

7 Heads and 10 Horns

in Daniel and the Revelation



Edwin de Kock

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by Edwin de Kock

12916 Los Terrazos Blvd., Edinburg, TX 78541, U.S.A.

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The cover illustration shows John, the beloved apostle, writing on the isle of Patmos. Used as free Christian clipart, <http://clipart.christiansunite.com>.

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This Book Is Dedicated to the Memory of

W. Duncan Eva

(1914-1997)

Fellow South African
and former President,
Northern Europe-West Africa Division
of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,
who at a combined workers' meeting
in my former homeland during 1993
was much impressed by and saw merit in my presentation
about the Western Greeks.

PREFACE

Every reader who picks up this book will quickly become acutely aware that its author, Edwin de Kock, knows his history, knows his Bible, and is an accomplished communicator who blends these gifts into a superbly written book. But even a superbly written book is wanting if it does not contribute to a broadening of our understanding of its subject.

The subject of this book, then, is the challenge of making sense of the prophetic seven heads and ten horns depicted in the twin books of Daniel and the Revelation. The author surveys various interpretations, over many years, that have attempted to explain the true meaning of the heads and the horns. He asserts that all of them—you heard right—*all* of them come short of getting it right. Sometimes previous attempts fail because they spring from inferior schools of thought. While this is not true of the Historicist school, even here a full exposition of the Biblical prophecies has not emerged. That is, until now.

At last, de Kock connects all the dots in a way that seems, at first blush, to be radically different from all that has gone before. But as I vicariously accompanied the author into the vast vaults of history, not only did I learn many things that heretofore had been unclear or totally unknown, but I also came to appreciate how history is indeed Biblical prophecy's indispensable and unerring companion. The unfolding of prophecy finds its truest manifestation in actual historical events that have taken place. Those elements of prophecy as yet unfulfilled are always brought to the same test: When these things come to pass, history inevitably bears them out. This is classic Historicism.

May I share a brief testimony touching on this? Back in 1976, I was an earnest searcher for Truth, but I hadn't the slightest idea how to "know" it. Providentially, I became aware that Hal Lindsey had recently come out with a book that he was promoting on Tom Snyder's *The Tomorrow Show* on the tube. When Lindsey explained that Bible prophecy is

intrinsically inerrant, I wanted to see evidence for this myself. The next day I went right out and procured my first Bible and a copy of Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*. While this man's best-selling title didn't satisfy all my questions regarding prophecy, it did become the instrument of my conversion to the Christian faith! My interest in Bible prophecy also had been born, and it has continued to intrigue and satisfy my heart's longing for Truth ever since.

Oh, I almost forgot to tell you that Edwin turns a phrase as well as anyone I have ever known. Here's one: "Violently wicked, godless people rose to political power and committed ideological murders on a scale that would have caused even those who sat imperturbably beside the guillotine in 1794 to gasp." Another sample, from the same paragraph: "The devil often shields his own against retribution in this life." One last example must suffice:

On a devastated world, these await the awful verdict. The degenerate angels, once so energetic in spitefully ruining people to acquire companions for their final misery, now have nothing to do. Around them lies a planetful of corpses in unburied heaps or dismally alone. The wicked who have come and gone with the years and centuries still molder in their graves. The fallen angels brood on their own condition and sometimes squabble bitterly among themselves, while lost humanity slumbers on in the sleep of the damned.

So, dear fellow reader, if I have any advice for you, it is this: Keep your mind wide open as you read the following pages, and do so with a sincere prayer that God's Holy Spirit will be your Counselor, just as our Saviour promised He would be (see John 14:26).

Then be ready to be surprised by joy as you encounter fresh solutions to the prophetic puzzle that my dear friend Edwin de Kock has finally achieved. I know that Edwin joins me in attributing all the glory to God, the Giver of all good things.

Jerry A. Stevens
Author, *VICARIUS FILII DEI*

Fairfield Glade, Tennessee
August 30, 2011

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I thank my gracious Heavenly Father for sparing me to complete my books on prophecy. Without his ordering of events, a nearly fatal heart attack on 18 March 2010 and the bypass surgery that followed, neither *The Truth About 666* nor this work would have been finished. I was snatched away from the very doorway of death.

When a book comes into existence over a considerable period of time, with several interruptions, it is sometimes difficult—even embarrassingly so—to remember everyone who has helped to make a better work of it. In the more remote as well as the recent past, the chapters of this work have been transmitted to more than a dozen people for their comments and suggestions. Only some have responded to a marked extent. A few, however, have fruitfully done so.

Among them have been Drs. William Shea, P. Gerard Damsteegt, Koot van Wyk, and Harold Erickson. Very meaningful was a structural contribution by Timothy R. Perenich. Others whom I like to mention are John Minick, Chris Chadwick, Stephen D. Emse, and Michael Scheifler. Please note that the appearance of their names does not necessarily mean they endorse my general conclusions or agree with the details in this work.

Particularly valuable and much appreciated have been the copious input of the editor and sometimes very candid critic by my side, dear wife and life's companion, Ria de Kock. Jerry A. Stevens has likewise given many valuable hours of his time to improving the final product. Assiduous and sharp-eyed copy-editor, he has spared no trouble in helping me make this a better if not a perfect book. Having read it and most of my prophetic work attentively, he has also written the Preface, for which I heartily thank him.

Beyond all assistance, of course, it is I who must and do assume full responsibility for the following pages.

ABBREVIATIONS

AA: Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*. 1911 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958).

DA: Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages: The Conflict of the Ages Illustrated in the Life of Christ*. 1898 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950).

D&R: Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1944). Combined and modified ed. of *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Revelation* (1865) and *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Daniel* (1873).

EB: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, of which several editions have been used. The shortened dates 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11 all refer to the *Ultimate Reference Suite*, DVD, for 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, accessed in the relevant year from the author's computer.

EB2: Macropaedia, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (30 vols., Chicago: Helen Hemingway Benton, 1982).

EB2mi: Micropaedia, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (30 vols., Chicago: Helen Hemingway Benton, 1982).

EB 68: *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Bicentennial ed., 23 vols., Chicago: William Benton, 1968).

GC: Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation*. 1888 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950). And other editions.

Liddell and Scott: Liddell and Scott. *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*. 1889 (Oxford, Eng.: Clarendon, 1961).

PFF: LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946-1954).

SDABC: *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Francis D. Nichol, et al., eds., 1953 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1978).

SDABD: Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, revised (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1979).

SDAE: *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*. Revised ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976).

SDASB: *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Students' Source Book*, eds. Don F. Neufeld and Julia Neuffer (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1962).

INTRODUCTION

This, our fourth book on prophecy, was largely written after *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History* (2001), over more than four years, from late 2002 to the winter of 2007. However, a series of circumstances prevented its completion. First, a group of lectures, originally delivered at Montemorelos University, Mexico, during 2003, had to be adapted for presentation at Camp Au Sable, Michigan, in 2006. This laid the groundwork for an augmented work, *The Use and Abuse of Prophecy: History, Methodology, and Myth*, which appeared in 2007. Then a further delay intervened: the extended research for and the writing of *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy* (2011), a book which was urgently needed.

But here, at last, it is: our *Seven Heads and Ten Horns*, which seeks to solve a problem that has baffled prophetic expositors for many hundreds of years. These include Historicists, like the Seventh-day Adventist writers who have for a century and a half been struggling to identify the seven heads. As shown in one of these chapters, they have presented no fewer than nine different interpretations. None of them, we regret to say, survives the test of reason or history.

In only two places, the Apocalypse poses a special challenge. Rev. 13:18 says: "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six." As demonstrated by our previous work, *The Truth About 666*, Andreas Helwig solved that mystery in 1600. History both before and after his time has irrefutably vindicated his equation $666 = \text{vicarius Filii Dei}$.

A few chapters later, in Rev. 17, we read of a jewel-bedecked prostitute called Babylon who sits on a scarlet Beast with seven heads and ten horns. This creature which she is riding is somehow related to the symbolic entities of chapters 12 and 13. They also have seven heads and ten horns. The latter remind us of the ten horns on the fourth Beast in Dan. 7 and are therefore not so difficult to understand. But the seven

heads? Identifying them is not so easy, which is no doubt why in this case, too, the Good Book says: “And here is the mind which hath wisdom. . . .” (Rev. 17:9)

Determining what these heads and horns are is no minor matter. It has several implications for a clearer, better Historicist understanding of Daniel as well as the Apocalypse.

Chapter One

THE DRAGON AND THE WOMAN

I

John, the last of the Twelve and the only apostle who had not died a martyr's death, was a maximum-security prisoner on a rocky island: Patmos, the Roman Alcatraz.

It lay about forty miles off the coast of Asia Minor and some distance from the seven churches that he loved. Here on the Lord's day he had an unexpected, heavenly visitor: the now aged apostle met again his resurrected, glorious Friend (Rev. 1:9-19), and had a series of visions.

One of these concerns a very beautiful woman, "clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." She is also on the point of giving birth to a son and cries out in pain. (Rev. 12:1, 2) But crouched in front of her is a huge red dragon, originally thrown out of heaven and dragging down with his monstrous tail a third of the stars. He waits to gobble up her issue (vs. 4). Having closely studied the Old Testament prophecies, he knows that this will be a boy and even when he is due to be born. The child, however, escapes and is taken up to heaven, where he shares the throne of God (vs. 5). Obviously this refers to the Lord Jesus.

Thereupon the frustrated and infuriated dragon turns his baleful attention to the woman, chasing her into the wilderness. But there she is protected from him for 1260 prophetic days or literal years, though a multitude of her children perish. Then, when this period is over, the ferocious monster goes forth to make war on the rest of her offspring.

Who is this lovely person and who is the dragon of Rev. 12?

To answer this question, we will not—like D. H. Lawrence¹—have to grapple with pagan literature or other

extrinsic symbols. Nor do we need to wade into the quagmire of spurious apocalyptic writing in the Old Testament Apocrypha. The ordinary Bible, as accepted by Protestants, will provide a sufficient answer.

It is easier to identify the dragon than this woman. Primarily he is “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan” (vs. 9), although the English word *dragon* can be a little misleading. The original Greek word, δρακων (“drakōn”), often just means “a serpent of huge size,”² which is brought out by the fact that the Apocalypse uses *dragon* and *serpent* more or less interchangeably. Let us therefore visualize this animal as a very large snake with the added features of seven heads and ten horns.

These are the ancient empires as well as the European kingdoms that the evil one has used successively in pursuit of his designs. When Christ was born and lived on this planet, Satan’s special instrument was pagan Rome—though this obviously cannot apply to the last part of the dragon’s career, as described in Rev. 12:17.

Some Catholics have maintained that the glorious woman whom he harasses is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Superficially this is plausible but also problematic.

The only Biblical support for such a view would have to be the events of Matt. 2:13-23. After the nativity, Mary’s husband, Joseph, put her and her baby on a donkey and fled with them to Egypt. But the prophecy about the woman depicts her as hurrying off alone and after the ascension, which is indicated by the emphatic adverb “then” (Rev. 12:6). She does not travel by donkey, a slow-moving animal, but flies with fast and far-ranging eagle’s wings (vs. 14).

A special difficulty is that the woman bears additional sons and daughters, including “the remnant of her seed” (vs. 17). The New Revised Standard Version translates this expression as “the rest of her children.” Jesus did have brothers, James, Joses, Simon, and Judas, as well as sisters (Matt. 13:55, 56), but these were no doubt the offspring of Joseph by a previous marriage. In any case, according to the Roman Church, our Lord was Mary’s only child.

Uriah Smith provided a Protestant explanation. Having decided on the basis of several texts that the woman represents the true church, he wrote: “‘The sun’ here signifies the light and glory of the gospel era. ‘The moon’ is the symbol of the Mosaic period. As the moon shines with a borrowed light derived from the sun, so the former era shone with a light borrowed from the present,” and “‘a crown of twelve stars’ appropriately symbolizes the twelve apostles”³ This is ingenious, but it suffers from the defect of being unprovable from the Scriptures. Where, for instance, do these identify the sun with the gospel or the moon with the Mosaic period; and why should the twelve stars symbolize the apostles rather than the tribes of Israel?

A serious objection is that the woman cannot simply represent the church, in the sense of Christianity; for she gives birth to the Messiah. But it did not happen like that. Instead, it was Christ who brought the church into existence.

Smith was certainly aware of this problem, for he said: “Verses 1 and 2 cover a period of time beginning just previous to the opening of the Christian Era, when the church was earnestly longing for and expecting the advent of the Messiah, and extending to the full establishment of the gospel church . . .”⁴ Obviously, for him the church included more than Christianity. Unfortunately he failed to clarify this point, which is what we now wish to do through a comparison of Scripture with Scripture, searching for related passages elsewhere in the Bible.

We discover that the twelfth chapter of Revelation skillfully blends predictions and other ideas from both the Old and the New Testament.

II

The symbols of the woman, her offspring, and the serpent originate in Gen. 3, the chapter that records the entry of sin into our world.

We read how the evil one, disguised as a beautiful reptile, tempted Eve, the mother of us all, into disobedience. Adam, our forefather, could not bear the thought of losing her.

Impetuously he decided to share her fate. They expected not only death but also eternal separation from God. Then, however, our compassionate Lord surprised them, the devil, and the universe with the first Messianic promise. Addressing the snake, he declared: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (vs. 15).

This prediction can be understood on several levels.

Literally God was making an important announcement: the endowment of womankind with a special spiritual ministry. Mothers would have an urge to protect their children against the devil. To Adam, the male who should have known better than to follow his wife into transgression, no spiritual promise was made on this occasion. His only outlook was toil and trouble until his death.

Elsewhere in the Bible, we read that in patriarchal times and early tribal Israel the man was the religious head of the home, its priest to intercede with God and teach his children to obey the Lord. However, the All Wise One also knew that men would often neglect this important duty. Later he had to transfer the priesthood away from family heads and restrict it to the tribe of Levi. Even today we still observe that all too often men are not much inclined to fulfil their religious function, without which they vainly seek to be regarded as the head of their homes. Left to their own devices, it seems that males are especially irreligious.

More often than not, it is the mother who reads the Bible to her children and teaches them to pray. As the first educator in their most impressionable years, she lays their mental and moral foundations, which usually endure for the rest of their lives. Frequently only she will take them to church. This is a fulfillment of that ancient promise: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman.”

Gen. 3:15 continues: “and between thy seed and her seed.” Though wickedness flourishes in the world, the Lord intervenes, and many a sinner—perhaps remembering his mother’s prayers and tears—experiences a sudden and mysterious revulsion for evil with a desire to turn away from

it. Often this takes the form of renouncing bad company. This is part of the enmity created by God between the woman's seed and the devil's brood.

A mysterious, unbreakable bond exists between the human male and the significant women in his life. A writer, whose name we can regretfully not recall, has stated that often when a man is dying, he calls on God and his mother, his wife, or his sweetheart, but never his father.

Many people, however, refuse repentance. As Jesus said to some who rejected him and were plotting to kill him: "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires" (John 8:44, RSV).

That was the immediate meaning of Gen. 3:15 for Adam and Eve in their situation, but more was involved.

In the Bible, *seed* means "offspring." From Gen. 12, the Old Testament especially applies this word to Abraham's descendants through Sarah, as in the promise that Canaan would belong to them: "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7). Elsewhere the Lord says: "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend" (Isa. 41:8).

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul points out a further, Messianic meaning of this word: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." (Gal. 3:16) That is, the existence of the Israelites and Jews was not to be an end in itself. They had to preserve the true religion of God, obey him, transmit the oracles, bring forth the Messiah . . . and share salvation with the entire human race.

When the Lord called Abraham, he not only said: "I will make of thee a great nation," but also: "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:2, 3). Different Old Testament writers touch on this theme. It becomes especially striking in Isa. 45, which tells how God the Creator made pagan Cyrus the greatest king on earth to carry out his purposes by restoring the chosen people to their country. That chapter goes beyond the Jews; in it the Mighty One also

stretches out his arms to invite the world into his embrace, when love calls out:

Look unto me, and be ye saved,
all the ends of the earth. . . .

(Isa. 45:22)

Through his Incarnation, the Lord of life began his work by first appealing to his own people, the Jews; but he also instructed his disciples to preach the Good News to everyone under the sun (Matt. 28:19-20). The time had come to break down the wall of partition separating the Hebrews from other nations. Paul taught this very plainly, especially where he said: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

Vitally important is the meaning of the word *Israel*. Though it often just refers to Abraham's literal descendants through his grandson Jacob, it means "God contends" and has a spiritual connotation, calling to mind that night when Isaac's son was wrestling with the Lord.

According to the Edenic prophecy, the devil would seek to destroy the Promised One, from the moment he was born. The dragon's first great effort was through king Herod, miscalled "the Great," who sent his soldiers to kill the Messiah (Matt. 2:16). Though heaven thwarted this plan, the snake would enjoy a short-lived and partial success: "You shall bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). Bitter was the agony of our Lord in Gethsemane and on the terrible cross, but death could not hold him in its thrall. Through his sufferings, he bruised the serpent's head, inflicting a mortal wound; for ultimately the devil and all his works are to be destroyed.

After his escape from the dragon, the woman's child "was caught up to God and to his throne." That is, Jesus ascended to his Father, with whom he shares the throne of the universe. He is also destined "to rule all the nations with a rod of iron," a reference to Ps. 2:7-9. This focuses on the time when he will return to shatter his adversaries (Rev. 19:11-16) and take up his scepter over the entire planet.

III

The woman symbolizes both the church and the Lord's ancient people, Israel or Judah. This we can establish through a direct comparison of Scripture with Scripture. Apart from Rev. 12:1, there is only one passage that explicitly deals with the sun, the moon, and twelve stars within a single metaphoric context, namely Gen. 37:9-11:

“[Joseph] dreamed another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said, ‘Behold, I have dreamed another dream; and behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.’ But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, ‘What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?’”

In these verses, the sun represents Jacob, the moon his wife Leah (Rachel had already died), and the stars the sons who would father the tribes of Israel. An objection to this interpretation may be that Joseph saw not twelve but only eleven stars. That is true, but a twelfth star is implied, for all these luminaries bowed down to him—the twelfth son.

Rev. 12 is concerned with God's people from the beginning of time, though the emphasis is on the period following the Messiah's birth. The woman does represent the church, as Smith and others have maintained; but in this chapter there is also a pointed reference to Israel. It is the Jewish nation and Old Testament Judaism that gave birth to the Redeemer.

Many Scriptures call the chosen people the daughter of Zion, the daughter of Judah, or the daughter of Jerusalem. In Hebrew, nationality and statehood are often designated in this way. Therefore, we also read of the daughter of Egypt (Jer. 46:11, 24), the daughter of Tyre (Ps. 45:12), the daughter of Edom (Lam. 4:21, 22), and the daughter of Babylon (Ps. 137:8; Isa. 47:1; Jer. 50:42; 51:33; Zech. 2:7).

So the woman of Rev. 12 is the Lord's people in both the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures. Herbert E. Douglass, deploring a contrary view on the part of Dispensationalists,

maintained this idea rather forcefully. He said: “The awesome Matterhorn truth of the New Testament is that there is no spiritual distinction between the men of faith in the Old Testament and the men of faith in the New,” and went on to quote Gal. 3:3-9, 26, 29 to prove his point.⁵ This is similar to C. Mervyn Maxwell’s position. He wrote: “We should not suppose, however, that there are two brides, an Old Testament bride and a New Testament one. Actually there is only one bride. God has one people, not two.”⁶

Sometimes, as in Isa. 54:5, 6, Israel is even called Yahweh’s wife. In the New Testament, a chaste and virtuous woman represents the Church (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-32), to whom the Lord is married. She is his holy bride. In Rev. 12 she, above all, is the mother of the Messiah and the rest of God’s children.

To bring forth the man-child, who is clearly Jesus the Messiah, this woman must exist before his birth. On the other hand, to flee from the dragon and be protected against him for 1260 prophetic days, which we maintain represent as many literal years, she must continue deep into our era. She is indeed the Church, which is the remnant of Israel, but in a comprehensive, not a limited sense. Her origins go back to Eden. Her final, triumphant destiny is the earth made new.

IV

The conflict against the dragon did not begin with the birth of Christ, but in an earlier era, before the creation of this planet. It originated with the rebellion of Satan in heaven, first described in the Old Testament, as in Isa. 14:12-15. “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning, how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!” (vs. 12).

Rev. 12:7-9, interpolated into the middle of the story that we have been considering, gives further details. “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil

and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” These are the stars that according to vs. 4 the dragon drags down with him—a third of the heavenly host.

Various commentators maintain that the evil one was cast out twice, the second time as a result of the crucifixion.

It would seem that after his fall, but before the time of Christ, the devil still had some, if limited, access to heaven. We read of this in the book of Job: “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.” (Job. 1:6)

But why, on that occasion, was he admitted to heaven, which had previously expelled him? It was apparently an important meeting between God and the representatives of inhabited worlds throughout the universe. These dignitaries are known as “sons of God.” One of them, however, was missing: Adam, whom the Bible also calls “the son of God” (Luke 4:38). Because of his fall, he could not come, having been dead for nearly 1,600 years.

Sitting in his place at the conference table, as the representative of our planet, was Satan—who whenever he had the opportunity to do so accused the Lord’s people on earth, including Job, the most righteous man in the world, of whom even God was proud. Lucifer had supplanted Adam as “the prince of this world,” a title that Jesus attributed to the devil on several occasions (e.g., John 14:30, 16:11).

The crucifixion finally and completely unmasked the great deceiver and dramatically changed his status. Just before his passion, our Lord declared: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.” (John 12:31-32)

Though he has not yet been officially installed as such, Jesus has become the rightful king of all who accept him. Just think of it! He, and not Satan, is now our representative in

heaven, not only on special days when beings from other worlds present themselves before God, but every minute of every day and night. “Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 8:25).

The promise of John 12:31, “now shall the prince of this world *be cast out*” is echoed in Rev. 12:10: “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren *is cast down*, which accused them before our God day and night” (emphasis added).

This second casting out was resisted and greatly resented by the archenemy of the human race. But in the rest of the universe, it caused tremendous rejoicing, though it spelled intensified trouble for the world: “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Rev. 12:12).

V

Let us now consider the identity of Michael, who led the heavenly host in Satan’s expulsion from heaven. This is a mysterious and very special being.

Jude, the second last book in the Bible, explicitly calls him the “archangel” (vs. 9). When required to do so, he heads the celestial army of God. Daniel is told that he is also “your prince” (10:21), “the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people” (12:1). That is, Michael has a special connection with Israel. Moreover, his name is mysterious. In Hebrew, *mîka’el* means “who is like God?” Elsewhere in Daniel’s book, we read that the Little Horn would assail “the prince of the host” and his sanctuary (8:11). Indeed, an antagonistic power would overthrow and break the chosen people as well as “the prince of the covenant” (11:21, 22). For Christians, there can be little doubt that this person is the Messiah before his incarnation.

Earlier in the Old Testament, he is called the Angel of the Lord or the Angel of God. It is he who in the desert twice met

Hagar, Abraham's concubine, when she fled, distraught and oppressed by her mistress Sarah. Both times, he told her *he* would exceedingly multiply her and Ishmael's seed: "I will make him a great nation" (Gen. 16:10; 21:18), which was to claim a divine prerogative.

This, too, must have been the mysterious personage who wrestled all night with Jacob and at daybreak renamed him Israel. Thereupon the patriarch asked him, "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?" Jacob then called the place Peniel, "for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen. 32:24-30).

When Moses, a lonely exile from his native Egypt and far from his Hebrew relatives, was tending Jethro's sheep in the wilderness of Sinai, "the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire" (Ex. 3:2). Then, "when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the bush" and ordered him to keep his distance and "put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (vs. 5). This close association, if not identification, of the Angel with Yahweh characterizes many episodes in the Old Testament.

As the Israelites were fleeing from Egypt, he daily accompanied them in a pillar of cloud, which burned like a fire at night. As pharaoh and his charioteers pursued them right in between the parted waters of the Red Sea, "the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them," to prevent the pursuers from reaching their prey (Ex. 14:19-20).

Later the Lord told Moses that this being would accompany the Israelites all the way to Canaan and cut off their enemies (Ex. 23:20-23). But they had to obey the Angel and not provoke him, "for my name is in him" (vs. 21).

After the Israelites had faltered and rebelled at the entrance to Canaan, the Lord returned them to the wilderness for forty years. This was to eliminate a cowardly, unholy generation

and to discipline the next one, which would finally inherit the Promised Land.

During all that time, to indicate his displeasure, God did not allow the chosen people to celebrate the Passover or even to practice circumcision (Josh. 5:5, 6). Yet their special companion never forsook them. For forty years, he kept on supplying them with manna and drinking water, protected them against the burning sun, the desert cold at night, and diseases. Miraculously he also preserved their raiment; neither their clothes nor their shoes wore out (Deut. 29:5). Furthermore, “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old” (Isa. 63:9).

Joshua, who succeeded Moses, met this companion of their wanderings just after the Israelites had crossed the Jordan into Canaan. “And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship . . . And the captain of the Lord’s host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereupon thou standest is holy.” (Josh. 5:13-15)

This was the very person who had originally appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and these were the words then spoken to him. It was none other than Michael, the archangel. He even accepted Joshua’s worship, which no ordinary angel would have allowed. This becomes clear from the episode when John the beloved apostle tried to venerate his angel companion—probably Gabriel—who had revealed so many marvelous things to him: “And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said to me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God . . .” (Rev. 19:10).

Judges 2:1-5 records an amazing story. The Angel of the Lord appeared among the Israelites and made his way from

Gilgal to Bochim. There he told an assembly of the chosen people: “I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers” and reproached them for disobeying him by concluding agreements with the Canaanites instead of eliminating them. “Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.” Again the Angel was describing his actions as those of God himself.

In the time of the Judges, he appeared to and instructed Gideon in what he had to do to save his people from the Midianites (Judges 6:11-21). In this context, he is also called the LORD. At a later time, to Samson’s parents he explained in detail how they had to rear the son who would be born to them and was destined to deliver Israel from the Philistines (13:3-23).

Because of their repeated apostasy, “the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people” often seemed to hide his face from the Israelites, yet he never forsook them. Unfortunately, in the time of Samuel, they insisted on replacing him with a human monarch. This greatly offended the aged judge and prophet. But then the Lord said to his servant: “Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Sam. 8:7).

From that time onward, the Angel appears less frequently in the Old Testament. It is sad to think that even before his incarnation his people repudiated the Messiah as their ruler. Yet he did not give up. One day, he would try again, by being born at Bethlehem to live among them as a man—though he knew beforehand that most of them would despise and reject him a second time.

He just could not keep away from this world! In a very special sense, it became his own planet, purchased by his blood and his acceptance of the limitations imposed by a material body.

After his passion, he could have divested himself of it again. But no, he ascended an eternally altered being. As Ellen

White expressed it, his human nature is an everlasting pledge of the faithfulness of God.⁷ When all things are renewed, with every outward sign of sin, degradation, and Satan obliterated, Jesus will preserve his scars sustained for us: the marks of the nails that bit into his hands and feet, and of the spear the soldier thrust into his side. Mysteriously transformed to become a man, the One who was and remains the second person of the holy Trinity, became an everlasting sacrifice for us. For him, this must have been, in a sense that we can hardly understand, a deeply painful and harrowing experience. Note how Douglass once put it:

“Contemplate the thought. It staggers the human mind. The Lord of Creation imprisoning Himself within His own creation. The Eternal God, who walked among the stars and whirled new universes into their orbits, to be forever cabined within time and space—this stretches the mind of men and women across unlimited oceans of love.”⁸

The conflict between Michael and the dragon, depicted in Rev. 12, is the great controversy between Christ and Satan. It began in heaven. It continued on earth. The latter phase is the main concern of Rev. 12.

VI

After the woman’s son escapes and is caught up into heaven, the dragon turns on her. As she flees, he spews out a flood to wash her away. In prophecy, water represents a multitude of people (Rev. 17:15), who persecute her. Her flight is successful, for she receives a pair of eagle’s wings, which indicate an ability to soar aloft and travel tirelessly, fast and far. They can also refer to God’s protective power. (Isa. 40:31; Ps. 36:7)

Probably the first to explain correctly the woman’s flight from her original territories was Joachim of Floris, abbot of Calabria in the twelfth century. He “applied the year-day principle to the 1260-year period. ‘The woman, clothed with the sun, who signifies the church, remained hidden in the wilderness from the face of the serpent, a day without doubt

being accepted for a year and a thousand two hundred and sixty days for the same number of years.”⁹

Like other symbols in Rev. 12, the region into which she flees from the dragon has been variously identified. In pondering the different possibilities, we can find it helpful to note the similarity and interrelationship of two words: *wilderness* and *desert*.

Bibles in several languages (such as German, French, and Spanish) state that the woman fled into the *desert*. This is, amongst other things, reflected in the expression “Church in the Desert,” used to describe the few Huguenots that remained in their country during the eighteenth century after Louis XIV had revoked the Edict of Nantes.¹⁰

Their refuge was, however, not really a desert, but “the Cévennes mountains, the French badlands.”¹¹ To understand why those Protestants called it the Church in the Desert, we need to know that in French versions, such as the one translated by Louis Segond, Rev. 12:6 reads: *Et la femme s'enfuit dans le désert* (“and the woman fled into the desert”).

In the Greek original, too, the word ἐρημος (*erēmos*), *wilderness*, is closely related to ἐρημία (*erēmia*), *desert*.¹² In addition, ἐρήμος (*erēmos*), marked with a different accent, is an adjective meaning *desert*.¹³ This is significant for our study, because a desert is usually also a wilderness, though a wilderness need not be a desert.

The Huguenots who opted for staying in their country and holding out in the Cévennes were more than a Calvinist survival group. They also constituted “the few descendants of the ancient Christians that still lingered in France in the eighteenth century, hiding away in the mountains of the south.”¹⁴

The Cévennes are just north of Languedoc. In it is Albi, a town I visited in 1992. Its name will remain forever linked with the medieval Albigenses, Cathars, who were largely though not quite exterminated four centuries before the Reformation in a Catholic crusade. A pretentious cathedral now commemorates those gruesome events and the victory won. Further to the east, piled high between earth and heaven

by a celestial hand, arise the mighty ramparts of the Alps, which sheltered another group of religious dissidents: the Waldensians, whom papal armies had vainly for centuries tried to eliminate.

The entire strip of territory adjacent to the Mediterranean, from northwestern Italy and southern France as far as the Pyrenees on the Spanish border had from the time of the ancient Celts and Visigoths continuously harbored elements that Rome could not subdue. During the Reformation, many of their descendants joined the Huguenots.

The remnant in the Cévennes was well acquainted with these facts when they chose to name themselves the Church in the Desert (or Wilderness). Voltaire (1694-1778), a deist rather than a Christian, but an extremely knowledgeable one with a lucid, brilliant mind, had illuminating things to say about non-Catholic believers in southern France:

“Auricular confession was not received so late as the eighth and ninth centuries in the countries beyond the Loire, in Languedoc and the Alps—Alcuin complains of this in his letters. The inhabitants of those countries appear to have always had an inclination to abide by the customs of the primitive church, and to reject the tenets and customs which the church in its more flourishing state judged convenient to adopt.

“Those who were called Manichaeans, and those who were afterward named Albigenses, Vaudois, Lollards, and who appeared so often under different names, were remnants of the first Gaulish Christians, who were attached to several ancient customs, which the Church of Rome thought proper to alter afterward.”¹⁵

Owing to his general skepticism about religion as well as his thorough research of many years for his books on French history, Voltaire is a significant witness to support an old claim by the Waldensians that they originated not with Peter Waldo during the twelfth century but at a much more ancient time.

They were certainly part of the “Church in the Desert,” often mounting up as on eagle’s wings into the recesses of

their lofty Alpine wilderness as they fled from their pursuers. After 538, when the Byzantine armies defeated the Ostrogoths in Italy and began to eradicate their non-Catholic religion, these people—together with others who subsequently joined them—survived for more than 1260 years and still exist.

VII

Smith extended the wilderness concept to other areas. “‘The earth helped the woman’ by opening its mouth and swallowing up the flood. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century began its work. . . . Defenders of the true faith multiplied. Soon there was enough Protestant soil found in Europe and the New World to swallow up the flood of papal fury, and rob it of its power to harm the church. Thus the earth helped the woman, and has continued to help her to the present day, as the spirit of the Reformation and religious liberty has been fostered by the leading nations of Christendom.”¹⁶

Ronald Thompson pointed in yet another direction. His *Champions of Christianity in Search of Truth* contains a photograph of a monument commemorating the French Huguenot refugees whom the Dutch brought to South Africa in 1688 and subsequently absorbed. They represent about 18% of the Afrikaners’ ancestry. Through my mother, Susanna Elizabeth Olivier, I am also one of their descendants.

This noble structure is situated some distance from the sea, not very far from Cape Town, in what used to be an inland wilderness, though never a desert. Nestled among the vineyards of Fransch Hoek (French Corner), with magnificent mountains as its backdrop, it adorns an area which for beauty has few rivals on the planet. This is how Thompson described that memorial:

“The main feature of the Huguenot Monument is the draped figure of a woman standing upon the world—displaying Africa with the Cape embellished. The woman is depicted, casting off a cloak of oppression. The Bible in her right hand, and a broken chain in her left hand, symbolizes freedom of religious belief. She stands poised above the earth, her gaze is

fixed on a noble vision of the future. Behind her are the symbols of her fortitude: three towering arches represent the Holy Trinity. Above the arches shines a depiction of the sun, representing the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. She represents the sun-clothed woman of Revelation 12.”¹⁷

All these identifications of the wilderness are valid; for, as Sanche de Gramont says, it is possible to think of the “desert” as “a period in time, not a place.”¹⁸ The reader should, however, bear in mind that the dragon’s wrath against the woman began a long time before the sixteenth century. She is in hiding for 1260 years, which takes us back to many centuries before the Protestant Reformation.

VIII

A question that students of prophecy ought to ask but usually omit is the following: Was there in Biblical times a literal, natural feature to which the words “desert” as well as “wilderness” could have applied? There was: the huge Sahara that stretches over the entire North Africa and into Asia. “Straddling the Tropic of Cancer for 4,000 miles (6,452 km), this giant region covers almost 1 percent of Earth’s entire land surface.”¹⁹ In the ancient Mediterranean world it was, as everybody knew, the Desert par excellence.

To the south, a strip of arid coast connects the Sahara with the Horn of Africa. To the east, it continues under other names as the Arabian and Syrian Deserts as well as into Mesopotamia. Further east is a small undesertlike strip. But beyond this lie the huge Iranian and Turkestan Deserts, thrusting into central Asia, east of the Black Sea. A smallish piece of land then separates the Turkestan Desert from the Taklamakan and the Gobi Deserts.²⁰ The distance from the latter to the Pacific is not very great.

In these areas, for the entire 1260 years (vv. 6, 14), while Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy dominated Europe, important Christian communities survived beyond the reach of Constantinople as well as Rome and its successor states. One was the Coptic Church of Nubia and Ethiopia. Another was the Church of the East, which is related to the Syrian Church.

When persecuted, it moved away from the Mediterranean. Eventually it left the Byzantine Empire and located its center in Mesopotamia. Its influence extended to both China and India. Associated with it in the latter country were Christians along the Malabar coast, whose ancestors had received the Gospel from the Apostle Thomas. As shown in a chapter in *The Truth About 666*, they were able to worship the Lord without interference until the sixteenth century, when the ships from Catholic Portugal rounded the Cape of Good Hope and unleashed the Inquisition against them.²¹

The territories of these ancient churches were largely encircled by deserts and arid regions, sheltered from the wrathful dragon as well as the Antichristian Beast. In his *Truth Triumphant*, Wilkinson dealt with these believers in some detail. The subtitle of his book is *The Church in the Wilderness*.

IX

The dragon is powerful and ferocious, yet he proves to be a loser. Twice he suffers expulsion from heaven. On earth, he is first frustrated when he tries to eliminate the Messiah. Then he fails in his efforts to kill the woman. But after the end of the 1260 year-days, which begin in 538 and end in 1798, he exerts himself in a final, desperate attempt: wrathfully, he goes “to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17).

This is the very last church, the end-time people of the Lord. By calling them the remnant of the woman’s seed, he greatly honors them, closely associating them with his only-begotten son. The expression that conveys this, οἱ λοιποὶ (hoi loipoí), refers to the remainder of the woman’s children, survivors of the terrible tribulation that raged for 1260 years. These people belong to the same family as the Messiah, of whom the Lord spoke to our first parents just before their expulsion from paradise, and to Abraham, whose descendant he is. Jesus Christ is the firstling of the woman’s seed, the one whose heel the devil bruised but whom he could not vanquish.

God's end-time people are the last, which is why they are called the remnant of her seed.

The question as to what exactly constitutes the true Church and the features that identify it is of vital concern to every believer. Renowned theologians have sought to clarify this issue. In May 1519, Dr. Martin Luther, a theological professor at the University of Wittenberg, pondered it deeply while preparing for his debate with a celebrated academic, Dr. Johann Eck, who would be defending Catholicism and its traditions.

At that early stage in his differences with Rome, the reformer concluded: "Where the Gospel itself was preached and believed, and its central public acts of baptism and the celebration of the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples were seen to be done, there was the Church founded by him."²² Fifteen years later, Luther still held to this view but clarified it further by adding: "The holy Christian people are recognised by their possession of the holy word of God" and also: "They must endure every misfortune."²³

Indeed. We note that Rev. 14:6 upholds the first part of Luther's definition by characterizing the final warning message to the world as "the everlasting gospel." Furthermore, baptism is the first of two essential sacraments. It needs, however, to be Biblical, indissolubly linked with repentance, and symbolize the sinner's identification—through single immersion—with the Saviour's death and resurrection. As for the Lord's Supper, an important element that should not be left out is foot washing, preparatory to the serving of the bread and wine. Jesus said this, too, was obligatory (John 13:15), though most denominations omit it.

The Apocalypse expresses these things more explicitly by predicting that the remnant of the woman's seed would obey the Lord by observing his holy Law. Two chapters further on in Revelation, where they are called "saints," inspiration reemphasizes the same idea by saying: "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12).

But do these words not apply to all Christians, or virtually all of them? Surely they also profess belief in our Lord and by the grace of God observe his Law. But do they? In two previous books,²⁴ we noted that the papal Antichrist—the dragon’s understudy—has meddled with the Decalogue, and it is his version which he will urge the world to observe as it “wonders” after him (Rev. 13:3).

Because our Lord is gracious and compassionate, he will condone the inability of early Protestants like Luther fully to discern and depart from the errors of the Roman Church. Those wonderful men were emerging from so much medieval darkness, when the great light of righteousness by faith enlightened their minds. But in the last days the Reformation is to be completed, and his children must enter into “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

There is an additional point that should not be overlooked: the order in which the Apocalypse refers to the two characteristics of the remnant Church. In both Rev. 12:17 and Rev. 14:12, the Decalogue is mentioned first and only after that “the testimony of Jesus” as well as “the faith of Jesus.” Many modern theologians would have put it the other way round. Faith should surely come first, for obedience, if it matters at all, is secondary.

But we cannot adapt the Word of God to suit our theology. Why, then, does Revelation express it the way it does? For the sake of emphasis, to insist that through divine assistance the remnant will actually *keep* the Commandments—not simply preach or speak about them. People like to hear about the love and pardoning grace of God, which are wonderful; but the natural human heart rebels when it hears that after conversion it also needs to obey the Most High, forsaking all bad habits and harmful associations. Some religionists even use faith as an alibi for continued disobedience, arguing that the Law was abolished by being nailed to the cross. But the Apocalypse puts it bluntly: those who claim to serve the Lord must also submit to his will and, transformed by the indwelling Christ through the Holy Spirit, keep his Law—although this will

inevitably incur the hatred of the devil as well as those that try to alter the Ten Commandments to suit their own theology.

William H. Shea has pointed out that Rev. 12:14-17 closely parallels Dan. 7:25. The following themes occur in both: three and a half times (1260 years), persecution, and an attack on the law of God.²⁵ In Daniel, the Little Horn wears out the saints of the Most High and thinks to change his Law, amongst other things as it concerns the Sabbath. In Revelation, the dragon goes to make war on those who keep that Law. The linkup between these Scriptures is indisputable, for “a time, and times, and half a time” in Rev. 12:14 is a direct quotation of “a time and times and the dividing of time” in Dan. 7:25. “This is a translation into Greek of the phrase that occurs in the Aramaic of Daniel 7:25 and the Hebrew of 12:7.”²⁶

Linking the dragon with the beast of Daniel suggests that when the papal Antichrist “thinks” to change the commandments of God, he is reflecting the mind of Satan, who is the ultimate Antichrist. Both have broken that Law and elevated themselves, in a vain attempt to achieve equality with God (Isa. 14:14; 2 Thess. 2:4); and both are angry when they notice anybody who insists on keeping it.

Coming at the end of Rev. 12 and pointing forward to the succeeding chapters, the words about the remnant and its characteristics are most emphatic. They herald the final stages of the cosmic war, the great controversy, which began before this planet was created, when the dragon defied the Most High and also stood up to Michael—before continuing the struggle after our Lord was born in Bethlehem. They are also the final fulfillment of what the Almighty told the devil before he expelled our first parents from Eden: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15).

This conflict will end when Jesus has returned in glory, destroyed the evil one with all his works, and restored the original harmony of the universe by creating “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13).

Chapter Two

THE DRAGON AND THE OTHER WOMAN

I

Two women figure prominently together with the dragon.

We met the first one in Rev. 12. She is the magnificent personage clad with the sun who stands on the shining moon, her head surrounded by stars. This is the Lord's beloved: his people through the ages, especially Israel and its remnant, Biblical Christianity. The dragon, Satan, hates and persecutes her as well as her offspring, the Messiah, and then her latter-day seed, "which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17).

The other woman in the devil's life, to whom we must now introduce the reader, is an attractive but cruel prostitute called Babylon. Somewhat of a vampire, she even drinks human blood (Rev. 17:6). We read about her in Rev. 17 and 18.

She sits on a scarlet Beast with seven heads and ten horns, of which the Apocalypse says that it "was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition." The same verse declares enigmatically that it "is not, and yet is." (Rev. 17:8)

Babylon is dressed in costly garments and bedecked with jewels, no doubt also wearing a seductive perfume, such as only the rich can afford. This female image has repelled or tantalized many generations of Bible readers, who have not been confined to those who study prophecy. For the Afrikaans poet Dirk J. Opperman (1914-1985), she symbolized the world as the City, the great hooker, who seduces and enslaves us as materialistic sellouts of all we could have been, of all that is fine and holy. And we pay most dearly for her favors, promising her

in the allurements of her bed
the poet and the prophet's head.¹

Maxwell dwelt on the idea that Babylon is the counterpart of the New Jerusalem,² which is typologically apt. But in its structure Rev. 17 is really more closely related to Rev. 12.

In both these chapters, we read of a seven-headed monster and a woman. In both, their location is a wilderness, and yet the Bible also mentions a quantity of water. A river flowing through such an area, like the Euphrates in lower Mesopotamia, would fulfill this specification. In both chapters, too, the women are described as having children.

She who is clothed with the sun—a shining white—represents the people of the Most High, from the time when a coming Redeemer was first announced to Adam and Eve to the end of history. She especially symbolizes Israel and its continuation, the church. Espoused by the Lord, she gives birth to the Messiah as well as his brothers and sisters. But her bejeweled opponent, “arrayed in purple and scarlet colour,” is a whore, who kills “the martyrs of Jesus.” She, too, produces children, who are harlots like herself. These are not the offspring of God but daughters born to the kings of the earth with whom she fornicates. Her name is the great Babylon, derived from an ancient city on the Euphrates where Noah’s rebellious descendants built the tower of Babel and which later spawned an empire that destroyed Jerusalem and carried away her children into captivity. (Rev. 17:4-7)

In both chapters 12 and 17 of the Apocalypse, the resultant progeny resemble their fathers as well as their mothers. The remnant, blameless toward God and humanity, are tenderhearted, keeping the Lord’s Commandments and the faith of Jesus, while the reprobate daughters delight in becoming state churches and use oppressive, secular means to force their unscriptural dogmas on those who disagree with them.

It was at the tower of Babel where false religion first reared its rebellious head, in disobedience to the Lord, who had ordered Noah’s descendants to disperse and repopulate the world. They also doubted his promise that there would never again be a universal flood (Gen. 9:7-11). Defiantly they

determined to stay together, erecting their infamous tower, both as a safeguard against another inundation and as a symbol of their unity and might (Gen. 11:4). It would become the focus of a world government. Ellen White saw this as a comprehensive symbol of apostate religion through the ages, including people who claim to follow the Scriptures but really do not:

“In the professedly Christian world many turn away from the plain teachings of the Bible and build up a creed from human speculations and pleasing fables, and they point to their tower as a way to climb up to heaven. Men hang with admiration upon the lips of eloquence while it teaches that the transgressor shall not die, that salvation may be secured without obedience to the law of God. If the professed followers of Christ would accept God’s standard, it would bring them into unity; but so long as human wisdom is exalted above His Holy Word, there will be divisions and dissension. The existing confusion of conflicting creeds and sects is fitly represented by the term ‘Babylon,’ which prophecy (Revelation 14:8; 18:2) applies to the world-loving churches of the last day.”³

In the Middle Ages and especially during the Protestant Reformation, preachers and writers applied the symbol of Babylon to Catholicism. This, after all, became the mother of many churches, which have now proliferated into an amazing multitude. Though each of them cherishes undoubted Biblical truth, they also still adhere to errors derived from the great Mediterranean apostasy.

II

The heads of the Beast represent both seven kings and seven mountains on which the woman sits (vs. 9). The latter symbolize the topography of Rome. Many Latin poets, including the greatest—Virgil, Horace, and Ovid—call her the seven-hilled city. The emperor Vespasian (A.D. 9-79, reigned from 69), one of John’s contemporaries, even struck a coin which on its reverse side bore “a symbol of Rome as a woman seated upon seven hills.”⁴ The Apocalyptic prostitute,

moreover, describes herself as a queen; in John's time, she was indeed "that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (Rev. 17:9, 18; 18:7).

The early Christians called her Babylon, a "cryptic title . . . to avoid political reprisals,"⁵ as when Peter sent greetings from "the church that is at Babylon" (1 Pet. 5:13). A century later, Tertullian (c. 155–after 220) confirmed her identity in prophecy: "Babylon, in our own John [*sic*], is a figure of the city of Rome, as being equally great and proud of her sway, and triumphant over the saints."⁶

To a considerable extent, the description of Rev. 17 fits that ancient city—and yet not entirely. Rome's dominion fell very far short of extending over the planet, nor did it fully involve the relationship indicated by the statement: "with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication" (Rev. 17:1-2).

During the Middle Ages, Babylon on the scarlet Beast was increasingly identified with the Roman Church and the papacy, by three groups of people.

The first were religious dissidents like the Albigenses and the Waldensians, of whom we have more to say in other parts of this book.

Second, the Eastern Roman Empire, with Constantinople as its capital, energetically used Apocalyptic imagery to preserve or extend its political influence. "Missionary and propaganda teams were systematically despatched by the Eastern Church to the Balkans, Egypt and the Near East, who united with Byzantine diplomats in preaching the iniquity of the West." It was, they taught, incurably tainted by its connection with Rome, which was "Babylon, the mother of all wickedness."⁷

Third, and most tellingly, more and more Catholics vented similar ideas. In about 1250, a writer now known as Pseudo Joachim boldly stated: "And as the Roman Church asserts to have preeminence among all others, just as Judah claimed the same among the tribes of Israel, therefore in a special manner is the Roman Church the woman in golden dress, riding on the scarlet-colored beast; she is the harlot who, without discrimination, commits adultery with all the princes of the world."⁸

This accusation was taken up, not only by clerics and ordinary laymen but also by eminent authors, of whom the greatest was Dante (1265-1321). In his fictional visit to hell, he meets and interrogates Pope Boniface VIII. He tells this evil pontiff that John in the Apocalypse wrote about people like him:

Di voi, pastor, s'accorse il Vangelista,
quando colei che siede sopra l'acque
puttaneggiar coi regi a lui fu vista . . .

Pastors, the Evangelist had you in mind
when he saw her who sits upon the waters
and fornicates with the kings of all mankind . . .

(Canto XIX, lines 106-108)⁹

Yet the question arises: was it really necessary for learned Catholics like Martin Luther, large numbers of priests, and a multitude of lay people to break with Rome, fragmenting the Western church? The alternative of reform from within should surely have been attempted.

As an idea, it was much on the mind of many people during the Middle Ages. The kings of Europe even met with religious leaders at Konstanz in southernmost Germany, between 1414 and 1418, for a Council intended to solve the ills of the Roman Church. Ultimately, however, little was accomplished, apart from eliminating rival popes to end a schism—and burning a holy man, Jan Hus, who had taught that only radical changes in Catholic doctrine and practice could heal the ills of Christendom. When John Paul II in St. Peter's on 12 March 2000 apologized for the wrongdoing of his church, he failed to mention this incident, although he had originally planned to do so.

The Lord had loved the church at Rome when it was led by godly Priscilla and Aquila. As a good friend of ours used to say before his voice was swallowed up in silence, "Every harlot was a virgin once." Therefore when this congregation apostatized from Bible truth and adopted heathen practices, God did not abruptly abandon it.

In Old Testament times, he had often forgiven the lewd behavior of his people, both Judah and northern Israel with its ten tribes, exclaiming: “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?” (Hos. 11:8). Similarly he was also longsuffering towards the backsliding Roman Church.

Through the great apostle Paul, he even—in advance—provided an antidote for many of its ailments: his greatest epistle to the Romans on righteousness by faith. This is the very book that would kindle, almost 1,500 years later, an unquenchable flame of love for Christ and a deep desire for reform in Martin Luther’s heart.

Through many messengers, including priests and holy monks, the Almighty pleaded with the city on the Tiber. To the congregation of Thyatira, symbol of the saints whom Rome was oppressing and killing over 1260 years,¹⁰ the True and Faithful Witness wrote about the need for endurance to the end. He warned against the teachings of Jezebel, another symbol for Catholicism, yet also stated: “I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not” (Rev. 2:21). Eventually even the divine forbearance can be worn out, and God gives up, as when in ancient times he said about the kingdom of northern Israel: “Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone” (Hos. 4:17).

The Medieval writers who applied Rev. 17:1-6 to their church, including the papacy, provided the main sources from which the Reformers of the sixteenth century drew the inspiration to do the same; and many Protestants have followed in their footsteps. Some of Ellen White’s remarks about Babylon are fully in this tradition: “The purple and scarlet color, the gold and precious stones and pearls, vividly picture the magnificence and more than kingly pomp affected by the haughty see of Rome. And no other power could be so truly declared ‘drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.’”¹¹

But the book of Revelation hints at a more inclusive identification for the harlot woman than merely with Rome. Babylon, derived from “Babel” and meaning *confusion*, “is employed in Scripture to designate the various forms of false or

apostate religion.”¹² Rev. 17 is not complete in itself; it prepares the reader for chapter 18, with its graphic images of the judgments that afflict and finally destroy the whore. The representation of Babylon largely has an end-time focus. It is significant that through its wording Rev. 18:2, 3 is closely linked with Rev. 14:8.

Babylon includes degenerate forms of Protestantism, churches that have forsaken the principles established by the Reformation and seek to reunite or closely cooperate with Rome. She is, after all, not only the great whore, but also “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (vs. 5). Before the Second Coming, they—together with pagans, spiritualists, and all the opponents of the Lamb—will confederate and help the dragon in his war against the last generation who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

III

Let us now identify the scarlet Beast on which she sits. We begin by asking how many monsters, antagonistic to the Lord’s elect, inhabit the second half of Revelation. The answer is provided by their final fate. As T. S. Eliot put it, “The end is where we start from.”¹³

There are only three such creatures: the leopard Beast, the two-horned beast that helped him as his “false prophet,” and the great red dragon (Rev. 19:20; 20:10). They finally expire together, cast into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. The scarlet Beast, which will “go into perdition” (Rev. 17: 8) must therefore be one of these. It is not an additional beast.

Now, it cannot be the two-horned beast, because the one in Rev. 17 has ten horns. Just this consideration immediately eliminates one of the three possibilities. The other two would have to be the leopard Beast and the great dragon itself. Which is it? Let us consider the evidence.

The scarlet Beast “shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition” (vs. 8). We search for additional passages that include or clarify this expression in the rest of the Apocalypse. One is Rev. 11:7, which foretells how a

power that animated revolutionary France tried to eradicate religion by doing away with the very concept of God's existence.

In "The Sevenfold Prophecy and the Year-Day Principle" (*Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History*), we recounted how—from 10 November 1793 to 27 July 1794—that country had an atheist regime, when the Bible was both banned and burned. The results were horrific. France became a cesspool of iniquity, while the bloodstained blade of the guillotine rose and fell on neck after neck. Officially the Terror claimed 17,000 victims and many more who died in prison or without trial.¹⁴ All this was at the instigation of "the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit" (Rev. 11:7).

The revolutionaries wallowed in wickedness like ancient Sodom, from which two angels had rescued Abraham's nephew Lot and his family, before fire came down from God to destroy it, together with Gomorrah and other neighboring cities (Gen. 19:1-25). The French Assembly with its law proclaimed: "I know not the LORD" (Ex. 5:2), like the brutish pharaoh who sneered at Moses' petition for him to free the Israelites from their bondage. It looked as if God's Word had perished in Paris, "that great city which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt" (Rev. 11:8, RSV).

Fortunately this dreadful situation continued for only three and a half years, after which the atheist law was repealed. And then, from the creation of the British Bible Society in 1804 until the present, the Scriptures came to be greatly elevated and multiplied through translation after translation, propagated all over the earth.

All this was a fulfillment of the prophecy in Rev. 11:7-12.

Writing about these events in *The Great Controversy*, Ellen G. White showed how mightily Satan had striven to suppress the Scriptures. She referred to the agency that sought to abolish religion as the beast from the bottomless pit in "a new manifestation of satanic power."¹⁵

A few pages later, she said: "When error in one garb has been detected, Satan only makes it in a different disguise, and multitudes receive it as eagerly as the first. When the people

found Romanism to be a deception, and he could not through this agency lead them to transgression of God's law, he urged them to regard all religion as a cheat, and the Bible as a fable; and, casting aside the divine statues, they gave themselves up to unbridled iniquity."¹⁶

This, however, should not be misunderstood: the Beast from the bottomless pit is not atheism but the devil who uses it as one of his many stratagems. Nor did such efforts cease with the events of the French Revolution. Far from it being their end, it became the fountainhead for further and even more terrible depravity.

During the twentieth century, the world witnessed further outpourings of Satanic wrath against the Scriptures, with similar results and on a vastly greater scale. Communism, whose regimes for many decades darkened much of our planet, sought to implement atheism as a state religion. Again, the Beast arising from the bottomless pit had the Bible banned. Again, unbridled iniquity flourished. Again, the blood of human beings flowed in copious streams.

But what was the connection between the French Revolution and Communism? The same as between a mother and her child, which is widely recognized, as in the following statement: "French materialist philosophy, social theory and socialist ideas were significant influences on the development of Communism and major contributors to Marx's ideas."¹⁷

In 1903, before the terrible regimes arose, Ellen White—with astonishing accuracy—pointed out the forces that would shape the twentieth century and drench it with blood. She emphasized how these influences would contradict the Scriptures and remove their restraints from society. Amongst others, she mentioned "evolution and its kindred errors," which tend to infidelity; so-called higher criticism "destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation . . . robbing God's word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives"; Spiritualist assertions that we are "unfallen demigods," unfettered by any law except our own desires; and anarchy, "seeking to sweep away all law, not only divine, but human."¹⁸

At the time when she wrote these words, on the doorstep of the new century, the learned West was generally looking forward to a brave new world. Progressive thinkers thought they were entering an era in which science and technology would rid the world of war and want. Goodwill, abundance for all, and universal peace were about to prevail. But that little woman presented a completely different vision of the future.

To the ideas already quoted, she added a specific, ominous prediction: “The centralizing of wealth and power; the vast combinations for the enriching of the few at the expense of the many; the combinations of the poorer classes for the defense of their interests and claims; the spirit of unrest, of riot and bloodshed; the worldwide dissemination of the same teachings that led to the French Revolution—all are tending to involve the whole world in a struggle similar to that which convulsed France.”¹⁹

And so it was. The planet was grievously wounded by two world wars and countless other conflicts. Multitudes of men, women, and children perished. After the Russian revolution in 1917, violently wicked, godless people rose to political power and committed ideological murders on a scale that would have caused even those who sat imperturbably beside the guillotine in 1794 to gasp. Elsewhere we also refer to two of these: Joseph Stalin, responsible for some thirty million deaths in the Soviet Union, and Chinese Mao Tse-tung, whose victims numbered anything between twenty and forty-three million.

Nor did the Marxist carnage end with these two men. For instance, Pol Pot, partly imitating Mao’s Cultural Revolution, in 1975 unleashed his own peasant Communism. Like the barbarians who had taken over the French Revolution, he wanted to recreate reality itself, beginning with the declaration, “This is Year Zero.” All vestiges of the old society were swept away. The people he had slaughtered summarily included “the educated, the wealthy, Buddhist monks, police, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and former government officials. Ex-soldiers were killed along with their wives and children.” To renew society, “Money was forbidden. All businesses were shuttered, religion banned,

education halted, health care eliminated, and parental authority revoked.” He had the cities evacuated, for all its inhabitants had to become peasants, though they knew nothing about agriculture. Millions of them “were now forced into slave labor in Pol Pot’s ‘killing fields’ where they soon began dying from overwork, malnutrition and disease, on a diet of one tin of rice (180 grams) per person every two days.” Two million fellow Cambodians were murdered or perished in unnatural ways, but he cheated justice by dying at 73 “of an apparent heart attack.”²⁰ His heroes, Stalin and Mao Tse-tung, had also died of natural causes. The devil often shields his own against retribution in this life.

In many countries, sometimes for years on end, the twentieth century was the Terror of the French Revolution writ large. The basic cause, however, was the same: rejecting religion—especially the Bible—with its restraints as well as its uplifting power. In every case, the great instigator was Satan, lurking in the shadows behind the thoughts and fantasies of human beings, who turned their backs on the light that God had given them and wandered off into darkness.

Atheism is still very much alive today. In contemporary America, it has become most militant, seeking to expunge all vestiges of Christianity from public life by going to extremes about the separation between church and state. This time, too, the devil is cunningly using it as a maneuver to fire up Fundamentalist zealots who want to contaminate politics with theology. The fiend behind their fair-seeming designs knows well what the inevitable consequence would be: legislation that mandates faith in a quite Medieval way, by stipulating what people have to believe in and how they must worship. Eventually this can have only one effect, to destroy religious freedom in America, with disastrous consequences for both dissenters and the country itself.

IV

But is there anything else in the Apocalypse to link the scarlet Beast with the evil one? We believe there is, namely Rev. 20:1-10. This tells how a mighty angel descends from

heaven with a key to “the bottomless pit” (vs. 1). He lays hold of the dragon, that is, Satan, and binds him, throwing him into “the bottomless pit” (vs. 3) where he remains for a thousand years.

In the original, these verses call the place of the devil’s imprisonment the ἀβυσσος (abyssos, “abyss”), which is—as seen from space—what our planet will become when devastated by the events that accompany the Second Coming. According to Rev. 6:14, the very atmosphere will be stripped away; for “the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.”

To designate the resultant formlessness, the original Hebrew uses the word *tehom*. The Septuagint translated it with *abyssos*.²¹ Accordingly, this word appeared in the Bible used by the non-Semitic Christians of the apostolic age. It was therefore perfectly intelligible to the seven congregations in Asia Minor where John had been ministering before his exile on Patmos and to whom the Lord initially addressed the Apocalypse.

Graphic portrayals of the earth’s desolation at that time are also found in the Old Testament. Isaiah speaks of a time when “the land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled,” and the whole world “utterly broken down,” when it “shall reel to and fro like a drunkard” (Isa. 24:3, 19, 20). Jeremiah also saw this future devastation: “I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.” (Jer. 4:23)

This darkness on the face of the earth, together with Jeremiah’s direct quotation from Gen. 1:2, “without form, and void,” refer the reader back to the time when the world began. For a millennium, the planet will be partially reduced to a state of chaos, reminiscent of what it had been like before the Almighty said, “Let there be light,” and began his creative work.

When Jesus returns, he empties the earth of everybody, except the devil and his fellow demons. Wicked humanity is dead and all the redeemed, the resurrected as well as the living saints, are taken to heaven. There, with their Redeemer, during a thousand years they sit in judgment on the unsaved of all ages, as well as Satan and the fallen angels who have tempted the human race.

On a devastated world, these await the awful verdict. The degenerate angels, once so energetic in spitefully ruining people to acquire companions for their final misery, now have nothing to do. Around them lies a planetful of corpses in unburied heaps or dismally alone. The wicked who have come and gone with the years and centuries still molder in their graves. The fallen angels brood on their own condition and sometimes squabble bitterly among themselves, while lost humanity slumbers on in the sleep of the damned.

After the millennium, the Lord and his people return to the earth. Then the wicked are resurrected. This frees the devil from his dreary confinement, and he returns to his frenzied activity of tempting the nations. He ascends, that is, from the bottomless pit. It is at this time that the Beast becomes the eighth king, though he is “of the seven,” and he is indeed about to go into perdition (Rev. 17:11).

All the hosts of the doomed accept King Satan as their leader and march on the New Jerusalem, which has in the meantime descended to our planet. They seek to conquer it. But a fire comes down from the sky and devours them. And so “the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone” (Rev. 20:10).

V

The literary parallel between Rev. 17 and Rev. 12, already noted, also seems to equate the scarlet Beast with the dragon.

Let us, moreover, take a closer look at the color that links them. It is practically the same. The Antichristian Beast, however, looks very different; it is a spotted leopard. This, too, must therefore be eliminated from our identification parade. It is true that like the scarlet Beast it experiences a

setback and a recovery. That is, the leopard Beast receives a deadly head wound, which is healed, while the scarlet Beast is committed to the bottomless pit but later released. In both cases, the world is amazed (Rev. 13:3; 17:8). “However, this similarity does not necessarily prove identity.”²²

It is enlightening to compare the colors in the Greek original of Rev. 12:3 and Rev. 17:3. Two different words are used. The dragon is πυρρος (*pyrros*), “flame-coloured, yellowish-red” and the Beast κοκκινον (*kokkinon*), “scarlet.”²³ But what does the latter word mean? *Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* states that *scarlet* can refer to “any of various bright reds.” Among Funk and Wagnalls’ meanings, we find “a brilliant red, inclining to orange.” Surely this and “flame-colored, yellowish red” are practically the same thing.

At least the translators of the Spanish Bible have thought so, rendering both *pyrros* in Rev. 12 and *kokkinon* in Rev. 17 as *escarlata* (“scarlet”).

Why, however, could John not have used the same word in both cases? In chapter 12, he depicts the dragon by itself as an ominous, cruel creature. But in chapter 17, he closely links the woman’s description with that of the Beast. She is “arrayed in purple and *scarlet*” (Rev. 17:4, emphasis added), self-consciously a queen (Rev. 17:18; 18:7), while he is the great usurper prince of this world.

Scarlet is a royal color. But the Bible also associates it with iniquity, as in the famous passage: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1:18). In contrast with majestic but immoral Babylon, the garment of the woman we met in Rev. 12:1 is a pure and brilliant white, for she is “clothed with the sun.”

Various commentators have supposed that Babylon and the scarlet Beast represent, respectively, the religious and the secular aspects of the powers arrayed against the Lord and his people. Some have even explicitly characterized the twosome as church and state. This is not sustained by the facts.

A sharp separation between church and state is a modern, especially an American, idea, largely derived from dissenting Protestants in and from England. Ancient people would have been quite puzzled by a phenomenon like the Rhode Island colony founded in 1647 at the insistence of Roger Williams (1603-1683) that no government should legislate about religion. Also perplexing to them would have been what happened a few decades later, when William III—a Hollander married to the English princess Mary—on invitation successfully invaded Britain during the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The next year they conceded a Bill of Rights and a situation that would increasingly reduce the state to what Thorstein Veblen has called “a bureau for the administration of the public peace and the regulation of equity between private interests.”²⁴ Until those times, in most places on earth, governance was almost never conceived of as a purely secular arrangement, derived from the community. Sovereignty was not rooted in the people but in the monarch, who derived his prerogatives from sources beyond their consent,²⁵ especially the “divine right of kings.”

Probably the most notorious example of royal insistence on such an autocratic principle is attributed to the “sun” king Louis XIV (1638-1715), shortly after his coronation at Reims on 13 April 1655. Needing more money to pursue his war against Spain, he asked endorsement from the Parliament of Paris. Though he obtained it, some members tried to contest the legality of such a decision, which allegedly caused him to cry out loudly, “L’état, c’est moi!” (*I am the state!*).²⁶

Curiously the closest approach to our present-day concept of a separation between church and state was God’s arrangement for ancient, theocratic Israel. The Lord disliked the institution of kingship and central government, but permitted it when the chosen people clamored for it. (1 Sam. 8, 12) However, the monarchs had to abide by an unalterable constitution, the Ten Commandments (plus many other laws and ordinances that could not be changed), nor were they permitted to encroach on the preserve of the priesthood and the Levites.

In contrast with Egyptian pharaohs as well as Assyrian or Babylonian rulers, Israelite and Jewish kings were not allowed to sacrifice or even enter the temple. Much of the judiciary and national education lay beyond their reach. Criticism, both religious and ethical, by the priesthood and especially the prophets, was also the monarch's lot—though the Decalogue forbade plain slander (“false witness against thy neighbour”). The chosen people and their rulers were subject to extensive legal constraints and a separation of powers. Nobody had complete immunity from censure. Ancient Israel and Judah, a unique nation, enjoyed great blessings whenever they wholeheartedly obeyed the Most High, yet there was also a threat that constantly hung over them: “Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king” (1 Sam. 12:25).

Separating religion from government was foreign to the pagan mind. It certainly did not apply to early Christian times, when people had to worship the state, personified as the goddess Roma, and emperors like Domitian or Diocletian were addressed as *Dominus et Deus* (“Lord and God”). Besides, Rev. 17:3 imputes a strongly religious element to the scarlet Beast, for it is “full of names of blasphemy.” Satan has always craved worship and sought to equate himself with God.

There can be little doubt that the red dragon of Rev. 12 and the scarlet Beast of Rev. 17 are one and the same.

VI

But what about the puzzling statement that he “was, and is not, and yet is” (Rev. 17:8)? Uriah Smith explained it with reference to vv. 8-11 as follows:

“While the Roman power as a nation had a long, uninterrupted existence, it passed through certain phases during which the symbol would not be applicable to it, and during which the beast, in such prophecies as the present might be said not to be, or not to exist. Thus Rome in its pagan form was a persecuting power in its relation to the people of God, during

which time it constituted the beast that was. But when the empire was nominally converted to Christianity, there was a transition from paganism to another phase of religion falsely called Christian. During a brief period, while this transition was going on, it lost its ferocious and persecuting character, and then it could be said of the beast that it was not. As time passed, it developed into the papacy and again assumed its bloodthirsty and oppressive character.”²⁷

This view, however, is surely incorrect because it cannot be harmonized with the symbolism of Rev. 12, 13, and 17 or the facts of history.

First, it disregards an important prophetic element which indicates the time frames which chiefly feature in those chapters. Rev. 12:3 shows the dragon wearing a crown on each of its heads. That was an era of empires, when Satan tried to kill the “man child” (Jesus) at his birth and subsequently caused the church to flee into the wilderness. According to Rev. 13:1, the pontifical Beast—the dragon’s protégé—has ten crowns, which are placed on the ten horns. The career of the papacy predominantly spans the Catholic Middle Ages as well as the Protestant Reformation, when monarchs ruled over Western Europe. But in Rev. 17, the great prostitute sits on a scarlet Beast with seven heads and ten horns, but none of these has a crown on it (vv. 3, 9). Now the focus is largely on the end time, when all her machinations will fail and doom will overtake her (Rev. 18). It is a period when republics predominate—with only a few ornamental kings and queens. The devil, of course, continues through all those ages, from before the beginning of our planet’s history until his bitter end, a thousand years hence.

Second, the papacy began to develop before the empire nominally adopted Christianity under Constantine I, the Great. It became a part of the setup he created. Though not yet fully dominant in the West, it was already a subdivision of the imperial church.

Third, that emperor almost immediately persecuted dissenting Christians, the Donatists of North Africa, from 317 to 321²⁸—only five years after his conversion at the Milvian Bridge in

312.²⁹ He did so despite the Edict of Milan, which had in 313 granted general religious toleration.³⁰

According to the Catholic historian Paul Johnson, the first Christian emperor “put order and stability, the rule of law, before any other religious consideration. When dissent in his view challenged the rule of law he acted quite ruthlessly. In 316 he thought it necessary to persecute the Donatists, and did so; one Donatist sermon complained that ‘local judges were imperatively ordered to act and put the secular power in motion; buildings were surrounded by troops; our wealthy followers were threatened with proscription, the sacraments were defiled, a mob of heathen were unleashed on us, and our sacred buildings became the scene of profane feasts.’” A dozen years later, he introduced theological censorship. “He ordered savage action against Arian writings: ‘If any treatise composed by Arius is discovered, let it be consigned to the flames . . . in order that no memorial of him whatever be left . . . [and] if anyone shall be caught concealing a book by Arius, and does not instantly bring it out and burn it, the penalty shall be death.’”³¹

VII

We think the enigmatic words “was, and is not, and yet is” (Rev. 17:8) are better explained by contrasting them with a phrase at the beginning of the Apocalypse referring to the Almighty, “which is, and which was, and which is to come” (Rev. 1:4). The devil, on the other hand, “was, and is not,” nor does he “come”; his destiny is to “go” . . . into perdition. All the same, he “yet is.” That is, Satan’s being still alive and active cannot be denied, but in comparison with the Eternal One he now has only a quasi-existence; for he will soon be eliminated.

The Greek words ὁ ὢν (ho ōn), “the being [one],” rendered into English as “which is,” echoes the Septuagint translation of God’s most awesome name.³² This is how the King James Bible puts it: “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, . . . I AM hath sent me to you” (Ex. 3:14). But in the Septuagint, this reads: “And God spoke to Moses, saying, I am THE BEING” (ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν, ego eimi ho ōn).

In English, “from him which is, and which was, and which is to come” (Rev. 1:4) is fairly straightforward. But the translators of the King James Version must really have scratched their heads over the apostle’s Greek. It is, to state the matter frankly, ungrammatical—deliberately so. It says: “from the *being*, the *was* and the *coming* one.”

“The *was*” seems bad enough, but even worse for those who know the original language is the construction that follows ἀπο (*apo*, “from”). The rule is that after this preposition the genitive case must follow, but here John uses the nominative. It is roughly as if, in English, he wrote “from he” instead of “from him.” Was this because, as has been suggested, the apostle’s Greek was so bad? Not at all. He was simply unwilling to modify the words ὁ ὢν (*ho ōn*), “the being [one]”; he wanted his readers to be startled into recognizing that expression from the Old Testament, and for them to know that the resurrected Christ who spoke to him was the divine one who met with Moses on Sinai. In the rest of the sentence, the genitive follows this introductory *apo* (from), in its normal grammatical way.

John was using *enallage*, a figure of speech, which is as Arthur Quinn puts it “an effective grammatical mistake.” A well-known English example is that memorable statement in *Punch Magazine*: “You pays your money, and you takes your choice.”³³ And American baseball player Satchel Paige said: “Sometimes I sits and thinks, and sometimes I just sits.”

Together with *ho ōn*, the words *ego eimi* (*I am*) figure in the introduction to the Apocalypse, which goes on to say: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8). Alpha and Omega being the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet, this says that the Lord is the A to Z of human destiny. Verse 11 repeats the same idea but for “beginning and ending” substitutes “the first and the last.” The latter expression is taken from Isaiah (Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12, 14), where—in the context of punishing Babylon—it designates God as the master of eternity and the one who arranges the affairs of the world.

At the end of the Apocalypse, as Christ is saying goodbye to his readers with a final promise about the Second Coming, he also describes himself as the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (Rev. 22:12, 13).

Are we not making too much of the Greek words for “I am”? We do not think so. Note that *ego eimi* is an emphatic construction. A speaker referring to himself would normally omit the pronoun. Instead of ἐγὼ εἶμι (*ego eimi*, “I am”), he would simply say *eimi* (“am”). Those who know Latin, Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese will recognize this construction. In those languages, too, the many verb endings make the use of pronouns unnecessary—except when special prominence, particularly emphasis, requires them.

Ego eimi is central to many of Christ’s descriptions for himself, especially in the fourth gospel, also written by John. For instance: “I AM the bread of life” (John 6:48); “I AM the light of the world” (John 8:12); “I AM the good shepherd” (John 10:14); “I AM the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

The most remarkable use of this emphatic I AM is to be found in the last few verses of John 8. Our Lord had just told some obnoxious adversaries: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.” Thereupon they made fun of him: “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” His answer stunned them into silence: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”

Here in his Gospel the apostle—a very bold man—also wrote deliberately ungrammatical Greek. Is this another case of *enallage*? Perhaps, but what he wished to communicate transcends our normal categories of thought. The effect of reading his text is to startle us and even to dislocate our normal thinking. Fortunately, in this case, the English translators have preserved the triumph of sense over grammar. Of course we cannot juxtapose “was” with “I am.” The meaning is something like, “Before Abraham was, I was the I AM.” Jesus was obviously also referring to that awesome expression that God used in speaking to Moses. The evidence for this is that the Jews who heard him understood him

perfectly . . . and wanted to stone him for blasphemy, because he had claimed divinity for himself. (John 8:56-59)

There is, then, a contrast between the scarlet Beast that “was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition” and the Lord “which is, and which was, and which is to come.” This is true in both a cosmic sense and in relation to the events depicted by the Apocalypse.

Lucifer, before he became Satan, was a most important being so far as God and his universe were concerned. Long before our planet existed, he *was*, but after he sinned and fell from his first estate, he really no longer amounted to anything—except on a single planet, which became the unfortunate recipient of his malignant attention. In this sense, it could be said of him that he “is not, and yet is” (the opposite of the great I AM, with whom he selfishly sought equality).

But these words also have an application in the end time. After becoming the tempter of our race and the indefatigable opponent of Christ, the devil’s efforts are halted when he “is not”—during his imprisonment in the bottomless pit. This description of him does not apply to John’s time or to that of Constantine. Instead, it reflects the viewpoint of the last generation, which will witness how Satan’s schemes are abruptly nullified by the Second Coming. Afterwards the hosts of the damned “shall wonder . . . when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is” (Rev. 17:8). Following the second resurrection, when the wicked of all ages are alive again, he is free to tempt and once more lead them into desperate rebellion, which ends with the second and final death.

VIII

The heads and horns with which the harlot woman is associated are the same ones as those that feature in Dan. 7. The former symbolize the ancient empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome; the latter represent the kingdoms of Western Europe. Prophetic expositors have identified the seven heads in a variety of ways, which necessitates a following, separate chapter. But two problematic points

concerning their relationship with the red lady of the Mediterranean can more appropriately be dealt with here.

The first is that she sits not only on the scarlet Beast (vv. 3, 7) but also on its heads (vs. 9). Since they include a number of empires that came and went in ancient, pre-Christian centuries, these verses seem to suggest that in some sense the woman is older than our era.

Though the great Mediterranean apostasy began in the time just after the apostles, we need to remember that it is a syncretic religion. Some of Babylon's beliefs and attitudes are more ancient than Christianity. These include a very strong solar ingredient and contamination with Middle Eastern ideas, including Greek philosophy, as further chapters will show.

Like the woman clad with the sun, elements of the great hooker originated long before the Redeemer's birth. She is not only named after ancient Babylon because of a symbolic interrelationship but even somewhat constitutes its literal continuation. Revelation, however, deals mostly with her career in the Christian era.

The second problematic point is the attitude of the ten horns toward the woman. For many centuries, the kings of Western Europe have had an illicit relationship with the Catholic Church and often benefited by it. But we also read that though they will subordinate themselves to the Beast, they "shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (Rev. 17:16).

Let us note that the antagonism of the horns is not directed against the scarlet Beast. After all, in a sense, they are part of it. For most of the time, the rulers of Europe never even realized that they were serving Satan, yet at times they did hate the woman. When in history was this particular prophecy fulfilled?

A number of writers, though disagreeing among themselves, have represented this hatred as a change in the relationship between the Western European monarchs and the Roman Church. "Some apply this attitude on the part of the ten horns to the attitude of some of the nations of Western Europe toward the papacy since Reformation times; others

consider that the fulfillment of this prediction is yet future. Heretofore the horns had given their support to the policies advocated by the ‘woman’ . . . particularly to the plot to slay the saints . . . But when Christ overcomes them . . . they turn on her, realizing that she has deceived them.”³⁴

On the face of it, this is very feasible, and yet another perspective also suggests itself, especially if we look back a good deal further than the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Whatever favors and advantages they obtained from harlot Rome, the European kings of the Middle Ages often hated the arrogant man in that city and other princes of the church—sometimes to the point of physically attacking them. This is not unusual for immoral women and their clients: they fornicate and fight.

Much of the trouble resulted from the papacy’s ownership for more than 1,100 years of the Papal State, the middle third of Italy, and other vast possessions. The pontiffs also sought to dominate the kings and emperors, especially during the high Middle Ages. These factors stimulated conflict, hatred, and greed.

Some readers will know the story of Henry IV (1050-1106), the German emperor that offended Pope Gregory VII, who was conspiring to have him deposed. To keep his throne, the monarch was compelled to await the pontiff’s pleasure at Canossa, three days in the snow. There he stood, barefooted, scantily dressed, and shivering, an unwilling penitent knocking on the castle door for admission.

How he must have hated that pope! Afterwards Henry took his revenge by making war on Gregory, whom he would surely have killed if he could.

This was not an isolated case. For instance, Innocent III, with whom the papacy climbed to the pinnacle of its power, punished seven kings and two rival emperors with excommunication and interdict.³⁵ These included the three most powerful rulers of Europe: Otto IV, the emperor of Germany, King Philip Augustus of France, and King John of England.³⁶

The last mentioned had refused to recognize the Archbishop of Canterbury, the pope’s appointee. For his pains, Pope

Innocent excommunicated him and incited the French to invade his territories. “John was only able to receive absolution after he had surrendered his kingdom to the Papacy, to be held in future as a fief for the service of 1,000 marks a year. Other vassal-kingdoms of the Papacy were Hungary, Portugal, and Aragon.”³⁷

Surely none of those rulers, even though Catholics, loved the pope.

Particularly instructive was the conflict between the Vatican and the Hohenstaufen emperors, whose dynasty “ruled in Germany from 1138 to 1208 and from 1212 to 1254.”³⁸

The Vatican’s policy was to maintain a balance of power in Italy. Its Papal State or “patrimony of St. Peter,” with the pontiff as king, was sandwiched in between the self-ruling cities in the North and the southern kingdom of Naples and Palermo, Sicily.

Frederick I Barbarossa (1152-1190) was cherishing grand ambitions. He wanted to rule like the mighty emperors of former ages, men such as Constantine, Justinian, Charlemagne, and Otto I. Rejecting the idea that he owed his power to the pope or was subservient to him, he claimed to derive his imperial dignity from God himself. His goal was the supremacy of *law* and not of the priestly office.³⁹

These ideas made Frederick utterly odious to Pope Alexander III (1159-1181), who saw him as a serious threat and united northern Italy against him by forming the Lombard League (*Societas Lombardie*). On 29 May 1176, their combined forces defeated Barbarossa’s troops at Legnano. As a result, he had to recognise the supremacy of the pontiff and restore all the Church property he had captured. “On 24 July 1177, he submitted to Alexander in person at Venice. The meeting took place outside St. Mark’s church. Frederick approached the Pope, threw off his imperial garment and prostrated himself at his feet. The Pope, with tears in his eyes, raised him, embraced him, and led him into the church, where he gave him his blessing. Afterwards Frederick held the Pope’s stirrup . . .”⁴⁰ The emotion of this proud and humiliated Hohenstaufen can readily be imagined.

His marvellously talented grandson, Frederick II (1194-1250, Holy Roman Emperor from 1220), also incurred the animosity of the papacy by being too powerful. Through his mother, he had inherited the Regno or Kingdom of Naples and Sicily. He also ruled the German Empire in the North.

Gregory IX (before 1170-1241, reigned from 1227) was a ruthless old man, who quite deliberately “decided that the alliance between Empire and Papacy must be destroyed,”⁴¹ though that setup had sustained and empowered the pontifical Establishment for three hundred years, since the time of Otto I (912-973, Holy Roman Emperor from 962). The pope was afraid that Frederick could unite all Italy under him, imperilling the Papal State, and so he “raised up enemies for Frederick wherever he could.” Especially the city-states of northern Italy in this case supported the papacy.⁴²

The war that followed ended with the emperor’s defeat and the shattering of his power in 1248, at a place which he himself had prematurely named Vittoria. Just two years later he died.⁴³ The papacy and its allies then also decided to exterminate Frederick’s line. In 1268, his last heir, Conradin, a boy of fifteen, crossed the Alps to reclaim his patrimony. He was defeated at Tagliacozze, captured, tried, and beheaded in the marketplace of Naples (1268). How his mitered enemy gloated! “Thus perished the last of the ‘brood of vipers.’”⁴⁴

During 1994, I found myself gazing on Frederick’s tomb at Palermo in one of its magnificent churches, and pondered how his humiliation, with that of his grandfather, led to the breakup of the medieval empire. Eventually, by the sixteenth century, Germany fractured into some three hundred separate political bodies.⁴⁵ Being rather more of Teutonic than Dutch ancestry, I found an indignation stirring within me, even after more than seven hundred years—and could readily imagine the hatred that those events engendered north of the Alps.

The antagonism of the European monarchs who generally supported the harlot woman was also allied to another emotion: greed. In Medieval times, the Roman Church eventually came to own a third of everything in Europe. It was like a hive which secular rulers could from time to time

descend on and rob of its riches. During the Reformation, this was one of the motives that influenced some kings who decided to become Protestants.

But greed already figured prominently in the conflict between the papacy and its nemesis, Philippe IV le Bel (1268-1314). France had moved into the vacuum created by the papal elimination of the Hohenstaufens. Philip the Fair was a handsomely inscrutable and most resourceful king. Unlike other medieval monarchs, he did not flinch from confronting Boniface VIII (c. 1235-1303, reigned from 1294), perhaps the greatest papal braggart of all time, who in his *Unam Sanctam* made even grander pretensions to total power than Innocent III, though lacking his political infrastructure.

Philip's ancestors, the Capetians, had for three hundred years been cultivating the idea that their monarchy was ordained of God, so he "believed the French throne to be more sacred than the papal one."⁴⁶

When eventually Boniface excommunicated him and was about to place his country under interdict, the king's agents suddenly turned up at the papal palace of Anagni in 1303 and arrested him. This enraged the aged pontiff, driving him into insanity and death.

The leader in this episode was William de Nogaret (1260/70-1313), a brilliant but terrible lawyer of Toulouse, who served as Philip's counselor and henchman for twenty years. This official fervently hated the papacy because the Inquisition had burned his Albigensian parents alive for alleged heresy.⁴⁷

De Nogaret's excommunication was reemphasized by Boniface's successor Benedict XI (reigned 1303-1304)—but exactly one month later this pope died of terrible intestinal pains. Poisoning could never be proved, but suspicion immediately fastened on the lawyer. De Nogaret had certainly "issued propaganda pamphlets rejoicing in the justice that God gave to malicious and worthless pontiffs."⁴⁸

The next pope, Clement V, feared the king so much that he annulled the bulls *Clericis Laicos* and *Unam Sanctam*,

“conceding outright victory to the secular power in its conflict with the church.”⁴⁹

But Philip’s spite, like his power, knew no bounds. Now he decided to demolish the Knights Templar, an order of fighting monks created during the crusades, a major power bastion for the papacy. They were really a state within a state, which Philip found intolerable. Furthermore, “they were great landowners and international bankers, and the royal treasury was itching to lay its hands on their resources.”⁵⁰

In 1307, Philip had the Templars arraigned for heresy and immorality. “Egged on by Nogaret, the royal inquisitors pursued the Templars with relentless savagery. Their Grand Master, Macques de Molay, was brutally tortured and burned, while the Archbishop of Sens sent 54 Knights to the stake on the same day.”⁵¹

Clement was helplessly compelled to witness their destruction. They had been “accused by suborned witnesses of bestiality, idol-worship, denial of the sacraments; of selling their souls to the Devil and adoring him in the form of a huge cat; of sodomy with each other and intercourse with demons and succubi. . .” Philip’s diabolic scheme accorded perfectly with the spirit which then was rife in a degenerate Holy Office, for “charges of black arts became a common means to bring down an enemy and a favored method of the Inquisition in its pursuit of heretics, especially those with property worth confiscating. . .”⁵²

With Clement began the so-called Babylonian Captivity of the papacy, which had to relocate from Rome to Avignon in southern France. The next six popes were all Frenchmen⁵³ and careful of their king. It would be seventy years before the pontiffs could return to Rome.

In such ways the horns that generally supported the woman of Rev. 17 also vented their hatred against her.

IX

But what of the prophecy that the horns would attack and even burn the harlot with fire? This, too, was fulfilled on more than one occasion.

Just after the Germanic peoples had begun to establish their kingdoms among the ruins of the Western Empire, Rome for the first time in many centuries suffered the pillage and atrocities of invading armies. The first incursion was that of Alaric the Visigoth in A.D. 410. Then Rome was sacked again, in A.D. 455, by Genseric and his Vandal troops.

Even more spectacular were the events of 1083. In that year, Henry IV sought to avenge himself on Gregory VII for his suffering and disgrace at Canossa. The German emperor advanced on Rome, most probably to replace this odious pope with a pontiff more to his taste. But Gregory summoned his vassal, Robert Guiscard, the formidable Norman who lorded it over Sicily and southern Italy. After some delay, this ruler and his barbarian host enthusiastically rushed northward. Henry, unable to cope with such formidable soldiers, beat a hurried retreat.

Unfortunately for the pope, the Roman populace then began to fight the Normans, who made this a pretext for sacking the city with its immense accumulation of riches. Especially the churches were “vast storehouses of wealth.” Guiscard’s forces included wild Calabrians and Saracens from Sicily, whose actions were nasty in the extreme. When the mob reacted against them, a massacre ensued and the city was set ablaze.⁵⁴ This turned the populace against the pope, so now it was Gregory’s turn to flee for his life.⁵⁵ He died in exile.

The sacking of Rome by forces of a king who normally supported the papacy would be twice repeated four hundred years later. With the Reformation at its height, the emperor Charles V neglected the provisioning of his German and Spanish troops, commanded by Charles, Duc de Bourbon. Enraged, they broke into the city on 6 May 1527 and “ruthlessly sacked” it for eight days on end. In September they returned and did it again.⁵⁶ “Massacre, plunder, fire and rape raged out of control . . . For weeks Rome smoked and stank of unburied corpses gnawed by dogs. The occupation lasted nine months, inflicting irreparable damage. Two thousand bodies were estimated to have been thrown into the Tiber, 9800 buried, loot and ransoms estimated at between three and four million ducats. Only when plague

appeared and food vanished, leaving famine, did the drunken satiated hordes recede from the ‘stinking slaughterhouse’ they had made of Rome.”⁵⁷

For the horns’ reactions against that city and its pontiffs, according to the prediction of Rev. 17:16, we do not need to wait on the future; history bears ample testimony to its fulfillment in the past. Despite their lewd connection with prophetic Babylon, the nations of Europe have often hated her and sometimes stripped her naked, by depriving her of her power and robbing her of her wealth. At times, they have even burned her with fire.

But will the rulers of Europe and of the planet not turn on her again, and most destructively, when they have to share in heaven’s end-time retribution against her, as they realize how she has led them to their doom? This is an interesting, but unnecessary, hypothesis. More than once, the rulers of Europe have already—in bygone centuries—vented their hatred against the pontiff and sacked his city.

If such were his will, the Almighty *could* use the ten horns to accomplish this work, as he has sometimes done in the past. But for the final act in the drama of the ages prophecy provides a different scenario. Together with their American friends, the European supporters of Babylon will share her fate in the time of the seven last plagues. Concerning the first of these we read: “There fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image” (Rev. 16:2).

We also note that, under the sixth plague, evil spirits seduce the rulers of the entire world to unite in a final, fateful unity to fight against God (Rev. 16:13, 14). This also does not sound like the ten horns turning on Babylon as she is about to perish.

Like the plagues that Moses was commanded to unleash against Egypt, these last ones are both a redemptive act to deliver the people who obey the Most High by keeping his Law and a punishment for those who persecute them.

How, then, will the ten horns and their allies react to Babylon’s destruction? The Bible says that “the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously

with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.” (Rev. 18:9-10). This chapter is full of references to Eze. 27, which predicted the destruction of Tyre, another city symbol of those who used to oppose the Lord. Its king was a symbol of the devil himself (Eze. 28).

X

The dominant image in Rev. 17 of Babylon sitting on a Beast, with a color like her own, depicts the close association of false religion with Satan. It also calls attention to the empires, kingdoms, and republics that have agreed to act as his instruments, until the end of time. Rev. 18 mostly deals with the consternation of the harlot’s lovers, those who rule the earth and the merchants whom she has enriched.

Among her opponents on high, however, a different emotion will prevail: “Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her,” because “in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth” (Rev. 18:20, 24).

Chapter Three

THE MYSTERY OF THE SEVEN HEADS

Little if anything in the Apocalypse is as intriguing or perplexing as the seven heads of the beasts described in Rev. 12, 13, and 17. Even within the Historical School no uniform interpretation exists. That identifying them would not be easy seems to be hinted at in the Bible itself by the words “Here is the mind which hath wisdom” (Rev. 17:9).

Referring to the chapter in which this statement occurs, William B. Engle has asserted that understanding its basics “is not contingent on identification of the heads.”¹ That is possibly true, and yet we can never be sure in advance what light the sharpening of our insight about any symbol may throw on other topics raised by the Apocalypse.

A serious defect of many analyses focusing on the heads is that they lack support from the Bible or are contradicted by it.

In what follows, we briefly refer to nine identifications by Seventh-day Adventist writers—there are undoubtedly more—and why we cannot accept them. Then, in the next chapter, we present our own interpretation.

Such an approach is necessary for many readers, who are perhaps acquainted with and even puzzled by the alternative, conflicting explanations about the seven heads. The field is cluttered up with them and needs some preliminary clearing.

I

First, there is the view that the seven heads do not represent particular entities but simply “all political opposition to the people and cause of God on earth throughout history.”² But this idea is ruled out by a single verse, which proves that specific powers are meant: “Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come” (Rev. 17:10).

II

Second, various nineteenth-century authors believed the heads referred to seven stages of Roman government. This is how Smith interpreted them in 1876. He said they were the “Kings, Consuls, Decemvirs, Dictators, Triumvirs, and Emperors,” plus “the Popes.”³ In 1905, Haskell echoed the same idea.⁴ These Seventh-day Adventists inherited it from older interpreters outside their denomination. For instance, in 1825 the British writer John R. Park (1778-1847) maintained that “the seven heads are kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, military tribunes, emperors, and popes.”⁵

This hypothesis has become archaic and is simply out of date, especially owing to a more accurate view of the past, made possible by twentieth- and twenty-first-century research. Nowadays we know that not Rome but Hellas created the great civilization of the ancient Mediterranean world. The pagan Romans, a practical but somewhat unimaginative people, were largely important for helping to spread and perpetuate this heritage. The Lord, in his great scheme of things, would surely not have dignified even their smallest constitutional arrangements with so much prophetic attention. After all, the Greeks also had many forms of government. The interpretation of the seven heads as stages of Roman history has simply withered on the vine and need no longer be taken seriously.

For those that do not find that a sufficient reason for dismissing it, we add the following considerations.

It is a commonplace of interpretation that the Antichristian Beast depicted in Rev. 13 is a composite of the foursome from Dan. 7. The predominant leopard symbolism refers to the Greeks, the feet of a bear to the Medo-Persians, the mouth of a lion to the Babylonians, and the ten horns to the kingdoms into which the Western Roman Empire would one day divide.

At first glance, however, it looks as if the Romans as Romans play no role in Rev. 13. How can this be explained? They are represented, by the leopard imagery in a *Greco-*

Roman sense. We deal further with this concept in Chapter 4, “The Mystery Solved,” and later in the book.

But about the basic identity of the ten horns Historicist writers have to a large extent agreed. We think they were all Germanic peoples, namely the Heruli, Vandals, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Alamanni, Saxons, Lombards, Burgundians, and Suebi, also called Suevi, or Swabians.

All of these established states that have endured or merged with others which still exist, except the Heruli, Vandals, and Ostrogoths. Because they were non-Catholic Christians, their kingdoms in Italy and North Africa were violently uprooted in the fifth and sixth centuries at the instigation of the papacy and Byzantine emperors who ruled from Constantinople.

Equating the seven heads with political trivia about ancient Rome does not fit in with this overall symbolic pattern, designed by God himself.

If in Rev. 17, the seven heads mean seven forms of Roman government, they must also do so in Rev. 12, which deals with the great red dragon. Primarily this represents Satan, but many prophetic expositors have in addition interpreted it as a symbol of pagan Rome. And yet all seven heads wear *crowns* (Rev. 12:3)! At least four types of republican Roman government, the “consuls, decemvirs, dictators, triumvirs,” were fiercely non-monarchical. None of these functionaries would ever have dared to wear a crown. Expelling the last monarch, an Etruscan, subsequent to the rape of the lady Lucretia, the Romans made it a deadly crime for anybody to call himself a *king*. Julius Caesar was assassinated on the mere suspicion of wanting to be one. This very point was also raised by the wily scribes and Pharisees at the trial of Christ. When Pilate wanted to free our Lord, they cried out: “If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar” (John 19:12). It was a lethal threat, which cost Jesus his life.

A major defect of this view is the implication that the heads, and therefore also the horns, mean entirely different things in different Scriptures, Dan. 7, Rev. 12, Rev. 13, Rev. 17, as though these chapters were not related through their

allusions and symbolism, which they obviously are. This would potentially leave the bewildered reader with a total of twenty-eight heads and forty horns, which is surely far too many.

Albert Einstein, who had closely studied the complexities of the physical universe, once observed—and this is inscribed in Fine Hall, Princeton University: *Raffiniert ist der Herr Gott, aber boshaft ist er nicht* (“God is subtle, but he is not malicious”).⁶ In this case, too, the Lord has not gone out of his way to be difficult with us; for he wants us to understand his warnings and encouragement intended for our welfare. About the Apocalypse, he gave an explicit instruction: “Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (Rev. 22:10).

We need to come up with a coherent picture, in which all the parts of our prophetic interpretation for Daniel and Revelation as a whole can be fitted together as in a jigsaw puzzle. Our explanation, yet to be presented, meets this criterion. The same cannot be said for any of the older interpretations dealt with in this chapter.

Yet it is profitable to note the reasons for identifying the seven heads with stages of Roman government and why it was popular in an older America—as an object lesson on how prophetic writers can be affected and misled by current preoccupations, and fall into the trap of the contemporary. The topic is also interesting for its own sake.

When the United States declared its independence in 1776 and eleven years later drew up its present Constitution, the ancient Classics—as these were understood at the time—had a distinctive influence on the form of government that the Founding Fathers decided to adopt. They had inherited elements of democracy from England, to which they added others that were home grown; but also, according to Albert H. Marckwardt, “as a consequence of our break from English political tradition, we tended in our first flush of republican enthusiasm to look to Rome as a model.”⁷

This was especially evident in the Americans’ abolition of the monarchy and in deferring to the people, which reflected a pre-imperial Roman ideal⁸ and is made apparent by Latinate

words like *republic*, *senate*, *senator*, *Capitol Hill*, the *veto* power, etc. The *eagle* emblem, incorporated in the grand seal of the United States is also derived from Rome. Since ancient times it has been a symbol “of war and imperial power.”⁹ Gaius Marius (157-86 B.C.), a great general and seven-times consul of the Roman Republic,¹⁰ in 102 B.C. “decreed that the eagle would be the symbol of the Senate and People of Rome.”¹¹

Another expedient derived from that ancient people is making the American president commander-in-chief of the armed forces. During a national emergency, he can become, with Congressional approval, a virtual dictator, at least in military affairs. Of this, the Tonkin Gulf resolution during the Vietnam War provides a conspicuous example. It was passed on 7 August 1964 with a vote of 466 to 0 in the House and 88 to 2 in the Senate. It remained valid until 1970, when the senators repealed it, “realizing too late” that they had surrendered to Lyndon B. Johnson and his successor, Richard M. Nixon, “their powers in the foreign policy process by giving the president wide latitude to conduct the war as he saw fit.”¹² Americans never use the word *dictator*, as the ancient Romans certainly did. On the other hand, the latter, politically a more cautious people, restricted his powers, denying him simultaneous civil jurisdiction. They also limited his tenure to six months.¹³ When they gave up this practice, as they most notably did in the case of Julius Caesar, their republic fell; and then the reign of the dictatorial emperors began.

The break with England during and after the Revolution was, however, only one reason why an older America doted on Rome. Another was the development of secondary education. Classical ideals formed part of the American Renaissance, and “in dozens of academies the classical course, with Latin and Greek language, literature, history, and geography for its subject matter, was the accepted preparatory curriculum for college work.”¹⁴

By the 1840s and 1850s, these influences extended from the eastern seaboard to the Mississippi, “dotting the new towns and cities with courthouses built like Doric temples, homes

with columned porticos, college buildings reproducing the detail of the Parthenon.” Today its most notable residue is to be found in America’s place names, including eleven Romes, nine Corinths, and twelve Spartas.¹⁵

From the period of the Revolution onward, especially all things Roman were clearly reflected in older writings and art, such as painting and sculpture. For instance, George Washington, the indispensable man, was—as both Americans and Europeans saw him—a latter-day Cincinnatus: the ancient hero called from behind the plow, who accepted supreme, emergency powers when the existence of his people was threatened, yet afterwards humbly laid them down again.¹⁶ And Jefferson fixed “the nation’s architectural style as that of the Roman republic,” and “took the first steps that stamped America’s federal city as a Roman town.”¹⁷

The time during which the founding fathers and the next few generations lived was accordingly characterized by a “cult of antiquity.” This “was not, in the eighteenth century, confined to the learned.” Most people knew their ancient history, “much as medieval believers knew their Biblical history, through ritual and icons and theater.”¹⁸ Furthermore, history had not yet been abolished as a separate subject in American schools.

This Classical approach is clearly and rather quaintly present in the first edition of the *Life of Washington* (1800) by Pastor Mason Locke Weems. It was an immensely popular book, yet its author could—without confusing ordinary readers—write a paragraph like the following: “Washington was pious as Numa, just as Aristides, temperate as Epictetus, patriotic as Regulus. In giving public trusts, impartial as Severus; in victory, modest as Scipio—prudent as Fabius, rapid as Marcellus, undaunted as Hannibal, as Cincinnatus disinterested, to liberty firm as Cato, and respectful of the laws as Socrates.”¹⁹ To the majority of modern Westerners, this is just abracadabra.

For people today, with their very different educational background, an interpretation of the seven prophetic heads as stages in ancient Roman government seems quaint and

peculiar—if not a little unbalanced. After all, the ancient Republic of Rome endured for more than four hundred and fifty years,²⁰ and its Empire for further centuries; but its other, earlier stages just briefly flitted into and out of existence.

III

A third, and Preterist, view of the seven heads has a kinship with the foregoing, because of its Classical preoccupation. It holds that they symbolize individual Roman emperors, an idea which Kenneth A. Strand has brilliantly refuted. He shows that up to John's time not seven but eleven such rulers—from Augustus to Domitian—sat on the imperial throne.²¹

The editorial synopsis of his article ends by also debunking a fourth as well as a fifth interpretation.

According to the former, the heads refer to seven individual pontiffs from 1798 to the Second Coming. But since that date, when Pius VI suffered the anguish of arrest and exile at the hands of General Berthier, a little after the French Revolution, there have been not seven but fourteen popes.²² Therefore, proponents of this view have fancifully supposed that only pontiffs with uniquely different names are meant—although the Scriptures say nothing about this.

IV

Others, no doubt aware that they cannot pick and choose their popes in such an arbitrary way, have varied the aforementioned view. They add together the seven heads and seven mountains of Rev. 17:9, 10, attaching importance to the word *there*. Alas, it does not exist in the Greek original, being supplied by the translators. A better alternative that agrees with the context would be: “The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And *they* are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.” In any case, the woman sits on seven and not on fourteen heads. What is more, John Paul II has now died. On 19 April 2005,

he was succeeded by Benedict XVI, the *fifteenth* pope. So this interpretation has collapsed like the proverbial house of cards.

V

The similar fifth interpretation is that here the Apocalypse refers to seven popes since 1929, when the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini restored the Vatican to the papacy. This view is numerically more feasible, though also commonsensically less appropriate, because Rev. 17:10 refers to “kings,” a plural word that can hardly apply to the pontiff, who—according to the Catholic doctrine of Apostolic Succession—is, theologically, always the same man, a kind of serial St. Peter. Further, the Vatican is hardly a great city, such as ancient Rome used to be, nor does it now have world domination. This is how the Apocalypse identifies the great hooker: “The woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17:18).

Even worse, this last view contradicts the message of the marvelous angel depicted in Rev. 10:1-10, who greatly resembles the glorified Christ that spoke to John on Patmos (Rev. 1:13-15). Therefore, we believe it was the Redeemer. It was also he who in Dan. 12:6, 7 had sworn that “a time, times and a half” would elapse before the final stage of human history began. And now, in the Apocalypse, the Saviour again most solemnly raised his hand to heaven and uttered a second solemn oath by him who lives forever and ever: “that there should be time no longer” (Rev. 10:6). He announced the beginning as well as the end of those terrible 1260 year-days when the holy people would be persecuted and with which the last of the seven heads is closely associated. As for 1929, however momentous this date may be, it does not belong to the great prophetic time periods, all originally mentioned in Dan. 7-12. The last of them ended in 1844.

The preceding two interpretations are, moreover, unacceptable because “The Bible never uses animal heads or mountains as symbols of individual rulers”—which “rules out as unsound any attempt to identify the seven heads of Revelation with individual popes, living or dead.”²³

VI

A sixth and more respectable explanation is that the seven heads represent the great empires of history which have often oppressed the Lord's faithful followers. They are interpreted as Egypt and Assyria, followed by Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, pagan Rome, and papal Rome-Europe. However, as C. Mervyn Maxwell points out: "The prophecies of Daniel are our key to the interpretation of Revelation. Daniel gives us Babylon, Persia, Greece, Roman Empire, and the Roman Church, but says nothing about Egypt and Assyria."²⁴ Yes, that is so. In fact, bringing these two powers into the picture undermines the interpretation that the leopard Beast is a perfect composite of the four creatures in Dan. 7. It also opens the way for fanciful views about the ten horns.

The book of Daniel depicts the Greeks as a fourfold entity, in three different contexts. In chapter 7, the leopard has four heads and not one. In Dan. 8, after the notable single horn has been broken, four horns come up out of the Grecian nation (vs. 22). Dan. 11:4 hints at a fourfold division. Therefore, why would the Greeks in Revelation be represented by a single head?

VII

A seventh view, espoused by Maxwell himself, maintains that the seven heads refer to (1) Babylon, (2) Persia, (3) Greece, (4) the Roman Empire, (5) Christian Rome, (6) Wounded Christian Rome, and (7) Christian Rome Revived.²⁵ Of these, the first four agree with Dan. 2, but do not harmonize with chapter 7; for the Grecian leopard has multiple heads. Furthermore, assigning *four* heads to Rome, with three for Christian Rome, is excessive and disallowed by Rev. 13:3: "And I saw *one* of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast" (emphasis added). When it revives, it is still the same head as it was before it received its deadly wound.

Allocating three heads to Christian Rome is also chronologically out of kilter with the angel's explanation to John. As he was speaking, five of the heads had already fallen (Rev. 17:10). The Roman Empire was still in its early stages and must therefore be the *sixth* and not the fourth head. As for Christendom and the papacy, this was a setup that lay in the apostle's future.

Some expositors, aware of such difficulties, have tried to get around them through relativistic thinking. Maxwell asks: "So shouldn't Revelation 17 be interpreted from the viewpoint of 1798/1844 and later, the era of the judgment and the end time?"²⁶ Nooo, it should not, unless we can prove that this is what the Bible teaches. It says nothing about relativistic time frames, an idea which could—if generally adopted—play havoc with all prophetic exposition.

Besides, such an interpretation clashes with a statement in Rev. 17:12: "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, *which have received no kingdom as yet . . .*" (emphasis added). These are the Germanic kingdoms listed on a previous page. They lay in John's future. From the viewpoint of 1798/1844, their first appearance had receded into the distant past.

It may be argued that there were ten of them for only a short period, shortly after the Western Roman Empire had disintegrated, since three—established by the Heruli, the Vandals, and the Ostrogoths—were uprooted in the fifth and sixth centuries. They had refused submission to the papacy and were accused of Arianism. Therefore, with the help of the Byzantine Empire headquartered in Constantinople, they were eliminated. Why then do we not see this reflected in the prophecy?

That topic is amply dealt with in Dan. 7. Consequently it is not mentioned by the Apocalypse, which focuses on other aspects of the Great Apostasy. It also uses different symbols. Most noticeably it does not depict a Little Horn, since the Leopard-like Beast of Rev. 13 so to speak *is* the Little Horn. Referring to both ten and seven horns to represent the same entities would in any case have been confusing.

VIII

To illustrate a little further how problems can arise from shifting the time frame to the period after 1798, let us look at Joseph B. Pierce's eighth interpretation. He says the last three of the seven heads are (5) Papal Rome, (6) the United States of America, and (7) "(possibly) Germany during the Axis regime, under Adolph Hitler."²⁷ This causes threefold confusion.

First, number (6) implies an amalgamation of the two-horned and the seven-headed Beast, though Rev. 13 keeps them apart as separate entities. America in prophecy looms so large and becomes so important that no mere head can do justice to its end-time prominence. To it, the Apocalypse assigns an entire, separate beast.

Indeed, since Pierce's book appeared in 1975, the United States has grown immensely powerful. For example, in 2003, its president, defying both the United Nations and much of world opinion, launched the Second Gulf War to crush the power of Iraq, with assistance from two Anglo-Saxon satellites, Britain and Australia. During the discussions leading up to this event, George W. Bush contemptuously brushed aside the combined opposition of Russia, France, and Germany. In the aftermath, books appeared, not simply to assert that the United States was now an imperial power, but to suggest just what kind of empire it may be.²⁸

Second, number (7) in Pierce's scheme assigns a head to the country of Germany. But the books of Daniel and Revelation depict the European powers not as heads but as horns. (And Hitler as well as his Third Reich have long since vanished, receding ever more insignificantly into the past, like Napoleon during the nineteenth century—though at that time some expositors tried to fit *him* into the prophetic scenario of the Apocalypse!)

Third, as Pierce himself points out, his explanation entails "that the ten horns of Daniel's fourth beast cannot be identified with the ten horns of the three beasts having seven heads in the Revelation."²⁹ This suggests a disjunction

between those closely related books of the Bible. Separate sets of ten horns—and heads—are highly suspect. We repeat: there are not twenty-eight heads and forty horns in these prophetic books.

IX

The hypothesis of the movable time frame must fall away, for several reasons. For one thing, it does not adequately explain why the Bible—after dealing with the heads—goes on to say: “And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition” (Rev. 17:11). More importantly, this fails to account for the contrasted order in which the books of Daniel and the Apocalypse presents the lion, the bear, and the leopard elements, though other writers on prophecy seem hardly to have noticed that point.

The different, reversed, sequencing of the lion, the bear, and the leopard elements of Rev. 13 also pinpoints the prophet’s vantage point in history. He lived and labored during the earlier, pagan stage of the Roman Empire, when Hellenic philosophy, culture, and syncretism predominated. The leopard likewise loomed large in the creation of the papal Antichrist. Before the Greeks, it was the Medo-Persian Empire that ruled the ancient Middle East, and beyond it—further back—the Babylonians. This inverted order of presentation, as compared with Dan. 7, refutes the idea that the seven heads in the Apocalypse must be viewed from within a period many centuries after John would be dead and buried. Consequently, when the angel says of the seven kings that “five *are* fallen, and one *is*, and the other *is not yet come*” (Rev. 17:10, emphasis added) he clearly means they should be identified from within the prophet’s lifetime.

If we assign to the Greeks not one but four heads, as is clearly done in Dan. 7, this makes it possible to see the seventh head as Christian Rome or Christendom, with the papacy as its outstanding feature—which is shown in the next chapter. Then everything about the prophecy falls into place, though Pierce demurs: “the seventh head ‘. . . must continue a

short space” and points out that the papacy has on the contrary continued for a very long time.³⁰

So it has, but this expression needs to be seen against the background of other passages, especially the final promise by the ascended Redeemer: “Surely I come quickly” (Rev. 22:20). As already pointed out, the seventeenth chapter of Revelation parallels the twelfth one; the “short space” of the Antichrist echoes a statement applied to the great red dragon, Satan, who “knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Rev. 12:12).

For us poor human beings with a lifespan so pitifully brief, how long the centuries of Antichristian oppression have been! But the viewpoint of other beings in the cosmos, including the great adversary who has lived for many millennia, is very different. This is even truer of the One whose years are measureless: “For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night” (Psalm 90:4). He it is, too, who through the inspired apostle encourages us: “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Rom. 13:12). Paul wrote this passage more than 1,900 years ago. For God, however, that was only a yesterday ago, and soon enough for us, too, it will be so.

X

Louis Fitzroy Were, an Australian evangelist and copious prophetic writer, produced a ninth view of the entities in Rev. 17. Mostly active around 1950, he blended Seventh-day Adventist Historicism with Idealistic elements in *The Woman and the Resurrected Beast: Why Is the Seventh Head Numbered 8? The Mysteries of Revelation 17 Solved*.³¹ After three decades, during 1983, Hans K. LaRondelle (1929-2011), a theology professor at the Seminary of Andrews University, assumed its copyright and reprinted it as a photo reproduction.³² Ten years later, having retired in Florida, he did so again.³³ The entire text of the book is word for word the same, except that he changed its title to *The Woman and the Beast in the Book of Revelation: Studies in Revelation 12-20*.

Apparently LaRondelle did not like the expression “The Resurrected Beast,” though the author regarded this as an essential idea for explaining the statement “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition” (Rev. 17:8). For Were, the “bottomless pit” is the grave and the “is not” phase meant the death of the beast, which he identified with the leopard Beast of Rev. 13, where John wrote: “I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast” (vs. 3). This referred to the events of 1798 when the French Revolution deposed and exiled Pope Pius VI in its attempt to abolish the papacy. According to Were, the head and even the Beast on which it grew were actually killed. The subsequent restoration of the papacy was therefore a resurrection.³⁴

We find these identifications problematic. Despite their similarities, Rev. 13 and Rev. 17 also differ from each other. The latter says nothing about the Beast being killed. The “is not” expression can be explained in another way; and in Rev. 20 the “bottomless pit” does not refer to the grave. Then, too, according to the Apocalypse the Beast on which the woman rides is an eighth entity and not in any way a seventh king. In his original subtitle, Were asked: “Why is the seventh head numbered 8?” But the 8 does not apply to a single head; it concerns the entire Beast. That is, Rev. 17:8 links the beast not just with the seventh of the heads but with every one of them: ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ (*ek tōn hepta, of the seven, emphasis added*). All the heads grow on the Beast.

Another knotty problem is that Were identified the Beast as the State and the woman sitting on it as the Church which controls it: “The beast of Rev. 13 combines both Church and State; in Rev. 17 there is still the same combination of Church and State, but the woman is shown as a separate entity from the State in order to make clearer the deceptive part that Babylonian teachings have in causing the States to persecute God’s people.”³⁵ But this is an anachronistic American and Australian idea. In ancient times, political structures were always institutionally blended with religion. For instance, the

Roman Empire was worshiped in the person of its emperor. Besides, we read that the Beast of Rev. 17 was “full of names of blasphemy.” Therefore, it cannot symbolize a purely secular entity. Nor does the Apocalypse say that the woman controlled the Beast. History reveals that the situation was more complicated than that. While the medieval Roman Church exerted great influence on the kings and emperors of Europe, these also often thwarted the designs of the popes and were sometimes in open conflict with them.

Another serious difficulty with Were’s interpretation is its hybrid character. Rev. 17:10 says of the kings or kingdoms depicted: “Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come.” Therefore, Were favored the idea that these were (1) Egypt, (2) Assyria, (3) Babylon, (4) Medo-Persia, (5) Grecia, and (6) Rome³⁶—although, as Maxwell pointed out, Egypt and Assyria are not mentioned in the book of Daniel, the basic paradigm for Revelation. Nonetheless, this is a Historicist approach.

On the same page, however, Were also remarked: “The writer desires to repeat what he stated in the previous chapter, namely, that he believes that the seven heads denote the *complete* representation of all the enemies of God’s people down through the ages, and as such it is *not necessary* that an actual number of 7 nations must be ascertained in order for the prophetic symbolism to have a literal fulfilment. The number 7, as we have shown from the pen of the servant of the Lord, is ‘symbolic’ . . .” (his italics).³⁷ Elsewhere we also read: “We scarcely need to point out that it is futile to look for exactly ten kings who will serve the interests of Babylon. The number ten is employed in Scripture in a comprehensive way . . .”³⁸ That is Idealistic reasoning.

It muddles together Seventh-day Adventist Historicism with numerological, Idealistic conceptions. Were specifically mentioned *The Revelation of St. John* written by William Milligan (1821-1892)³⁹ and at some length discussed his ideas. He follows this man’s ideas at some length, until they involve him in problems for which he obviously had no stomach.

In Chapter 12, “Why the 7th Head of the Beast Is Numbered Eight,” Were stated: “The number of the beast is brought to view in connection with ‘the *name* of the beast’—note carefully Rev. 13:17, 18. Now it is an interesting and important fact that as the Pope’s official title numbers 666, so the Lord’s *name* JESUS, in the numerals of the Greek language, numbers 888.” A little further on the same page, he associated 888 with the Trinity.⁴⁰

The Apocalypse does not, however, anywhere call attention to this number. Contrasting these two numbers is one of Milligan’s fallacies. We discuss him and similar writers at length in *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy* (2011). The reader will there observe that according to Milligan the Beast of Rev. 13 was “not Rome, either pagan or papal.” Further, for him the number 8 supported Sundaykeeping because in “the resurrection of our Lord on the first day of the week, following the previous seven days, it expressed a new beginning . . .”⁴¹

It is interesting to see how Were, by giving too much weight to the writings of cunning numerologists like Milligan, eventually became entangled in it and was forced to protest.

Under the heading “Why the First Day of the Week Is Mentioned Eight Times in the New Testament,” he found himself constrained to write:

God’s enemy, in his endeavour to have Sunday observed as a holy day, makes a wrong use of the significance of the number 8 (as he does with other things of God) in connection with the resurrection of Christ. He has sought to have Sunday of each week called “the *eighth* day”, and has laboured to make the reference to the “eight days” of John 20:26 refer to the first day of the week. Satan’s effort to label Sunday, the first day of the week, as an eighth day, is an attempt to *literalize* the number 8, which is used in Scripture as the *symbol* of the Lord’s triumph over His foes. The errors taught under Satan’s tuition frequently contain some degree of truth, but in a counterfeit. Christ’s resurrection is definitely connected up in the Scriptures

with the number 8. For instance, the first day of the week *is mentioned 8 times in the New Testament*: Matt. 28:1; Mark 16: 1, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2. Thus, the resurrection day of our Lord is mentioned 8 times, because it was the day when He arose in triumph, to a new life. Satan takes the fact of the symbolic use of the number 8 in connection with Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week and uses it to foster his rebellion against God. However, the point to notice is that, while Christ's resurrection day is mentioned 8 times in the New Testament, we are nowhere enjoined to observe that day as a holy day, or to honour that day *every week*.⁴²

That paragraph, however, contains a misleading statement: "Thus, the resurrection day of our Lord is mentioned 8 times, because it was the day when He arose in triumph, to a new life." But in these texts the resurrection is mentioned only 6 times (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16: 1, 9; Luke 24:1; and John 20:1, 19). Elsewhere, the resurrection is referred to over and over again. As for Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor. 16:2, these texts do mention the first day of the week, but not the resurrection. It is, moreover, spurious to assert that the number 8 "is used in Scripture as the *symbol* of the Lord's triumph over His foes." We see no reason for regarding it as a symbol.

Astutely manipulated numerology can be used to "prove" almost anything. We should simply have left it out of his book. In any case, his attempt to show that "the seventh Head [is] numbered 8" was unsuccessful.

XI

The aforementioned attempts at unveiling the mystery of the Beast with its seven heads and ten horns are not the only ones that we could refer to. Their very multiplicity does, however, demonstrate that Seventh-day Adventist writers on prophecy have not yet achieved consensus about important elements of Rev. 17. That is, not one of these views is fully satisfactory.

Chapter Four

THE MYSTERY SOLVED

I

Having—conclusively, we think—dismissed the nine interpretations examined above, let us now restate and further discuss our view of the seven heads.

We showed that this symbolic animal is a perfect composite of the four successive creatures depicted in Dan. 7. We also quoted Maxwell, who pointed out that “the leopard had four heads, the other three had one each, and the fourth beast had ten horns,”¹—although he did not follow up this valuable insight.

According to the seven principles which we have enumerated and discussed in *The Use and Abuse of Prophecy* (2007), especially the comparison of Scripture with Scripture, consistency, and prophetic augmentation, these must also be the heads that appear throughout the Apocalypse and to which Rev. 17:9-11 refers. There are not twenty-eight heads, just as there are not forty horns, in Daniel and the Revelation. The seven heads are the Babylonians, the Medo-Persians, the Greeks (four heads, of which the last makes up the Greco-Roman Empire), and Roman Christendom, culminating in the papacy.

About the heads, the following table summarizes our view:

Seven Heads	Rev. 17:3-11
1. Babylon	} “five are fallen”
2. Medo-Persia	
3. Macedonia and Greece (Antigonids, etc.)	
4. Syria: Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Iran (Seleucids)	
5. Egypt (Ptolemies)	
6. Pagan Greco-Roman Empire (Magna Graecia, Sicily, etc.)	“one is”
7. Roman Christendom/Papacy	“not yet come”
8. Scarlet Beast: Satan, Prince of This World	“of the seven and goeth into perdition”

As previously pointed out, the Apocalypse always presents the seven heads in conjunction with ten horns, symbolizing the Germanic kingdoms into which the Western Roman Empire broke up. These were the Heruli, Vandals, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Alamanni, Saxons, Lombards, Burgundians, and Suebi/Suevi or Swabians.

The Grecian leopard of Dan. 7 differs from the lion, the bear, and the terrible fourth beast in an important respect: it had four heads as well as four wings. Each of the others had only one head apiece, representing coherent “universal kingdoms” of the ancient Middle East and Mediterranean world. The Greeks, however, were different: they were always divided. Theirs was never politically a universal kingdom, though their culture, religion, and philosophy became predominant throughout the Western world—not only in ancient times but for many centuries to come. Therefore, the Greeks were symbolized by four heads.

But did Alexander the Great not unite them all, at least for his lifetime, into a single empire? That is an old and common misconception, which flies in the face of the facts. A large and influential portion of Hellas, the regions that lay in the West (particularly Sicily, Italy, and southern Gaul), at no time came under his control. And yet they make up an indispensable part of our story.

II

Three salient features link together the beasts of Rev. 12, 13, and 17, establishing a clear exegetical interrelationship. First, they all have seven heads and ten horns. Second, the chapter about the great red dragon chasing the virtuous woman and the one about the leopard Beast of Rev. 13 involve the identical prophetic period of 1260 days/42 months/3½ years. Third, Rev. 12 and Rev. 17 deal with the same symbolic entity in relation to two different women, who are obviously being contrasted.

Unraveling the mystery of the heads is relatively easy if we bring together the data and hints from all three of those chapters, plus additional details from the Apocalypse. Because

the scholar's needs so often demand it, it is natural to concentrate on individual visions, as though they were separate prophecies; but that is not the sense in which they were written. Let us bear in mind that our present-day division into chapters and verses did not yet exist in John's day. Though, for instance, Rev. 12 and 13 focus on somewhat different topics, they are also continuous with each other.

It is insightful to read the entire Rev. 11-20 at a single sitting and see it as a coherent panorama of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, on both a cosmic and a terrestrial plane. Most of this is portrayed in the form of symbols. On the one hand, we have the great red dragon, with his two beast assistants; on the other, the Lamb and angels, some of whom represent his people. The evil one and his human instruments blaspheme and fight against the Saviour, attacking and opposing the Law of God through persecution against those who keep it. Heaven responds with judgments, a theme resounding through all ten chapters. The Second Coming figures prominently, as well as the events that follow it, climaxing in Rev. 20, when all the wicked and the devil who deceived them are exterminated—preparatory to the final two chapters about a new Jerusalem on a recreated earth.

But behind the Apocalypse additional Bible prophecies loom up and demand attention, particularly those of Daniel. As one coherent structure, that book also describes essentially the same panorama of conflict, blasphemy, and judgment. In Chapter 2 and then Chapters 7-12, we read about kingdoms and powers—depicted largely, though not exclusively, through the symbols of beasts and horns—that fight against God, the Messiah, and his people. One of these, represented in both Dan. 7 and 8 as a Little Horn, opposes God's Covenant, desecrates his sanctuary, and even tries to change his Law.

But the Son of Man receives the kingdom and comes back to the world, the Beast is consigned to the flames, and those who faithfully served the Lord inherit the earth.

III

According to Rev. 17:9, 10, “The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And *there* are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.”

The heads have a double application. On the one hand, they represent the hills of Rome where figurative Babylon is seated. Having already discussed this idea in a previous chapter, we will not here repeat ourselves. But the heads also symbolize seven ancient empires or sociopolitical powers.

Let us notice that the word *there* in the sentences quoted above is lacking in the original text; it was supplied by the translators, which has led to misunderstanding on the part of some expositors. In the Greek language, *there*—in the sense of *in that place*—is normally ἐκεῖ (*ekei*). If such a notion were meant, that word would surely have been used. A better and more normal rendering is consequently: “And *they* are seven kings . . .” This point is important: it negates amongst other things the error of interpreting the heads as seven popes.

By John’s time, five of these entities “have fallen,” namely the Babylonian head, the Medo-Persian head, and three of the heads on the Grecian leopard of Dan. 7.

The “one is” mentioned by Rev. 17:10 refers to the pagan empire ruling the entire Mediterranean world in the first two centuries of our era. Politically and in a concrete sense it was Roman, but in culture, mind, and spirit it was largely Hellenic. The mental makeup of its rulers, including their view of ultimate reality, was deeply influenced by the Greeks, from the earliest period and throughout its history.

The key word for describing the empire of John’s time is *Greco-Roman*. According to a number of authorities, some already quoted, it represented the final stage of the Hellenistic world. C. H. King describes it as a “Greco-Roman state.”²

Prophetically this sixth head on the beasts of Rev. 12, 13, and 17 is related to and can—from a religious point of view—be identified with the fourth and final head of the leopard Beast described in Dan. 7. This is further borne out by its

symbolic representation as a Little Horn in Dan. 8 which is somehow linked to one of the four horns representing the ancient Greeks.

In Dan. 7, four leopard heads are allocated to the Greeks, “and dominion was given to it” (vs. 6). In Dan. 8, they are represented by four horns, “which stood up out of the nation” (vs. 22). Surely this means all the Greeks, and not only those living in the states resulting from the breakup of the empire created by Alexander and his Grand Army. One division, both ancient and illustrious, lay in the West, though it was never conquered by that famous Macedonian. Nevertheless, it profoundly affected all of European history.

The Greeks at first lived mostly on both sides of the Aegean, that is, in Western Asia as well as Eastern Europe, and on their many islands. By 550 B.C., they had occupied practically the entire coast of the Black Sea. They had likewise spread their colonies through much of the Mediterranean, everywhere planting their characteristic and often independent city-states, even onto African soil just west of Egypt in Cyrenaica.

And then there was Western Hellas, part of which we shall be focusing on. This included portions of Italy (amongst others Magna Graecia (“Great Greece”), as the Romans called it), much of Sicily, southernmost Gaul—especially Massilia (Marseilles)—and settlements in Sardinia, Corsica and western Spain.³

Though Western Hellas escaped Alexander’s dominion, it fully belonged to what Daniel calls Grecia (Dan. 8:21; 11:2). Nor was it small or in any sense a backward area. Its population was large and cultivated, for as Lerner and Burns pointed out, “Greek civilization in Italy and Sicily was as advanced as in Greece itself.”⁴

Especially illustrious was the city of Syracuse. It stood at the southernmost tip of Sicily on its own little island, though with a connective causeway, which made it difficult to attack. Some fifty years before Alexander the Great, its powerful ruler, Dionysius the Elder (c. 430-378 B.C.), had made it “the richest and most populous city in the world.”⁵ From this

center, he set out to build an empire. It included most of Sicily, Magna Graecia in southern Italy, and northern settlements along the Adriatic like Ancona and Hadria (ancient Venice), a gorgeous city arising on the estuarine marshland of the River Po.⁶

But centuries earlier, the Hellenic influence that would profoundly shape the Romans had already taken root on Italian soil. This was a long time before they acquired their polyglot empire or even lived in the city that bore their name. It had also affected their predecessors, the Etruscans. To begin with, the Greeks came as traders. First on Pitheculusae, “a fertile island seven miles from the Campanian mainland,” just off the northern tip of the Gulf of Cumae, which today is the Bay of Naples. Later they moved onshore and settled at Cumae (Cyme) itself.⁷ What is also remarkable is that the very names “Greece” (*Graecia*) and “Hellas” originated in Italy!⁸

The founders of Cyme came from different parts of Greece, perhaps as far back as 1000 B.C. That city taught the Etruscans, and through them the Romans, the alphabet, art, and much about “the Greek gods and Greek religion. Heracles, Apollo, Castor, and Polydeuces became such familiar names in Italy that they came to be regarded as original Italian deities.”⁹ If the Romans had, according to the legend of Romulus and Remus, been suckled by a she-wolf and thereby imbibed the fierceness which so characterized them in later years, their babysitter and primary educator of any significance was that cultivated woman of Cyme. Later Hellenic instructors were Magna Graecia and Sicily to the south, before the Romans made significant contact with Athens and Alexandria.

They not only conquered the Greeks who populated the area near Naples as well as Venice, Ancona, and Magna Graecia, but extended citizenship to them, bringing them—like the rest of Italy—into a special relationship with themselves. That is, these Hellenic people were all incorporated as an intrinsic part of the heartland, which was not the case with other territories beyond the seas which later

became part of the Empire. Biological assimilation followed. The Italian Greeks became Roman.

Historically this was immensely significant. It is also indicated by prophecy in several contexts. The fourth beast of Dan. 7 has not only Roman iron teeth but Grecian nails of bronze. Prophecy relates the Little Horn of Dan. 8 to four horns that represent the Greeks, as an outgrowth. The Antichristian Beast, though it is centered in Rome, has a very leopard-like look.

The Romans had a threefold connection with the Greeks. First the Republic and later the Empire were transformed by their culture. Then they went on to conquer all of Greek-speaking Italy and Sicily, as well as the former Hellenistic kingdoms. Eventually this Roman-Hellenic amalgamation also gave birth to the Byzantine Empire.

Though conquered, the Greeks at no time became the junior partners of the men from Latium. This is how the eminent historian Michael Grant describes their situation: "Apart from the effects which this Greek culture had on the Romans, the Greek world, although politically subjected to Rome, had not been Romanized at all—and was never going to be either, to any marked degree. Extended rather than diminished in size, it was going to remain Greek. And, eventually, the Greeks got their revenge, when Constantine I the Great (A.D. 306-337) created his new capital Constantinople, on the site of the Greek city of Byzantium: with the logical result that some centuries later the language and culture of the surviving Byzantine, east Roman empire became officially Greek. . ."¹⁰

IV

The sixth head symbolizes the pagan Roman (actually the Greco-Roman) Empire as it existed in John's time and for the next two hundred years, from a cultural and a religious-philosophical point of view. It is this above all, and not the mere politics of antiquity, that interests Heaven vis-à-vis the church and is reflected in the prophetic scenario described by the Apocalypse.

Intellectually, Rome was largely the child of Hellas, conceived and reared by the western Greeks though subsequently also educated by Athens and Alexandria. It is true that ordinary Romans had little time for—indeed, they often despised—the Greeks; and much in their way of life, like the gladiatorial games, was clearly non-Hellenic. Yet, their collective educator, like so many of their individual pedagogues, was Grecian.

Their empire brought, as J. M. Roberts put it, the culmination of the “Hellenistic Age (c. 300 BC-AD 300),” which “may be broadly defined as the period from the Greco-Macedonian conqueror Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) to Constantine, the first Christian Roman emperor (d. AD 337).” During that period, Middle Eastern syncretism not only further transformed the religion and philosophy of the pagan Romans. It also produced the Mediterranean apostasy: “The basic forms of worship of both the Jewish and Christian communities were heavily influenced in their formative period by Hellenistic practices, and this remains fundamentally unchanged to the present time.”¹¹

We realize that this interpretation may meet with resistance from readers who have been taught that the four heads on the leopard in Dan. 7 symbolize four Hellenistic kingdoms resulting from the breakup of Alexander’s empire after his death. They also tend to suppose that such a quadruple division remained a permanent feature for a substantial period of time.

But the witness of present-day historians uniformly contradicts such a view. They insist that after an initial period, during which the Conqueror’s generals fought matters out among themselves, the Hellenistic East comprised only *three* major kingdoms—apart from many smaller fragments. This is how Robert Malcolm Errington, professor of Ancient History at Philipps-Universität in Marburg, Germany, summarized the final situation: “A powerful political structure had developed out of the empire of Alexander, in which three Macedonian ruling families controlled the world of the eastern Mediterranean until the Roman conquest. In Macedonia itself

the Antigonids came to power; in Syria, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and Iran, the Seleukids [*sic*]; and in Egypt, the Ptolemies.”¹²

Our favorite Bible commentary, with its enlightening maps, says much the same. It shows that in 323 B.C., just after Alexander’s death, his former empire was ruled by *five* men: Antipater, Lysimachus, Antigonus, Eumenes, and Ptolemy. A dozen years later, in 311 B.C., there were still *five* of them, although some names were now different: Cassander, Lysimachus, Antigonus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy. Only ten years further on, in 301 B.C., they were reduced to *four*: Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy. But then, a mere twenty years later, in 281 B.C. Lysimachus was killed, and only *three* divisions remained: Macedonia, the Seleucid Empire (which later consisted only of Syria), and Egypt. And this last-mentioned setup lasted for more than a century, until all these territories were conquered by and incorporated into the Roman Empire.¹³

How then can we explain the prophecies of Dan.7:6, Dan. 8:8, and Dan. 11:4, which all depict or suggest a fourfold division for the Greeks? By 280 B.C., the quartet of Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy was no more. Yet according to Dan. 8, the four horns that symbolize the Greeks were destined to persist until the advent of the Little Horn, the Romans, long after the death of those men. The difficulty is resolved by adding to the three Hellenistic horns the Western Greeks, as we have done. We also note that, in view of the important role they have played in history, their omission would have been inexplicable.

V

The entity represented by the seventh prophetic head still lay in the future for John, who saw it in vision; it had “not yet come.” Located on all three apocalyptic beasts as portrayed in Rev. 12, 13, and 17, it parallels the head on the fourth beast of Dan. 7, which also bears the Little Horn.

As shown by our *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History*, the last-mentioned creature symbolizes not simply

Rome but also Western Europe. It corresponds to the legs of iron . . . plus the feet of iron mixed with clay on the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. We think, moreover, that it is not just Roman in a general, generic sense but particularly symbolizes Orthodox and Catholic Christendom, from the era of Constantine down to our day.

In its genesis, this head coincides with what historians call the "Lower Empire," which followed the anarchy of the third century. As Hugh R. Trevor Roper put it, "there are two successive Roman Empires."¹⁴ The first one, created by Augustus and still thriving in the time of John, was characterized by a confident *Pax Romana* ("Roman peace") throughout the Mediterranean world. But then the Troubled Century intervened with its many short-lived emperors, barbarian invasions, currency collapse, and pestilence, which killed a third of the population. After the establishment of the second empire by Diocletian, the key figure was Constantine I. Through his conversion, he began to transform it into Christendom. This is the seventh head of Rev. 17.

An emperor converted to a syncretic, Mythraic form of Christianity, Constantine established a virtual theocracy. Into it, he brought the religious prerogatives he had inherited from his pagan predecessors, especially as reflected in two titles, which were closely interrelated. According to the first, he was supposedly "God on earth," as were his Byzantine successors and later the Russian czars. As Napoleon Bonaparte said to Alexander I, "I see that you are an emperor and a pope at the same time. How useful."¹⁵

The Roman Caesars, personifying the state of Rome, demanded worship. In this, they continued a custom inherited from Mesopotamia and particularly Egypt, which reached them through Alexander the Great as well as the Hellenistic kings who succeeded him. Often this was associated with sun worship. The first Christian emperor and those around him adapted this tradition. Though he would no longer be a deity in his own right, he would still be the *Pontifex Maximus* ("high priest").¹⁶

This represented Constantine as the intercessor between heaven and earth. He also added other titles: *Bishop of Bishops* and *Vicarius Christi* (the “Vicar of Christ”),¹⁷ as well as *Isapostolos* (“Equal of the Apostles”). According to Eusebius, cited by John J. Norwich, the golden coffin which after death encased the emperor’s body was put in the Church of the Holy Apostles. That building, which no longer exists, contained twelve sarcophagi, one for each of the Twelve, which surrounded his tomb. As Norwich put it, this “strongly suggests that he saw himself as yet greater than they—a symbol, perhaps of the Saviour in person: God’s Vice-Gerent on Earth.”¹⁸

This theocratic conception, together with the titles that attended its birth, transformed the empire and Europe for centuries to come. As Roberts put it: “Constantine I the Great, the first Roman emperor to profess Christianity, initiated not only the evolution of the empire into a Christian state but also provided the impulse for a distinctively Christian culture that prepared the way for the growth of Byzantine and Western medieval culture.” This historian went even further. He said: “by the official establishment of Christianity,” plus his other arrangements, Constantine “had registered a decisive break with the tradition of classical Rome. Ultimately, and unwittingly, he was founding Christian Europe and, therefore, the modern world.”¹⁹

As the Byzantine Empire declined and later headed for extinction at the hands of the Turks, the pattern of closely linking church and state persisted in the West. There the bishop of Rome became the kingpin of Christendom. He arrogated to himself the very titles that formerly belonged to Constantine and other Byzantine emperors: *God on earth*, *Pontifex Maximus*, *Vicarius Christi*. For many medieval centuries, the popes— aspiring to an identical dignity— strove to be both religious and political rulers, especially in Italy, where they were literally monarchs over the Papal State until 1870. As Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), an immensely erudite man and “one of the greatest English political thinkers,”²⁰ expressed it, the papacy was “no more than the ghost of the

deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof.”²¹ Though they constantly had to fight a sometimes losing battle against the kings and emperors of Europe, who cherished similar ambitions, the pontiffs exerted themselves with every resource at their disposal to preserve their double Roman heritage as both political and religious rulers.

The Vatican city-state of today, with the pope as an absolute monarch, continues that tradition. Its potency, despite the diminutive size of its physical territory, was dramatically underlined by the funeral of Pope John Paul II in April 2005. It was attended by more than two hundred VIPs from all over the world, including President George W. Bush and two of his predecessors. This is how Samuele Bacchiocchi, a Protestant Italian of Waldensian parentage, described that amazing scene:

“Never before mankind had seen three United States Presidents kneeling for about five minutes in front of a pope’s casket, heads bowed, as choral music filled the majestic St. Peter’s Cathedral. Joining the American delegation were first lady Laura Bush and Secretary of State Condoleeza [*sic*] Rice.

“More than 100 official delegations attended the funeral, including four kings, five queens, and more than 70 prime ministers. Countless dignitaries, cardinals, bishops, and over 700,000 people rubbed shoulders in St. Peter’s during the three hours [*sic*] ceremony of John Paul II’s funeral.”²²

To us today, the concept of Christendom has rather faded, but for most of history this was a key concept in the Mediterranean world. As Margaret Aston pointed out, into the latter part of the fourteenth century it was still “more meaningful than Europe.”²³ Through all the medieval centuries, most people lived and died in local communities under feudal lords, who often fought one another. For the ordinary person, travel was dangerous and the roads were uncertain. Countries, as we understand them, existed only in a rudimentary way. What really mattered was feudalism, based on the family relationships of the ruling classes.

Not even language, that striking national characteristic of our day, was useful in defining Europe. The majority of

educated people, mostly clerics, did their reading and writing in Latin. Vernacular speech forms did exist, but only at first as a multitude of dialects. For instance, “Dante reckoned that there were more than a thousand varieties of Italian vernacular in his day.” But gradually, especially with the help of printing, invented halfway through the fifteenth century, this profusion was whittled down and unitary languages came into their own.²⁴

Only by 1500, Europe—as we understand the concept—fully emerged. The national states were coming into focus, travel was more common, printing proliferated and rapidly spread knowledge far and wide, Bartholomeu Dias and Vasco da Gama opened the way to the Far East, Columbus found a way to reach America, and humankind began to think on a different wavelength.

Yet until those days not Europe but Christendom predominated, and is still not an outmoded concept, although it has—for the time being—retreated into the background of people’s thinking.

Represented by the seventh head, Christendom survived the ever clearer subdivision into a Byzantine and a Western Empire. It also survived the fragmentation of the latter into the states of Europe and for many centuries found its center in the papacy.

In both our *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History* (2001) and *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy* (2011), we have much more to say about this entity. Here we only wish to point out that some finesse is needed for interpreting in the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation the contrasting expressions *pagan Rome* and *Christian Rome*, so popular with many writers over more than a century.

Pagan Rome is a good and well-established synonym for the Greco-Roman Empire, and we do not wish to find fault with it. But when did that period end? With the Edict of Milan in 313, just after Constantine’s conversion, or when he founded New Rome (Constantinople) in 330 as an explicitly Christian city.

Paganism lingered on for some time. Indeed, it blended with Christianity to create a syncretic religion, though overtly it declined. It was largely pushed into the background by Theodosius I, the Great (reigned 379-395), the last emperor who ruled over both the Eastern and Western Empires. He “is known for his imposition of orthodox Christianity on the empire”²⁵ and making it “an ingredient of good citizenship.” Under this powerful ruler, “many pagan temples were closed or even destroyed”²⁶—including the celebrated shrine at Delphi²⁷—so that in the writings of his contemporary, Bishop Ambrose of Milan (reigned 374-397), the words “‘Roman’ and ‘Christian’ are almost synonyms.”²⁸ The ancient capital Rome, it is true, at least in the fourth century, still remained a largely pagan city. “Dominated by proud senatorial families,”²⁹ it could hold out against the emperor. Yet within a hundred years or thereabouts most of these had also switched allegiance, and “just as the Roman upper class had once been associated with state paganism, so now it was tied to Christianity.”³⁰

In the light of such facts, it is peculiar to suggest, as various writers have done, that pagan Rome endured until 476, when the Western Empire fell, or otherwise until the time of Justinian I during the Reconquest, in 538. It was in this year that the besieging Ostrogoths failed to capture the Eternal City and destroy the papacy. However, these people, too, were not pagans but members of the Germanic Church, though not Catholics. Their King Theodoric and his successors had ruled over Italy since 493.

No, from Constantine to Justinian and afterwards the Roman emperors, in the East as well as the West, were Christians, every man jack of them—except for Julian the Apostate (reigned 331-363), who ruled only briefly, a mere nineteen and a half months. These autocratic rulers used every means at their disposal to ensure that their subjects conformed to their imperial whims and wishes. The name Christian Rome (or, better, Christendom) should, properly speaking, be used to describe the later, second Roman Empire and its European successor states, from the time of Constantine onward.

Many prophetic writers, however, apply this label to Catholicism or the papacy only in a later era, especially during the 1260 year-days of 538-1798. Although we also recognize this period as prophetically important, it does not coincide with the pontificate, whose beginnings antedate it by several centuries and which now—already more than two hundred years after 1798—is still very much with us.

Christian Rome is a confusing expression if applied exclusively to medieval, Catholic Europe. But does it not acquire a special meaning because the pope in the Middle Ages lorded it over all the kings and emperors in a secular as well as an ecclesiastical sense? It is true that before the Reformation the Catholic Church had well-nigh universal sway over every part of Western Europe . . . though only in matters of religion, because the kings and emperors cooperated with the Vatican.

Except when they were weak, they did not, however, knuckle under to the popes in other matters. Powerful rulers like Charlemagne, Otto I, Philip the Fair, and Charles V were all good Catholics; but they also sought to dominate the pontiffs of their time. Sometimes they even believed that they were the head of the church.

This is particularly well illustrated by the reign of Philip IV le Bel or the Fair (1268-1314), who ruled over France. At the jubilee of 1300, that papal braggart Boniface VIII (1294-1303) had worn a crown and waved a sceptre, shouting to the throng of pilgrims: “I am Caesar—I am Emperor!”³¹ For two hundred years, from the time of Hildebrand in the eleventh century, the popes had largely enjoyed both ecclesiastical and temporal supremacy. To insist on his own prerogatives and power, Boniface issued pretentious bulls, *Clericis Laicos* (1296), claiming tax exemption for the church, and *Unam Sanctam* (1302), to assert “the supremacy over the temporal power.”³² But how soon his reign and life would be over!

Philip tolerated no nonsense from anybody, including the pope. His ancestors, the Capetians, had for three hundred years been cultivating the idea that their monarchy was

ordained of God, so he “believed the French throne to be more sacred than the papal one.”³³

This is the man whom Boniface dared to excommunicate; he was also about to place an interdict on France as a whole. The king acted against him promptly. In 1303, he sent his agents, who boldly manhandled the pope, which brought about his death. When his successor, Benedict XI, was also considering excommunication, he died—apparently poisoned. The next pope, Clement V (a Frenchman) feared the king so much that he helped him through the Inquisition to destroy the Knights Templar, power bastion of the papacy. He also annulled the *Clericis Laicos* and the *Unam Sanctam*, relocating himself with the Roman curia to Avignon in France,³⁴ where the king and his spies could keep an eye on them.

As Richard W. Southern pointed out to conclude an enlightening analysis: “The situation at the end of the Middle Ages tended—though with much greater complication and political awareness—to approximate to the situation at the beginning. The secular ruler became the residuary legatee of ecclesiastical power.”³⁵

Nowhere does the Bible suggest that for 1260 years the popes would rule over Europe in an absolute sense. It does, however, in Dan. 7 as in Rev. 13, depict the Antichrist as a power that would for this period persecute the saints of the Most High.

A cause of further confusion is to equate Christian Rome with the Holy Roman Empire. The latter name describes the medieval symbiosis between church and state, from Christmas day in A.D. 800, when the pope crowned Charlemagne as a new Augustus Caesar.

For reasons such as these, we prefer the word *Christendom*, which designates the entire period from Constantine to the present.

VI

After speaking about the heads, the Apocalypse goes on to say, “And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth,

and is of the seven” (Rev. 17:11). What entity is this? It is the scarlet Beast, which “shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition” (vs. 8). As a previous chapter has already demonstrated, it is identical with the great red dragon of Rev. 12. In other words, what these verses predict is that the devil will yet throw off the mask and directly take over the government of the world.

There will be an ultimate fulfillment of the Redeemer’s prediction about false Christs who will seek to counterfeit his return to the world (Matt. 24:24). The apostle Paul may also have had this in mind when he wrote: “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14).

According to Ellen White, the devil will very boldly try to imitate the Second Coming: “In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation.” But those who truly serve the Lord will penetrate his disguise, because he will teach that he has changed the Sabbath, and he “is not permitted to counterfeit the manner of Christ’s advent.”³⁶

The eighth kingdom, with Satan as the overt ruler of our planet, may soon be set up in what a deluded world will consider the prosperous and peaceful millennium which many have been expecting. For a short time, the devil can enjoy the worship that he has always craved. But suddenly the real Christ returns and slays all finally impenitent and wicked people with the brightness of his coming. Satan’s plans being interrupted, he cannot yet go further with direct control of the human race.

Instead, he is suddenly thrust into the “bottomless pit,” what the original language calls the ἄβυσσος (abyssos, “abyss”). As already noted, this is the very word which the Septuagint uses where it describes creation: “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon *the face of the deep*” (Gen. 1:2; emphasis added). John’s original readers in the seven churches, mostly Greeks who knew no Hebrew, used this translation.

Abyssos also suitably describes our planet at the end of days. Its atmosphere stripped away, it is a gloomy wreck of its former self. For a thousand years, it will revert to a state of chaos similar to the one which existed before the Creator said: “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3). Bound by the chain of circumstances, Satan will have only the fallen angels to keep him dismal company. Together, with fear and trembling, they await the Third Coming of Christ, when the damned of all the ages are to be resurrected and they themselves must also face the last judgment. (Rev. 20:5, 7)

So it is after the thousand years that the eighth kingdom, headed by the devil, fully—though briefly—becomes a reality. The resurrected lost ones, who in their lifetime chose him and are now compelled to be his subjects, will include his followers from all seven of those prophetically important periods—when Babylon, Medo-Persia, the Greeks, the Romans, and Christendom with the papacy in tow enjoyed their day in the sun. In that sense, the eighth or dragon kingdom is “of the seven.”

At this time, too, they will obey their elected leader as he gathers them together for a final, desperate onslaught to overthrow the kingdom of God with an ill-fated march on the New Jerusalem. This is to be the devil’s journey to perdition, as it must be theirs. Read the graphic details, as Scripture portrays them:

“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone . . .” (Rev. 20:7-10)

Chapter Five

GRECO-ROMAN CONJUNCTION AND OVERLAP

I

Over the years, to illustrate their lectures, evangelists have rolled out their colorful prophetic charts or flashed images onto a screen depicting the statue that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, or the four creatures of Dan. 7. They would then proceed to show how the predictions of the Bible had been fulfilled, in amazing detail. If these preachers belonged to the Historical school of prophetic interpretation, theirs would be a clear-cut and convincing sequence: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, the Roman Empire, and the kingdoms of Western Europe.

With most of this, we agree. There is, however, also something else: a close relationship, a conjunction and even an overlap of the Greek and Roman elements. This factor is clearly present in Rev. 13. It depicts a Roman Antichrist but with prominent leopard imagery, which means Greek. And in a previous chapter we identified the sixth Apocalyptic head as the pagan Greco-Roman Empire.

We pointed out that Heaven is not overly concerned with merely political history but especially emphasizes the bearing of events on religion. For this reason, the Hellenic heritage of Rome is of particular interest. The dualism of the Greeks—together with Babylonian polytheism, astrology, and Medo-Persian Mithraism—went far toward producing the great Mediterranean apostasy.

II

The book of Daniel also deals with this interrelationship of the Greeks with the Romans and indicates more than once that in some ways their activities overlapped.

About this, let us note the cumulative witness of Dan. 2, 7, 8, and 11. As far back as 1826, Edward Irving (1792-1834), the great Scottish preacher and religious writer, pointed out that these chapters represent the “four main streams” of Daniel’s prophecies. Each adds details to what has gone before.¹ Furthermore, the Hellenic and Roman elements in them become increasingly juxtaposed and interrelated.

In Dan. 2, the third kingdom, the Greeks, are represented by the belly and thighs of bronze and the fourth, the Romans, by the legs of iron (vv. 32-33, 39, 40). For many, this is probably the best known of all the prophecies in the Old Testament; therefore, some may think that we hardly need to look at this again. But let us do so anyway.

We first check the meaning of the word *thigh* in *Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (Merriam-Webster): “The proximal segment of the vertebrate hind limb extending from the hip to the knee and supported by a single large bone.”

Commenting on Dan. 2, a Bible commentary has this to say about the *legs* of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream: “The word thus translated seems here to refer to the lower part of the legs.” After that, however, it adds, in what we think is a self-contradiction: “The word translated ‘thighs’ (v. 32) refers to the upper part of the hips. Precisely where on the leg the transition from brass to iron occurred is not clear from these words.”²

We can well appreciate this hesitancy. Prophetic charts of that statue sometimes show the two legs as consisting of iron almost from top to bottom. In Maxwell’s 1981 edition, his illustrator, John Steel, depicted only the top part of them as bronze and covered it with a kind of miniskirt. Several inches above every knee are iron.³ William Ward Simpson’s *Folding Prophetic Chart*, which the young H. M. S. Richards used in the early twentieth century,⁴ was similar; but the juncture of the two metals stands out more clearly because the statue is nude, though with some modest shading in the pelvic area.

According to the Bible, however, *everything* above the knees, and no doubt right into their joints, was made of bronze. When I suddenly realized this, I knew I had to seek

out expert advice, since I do not know Aramaic, the language in which Daniel spoke to the Babylonian king as he related his dream.

A good authority to consult was Dr. William Shea, a little before Christmas 2002. Having checked the meaning, he confirmed that for Aramaic, too, the thigh extends right down to the knee. He added that the word in Dan. 2:32 was very similar to its Hebrew equivalent, which for instance occurs in Gen. 24. In that chapter, we read of Abraham sending his eldest servant to find a wife for his son Isaac in Mesopotamia and not among the Canaanites. To ensure that this would be done, the patriarch made his envoy take an oath, who did so by putting “his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master” (vs. 9).

But is a leg not a single entity? When we walk, it is. For the legs of the image to represent, in their upper half, the Greeks and, in their lower half, the Romans may therefore—even in Dan. 2—be plausibly taken to suggest a close relationship between these two peoples, as history shows there certainly was.

Now we go on to Dan. 7. In this, the Greeks are represented not only by the leopard with its four wings and four heads, but also by the bronze nails of the fourth beast (vs. 19). In our *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History*, a chapter entitled “Iron Teeth and Bronze Claws” is concerned with this topic. The Hellenic ingredient of the Roman Empire, as well as the Greco-Roman overlap in the prophecy, is unmistakable.

Dan. 8, in the vision of the ram and the hairy goat, is even more explicit. It identifies the latter as the Greeks (vs. 21) and then suddenly links them with the Romans and the papacy in the shape of a little horn (vv. 8-12, 23-25). Much the same thing happens in Dan. 11, which also mentions the “realm of Grecia” (vs. 2). After a prophetic preview of Hellenistic history, that chapter likewise—at least from vs. 20 onward—proceeds to deal with the Romans.

There is no transition to mark them as separate peoples. Bible prophecy treats the Romans as though they were an

outgrowth of or at least very intimately linked with the Greeks.

We see this perhaps most clearly in Dan. 8, where we read of the rough goat. About its identity there can hardly be any doubt, for the Bible tells us explicitly that it symbolizes the Greeks (vs. 21). After its single horn is broken off, the head of the goat sprouts four other horns. They obviously parallel the four heads of the leopard in chapter 7. But suddenly a difference appears: another horn. At first it is small but soon it becomes immensely large. It represents the Romans, both pagan and papal.

Is it not also connected with a Grecian head and one of the other horns? Common sense answers “yes,” for otherwise the prophecy would not have brought these elements together as parts of the same presentation. And yet a number of scholars deny this connection. They display considerable ingenuity involving the Hebrew language to show that the Little Horn has no connection with the other four.

We demur, and in a forthcoming chapter will probe and seek to answer the riddles posed by Dan. 8.

A civilization is known above all by its value system, rooted in a worldview. T. S. Eliot, poet and ethical thinker, saw religion as “the whole way of life of a people.”⁵ And certainly the great Mediterranean apostasy, a central theme of Revelation, was deeply imbued with Hellenism, as other chapters will show. It was this that engaged the Lord’s attention and is reflected in Biblical prophecy.

In government, administration, and law, the Greeks and Romans were distinctly different. But in matters of culture, intellect, and religion they increasingly became harder to tell apart—though Latin poetry reached very great heights without merely imitating its Hellenic and Hellenistic models. And then there are two other factors. First, the Romans eventually blended biologically with the Western Greeks in southern Italy and Sicily. Second, the Empire for the most part absorbed the former Hellenistic states. Two-thirds of its inhabitants lived in the eastern Mediterranean region, with Greek as either their mother tongue or *lingua franca*.

The Babylonians were able to superimpose their values on the people they conquered, to the extent that this can ever be the case. But the Romans were totally unable to do so in relation to the Greeks, who in most ways were their superiors—though not on the battlefield. In intellect and culture, it was Hellas that progressively swallowed up Rome, a fact which the latter acknowledged, most spectacularly through the words of the great Latin poet Horace (65-8 B.C.):

Greece, conquered Greece, her conqueror subdued.
And clownish Latium with its arts imbued.⁶

This was true throughout the Empire, affecting all the countries around the Mediterranean, even Semitic lands like Palestine in the time of Christ. Here is a startling passage from Werner Keller's much-translated work, *The Bible as History*, of which more than ten million copies have been sold:

Life in the Roman Empire took on more and more the stamp of Greece. Roman civilisation was to a large extent Greek civilization: Greek was the world language which united all the subject peoples of the East.

Anyone wandering through Palestine at the turn of the eras might have imagined he was in Greece. Across the Jordan lay out and out Greek cities. The "Ten Cities" [Decapolis] of the gospels (Matt. 4²⁵; Mk. 5²⁰) took Athens as their model: they had temples which were sacred to Zeus and Artemis, they had their theatre, their pillared forum, their stadium, their gymnasium and their baths. Greek in architecture as well as in the habits of their citizens were likewise Caesarea, the seat of Pilate's government, which lay on the Mediterranean south of Carmel, Sepphoris and Tiberias, which lay a few miles north of Nazareth on the Lake of Galilee, Caesarea Philippi, built at the foot of Hermon, and likewise Jericho. Only the many small towns and villages in Galilee, as in Judah, had retained their Jewish style of architecture. It was in these genuine Jewish communities that Jesus lived and worked, and nowhere do the Gospel writers speak of his ever having lived *in* one of the Greek cities but only in their neighbourhood (Mark 7³¹).

Nevertheless Greek dress and much of the Greek way of life had long before Jesus' day penetrated into the purely Jewish communities. Natives of Galilee and Judah wore the same sort of clothes as were worn in Alexandria, Rome or Athens. These consisted of tunic and cloak, shoes or sandals, with a hat or a cap as head covering. Furniture included a bed and the Greek habit of reclining at meals was generally adopted.⁷

This was even more the case when John was having his visions on Patmos, and in the period that was to follow shortly after his death. Hellenic culture and philosophy, particularly Plato's ideas, were about to experience a tremendous resurgence as part of an important cultural development: the Greek Renaissance.

Its heyday, lasting for more than a century, was the years A.D. 117-193, though "even in the writers of the first century" readers can find indicators that such a revival was on its way.⁸ Some even abandoned Koine Greek and reverted to Attic, the illustrious dialect of Athens in its golden age. A specimen of such authors was Aelius Aristides (A.D. 129-189). "He uses the purest Attic, indistinguishable from the style of the great Athenians of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.," though few of his productions are still worth reading.⁹ Much more successful was Lucian of Samosata (c. A.D. 120-180), a Syrian who wrote "a Greek, which is equal in style to the best of the great classical authors."¹⁰ He is even famous as the father of science fiction, with his satirical *True History* about a journey to and adventures on the moon.¹¹

This period, when the spirit of Hellas began to flourish anew, coincided with the reign of the "five good emperors": Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius. It ends with the murder of Commodus, when for the Roman world the Troubled Century began, with its barbarian invasions, economic disaster, pestilence, and the assassination of emperor after emperor.

Hadrian was a Spaniard who loved Hellenic culture, richly endowing the cities of Greece. Athletic, tall, handsome, and gifted with a marvelous memory, he greatly appealed to the

people of that country, especially since he was also a poet, a painter, and an architect. He even began the new imperial fashion of wearing a Grecian beard. At Rome, the aristocrats—clean-shaven to a man, according to the custom of their ancestors—deplored his Hellenic tendencies and called him the Greekling,¹² presumably not to his face. Though in many ways Hadrian proved to be an effective ruler, he disliked all Semites: Carthaginians, Syrians, and particularly Jews. When these rebelled because he ordered a pagan city, Aelia Capitolina, to be built on the site of Jerusalem, his armies destroyed them as a nation for 1,800 years. Though still esteemed by many who dote on all things Classical, Jewish writers to this day exhibit the emperor Hadrian's portrait in a bloody and infamous corner of the rogues' gallery that they maintain for those who have troubled their people through the centuries.

The Greek Renaissance impinged on western Christianity at a crucial formative stage of its development. Especially Alexandria as well as other erudite centers fostered a tendency toward liberal theological inventiveness and ecumenical syncretism, both of which were foreign and contrary to what the Scriptures teach. The spirit and the mindset of the age began to prevail in the Mediterranean church, including Rome.

The sixth head of Rev. 17 symbolizes the pagan Roman (really the Greco-Roman) Empire, which predominated when John had his vision. This head has a clear affinity with the last of the four heads on the leopard in Dan. 7 as well as the one of the four horns in Dan. 8—also with the Little Horn, at least in its initial, pagan aspect.

Blending together two peoples like the Greeks and the Romans is not unique in prophecy. Something similar happened to the Medes and Persians, represented in Dan. 2 by the chest and arms of silver and in Dan. 7 by the ponderous bear that rose up on one side. They also amalgamated, which is why prophecy depicts them as more or less a single entity, though historians sometimes fail to do so.

The seventh head of Rev. 17 corresponds to the seventh head of Dan. 7, the one on the terrible nondescript beast, which

also bears the Little Horn. In the Apocalypse, we think it symbolizes Roman-European Christendom.

This is related to the identification of several other writers. Maxwell, for instance, calls it Christian Rome¹³ and Goldstein describes it as an amalgamation of papal Rome with Europe.¹⁴ Our view, presented in the previous chapter, is, however, more comprehensive, tracing the origin of Roman-European Christendom back to the emperor Constantine and not simply to the pontiffs on Vatican Hill.

Chapter Six

THE ITALIAN GREEKS

I

One sweltering day in 1985 at the ruins of ancient Mycenae, southwestern Greece, not far from Corinth, I met and conversed with a group of friendly tourists. They turned out to be amateur archaeologists from Rome, who proudly told me the Greeks and Italians were sister nations. Gerardo Vacana also implied as much in his *Taccuino Greco e Altri Versi* (“Greek Notebook and Other Verses”) of 1993, where he wrote:

La Grecia è il paese amico
dove ci si sente più a casa.

(Greece is the friendly country
where one feels most at home.)

He headed this charming Italian poem with an intriguing expression: “Una faccia, una razza.” According to a note by Amerigo Iannacone of Venafro near Montecassino, who edited and published Vacana’s little book, this is “a popular saying widely diffused in many parts of Greece, to assert that Italians and Greeks have the same face and belong to one and the same race.”¹ That idea prevails in both those countries, apparently since very long ago.

How can this be even approximately true?

A glance at a map reveals that southern Italy comes close to touching the Balkan peninsula. Here the sundering Adriatic narrows to the Strait of Otranto. A mere fifty miles to the east of it lies modern Albania, but in ancient times the people on both sides spoke Greek. The Balkans and southernmost Italy were then adjacent parts of Hellas. In *Rome and the Western Greeks, 350 BC–AD 200*, Kathryn Lomas explained that according to recent research southeast Italy was “an important point of contact between Greece, Illyria and Italy.”² The Romans, once

they had become a political entity in their own right, nicknamed certain portions of Italy, especially its southern region, Magna Graecia (“Great Greece”).

Furthermore, “prior to the Punic Wars, there are signs that contacts between the Aegean world and the West were very extensive. Given the lack of information about the early history of the Greek colonies, it is easy to overlook the fact that although the Italiotes developed along distinctive lines from the Aegean Greeks, they remained an integral part of the wider Greek World. . . . The Italiote cities participated in the pan-Hellenic festivals and maintained contacts with the major sanctuaries of Greece in the same way as Athens, Corinth or any other city of Aegean Greece.”³

By 350 B.C., Magna Graecia “was a strategically and economically significant area.” It held “an intermediate position between eastern and western Mediterranean, thus occupying a unique position in both Greek and Italian terms.”⁴

Today the towns along the Gulf of Taranto and in Calabria are among the poorest in Italy, but during the centuries before the Christian era they prospered. “Magna Graecia in the years after the Roman Conquest [was] stupendously wealthy.” Nor was its history “simply one of frenetic overachievement followed by decline and desolation.” On the contrary, “many of the Greek cities continued to flourish under Roman rule and played an important role in the development of Roman Italy.”⁵

Those Greek-speaking cities lined the shore from the heel to the toe of the Italian boot and up as far as the Bay of Naples. After the Roman conquest and as the years marched on, their names mutated, but some of them are still there, known in Italian as Taranto, Crotone, Reggio, and Napoli. In Greek times, the first-mentioned was known as Taras. The Romans called it Tarentum. For a time, just after the disasters of the 470s B.C., it was “possibly the wealthiest and physically largest city in Italy”⁶ and “clearly had an alliance with Naples,”⁷ which had also been founded by Greeks as Neapolis (“New Town”).

Although the present-day language in those southern cities is Italian, traces of their original speech have lingered on. According to Salvatore Settis, one of Italy’s foremost

archaeologists working at the University of Pisa, the dialect spoken in his native Calabria still contains a “large number of ancient Greek words that have survived more than 2,000 years.”⁸

The process of blending the Greeks and the older Italiote peoples began with cultural contacts and ended in biological amalgamation. It predated the Roman period and included several other peoples. These spoke a variety of languages, not always related: Gaulish in the north, Venetic in the northeast, Etruscan in the lower northwest, Latin-Faliscan in the center, Osco-Umbrian through much of the peninsula—and Greek in Magna Graecia as well as Sicily. Culturally, at first, the last mentioned was the most significant one and Latin almost the least. Until the village of Rome could grow into a city able to conquer its rivals, its language was geographically most restricted. It hardly ranked as an important one. “Originally spoken by small groups of people living along the lower Tiber River, Latin spread with the increase of Roman political power, first throughout Italy and then throughout most of western and southern Europe and the central and western coastal regions of Africa”⁹ It was not, to begin with, the common speech of Italy. However, “by A.D. 100 at the latest, Latin had effaced all the other dialects between Sicily and the Alps, with the exception of Greek in the colonies of Magna Graecia.”¹⁰ That is to say, when John wrote the Revelation, the language and culture of these folk still predominated in the lower half of Italy.

II

As Patrick J. Geary has shown persuasively, ethnogenesis—the origin of nations—far from being a matter of simple facts, is entangled with myths and legends. Historians bring it all together, more or less conscientiously, yet it is often politicians and their supporting theologians who manipulate what it is all supposed to mean.¹¹ In our *Use and Abuse of Prophecy*, chapters about the mythological element in history, as well as the downright forgeries that writers have often foisted on us, make a similar point.

There was never such a thing as a Roman nation. To quote Lomas again, there was not even, despite the role of Latin as the administrative language, such a thing as “a monolithic and uniform Romanised Italy”; for “most cities managed to construct a distinctive local identity forged from disparate elements of Greek, Roman and Italic culture.” Therefore, “all the evidence points to a complex process of cultural interaction, and emphatically not to the development of a monolithic and uniform Romanised Italy.”¹²

The history of that peninsula, in any meaningful sense, began with the Greeks. Before the Romans became dominant, various other peoples with their languages and traditions struggled against one another and had their hour beneath the sun. Particularly vigorous for a time were the Oscans, who strove for the mastery in the south and as far north as the bay of Naples. To some extent, the Greeks of Magna Graecia later blended with them and others they found on the peninsula, yet always imposing their language and culture. Indeed, all the people of Italy were “heavily influenced by neighbouring Greece with its well-defined national characteristics, expansive vigour, and aesthetic and intellectual maturity.”¹³

The Roman republic, then, expanded from a smallish town that conquered the neighboring cities, before extending its dominion over the rest of Italy, Sicily, and the Mediterranean world. As it grew into an empire, Romanitas (“Romanness”) increasingly became a matter of citizenship rather than ethnic origin, just as in the case of America today. By A.D. 212, “virtually all the inhabitants of the Empire were Roman citizens,”¹⁴ though in the apostles’ time this was still a privilege reserved for a small élite and often purchased at a very large price. And so it happened that the apostle Paul, a Jew, could truthfully say he was “a Roman” (Acts 22:25-29), whose mother tongue was probably Greek—although as a learned theologian he also knew Hebrew as well as Aramaic, the language of Palestine, since he was educated in Jerusalem. It is possible that he could also speak Latin, but that was hardly necessary, since the Empire was bilingual. Throughout its eastern half, and even many places beyond it, the lingua franca was Koine Greek, which is why the New Testament was written in it.

The history of Rome began with Latin-speakers or, as Carlo M. Franzero maintained, the city was founded by the Etruscans.¹⁵ It is still unclear where this mysterious people originated. They may have emigrated from Western Asia and certainly spoke a non-Latin, non-Indo-European language. Their heartland lay along the coast of northwestern Italy, just above Rome. Eventually they came to dominate most of the peninsula, which—between the eighth and the sixth century before our era—brought them into closer contact with the Greeks, including those of Magna Graecia.

Around 700 B.C., “there began,” as M. I. Finley put it, “a cultural invasion on a scale, intensity and duration for which I cannot think of a parallel.”¹⁶ The Etruscans assimilated Greek ideas and inventions, such as the alphabet, modified them, and passed them on to the Romans.¹⁷

This Hellenic influence even penetrated into the Etruscan religion. Several of their gods and other mythological figures had names quite similar to those of the Greeks: Apulu (Apollo), Artume (Artemis), Hercle (Hercules), and Satre (Saturn).¹⁸ We do note, however, that their beliefs and mythology “often differed sharply from that of their Greek counterparts.” For instance, their Menrva, “an immensely popular deity, was regarded as a sponsor of marriage and childbirth.” The Etruscans equated her with the Hellenic Minerva and Athena, although the Greeks taught that the latter was a virgin, “much more concerned with the affairs of males.”¹⁹

A prized possession was the Sibylline Books, which supposedly foretold this people’s future. These had been created, “like everything else of antiquity in Rome, by the Etruscans,”²⁰ who were great believers in divination and prophecy. On one occasion, Tarquinius Superbus, traditionally the seventh king of that city, even sent two sons to consult the oracle who sat in Apollo’s temple at Delphi, Greece. They asked her which of them would succeed their father.²¹

We do not know exactly what she answered, but in about 509 B.C. history provided its own unpleasant answer: neither; Tarquinius Superbus would be the last Etruscan king of Rome! The growing city, whose inhabitants by now were largely Latin-

speaking people from the surrounding region known as Latium, had come increasingly to dislike the Tarquin family, regarding them as foreign tyrants. According to an ancient tale, Sextus Tarquinius (one of those sons who had gone to Delphi) raped Lucretia, a virtuous Roman lady. Sobbing bitterly, she told of the outrage and then committed suicide. Her kinsman, Lucius Junius Brutus, led a revolt that drove out the entire royal family, establishing the Republic of Rome.²²

Due to subsequent events and an inherent rancor, this new state—as its dominion grew—was “bent on blotting out from Italy the Etruscan civilization from which she herself had sprung,”²³ rewriting history from a Roman point of view.

First there was a long struggle with as well as the conquest of Etruria. Then, in 390 B.C., the Gauls, who had occupied and were living in northern Italy, descended on the city of Rome. Sacking and burning it, they “wiped out not only the records but most of the monuments as well.”²⁴

At that time, the Etruscans, sensing an opportunity to regain their lost liberty, had rebelled but were brutally quelled a second time. Eventually, however, they settled down as a well-behaved part of the Roman Republic. But in the final century before the Christian era, they made the further mistake of siding with Marius. With the civil war that followed and ended in 82 B.C., it was the Roman dictator Sulla (138-78 B.C.) who emerged as victor.²⁵ He was a most vindictive man and sought to completely eliminate the Etruscans as a people. He also needed land to reward the services of the forty-seven legions that had fought for him. Therefore, the whole of Etruria was converted into colonies to accommodate their resettlement. As for the beautiful Etruscan cities, “he dismantled them, destroyed their public buildings, burned their records, toppled their monuments, razed their walls.”²⁶

A generation later, Virgil (70-19 B.C.), to flatter both Augustus, who had recently become emperor, and the nationalism of the Romans, rewrote their history for them. In the *Aeneid*, he depicted their founders, not as lowly Latins educated by the Etruscans but as noble Trojans, who escaped the sack of their city and came to Italy, after ten years of wandering all over

the Mediterranean—just as Homer’s Ulysses finally got home to Ithaca.

Those Trojans were supposedly led by Aeneas, who was half divine. His mother, Venus, aided and abetted his voyage to the west. But Juno, Jupiter’s consort, favored Carthage in North Africa, and did everything she could to thwart this valiant man and his companions—in ways both natural and supernatural. She did not want them even to set foot on the shores of Italy. Eventually, however, they succeeded, as immigrants, settlers, and conquerors. The Trojans intermarried with the Latins and initiated the glorious history of Rome, which soon set out to conquer the rest of the world.

It is quite a story, obviously an imposture, but a most compelling one. Expressed in lofty and sometimes beguiling language, the Virgilian epic soon became a kind of Bible for the Romans, who swore by it and may have drawn their swords on anybody who dared to doubt it. But, of course, it is for the most part brilliant baloney. In the twentieth century, it would even provide the paradigm for a popular science fiction movie, *Battleship Galactica*.

All the same, this famous fiction has for two millennia—consciously or subconsciously—colored the historical as well as the prophetic thinking about the origins and nature of Roman Italy and the empire itself. Only since the twentieth century, with its archaeology and skeptical, scholarly research, a very different picture has emerged. Though less heroic, this is much more illuminating and not without an allurements of its own.

In addition to deriving so much from the Etruscans and largely absorbing their heritage, the Romans were deeply indebted to the Italian Greeks. Throughout their history, they continued their assimilation to the superior culture of the Hellenic south. As George W. Botsford and Charles A. Robinson put it, “the Italian and Sicilian Greeks were a mighty factor in the civilization of Italy.”²⁷ These are the roots that modern Italians are rediscovering right now.

III

But there is also something else, the intriguing fact that the word for Greeks and the general concept of Hellas actually originated in Italy.

In ancient times, this idea did not at first exist. As yet there was no unitary Greece, located in the Balkan Peninsula, no nation of Greeks, and no standardized language. Instead, the people whom we are describing lived in independent city-states, which were dotted all over the Mediterranean, especially along its northern shores. They spoke and wrote in a variety of dialects. Constantly at war with one another, they nevertheless preserved a general sense of kinship, worshipped the same gods—with a central shrine at Delphi—, and competed in theatrical as well as athletic contests, for which there were special truces. The best known of these were the Olympic Games.

Bible prophecy recognizes that the Greeks were never a single state. Daniel in surveying them as a whole refers to them as a plurality, four heads (chap. 7) or four horns (chap. 8). The interconnected symbolism of that book is largely the paradigm for the Apocalypse. It is therefore an error to identify only one of the seven heads in Rev. 17 with the Greeks.

In different periods, certain of their cities rose to prominence. We mention only a few of these, which thrived along many shores and in territories that today are separate countries. Some, were on islands, like Samos and Lesbos; others (Ephesos, Miletos, Halikarnassos) were situated along the coast of Asia Minor; many, such as Athens, Sparta, Corinth, and Thebes, adorned the Balkans; more of them flourished in Italy (Taras, Sybaris, Croton, Rhegion, Neapolis [Naples]), or Sicily (Syracuse, Catana, Messina). Even further west, was Massilia on the southern shore of what today is France.

Before the Roman conquest, first one and then another of these city-states tried to predominate, with varying but always temporary success. The same applies to Macedonia under King Philip and his son Alexander the Great, whose army never crossed the Adriatic into Italy—although their kinsman

Pyrrhus (319–272 B.C.), king of Hellenistic Epirus and an outstanding general, did so but after clashing disastrously with the Romans gave up his imperialistic attempt. Yet these cities were also highly indebted to one another.

A good instance of this was Massilia (Marseille), the oldest city in France. According to some archaeological remains, the first inhabitants of the area were probably Phoenicians, yet it was Greeks from Phocaea in Asia Minor who actually founded a city there in about 600 B.C.²⁸ It almost immediately became a vital link between ancient Britain and the Mediterranean, as William and Roselle Davenport explained in their charming book about the Seine in France. “By the sixth century B.C. the river had become the major leg of the route by which tin was brought from the mines of Cornwall to Massilia . . . one of the flourishing colonies of Magna Graecia on the Mediterranean Coast. Without tin there can be no bronze. Greek artisans and Greek foundries were hungry for the indispensable metal. Transported by boat across the English Channel and up the Seine, then shipped overland, and down the valley of the Rhône . . .”²⁹

In passing, we note that for the Davenports Magna Graecia included Massilia, though nowadays historians usually limit the use of this expression to a largely coastal area from Cumae near Naples to Tarentum (ancient Taras) on the southeastern Gulf of Taranto.³⁰ This is not, however, how ancient writers always viewed the matter. One of them, Pompeius Trogus, even “makes the startling assertion that the Greeks occupied ‘*non partem sed universam ferme Italiam*’ (‘not just part, but almost all of Italy’), thereby equating Magna Graecia with the whole of Italy.”³¹ The Davenports, with their own more inclusive nomenclature, march to the beating of this different drum.

Italy was important in helping to establish another indispensable element of civilization, the alphabet. As is well known, the Greeks acquired its rudiments from the Phoenicians, but where? It could have happened in the eastern Mediterranean on an island like Cyprus. But another place where these two peoples lived cheek by jowl was Sicily. Its west coast was inhabited by Phoenicians, who soon acknowledged the

sovereignty of nearby Carthage in North Africa. Itself a colony of Tyre, this had become the center of Semitic civilization and in its heyday dominated the western Mediterranean as far as Spain. North of Sicily lay Sardinia, where “Phoenicians were the island’s first recorded settlers, at about 800 B.C.”³² and above it Corsica. Here the “Greeks, Etruscans, and Carthaginians . . . battled for control of the eastern seaboard before the Roman conquest in 259 B.C.”³³ About fifty miles due east of Corsica is Italy. Here was the ancient heartland of Etruria, whose inhabitants may well have founded Rome and certainly greatly influenced it.

“The latest possible date for the Greek adoption of the alphabet is fixed by the date of the earliest Greek inscriptions. At present none is known earlier than 750 B.C., but there are about ten from between that date and 700 B.C., mainly on sherds and clay vessels, from sites ranging from near Naples to the Greek mainland and islands. This wide spread shows that by 700 B.C. Greek writing was well established. The earliest example of the Greek alphabet written out in order is scratched on an ivory tablet found in Etruria in Italy, datable to between 700 and 650 B.C.”³⁴

The importance of the Greeks that colonized Italy is also highlighted by the astounding fact that this is where they acquired their communal name.

John B. Bury explained it as follows: “The Greeks, when they first came into contact with Latins, had no common name; Hellenes, the name which afterwards united them, was as yet merely associated with a particular tribe. It was only natural that strangers should extend the name of the first Greeks with whom they came in contact to others whom they fell in with later, and so to all Greeks whatsoever. But the curious circumstance is that the settlers of Cyme were known, not by the name of Chalcis or Eretria or Cyme itself, but by that of Graia [in Boetia]. *Graii* was the term which the Latins and their fellows applied to the colonists, and the name *Graeci* [Greeks] is a derivative . . .”³⁵

IV

In an ever closer association with the people of Italy, the Greeks continuously molded their minds and customs. This touched not only their culture, but even their religious ideas. Apart from the original syncretism, much of which can be seen from the Greco-Roman pantheon, this also extended to the dualist philosophy that subsequently blighted so much of Christianity. It struck root, if it did not quite originate, on Italian soil—in southern Magna Graecia.

Here, “across the foot of the peninsula,” lay an ancient city called Croton or Crotona. Originally established by Dorian Achaeans in about 720 B.C., it had extended its holdings. By about 530 B.C., it became the home of Pythagoras, an immigrant from the Aegean island of Samos. The well-known theorem of this mathematician still delights or puzzles schoolchildren all over the world.³⁶ (Actually, however, “twelve hundred years before Pythagoras was born, the Babylonians were familiar with the facts with which the Theorem of Pythagoras deals—that in any right-angled triangle the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.”³⁷)

In Classical times, he was perhaps even more famous for his philosophical and religious ideas.³⁸ Though Pythagoras left nothing about this in writing, he was immensely influential, and it is possible to reconstruct what he taught. This is how Michael Grant summarized his central beliefs:

Pythagoras believed that the human soul corresponded “directly with the orderly construction of the universe.” On the other hand, “he envisaged the soul as a fallen, polluted divinity imprisoned within the body, as in a tomb, and destined to a cycle of reincarnations (*metempsychosis*). From this cycle, however, it can gain release by ritual purging, accomplished by abstinence and training and study, which he associated with the worship of Apollo. The soul, he believed, is indestructible, but temporarily detachable from the body; a theory of ‘bilocation’ derived from shamanistic faiths (named after the legendary Orpheus current in Scythia and Thrace). Here

Pythagoras was moving away from science into different spheres altogether; and in doing so he gained a reputation as occultist and miracle-worker, wearing melodramatic clothes and laying down primitive taboos. . . .”³⁹

This ancient guru founded what was virtually a new religion. By now, “Magna Graecia had also become an intellectual centre for the Greek world.”⁴⁰ In this period, “a strong Pythagorean tradition developed at Croton, Metapontum and Rhegium, and some attempt was made by the ruling oligarchies to govern these cities according to Pythagorean precepts.”⁴¹ This was especially the case at Croton, the master’s hometown. Here his new faith was practiced “by an ascetic society or brotherhood.” Three hundred of Pythagoras’s young supporters even took over the city government, though when he had grown old his rule was overthrown and he had to flee to Metapontum, where he died.⁴²

Greek speculations in Italy about the nature of ultimate reality were, however, not limited to Pythagoras and his disciples. “An Eleatic philosophical school developed at Velia under the leadership of Zeno.”⁴³ This activity culminated “in the works of Pythagoras’ follower, Parmenides.”⁴⁴ According to Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary, this school “developed the conception of the universal unity of being,” which was quite compatible with Pythagoreanism. Velia (its original name was Hyele) lay south of Naples, only about fifty miles from present-day Salerno.

The ideas of Pythagoras, apparently under Orphic and earlier Indo-European influence, were similar to those that would later be taught by Plato, Philo Judaeus, the Neoplatonists, and the Gnostics. Italy therefore seems to be where Greek dualism first established itself prominently.

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.) wrote at great length about the “influence of Pythagoras on Magna Graecia and thence on Rome,” especially “in their political and religious organization.” Of all the Romans living at that time, Cicero was the most knowledgeable about Greek philosophy. He was also the author of *De Natura Deorum* (“About the Nature of the Gods”). This book was not based on hearsay but solid

research. Apart from conversing with Hellenistic scholars at Rome, Cicero traveled abroad, where he met more of them and attended their lectures. His trip included Athens, where he spent half a year, the coastal cities of Asia Minor, and Rhodes, which was the home of Posidonius, at that time the leading teacher of the Stoics.⁴⁵ We think it would therefore have been no exaggeration for Cicero to claim, “I was educated by philosophers outstanding in their field.”⁴⁶

Allan Wardman, who refers to Cicero, seems to be skeptical of the idea that Pythagoras in Magna Graecia could have had such an impact on the Romans.⁴⁷ But it is unwise to brush aside the observations of that famous Latin writer. Cicero had a first-rate mind and was so utterly honest in the expression of his opinions that he paid for it with his life, when he opposed Octavian, the future Augustus Caesar. He was proscribed, executed, and had his head and hands chopped off.⁴⁸ Besides, as an inhabitant of that space-time, he would surely have known how influential Pythagoras had really been in both southern Italy and Rome.

Dualism, as fostered by the Greeks and their predecessors, was a key component in the ancient Mediterranean apostasy. Here we note that its Hellenic cradle, rocked by Pythagoras and his disciples, was southern Italy.

V

The Western Greeks lived not only in southern Italy but also in nearby Sicily. Apart from having heard that the Mafia hails from that island, most foreigners—including prophetic interpreters—know little about it. Let us therefore note some interesting facts about its ancient past.

Sicily (or at least its major portion) was, like the Grecian settlements on the adjacent Italian mainland, an intimate part of the Hellenic world. A long time before Alexander the Great and the dominance of Macedonia, Syracuse—colonized by the Greeks between the eighth and sixth centuries before Christ⁴⁹—had become a most remarkable and powerful state. It largely dominated eastern Sicily, and kept up its links with its mother

city Corinth, which throughout the years “succeeded in retaining unusually intimate relations” with its colonies.⁵⁰

In 415-413 B.C., Syracuse demolished the fleet and army sent against it by imperial Athens during the Peloponnesian War.⁵¹ Ships being of crucial importance to that famous city for victory against her enemies led by powerful Sparta, the fiasco at Syracuse greatly contributed to the defeat of Athens, as well as its subsequent decline.

Bury painted a fascinating picture of Syracusan achievements. “For half a century after the fall of Athens it seemed likely that the destinies of Europe would be decided by a Greek city in the western Mediterranean. Under her new lord Dionysius [c. 432-367 B.C.], Syracuse had become a great power, a greater power than any that had yet arisen in Europe. In strength and dominion, in influence and promise, she outstripped all the cities of the mother-country; and, in a general survey of the Mediterranean coasts, she stands out clearly as the leading European power.”⁵²

At that time, it became “the vastest of all Greek cities.”⁵³ For centuries, it had attracted many refugees and visitors, including very famous people. Especially the Persian menace in the east resulted in a westward migration by Ionians during the sixth century before our era.⁵⁴ Sappho (c. 610-c. 580 B.C.), the greatest lyric poet of Hellas, fled to Syracuse from her native Lesbos in a time of revolutionary upheaval, and spent her last years in that city.⁵⁵ Epicharmos (c. 550-460 B.C.), born in Kos, also went to live there. He was “an excellent dramatist, especially distinguished for his liveliness.”⁵⁶ Plato, the famous philosopher, made three trips to Syracuse, trying to implement his political ideas, though without success.⁵⁷

But Sicily also made outstanding contributions of its own to Hellenic culture and civilization. Empedocles (c. 490-430 B.C.), “Greek philosopher, statesman, poet, religious teacher, and physiologist, was a citizen of Acragas (Agrigentum).” To his contemporaries, this polymath seemed more than mortal. “Aristotle reputedly hailed him as the inventor of rhetoric, and Galen, a 2nd-century Greek physician, regarded him as the founder of Italian medicine. Lucretius, a Roman poet, admired

his hexametric poetry,” though time has devoured all his writings, except for five hundred lines of verse that are still ascribed to him.⁵⁸ Sophron (fl. c. 480 B.C.), famous for his mimes, was highly regarded by Plato.⁵⁹ He influenced both Theocritus and Plato himself.⁶⁰ Oratory “as a conscious art, begins, so far as we know, in Sicily. . . . The earliest names we hear of, themselves became almost legendary, are those of Korax and Teisias.”⁶¹

In literature, a most influential Greek Sicilian, born in Syracuse, was Theocritus (c. 300-after 260 B.C.), “the creator of pastoral poetry”⁶² and a poet of high if not the highest order.⁶³

His influence through the ages and in many languages has been extraordinary. Amongst others, he launched into fame the greatest Latin poet, Virgil, with his *Eclogues* in about 38 B.C.⁶⁴ During and after the Renaissance, the influence of Theocritus also left many traces in both Italian and English literature, most notably in John Milton’s *Lycidas*, which “most poets and critics have agreed, is the most perfect long short poem in the English language, and one of the greatest poems ever written.” Two other famous odes indebted to Theocritus are Shelley’s *Adonais* and Matthew Arnold’s *Thyrsis*.⁶⁵

But the most famous Syracusan was Archimedes (c. 287-212 B.C.), a very great scientist and inventor. He is especially famous for discovering π and greatly advancing mathematics in solid geometry, while in physics and chemistry he established “the fundamental laws of hydrostatics.”⁶⁶ When the Romans were besieging Syracuse in the time of King Hieron II, Archimedes’ military machines held them at arms’ length for three years. Indeed, he died as a result of this achievement, slain by a Roman soldier—probably in reprisal—still “being at the time intent upon a mathematical problem.”⁶⁷

Despite the strategically central situation of Sicily in the Mediterranean, Syracuse was prevented from becoming the focus of a truly great power by its struggle with the Carthaginians and the consequent Roman intervention. Carthage, a Phoenician city, was in North Africa a mere

hundred miles to the southwest and had settlements on the west coast of Sicily itself. It was inevitable that they and the Greeks would come into conflict.

In his first war with the Carthaginians, Dionysius, the Elder (c. 430-367 B.C.) fought them off successfully and then extended his empire, until it included the boot of Italy and some territories on both sides of the Adriatic.⁶⁸ His second war with Carthage also ended in his favor, but the third (383-c. 375) “proved disastrous; he suffered a crushing defeat,” although “he was engaged in yet another conflict with the Carthaginians at the time of his death.”⁶⁹

It is noteworthy that constant interaction existed between Syracuse and other centers of the Grecian world. For instance, aristocrats from that city had to face their tyrant Dionysius II as well as Hicetas, tyrant of Leontini. They appealed for help to Corinth, the mother city of Syracuse, which sent Timoleon (d. after 337 B.C.) with a liberation force. In 344 B.C., it defeated the two armies which opposed it. When Nicetas tried again in 341 B.C., he was finally defeated and executed. Through a treaty, Timoleon confined the Carthaginians to the west of the Halycus (Platani) River and introduced an improved constitution for Syracuse.⁷⁰

In this very period, however, Corinth was conquered by and became a puppet of Macedonia (338 B.C.),⁷¹ as well as the focus for King Philip’s alliance against Persia. For this campaign, he was its nominal president as well as the general of the united armies. This setup was named the League of Corinth.⁷² After Philip’s death, his son, Alexander the Great, continued this policy and subsequently crossed into Asia Minor for the Persian campaign.⁷³

Owing to its links with Corinth, it is possible that the Macedonians regarded Syracuse as part of their dominions. But neither Philip nor Alexander ever ruled over Sicily, nor could Syracuse formally supply any soldiers for the war against Persia, although some volunteers might have joined that campaign. Sicily necessarily had to direct its gaze to its southern enemies in Carthage, North Africa. It sometimes also cast a nervous backward glance over its shoulder at the Romans in the rear.

The conflict with the ever more powerful Carthaginians dragged on and eventually brought about the extinction of Hellenic independence in Sicily. In 264 B.C., the ambitious republic on the Tiber decided to step into the picture. “The primary cause was Roman jealousy over Carthaginian expansion in Sicily. Carthage already controlled the western portion of the island and was threatening the Greek cities of Syracuse and Messina on the eastern coast. If these cities were captured, all chances of Roman occupation of Sicily would be lost.”⁷⁴

The second war with Carthage, which started in 218 B.C. and lasted for sixteen years, unleashed an invasion by Hannibal into Italy. By ravaging that country and through several brilliant victories, he almost forced Rome to the brink of destruction. But an invasion of his homeland forced him back to North Africa, where Scipio Africanus the Elder (236-184/183 B.C.) defeated him at the Battle of Zama in 202 B.C.⁷⁵

Half a century earlier, Hieron II of Syracuse (d. 216/215 B.C.) had been obliged to accept a treaty with Rome; but after his death the city allied itself to the Carthaginians. The Romans besieged it from 212 B.C. and captured it during the next year.⁷⁶ All Sicily was then added to their domains. This was the first significant venture of Rome beyond the Italian peninsula, and where its international empire began, involving a consistently southward movement, down through Magna Graecia and Sicily.

Beyond them, lay Carthage, the great enemy that obstructed the way of empire and whose power had to be broken. This is a point of considerable importance, further dealt with in an upcoming chapter, “Solving the Problems of Daniel 8.”

VI

Within a few generations, Carthage was conquered and and later destroyed. The victorious legions now turned east and conquered the rest of Hellas in the Balkans, Western Asia, and North Africa. As famous cities, including Athens, Antioch, and Alexandria, passed into their hands, they were astounded by yet further evidences of the Greeks’ superior, enchanting culture than those they had encountered in Magna Graecia and Sicily.

Roman and Italian noblemen “visited the Greek East both for business and for pleasure. The tendency for well-to-do young men to be educated by Greek tutors and to be sent to Greece to complete their education grew steadily throughout the first century BC.” This prompted another development. As it became evident that their services were prized and well rewarded, “Greek artists and intellectuals migrated to Italy in greater numbers . . .”⁷⁷

The Hellenization of the Roman élite was especially evident in the oldest area where several hundred years earlier their ancestors had met the immigrant Greeks. “By the middle of the first century B.C., numerous villas had been built in the area between Naples and Misenum, and the Bay of Naples had become a major cultural and intellectual centre which was regularly visited by many Roman notables. Cicero’s letters show that most of his friends and political associates owned property here, and cultivated connections with leading local families.” The Bay of Naples “was clearly a cultural centre of great importance. . .”⁷⁸

Here, in A.D. 2 and at Puteoli in A.D. 138, Greek games were introduced, attracting even more people from the Eastern Empire. The historian Strabo (64/63 B.C.– A.D. 23) referred to the strong Hellenism on the Bay of Naples, noting “the Greek ambience of Cumae and the Greek civic institutions of Naples.”⁷⁹ In this city, not only Hellenic culture and erudition persisted throughout the earlier empire; despite the Roman conquest, the Greek language itself survived, for a thousand years from when Naples was founded in 600 B.C.⁸⁰ Other cities further south, like Velia and Rhegium, preserved a similar heritage.⁸¹

The capital itself did not escape this virtual tsunami of Hellenization, which was greatly augmented by ordinary, mostly poorer immigrants streaming in from all over the Eastern Empire. As Froom expressed it: “Rome itself under the emperors was essentially a Greek city, with Greek as its second language.”⁸² At first, it was especially among these people that Christianity established itself. Their lingua franca being Koine Greek, the apostle Paul wrote his Epistle to the

Romans in it. Consequently in that city “the language of the church was Greek until the early fourth century.”⁸³

The ruling and intellectual élite of imperial Rome eventually became “completely bilingual.” By the time of the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121–180) they “had acquired familiar ease in two media of expression,”⁸⁴ while the Greeks themselves were resolute monoglots.⁸⁵

Like so many English-speaking people during the twentieth and present century, they did not deign to learn foreign languages. Though their overlords both spoke and for administrative purposes wrote Latin, the Greeks could with impunity pretend ignorance or an inability to learn it. Throughout the peninsula, it had largely eliminated all the other languages.⁸⁶ The Oscans, like most of conquered people in Italy, assimilated. After all, the “use of the Latin language had strong political overtones, signalling acceptance of Roman values.”⁸⁷ But for the Greeks of Magna Graecia and Sicily these others were simply barbarians; they considered themselves a superior breed and did not follow such an example—and the Romans allowed them to get away with this attitude. The same was true throughout the rest of the Classical world.

But why? The reason was that first the Republic and then the Empire had long since yielded to the enchantment of Greek philosophy, literature, art, and religion. This was already a common fact of life by the time when John had his visions on Patmos about the leopard-like Beast that rose from the Mediterranean (Rev. 13:1) and the woman Babylon, “that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” together with the seven-headed beast on which she sat (Rev. 17:9, 10, 18).

The period immediately after the last apostle’s death saw even greater Hellenization during the Greek Renaissance, to which we have already referred. It flourished when Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius were ruling the Empire. We need not here describe it again, except to note that Hadrian not only stimulated that great revival in a general way but renewed the ancient links between the Greeks of Italy and those who inhabited other cities throughout the Mediterranean world. “In the second century AD, Greek culture

and institutions received a further boost from the emperor Hadrian. The Panhellenion, a body intended to provide a focus for all cities of proven Greek origin, provoked a great upsurge of interest in Greek culture and customs which was particularly strong in cities on the periphery of the Greek world. As part of this initiative, an embassy led by Callicrates was sent by Sparta to Tarentum in 145-50, apparently to revive the traditional connection⁸⁸ between the original mother city and its Italian colony.

We particularly note the following: “In the East, the great Hellenic revival was a second-century phenomenon, given added impetus by Hadrian. In the West, the equivalent process begins a century earlier, with patronage from Augustus and other Julio-Claudian emperors.”⁸⁹ But long, long before those emperors, the Greeks of Magna Graecia and Sicily had for centuries been molding and predisposing the emergent Roman mind to such an end. When Horace (65-8 B.C.) wrote his often quoted lines about vanquished Greece culturally subjugating her Latin conquerors, he was not just referring to the inhabitants of Athens or other cities in the Balkans. He also had in mind the ones of his native Italy, and he, too, may have felt that

Greece is the friendly country
where one feels most at home.

If he could have peered into the future of two millennia later to read Gerardo Vacana’s poem, he may even then have agreed that Italians and Greeks were developing “Una faccia, una razza.”

And yet that ancient upsurge of culture and Renaissance did not persist. The beginning of the third century marked “the end of both the economic and political stability enjoyed by Italy as a whole, and the Hellenising impetus among the Roman élite which had been so important to the flourishing Greek culture of southern Italy.”⁹⁰

What happened? The Troubled Century that followed the reign of Marcus Aurelius, late in the second century, ruined the Principate, the Classical, pagan Roman Empire. Barbarian invasions, pestilence, repeated imperial assassinations,

administrative crises, and ruinous inflation threatened its very survival. Impending chaos ended with the accession of Diocletian (A.D. 245-316), who introduced the Dominate, reestablishing the empire along different lines. Partly building on this foundation, Constantine transformed it into Christendom, which later in the West gave birth to the Catholic Middle Ages.

But throughout and beyond the earthly life span of Christ as well as his apostles, including John who wrote the Apocalypse, Imperial Rome was virtually trademarked “made in Hellas,” to a remarkable extent. The army, like the system of roads, the laws, and the administrative structure, was thoroughly Roman. But in culture, intellect, and spirit the empire was as Greek as Magna Graecia and Sicily, followed by Athens, Antioch, and Alexandria, could make it. The process of its manufacture, beginning in Italy, had lasted for centuries and left an enduring imprint, which is still noticeable today.

Prophetically this is why both Daniel and the Apocalypse in several contexts intertwine their Greek and Roman symbolism, most notably in Rev. 13, with its leopard-like Beast to represent the Antichrist. To understand this as well as the seven heads, we need to be somewhat knowledgeable about the history of the Italian Greeks.

In the following two chapters, we will also note how it leads to a better understanding of Dan. 8 and solves some knotty problems that have till now obstructed its interpretation.

Chapter Seven

GREEK AND ROMAN HORNS IN DANIEL

I

Daniel 8 depicts the Greeks as an aggressive he-goat that stamps on and utterly vanquishes a sheep ram, representing the Medo-Persians. The triumphant animal has a single large horn, a symbol of its “first king” (Dan. 8:21), obviously Alexander the Great. After becoming “very great” (v. 8), it is broken, “and four kingdoms . . . stand up out of the nation” (v. 22). A few chapters later, a parallel passage says, “His kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those” (Dan. 11:4).

The prophet also saw a peculiar addition: a horn that starts in a small way but afterwards grows mightily. It becomes “exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land.” It attacks and pollutes the sanctuary of God, assailing even heaven itself. It opposes “the prince of the host” (Dan. 8:9-11), who is the Messiah, and “destroys the mighty and the holy people” (v. 24).

The choice of animal symbols in this chapter is highly significant and doubly appropriate. On their seals, the Persians used the ram as a common emblem, and the Greeks a goat, which was “a familiar figure” on their coins, as can be clearly seen in Froom’s photographic reproductions of casts from the British Museum and the Parisian Bibliothèque Nationale.¹ The latter symbol is probably derived from Macedonia. Its original capital was Aigai, and the scions of its royal house, to which King Philip and his son Alexander the Great belonged, were called the Argeadai. This is the usual explanation. But “Justin, who wrote a schoolbook in the third century A.D., relates another story, which springs from the similarity between the name of the capital, Aigai, and the

Greek word *aiges* (“goats”). In this version the goatherd Caranus gained control of the town Edessa, which was then renamed Aigai because of his goats.”²

Biblically this symbolism has a further dimension. In Old Testament times, both the ram and the goat were sacrificial, sanctuary animals. Both were used on the Day of Atonement. Two sheep rams were sacrificed as burnt offerings (Lev. 16:3, 5). Of the two goats, one was “for the LORD.” When the high priest had killed it, he took its blood into the Most Holy Place and sprinkled it on the mercy seat above the Ark of the Covenant. The other animal had a different purpose: it was an [e]scape goat and not to be sacrificed. After completing his work in the sanctuary, the high priest was commanded to lay “both his hands” upon it, “and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness” (Lev. 16:8-22). There it was left to perish.

From a religious point of view, the goat was an ambiguous creature. Though sometimes it was sacrificed, on Yom Kippur it also had a bad connotation. Typologically, that second goat represented the devil. In the New Testament, Christ unequivocally used the goat to portray his professed servants who think they are good, yet go to hell for their lack of compassion toward needy and suffering human beings (Matt. 25:41-45).

From ancient times, the sheep was regarded in a favorable light, most often as a blameless, though weak and erring, sometimes a wayward animal. As a sacrificial victim, it came to symbolize the Lamb of God, who would die for the sins of the world. In Dan. 8, the ram represents the Persians, because through three decrees their kings would command the rebuilding in Jerusalem of the temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian army. For this purpose, the Lord had made Cyrus king and called him “his anointed” (Isa. 45:1), so that in the sanctuary context he even prefigured the Messiah.

As a Hellenic symbol, the goat was both Alexander and his nation, the Greeks. And the hypertrophic Little Horn? In Dan. 8, it has a goat connection. In contrast with the Persians, the Romans—vis-à-vis the Chosen People—were not sanctuary builders but sanctuary destroyers and desecrators.

On the literal plane, they demolished the Second Temple in A.D. 70. Sixty years later, when Emperor Hadrian visited the ruins of Jerusalem in A.D. 130, he decided to have the city rebuilt. But he renamed it Aelia Capitolina, and where the Lord's temple had stood, he wanted one erected for Jupiter. This plan ignited the Second Jewish War (A.D. 132-135) under a false Messiah, Bar Kokhba. After great losses, the Romans crushed the revolt. Not only did they kill 580,000 Jews and enslave a large number of them; Hadrian sought to eliminate Judaism itself. "He prohibited the Torah law, the Jewish calendar and executed Judaic scholars. The sacred scroll was ceremoniously burned on the Temple Mount." Furthermore, "In an attempt to erase any memory of Judea, he wiped the name off the map and replaced it with Syria Palaestina, as an insulting reminder of the Jews' ancient enemies the Philistines, long extinct by then."³ This is how the Chosen People were uprooted as a nation state for more than 1,800 years, until 1948.

As Constantinian Christendom, culminating in the papacy, the Romans also assailed the antitype of the sanctuary, both the Holy and the Most Holy places which according to the Bible exist in heaven (Heb. 9:11, 24; Rev. 11:19; Rev. 16:17). They did so by setting up a spurious sanctuary service of their own, with the Mass and transubstantiation as its centerpiece. This was one of the reasons why the sanctuary had to be "restored to its rightful state" (Dan. 8:14, RSV).

II

Important for understanding this chapter is the word *vision*. It occurs repeatedly (vv. 1, 15-17, 26) and also has a bearing on the rest of the book, for instance in Dan. 9:23-24; 10:1, 11-12; 11:2; 12:4-13.

Readers may be inclined to think that Daniel often had visions, so what could be so special about this word in the last part of his book? As a matter of fact, he did not have many divine revelations about the future. For a lifetime of about ninety years, he recorded only five. *Vision* or *visions* explicitly occurs in only Dan. 2:19; 7:1, 2, 7, 13, 15; 8:1, 2, 13, 15-17, 26, 27; 9:21, 23, 24; 10:1, 7, 8, 14, 16, but not in chapters 11 and 12. These do not record a separate vision but a largely literal, non-symbolic explanation by the angel Gabriel. He is the internal expositor, a concept explained in the “Seven Keys to Unlock the Mysteries of Revelation” in our *Use and Abuse of Prophecy* (2007).

Daniel had no direct prophetic communication from heaven in his own right before he turned seventy. The one vision of his youth, when he was eighteen, came in answer to prayer to save the lives of the wise men—including himself and his friends—by showing what the Babylonian king had dreamt (Dan. 2:17-19). For most of Daniel’s life, his main gift from God was the ability to *interpret* divine revelations given to other people (Dan. 1:17), particularly Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2 and 4) and Belshazzar (Dan. 5).

Let us note in passing that a compassionate Creator often supernaturally, as well as through his servants, warns and seeks to guide the rulers of countries, especially those that play a leading role in the world, above all as they relate to his people. He spoke to Egypt through Joseph, who interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams, and through Moses, who unleashed the plagues. He warned the Assyrians by the mouth of Jonah and in other prophecies of the Old Testament. He labored with Nebuchadnezzar through dreams, and pronounced judgment on the Neo-Babylonian Empire by writing on Belshazzar’s palace wall. He raised up Cyrus for the special purpose of reinstating his people in Jerusalem, even foretelling the famous Persian’s career a hundred years before his birth (Isa. 45).

Subsequently, according to Josephus (A.D. 37/38-after 93), he also spoke to Alexander the Great through a prophetic dream. The Conqueror was angry because the Jews would not

forswear their allegiance to the Persians, and he was advancing on Jerusalem to destroy it. But as he came close to the city, he saw its priests come forth in white linen garments, headed by Jaddua “with his mitre on his head, having the golden plate whereon the name of God was engraved.” And then Alexander “approached by himself, and adored that name.” He explained his unusual behavior to his surprised companion Parmenio by speaking of “that God who hath honoured him with his high priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion over the Persians. . .”⁴

To the Romans, the Most High directed a strict warning through the wife of Pontius Pilate (Matt. 27:19), the emperor’s procurator, during the unjust trial in which he condemned the world’s Redeemer to scourging and a horrible death by crucifixion.

The vision of the four beasts (chap. 7) came to Daniel in the first year of Belshazzar. Two years later (Dan. 8:1), he had another vision—the one we are focussing on. He saw the ram, the he-goat, and again an evil Little Horn on the rampage.

The vision of Dan. 8 is amplified in chapter 9. As an internal expositor, Gabriel afterwards explained it further, according to Daniel’s last three chapters (10-12). This came to the prophet more than twenty years later, when he was already eighty-eight years old,⁵ a short time before his death.

The angel’s final appearances occurred on river banks to the east of Babylon, the direction from which its Persian conqueror was to come. In the revelation of Dan. 8, the prophet found himself at the Ulai in Elam. The next one, beginning with Dan. 10, took him to the Hiddekel or Tigris. In each case, more was involved than the Persians, the Greeks, or the Romans. Daniel also saw and overheard both Michael and Gabriel (Dan. 8:2, 16-17; 10:4-6, 21; 12:7).

The former, more resplendent person—a man “clothed in linen” but “whose face was like lightning and his eyes as lamps of fire” (Dan. 10:5; 12:7)—was “your prince” (Dan. 10:21), the “great prince which standeth for the children of thy people” (Dan. 12:1).

According to this description, Daniel looked on the Son of God himself, the Redeemer. More than five centuries afterwards, the apostles Peter, James, and John, who was still a young man, would see him glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:2). Years later, on Patmos, the beloved disciple—now an old man—was to meet his Lord again and fall at his feet, overwhelmed by his glory. But reassuringly his friend and Master laid his hand on him and said: “Fear not.” (Rev. 1:13-16). Just so, Gabriel had addressed Daniel, six hundred years before (Dan. 10:12).

The word *vision* in the final five chapters of the book is closely concerned with the sanctuary, a topic which he could not get out of his mind. Though promoted to very high office at Babylon, Daniel never forget that he was a captive and an exile from Jerusalem, where the beautiful temple which Solomon had built still lay in ruins, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar’s army. The older the prophet became, the more he yearned for his people’s return. Diligently he studied the Scriptures and dwelt on Jeremiah’s prediction that the Jews would be allowed to go back after seventy years. And then the Lord revealed to him the entire future of the sanctuary.

Modern readers may wonder what was so special about it and also be puzzled by the expression “daily *sacrifice*.”

First, we need to note that *sacrifice* is not in the original and that the translator’s choice of “daily” is also a little unfortunate. In Hebrew this is not a phrase but a single word: *tamid*, occurring “103 times in the OT, used both adverbially and adjectivally. It means ‘continually’ or ‘continual,’ and is applied to various concepts, such as continual employment (Eze. 39:14), permanent sustenance (2 Sam. 9:7-13), continual sorrow (Ps. 38:17), continual hope (Ps. 71:14), continual provocation (Isa. 65:3), etc. It is used frequently in connection

with the ritual of the sanctuary to describe various features of its regular services, such as the ‘continual bread’ that was to be kept upon the table of shewbread (Num. 4:7), the lamp that was to burn continually (Ex. 27:20), the fire that was to be kept burning upon the altar (Lev. 6:13), the burnt offerings that were to be offered daily (Num. 28:3, 6), the incense that was to be offered morning and evening (Ex. 30:7, 8). The word itself does not mean ‘daily,’ but simply ‘continual’ or ‘regular.’” Outside the book of Daniel, *tamid* is translated “daily” only once, in Num. 4:16.⁶

So instead of “daily *sacrifice*,” *tamid* could in Dan. 8:11 and Dan. 11:31 be more appropriately translated as “the continual service,” which makes it synonymous with what the sanctuary was all about. When the Romans in A.D. 70 destroyed the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, they abolished its entire ritual, and the Jewish people have never restored it. As predicted, Jesus the Messiah through his crucifixion caused “the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” (Dan. 9:27).

The *tamid* did not, however, disappear; it was transferred to the heavenly sanctuary, in Christ’s continual ministry on behalf of us all. That is where he, the “man clothed in linen,” has now for almost two millennia, tirelessly officiated as the only true high priest for every member of the human race.

(As dealt with in our previous work, *The Truth About 666*, there is also another, older explanation by Seventh-day Adventist writers about what the *tamid* may entail.)

III

The emergence and devastation of the Little Horn is described in Dan. 8:9-12. It undoubtedly represents the Romans, in both their pagan and Christian stages.

Near the beginning of our era, they killed the Messiah and destroyed the earthly sanctuary, so that its continual service ended. Jesus himself, with Dan. 8:13 and Dan. 12:7-11 in mind, predicted this event: “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains. . .”

(Matt. 24:15, 16) Virtually the same words occur in Mark 13:14. This Gospel likewise says: "Let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains."

Luke's version is a little different. He does not repeat the phrase "abomination of desolation," but Jesus further fills in the picture of coming events. He tells the Christians precisely what they will have to do and specifies the sequel for the Jewish nation: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:20-24).

History tells us that forty years later when the Christians saw the Romans encircle Jerusalem, they remembered the Saviour's warning. After the legions had briefly lifted their siege, the believers promptly fled from the city and Judea, eastward across the Jordan. Every one of them was saved. From Decapolis and other places of safety, they later, in A.D. 70, heard about the terrible massacre and how the city with its temple had been devastated by the Roman legions.

But Jesus foretold more than the fate of Jerusalem and its temple as they existed in his time. His future-discerning eyes looked down through the ages. The Olivet discourse recorded in Matt. 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21:5-38 has a dual application, for in it the Saviour deliberately mingled two predictions. Peter, John, James, and Andrew had asked him: "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" But, as Ellen G. White explained it,

Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His

coming. He mingled the description of these two events. Had He opened to His disciples future events as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the sight. In mercy to them He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves. When He referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, His prophetic words reached beyond that event to the final conflagration in that day when the Lord shall rise out of His place to punish the world for their iniquity, when the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. This entire discourse was given, not for the disciples only, but for those who should live in the last scenes of this earth's history.⁷

We need not suppose that because Luke 21:20-24 fails to mention the "abomination of desolation," it does not deal with exactly the same events as Matt. 24:15, 16 and Mark 13:14. All three of these passages refer to the same initial situation: great peril for the Lord's followers in Judaea and the command that they must promptly flee to the mountains. The real question here is whether the "abomination of desolation" already existed in the first century A.D., while Rome was still a pagan empire, or did it originate with papal Rome? The latter eventuality concerns the 1290 year-day prophecy of Dan. 12:11: "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." Historicists calculate this time period from A.D. 508 to 1798.

While Dan. 7 distinguishes between paganism and papal Rome, the next chapter, Dan. 8, does not. Its Little Horn grown huge refers to both, which emphasizes Heaven's perspective, namely that the pontifical system has essentially perpetuated heathenism.

In 1651, Thomas Hobbes, the famous English polymath, declared: "The papacy is no other, than the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof: for so did the papacy start up on a sudden out of the ruins of that heathen power."⁸ Hobbes in several passages elaborated his idea

that the papal power was a rump state of the Roman Empire. About Latin, which Catholicism has retained and “which is not commonly used by any nation now in the world,” he asked: “What is it but the ghost of the old Roman language?” Many other things, too, had been inherited from the ancient imperial religion. Therefore, Hobbes spoke of the “old empty bottles of gentilism, which the doctors of the Roman Church, either by negligence or ambition, have filled up again with the new wine of Christianity.”⁹ Or, in the forthright words of Ellen G. White: “Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror.”¹⁰

As Jesus interpreted the prophecies of Daniel during his Olivet discourse, the abomination of desolation either already existed or would have begun its existence by A.D. 70, when Jerusalem would be destroyed. But how do we reconcile this with the prediction of Dan. 12:11 and the 1290 year-day prophecy? We distinguish between the origin or essence of the abomination that makes desolate and *setting it up*. The papacy began its career quite early in the Christian era. The apostle Paul said that even in his time—while Jerusalem and its temple were still standing—the mystery of lawlessness was already at work (2 Thess. 2:7, NKJV). That is, he could detect the first deviations from the Gospel which would later produce a full-fledged Antichrist. But much history and obstacles would intervene before it could be set up and predominate in Christendom. We provide the details in *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy* (2011).

In passing, we note that the “abomination of desolation” as Historicists explain it clashes with the Dispensationalist model, which seeks to fit it into what was predicted in Eze. 36-38. These chapters really belong to the future that never was, as described in our *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History* (2007). They speak of nations attacking the Chosen People, only to be themselves defeated and destroyed. According to Hal Lindsey, “Ezekiel 36 and 37 speak of the final restoration of the Jews to the land of Palestine, a restoration from which they will never be scattered again.” This would bring about “a great spiritual rebirth of the nation

and the return of Jesus the Messiah to rescue them from their enemies.”¹¹ But this does not agree with the Olivet discourse. In it, the Saviour had nothing to say about any such rescue or rebirth. On the contrary, as he told his disciples, the hostile forces surrounding Jerusalem would win and exterminate its inhabitants, except the ones they led away captive and sold into slavery, as happened to thousands of Jewish men, women, and children.

For a sharper focus on the Lord’s explanation of the attack on Jerusalem by the Little Horn less than four decades after Christ had ascended to heaven, we need to do a little language-based analysis. The reader should find this both enlightening and interesting.

We begin with the word “desolate,” spoken to the Jewish leaders, and two phrases addressed to the disciples, namely the “abomination of desolation” and “until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” The concepts involved are interrelated. Let us look a little at these words and expressions, to see what parallels, if any, they have in other parts of the Bible.

What did Jesus mean when he said: “Your house is left unto you *desolate*” (Matt. 23:34-39)? As often when he had trouble with the Scribes and Pharisees, he addressed them through an allusion to the Old Testament. On this occasion, his statement was based on a dire warning to wicked King Zedekiah, shortly before the destruction of the first temple and the Babylonian captivity: “If ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the Lord, that this house shall become a *desolation*” (Jer. 22:5). (Emphasis added for both verses.) The Greek in Matthew’s Gospel is ἐρημος (*erēmos*, “desolate”).

To his disciples, Jesus explained just how the earthly sanctuary would be eliminated: through το βδελυγμα της ἐρημωσεως (*to bdelugma tēs erēmōseōs*, “the abomination of desolation,” Matt. 24:15 and Mark 13:14). *Erēmos*, “desolate,” is obviously the adjectival form of ἐρημωσις (*erēmōsis*, “desolation”). Which agency would bring this about? One hint is found in Rev. 17:4-6, where Babylon—that notorious vampire woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs—holds up a golden chalice filled with βδελυγματων

(*bdelugmatōn*, “abominations”). But here we especially want to compare the words of Mark and Matthew with verses in “Daniel the prophet,” whose book Jesus said his disciples should read and seek to understand.

Did he have in mind a specific passage? Dan. 8:8-11, 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11 are all concerned with a future enemy of Israel, the Romans and their syncretist offspring, the papal Antichrist. But does “the abomination of desolation” occur in any of those verses?

It does, in Dan. 12:11, according to three important Bible translations, the New King James Version (NKJV), the fourth-century Latin Vulgate, and the even more ancient Septuagint in Greek. They all contain the synonymous phrases: *the abomination of desolation/abominatio in* [“for”] *desolationem/to bdelugma tēs erēmōseōs*. According to the Gospels, these were the very words that Jesus used, at least in the Evangelists’ Greek translation of the Aramaic which he habitually spoke to them.

The phrase appears in conjunction with three related time prophecies: the 1260, the 1290, and 1335 year-days (Dan. 12:7, 11-12), which are included within the larger framework of the 2300 evenings and mornings (Dan. 8:14, RSV). They all refer to the final segment of history before the Second Coming. The first-mentioned period would be “for a time, times, and an half,” amongst other things “to scatter the power of the holy people” (vs. 7). Dan. 7:25, a parallel passage, also mentions this time prophecy and presents the Little Horn as one who “shall wear out the saints of the Most High.”

As translations of Dan. 9:27, where we read of the last of the seventy prophetic weeks allocated to the Jewish nation, we again find a correspondence between the Vulgate and the Septuagint. Once more the former has *abominatio in desolationem*, though in the latter it is το βδελυγμα της ἐρημωσεων (*to bdelugma tēs erēmōseōn*, “the abomination of desolations”), with a plural form—perhaps referring to the destruction of both the city and the sanctuary, already mentioned in vs. 26. All the same, at the end of vs. 27 the

singular is used: τὴν ἐρημωσιν (*tēn erēmōsin*, “the desolation”).

A striking difference between Dan. 12:11, 12 and Dan. 9:27 is that the abomination of desolation is linked with two different time periods: the 1260, etc., and the seventy septennates (490 years, which began in 457 B.C.). The latter—already explained in our *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History*—forms part of the longer prophetic sequence, the 2300 year-days (Dan. 8:13, 14), which end in 1844.

This passage begins with the question “How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden underfoot?” To this, we add another parallel passage: “And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate” (Dan. 11:31). The NKJV renders that last phrase as *the abomination of desolation* and the Vulgate as *abominationem in desolationem*, though this has no parallel in the Septuagint.

Here we need to explain something else. Some readers may be puzzled by our use of versions like the Vulgate and the Septuagint. Just how can these be relevant to our study? After all, however ancient and venerable for respectively the Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox churches, these are still translations, not the original Hebrew and Aramaic in which the book of Daniel was written.

That is true, but both the Latin Vulgate, translated by Jerome (c. A.D. 347–c. 420) and the Greek Septuagint (c. 250 B.C.) are considerably older than the Masoretic Hebrew and Aramaic text, from which later Bibles were translated. Simply on the basis of this fact, a number of things are clear. One is that the phrase *abomination of desolation* for translating verses in Daniel is very early and also does not derive from a single source. Jerome largely did not base his Vulgate on the Septuagint, for which Augustine reproached him.¹² He nevertheless insisted on making his own translation of the Old Testament from the original languages. So the Hebrew manuscript(s) on which both the Vulgate and the Septuagint

were based, independently of each other, must in some details have differed from what today is known as the Masoretic text. This suggests those ancient translators had access to older manuscripts, though this does not imply that older necessarily means better.

Nevertheless, the Septuagint, originally created for the Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt, became extremely important for the followers of Christ. For our quest, the following is significant, the more so because it appears in a secular encyclopaedia: “The early Christian Church, the language of which was Greek, used the Septuagint, not the Hebrew original, as its Bible, so it was in the Septuagint text that the Christians located the prophecies that they claimed were fulfilled by Christ. Jews considered this a misuse of Holy Scripture, and they stopped using the Septuagint.”¹³

When we compare the New Testament text with that of the Old Testament, this version should not be disregarded. The Septuagint is not just another translation, for—in the verses referred to—Matthew and Mark seem to have based their wording on it. R. Grant Jones, who has diligently compared the two Greek texts, the New Testament with the Old, concluded: “A large number of quotations agree in sense with the Septuagint but disagree with the Masoretic text—I have compiled a list of these verses, and a list of the occasions (far smaller in number) where the New Testament author preferred a Masoretic reading to that of the Septuagint. Finally, in the appendix, the reader will find a sample of readings from the Dead Sea Scrolls which support the Septuagint against the Masoretic text . . .”¹⁴

There are textual problems concerned with the book of Daniel in the Septuagint. Because it was not entirely satisfactory, what has come down to us is according to Theodotion, a Hellenistic scholar of the second century in our era. Nevertheless, his version “is not so much an independent translation as a revision of the Septuagint.” It may even go back to another translation, older than itself.¹⁵ In any case, Theodotion does use the expression “the abomination of desolation,” which is pre-Masoretic. But did he not simply

copy it from the New Testament? He would not have done so, because Theodotion was by religion Jewish, a convert from Gnosticism.¹⁶

It is, of course, true that here and elsewhere in Daniel, there is—apart from the phrasal form—no substantial difference between “the abomination of desolation” and the “desolation that maketh desolate” as used by the Authorized Version or its original, the Masoretic text. The chief point of difference lies in the last part of Dan. 9:27. Here both the Hebrew original and the English seem a little fuzzy, while the Septuagint gives the impression of greater clarity. It says, “And one week shall establish the covenant with many: and in the midst of the week my sacrifice and drink-offering shall be taken away: and on the temple shall be an abomination of desolations, and *at the end of the time* an end shall be put to the desolation” (emphasis added). We believe that the phrase we have stressed is of particular importance.

IV

The Redeemer said about his people, the Jews: “And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:20-24). The Apocalypse quite closely echoes this wording with a prediction about “the court without the temple,” which “is given unto the Gentiles,” and says that “the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months” (Rev. 11:2). This period of prophetic months is one we have dealt with before: the 1260 year-days, which began in 538 and ended in 1798.

In the context of Dan. 8 and Dan. 12, this is important not only for Christians but also for Jews. It appears that after 1798, in the time of the end, they will no longer be barred from returning to their ancestral city.

For reasons given elsewhere, we do not accept the Dispensationalist view that focuses on 1948 as a significant prophetic date, just because Israel then became an independent state. And yet we also cannot agree with those writers of the

Historical School who have dogmatically rejected the very possibility that the Jews could ever return to their ancient homeland before the Second Advent.

Expecting both the Rapture and a subsequent Antichrist who would rule the world for a period of three and a half literal years, Hal Lindsey wrote in 1970 that “within forty years or so of 1948, all these things could take place.” That is, the rebirth of Israel would be completed, and Christ would return.¹⁷ But it did not happen. This much, however, must be said for Lindsey, that he did not—like some others belonging to his school—expect a complete conversion of the Jewish nation. He thought a third of them would accept the Lord Jesus as the true Messiah.¹⁸ He evidently realized that so far as Christianity was concerned the majority of Jews would to the end remain a very hard nut to crack. This is common sense, and we agree with it.

But if we reject what Lindsey and other Dispensationalists have taught about modern Israel, we also cannot agree with some statements from their opponents of the Historical School. They, too, have on this topic been discredited by events. We note the following example. According to Varner J. Johns, “A forlorn hope indeed is the hope of a future gathering of the Jewish people, a rebuilding of the Jewish nation, and a nation-wide acceptance of the Messiah.”¹⁹ With what confidence that expositor, a Seventh-day Adventist Historicist, wrote these sentences in 1942! Nevertheless, just six years later, the state of Israel triumphantly came into existence, and there *was* a gathering of the Jewish people from many countries. The nation was rebuilt, though most of it has certainly not accepted Jesus as its Messiah.

V

The Little Horn has a Christian as well as a pagan stage. It has fulfilled the prophecy of Dan. 8, in two different ways. Just as the pagan Romans had literally destroyed the Jewish nation (Dan. 8:24) in the first century, the Antichrist through later ages murdered dissident Christians—the Lord’s other people—by the millions. The pontificate, within the context of

the great Mediterranean apostasy, was the first to tamper with the Ten Commandments. Like its Orthodox counterpart in the East, it also instituted a spurious sanctuary service of its own. For Christ, the God-man and heavenly high priest, the only mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5), it substituted many purely human priests as well as the Pontifex Maximus, the pope. Instead of the Lord's own sacrifice, offered only once and for all (Heb. 7:27), it says a daily Mass.

But did it also magnify itself against "the prince of the host," thereby standing up against him and destroying many? And in what sense could it cast down "the place of his sanctuary"? (Dan. 8:11, 25) For that, after all, is in heaven. Nevertheless, it did all these things. It arrogated to itself prerogatives belonging only to Christ and mightily strove—with inquisitorial faggots, torture, and sophistry—to eliminate those who opposed or even just criticized its system, centered in what it calls the sacrifice of the Mass. At the same time, it eradicated wherever it could the churches and other places of worship used by the so-called heretics.

VI

Finally we need to inquire how the powers depicted in Dan. 8 (the ram, the he-goat, the four horns, and the Little Horn) can be related to our previous explanation of the seven heads in Rev. 12, 13, and 17. We think they fit well into our scheme, while they also shed further light on the powers involved.

The vision begins with a symbol which, according to the internal expositor, represents the Medo-Persians (Dan. 8:20). This coordinates with the second head of the Apocalypse. The he-goat is likewise identified explicitly. It is the Greeks, who after Alexander's death continue as four quite separate divisions (vv. 21, 22). In Apocalyptic terms, we here have four additional heads, numbers three, four, five, and six. The Little Horn begins through a linkage with one of these, which gives us the pagan Graeco-Roman nexus. After that stage, from the fourth century, it mutates into Christendom, an apostate form of Christianity. Surviving the collapse of first the Western and

then the Eastern (Byzantine) Empires, it continues as Catholic Europe, with the papacy at the pinnacle of its religious edifice. This is the seventh head of Rev. 17:10.

The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation taken together constitute a beautiful, coherent picture, providing God's people through the ages with his own, dependable preview of history. Some of this, he tells them frankly, will be grim; but at the end they are to triumph, when Michael—the one who is like God, our Saviour—stands up and comes again, to deliver “every one that shall be found written in the book” of life (Dan. 12:1).

Chapter Eight

SOLVING THE PROBLEMS OF DANIEL 8

I

Candid scholars recognize “the historical problems confronting interpreters of the book of Daniel, one that seems to abound in more problems than any other OT book of its size.”¹ They are especially abundant in the eighth chapter. Fortunately, however, bringing the Italian and other Western Greeks into our analysis solves most if not all of them.

Like other prophetic expositors of the Historical School, we are convinced that the Little Horn depicted in that chapter symbolizes the Roman Empire, both pagan and Christian, together with its later prolongation into Catholic-Orthodox Europe. But many think that the four Grecian horns represent only the division of Alexander’s empire into as many Hellenistic states. Such a view, however, hampers our efforts to interpret the following two verses: “The he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land” (Dan. 8:8-9).

Five problems beset our understanding of this passage.

II

The first one concerns the number of Hellenistic kingdoms. To begin with, in 311 B.C., there were *five* of them; that is, after Alexander’s death his empire did not immediately, as some have supposed, divide into four. Only ten years later, in 301 B.C., the five divisions were reduced to four. These were ruled by Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy.² This situation, however, also did not persist. It endured for only

twenty years, historically a mere flicker in time, until “Seleucus defeated and killed Lysimachus in 281 B.C.”³

From that date—and for the rest of a very much longer Hellenistic period—there were, as historians now unanimously affirm, only *three* substantial kingdoms resulting from the Alexandrine conquests. The Antigonids ruled in Macedonia and Greece; the Seleucids in Asia, especially Syria; and the Ptolemids in Egypt.⁴ These three Macedonian families “controlled the world of the eastern Mediterranean until the Roman conquest.”⁵

We say “three substantial kingdoms”; Alexander’s empire actually fragmented and crumbled into far more pieces, especially as the years marched on. According to Michael Grant, “kingdoms by no means form the whole of the Hellenistic picture. There were also, both within the royal dominions and outside them, hundreds of more or less independent city-states, whose mode of government, indeed, still constituted the normal, basic form of Greek existence.” He especially mentions Athens, which in 229 B.C. bought off the Macedonian garrison, and the island of Rhodes, which after Alexander’s death expelled the soldiers he had left there. “In 305-304 [B.C.] they gained further renown by repelling a siege by one of his would-be successors, Demetrius I the Besieger (Polioretetes). . .”⁶ Before and after 200 B.C., the people of Rhodes then got rid of the pirates who had infested the eastern Mediterranean, after which they rivalled the Athenians “as the principal Aegean commercial state.”⁷

In any case, the twenty-year traditional fourfold division of 301-281 B.C. was ephemeral and very soon yielded place to the three main kingdoms that present-day historians recognize, together with many other bits and pieces.

In Dan. 11, prophecy narrows its focus to only two divisions, Macedonian Syria and Macedonian Egypt—with disgusting royal families, who in their lust for sovereignty spared no one but often slaughtered even their closest relatives: siblings, offspring, parents. Then suddenly the Roman colossus is introduced, precisely as in Dan. 8. In the course of time, it would, according to Dan. 11:28-35, turn its

heart against the holy covenant of God, set up “the abomination that maketh desolate” (vs. 31), which Jesus also predicted (Matt. 24:15), subvert the sanctuary service, and persecute the Lord’s people to the end of time. This harmonizes well with the vision of Dan. 8. In fact, it is an internal, angelic expositor’s clarification of it.

III

Focusing exclusively on the Hellenistic kingdoms, to the exclusion of the Italian and other Western Greeks, is a very old—we may even say a standard—expository procedure. Over the centuries, writers have usually followed it in interpreting Daniel’s prophecies.

For instance, Hippolytus (c. 165-c. 235) eighteen hundred years ago, equating the statue’s belly and thighs in Dan. 2 with the leopard of Dan. 7, declared that the latter symbolized “the Greeks who ruled from Alexander onwards.” Its heads, he thought, represented the divisions of the Conqueror’s empire. Hippolytus went on to say, “For Alexander, when dying, divided his kingdom into four parts.”⁸ Of course, he did nothing of the kind; so he was succeeded by his halfwit brother Philip III Arrhidaeus and his own son, Alexander IV, posthumously born to Roxane (d. 310 B.C.), Alexander’s Bactrian wife. But Cassander imprisoned both her and the boy and had them murdered.⁹ And thereupon Alexander’s generals fought it out with one another, carving up his empire among themselves.

Hippolytus was an impressive, though from a present-day perspective also a somewhat ambiguous expositor, for he has been lauded by both Futurists and those who belong to the Historical School of prophetic interpretation. Certainly his grasp of Grecian history was defective, which is understandable. The beginnings of the Hellenistic states lay four hundred years in his past, and in his day there were as yet no printed books or research journals, only scrolls with a very limited circulation. Everything had to be laboriously written out by hand. Sometimes an entire edition could consist of no more than ten or five copies, and these were often inaccurate.

Many records were, moreover, simply consumed by all-devouring time.

A little more than a century later, Jerome (c. 347-420), “traditionally regarded as the most learned of the Latin Fathers,”¹⁰ continued Hippolytus’s interpretation: “*And a third kingdom of brass, which shall rule over the world* signifies Alexander, and the kingdom of the Macedonians, and of the successors of Alexander.”¹¹

Jerome, who translated the Vulgate, was staunchly Catholic and even became the secretary of Pope Damasus.¹² He wrote at a time when most of the Western church had already in significant ways departed from Biblical truth, so that a Protestant needs to be wary about anything he wrote. According to Froom, however, “despite advancing apostasy and receding understanding of the prophecies, Jerome’s voice still rang out on the historic fundamentals of the prophetic outline—about the last comprehensive testimony in the last stand of the earlier prophetic interpretation springing from the apostolic age.”¹³

Nevertheless, Jerome’s inaccuracy about Hellenic history is evident. An instance of this is his comment on Dan. 8, which “names Alexander’s half brother Philip and three of the generals, as the four successors of Alexander’s empire.”¹⁴ This is a garbled version of what really happened. And that detail which limits the scope of the third kingdom to Alexander and the Macedonians was, we believe, an even greater mistake.

The somewhat folkloric view that there were, throughout the period under consideration, precisely four Hellenistic kingdoms was handed down through the centuries. It survived the Middle Ages and even the Protestant Reformation. In 1733, it was still reflected in Sir Isaac Newton’s analysis of Dan. 7, as well as his understanding of Dan. 8. Just like Jerome, he limited the Grecian phase represented by the leopard’s heads to the kingdoms into which Alexander’s empire had broken up and said there were four of them: “*Cassander* reigned over Macedon, Greece, and Epirus; *Lysimachus* over Thrace and Bithynia; *Ptolemy* over Egypt,

Libya, Arabia, Coelosyria, and Palestine; and *Seleucus* over Syria.”¹⁵

Uriah Smith followed writers like Newton exactly. He, too, equated the Grecian leopard with Alexander’s empire and its divisions, mentioning the same four generals. He likewise linked this idea with other chapters in Daniel: “The leopard had four heads, the rough goat four horns, the kingdom was to have four divisions; and thus it was.”¹⁶ We, though, think that thus it was not, at least so far as the Hellenistic states were concerned.

So were there not four enduring divisions of the ancient Greeks as stated in the Bible? Indeed there were, but not simply of Alexander’s kingdom. To complete the four, we need to include the rest of the Greeks, especially those who lived in Sicily and Italy. Bringing them into the picture enables us to solve this conundrum.

Let us ask, however, why men like Newton (1643-1727), Smith (1832-1903), and others following in their train did not make a point of referring to the Western Greeks. The answer may be startlingly simple: they knew little or nothing about them. Can that really be true? Those expositors were people of such towering intellect! Indeed, but brainpower cannot substitute for a lack of reliable data.

For his posthumous *Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms* (1728), Newton’s source material was, apart from the Scriptures, limited to “the works of classical Greek and Roman writers.” What was the result? His Bible-based conclusions have largely stood the test of time. But “his reconstruction of ancient history built on secular classical information was completely erroneous.”¹⁷ In his time, too, the science of archaeology in any meaningful sense as yet was nonexistent. The colorful hieroglyphs on Egyptian monuments were mute, awaiting the birth of and decipherment by Jean-François Champollion (1790-1832), a generation after Newton’s death. A multitude of cuneiform tablets, mostly buried beneath great heaps of rubble, also still lacked the future geniuses who would learn to read them and turn the

mysterious wedge marks on them into meaningful Sumerian, Accadian, Ugaritic, and Persian texts.

And what shall we say of Uriah Smith? He, too, had a magnificent mind. But his volumes about the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation were, apart from later revisions, completed by 1873, and he died a century ago. For that time, his grasp of history and contemporary affairs was excellent. Knowledge of the past had greatly improved, and archaeology was beginning to come into its own; and yet, when he was lowered into his grave at Oak Hill Cemetery in Battle Creek, Michigan, immensely important discoveries about the past still lay in the future. John H. Plumb would write in 1965 about “the inadequacy of factual material . . . at the command of an historian one hundred or even fifty years ago.” Most archives still had to be opened and records sorted as well as catalogued. Consequently “almost every generalization about a man or an event or an historical process was three-quarters guesswork, if not more.” Fortunately, however, in the meantime “millions of facts have been brought to light, ordered and rendered coherent within their context.”¹⁸

No, there were not four enduring Hellenistic kingdoms that used to be part of Alexander’s empire, only three.

IV

The second problem that obscures the study of Dan. 8 is closely related to the previous one. To believe the four horns refer exclusively to the post-Alexandrine kingdoms in or near the eastern Mediterranean is also logically to reject the idea that somehow Imperial Rome developed from one of them. Therefore, some scholars insist that the Little Horn proceeds exclusively from a compass point (Dan. 8:8) and not from any one of the horns, with subtle arguments about the gender of the word *horns* and *winds* in Hebrew.

Grammatically, that point may be well taken, yet it hangs too much exegetical weight onto far too frail a thread. But the whole line of argumentation flies in the face of both the prophetic context and the historical facts.

Exactly why do the horns of Dan. 8 depict the Romans in a Greek environment, if no such linkage existed? And did the Romans, pagans as well as Christians, historically have or did they not have significant connections—cultural, philosophic, and religious—with the Greeks? They certainly did and abundantly, beginning in ancient Italy itself, as already demonstrated.

Elsewhere, too, the book of Daniel indicates that the Romans would be meaningfully bonded with the Greeks, as becomes clear from comparing Dan. 8:9 with a very similar representation in Dan. 11:16. In the former verse, we read that the Little Horn grown large will push “toward the pleasant land.” The latter states that the representative of the Roman power “shall stand in the glorious land.” In both cases, the great enemy of the Jewish people is suddenly introduced, without an explanatory note, in a *Grecian* context. This must be significant.

The Little Horn in Dan. 8 does not dangle or float in the air. It must somehow be joined or related to one of the four Hellenic (though not necessarily Hellenistic) horns. Besides, it can surely at the same time proceed simultaneously from a compass point *and* from a horn. The argument from Hebrew grammar is interesting but probably irrelevant, since it seeks to solve a historical problem which does not exist.

Daniel and the Revelation never present horns, heads—or other parts of a man or an animal—as disembodied entities. It has been argued that Zech. 1:18, 19 may prove otherwise. In that case, however, vs. 21 introduces a contradictory element. These horns were “lifted up” by the Gentile nations that oppressed the land of Judah. To deal with them, heaven sends four workmen to terrify them. The Authorized Version calls them “carpenters.” They probably come with saws in their hands.

Because of the numeric and other factors, it would have to be the four horns of Dan. 8 that are paralleled by the four horns of Zech. 1, and not the single Little Horn. This one is obviously related to the one described in Dan. 7:8, 20. Far from being disembodied, the latter is—like the ten among

which it sprouts and enlarges so vigorously—attached firmly to the head of the beast on which it grows.

The four horns cannot be limited to divisions of Alexander's empire. If so, we would be left with a further puzzle: the existence of *five* major Grecian divisions, the Alexandrine four as well as the one in Magna Graecia, Sicily, etc. Otherwise we must suppose that heaven has simply overlooked the Western Greeks, despite their massive contributions to the rise of Rome.

Some expositors have sidestepped such issues by identifying the Little Horn in Dan. 8 with Islam, on the supposition that it is a totally different one from the Little Horn of Dan. 7. But the Historicist William Cunningham (1776-1849) demolished this hypothesis as far back as 1808, with three compelling arguments. First, the Moslems “arose more than six centuries after the fall of the last Macedonian kingdoms.” Second, the sanctuary trodden underfoot was “the worship of God, through Christ alone,” which would be “corrupted and obscured, by superstitious veneration for the Virgin Mary and the saints, or by any species of creature worship. It then ceases to be the daily sacrifice ordained of God.” Third, the Antichrist would arise within the church, as is clear from 2 Thess. 2:4. But Islam rose “*WITHOUT the church, and cannot therefore be an abomination of desolation IN the church*”¹⁹ (emphasis and capitals as quoted by Froom).

To this, we add that according to Dan. 8:24 the Little Horn would destroy the Jews as a nation state, some six hundred years before the rise of Islam.

No, the Romans had a very close relationship with the fourth horn, beginning with the Italian and other Western Greeks, through abundant cultural, philosophic, and religious connections.

The four horns were destined to come up “toward the four winds of heaven” (Dan. 8:8). One of them must therefore lie in the West. Yet the Hellenistic kingdoms—including that of Antiochus Epiphanes, who the Preterists think was the Little Horn—were predominantly situated to the east of the Greek

peninsula, from which Alexander had set out to invade the Persian Empire.

A simple solution for many problems concerned with this topic comes to light through a more careful reading of the prophecy itself. It does not state that the original horn is split into four, as is shown in R. M. Eldridge's illustration to *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation*²⁰—though the text which it accompanies does not really say what the picture shows.

The Bible puts it differently: the first big horn on the hairy goat is broken [also “plucked up,” according to Dan. 11:4] and then “*instead of it* there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven” (Dan. 8:8, RSV, emphasis added). Vs. 22 explains this as meaning: “Four kingdoms shall stand up out of the *nation*” (emphasis added).

The prophetic focus is therefore on the Greeks as a whole, not just on the kingdoms that resulted from the breakup of Alexander's empire. Those of Magna Graecia and Sicily should be included, not omitted, as in the practice of the older expositors to whom we have referred. Let us repeat the key text that mandates this: “The beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it” (Dan. 7:6), that is, to all of Hellas.

V

As already shown, it was at the tip of their native peninsula, from Magna Graecia, that the Romans first stepped out of continental Italy onto Sicilian soil, to intervene in a conflict between the Greeks and Carthaginians from North Africa. That moment began the epoch of what later mutated into the Empire. Soon the Romans established their dominion over the Grecian towns along the east coast, including magnificent Syracuse, as well as the rest of Sicily.

But the new overlords did and could not spread their original Latin culture to these conquered Hellenic countries. Instead, they increasingly disseminated Western civilization, which they had already adopted from the Greeks, its true creators.

As Christopher Dawson explained, “The Romans were a people of soldiers and organizers, lawyers and engineers, road-makers and land-surveyors, whose achievement is summed up in the lapidary sentence ‘Balbus built a wall.’”²¹ This refers to a certain Balbus who built the walls “on the Northumbrian moorland” of Britain to keep out the Picts inhabiting what today is Scotland. The Romans, a highly practical people rather than intellectual innovators, chiefly provided the organization and “the shield which protected the westward advance of the classical Mediterranean culture. The Greeks themselves, like Polybius and Strabo, were the first to recognize the nature of the Roman achievement as the indispensable continuation and completion of the achievement of Hellenism.”²²

VI

The third, related problem which we need to address is that the Little Horn vis-à-vis the four Greek Horns would begin its career only “in the *latter time* of their kingdom” (Dan. 8: 23, emphasis added).

The Romans came onto the stage of Mediterranean history as an imperial power when there were only three Hellenistic divisions left of what had been Alexander’s empire. One of the four to which traditional interpreters keep referring had already vanished, more than a century earlier, with the death of Lysimachus. Yet, according to the prophecy, *four* would still be in existence (Dan. 8:9, 22). This contradiction of a prophetic theory by a historical reality surely, as Thomas Huxley so aptly put it, represents “the slaying of a beautiful hypothesis by an ugly fact.”²³

The fourfold 301-281 B.C. Hellenistic division came to an end before the Romans even ventured out of continental Italy. In 212 B.C. they took Syracuse,²⁴ the chief city of Sicily, after which the island “became the first Roman Province.”²⁵ This was sixty-nine years after the fourfold Hellenistic setup of 301-281 B.C. had already been replaced by a threefold division.

Thereupon, as we have already related, the Romans expanded their power further to the south by declaring war on

Carthage. This was in 219 B.C. Despite the valiant attempts of Hannibal, who invaded Italy itself, they pounced on his city in 203 B.C. and conquered it.²⁶ Further warfare ensued, until they plundered Carthage once again and burned it to the ground, in 146 B.C.²⁷ Obviously all these dates are later than 281 B.C., in a period when the fourfold Hellenistic division of Alexander's conquests no longer existed.

Having eliminated their great North African competitor, the Romans could expand into the rest of the Mediterranean, beginning with the Balkans. "Under Philip V (reigned 221-179 B.C.) and Perseus (reigned 179-168 B.C.) Macedonia clashed with Rome and lost."²⁸ The last of these dates lies more than a hundred years after the fourfold Hellenistic division had been replaced by the tripartite arrangement unanimously recognized by modern historians.

There is a chronological gap between the time of Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy and the Roman era—a serious mismatch between the prophetic interpretation of Uriah Smith and his illustrious predecessors (as well as those who have followed in their footsteps) and the historical reality. Fortunately this difficulty vanishes when we accept that the Occidental horn which helped to shape the Romans, and with which they were so intimately connected, represented the Italian and other Western Greeks.

VII

The fourth problem that touches Dan. 8 is the direction in which the Little Horn extended its power: it "waxed exceeding great, toward [1] the south, and toward [2] the east, and toward [3] the pleasant land."

The ancient Romans did not, as some prophetic expositors have suggested, set out on the road of imperial expansion through an eastward movement via Macedonia and Asia Minor. This happened only afterwards. Just as the Bible foretold, they first went into Sicily. Then, as mentioned above, they struck even further south, to Carthage in North Africa, to eliminate their most deadly rival in the Mediterranean world. This admirably fulfilled the prediction of Dan. 8:9. A famous

general of the Republic, Scipio Africanus, eventually destroyed that troublesome city in 146 B.C., at the end of the Third Punic War, which was also the year when Macedonia became a Roman province.

Dan. 11 prophetically describes two powers known as the King of the North and the King of the South. The former was ancient Syria, which was much larger than the country that presently bears this name; the latter, Egypt. Both were ruled by Greek-speaking dynasties.

As various sources show, it was Pompey the Great who conquered Syria and made it a Roman province in 64-63 B.C., a lot which also befell Judaea. A spectacularly successful general, he was at first allied with Julius Caesar, whose daughter Julia he married. But they began to drift apart when she died in childbirth. Thereupon Pompey married Cornelia Metella, a young widow, whose father was Caesar's enemy. Then the two great generals went to war with each other.

At the Battle of Pharsalus, Greece, in 48 B.C. Pompey was defeated. He fatefully fled to Egypt, but there the advisors of the young King Ptolemy XIII feared offending Julius Caesar, who was also on his way. Therefore, Pompey was killed and his severed head presented to Caesar as he disembarked.

The middle-aged victor duly arrived at Alexandria, the capital of that country—and had his affair with the youthful though politically astute Queen Cleopatra VII, who seduced him. (Afterwards she bore a child, whom she declared to be his son, naming him Ptolemy Caesarion [little Caesar].)

Having returned to Rome, Julius Caesar was himself assassinated by Brutus and Cassius on the Senate floor in 44 B.C. His heir Octavian, in alliance with his brother-in-law Mark Antony, vanquished their forces, and they were put to death.

But then Cleopatra tried to reestablish an independent Ptolemaic Egypt. Allied with her was Mark Antony, who meanwhile had also fallen in love with her. He divorced Octavia, Octavian's sister. Now her revengeful and ambitious brother made war on Cleopatra and Mark Antony, defeating them at the naval battle off Actium, Greece, in 30 B.C. Pursued

by Octavian and his forces, the doomed couple fled to Egypt, where they both committed suicide. Cleopatra's death on 12 August 30 B.C. marked the end of the last Macedonian kingdom.

Nevertheless, chronologically and geographically it remains an important fact that the first direction in which the Roman Empire grew was toward the south 146 B.C.

As Polybius (c. 200-after 118 B.C.), who wrote while conquered though defiant Carthage was still a threat to Rome, correctly said so many years ago, "the historian must also be a geographer."²⁹ Indeed, and this also applies to prophetic interpreters.

VIII

We come now to the fifth and final problem that we need to discuss. In Dan. 8, the Little Horn symbolizes two different entities. As our Bible commentary explicitly puts it: "This little horn represents Rome in both its phases, pagan and papal. Daniel saw Rome first in its pagan, imperial phase, warring against the Jewish people and the early Christians, and then in its papal phase, continuing down to our own day and into the future, warring against the true church."³⁰ But on the previous page, in Dan. 7, we meet a Little Horn with a much more restricted meaning. There it is confined to the Christian era and symbolizes only the papacy.

It may be argued that, from God's point of view, the heathen stage is chiefly a prelude to the Antichrist who oppresses and persecutes his people. That is so, and yet it remains a puzzle that two successive chapters employ the same or at least a very similar image to symbolize two rather different entities. There must be a special reason for it.

The key to this apparent anomaly presents itself in the following passage: "How long shall be *the vision* concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, *Unto two thousand and three hundred days*; then shall *the sanctuary* be cleansed" (Dan. 8:13, 14, emphasis added).

The vision mentioned here covers the entire history foretold in Dan. 8 as a continuous panorama, over many hundreds of years. To be exact, in prophetic parlance, a period of 2300 days. And always the entities depicted are in one way or the other related to the sanctuary. Here uninterrupted continuity, without any gaps in the symbolism, proves to be the overriding consideration.

If it were literal time, this period would be a little more than six years, which in the present context is meaningless. Only as prophetic time—as year-days—the 2300 days make sense, extending without interruption from Persian to Greek, to Roman, and then to Western European times. As the angel Gabriel explained them in Dan. 9, they encompass all twenty-three centuries that are dealt with in the vision.

In passing, we note Gerhard Hasel's conclusion after an analysis of the Hebrew text: "It is clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that the year-day principle is functioning in chapter 8." Indeed. "The prophet himself provides the key to the year-day principle which functions on the basis of contextual, linguistic, philological, and syntactical relationships in 8:12-14."³¹

This is marvelous, for now we know that the year-day principle, at least as it affects the 2300 days, can be established in three separate ways: according to the simple idea that in prophecy one day equals a year (Num. 14:34 and Eze. 4:4, 5), septennates (as we demonstrated in *The Antichrist in Prophecy and History* with our chapter "In the Fullness of Time"), and the contextual factors of Dan. 8.

But when did the 2300 years begin and when did they end? When we dealt with the seventy prophetic weeks of Dan. 9, we noted that amongst other things they functioned to "seal up the vision and prophecy" (vs. 24). This expression most logically refers back to the vision of Dan. 8. Then, too, at the beginning of Dan. 9:24, we read that "seventy weeks are *determined* upon thy people and upon thy holy city . . ." (emphasis added). The original key word here is *chathak*, which is not found in any other part of the Scriptures. It does, however, occur "in post-Biblical Hebrew with the meaning 'to cut,' 'to cut off,' 'to determine,' 'to

decree.”³² For this verse, we think that “cut off” would be the significant translation.

The 490 years extended from 457 B.C. to A.D. 34. They constitute the initial segment of the 2300 year-days. If we add on the remaining portion of 1810 year-days, this brings us down to 1844, when the Millerites expected the Second Coming but Jesus actually entered into the Most Holy place of the heavenly sanctuary.

We see, then, that the symbol of the Little Horn, applied to only the papacy in Dan. 7, is used in Dan. 8 to represent both pagan and Christian Rome-Europe. This is to ensure, above all, interpretive continuity for the 2300 year-days. No time gap must interrupt the different stages. After the Persians and Greeks, the pagan Romans appear, immediately followed by Christendom from Constantine onward, with the syncretist Roman Church as its dominant offspring, right down and throughout the Middle Ages into the time of the end, until 1844. This is the terminal point of “the vision.” Chronologically all these elements are blended together.

We observe that the Bible uses prophetic symbols not mechanically but in a dynamic way, adapting them to the needs of different contexts. This principle of prophetic augmentation also operates in other Scriptures, such as Rev. 13, which omits the Little Horn, although the ten horns of Dan. 7 do appear. The leopard Beast itself is an alternative symbol for the papal Antichrist, emphasizing even more strongly the Greco-Roman overlap already referred to and also evident from Dan. 8 and 11—as well as the facts of history. The same symbolic dynamism applies to the seven heads that characterize the beasts of Rev. 12, 13, and 17.

IX

To bring the Western Greeks, whom older expositors never or hardly ever mention, into focus can be most enlightening. Living in the Italian south of Magna Graecia as well as nearby Sicily, they profoundly affected the Romans’ mental and spiritual culture, partly even blending with them biologically. Later, when the world’s new conquerors extended their

dominion further into the Mediterranean, their contacts with Hellas grew ever more intense. The result was an empire Roman in form but largely Greek in content, a fact familiar to present-day historians and reflected in the ancient prophecies of Daniel and John the Revelator.

In Dan. 2, the upper part of the statue's legs is bronze, while the lower half is iron. In Dan. 7, the fourth beast has not only iron teeth but also paws of bronze. The Greek and Roman symbols link up even more closely in Dan. 8, where a Roman Little Horn abruptly appears in conjunction with the Grecian horns, without the slightest hint that a different ethnic group has come onto the scene. In Dan. 11, which uses literal rather than symbolic language, much the same thing happens. Therefore, if in Rev. 17, the sixth head becomes interpretable in Greco-Roman terms, it is because of this Old Testament background.

On the other hand, when necessary or appropriate, the prophecies do distinguish between these interrelated peoples. For instance, Dan. 2 through the bronze and iron depicts the Greeks and Romans as separate entities. Dan. 8 depicts the latter as only an outgrowth from one of the four horns, though this also shows that they are interrelated entities. It is, moreover, noteworthy that the Apocalypse does not give as many details about either the horns or the heads as Dan. 7 and 8. In Rev. 17:9, 10, the sixth head symbolically telescopes together the Grecian fourth horn and its derivative Roman Little Horn.

If to some readers these ideas seem a little strange, we need to remember that throughout the Bible the Lord is not overmuch concerned with mere political facts and entities. His chief concern is with what the Germans call *Heilsgeschichte* ("salvation history"), that is, how the nations of the world react to the Gospel and treat his people.

These juxtapositions and such an intermingling of elements may puzzle traditionalist students of prophecy. They may especially wonder at how we are relegating the victorious Romans to a position lower than the Greeks whom they conquered. This is to be still overly influenced by a viewpoint which used to prevail in the nineteenth century. At that time

and even into the early twentieth century, as I remember from my own education, the school system gave separate cultural prominence to the Romans, more or less equating their achievements with those of the Greeks, though now we know that intellectually they were really small potatoes—except as soldiers, lawyers, administrators, architects, and construction workers. (“Balbus built a wall.”)

For us, the historical and prophetic picture is now clearer and simpler. Accepting more recent findings and conclusions, increasingly commonplace among archaeologists and historians, we know that ancient Mediterranean civilization was largely created by the Greeks, who also incorporated elements from other Near Eastern peoples. The political matrix was the Roman Empire. Two-thirds of the people in it were in its eastern provinces, already steeped in Hellenic culture. Even the emperors and intellectual élite in Italy were, like us—for good or ill—the heirs and pupils of the Greeks.

This helps to eliminate a considerable number of problems in prophetic interpretation. We can therefore now better identify the horns of Dan. 8 as well as the heads of Rev. 17. And we are amazed by how exactly the inspired pen of prophecy has traced the Greco-Roman reality as well as its syncretist European aftermath. For ages past, before the real-time events of history could shape them into substance, they preexisted only as images in the mind of God, who in his good time transmitted them through symbols and explanations, via his penmen, to the pages of an ancient Book, which his children are still privileged to read today.

Chapter Nine

ANCIENT GREEKS AND EARLY CHRISTIANS

I

Three hundred years before the Christian Church “went forth conquering and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2), Alexander the Great set out on a similar venture. But, unlike the apostles, he was not a humble man. All along his trail, he commemorated his victories and triumph by announcing the creation of cities, each named Alexandria. Of these there were no fewer than fifteen, from Alexandria in Cilicia, founded after the battle of Issus in 333 B.C., to Alexandria on the Indus. Some of them are still thriving; others have all but disappeared, except for the echo of a name, translated into several languages. They include Iskenderun (formerly Alexandretta), a southern Turkish harbor town, and Iskandariya in Iraq.

But none of these could quite compare with Alexandria, founded in 332 as Egypt’s greatest harbor city and new capital, which it remained for almost a thousand years until its conquest by the Arabs in A.D. 642. In our time, an additional thirteen centuries later, it has a population of more than four million people.¹ During its glory days, it grew to become the second largest city of the Roman Empire, famous for learning and research.

Here the Greco-Egyptian Ptolemies, who ruled from 323 to 30 B.C., had preserved not only the conqueror’s name, but also strikingly fulfilled his dream of planting Hellenic culture beyond its original cities and islands.

On or near the eastern Mediterranean, there were also other important intellectual centers, like Antioch, the capital of Hellenistic Syria; Berytus (Beirut), an ancient Canaanite city refounded by the Romans and embellished by Herod the Great; and Athens, where Greek civilization had flourished four centuries before Christ and whose magnificent statues, architecture, and paintings made it “a vast gallery of art.”²

The chief ornament of Alexandria was its library. Created by Ptolemy I in the third century before the Christian era, it had the largest collection of papyrus books in the world—according to Aulus Gellius about 700,000 rolls.³ Equally important was another foundation of the same king, the so-called Museum, which was really “a sort of research university.”⁴

Some readers may remember *Cosmos*, Carl Sagan’s thirteen-part television series in the 1980s and his beautiful book with the same title. He highlighted fascinating data about Hellenic science and technology, some of it going back to pre-Christian times. All of it was represented in that city on the Nile. Amongst others, he mentioned Anaximander of Miletus (610-547 B.C.), the first evolutionist;⁵ Democritus of Abdera (460-361 B.C.), who originated the atomic theory;⁶ and Aristarchus of Samos (c. 310 B.C.-c. 230 B.C.), the first man to teach that the earth—together with the other planets—revolves around the sun. This he situated among the stars and even suspected that the stars themselves were distant suns.⁷ Copernicus, to whom this heliocentric theory is usually attributed, “cited Aristarchus as an ancient authority who had espoused the motion of Earth. However, Copernicus later crossed out this reference, and Aristarchus’s theory was not mentioned in the published book.”⁸ But through the unavailability of telescopes in the third century before Christ this man’s ideas could not be validated; therefore, the geocentric system worked out by Ptolemy (c. A.D.150) prevailed until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,⁹ for 1,300 years.

All branches of learning as well as pseudo-knowledge were represented in the great Alexandrian library: medicine, astrology, literature, and philosophy of every kind. “For 600 years, it was the repository of the world’s wisdom, a place where scholars of every discipline and from every culture converged.” It collected not only Greek works, but scrolls from the entire Mediterranean world, the Middle East, and even India.¹⁰ Scholars were enabled to study a multitude of cultures. What they could not read directly was translated for them.

By that time, the mindset of the Greeks, “a people famous for their intelligence and culture,”¹¹ had imposed itself on the

civilized world around the Mediterranean to become the mainstay of civilization. Its physical matrix, the Roman Empire, had conquered and ingested most of the Hellenistic kingdoms originating from Alexander's conquests. Other important cultural ingredients were also blended in: from Egypt, Asia Minor, Persia, and Mesopotamia.

From Alexandria, the great Latin poets and other writers of the Augustan age obtained their models and much of their inspiration. Here, too, Christianity regrettably assimilated Greek and other pagan ideas in a syncretism that modified much of it profoundly.

Chief among these influences was Plato's philosophy, especially in a Hellenistic version known as Neoplatonism. Similar to or intertwined with it were Gnosticism, and astrology. Some of this had already existed when Christ was born, and soon—within a century and a half from when the last apostle died—the rest would evolve.

Very prevalent, in contrast with what the Bible teaches, was a common belief in a spiritual realm separate from and superior to the world of the senses. Some people, like the Gnostics, even regarded matter as intrinsically evil. This idea is known as dualism.

Writing about the Dead Sea Scrolls and the possible theology of those who lived at Qumran, just before and in our era, Hershel Shanks remarked: "Many varieties of dualistic doctrines with subtle and often vague differences were circulating at the time, ranging from Neoplatonism to Persian Zoroastrianism to Christian and Jewish Gnosticism. Dualistic theologies are also reflected in such Jewish apocryphal books as Jubilees and the Testaments of the Patriarchs . . ."¹²

Here we have elements that would fuse with and corrupt a good deal of Mediterranean Christianity. Astrology, originally the worship of the planets as gods, began in Babylon. Zoroastrianism as well as the later religion of Mani, which developed from Gnostic ideas, came from Persia. Mithraism, already referred to, blended with many of these conceptions. This had begun even earlier, in the ancient Indo-European

religion. From the Egyptian pantheon, too, important ingredients entered into the final potpourri.

With the Alexandrine conquests, the Greeks took over the Persian Empire, which included Medes, Babylonians, Lydians, Jews, Phoenicians, Egyptians, and even some Indians.¹³ All these provided the ingredients for the first international society. By the time of Christ, the political glue that held it together was the Roman Empire; but culturally its domination remained with the upper crust who spoke and wrote Greek, as either their mother tongue or adopted language. This assortment of influences powerfully affected the infant church and, so far as it concerned the papacy, is aptly symbolized by the first beast of Rev. 13: a spotted leopard with the paws of a bear and the muzzle of a lion.

From the time of classical Hellas, more than half a millennium before Christ, to the breakup of the Western Empire, that civilization would last “for over a thousand years without a break in its tradition.”¹⁴

II

But our quest toward understanding those influences on the early Christian church, as well as the world today, necessitates a journey into an even remoter historical period. The trail leads further back than Classical times or even Homer, who himself lived about eight hundred years before Christ. According to Richard Tarnas, Platonic and Neo-Platonist philosophy was not simply the invention of great Hellenic intellects during a period that is accessible through their writings.

Instead, it represents “a unique confluence of the emerging rationalism of Hellenic philosophy with the prolific mythological imagination of the ancient Greek psyche—the primordial religious vision, with both Indo-European and Levantine roots extending back through the second millennium B.C. to Neolithic times, which provided the Olympian polytheistic foundation for the cult, art, poetry, and drama of classical Greek culture.”¹⁵ And this is what we now must look at.

The Hellenes, as they eventually called themselves, are one of the oldest peoples in the world, as ancient as the Jews or the

Chinese. Their ancestors were the Indo-Europeans, whose homeland lay “in the Pontic-Caspian steppe.”¹⁶ The Greeks began as Asiatics, which according to the Bible is true of all people. They were, accordingly, an Indo-European people from around the Caspian Sea, speaking an old form of their language.

In about 1900 B.C., approximately when Abraham received his call to leave Ur of the Chaldees on his way to Canaan, the Greeks were also on the move, migrating westward. Along the coasts of the Aegean and on its islands, they founded a civilization with powerful centers at Mycenae and Tiryns, south of present-day Corinth, as well as in Asia Minor, where Troy stood guard at the entrance to the Hellespont and the Black Sea. In about 1500 B.C., the Mycenaeans captured Crete, although they were expelled from that island a hundred years later. Yet by 1400 B.C. and for another two hundred years, they dominated the Aegean, but then their trade and power declined.

But before this happened, it was—according to the famous archaeologist Flinders Petrie—“a great widespread civilization,”¹⁷ which amongst others had contacts with Egypt fifteen hundred years before the time of Alexander the Great.

The reasons for the Mycenaean collapse are unclear. Perhaps there really was, as Homer said, a ten-year war between the European Greeks and those of Troy, though not necessarily over beautiful Helen who had eloped with Prince Paris. The conflict between these cities may well have undermined that ancient civilization, rendering it incapable of coping with the Dorians, who descended on mainland Greece in about 1100 B.C.

Despite the destruction of Troy and the eclipse of Mycenae, with the dark age that followed, the Greeks continued their colonization. By 600 B.C., they had city-states in many parts of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Included were Sicily, parts of Italy (especially its southern third), bits of Sardinia, what today is the south coast of France, at Massilia (Marseilles), Cyprus, and Cyrene in North Africa.¹⁸ Some Greeks even went to live among and work for the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Romans, and Etruscans. Many of these contacts provided elements that amalgamated with their distinctive culture.

In Joel's prophecy, written well before the book of Daniel, we read how merchants from Tyre and Sidon sold Jews to the Grecians and thereby incurred a terrible judgment upon themselves (Joel 3:4-7). These poor Hebrews had, it seems, survived and were still living in Judah after Nebuchadnezzar's armies had destroyed Jerusalem; but then the Phoenician scavengers came and rounded them up—to sell them into slavery all over the Mediterranean world.

A wide expanse of centuries separates the early, pre-Homeric Greeks from those of later, Classical times. If it were not for the excavations of Heinrich Schliemann and subsequent archaeologists we would hardly have known about their earlier civilization. But for our analysis that early period is important, however scanty or indirect the surviving data may be.

The Mycenaens have disappeared beneath the rubble of the centuries, leaving very few written records—such as Linear B on Crete. History does, however, provide suggestive clues in the annals of other peoples in Western Asia who spoke Indo-Germanic languages. These were their early kindred: the Hittites, the Iranians, the Mitanni, and even the Aryans who invaded India.

It is a curious fact that several elements in Hinduism closely resemble Platonic or Neoplatonic thinking: a pantheistic world soul, matter as inferior to spirit, magic, the individual seeking release from the world of sense, ascetic practices, meditation, and reincarnation. This indicates a historic link between these conceptions, which cannot be adequately explained from the perspective of Greco-Roman civilization in the apostolic era and the subsequent period. At that time, India had only limited contact with the Mediterranean world. Besides, the similarity goes back several centuries before the Christian era.

A system that powerfully influenced the Greeks from at least the sixth century before our era was Orphism, a mystery religion whose preoccupations were “the sense of sin, the need of atonement, the theory of the suffering and death of a god-man, and lastly the belief in immortality (and of final escape from evil).” Two great philosophers successively touched by it were Pythagoras and Plato.¹⁹

The latter like the former also taught reincarnation. Plato mentions it repeatedly, for instance in the *Republic*, the *Phaedo*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Laws*.²⁰

Metempsychosis, the transmigration of souls, is an ancient belief among many peoples. Orphism could in this have been influenced by the ancient Egyptians. As far back as 1850, the learned John Kenrick sought to explain their ideas about the afterlife in comparison with those of the Greeks and even the Israelites. He said that according to Herodotus the Egyptians had been the first to believe in human beings' inherent immortality. They also thought that every 3,000 years the soul completed a grand circuit of reincarnation from animal to man. At every rebirth, it went through a further stage. But the soul did not lose consciousness and could not leave the body of the deceased before it had decayed. Apparently this was the reason for embalment. It ensured that the tomb would be "man's everlasting habitation" in a state of conscious peace.²¹ In other words, embalming was supposed to prevent reincarnation. After all, a lofty pharaoh did not want to become an animal!

But it is also possible that the Mycenaean Greeks acquired this strand of religious thinking from the Cretans. These were the Caphtorim of whom the Bible says that they were descended from Mizraim—Egypt.²² But this is speculation and not entirely plausible. The problem is that the Egyptians did not in their records stress reincarnation, as Hindus and Plato have done.

Let us therefore, taking our hint from Tarnas, consider the greater probability that the ancient ancestors of the Greeks brought the rudiments of such ideas with them from their original homeland, not far from northern Mesopotamia, or were influenced by another people living in or near that area. This may provide a geographic key to understanding the remarkable similarity between a number of Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas and those of India.

In about 1500 B.C., about four centuries after the earliest Hellenes had migrated to the West, the Indo-Aryans invaded the upper basin of the Indus River, taking their religion with them. According to an early Vedic hymn, these were, "a blond and fair-skinned" people. They conquered, despoiled, and slowly

mingled with the “black-skinned” or Dravidian inhabitants whom they found there.²³ To preserve their so-called racial purity, they created one of the first and certainly the most successful of the apartheid systems in the world. At first, “Dravidians were forbidden to marry Indo-Aryans or even to associate closely with them,” that is, it was “a simple division between the dark Dravidians and the lighter Indo-Aryans.” Later this evolved into the caste system.²⁴

Some readers will remember the battle that Gandhi undertook against racism in both South Africa, which eventually turned against it, and his own country, where his endeavor failed—as did the subsequent laws against the caste system. In India, it has remained entrenched to this day, because it is protected by a religion which is also partly based on it. According to Caryl Matrisciana, a former New Ager who was born and reared in that country, “Lighter skin is supposed to reflect the purity of one’s blood. Hindu Scriptures teach that dark-skinned people can hope for salvation only by becoming lighter in future incarnations.”²⁵

This preference for a whiter complexion is an important clue to the origin of those who brought the old Vedic religion into India. Originally it was an import from Western Asia and specifically Iran, as can be noted from the oldest Hindu scriptures known as the Rigveda. “The Vedic people were in close contact with the ancestors of the Iranians, as evidenced by similarities between Sanskrit and the earliest surviving Iranian languages.”²⁶ In this, however, there is an awkward problem: the Persians of historical times were not “a blond and fair-skinned” people. So where did the ancestral Aryans of India come from? We think we know.

In 1500 B.C., there was also—at about the very time when Aryans were thrusting into India—a powerful Middle Eastern kingdom, west of Iran, known as Mitanni. It stretched from Syria to Kirkuk in northern Mesopotamia,²⁷ which is now Iraq. This region included the later Kurdistan and may well have been the original homeland of all Indo-European people and even postdiluvian humanity.

According to food specialists, Kurdistan is probably where wheat was first deliberately cultivated. *Triticum dicoccoides* still grows there wild and “is harvested in the ancient food-gathering way.” It is “the ancestor of nearly all cultivated wheat” in the world.²⁸ Perhaps it is from here, instead of Iran, that the proto-Hindus migrated until they reached India. The Mitannian kingdom was, as history attests, of relatively short duration, facing formidable enemies—which is why not many people know about it in our day.

Most of its inhabitants were Hurrians, which the Old Testament calls Horites; but “their royal family and the nobles were the Indo-Iranians (i.e. Aryans). They worshipped Indian gods such as Mithra, Indra, and Varuna.” In power, the Mitannians rivaled, for a century, the other great powers of Western Asia. At first, they were almost continuously at war with the pharaohs; but when the Hittites became a threat, they swiftly sued for peace; their “successive kings sent princesses to the Egyptian royal harem to secure the alliance.”²⁹

One of these was probably the beautiful Nefertiti (Nofrotete), queen of Akhenaten (c. 1370-1353 B.C.). Her parentage is uncertain; she may have been a Mitannian, whose religion inspired her husband.³⁰ Historian Richard Patrick concurred with part of this idea. As he pointed out, “the available evidence suggests that she was not an Egyptian—a striking departure for the Egyptian royal house which, to keep the line pure and to follow the example of Isis and Osiris, usually married the princes and princesses to each other.”³¹

The portrait bust and statuette of Nefertiti in the State Museums of Berlin, reproduced photographically in *Art of the Ancient World* by Henriette A. Groenewegen-Frankfort and Bernard Ashmole,³² reveal that she was neither African nor Semitic. Nefertiti is linked for us with vivid personal memories. In 1991, I looked on her in the museum beside a tree-lined street of West Berlin, together with Ria, my own lovely wife. I noticed that Akhenaten’s First Lady must have been a dolichocephalic Caucasian of the Nordic type. Though not a Greek, she could easily have passed for one.

A pharaoh would not normally have chosen a foreigner as his queen; if he did, she would certainly have been a princess and from a powerful nation—most probably Mitanni.

In his worship of Aten, the sun disk, Akhenaten may have blended the Egypt's Re (or Ra) with the Indo-European Mitra, and the idea that there is only one god, as also taught by the Hebrews. His monotheism failed, because the pharaoh's fellow Egyptians and especially the traditional priesthood could not stomach it. This was just as well. As history demonstrates, the religion of Yahweh and the Gospel of Christ have been confronted by few if any more effective enemies than rival monotheistic religions or tendencies. Islam is only one of these. A subtler and more deadly, enduring threat to Christianity has been Neoplatonism.

By 1370 B.C., the Hittites conquered Mitanni but maintained it as a buffer between Asia Minor and Assyria. A hundred years later, by 1290 B.C., the Assyrians overwhelmed it.³³ The unsettled conditions first threatening and later engulfing the Mitannian state—together with the entire region—could have unleashed, from that country or its related neighbors, the Aryan migration of people to India.

The Mitannians also left significant traces in the records of the Hittites, whose own religion was very mixed. The parallels with the later Indo-Aryans and their Vedic religion are fascinating:

“In a treaty between the Hittites and the Mitanni, the king of the latter swears by a series of Hurrian gods and then adds a series of names that are transparently the names of major Indic deities—*Mi-it-ra* (Indic Mitra), *Aru-na* (Varuna), *In-da-ra* (Indra) and *Na-sa-at-tiya* (Nasatya). A Hittite text on horse-training and chariotry, whose author is identified as Kikkuli the Mitannian, employs the names of Indic numerals for the courses that the chariot makes about a track—*aika* (Indic *eka* ‘one’), *tera* (*tri* ‘three’), *panza* (*panca* ‘five’), *satta* (*sapta* ‘seven’) and *na* (*nava* ‘nine’), while a Hurrian text from Yorgan Tepe employs Indo-Aryan words to describe the colour of horses, for example, *babru* (Indic *babhru* ‘brown’), *parita* (*palita* ‘grey’)

and *pinkara* (*pingala* ‘reddish’). The Mitanni word *marya* is precisely the same as the Vedic *marya*, ‘warrior.’”³⁴

For a time, the Hittites were also neighbors of the Mycenaean Greeks who lived in western Asia-Minor. Before the Sea People overran and shattered both these civilizations, they had mostly friendly relations. The name of the Anatolian country of Ahhiya(wa) near the Aegean sounds a good deal like the Greek Achaea.

Near the Caspian Sea, in their original home, the most ancient Greeks had been virtual if not actual neighbors of people who later became the Indo-Iranians. If the religion of the two groups was similar to begin with, they were likely to have taken it with them in both their westward and eastward migrations.

In passing, we note that an important scholar, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, takes issue with “the conventional date of 1500-1200 B.C.” for the entry of the Aryans into India. He thinks it was “around 1000 B.C. or a little later.”³⁵ As he points out, there is a huge chronological gap between the mention of the Mitannian gods in the Hittite cuneiform tablet from the time of Suppiluliuma between 1370 B.C. to 1335 B.C. and the earliest Indian account. “No other mention of these gods or any Hindu god is to be found in any inscription anywhere for about twelve hundred years after this.” Nevertheless, the linkup is clearly indicated by both the names that these deities have in common and the similarity with the language of the Indo-Aryans as contained in Kikkuli’s “so-called ‘Horse Treatise’ . . . found at Boghazköy.”³⁶

It is also possible that the belief in reincarnation did not enter India with the Indo-Aryans but that they adopted it at a later time. Their earliest scripture, the Rigveda (1200 B.C.), did not teach it. But “the clear and explicit mention of the doctrine of transmigration is to be found in the Upanishads,”³⁷ dated from 700 to 600 B.C. That was also the approximate time when Hellenic Orphism became prominent, and yet there was little if any contact between the Greeks in Europe or Asia Minor and India. Most probably, therefore, the linkage between Eastern and Western ideas about the transmigration of souls is, as indicated above, a more ancient one.

The Mitannians, the Hittites, and the Mycenaeans have all disappeared from the scene of action. The relics they have left behind to mark their day beneath the sun and the events that eclipsed them are fragmentary in a material sense. But ideas are different. Though invisible and immaterial, they can survive the passing of peoples, civilizations, and entire eras, with a power to shape the world for ages to come.

III

With this in mind, we take another look at Mithraism, to which we first referred in our *Christ and Antichrist*, where we discussed the origin of both the papacy and Constantine's imperial Christianity. It was vastly important for the syncretism that produced the Antichrist. We now give some further details.

Mithras represented the amalgamation of a "Vedic" god, Iranian ideas, Babylonian astrology, Hellenistic intellect, and Roman religion. His worship began as a very ancient Indo-European pre-Indic cult that centered in Mitra. This was one of the gods for at least the people of Mitanni and Iran, as well as those who subsequently invaded India and created Hinduism.

Associated with him from the earliest times was *Agni*, which means "fire" (like the Latin word *ignis*, from which we have "ignite"). According to the Rigveda, an early Indian scripture, this was one of the two greatest deities, though also a material element in ritual offering. It is "equally the fire of the sun, lightning, of burning wood, and of that which made light for the purpose of religious worship."³⁸

It was apparently also important to the ancient Greeks. For instance, in about 513 B.C., Heraclitus of Ephesus, an Ionian philosopher, considered "fire to be the primary form of all matter."³⁹

Before the time of Zoroaster (6th century B.C. or earlier), Mithra was "the Iranian [Medo-Persian] god of the sun, justice, contract and war." He is also mentioned in some Indian Vedic texts. "The Greeks and the Romans considered Mithra as a sun god," with much the same attributes as those attributed to him by the Iranians.⁴⁰

Astrology, too, which has paralleled other forms of syncretic religion, is very ancient, beginning in Mesopotamia as far back as the third millennium before our era. It was the Babylonians who first associated the moving bodies in the heavens with the days of the week: the moon, Shamash (the sun), Nebo (Mercury), Marduk (Jupiter), Ishtar (Venus), Ninib (Mars), and Nergal (Saturn).⁴¹ The last-mentioned five were the only planets, as we understand the word today, which were visible to the naked eye in that age without telescopes. The earth, of course, was assumed to be the center round which the universe revolved—and present-day horoscopes are still based on this defective view of the solar system. In this scheme, our world was not regarded as a planet.

From Babylon, astrology spread all over the Middle East. It soon began to permeate the surrounding countries, acquiring additional influences from the Persians, the Egyptians, and the Jews. Like a mental bacterium, it infected mind after mind, extending in all directions, including Europe. After the conquests of Alexander the Great, its new center was Alexandria in Egypt. A great name in its development was that of Claudius Ptolemy (fl. 130-150 B.C.), who “sought to portray astrology as a natural science,”⁴² based on his false idea that the sun, the moon, and the planets revolve around the earth. Astrology still flourishes today, even though it is now common knowledge that the earth revolves around the sun, more planets exist, and the Ptolemaic system has been completely discredited.

The men debunking it were the Polish churchman Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), who worked out the theoretical calculations for the heliocentric system, and the Italian astronomer-mathematician Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), who half a century later provided the proof, by turning his well-made telescope on the sun, the moon, and the planets. Of the scandals that have beset the Roman Church for more than three and a half centuries, none has been more embarrassing than the treatment meted out to this great man, a Catholic Christian, who believed and did not—as was alleged—undermine what the Bible taught. Nevertheless, Galileo’s discoveries caused him to be hounded and condemned as a heretic by the Inquisition under the

auspices of Maffeo Barberini, Pope Urban VIII (1568-1644, reigned from 1623), allegedly an enlightened man and even Galileo's so-called friend. The inquisitors and the pontiff made him recant and placed him under house arrest until the end of his life. We also note that Urban, who insisted on the Ptolemaic system, also believed in horoscopes; and “. . . an astrological forecast in the spring of 1630 prophesied his own early demise. The superstitious pontiff retaliated first with imprisonment for the astrologer and later with a ferocious edict prohibiting predictions of a pope's death, or even the deaths of papal family members up to and including the third degree of consanguinity.”⁴³

Very belatedly, 359 years later, on 1 November 1992, Pope John Paul II “acknowledged in a speech today that the Roman Catholic Church had erred in condemning Galileo 359 years ago for asserting that the Earth revolves around the Sun.” Unfortunately he qualified his statement in several ways. He said “the theologians who condemned Galileo did not recognize the formal distinction between the Bible and its interpretation. ‘This led them unduly to transpose into the realm of the doctrine of the faith, a question which in fact pertained to scientific investigation.’” Moreover, “though the Pope acknowledged that the Church had done Galileo a wrong, he said that 17th-century theologians were working with the knowledge available to them at the time.”⁴⁴ But the pontiff of that time was fully to blame for this debacle. Both he and his theologians directly made the Bible the main reason for finding Galileo guilty of heresy.

The real and very awkward issue is the doctrine of papal infallibility. Either the Holy Spirit, who supposedly inspires all pontiffs, told Pope Urban VIII that the earth is the center of the solar system, or he did not. Perhaps the entity speaking through him did assert it was. But whoever it might have been could surely not have been the Spirit of God?

Catholicism is a syncretic religion, a mixture of Biblical Christianity and heathenism. This became especially evident from the time of Constantine, who confused Jesus Christ with Mithras, the *sol invictus* (“the unconquerable sun”) some seven hundred years after Plato. The way had been prepared by the

pagan Romans. First they adopted the seven days of the week on an astrological basis. Then, as Samuele Bacchiocchi's research has revealed, in the half-century after A.D.79 and before A.D.135 they moved the day of the sun god from the second to the first position in the week. Mithras was in imperial, militaristic circles ousting the traditional Apollo of the Classical world. To this is due the invention of *dies solis* (Sunday) as well as the change of the Sabbath, as shown in our *Christ and Antichrist*.

A further monument to this newly popular deity was erected in what was soon to become the Christian calendar: December 25, the alleged birthday of Lord Mithras. Here, in part, is how the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* at present explains it: "One widespread explanation of the origin of this date is that December 25 was the Christianizing of the *dies solis invicti nati* ('day of the birth of the unconquered sun'), a popular holiday in the Roman Empire that celebrated the winter solstice as a symbol of the resurgence of the sun, the casting away of winter and the heralding of the rebirth of spring and summer. Indeed, after December 25 had become widely accepted as the date of Jesus' birth, Christian writers frequently made the connection between the rebirth of the sun and the birth of the Son." But then the article goes on to say: "One of the difficulties with this view is that it suggests a nonchalant willingness on the part of the Christian church to appropriate a pagan festival when the early church was so intent on distinguishing itself categorically from pagan beliefs and practices."⁴⁵ But syncretism was a fact, with nothing nonchalant about it; Constantine adopted it as a deliberate policy. Which is how Jesus was reinvented as an ancient Indo-European god.

Another influence on Constantine and the bishops who abetted him was the Greco-Egyptian cult of Serapis. This was a synthetic but popular deity, fabricated by blending elements from the Hellenic pantheon with gods from Egypt's pharaonic religion. Serapis was a "Greco-Egyptian deity of the sun," revered as "Zeus Serapis."⁴⁶ Then, too, there was the mother goddess Isis. As shown in *Christ and Antichrist*, amongst other things via *The Myth of Mary* by César Vidal, she was amalgamated with several other goddesses popular throughout

the Mediterranean world and Western Asia. Some of these were the Mesopotamian Ishtar, variously called “the Holy Virgin” and “the Virgin Mother”; the maternal Hellenic Demeter; and the Phrygian Cybele, known as *Magna Mater* (“great mother”) or by her full title: *Magna Mater Deorum* (“great mother of the gods”).

Especially appealing was the image of mother Isis with baby Horus in her arms. For hundreds of years, the Egyptians had been worshipping them, before the Macedonian Greeks came and conquered their country. Then the cult of Isis spread abroad, becoming extremely popular for an additional thousand years in both the Ptolemaic and the Roman periods, from the fourth century before our era down to Justinian’s time. Many Christians imitated the Isis and Horus statuettes and pictures that they had seen in Egypt and applied them to Mary, the mother of Jesus. In this way, she, who had originally only been a humble maiden of Nazareth, became the great goddess of the Western world, inheriting awesome heathen titles gathered from so many lands.

Applying expressions like Mother of God and *Theotokos* (“God-bearer”) to Mary was too much for many Christians, particularly those in the Byzantine Empire. During the fifth century, Nestorius—Patriarch at Constantinople—opposed such terminology. This contributed to the schism which later separated Roman Catholicism from the Eastern Orthodox Church in 1054.

IV

Let us now consider more specifically what the ancient Greeks themselves believed about religion, as it is revealed by their writings after the Mycenaean period—which in its clumsy script, now known as Linear B, has left us little of note.

At the beginning of Hellenic literature stood Homer (c. 850 B.C.), who lived between a hundred fifty and two hundred years after King David. He has left us two very famous works, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which, as Herbert J. Rose expressed it, are “among the sublimest in any language, indeed supreme in their kind.”⁴⁷ They constituted as it were the bible of the ancient

Greeks, who largely based their ideas about the gods on what these two epics had to say about them.

It is worth noting, however, that both the Apolline clergy and the Orphics claimed their writings were even older. The latter said Homer had borrowed “freely” from them,⁴⁸ which is not impossible.

Prominently cherished by the great library in Alexandria were the masterpieces of Athens, from the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., its golden age. Attica, in which that city was situated, had not more than 100,000 inhabitants, including resident aliens and slaves. This is about the population of McAllen in southmost Texas, with considerably fewer people than many other American counties. Yet, in about eighty years, Athens produced a crop of artists, writers, and philosophers whose quality has rarely been equaled and never surpassed. Time has permitted only fragments of their work to survive.

As the Acropolis today consists of marvelous ruins, so does the literature of Classical Greece as it has come down to us. Some works survive intact, others are fragmentary, many have disappeared. Those gifted ancients lacked the printing press. Unfortunately as much as 90 percent of their manuscripts have therefore perished, including many masterpieces. “The remains of that literature constitute but a small fraction of the total output of Greek and Roman men of letters. Not only are the works of particular authors missing—we have but 7 out of 90 plays by Aeschylus, 7 out of 123 by Sophocles, 18 out of 90 by Euripides, and other authors of repute survive in nothing but a few quotations and references—but entire periods, such as the Hellenistic age in Greek. . . are poorly represented.”⁴⁹

If with their few surviving plays these three dramatists are in the same league as William Shakespeare, it is tantalizing to wonder how posterity would have evaluated them if all they had created could have come down to us intact. Sophocles, at least, outstripped the great English playwright in sheer productivity, yet all but seven of his plays have disappeared. He wrote for sixty years.⁵⁰ A fascinating fact is that his “*Philoctetes* was first performed in 409, when Sophocles was 90 years old.”⁵¹

For the Greeks, literature became a depository of their worldview and ideas about the supernatural. As the Classicist Edith Hamilton has put it, their religion “was developed not by priests nor by prophets nor by saints” but “by poets and artists and philosophers.”⁵² After Homer, it is elaborated in the great tragedies by the dramatists referred to. Their work originated within the framework provided by “the very popular cult of Dionysus. At these festivals all manner of feats of physical and mental skill were performed for prizes of one kind or another.” These dramas, written and produced competitively,⁵³ taught religion through entertainment; their presentation was really an act of worship. The problems they dealt with were central to human ethics.

Both beauty and the operations of the human mind appealed to and often deeply stirred the Greeks. But beyond their love of logic, they were very much aware of the supernatural. This is why the apostle Paul, addressing the Athenian judges of the Areopagus, could take this as his point of departure and say: “I perceive that in every way you are very religious” (Acts 17:22, RSV).

The link between pagan religion and Hellenic philosophy is quite clear in the writings of Plato (427-348/7 B.C.). His was “one of the greatest names, not only in philosophy but in literature, an unexampled combination of immense and original powers of thought with stylistic ability which would have made a second-rate thinker famous. . . .”⁵⁴

It is well known that he was greatly displeased with the poets’ and especially Homer’s stories that attributed immoral or contemptible behavior to the gods. Like his master Socrates, Plato believed in the ancient deities, sometimes referring to them as gods and sometimes as God. Later this pseudo-monotheism became a snare for both Jewish and early Christian admirers of his philosophy.

Let us note that many educated pagans in the ancient world as well as modern ones, like Hindus of our own century, have often taught that ultimately there is a single deity. To them, what ordinary people worship are lesser manifestations, even just objects useful for concentrating lowly minds. Toward these,

some intellectual Indians can at times be very condescending. I remember this from earlier discussions with Hindus in South Africa and also at a party in Albuquerque, New Mexico, during July 1992. There a young couple, fresh from India, ridiculed the belief of poor people in their country who attribute a god to every object, even adding deities for latter-day inventions. With shocking hilarity, they explained that for simple-minded Hindus there was a computer god and even a suitcase god!

A multitude of deities also characterized other peoples. The Babylonians likewise elaborated their pantheon into about 5,000 gods and goddesses. Devotees of the leopard Beast, inheriting this and other polytheistic practices, developed a similar system: saints who preside over specific occupations, activities, and even diseases.⁵⁵

For instance, St. Hadrian is the patron saint of butchers, St. Jerome of lawyers, and St. Eligius of steelworkers. St. Anthony presides over barren women, St. Nicholas over beer drinkers, and St. Clare over television. St. Hilary renders special assistance for snakebite, St. Liberius for gallstones, and St. Dymrna for insanity. Santa Claus—who is really St. Nicholas—not only makes children happy at Christmas but is also the patron saint of thieves [and possibly of supermarkets]. Some of these saints are supposedly departed holy people, which makes their veneration a form of Spiritualism, but others never really existed. They began as heathen deities. “As paganism and Christianity were merged, sometimes a saint was given a similar sounding name as that of the pagan god or goddess it replaced. The goddess Victoria of the Basses-Alpes was renamed as St. Victoire, Cheron as St. Ceranos, Artemis as St. Artemidos, Dionysius as St. Dionysus, etc.”⁵⁶

If Plato castigated other writers for misrepresenting the Hellenic deities, he was yet “a master of style . . . essentially a poet, though he wrote little verse.”⁵⁷ The snippets he did produce—a mere thirty elegiac epigrams have survived—include, according to C. Maurice Bowra, “some of the most beautiful short poems in the world.”⁵⁸

Plato spent the greater part of his life as a professor at the Academy which he had founded, yet he was no dry academic

writer. His dialogues are full of interesting incidents, pathos and color, shrewd characterization, and bits of humor to relieve the overall seriousness. How superbly he could create an allegory or retell a myth!

Many have been deeply impressed by his fine description of Socrates as he was facing death. Having drunk the hemlock that the Athenians used to execute him because of his convictions, the noble old philosopher lay down on a couch and uttered his last words, as recorded in Plato's *Apology*: "The time has come to part, I to die, and you to live. And which of us goes the happier way? That is unknown but to god."⁵⁹

Rose has pointed out that "a great part of Plato's eschatology is expressed, not in fully reasoned statements, but in prose poems, represented as revelations of sages or other venerable and inspired teachings . . ."⁶⁰

We rather dwell on this point of Plato's literary genius because not enough people have stopped to ask exactly why this man has cast such a long intellectual shadow over the ages. He was, as the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* enthusiastically puts it, "by any reckoning, one of the most dazzling writers in the Western literary tradition and one of the most penetrating, wide-ranging, and influential authors in the history of philosophy." Indeed, "the questions he raises are so profound and the strategies he uses for tackling them so richly suggestive and provocative that educated readers of nearly every period have in some way been influenced by him, and in practically every age there have been philosophers who count themselves Platonists in some important respects."⁶¹ That is, Plato has not simply convinced with his reasoning, however superb, but seduced so many minds with his charming, scintillating style.

V

Plato is particularly famous for his theory of Ideas or Forms. Following in the intellectual footsteps of his master Socrates and other thinkers before him, he taught that the things we see around us in the workaday world were just a subsidiary reality. For him, there also existed, beyond the senses, a sphere of unchangeable and eternal entities of which everything on earth

was an imperfect reflection. For instance, every house partakes of *houseness*, and every dog of *dogginess*. The buildings we see around us and the animal that wags its tail in our presence come and go, but *houseness* and *dogginess* are eternal. The same applies to higher conceptions, such as *justice*, *goodness*, and *beauty*. Allegedly it is not the individual specimens of these that are really important but the ideas that underlie them.

Some may shrug their shoulders and say that such a view is ridiculous and the reasoning which goes with it spurious. After all, these are just concepts, abstractions, with no reality status in themselves. That may be true, and we certainly benefit by the labor of other eminent philosophers who followed the ancient Greeks, as well as the science of semantics. But that is not how Plato and many people in the early period of Western Christianity regarded things.

Plato's doctrine of Forms and the dualism it fostered also involved a particular view of the afterlife. Just as the forms are supposedly imperishable and eternal, he considered the human soul immortal. According to his masterpiece, the *Republic*, "the 'just' among the dead passed straight to Heaven, the 'unjust' spent a period in Purgatory and then returned to earth, but they were left free (in the light of their experience) to choose the form of their next life."⁶² As we have noted elsewhere, Virgil the great Roman poet reflected a similar view.

Although, like the rest of Mediterranean Christianity, Catholicism rejected reincarnation, it accepted both the soul's inherent immortality and purgatory from Plato and his school.

The idea of two realities, one natural, the other supernatural, involved a good deal more than hairsplitting arguments about the reality status of concepts like justice, goodness, and beauty (or dogginess). For Plato, there was also "the underlying functional equivalence of deities and Ideas implicit in much of his thought."⁶³

Greek dualism with its view of the afterworld has, for many Christians, sabotaged what the Bible teaches about this world and the world to come. According to the Scriptures, the present life and its concerns, however tragic they may sometimes be, are important. Though believers prepare for heaven, they need to

treat their bodies well as temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), be good citizens, act responsibly toward the environment, and compassionately care for their fellow human beings in the world. As for the hereafter, they should realize that “the dead know not anything” (Eccl. 9:5), and that the resurrection will be a physical reality at the Second Coming of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:12-23, 51-55).

Dualism also promotes an ascetic lifestyle with a neglect of and even contempt for the human body. This tends to produce unwholesome ideas about sex and womankind, especially among monks and clerics, as well as irresponsibility toward society and the planet itself. If the material universe is inferior and only the hereafter matters, the betterment of people and the world can have only minor importance. Just one thing ultimately matters: personal salvation. This, however, is intrinsically selfish and foreign to what the Bible teaches. According to both the Old and the New Testament, yearning after and loving God supremely is only one of the two greatest commandments. The other one is to love our neighbor as ourselves.

VI

To both pagan and papal Rome, the Greeks—an ancient, ingenious people—bequeathed an Indo-European heritage amalgamated with other elements from the Middle East, some originating in old Babylon, others in Egypt, and yet others in Iran. Blended in were ideas originating with Pythagoras, Plato, and Plotinus. Intellectual and religious syncretism, which soon affected even the Christian world, was very characteristic of the first centuries in our era. The most notable results that even endure to this day were two doctrines: the immortality of the soul and Sundaykeeping as a substitute for Sabbath observance.

Neither is Biblical. As already shown, inherent immortality is derived from philosophic dualism, and Sundaykeeping is ultimately based on Mithraism. This became especially prominent when Constantine, the first Christian emperor and a Mithraic as well as a political opportunist, blended a popular form of paganism with his new-found faith. The results were stupendous and are still very much with us today.

CONCLUSION

I

These pages have presented material that some of our readers are almost certain to find new and unfamiliar, if not bewildering. For instance, they may hitherto not have known anything about the Western Greeks. Others may for years have believed or even in evangelistic meetings taught an explanation of the seven heads and ten horns that this book has found wanting. This could make them reluctant to change their belief. Yet we ask them to kindly give us a fair hearing.

Earlier in this book, we examined nine interpretations by Seventh-day Adventist prophetic expositors of the Historicist School. But we discovered that all of them unfortunately fail to meet one or the other of the criteria which we repeat below. If we, too, are wrong, this adds a tenth mistaken interpretation. Then the riddle of the seven heads and ten horns remains unsolved.

II

To identify them successfully, expositors must satisfy two specifications. The first is to harmonize their view with Dan. 7, which records the vision of four great beasts arising from the sea. The symbolism of leopard, bear, and lion, together with the requisite number of heads and horns, are also present in Rev. 13:1, 2. To ignore the interrelationship of these Bible passages is illegitimate. Further, the identification must meet the historical requirements of Rev. 17:10, 11: "Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition."

The key to understanding the seven heads and ten horns is found in Dan. 7, 8, and 11. These chapters all portray the ancient Greeks not as a single nation but as a plurality of separate though related entities. They inhabited different city-

states, spoke different dialects, and had different traditions. It is true that they also shared a common Hellenic culture, attended the same Olympic Games, and in times of crisis allied themselves against a common enemy like the Persians. Nevertheless, their plurality was a historical fact.

Dan. 7 describes a vision of four beasts which symbolize as many empires. The third one, a leopard with four wings and four heads, represents the Greeks. This fourfoldness clearly signals the fact that they were not a single, homogenous people. In Dan. 8, we likewise find them represented as a plurality. This time their symbol is that of a rough goat, which via its great horn refers to Alexander the Great. The Conqueror's successors, however, are represented by four "notable horns." These are "four kingdoms [which] shall stand up out of the nation." As we have shown, they were not limited to what had been his empire. Also, the number of its divisions varied. At one time, there were six; for a mere twenty years, they were reduced to four; and then, for more than a century—as history clearly demonstrates—to only three. A further factor is a Little Horn which is somehow connected with one of these horns. Soon it grows immensely and makes war on God's people, the Messiah, and the sanctuary service.

Dan. 11 mostly dispenses with symbols and uses literal language, but it is similarly pluralistic. It begins with a single mighty ruler whose empire was not to be inherited by his own posterity. Soon it is broken and plucked up, destined "for others," (vv. 1-4). Then the focus of the chapter shifts to the king of the north and the king of the south, especially as they affected the Promised Land. They were the Greco-Macedonian dynasties of ancient Syria and Egypt. Again we note that here, too, the ancient Greeks were not a single but a divided people.

III

In addition to the remnants of Alexander's empire, very many Greeks were never subjected to his dominion. A large and powerful branch of them thrived in the West. Their

ancestors had crossed the narrow straits which separate Greece from the Italian peninsula. They colonized nearly half of it all the way up to Naples. Because of its large extent, this region came to be known as Magna Graecia (“Great Greece”). That was centuries before Alexander was born. The eastern seaboard of nearby Sicily was settled in the same way, and mighty Syracuse for a while became the most powerful city-state in the Grecian world. The Etruscans, as well as the Romans who succeeded them to become the dominant people in Italy, adopted much of their culture, philosophy, and religion from the Western Greeks. When the people of Rome proceeded to conquer their neighbors and eventually the rest of Italy, creating first a republic and then an empire, they constituted the Little Horn described in Dan. 8 which grew so mightily. The Romans intermarried with the Italian Greeks and were therefore even biologically related to them.

IV

Our interpretation solves several problems that have puzzled other expositors of Dan. 8. It also highlights the importance of the Grecian element in both Daniel and the Apocalypse. For instance, the Beast from the sea of Rev. 13 is predominantly leopard-like. At first sight, those who interpret that creature as a symbol of the papacy may find this strange—until they come to recognize it as a largely Greco-Roman Beast. The earliest church writers of the Roman Church and often even the pontiffs spoke and wrote in Greek. Only at a later stage, after the decline of the Empire, their church adopted Latin as its characteristic language.

The Romans provided the administrative and judicial framework, but much of the culture and theology that shaped Catholicism was the syncretic creation of the ancient Greeks. These were a brilliant people, but through their influence they perverted the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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About the Author



Martin Gibbs Photographic, Pretoria, South Africa, 1983. Used with permission.

Edwin de Kock (1930-) has written four books on prophecy: *Seven Heads and Ten Horns in Daniel and the Revelation* (2011); *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy* (2011), augmented by *The Identity of 666 in Revelation* (2012), a Power Point video; *The Use and Abuse of Prophecy* (2007); and *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History* (2001).

Scholars as well as ordinary readers have delighted in his pleasant style, blended with research ranging over centuries. He displays a grasp of history, contemporary world affairs, and a polyglot culture that are unusual among writers on prophecy. He has also published in Afrikaans and Esperanto, the International Language. In the latter, he is one of its most famous original poets. A good deal of his poetry has been translated into other languages, including English.

De Kock's fascination with prophecy and history is virtually as old as his Adventism, beginning in his native South Africa more than seven decades ago. It culminated in almost twenty years of intensive research, which is still continuing. He has academic qualifications in theology, literature, education, and speech. In Israel, on Crete, and in Europe, he visited great museums, cathedrals, art galleries, and important sites connected with the contents of his books.

He has lectured internationally and been interviewed on radio and television in several countries, including the Esperanto service of Radio Vatican. This was explicitly about his Adventism, in 1985.

Professionally he was an educator for more than thirty-five years, in South Africa, South Korea, and the United States, especially as a college teacher. He finished this career as a writing professor at the University of Texas, Pan American, in 2000. His wife Ria, whom he married in Bloemfontein, South Africa, on 26 December 1954, did the same kind of work at the same institution, from 2004 to 2012. Their sons André and Carl with their families also live in America.

Prophetic and Other Publications

by Edwin de Kock

The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy (2011). *Book, \$39.95, Data CD or Attachment, \$19.95.

The Identity of 666 in Revelation (2012), **Video DVD (Power Point presentation), \$14.95.

Seven Heads and Ten Horns in Daniel and the Revelation (2012).***Book, \$20.00. Data CD, \$14.95. Attachment, \$10.

Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History (2013). Newly revised and updated. Book, \$19.95.

Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History plus 13 other items (2013).****Data CD, \$19.95.

The Use and Abuse of Prophecy (2007). Book, \$14.95.

*Ranging over the entire Christian era, *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy* is a penetrating 874-page book in three volumes for both scholars and lay people concerned with past, present, and future events. This is the most comprehensive work on prophecy and history ever produced by a Seventh-day Adventist, with the assistance of excellent researchers and scholars. About the earliest Christian centuries, it agrees with and defends Ellen G. White's *Great Controversy* as well as Uriah Smith's *Daniel and the Revelation*, but it adds much that neither of them dealt with.

For instance, the Heruli, Vandals, and Ostrogoths were not really Arians. Most of them were ancient Sabbathkeepers, who stood in the way of papal supremacy. Therefore, they had to be eliminated. The popes were supported by the kings and emperors of Europe in persecuting those who opposed the Roman Church. For centuries, the pontiffs also struggled to dominate these rulers.

With amazing new discoveries in Latin as well as five other languages, this book vindicates Uriah Smith's conclusion that the 666 in Rev. 13:18 really refers to *vicarius Filii Dei* (the vicar of the Son of God). This title first appeared during 753 or soon afterwards in a document known as the *Donation of*

Constantine, which was forged by the papacy to claim ecclesiastic supremacy as well as secular domination. The narrative of *The Truth About 666* is enlivened by many fascinating episodes. For instance, it shows that the people of Brazil, the largest country in Latin America, speak Portuguese, while the others speak mostly Spanish, due to a papal decision based on that fraudulent manuscript.

This book is a storehouse of brand-new discoveries. One of its treasures is an Appendix with material quoted from more than eighty non-Seventh-day Adventist writers, mostly Protestants who lived and labored before Uriah Smith. They testified to the fact that *vicarius Filii Dei* was indeed a papal title. Most of them also showed that it had a number value of 666.

Very many Catholic writers also bore witness to the fact that the popes have for more than a thousand years been called the *vicars of the Son of God*, in Latin as well as other leading languages of Western Europe.

In its third volume, this book discusses the problem of some Seventh-day Adventist scholars who now say that 666 does not refer to the pope but only means human sinfulness or imperfection. Some of them also claim that the number, the name, and the mark of the Beast are one and the same thing. By implication, there will therefore be no Sunday laws, nor will America cooperate with the papacy in its pursuit of world domination. Such ideas undermine the third angel's message, suggesting that Seventh-day Adventists are not really the Remnant Church of prophecy. As *The Truth About 666* demonstrates, these scholars have most unfortunately been influenced by writers from outside their church: Sundaykeepers, Protestants and Catholics, as well as others, including Spiritualists.

***The Identity of 666 in Revelation* (2012), Video DVD. The author had been invited by the Adventist Theological Society (Southeastern Chapter) to lecture on this topic pursuant to the publication of his book, *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy* (2011). This is a copy of

his Power Point presentation with a subsequent session of questions and answers in a very full Lynwood Hall Chapel at Southern Adventist University, College Place, Tennessee, on Saturday, 14 January 2012, at 3:30 p.m.

****Seven Heads and Ten Horns in Daniel and the Revelation* (2011) looks penetratingly at the woman Babylon depicted in Rev. 17. She rides a Beast with seven heads and ten horns, the identity of which has so far eluded all Historicist prophetic interpreters. Amongst other things, this work examines nine interpretations by Seventh-day Adventist writers, showing that these unfortunately fail to solve the mystery of Rev. 17:10 and related Scriptures. It presents a brand-new Historicist explanation and resolves a number of awkward problems concerning the beasts and horns described in Dan. 8.

*****Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History* (2013). This work only, as a single item, sent by e-mail attachment, \$10.00, but it is also available on a data CD for \$19.95, which additionally contains 13 further items:

1. An updated revision of *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History*, originally printed in 2001 (440 pages). While in print, it was prescribed for Master of Divinity classes at the Seminary, Andrews University, at least three times by two professors.
2. "The Role of Prophecy in Our Lives" (28 January 2008) by Ria de Kock, which was originally published in the South African *Signs of the Times*. Amongst other things, this article surveys the totality of her husband's prophetic writing in the English language.
3. *Africa and the Bible* (1988, revised in 2006). Israel first became a nation in Africa and was partly Egyptian. That ancient continent is also where the first Bible writer was born and the infant Jesus found shelter. Africans have played a significant role in salvation history. An uplifting read for black

people everywhere in the world. *Africa and the Bible* is a revised and considerably augmented version by Edwin de Kock of *Africa in the Bible*, an undated pamphlet by Fares Muganda, a Tanzanian church leader and evangelist.

4. “About Diet, Law, and Holy Days,” a four-page letter written to a non-Seventh-day Adventist scholar during 2006 to answer his e-mail query about Rom. 14:5-6. This concerns its larger context in both that chapter and the rest of the Bible.

5. “Ingredients, Scope, and Structure of *The Great Controversy* by Ellen G. White,” 27 July 2006. Amongst other things, this deals with nonverbal as opposed to verbal inspiration, the prophetic writer’s use of sources, and so-called plagiarism.

6. “Why People Were Created with Freedom of Choice,” 28 May 2005, a short, unpublished article. It shows that choice extends beyond religion; it is what makes us human. Without it, we would be robots, lacking all real freedom and creativity, even on the most humble level of everyday life.

7. “Prophecy Validated by Events,” ADVENTISTS AFFIRM, Fall 2005. This validates the Seventh-day Adventist explanation of the two-horned beast described in Rev. 13:11-17 within its historical context, showing how ridiculous it must have seemed during the nineteenth century, even as late as the first World War (1914-1918), and yet how feasible it is today.

8. “Letters About Inspiration” (c. 2003), to a correspondent. Three forms of inspiration mentioned or discussed are: *The Lord or His Angels Speak Directly to the Prophet*, which “often takes the form of an actual voice”; *The Prophet Has a Dream or a Vision* but describes the objects or actions seen in his or her own words; and *Guidance in the Writing Process*. An example of this is the Gospel according to Luke, who did diligent research and also quoted extensively from his predecessors.

9. “A Dispensationalist Calculation Error,” *Ministry* magazine, August 2002. Amongst other things, this article demonstrates that Futurism is based on bad arithmetic in claiming that the 1260 days, 42 months, and 3½ years of Daniel and Revelation are literal time. That is, the math for fitting this period into Dan. 9:27 is wrong.

10. “The Main Reason for the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” an unpublished article (c. 2000). It surveys the interaction of Jews and Arabs over the centuries. Among the myths debunked is the idea that all people in the Middle East who speak Arabic are descendants of Hagar, Abraham’s concubine.

11. “How Pieter Wessels and My Mother Became Seventh-day Adventists,” a Vespers talk on 26 January 1996 in Inchon, South Korea, at the SDA English Language Institute where Edwin de Kock was teaching English as a second language as well as Bible classes. Pieter Wessels was an Afrikaner who lived at Kimberley in the Northwestern Cape Province of South Africa during the last part of the nineteenth century. In that area, where the richest diamond strike in the world had been made, he was one of the men whom this made very wealthy. Wessels discovered the true Sabbath from his own reading of the Bible and soon not only pioneered but also funded the Seventh-day Adventist Church in his country. De Kock then told how his mother likewise discovered the Sabbath by reading the Ten Commandments on her own. He went on to tell how for him these events were linked, because they also caused him to meet his wife Ria who was born within thirty-five miles of Kimberley.

12. “The Best Book About the Sabbath” (*South African Union Conference Lantern*, 1 June 1987) relates how in 1935 Susanna E. de Kock (born Olivier) discovered the truth about the Sabbath by reading the Ten Commandments and afterwards became a Seventh-day Adventist. At that time her five-year-old son, the future writer of *The Truth About 666*,

understood what she was doing and decided to follow her example.

13. “Three Golden Calves” (*South African Union Conference Lantern*, November 1979). A cautionary tale of an event from more than three thousand years ago. It traces the destructively evil influence of the golden calf, which the high priest Aaron made at Sinai, on Israel’s subsequent history.

14. “The Influence of Most Fiction, Whether in Books, Movies, or Plays,” adapted from a sermon preached in a South African Church, during the 1960s or the 1970s. The main point was: “Story books, movies, and plays very often destroy a love for the Bible and sacred things. Our main concern should not be where the reading or viewing takes place (at home or in a theater), but the pernicious influence of fiction.”

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edwdecock@hotmail.com OR

Edwin de Kock
12916 Los Terrazos Boulevard
Edinburg, TX 78541
U.S.A.

Over the centuries, countless writers have tried to identify the seven heads and ten horns in Daniel and the Revelation. All of them have been unsuccessful, due to one or more of the following facts:

1. The first head must symbolize Babylon and not Egypt followed by Assyria, because in Rev. 13 the heads and horns are clearly related to and derived from the four beasts of Dan. 7. Among them, these have exactly seven heads and ten horns.
2. The ancient Greeks were never a single entity. In Daniel, their nation was symbolized by *four* heads (Dan. 7) or *four* horns (Dan. 8). History shows that they included the sometimes powerful western Greeks of Italy and Sicily, who were not part of Alexander's empire.
3. The Little Horn of Dan. 8 is closely related to one of the four Greek horns and seems to grow out of it; otherwise, there is no vital connection between them. History reveals that the Romans were profoundly shaped by Hellenic culture; biologically, they were also, at least in part, of Greek descent.
4. According to Rev. 17, the sixth head still existed in John's time while the seventh lay in his future.

This book presents a compelling new Historicist interpretation that harmonizes with each of the aforementioned facts.

