

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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Isaiah 65-66, New Heavens and a New Earth

"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13).

What was the promise to which Peter refers?

Immediately, our minds might leap to the closing of Revelation: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Revelation 21:1

The restless masses, pictured by the sea (Isaiah 57:20), will no longer find any place by the close of the little season.¹ These words from Revelation beautifully harmonize and amplify on the new heavens and the new earth. However, the book of Revelation could not have been what Peter had in mind, because Revelation was not yet given to the Apostle John while Peter was alive.

ISAIAH 65, THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

We find this promise not once, but **twice** in the closing chapters of Isaiah. "For, behold, I create *new heavens and a new earth*: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Isaiah 65:17). "For as *the new heavens and the new earth*, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain" (Isaiah 66:22).

To understand the context we need to start with Isaiah 65:8, "Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all."

"Wine" is a picture of joyful doctrine. In this case, the cluster has not even been cut from the vine, let alone subjected to the careful process that will transform it into wine. Take firm hold of that picture — the Lord sees the blessing in the cluster still on the vine. All of the hopes for a new heaven and new earth begin with the promise to Abraham long before the promise can become a reality. "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which

is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" (Genesis 22:17). Isaiah's allusion to a new heavens and a new earth corresponds to "the stars of heaven" and "the sands of the seashore."

In Isaiah 65:8 there is a command not to destroy the grape cluster, picturing the joyful hopes of Israel. This threat of destruction may correspond to the troubles that befell Israel during the "Times of the Gentiles." At that time the typical monarchy through the line of David ceased, and the typical Jubilee system could no longer be observed. These ominous experiences could have marked the end of Israel's hopes. And yet the experience with Gentile dominion did not extinguish Jewish religious hopes, represented in the grape clusters. "For my servants' [Israel's] sakes that I may not destroy them all [i.e. the clusters]." Israel's hopes remained alive throughout the bitter experiences of the Diaspora. Isaiah 65:9, "And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there." There were 70 weeks determined upon the people that would bring them to Messiah, the seed of promise.

The specific reference to an "inheritor" is important. This word "inheritor" is H3423 *yaw-rash*. It suggests someone who has driven out the previous occupants and now possesses something. This a picture of our Lord taking possession of this world.

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“Out of Judah” must surely be a reference to the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Revelation 5:5), who is our Lord. Additionally, there is a “mine elect” class, the church, as contrasted with “servants,” natural Israel. So now we are in the transition period between the Jewish age and the Gospel Age with the first advent of Jesus.

Because of the reference to “servants” in verse 8, this promise must include natural Israel and the Ancient Worthies who shall dwell in these mountains — note the plural. These are the servants who will dwell in the earthly kingdom, the mountains of this world. The elect, who came into the covenant with Messiah, share in the inheritance. This is reminiscent of our Lord’s words when he said, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

WARNING OF JUDGMENT

The Lord promises a blessing. Isaiah 65:10, “Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.”

However, in Isaiah 65:11-15, there comes a warning of judgment. This is a reference to the condition of the Jewish people after their time of favor has ended. The servants are those who have been transferred from the house of servants to the house of sons. They are the Jews of the first Advent who came into Christ. This concludes with the promise that the Lord would call his servants by **another name**. And so it was that they left the house of Moses and entered the house of Christ.

During the *mishneh*, the 1845 years of disfavor for the Jewish polity, have the Lord’s servants been called by the names of “Israel” and “Judah?” No, they have

not. As promised they have been called by other names; “Christians” (Acts 11:26), “the little flock,” “the church of the firstborn,” “the bride of Christ.”

SOMETHING SWORN

“Curse” (H7631), or “something sworn,” seems such an inappropriate word and yet the text is rendered “curse” in both the Soncino and the Jewish Publication Society translations: “And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto Mine elect: ‘So may the Lord GOD slay thee;’ but He shall call His servants by another name.”

We have called unto Peace, we have not been called to utter oaths, particularly strong oaths such as; “So may the Lord GOD slay thee.”

However, the reference here is not to those who are yet waiting for Messiah hampered by “blindness in part,” but to those in verse 11 “who have prepared a table for the troop.” This phrase is difficult to understand because it refers to those who forsook the Lord and trusted to the fortune of the stars in their cultic worship of the Babylonian deity of good fortune called “Gad.” In verse 11 of our text the name “Gad” is translated “troop” and the reference to Babylonian worship was not clear to the King James translators.²

So for this unhappy class, their faith rested in other gods who would give them good fortune and serve as their defense. “Troop” does indeed deserve this severe judgment. It is the LORD who delivers the sentence.

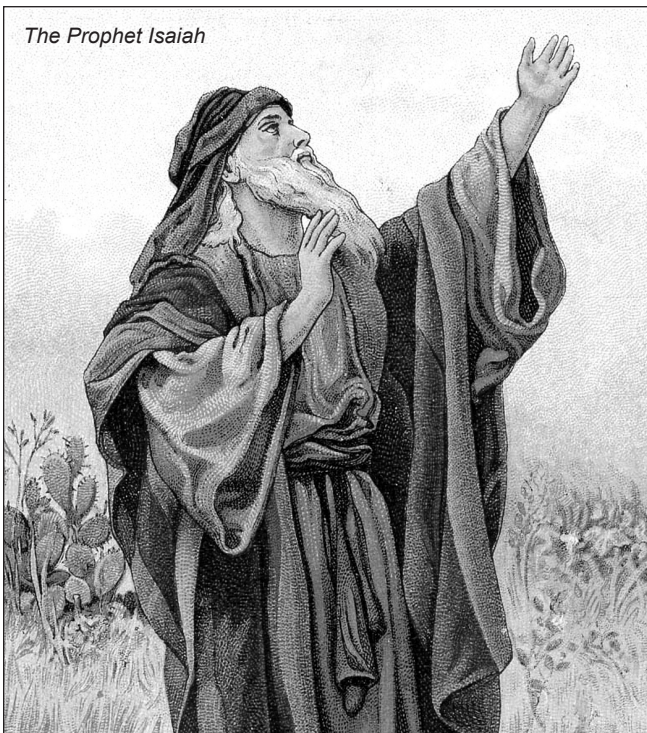
THE GOD OF AMEN

Now the favor returns. “So that he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes” (Isaiah 65:16).

All mankind will come into these promises made to father Abraham and be blessed indeed. It would appear that this verse especially applies to Gentiles, for they are not using the name “Jehovah” which has special promise for natural Israel. In the entire Bible, this phrase, “the God of Truth” is only used here. Some commentaries suggest that leaving it untranslated might give us a better sense, “the God of Amen.” Strong’s defines “amen” as “sure; abstractly faithfulness; adverbially truly.” These definitions convey the sense that He is a God whose promises will surely come to pass, a God who is faithful.

We finally reach the text that the Apostle Peter quotes. “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy” (Isaiah 65:17-18).

This is a special promise of restoration for natural Israel, the seed of Abraham after the flesh. “And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping



The Prophet Isaiah



Spiritually, there will be a New Heavens and a New Earth.

shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed” (Isaiah 65:19-20).

We are assured that in the New Heavens and the New Earth, we will not see children perishing in infancy, nor even a sinner perishing who has not had an extended and fair trial to reform and set his feet on the “Highway to Holiness” spoken of in Isaiah 35, “And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35:10).

HIGHWAY NOT A NARROW WAY

Because God cares, He did not abandon the world of mankind in a hopeless condition. He did not allow death to be the **final** condition of suffering man. He provided a “ransom,” the basis of the only true hope for a world in despair. “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction” (Hosea 13:14).

But there is an apparent contradiction respecting the Highway of Holiness in Isaiah 35, for how can someone “return” who was never originally “in” Zion? Isaiah 35:10 cannot be referring to the church of the firstborn, for they are **not** on this Highway of Holiness although they are intimately associated with it. This is a *Highway*, it is not a *Narrow way*. This Highway is for the “weak” (Isaiah 35:3), it is for the “feeble” (Isaiah 35:5), and it is even for the “foolish” (Isaiah 35:8). In spite of all these failings the travelers will not remain “unclean.”

Isaiah 35 must refer to a consecration to righteousness for mankind in the kingdom. We would like to think that the pouring out of the holy Spirit on all flesh would eliminate these problems of weakness, enfeeblement, and foolishness, but in reality that is not the case. How can we say this? It is because the New Creation has the first-fruits of the spirit even now and they have to work with all these problems.

The use of the word “return” becomes clearer when we recognize that sin and alienation from God are an unnatural state. Harmony and At-one-ment with God is the natural state. It is the state that our first parents enjoyed in Eden. This return from the lost and perishing condition is to Zion, the holy city where our Heavenly Father eagerly awaits. The travelers come with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. It is this portion that God has elected to give to the human race, and what a glorious portion!

CREATION TO BE DELIVERED

Our Lord’s shed blood, spilled upon the earth, bought all the lower creation as well as the church and the World of Mankind. In the following passage from Romans, we will consistently use “creation” for the Greek *ktisis* (G2937).

“The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:19-23).

We call to mind that the earth was “made to be inhabited.” The Edenic paradise shall be restored — surely this is part of the “return” mentioned by Isaiah. The Strong’s definition includes the thought of “returning to the starting point.” So, mankind will return to where our race first began — human perfection in a paradise home. “The desert shall blossom as the rose;” and both the plant and animal creation will be restored to their proper balance; nature with all its pleasing variety will call to man from every direction to seek and know the glory and power and love of God; and mind and heart will rejoice in Him.

Though Isaiah 35 promises the New Earth a Highway, walking on this road will still take effort. There will be cheer and encouragement along the route from the New Heavens, for the church has shared mankind’s sorrow. As the goal, Zion, is reached, there will singing and shouts of praise. The Hebrew word for “songs” (H7440) actually suggests that the voices will be a little shrill with a joy that naturally spills over into song.

They will have “everlasting joy upon their heads.” Not only does this suggest joy in the heart but this is a different sort of joy. This joy is built upon a foundation of understanding. It is a joy that blends with song and with gratitude to God for all His leadings.

PROMISES TO THE NEW EARTH

In this new earth Isaiah 65:21-25 promises that resurrected mankind will not only enjoy the soul-satisfying labor of their hands, but a restored fellowship with God.

“It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.”

It will take an eternity to know our Heavenly Father, but the unassailable principle which the Bible enunciates with clear and definite voice is that life goes on; life is endless.

— *Br. Richard Doctor*

(1) “No more sea” may be linked to the temple of Solomon. Here we would find the laver, called in Greek “the sea,” using the same word that appears in Revelation, G2881, *thalassa*. In the Kingdom there is no laver, no “sea,” because from the temple described by Ezekiel issues living waters that flow in a river gathering strength until it is deep, broad, and swift.

(2) See the Lange’s Commentary discussion on “Gad,” Isaiah 65:11. “Gad” may even be linked to the demonic “legion” possessing the man in Mark 5:9, Luke 8:30.

The Dragon of Revelation

“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads” (Revelation 12:3).

A dragon is referred to by name in twelve Revelation scriptures. Though interpretations of the dragon exist, it seems that the symbol’s definition is often changed to fit the preferred interpretation: one time it is religious pagan Rome, then non-religious government, then Satan himself. The objective of this article is to suggest a scripturally supported, historically verified, and consistent interpretation of the dragon.¹

Revelation 12:17 depicts the dragon starting to make war with the “remnant” saints of God. Many understand that verses 15 and 16 represent the enlightenment and French Revolution, and that position will be assumed here, but little consideration is given to how this conflict propagates after the French Revolution. In fact, this is the only attack upon the saints stated in scripture that occurs after the French Revolution and the ending of the 1260 year period of Papal lease of power.² Therefore, a clear understanding of what the dragon represents should be of considerable interest for us today.

SETTING THE STAGE

Great changes occurred in the world just before and following Christ’s **First** Advent. Greek written language and philosophical exercise, coupled with Roman infrastructure, paved the way for the expansion of the Gospels throughout the Mediterranean world, along with freedoms

and general literacy which expanded with it. Superstitions were abandoned, and an understanding of the character and existence of Satan was revealed. There is a parallel found in Christ’s **Second** Advent, which was also preceded by philosophical expression and infrastructure advancement.

In addition, a parallel exists with the success of Satan in setting up false systems of righteousness in both cases, even in context with all the advancements in Western civilization. Satan was, and still is, “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Therefore, he continues to use the organs of established political power and information dissemination to filter vital truths from the common discourse. An important part of this evaluation will be the introduction of history from a non-filtered perspective.

FIRST PRINCIPLE: THE DRAGON IS NOT THE BEAST

John reports what he sees. When he saw a “red” dragon he recorded it as such; when a “scarlet” beast, it was recorded as a beast.³ As simple as it sounds, it is a concept often overlooked. The dragon and beast are not the same symbols, thus they have their own meanings. When the harlot, a well-known symbol of the Catholic Church, is described riding upon a beast,⁴ it is the beast, not the dragon, that is the civilization⁵ supporting her. Christendom is the society that supported the Catholic Church; therefore, the beast is easily identified as Christendom. As for the dragon of Revelation 12:3, it is universally recognized as representing pagan Roman civilization. Thus the beast and dragon are as different as Christian society and pagan society. The color “red” given to both the beast and dragon may confuse the two to be the same, but the Greek word for “red” is different in each case.⁶

The two can be differentiated by their actions as well. The woman, within whom the righteous seed dwelt,⁷ was in some manner protected from the serpent (incipient dragon),⁸ while the beast was given the power to overcome them in Revelation 13:7 during the same 1260 years.⁹ We also see the dragon giving something to the beast in Revelation 13:2. It is reasonable to conclude that one does not give something to one’s self, so again it is apparent that the description illustrates two separate entities. Note also, the beast is destroyed separately from the dragon at the end of Revelation 19.

It follows, then, that the dragon maintains its own identity, not to be confused with that of the beast. It is unnecessary to change its original identification from the form of its introduction: a pagan-religious power. (Further consideration of how a pagan social/political power can exist up to our day will be discussed later.)

SECOND PRINCIPLE: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS NOT THE BEAST

The woman riding upon the beast of Revelation 17, is commonly understood to represent the Catholic Church. Therefore, it stands to reason that the beast represents



A dragon with seven heads and ten horns

the society that supported the Catholic Church, including the monarchies, civil governments, and the culture in general, that is, Christendom. Furthermore, Revelation 19 separates the two when, in its beginning, the Catholic Church is obviously spoken of as destroyed before the beast's destruction at the end of the chapter. Consider, also, that the little horn (Papal dynasty) rose out of the beast;¹⁰ thus the beast supplied incubation and support for the Papacy and Catholic Church.

Therefore, when Revelation speaks of the beast, it does not refer to the Catholic Church, but rather to the civil governments, as well as all society, that cooperated with her while she lived, and will survive her for a short period after her demise. The beast is of a Christian world, not a pagan or secular one. That is, the Catholic Church was supported by a "Christian" civil government during the 1260 years.¹¹ This means that the pagan dragon had no part in supporting the Catholic Church; in fact, it has been in opposition to her ever since their conflict was first introduced at the beginning of Revelation 12.

DRAGON: THE DEVIL'S ATTRIBUTE OF POWER

Many understand that the four positive attributes of God — power, wisdom, justice, and love — are mirrored by four negative attributes of Satan as used in the four names he is given: dragon, old serpent, Satan, Devil.¹² The dragon is the power attribute of the Adversary,¹³ so when the dragon is mentioned, it is meant to indicate the power of Satan, even the direct power of Satan. We suggest that the millennia-old conflict between the dragon

and false Christianity is but Satan trying to cast out a sort of "rule-by-proxy" system venerated with truths he would sooner discard. He would prefer a direct worship of his personage as paganism more closely approximates.

How is this power exercised upon mankind? First, we must realize that Satan is the god of this world,¹⁴ being as much self-evident today as ever. Government, educational systems, and cultural influences are undermining the Scripture's voice at every turn, and dramatically increasing since the time of Bro. Charles T. Russell. The power to do so is not coming from flesh and blood, but from spiritual wickedness in high places.¹⁵ The corruption of society is more a top down than bottom up process. The power of the establishment to promote darkness over light and evil over righteousness is all around us. To use Jesus' analogy, if we can discern the coming storm by dark clouds on the horizon, why cannot we discern Satan's powerful influence today by observing the increasing wickedness promoted by the institutions of power and influence?

THE DRAGON: A COMBINATION OF POWER AND SUBTLE DECEPTION

Unlike the popular image of a flying dinosaur, the ancient and Biblical form of a dragon is that of a serpent.¹⁶ In essence, a dragon is but "a serpent on steroids." It combines power with subtle deception. It can control people by either the threat of harm or by creating a false reality through which it can mold their wills. And unlike the cave-dwelling flying dragon of the Middle Ages, the dragon is actually a water-dwelling creature.¹⁷ Dragon traditions are common in the myths of the ancient world, but "one definable aspect (exists) among them — association with and control over water."¹⁸ This aspect implies that the dragon can be hidden at will (as submerging in water). Waters are also a symbol of peoples and truth.¹⁹ Taking these symbolisms as a whole, the dragon dwells invisibly among mankind while manipulating truth at will. Water comes out of the mouth of the serpent first, then out of the mouth of the dragon, at the end of Revelation 12. "Truth" is used as a weapon through agencies unknown to the people via humanistic philosophies. (The meaning for the transition from the serpent to the dragon in this passage will be addressed later.)

THE DRAGON BECOMING "CIVIL"

To understand the dragon, one must understand an important construct of historical pagan religion. The pagan religion was comprised of two components: (1) the religion held by the populace, i.e. the myths, sacrifices, festivals, and superstitions society participated in, and (2) the mystery religions, that is, secret religious societies made up of a specially-selected few.²⁰ The latter was made up of men from all classes, but generally, those of ability. They were so secretive that ancient scholars could not — or would not — reveal much more detail beyond their existence.

Combine this duality of nature with the casting of the dragon out of heaven in Revelation 12:9, and a reasonable interpretation of how paganism can exist today becomes apparent. The dragon being cast out of heaven illustrates its loss of religious recognition among the masses, but its hidden religious component remains intact. Note how it is “cast into earth”²¹ In this sense pagan worship continues hidden, undetected by the masses. Note also the danger to society this situation represents: “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and sea (stable and unstable elements of society)!” (Revelation 12:12).²²

Freemasonry is a reasonable candidate for such an organization operating under the earth (earth meaning stable society) and influencing the unstable elements of society (the sea). Its revolutionary influence can be traced from early 16th century England²³ and imported to France through the early 17th century, resulting in the “Age of Enlightenment.”²⁴ As the 1260 years of Papal power closed, its adversary, the dragon, re-emerged to reclaim political power. But, the “Enlightenment” was still within the 1260 years of Papal lease of power, so it first began “enlightening” (casting out water from its mouth) as a serpent, since during the 1260 years paganism had no political power, thus could not be represented as the dragon. The serpent became a dragon during the last 10 years of Papal power when the Revolutionaries seized power and continued to “enlighten” the masses with a flood of turbulent, muddy water. The object of the intended destruction was primarily the purging of all Christianity,²⁵ both true and false, and to supplant it with a secular government (secular meaning the absence of any Christian influence). In this sense, the dragon became a secular civil power from the world’s view while maintaining a pagan core.

DRAGON’S ACTIVITY POST FRENCH REVOLUTION

We know from the last verse of Revelation 12 that the dragon would continue its activity beyond 1799, marking the end of the 1260 years and the French Revolution. The dragon now focusses its attack upon the righteous seed of the woman, rather than the unrighteous seed, the Man of Sin. Since the 1260 years period was distinctly described as being a period in which physical persecution of the saints would be allowed, we can conclude that such direct persecution would cease, to a large degree, after 1799.²⁶ This is well supported by the last 200 years’ history. Therefore, the dragon’s persecution could be viewed as an undermining of their values, an ever-increasing process of marginalization and eventual demonization of their beliefs and activities. This, in fact, we can see happening today, using the same process the devil used to “enlighten” the masses of 18th century France, the same process he used as “an angel of light” to create the great Apostate Church. Satan is not limited by light, but easily distorts it, “muddies the waters” with regard to his own objectives.²⁷



Woman fleeing as with two wings of a great eagle

DRAGON’S UNCLEAN SPIRIT

Revelation says a croaking,²⁸ unclean spirit comes out of the mouth of the dragon. Out of the mouth (through its communications, spoken or written) comes a monotonous repetition (in the manner of a frog’s croaking) of lies that are substantiated only by their oft repeating; much like the “Big Lie” technique, where beliefs are created without significant proof but rather by being repeated over and over and over again. Fundamental to this unclean spirit is the manufacture of a set of morals and ethics not specifically found in the Bible, being a sort of secular morality emanating through secular powers.

The only rights of man are those which are God-given; yet the loudest proponents of human rights have come from secular, anti-Biblical sources starting with the “philosophers” of the age of “enlightenment” to the humanists and progressives of today (with the notable exception of the abolition of slavery, with much credit for that given to 18th century Christians). “Liberty” was the watchword of the French Revolution, but the peasants of Vendee and citizens of Lyon were treated very harshly when they wished to be liberated from the Revolution. And so the spirit has continued on with the advent of secular Communism (religion an “opiate of the people”), Socialism, and many other “isms” that use secular morality to justify their authoritarian control, justifying their actions with creeds foreign to scripture.

Space only permits the example of one unclean spirit: Darwinism. Evolution has never been proven in a manner to satisfy the rigors of exacting science, that is, it has never been demonstrated in a controlled experiment. An extensive effort over many decades with fruit fly experimentation has failed to demonstrate evolution’s fundamental principle²⁹ — which failure would in most cases falsify any other hypothesis. Yet, the idea is presented over and over and over again throughout society as an established fact, and efforts to open up competing considerations are quashed by the establishment.

DRAGON'S DEMISE

The dragon's destruction is distinct from that of the beast and false prophet in Revelation 20:1-3. The angel (Jesus) comes down from heaven (the *apokalupsis* or full revealing of Christ to the world) and personally ends the dragon's influence upon mankind.³⁰ This suggests the chameleon-like ability of the dragon who has survived the societal turmoil that brought down the beast, false prophet, and kings of the earth, to continue to deceive mankind. This is stopped by the direct intervention of Christ. That is the last we hear from the dragon, because Satan's political power will cease to exist at this point.



Voltaire, the French spokesman for "Enlightenment"

SUMMATION

Satan has not lost his tactic of bending light through the prism of human failings. This tactic is apparent from the early expansion of Christianity, through the Age of Enlightenment, to the present use of various "humanitarian" forms of political and social power. There was, and is, some system of false altruism always being presented that stands separate from, and is combative towards, the Word of God. The Lord has given us the symbol of the dragon so that we may not be fooled by the wiles of the devil in his attempts to destabilize society and to establish the dragon's kingdom.

1 John 4:1 is as true today as it was in John's day: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets [demagogues] are gone out into the world."

— Br. Robert Davis

Editor's Note: The deep thinking in this article reflects careful thought over a long period of time, and is well worth our attention. Satan continues his opposition to the Church, and his influence in otherwise Christian society to foster pagan concepts appears unabated, as this article brings to light. As to the specific details of Revelation 12, here are two comments that are supplementary, perhaps in some nuances, distinct.

(1) Footnote number two mentions the suggestion that the flood of waters spewed from the mouth of the dragon were at the outset of the 1260 years, an effort to sweep away the Church as it was escaping into the wilderness (R55, R307). In this case, Revelation 12:17 would cover the animosity of our adversary against the saints through much of the age, pursuing them through the power of the state as he was able.

(2) The leopard beast of Revelation 13 (Papacy), and the scarlet beast of Revelation 17 (the peoples and governments that supported the Roman Catholic Church), though related, are distinguished from each other. They are described differently, and introduced at different times in the narrative. We think that the seven heads of the leopard beast are Babylon, Persia, four parts of Greece, and Rome. That the seven heads of the scarlet beast are seven governments from Justinian through Victor Emmanuel that have cooperated with the Roman Catholic Church. The beast of Daniel 7:8 is different still, though related. That beast is the Roman Empire, out of which Papacy arose.

— Br. David Rice

(1) Occam's Razor, a theory of effectively arriving at the proper understanding with given facts, in essence states that the most straight forward interpretation of all alternatives is the most accurate one.

(2) Some interpret Revelation 17:12 as a future event in which saints will see persecution. But scripture states that the saints are overcome by the Papacy (Daniel 7:21,25) and the beast (Revelation 13:7) only during anti-Christ's 1260 year lease of power. (Editor's note: in addition, the *Beauties of the Truth*, February 2014 article on Revelation 12 expressed the thought that the flood of water was at the beginning of the 1260 years of Papal dominion. On this issue the editorial board does not speak with one voice.)

(3) A dragon was a well-known image at John's time; however, the beast he saw was a new type. See Daniel 7:7.

(4) Revelation 17:3.

(5) Supporting society is comprised of many elements, such as civil government, armed forces, general culture, and the commercial world. These can be distinguished by the parts of the symbolic animal such as the horns being ruling dynasties, heads as central governments, bodies as the general culture (see Revelation 13:2 where the Greek leopard is the beast's body implying Rome owed its culture to Greece), teeth and claws as armed agencies.

(6) For the "red" dragon of Revelation 12:3, G4450 (*purros*), fire-like, flame colored. For the "scarlet" beast of Revelation 17:3, G2847 (*kokkinos*), crimson. According to Hislop the first pagan apostasy involved the worship of fire and the serpent: Hislop, Alexander, *The Two Babylons*, Loizeaux Brothers, Second US edition, Neptune, New Jersey (1959) page 225.

(7) See Revelation 12:17.

(8) Revelation 12:14. The serpent is the dragon minus political power. During the 1260 years power was given to Papacy and the beast, therefore paganism had no power in the Holy Roman Empire other than deception.

(9) Time, times, and ½ time in Revelation 12:14 and 42 months in Revelation 13:5.

(10) Daniel 7:8. Note that it rose from one head that represents the capital city of Rome.

(11) See "Divine Right of Kings," Wikipedia. (Editor's note: one question that needs to be explored further, Does not the dragon give its power to the beast? Revelation 13:2.)

(12) Revelation 12:9, 20:2 — These scriptures are in context with the Adversary's fall from a position of influence. We suggest they represent mankind's fuller understanding of his character at these points. The first citation comes when Christianity brought to light

his existence, the second at the *apokalypsis* when the depth of his duplicitous involvement in earth's affairs is unmasked.

(13) See Isaiah 27:1, where leviathan is called the dragon and a crooked serpent. Job 41 extols the power of leviathan.

(14) 2 Corinthians 4:4. Our Lord calls him "the prince of this world" in John 12:31, 16:11. Satan tempted Jesus with all the kingdoms of the world; how could this be a temptation if he did not have control of them? Matthew 4:8-9.

(15) Ephesians 6:12.

(16) Isaiah 27:1. See, *op. cit.* Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, pages 225-226.

(17) Isaiah 27:1, Ezekiel 29:3, Psalm 104:26.

(18) Ingersoll, Ernest, *Dragons and Dragon Lore*, Payton and Clark (1928), page 15.

(19) Revelation 17:15, Isaiah 11:9.

(20) See, *op. cit.* Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, page 7.

(21) Note: KJV and Wilson Diaglott translate the preposition "into" and not "on." The concept of being hidden in the earth is a possible interpretation. The preposition (*eis*), "in," as defined in Thayer's #1519, has a broad interpretation, but his first definition (1a) is of particular interest: "it stands before nouns (in this case earth) designating an open place, a hollow thing, or one in which *an object can be hidden*" (emphasis added). The same Greek preposition is used in the sense of Matthew 13:33 where the leaven is hidden in the bread. Compare Jeremiah 28:17.

(22) So what modern entity cast in the mold of ancient mystery religions and exercising great political power would be suggested? Freemasonry. Not that all Freemasons are fully aware of the objectives of the Masonic inner sanctums, but they are a highly secretive group composed of men at the highest levels of power and influence who even claim an ancestry derived from ancient cultic religion. The Egyptian obelisk (called the Washington Monument, being heavily influenced by the Masonic Order) resides in full view of the White House and the U.S. Capitol building. Symbolism like this is readily apparent and should not go unnoticed.

(23) "Three years later (1733) Jacobite refugees from England founded in Paris the first French Freemasonry lodge. It served as a refuge for deists and as a center of political intrigue; it became a channel of English influence, and *prepared the way for the philosophies*" Durant, *The Story of Civilization IX* (1965) pages 294-295. This is how the Two-Horned Beast "spoke as a dragon" in Revelation 13:11.

(24) Durant, Will and Ariel, *The Story of Civilization IX*, Published by Simon & Schuster, NY (1965), pages 938-939. Robinson, John, *Proofs of a Conspiracy — Against all the Religions and Governments of Europe*, George Forman (1798), page 223 — at the time Robinson was a Professor of natural philosophy and Secretary to the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

(25) "I am weary," he (Voltaire) would say, "of hearing people repeat that twelve men were sufficient to establish Christianity, and I will prove that one may suffice to overthrow it." *The British Critic — A New Review*, January-June 1797. In 2016 this was available on-line through Google Books.

(26) Christians in general have seen considerable physical persecution from Communism and Islam, and due respect is paid for those willing to suffer in Christ's name even though many have not been blessed with the Present Truth.

(27) Truth is water that is "clear as crystal," Revelation 22:1.

(28) Revelation 16:13. Most Bible Students would agree that this takes place after the French Revolution.

(29) An increased complexity of an organism's physical structure resulting from genetic mutation that offers superior survivability.

(30) "Laid hold on," G2902 (*krateo*), usages: Matthew 14:3, 18:28, 21:46, 22:6. In the sense of sudden apprehension, sometimes grab, often to hold strongly. Apprehended first before being bound, see Mark 6:17.

A Note on the Abrahamic Promise

"In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

The Hebrew of this text, rendered literally, is "And will-be-blessed in thee all peoples of the land." And of Genesis 22:18, "And will-bless-themselves in seed of thee all nations of the earth."

The latter is often carelessly translated. In both cases the verb has the letter "vav" (ו) prefixed, which is a conjunction (in this case, "and"). The root verb is *barak*, which is "to bless." In 12:3 it is prefixed with "nun" (נ) which designates the passive. In 22:18 it is prefixed with "hith" (היה), which designates the reflexive case. Rotherham so translates it, and the ASV notes it in the margin.

The other three times this word is used in the same tense and case is Genesis 26:4 (word for word the same as 22:18), Deuteronomy 29:19, and Jeremiah 4:2,

"... and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself ..." and "... thou shalt swear, As Jehovah liveth, in truth, in justice, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory."

The word is used reflexively, but in the future tense, in Isaiah 65:16, "So that he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes."

It remains for us to understand what it means for nations to bless themselves. The simplest would seem to be that Genesis 12:3 is saying heaven will bless earth, and 22:18 is saying that the peoples of earth will bless one another. Thus, these two versions of the Abrahamic promise are not contradictory, but complementary.

— Br. James Parkinson

Financial Report

4,795.10	Balance January 1, 2015
1,051.50	Donations
-1,952.16	Expenses
3,894.44	Balance January 1, 2016
632	Current subscribers