

THE SYMBOLS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION AND THEIR SOURCES.

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THE Book of Revelation is saturated with the imagery of the Hebrew prophets, its chief model being the Book of Daniel, while it borrows freely from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel and Zechariah.

Of the three theories as to the period to which the visions refer, the one which places it near the time of the Revelator has now superseded for the most part the theory that the visions cover the history of the Church through all time, and the theory that most of the fulfilments are still in the future. The Revelator himself indicates both at the very beginning and in the last chapter that the events described are imminent; so also does the identification of some of the events by him as he describes them. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must *shortly* come to pass"; and again, "The Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must *shortly* be done," Rev. i. 1; and compare xxii. 6, 7, 10, 12, repeating the idea also expressed in i. 3, "The time is at hand."

To follow the book chapter by chapter, consecutively. The figure of Jesus's beloved as "kings and priests" is taken from Ex. xix. 6, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests"; but is used also by Peter, "a royal priesthood," 1 Peter ii. 9. The figure "he cometh with clouds" is in Daniel vii. 13, "One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven"; in Revelation followed by an allusion to Zech. xii. 10, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." Yet the combination in a closer parallel had been made by Jesus in Matt. xxiv. 30, "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven."

The description of the Son of man, Rev. i. 13-16, parallels Dan. vii. 9 and x. 5, 6: "The Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool"; "Behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz. His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." "Out of his mouth went a sharp sword," compares with Is. xlix. 2, "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword"; and with the "candlesticks" compare Ex. xxv. 31, 32, 37, and Zech. iv. 2.

While it is to be carefully noted that the book is directly addressed to no other than the seven churches, and at the end reiterates that it is "to testify unto you these things in the *churches*," strictly identified by the closing exhortation of each of the seven, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the *churches*," with no evidence that the book is a general epistle, most commentators seem to have assumed that it is general. This oversight may go toward accounting for the diversities of interpretation among the more than eighty commentaries written upon it, though the special addresses to the seven explain themselves. The expression "He shall rule them with a rod of iron," in Rev. ii. 27 and xii. 5, is found in Ps. ii. 9.

The vision is resumed in Rev. iv, with a throne set in heaven. The description, with that of the four beasts, identifies it with Ezekiel's vision, Ezek. i. 25-28, "Above the firmament. . . was the likeness of a throne. . . and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire. . . from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward. . . As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about"; a clear correspondence to the Revelator's red sardine stone, and the "rainbow round about the throne."

Each of Ezekiel's four beasts (Ezek. i. 10) had four faces, "The face of a man, and the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle"; whereas in Revelation this figure is merely resolved into its components, "The first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf [the Greek includes young oxkind, at any stage], and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle," Rev. iv. 7. Ezekiel gives each beast

four wings, John adds two more; Ezekiel gives "rings full of eyes round about," to the wheels accompanying the beasts wherever they went, Ezek. i. 6, 18; and he ends the description with the explanation, "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord," while John represents the beasts as giving glory and honor and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, Rev. iv. 9; the object in both being the expression of the glory of God by cherubic figures symbolic of celestial beings, as the twenty-four elders (twice the number of the "elders" or heads of the tribes of Israel) of human glorification of God by his special chosen disciples, originally represented by the twelve, in verse 10; and both the celestial and human representatives together in Rev. v. 8-14.

Compare with Rev. v. 1, "a book written within and on the backside," Ezek. ii. 9, 10, "Behold, an hand was sent unto me; and lo, a roll of a book was therein." Comparing the woes following the opening of the seals in Revelation, the resemblance appears strongly in verse 10: "And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe." As the "book" was a roll, "without" and "on the backside" are synonymous. Here, as in the case of the four beasts, John resolves the general contents of Ezekiel's book into their successive stages of opening or development of events, to seven, the Jewish symbol of completeness; or, as Daniel has it, "Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." Dan. xii. 4, in both representing a completed series. John's symbol indicates that only "the Lamb" was able to "loose the seals" or reveal the contents, or woeful events coming on the earth.

The four horses going forth successively on the opening of the first, second, third and fourth seal, compare with Zechariah's, "In the first chariot were red horses, and in the second chariot black horses, and in the third chariot white horses, and in the fourth chariot grizzled and bay horses," compare Rev. vi. 1-8 with Zech. vi. 2, 3.

"When he had opened the sixth seal. . . there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black. . . and the moon became as blood." Rev. vi. 12; this is taken from Joel's description of "the day of the Lord": "The earth shall quake before them. . . The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come," Joel ii. 10, 31. "The heaven departing as a scroll, the stars falling as untimely figs," Rev. vi. 13-14, from Is. xxxiv. 4, "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and

all their host shall fall down, as the leaf. . . . and as a falling fig from the fig-tree." Both of the foregoing figures are cited also in Matt. xxiv. 29.

The hiding in dens and in rocks, Rev. vi. 15, parallels Is. ii. 19-21, "They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth for fear of the Lord." The calling to the mountains, "Fall on us," repeats Hos. x. 8, "They shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us."

With the four winds in Rev. vii. 1 compare Dan. vii. 2; they represent destructive agencies against the earth; restrained in Revelation, but in action in Daniel. "Sealed," Rev. vii. 3, 4, has its synonym in Rev. xiv. 1, "having his Father's name written in their foreheads," explained by Ezek. ix. 4, 5, "Go through the midst of the city. . . . Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry, for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said. . . . Go ye after him through the city, and smite. . . . but come not near any man upon whom is the mark." It is remarkable that in the sealing of "all the tribes of the children of Israel" two of the most important, Dan and Ephraim, are omitted; this suggests that one is not to count upon strict mathematical or historical exactness in the seer.

Chapters viii and ix describe symbolically in detail the destructive agencies: the seven angels sounding, apparently having a correspondence to the successive opening of the seven seals, but dwelling more exclusively on terrestrial phenomena: earthquake, and darkening of the sun and moon appear in both. A marked feature of Revelation is the variety of plagues and forms of vengeance inflicted on idolaters, sorcerers, murderers, fornicators, thieves and liars; recalling rather the John (and James) who would adjudge fire from heaven upon the inhospitable Samaritan village, than the John who wrote the Epistle whose key-note is "God is Love."

No actual occurrences to correspond to the description in these two chapters are known; yet the "locusts" seem to draw a strong suggestion from Joel i and ii. 3-8, "The locust, the nation. . . whose teeth are the teeth of a lion; the appearance of them as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains," compared with Rev. ix. 7-9, 16-19.

"The little book," Rev. x, parallels Ezek. iii. 1-3, 14, "Eat this roll. . . . Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. . . . and I went in bitterness." Also verse 4 corresponds to Rev. x. 11.

The measuring of the temple in Rev. xi appears to be suggested by Ezek. xl-xliii. With the tread of the Gentiles, Rev. xi. 2, compare Dan. vii. 25, and Luke xxi. 24. The forty-two months or one thousand two hundred and sixty days (thirty-day months) of verse 3, and of Rev. xii. 5, 6, also equal the "time, and times, and half a time" of Rev. xii. 14, and draw from the "time, times, and dividing of time" of Dan. vii. 25, and "time, times and a half" of Dan. xii. 7, which have tripped numerous expounders.

The two olive trees, witnesses or candlesticks, parallel the two olive branches or anointed ones of Zech. iv. 3, 14, who supply oil to the lamps of the temple of God: also called "two prophets" in Rev. xi. 10, apparently calling men to amendment by mournful or "sackcloth" judgments. "The great city, which spiritually is called Sodom. . . where also our Lord was crucified," is doubly identified as Jerusalem; the first identification being Is. i. 8-10, where "the daughter of Zion" is addressed as "Sodom." The closely related twelfth chapter covers the same period as the eleventh; but the "woman clothed with the sun" seems not to parallel any Scripture symbol, but, with the dragon waiting to devour her child, thus far remarkably resembles the classical Greek myth as to the birth of Apollo, god of the sun and of light, the dragon Python pursuing his mother at the time of her travail in order to destroy the child which was to destroy him; so it is indirectly associated with the serpent, and the promise, "Her seed shall bruise thy head," Gen. iii. 15. Yet, as the seed of the woman "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ," the woman represents Christianity, persecuted and driven into exile and obscure places by the dragon "having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads": figured in chapter xiii as a "beast" to whom the dragon transferred "his power, and his seat, and great authority." This beast is a composite of the four beasts of Dan. vii, the leopard, the bear, the lion and the beast of ten horns, and is explained in Rev. xvii.

The second beast of Rev. xiii. 11-18 is usually explained as the cult or priesthood of emperor-worship, introduced by Caligula A. D. 39. "The number of his name": numbers in Greek as in Hebrew and Latin being represented by letters of the alphabet, the number 666 was expected to spell a name; but the Greek of the text being the letters for *ch*, *x*, and the digamma, spells no recognizable name; but the Hebrew characters for 50+200+6+50 and for 100+60+200, making together 666 as the sum, spell *N(e)ron Ksr*:

the Hebrew letters, being consonants only, represent the framework of what in Latin is *Nero Cæsar*.

The 144,000 of chapter xiv seem to correspond to the 144,000 of chapter vii. The figure of the punishment of the worshippers of the beast indicates its source as Ps. lxxv. 8; but in Rev. xiv. 10 "the wine of the wrath of God" is without mixture, instead of "full of mixture." The fire, brimstone, smoke and blood recall the Lord's vengeance upon Idumea, Is. xxxiv. 6, 7, 9, 10, "And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone. . . . It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever."

The figure of reaping the earth is from Joel iii. 13, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. . . . the press is full, the vats overflow; for the wickedness is great." The blood of the wine-press refers again to Idumea, "The land shall be soaked with blood," Is. xxxiv. 7.

The results of the pouring-out from the seven goblets of wrath, by the messengers or agencies of wrath, are plagues of which the descriptions are not always consistent with literalness of interpretation; though the first plague compares with that following the sprinkling of ashes by Moses, which "became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt," Ex. ix. 10; the second and third plagues with Deut. xxxii. 42, 43, "I will make mine arrows drunk with blood. . . . he will avenge the blood of his servants," as a fitting and just punishment; "For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink: for they are worthy," Rev. xvi. 6. Yet that all waters became blood, and that every creature in the sea died, for this, reaches hyperbole.

The figures under the sixth plague take us to the prophecy of Jeremiah against Babylon, Jer. l and li; the drying-up of the Euphrates that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared, compares with "Prepare against her the nations, with the kings of the Medes"; the kings of the east being the Persians and Medes, bordering Babylonia on the east, and who overthrew Babylon. The order of the Greek in verse 13 is rendered into English, "And I saw [come] out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three spirits, unclean like frogs." "Armageddon," a rendezvous, not the battleground, is the hill of Megiddo, on the edge of the plain of Jezreel; the great battlefield of the Old Testament, scene of the victory of Gideon and of Barak, and of the death of Saul and of Josiah in

battle, may well prefigure the decisive great struggle between Christianity and Roman paganism.

Under the seventh seal, "every island fled away, and the mountains were not found," like Rev. vi. 14, echoes several suggestive Old Testament figures, but especially Habakkuk iii. 6, "The everlasting mountains were scattered." The hail, "about the weight of a talent," that is 114 pounds, 15 pennyweights, would be as deadly as cannon-balls of like weight, had not the conditions of hail-fall limited the size of hailstones to a few ounces.

Rev. xvii. 9 explains the unchaste woman and the beast having seven heads and ten horns, "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth," further identified as "that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth," imperial and "seven-hilled" Rome; the directive power being shifted from the dragon or Satan to that of a false or immoral religion, under a figure familiar to the prophets, that of an impure woman, Ezek. xvi and xxiii; Hos. i-iv; Jer. iii. The symbolic name of the city, like the figure of the beast, is drawn from Daniel, namely, Babylon, the seat of the first and foremost of his four beasts. Primarily the heads represent "seven kings," that is "emperors," who killed the saints and fought against the Lamb. "Five are fallen": Augustus Cæsar, the first emperor of Rome; Tiberius; Caligula; Claudius, and Nero. This much is clear; the rest of the kings, because of the peculiarity of the description, are not clearly understood.

Rev. xviii deals with the fall of the city. With verse 2 compare Is. xxi. 9, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen": for the foul creatures inhabiting it, compare Is. xiii. 19-22, and xxxiv. 11-15. With verse 4 compare Jer. l. 8, and li. 6, 45; with verse 5 compare Jer. li. 9; with verse 6 compare Jer. l. 15, 29; with verse 7 compare Is. xlvi. 7-14: "Thou saidst, I shall be a lady forever. . . . that sayest in thine heart. . . . I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children. But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood. . . . and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly. . . . the astrologers. . . . the fire shall burn them." Thus the quotations from Isaiah and Jeremiah are brought over with the name from their prophecies concerning ancient Babylon; but verses 9-19 describe a merchant city, and are drawn from Ezekiel's description of the fall of Tyre, Ezek. xxvi-xxviii. With verses 9-16 compare Ezek. xxvi. 16, 17 and xxvii. 7-36; "slaves and souls of men," in verse 13, compare with Ezek. xxvii. 13, "They traded the persons of men." With verses 15-19 compare Ezek. xxvii. 29-33.

With verse 20 we return to the Babylon prophecy, Jer. li. 48-56, "Then the heaven and the earth shall sing for Babylon; for the Lord God of recompenses shall surely requite." With verse 21 compare Jer. li. 63, 64, "When thou hast made an end of reading this book, thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her." Verses 22, 23 echo Jer. xxv. 10, "I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle," but this refers to the people of Judah. With verse 24 compare Jer. li. 49. As Rome is twenty-one miles from the sea, up the Tiber river, which below the city at low water sometimes has only four feet of depth, the description foregoing must not be applied too literally to its commerce. The fall is of Babylon and Tyre, though applied to Rome, which has stood continuously since its foundation, and after the fall of paganism had more than a million population; and now more than half a million.

The final struggle between the "Faithful," the "Alpha and Omega" of Rev. i. 14-16, or between Christianity with "the armies in Heaven," and paganism represented by the beast with the kings of the earth and their armies, is figured in the last half of Rev. xix and is distinct from the final conflict with Satan.

John, in Rev. xx, gives a current conception, that, after the destruction of the beast and his worshipers, Satan is bound or restrained from activity for a thousand years, while the *souls* of the beheaded martyrs are living and reigning with Christ. This "millennium" is from the *Secrets of Enoch*, composed between 30 B. C. and 70 A. D., in which (chaps. xxxii, xxxiii) the duration of the Messianic kingdom is first figured as a millennium, based apparently on the Persian theory that the creation, occupying six days followed by a Sabbath rest, prefigured that the world's age would consist of 6000 years of activity, followed by 1000 years of Sabbath rest. There is not even intimated in any other part of the Bible, an interval in resurrection; Jesus says, "The *hour* is coming, in which *all* that are in their graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation," John v. 28, 29; compare Dan. xii. 2. Nor that Christ's reign shall cease "till he hath [already] put all enemies under his feet," 1 Cor. xv. 24-28. Note, therefore, that the thousand years are the measure of the reign of the *souls* of the beheaded martyrs,

not of Christ's reign, and that only the beheaded are mentioned, though those martyred by other means must have been a greater number.

The figure of Gog and Magog is drawn from Ezek. xxxviii and xxxix, for the peoples north of Syria, to the Black Sea. The figure of the judgment with its books is from Dan. vii. 10. Rev. xx. 9, 10, describes Satan himself and his dupes overthrown; verses 12, 13, the general judgment, yet distinctly of the dead, not of the living.

The figure of the new heaven and the new earth, and the passing of the old, Rev. xxi, draws from Is. xiii. 13, "Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place"; and lxv. 17-19, "I create new heavens, and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind"; and for the new Jerusalem compare, "Behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people, and the voices of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." The vision from the high mountain, of the "holy Jerusalem" (Rev. xxi. 10) recalls Ezek. xl. 2 and xlviii. 30-35, the city of twelve gates, three on each of the four sides, north, east, south and west; but the 4500 measures are enlarged to 12,000 stadia, or "furlongs," length of each side of the city. Also compare the naming of the gates after the twelve tribes of Israel. Rev. xxi. 3 might be a paraphrase of Ezekiel's name of the city, namely, "The Lord is there," and the gems of the foundations of Is. liv. 11, 12, "I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones." The light parallel of Is. lx. 19, 20, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down. . . ." seems equivalent to "There shall be no night there." With verse 24 compare Is. lx. 3, "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising"; and with verse 27, Is. xxxv and lx. 21; lii. 1; and Zech. xiv. 16 20, 21. John describes only the city, capital of the new earth.

With Rev. xxii. 1-5 compare Ezek. xlvii. 1-12, "Waters issued out from under the threshold of the house" (i. e., the temple) ". . . a river. . . behold, at the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other. . . These waters. . . being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. . . and everything shall

live whither the river cometh. . . . And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed; it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." Also especially for "throne" and "light" compare Zech. xiv. 7-9.

Thus in the book called Revelation is described a Messianic earthly kingdom, obtained through great conflicts. "Revelation" is a translation of the Greek *apokalypsis*. But this book is only one of several apocalyptic books, and in order to understand their nature, we indicate the contents of the *Book of Enoch* (five parts combined), perhaps the most important of all non-canonical apocalyptic sources, written (probably in Aramaic) in the second and first centuries B. C.; which exercised here a great influence, as it did generally, on Palestinian literature of the first century A. D. It deals with the fall of angels, a final judgment held on Mt. Sinai, a general resurrection, consignment of the wicked to Gehenna, God establishing his kingdom in Jerusalem, Gentiles converted, and the just eating from the tree of life; the Messiah, to whom God has committed all dominion and all judgment, dwelling among the elect in a new heaven and a new earth. This book is quoted in Jude 14, and apparently in Matt. xix. 28 and John v. 22, 27. It is a characteristic of apocalypses that all are put forth under assumed names—as a rule, of some famous Hebrew character; they are not "prophecy" in the narrower sense of prediction, but in the sense of general inspiration. But errors, and lack of fulfilment (the test of true prophecy) betray their visionary nature, and they fail to be accepted as canonical. Revelation presents, in the guise of visions, a tissue of Old Testament prophecies, interwoven with vivid, lurid or dark colors of the compiler; a Dantean poem, rather than an addition to original prophecy.