, whose power comes from the Dragon. The Beast refers to that segment of humanity that idolizes matter, contracts its consciousness to strictly material dimensions, and adopts a despotic and plundering attitude toward the earth. This pillaging of nature, wreaking tortured wonders and wretched corruptions of its substance, is promoted by a second lamb-like beast with two horns, an archangelic but demonic Being that dwells in the sun sphere and is opposed to the principles of the Lamb. The pseudo lamb is signified by the number 666, designating the principle that leads man to complete hardening in external physical life by actively rejecting spiritualizing influences, the forces inhering in and represented by: 1) the physical body, signified by the Hebrew letter *Samech* (numerical value of 60); 2) the etheric body (Hebrew *Vau*, 6); 3) the desire body (*Resh*, 200); 4) the lower ego or mind (*Tau*, 400)—giving the composite value of 666, which represents what is hardened in these four vehicles.

These four letters (*s-v-r-t*), read backwards, since astral letters are mirror images of their derivative physical world counterparts, spell the name of the sun-demon Sorath, the Lamb's adversary, whose sign was a thick stroke bent back upon itself and terminating in two curved points—thus the Apocalyptic's description of the beast as having two horns like a lamb.

This beast appears after the first beast, material man, appears, and attempts to seduce him from



Pen and watercolor drawing, c. 1805, William Blake, Rosenbach Foundation, Philadelphia

#### ***The Number of the Beast is 666***

*A visionary depiction of the Beast, here with three heads and two horns, giving power to a Being which appears to be a composite image of the secular ten-crowned and the legitimate seven-headed beasts. The Lamb is impassively interposed between the two Beings, nullifying the power of the two-headed Beast, if its (the Lamb's) salvific forces are invoked.*

taking up the Christ Impulse. For the number 666 also refers to that portion of humanity that refuses to spiritually evolve. We note that  $6+6+6=1+8=9$ , which is, like the 144,000 ( $1+4+4=9$ ) to be saved (14:3), the number of humanity, as explained by Max Heindel in *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception* (pp. 500-501). It likewise designates a critical moment in Earth Period evolution, the penultimate time when 6x6x6 conditions or phases of its development have passed and humanity is on the threshold of entering the Jupiter Period (after

an interperiod *pralaya* or span of formlessness). If, by that time, individual humanity has not accepted Christ's redemptive power and transformed its "animal" nature, they shall be as goats to be separated out from the lambs, who have become like unto their Redeemer.

The worship of the beast 666, the outward, mortal man, Caesarism, the idolatry of things, will arrest the spiritual development of man. So while readers of *Revelation* are correct in surmising that the two-horned beast is a threatening and potent power, that power can only work in and upon them who consciously and deliberately receive it and bear its name and mark.

A final note on the Sorath number gives pause. Its appearance in historical time is suggestive. The year 666 marks the birth of Mohammedanism, a religion with high teachings, but whose exoteric form advances God as a Sultan (evincing atavistic Old Testament parallels) Who has no Son. This faith portrays life as subject to fatalism (Kismet) and has no place for individual creative freedom. The second multiple of 666, 1332, marks the persecution and extermination of the Knights Templar. Finally, according to Alfred Heidenreich in his *Study of Revelation*, a vital confrontation is prophesied for 1998 that will decide the destiny of the human race for centuries to come.

As an immediate and stark counterpoise to the false lamb coming up out of the earth (materiality), who *will* work wonders, and will *appear* philanthropic, Chapter 14 describes the true Lamb of God on Mount Zion with souls drawn from the same pool of nine (humanity), but spiritualized, the first fruits of the Christ-redeemed, bearing in their foreheads not the mark of the beast but their Father's name.

Now appears another manifestation of Christ ("like unto the Son of Man"—14:14), which is both an echo of and a foil to the "grim reaper," the pale rider on the pale horse. For he thrust in his sickle and reaped the earth. His harvest is the souls that are "saved," though saved, as Peter says, as by fire through tribulation as they witness for Christ and are trod in the winepress of salvific affliction. As the grain of rude event is painfully ground in the mill of retrospection so that nutriment may be extracted for the soul, so are the grapes of earthly



Woodcut, 1496-97, Albrecht Durer, State Hall of Art, Karlsruhe

***The Seven-headed Dragon and the Beast with two Lamb's Horns***

*A prosperous and idolatrous humanity kneeling in admiration before the crowned, seven-headed Beast of materialism, while the winged Woman clothed with the Sun and her Ego Child reverence the Father Who holds the sickle by which He shall reap the souls of mankind at the last harvest of the Earth Period.*

experience crushed to release their life's substance, which may then be volatilized and transmuted as pabulum for the spirit.

Thereupon follows the Seven Vials of Wrath, which are a mercy primarily directed toward the unregenerate, the blasphemers, the doers of evil, who are but experiencing their destiny, since "having shed the blood of saints and prophets," the Lord "hast given them blood to drink" (16:6). Presented with many occasions to change their ways, some yet "repented not to give him glory" (16:9); that is, they persisted in deathly self-glorification.

What are we to make of this dreadful succession of scourges and cataclysms, these outpourings of wrath? As the Earth Period draws to a end, accounts long open and active must be adjusted and closed. A final accounting must be made. The



seven last plagues are the accounting, a meting out to man consequences of deeds done while on earth by the Lord of Earth, Taurus, one of the four Recording Angels (15:7) and heavenly “beasts.” (See Corinne Hemline, *New Age Bible Interpretation VI*, p. 230.)

The vials of wrath may more correctly be described as fierce love, fierce consuming love, which only appears as wrath because humanity is being purged of its impurities with all the suffering attendant to this blessed purgation. It is a burning of the chaff and a settling out of the dregs, both in the individual person and in the community of humankind. For the consequence of not repenting, changing one’s mind, is dire. Commitment to evil could entail a stripping of the etheric body and the casting of the spirit into limbo for an interminable span until a life wave appears whose evolutionary conditions approximate those of the suspended spirit’s original life wave. So the warning, “Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments [vehicles] lest he walk naked and they see his shame” (16:15).

The seventh plague is attended by a voice from the Throne in Heaven which pronounces, “It is done.” We are reminded of Christ’s words on the cross, “It is accomplished.” Both consummations are attended by earthquakes because they both have seismically transformative effects on the planet.

Finally, the personification of earthly sensuality and materiality is introduced and the visionary experiences reach a negative crescendo. The Scarlet Woman is pictured mounted on the seven-headed, ten-horned beast. “Many waters,” or multitudes of earthly people, are saddled and bridled by lust, greed, and material sorcery. The kings of the earth who rule at their pleasure are yet ruled by their own passions, and thus those who seek material power are enslaved by the very matter they seek. They are possessed by what they possess.

Why is the Woman in scarlet and purple called a whore? And what is this fornication? It is the abuse, the illicit violation, of matter. Matter as *Mater*, mother, that which gives birth to all material form, is of heavenly origin; but here it is stripped of its spiritual context and purpose.



William Blake, 1809, The British Museum, London

#### ***The Whore of Babylon***

*The bejeweled Babylon the Great, reigning on the seven hills (heads) of earthly authority over its worldly kings, holds the cup of blasphemy, out of which partakers ascend in false rapture only to descend in anguish and shame. Greed and lust are self-consuming.*

Blasphemy and sacrilege has occurred. The blood of saints has been drunk. This is black magic. This is the demonic quest for personal power by the taking of life. The intellect asserts a prurient invasiveness upon matter, whose issue is idolatry, apostasy, and death.

The Woman with the golden cup of abominations represents the most arrant expression of the carnal life. The Great City, Babylon, reigns over its kings because to reign on earth is to be ruled by pride and passion. Thus Christ came to serve that man might reign in spirit by abdicating the “thrones” of worldly temptation. Of the seven heads of the Beast, five are fallen, two earth epochs yet remain in which materialism shall tempt and thwart man’s self-overcoming.

Again the scales of cause and consequence are balanced as the carnal soul’s self-glorification and delicious living are met with proportionate undo-

ing and sorrow. The worldly soul that says, “I sit as a queen, and am no widow” (18:7), is contrasted with the souls who are widowed without the Bridegroom, Christ, yet married to Whom, as the King of kings, are as the Woman Clothed with the Sun, who has the passionate Moon underfoot. The Scarlet Woman who takes and takes, until finally she consumes bodies and souls, her own spiritual opportunities, is contrasted with the Bride who loves and gives, whose sacrifice of the material world gains her the Kingdom of Heaven.

The fundamental core of Babylonian wickedness is its attitude toward matter—it is selling its spiritual inheritance for a mess of pottage, valuing the invaluable Christ Gift at thirty pieces of secular silver. It is making a religion out of matter. The religion of materialism was given its credo by Francis Bacon, who declared, “We must put nature on the rack and extort from nature the answers in which we are interested.” Bacon is the unwitting father of this inquisitorial attitude toward manifest creation.

While Goethe encouraged looking at nature whole, as a lover looks upon his beloved and attends upon her freely offered confidences, the prevailing contemporary attitude rapes and pollutes nature, “smashes” the atom, manipulates genes, “sacrifices” animals for cosmetic and pharmacologic curiosity. This vivisection of living earth being, atomizing and anatomizing matter, is more than indecent exposure, it is an exploitation and torturing of nature. To what end? The bottomless pit? Pernicious influence is exerted on humanity from that direction. A “sodomy of thought” is in evidence in the modern view of nature, consisting in a perversion of the faculty for knowing. Here we glimpse what are rightly called, in the sense recorded in *Revelation*, Babylonian practices.

What is the antidote to this attitude and activity? Vital, living Christianity, adhering to the Hippocratic injunction, *first do no harm*. Vital Christianity has been described as Christianity without religion, without the man-built apparatus that blocks the door to the living Christ.



Monoprint, with pen and watercolor, 1795, William Blake, Tate Gallery, London

### **Newton**

*The “father of modern science” has here been transposed into an allegorical image of materialism. Using a pair of dividers, he imposes rational order on the world. But his gesture, now become an obeisance to the physical earth, causes him to lose his erect posture, by which he stands toward the heavens and the God in Whose image he is created. The environment is arid. His back echoes the curved rock he seems part of.*

Matter, as such, sundered from its Creator, is the real death, the snare and the delusion. To all of nature the words of Christ may apply: “You have made of my Father’s house a den of thieves,” a house of merchandise. This generalized phenomenon now faces apocalyptic consequences: And the merchants of the earth, they who traffic in exclusively material transactions, shall wail and grieve over the laying waste of Babylon.

Those who raise up the living Christ within themselves, who develop the principle of brotherly love, will appear in white (etheric) garments after the War of All against All (between the Fifth and Sixth Earth Period Epochs). Our purely intellectual culture is developing in the direction of the abyss of intellect. If the personality is not spiritualized, it will be submerged by rational materialism, spiritual forces will not be recognized as such and will be expended in the exclusive concern for bodily needs (longevity, merely physical health, exquisite sensation, the extension of physical powers). Rampant consumerism and amoral capitalism are enlisted to serve these needs. Still greater intelligence and energy will be focused on the advance-



ment of war technology and the satisfaction of strictly mundane impulses.

Over and against this grim prospect is the vision of the other city, the New Jerusalem, and the One Who will lead and empower us to get there, Who is called Faithful and True, Who again rides a white horse, as does the host of saints whose minds have been spiritualized, who revere the *other* Woman, the Bride, who in community as the Church of the elect *are* the Bride.

The focus, the pivotal issue, is how spiritual power is used. Sorath, the sun-demon, the tempter to black magic, engages those who are magnetized by matter, who commit prostitution with it, who marry and become chattels of the hardening principle in physical substance. These are the inhabitants of Babylon. New Jerusalem is occultly built by white magic, by deeds of love and generosity, by self-giving and devotion to pure ideals.

Only one faced with the terrible prospect of the abyss can develop love and freedom. Were man not faced with this possibility, he could not choose between good and evil, he would be but a pawn and incapable of exercising the divine gift of freedom, which is inseparable from the full development of love. If man were unable to embrace evil, he could not out of a purified will freely elect God, and his highest dignity as man would be denied him. It is precisely this freedom to choose between good and evil that confers his divine status and glorifies him in Christ as a Son of God.

Spiritual opportunities will abound in the many future incarnations, before the War of All Against All, after it in the New Galilee (represented by the Seven Seals), and into the Seventh Epoch (represented by the Seven Trumpets).

*Revelation* concludes with highly charged images and an exaltation of praise and song as the marriage supper of the Lamb is prepared. Formerly the *Lamb* was the supper, the sacrificed Lamb, "slain from the foundation of the world" (13:8). Michael, the countenance of Christ, the "angel standing in the sun," announces the Wedding Feast. The Sword of Truth, the Word of God, slays



William Blake, 1808, National Trust Photo Library, London

### ***The Last Judgment***

*Great dynamism characterizes Blake's Judgment Day as the just ascend and the wicked descend. The Dragon is chained below, the Harlot above him is seized. The twenty-four Elders, the blessed, and angelic hosts surround the Redeemer. The menorah and shew bread are shown above.*

the illusions and falsehoods of the Beast and his followers, carnal man. Actually, Michael represents the human being when he shall have achieved the highest spirituality relative to the Earth Period: He will have united, like the Earth itself, with the Sun and he will have overcome the Moon's magical forces. In the form of Michael he will fetter the evil of the world in his soul, symbolized by the dragon.

The Last Judgment scenes of Christian eschatology are largely based on the Apocalyptic visions described in Chapter 20. Two deaths are mentioned. The first death ("first resurrection," 20:16) consists in the laying aside of the last physical body prior to the Jupiter Period (New Jerusalem), which will be the last death of the entire succession of physical embodiments during the Earth Period.

Those who have received the Christ Principle will see the physical fall away as a snake sloughs off skin, while their etheric body harmonizes with their desire body, having released all desire for experience in the physical. Those who have not purified their desire bodies will feel in their etheric bodies the unappeasable desire for physical sensation and will burn in the fires of desire.

Further spiritualization will require a release of the etheric body. The Christ-infused will be able to accomplish this release, which, as the second death (20:14, 21:8), the death of the second vehicle, will have no power over them. The new Jupiter will have a satellite composed of those unable to attain to the Jupiter consciousness, an astral (desire body) consciousness whose lowest member is etheric.

Only through man having become human, having received the ego-intellect, can he succumb to the Beast 666, for it is intellect itself which can misguide man and cause him to reject the Christ Principle.

When he lives in four-square (actually cubic—“the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal”) New Jerusalem, man will be angelic (21:17). His former Adamic state of innocence in the Garden of Eden as generic man was also etheric. He descended or fell to material consciousness. A planetary sacrifice in another garden (Gethsemane) and in the first City of Peace (old Jerusalem) redeemed alpha humanity, providing them with spiritual power, if they choose it, to recapture their etheric status, but now in full self-consciousness, to dwell in a new and holy City of Peace, where they can live in community as Omega humanity, partaking of the Tree of Life, because, having freely chosen deeds in Christ’s name and power, they have been written into the Book of (immortal) Life.

The name of Christ, the planetary I AM, shall be in the foreheads of His younger brothers. For it is in the place corresponding to the root of the nose that the Ego has its sanctuary, its Mercy Seat. At the same time, this name no man can know but the individual in whom it is sanctuaried, for only the I can be I to itself (19:12).

The One Who makes all things new (20:5) shall enable humans to do likewise. They shall sing a



*“And he carried me away in spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”—Revelation 21:10*

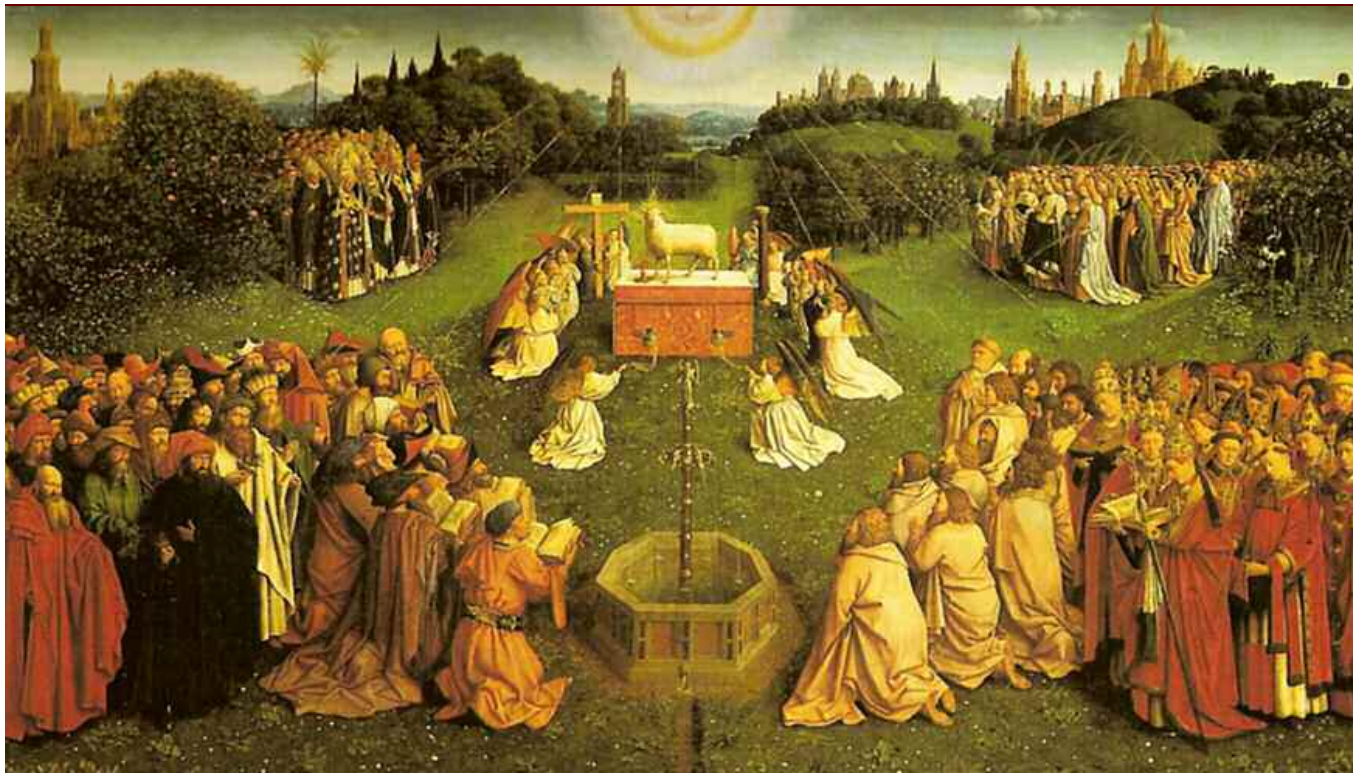
new song (14:3), which describes their capacity to utter living etheric beings through the etheric larynx. They shall “speak plants.” In fact, New Jerusalem itself, the New Heaven, which is also a New Earth, shall be largely of their creation, the transformed essence of Earth Period experience.

The “Lamb’s wife” (21:9) is this etheric city, the ecclesia of Jupiter humanity, which structure correlates with the Lamb’s (Christ’s) lowest body, composed of life spirit. It is the attitude of Earth Period’s humanity to nature that shall admit them to, or bar them from, New Jerusalem. As those who destroy earth shall be destroyed (unable to advance), so those who respect the earth and seek to preserve its integrity shall be saved. Ultimately, working with matter will be a magical practice: white magic being creative and constructive, transformative into greater goodness; black magic being the violent tearing asunder and degrading of substance, using it against others to hurt and maim and gain power over them.

It is clear that one’s proper role during Earth evolution is the adoption of a creative, loving con-

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Central Panel (53" x 93"), Ghent Altarpiece, 1426-1432, Hubert (?) and Jan Van Eyck, St. Bavon's Cathedral, Ghent

### ***The Adoration of the Lamb***

*"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."*

cern for the dense physical dimension, realizing that it correlates with and manifests the World of Divine Spirit. It is instructive to note that the twelve gates or entrances to New Jerusalem are made of pearl, which is an organic substance worked up from elemental materials and become an emblem of transformed pain. The physical instrument can be so purified and energized that it sublimates, is itself transfigured, and becomes the resurrection body.

The critical mass of accumulated evil will explode as planetary catastrophe, the Babylonian fire shall characterize an enduring condition for those who defiantly continue to practice evil. In a place called Armageddon (16:16) they shall gather. There they shall be conclusively overcome and separated out (as "goats") to dwell in their degraded element, domiciled in the region of second death, passion's Lake of Fire. Yet even this condition will have the effect of separating out and incinerating all obstructive impurities so that these wayward ones may eventually join with their brethren and experience the gifts of the spirit.

The battle of Armageddon has been fought over

and over again in every race and age. It designates (Hebrew, *place of troops*) the conflict in the individual heart and mind between good and evil, the higher and lower nature. The prophesied Armageddon will be that War of All Against All at the end of the Fifth Post-Atlantean Epoch as untrammelled egotism is let loose.

The Apostles, accessors of the twelve zodiacal energies, are warders of the twelve gates of the Christian Mystery Temple in the etheric (21:14) realm. The disciple passes through one of the gates and its apostle becomes his teacher as he progresses through the successive degrees of the mysteries (9+3+1), the thirteenth degree being given by the Apostles' Teacher.

The *Apocalypse* consists of a series of vignettes or paradigmatic images that portray phases of collective and individual human initiation. By meditating on its content and discovering the keys to the signs by which the deepest mysteries are signified, significant power can be instilled in the inquiring soul to raise it toward the realms of the great creative Hierarchies and into the greater Glory of God. □

—C. W.