

The Bride and the Reject

by
Damien Mackey

Introduction

Every new disturbance in the world, be it of *natural* cause such as earthquakes or hurricanes; *political*, such as the Gulf War crises I and II; or *economic*, for example the recent Asian and Brazilian meltdowns, finds its modern-day interpreter with the Book of Revelation in hand. Depending upon one's political or religious proclivity the Beast of Revelation (13:11) can be, now the President of the United States, now Saddam Hussain rebuilding the city of Babylon, now the Pope ruling Catholicism. And we can be sure that this sort of frenzied speculation is only going to intensify as **Year 2000** approaches. Indeed already the 'millennium bug' has begun to bite the loony cultist fringe; for most recently the Israeli government had to deport a group of American 'Christians' for fear that they had violent intentions towards the Old City with the approach of the new millennium; suspecting them to be amongst fanatics who believe that the ancient Temple of Jerusalem is destined to be rebuilt in the near future. This would mean firstly clearing away - even with a bomb if necessary - the great Moslem shrine, the Dome of the Rock, that now occupies the mount.

Meanwhile, certain Protestant and evangelical groups continue to persist with the notion, conceived during the Reformation, that the Pope is Antichrist and that the 'Roman Catholic Church' is the "*famous prostitute ... riding a scarlet beast which had seven heads and ten horns*" (Revelation 17;2,3), the seven heads being also "*the seven hills*" (18:9). This latter, they insist, must be a reference to Rome with its Seven Hills. And they puzzle as to why good, prayerful, Bible-believing Catholics cannot see this. The Modernist crisis has only reinforced this view in their minds, especially when they learn of 'Catholic' bishops denigrating the Bible and supporting Gay Acceptance, etc.

No doubt some of these non-Catholic brethren are genuine in their beliefs. Leo Harris for instance, writing the Foreword to Thomas Foster's *The Pope, Communism and the Coming New World* (Acacia Press, Vic.), having acknowledged that: "*In the present remarkable days, with the Holy Spirit touching the lives of many people in both the Roman Catholic and main-line Protestant churches, one may feel reluctant to expose the errors found in any church system*", feels constrained nevertheless to add a point that will be taken up more vehemently by Foster himself: "*However, it is no light matter that any one man should arise and claim supreme headship over the church as Christ's sole representative or vicar*". Foster himself will go so far as to identify the Pope as Antichrist (which he says literally means *in the place of* Christ, rather than *against* Christ).

I personally know of Protestants who, whilst likewise being quite uncomfortable with the concept of the Papacy, are prepared nonetheless - in the current climate of ecumenism - not to make too much of an issue out of it, but to accept that there is presently going on throughout the world a ‘mustering of all people of good will’ (including even Roman Catholics). Perhaps this new outlook is the first stirrings of unity, the graces of the ecumenical effort.

Catholics have of course quite a different view from the Protestants of the Church and the Pope. The Blessed Virgin Mary, they believe, “*is the image of the Church whom we likewise call mother*”. (Pope John Paul II, Homily 18 November 1980; cf. *Lumen Gentium*, #63); which Church therefore can by no wise be identifiable with the miserific Harlot of the Apocalypse. And they regard the Pope as indeed the appointed Vicar of Christ on earth (cf. Matthew 16:18), the very foundation of the Church, and infallible - and this particular Pope as being one of the greatest individuals of human history.

The Harlot of Revelation they consider to be a more than adequate description of the Modernist “World Wide Church of Darkness” (cf. Pope St. Pius X).

In this **MATRIX** article I shall be endeavouring to show - hopefully to assist ecumenical efforts by clearing away misgivings, but especially to provide Catholics with a defence against unwarranted accusations - that the mystery Whore, “*Babylon the Great*”, is not Rome at all (either physical or spiritual) but the ancient City of Jerusalem where Jesus himself was crucified - and where many of the prophets, and Apostles, were martyred. In this way I hope to establish that the Whore cannot possibly have anything to do with the Catholic Church. It will be my argument here that the Book of Revelation **has already been literally fulfilled**; that it was fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies under Titus in 70 AD, corresponding to the burning of “*Babylon*” in the Apocalypse (Ch.s 17-18) and that its relevance for us today is allegorical and symbolical (e.g. the above-mentioned likening of the Harlot, *which is a city*, with Modernism, *which is a system of thought*). This accords with Pope John Paul II’s recent statement to a C20th audience that the Book of Revelation is symbolical and figurative in meaning.

Essentially Revelation is about the divorce of one formerly just woman who had gone bad, and the marrying of a new, faithful one. The scroll of Revelation 5:1 is actually a bill of divorce; the divorce being completed in the most emphatic manner with the annihilation of the harlot city, “*Babylon*”. I am indebted to Kenneth Gentry Jr. in “*A Preterist View of Revelation*” [*], for spelling this out. E.g. [51-2]:

When viewed against the backdrop of the theme of Jewish judgment, personages (a harlot and a bride), and the flow of Revelation (from the sealed scroll to a capital punishment for “adultery” to a “marriage feast” to the taking of a new “bride” as the “new Jerusalem”), the covenantal nature of the transaction suggests that the seven-sealed scroll is God’s divorce decree against his Old Testament wife for her spiritual adultery. In the Old Testament God “marries” Israel (see esp. Ezek. 16:8,31-32), and in several places he threatens her with a “bill of divorce” (Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8).

[*] In C. Marvin Pate’s **Four Views on the Book of Revelation** (Zondervan, 1998). The word “preterist” is based on a Latin word *praeteritus*, meaning “gone by”, i.e. past.

Also I want to clear up the serious problem - *of commentators own making* - whereby the Apostles, supposedly expecting Christ's final coming or *Parousia* in their own day, were mistaken because this has not yet come about. Such an interpretation would suggest that Our Lord had passed on to His intimate friends the wrong time-table, and I find that quite unacceptable. My argument here will be that the Apostles were referring to Christ's coming in victory in 70 AD, thus freeing the early Christian Church once and for all from its Judaic connections.

A. Some Illustrations of this Interpretation:

The historico-literal level of biblical interpretation is the most basic one, and Popes have urged that scripture scholars identify that first. Obviously there can be only one historico-literal fulfilment of anything. I am now going to illustrate with biblical examples the interpretation of Revelation being favoured here: namely, of an early historico-literal fulfilment, but allowing for later allegorical ones.

Example 1: The sack of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in c.590 BC.

This has many parallel likenesses to the sack of Jerusalem by the Roman armies under Titus in 70 AD. That is not surprising since the same city in the same geographical location is involved. But the details of the first incident can never be entirely duplicated in the second (despite what certain psycho-historians seem to think). That is obvious! By 70 AD there would be no Babylonian armies, no Nebuchednezzar, no prophet Jeremiah, and so on. The connection can only be an *allegorical* one - 'like, but not the same as'.

But let us take the better-known example of St. John the Baptist (so misunderstood by the Modernists).

Example 2: "In the Spirit of Elijah"

Our Lord confirmed that the Baptist was the one of whom the Old Testament prophet Malachi had foretold: "*Behold, I will send you Elijah*" (4:5; cf. *Matthew 11:4*).

But He also confirmed that John was not Elijah himself: he came "*in the spirit of Elijah*". Only Elijah could fulfil the literal conditions of his own day.

Likewise, only one scenario literally fulfils Revelation - and that I suggest is the scenario pertaining to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The many later scenarios are, imbued, so to speak, with its "*spirit*"; this being most emphatically true of our own era, with the Bride of the Lamb apparently following Her Spouse in His Passion, Death and Resurrection. Thus I would suggest for example that when St. Vincent Ferrer (O.P.), at the time of the Reformation, claimed to be the 'Angel' or 'Eagle' of the Apocalypse, he could do so only figuratively: that is, "*in the spirit*" of that being - as St. John the Baptist was in relation to Elijah.

Intensifying the "*Marian Dimension*" (cf. Frits Albers' *The Marian Dimension in the Apocalypse of St. John*, 1982; "*Redemptoris Mater*", 1987), I turn now for *Example Three* to the Books of Hosea and Isaiah, especially to the Virgin and Immanuel.

Here we shall see why Isaiah is traditionally regarded as “*the Fifth Gospel*”. Since this section will be absolutely crucial to this entire article I must make of it a new section.

B. The Hosea/Isaiah Paradigm

(I) The Unfaithful Adulteress

The prophet Hosea was actually commanded by God to pantomime the tragic situation of the ‘woman’ Israel’s infidelity to God by taking for his wife an adulteress from the harlot nation of Samaria (northern Israel). ‘*Go, marry a whore, and get children with a whore, for the country itself has become nothing but a whore by abandoning Yahweh*’ (Hosea 1:2). God knew that this woman, a product of her environment, would be unfaithful to the prophet, but He nevertheless urged Hosea to take her back after her infidelity, as a sign to Israel that God was patient and long-suffering and was also prepared to take back unfaithful Israel (3:1-3).

(ii) The Faithful Virgin

By contrast, the prophet Isaiah (whose name like Hosea’s indicates God as ‘Saviour’) married a good woman; a virginal ‘prophetess’. And if I am right in an identification made previously (“*Isaiah and his Six Children*”, 1998) - that Isaiah and Hosea are in fact the same person - then it would be a case of the one prophet having been married to both types of woman: firstly the adulteress, then afterwards, the faithful woman.

This is in fact the whole tension of the Book of Apocalypse. The pantomime that Hosea/Isaiah had played out in c.700 BC will now be approximately re-enacted by Jesus Christ himself, the Saviour, in His divorce of the unfaithful earthly Jerusalem (Judaism) and marriage with his new Bride, the heavenly Jerusalem. This time there will be no taking back of the adulteress Jerusalem, though He had longed to. ‘*Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you refused!*’ (Luke 13:34). Now His patience had at last run out with her.

When we read Isaiah’s prediction that the ‘virgin’ will give birth to a child, “*Immanuel*”, we immediately think of Mary and Jesus. And this is as it should be.

But there is more to it than that.

What is not so well known is that this Isaian prophecy was actually fulfilled **literally** at the time of Isaiah. Then, 700 years later at the time of Christ, it was fulfilled **symbolically** - but perfectly. Whilst Isaiah, in the Holy Spirit, ‘prophetically foresaw’ the Blessed Virgin and Jesus, his reference was, for himself and his contemporaries, a far more down-to-earth and immediate one. Isaiah was about to marry a “*virgin*” in Jerusalem and she would bring forth a boy-child whom the couple would name “*Immanuel*”.

Remember that Immanuel’s birth was meant to be ‘a sign’ from God to King Ahaz with whom Isaiah had been conversing at the time outside the walls of Jerusalem (Isaiah 7:11). ***But what sort of sign for Ahaz and his contemporaries would have been the***

virginal birth of Jesus Christ, 700 years later! No matter that this wicked king of Jerusalem rejected the sign.

Whilst the point of this “*sign*” for us, with the hindsight advantage of the New Testament, is Salvation - the miraculous birth of the God-Child Jesus Christ - the point of it from Isaiah’s perspective was very much a chronological one. What the prophet was telling Ahaz and the people of Jerusalem was that even before his little Immanuel would reach the age of consent, “*to refuse evil and choose good*”, the Assyrian armies will have swept away Jerusalem’s northern enemies. Immanuel was not the only one in Isaiah’s family to serve such a symbolic purpose. “*I and the children whom Yahweh has given me are signs and portents in Israel*” (8:3,18), the prophet tells us. Then, in the next chapter, he goes on to say that he “*went into the prophetess [i.e., the former virgin, now his wife], she conceived and gave birth to a son*”. This boy-child too would be a sign for Jerusalem regarding the progress of the Assyrian armies.

Thus, in Isaiah’s mind, there would have been nothing miraculous about the birth of Immanuel. The virgin and Immanuel were of his own family. The prophecy was *literally* fulfilled in Isaiah’s day, but figuratively in Jesus’ time. For the Virgin Mary’s Son was not actually called “*Immanuel*”, but “*Jesus*” (Luke 1:31); quite a different Jewish name. However “*Immanuel*”, meaning “*God is with us*” can be applied to Our Lord as a most fitting title; and indeed it is far more fitting for Jesus, the God-Child, than for Isaiah’s son.

The ‘Holy Family’

Isaiah’s outspokenness before young Ahaz would not have endeared him to that monarch who became one of Jerusalem’s most evil kings. Though Scripture does not spell it out, there is the implication that Isaiah and his family eventually had to flee Jerusalem to escape Ahaz’s wrath. This would make Ahaz a forerunner of Herod (cf. Matthew 2:13-14). Here is the reasoning. Immanuel we are told, before he reaches the age of reason, would “*feed on curds and honey*” (7:15). What does that signify? It suggests that the family must have had to head north to the region that had already been devastated and depopulated by the Assyrian armies, where briars and thorns had taken the place of abundant vineyards, and where “*all who are left in the country will feed on curds and honey*” (vv.22,23).

It was undoubtedly during this sojourn in the north, in the Galilee region, that Isaiah would have uttered his famous epiphany: “*... in days to come the way of the Sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone*” (9:1). Here is yet another Scriptural example of a double fulfilment, firstly in Isaiah’s day, then during Christ’s childhood. Immanuel, dwelling in the region of Galilee, was a true type of the Christ child. And St. John the Evangelist in Revelation picks up this theme of Immanuel and his mother fleeing into the wilderness to escape the wrath of the ‘king’:

The woman brought a male child into the world, the son who was to rule all the nations with an iron sceptre, and the child was taken straight up to God and to

His throne, while the woman escaped into the desert, where God made a place of safety ready, for her to be looked after in the 1260 days (12:5-6).

This “*male child*”, the victorious One who rides the white horse, is the Christ victorious in His Passion and Resurrection (cf. 5:5). Pope Pius XII stated unequivocally: “*He is Jesus Christ*” (Opus Dei, *op. cit.*, 70). This is actually quite obvious from Revelation’s further description of Him (19:12-16):

*... the name written on Him was known only to himself, his cloak was soaked in blood. He is known by the name, The Word of God. From His mouth came a sharp sword to strike the pagans with; He is the one **who will rule them with an iron sceptre**, and tread out the wine of Almighty God’s fierce anger. On his cloak and on His thigh there was a name written: ‘The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords’.*

He is also Immanuel, “*God-with them*” (21:3).

It would appear therefore that the Book of Isaiah holds the key to the difficulty of identifying the apocalyptic Woman and her male child, and her having to flee into the desert. She, like Isaiah’s virgin, is the faithful ‘Virgin Daughter of Zion’ - virgin and mother - from whom a Son was indeed brought forth in suffering (the Crucifixion); but who rose triumphantly and ascended into heaven to be enthroned there. This Woman-church is then forced to flee into the desert (Revelation 12:6) for the duration of 1260 days (i.e. 42 months or 3 and a half years), no doubt in obedience to Our Lord’s Olivet command to His faithful to leave the city of Jerusalem on the eve of her destruction:

*‘So when you see **the disastrous abomination**, of which the prophet Daniel spoke, set up in the Holy Place (let the reader understand), then those **in Judaea** must escape to the mountains Pray that you will not have to escape in winter or on **a sabbath**. For then there will be **great tribulation** such as, until now, since the world began, there never has been, nor ever will be again’.* (Matthew 24:15-17,20-22; cf. Mark 13:14).

That this “*great tribulation*” refers to a pre-70 AD scenario is obvious from the mention of the “*sabbath*” restricting the movements of peoples in Palestine. All that Jewish legalism went right ‘out the window’ after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Our Lord challenges “*the reader*” to “*understand*” about the Abomination that Makes Desolate from which the faithful must flee. But it is really made easy for us because St Luke, removing all the mystery, tells us that this refers to the Gentile armies that will invest Jerusalem (Luke 21:20-22). These are the Gog and Magog of Revelation 20:8. St. John borrowed this from Ezekiel 38 and 39; the multi-nation armies of the ruling empire that attack Judea and Jerusalem. “*Armageddon*” (Revelation 16:16) probably refers to Jerusalem’s northern fortress of Har Magedo.

St. John picks up this command of Our Lord’s to flee when he writes: “*A new voice from heaven; I heard it say, ‘Come out, My people, away from [Babylon] so that you do not share in her crimes and have the same plagues to bear. Her sins have reached up to heaven ...’.*” (Revelation 18:4,5; cf. 18:2).

The 1260 days (i.e. 42 months or three and a half years) pertains to the period of the Jewish war in the era 66-70 AD. Now the Virgin Mary did not flee into the desert at this time in history, and for that precise duration of time; for She was no longer on earth, having taken Her place beside Her Son in heaven. So, just as in the case of Isaiah's virginal bride, all the details cannot be made to fit Mary. And yet the Woman of Apocalypse, in the far-sweeping gaze of the Holy Spirit, *does* symbolise Mary, as does Isaiah's "*virgin*".

Fr. Kramer was therefore quite wrong in his blanket assertion in *The Book of Destiny* (276) that: "*The woman of chapter twelve is not the Blessed Virgin Mary*".

Opus Dei - in common with the *AMAIC*'s efforts to uphold the "*Marian Dimension*" in the Apocalypse - is very emphatic about this Marian connection, based on Pope St. Pius X, ("*Revelation*", *The Navarre Bible*, 26):

As in the case of the parables, not everything in the imagery necessarily happens in real life; and the same image can refer to one or more things - particularly when they are closely connected, as the Blessed Virgin and the Church are. So, the fact that this passage is interpreted as referring to the Church does not exclude its referring also to Mary. More than once, the Church's Magisterium has given it a Marian interpretation. For example, St. Pius X says: 'Everyone knows that this woman was the image of the Virgin Mary ...'.

Less satisfactory, though do I find O.D's implication that Holy Spirit's text has trouble fitting a specific scenario (p.97. Emphasis added):

The mysterious figure of the woman has been interpreted ever since the time of the Fathers of the Church as referring to the ancient people of Israel, or the Church of Jesus Christ, or the Blessed Virgin. The text supports all of these interpretations but in none do all the details fit.

Such a misalignment I believe is forced upon those who fail to recognise in the entire Revelation a consistent historico- literal substratum of the era of the Apostles. All of Revelation's prophecies strongly reflect actual historical events in St. John's near future, though - as is obvious to any sound commentator - ***they are set in apocalyptic drama and clothed in poetic hyperbole.***

There will be no problem fitting details once one has the appropriate matrix; the matrix that the Holy Spirit has in mind.

Having said that, there is no harm in one's allegorising - as the *AMAIC* for example has so often done - the whole situation of the Woman fleeing into the desert from the great Red Dragon as the current banishment of Marian devotion to the desert of oblivion by the Modernists, or the rejection by Catholics of Our Lady of the Rosary and her message.

Unmasking the Whore, "Babylon the Great"

St. Augustine wrote his *City of God* about two cities - the camp of the just and that of the evil - from Cain and Abel right down to his own day *circa* C5th AD. Taking a lead from this, but adopting alongside it the perspective relevant to this article of the good and the evil woman - of divorce and re-marriage - I shall be contrasting Christ's Bride with the Devil's Harlot Woman.

The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah (Jerusalem) are typified in many Scriptures (e.g. Isaiah 1:8, Lamentations 2:13) as a Woman. In Ezekiel, Israel is likened initially to a helpless girl-child upon whom God took pity and nourished, and watched grow, and dressed in finery, taking her as His spouse, and eventually crowning her with queenship so that she became the envy of the nations (16:4-14). But, with the passing of time, she became infatuated with her own beauty; using her fame to make herself a prostitute (v.15); even going beyond the excesses of a prostitute (vv. 21, 33-34). As punishment, God handed her over to "*all the lovers*" [i.e., the nations], with whom she had been trafficking, but who had become sick of her filthy ways (v.28). These were to treat her in the same way as were treated "*women who commit adultery and murder ... stripped ... stoned and run through with a sword*" (vv.38,40).

1. Thus did Assyria do to the northern kingdom of Israel which Ezekiel calls Jerusalem's "*sister*". (Fulfilled in c.720 BC).
2. And so, God warns through Ezekiel, will the Babylonians do to Jerusalem for not having learned from her sister's mistakes. (Fulfilled in c.590 BC).

For the Lord Yahweh says this: I now hand you [Jerusalem] over to those you hate, to those in whom you have lost interest. They will treat you with hatred, they will rob you of the fruits of your labours and leave you completely naked. And thus your shameful whoring will be exposed As you have copied your sister's behaviour, I will put her cup in your hand.

The Lord Yahweh says this:

*You will drink your sister's cup,
a cup that is wide and deep,
leading to laughter and mockery,
so ample the draught it holds.
You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow.
Cup of affliction and devastation,
the cup of your sister Samaria,
you will drink it, you will drain it;
then it will be shattered to pieces
and lacerate your breast.*

I have spoken - it is the Lord Yahweh who speaks. (23:28,2931-33,34).

3. And St. John the Evangelist is right in line with this Old Testament tradition. In Apocalypse he prepares the Jews for the second destruction of Jerusalem, in 70 AD, in the same way as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel had done for the earlier destructions of

Israel, by the Assyrians, and Jerusalem, by the Babylonians. This time the Romans will be God's instrument of wrath to destroy the filthy city.

Revelation is absolutely saturated with references from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel; for, according to Fr. Kramer (*ibid.*, 3-4):

The Apocalypse is a prophetic book (IV.1), and it ranks St. John with the prophets of the Old Testament (X.11). The "mystery of God" had been declared by His "servants the prophets (X,7) The Apocalypse is so largely a restatement of the Old Testament prophecies, that some have called it a mere compilation. [My emphasis].

All the seemingly idiosyncratic imagery used by St. John in Revelation ("wormwood", "burning mountain"; "blood sun", "great hailstones", etc.) turns out upon investigation to be 're-cycled' imagery, in the sense that it has already been used - and its meaning established - in the Old Testament. Thus the above graphic image of Jerusalem (Ezekiel's) as the drunken whore holding the cup of wrath in her hand, is **exactly the same** image of Jerusalem that we find in the Book of Revelation (though separated in time from Ezekiel by about half a millennium); the harlot drunk with wine and holding a golden cup in her hand. St. John wrote (Revelation 17:4-6):

The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and glittered with gold and jewels and pearls, and she was holding a golden wine-cup filled with the disgusting filth of her fornication; on her forehead was written a name, a cryptic name: 'Babylon the Great, the mother of all the prostitutes and all the filthy practices on the earth'. I saw that she was drunk, drunk with the blood of saints, and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus

Here the martyrs of the Old Testament ("saints") are distinguished from those of the New ("martyrs of Jesus"); but they all suffered their fate in the one city. This city, this vile 'woman', is apostate Jerusalem! She is also called "the Great City" (e.g. Revelation 14:8; 18:10), and, again, "the Great City known by the symbolic names Sodom and Egypt, in which their Lord was crucified" (11:8). Derogatory names like "Sodom", "Gomorrhah" and "Egypt" were indeed code-names - or, rather, labels of contempt - applied by the Old Testament prophets to Israel and Jerusalem turned harlot. Thus Isaiah addressed Jerusalem's leaders: "Hear the word of Yahweh, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the command of our God, you people of Gomorrhah ... What a harlot she has become, the faithful city, Zion, that was all justice!" (Isaiah 1:10,21; cf. Jeremiah 23:14).

And St. John in turn picks up this usage for Jerusalem - **clearly Jerusalem because she is the only city of which it can be said "in which their Lord was crucified"** - and applies to her the mystery name of "Babylon", "a cryptic [symbolical] name" (17:5). In case we missed it, St. John goes on to tell us of this "Great City" that: "In her you will find the blood of prophets and saints, and all the blood that was ever shed on earth" (18:24). Now that description could not possibly refer to Rome despite what even many good commentators seem to think. For example:

- **Opus Dei** (*op. cit.* My emphasis) on Rev 17:1-19:10: “*This first section of the final scene begins with the depiction of **the city of Rome** (described as the great harlot, the great city, great Babylon), its punishment, and its connexion with the beast (the symbol of absolutist antichristian power personified by certain emperors: cf 13:18)*”.
- **Fr. Kramer** (*op. cit.*, 387-8. My emphasis): “*The name of the harlot was written on her forehead. Seneca (“Contro. V.i”) says that Roman harlots wore a label with their name on their foreheads. That would make this verse point to **Rome**, since this woman is the figure of the great city. St. Peter (I Peter, V.13) writes from Babylon, by which he surely [sic] means Rome.*

Note that Rome does not figure at all in the Old Testament until we come all the way down to its very last history, Maccabees (c.150 years before Christ), in which Rome is mentioned, but not in terms of St. John’s condemnatory: “*In her you will find the blood of prophets and saints, and all the blood that was ever shed on earth*”. Rather, Rome is spoken of most favourably, even eulogised, by the inspired Maccabean writer. Rome and the Maccabees actually formed an alliance (I Maccabees 8:1,12-16).

And obviously, from St. John’s description, “*Babylon*” cannot refer to any historically recent city. **It refers to Jerusalem!** In fact Our Lord himself told the Pharisees in what great city the blood of all holy men had been shed, and ‘*still*’ was being shed:

‘... you will draw down on yourselves the blood of every holy man ... from the blood of Abel ... to the blood of Zechariah ... whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar [i.e., of the Jerusalem Temple].

*I tell you solemnly, all of this will recoil on **this generation**. Jerusalem Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you refused! So be it! Your House [Temple] will be left to you desolate, for I promise, you shall not see Me any more until you say: **Blessings on Him who comes in the name of the Lord!**’ (Matthew 23:35-39).*

‘This generation’

There is a lot for us to chew over in this statement alone. For starters, here we encounter mention of that coming of Christ that has so baffled commentators, that seems to pertain to that generation. God, who had conceded to Israel a forty year probation in the desert under Moses (c.1400 BC), now again in the time of His Son will give about forty years (c.30-70 AD), a full generation, to enable the Apostles to gather in whomsoever is to be saved. And just as Moses, with assistance from his loyal priests, had to carry, cajole and exhort his people during the trying sojourn in the wilderness, so do we find St. Peter, with his loyal team of Sts. John, Paul, etc., doing the same.

- Thus **St. Peter**: *‘You must repent ... every one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ... Save yourselves from **this perverse generation**’. (Acts 2:38,41).*
- And **St. John**: *“I am writing this, my children, to stop you sinning; but if anyone should sin, we have our advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ ...”. (I John 2:1).*
- And **St. Paul**: *“The Holy Spirit says: If only you would listen to Him today; do not harden your hearts, as happened at the Rebellion, on the Day of Temptation in the wilderness, when your ancestors challenged Me and tested Me, though they had seen what I could do **for forty years**”. (Hebrews 3:9)*

St. Paul in fact most eloquently tries to lift the peoples’ minds above the earthly Jerusalem that is passing away to the heavenly Jerusalem. *“What you have come to is nothing known to the senses ...” (Hebrews 12:18, etc.).*

St. Peter again: *“... men with an infinite capacity for sinningThey may promise freedom but they themselves are slaves ... to corruption; because if anyone lets himself be dominated by anything, then he is a slave to it; and anyone who has escaped the pollution of the world once by coming to know our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and who then allows himself to be entangled by it a second time and mastered, will end up in a worse state than he began in. It would even have been better for him never to have learnt the way of holiness, than to know it and afterwards desert the holy rule that was entrusted to him.*

*What he has done is exactly as the proverb rightly says: **The dog goes back to his own vomit, and: When the sow has been washed, it wallows in the mud**”. (2 Peter 2:14,19-22).*

- And **St. John** again: *‘Write to the angel of the church in Sardis and say, “... I know all about you: how you are reputed to be alive and yet are dead. Wake up; revive what little you have left: it is dying fast. ... Repent. If you do not wake up, I shall come to you like a thief, without telling you at what hour to expect Me’. (Revelation 3:1-4).*

In this way many were saved, *“a huge crowd” (Revelation 19:6).* But *“the apostasy”* of which St. Paul warned (2 Thessalonians 2:3), and from which St. John was trying to hold back the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 1), and from which St. Peter and the other Apostles would have been trying to protect Judea and Samaria (cf.) was always working its way too - as it had with Moses’ generation of Meribah and Massa in the desert (Psalm 94), and would eventually result in mass destruction.

Thus I believe the above texts of the Apostles to be all **contemporaneous** witness and exhortation - not writings separated before and after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD! The people would be given a generation of 40 years to change, with the Apostles urging them not to fall back, to apostatise. Eventually the destroying angel would pass by

those who had been marked with the sign of the Lamb, that is the baptised who had persevered in their faith. But those who wore the mark of the beast (Revelation 14:10), the apostates, would be destroyed, and violently. This is exactly what our Lord had prophetically alluded to prior to his Passion, when - having had placed before Him by “*some people*” the examples of those slain by the Roman troops of Pilate, and others killed by a falling tower - He insisted: ‘*Unless you do penance you will all perish as they did [that is, by a violent death]*’ [Luke 13:1-5]. For at the end of the 40 years thousands upon thousands of Jews died violent deaths at the hands of the Romans, and with towers, missiles and stones falling upon them.

That applies to all wicked generations, including ours.

But let us once and for all get away from the idea that some modern-day Beast is going to implant 666 micro-computer chips in the foreheads of his followers. Might not the mark of the beast, like a Satanic aping of the *tau* marked upon the forehead by the angel in Ezekiel (9:4), have been invisible; a spiritual character that only the destroying angel discerns, to kill or to spare? Nor should anyone be living in fear of terrible storms of hail of unnatural size. The “*great hailstones weighing a talent each*” of Revelation 16:21 are the same as described by the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, eyewitness to the ultimate destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD (*The Jewish War*, 3.7.9, cf. 3.7.10. Emphasis added):

... catapults ... threw at once lances upon them with great noise, and stones of the weight of a talent were thrown by the engines that were prepared for that purpose, together with fire which made the wall so dangerous that the Jews durst not to come upon it.

Josephus’ description of this doomed generation, fittingly punished, completely backs up Our Lord’s numerous complaints about it being “*an evil and adulterous generation*”, (e.g. Matthew 13:39; Mark 8:12; Luke 11:29), and worse than Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:15; 11:24 Mark 6:11; Luke 10:12). Josephus wrote (*ibid.*, 5.10.5): “*Neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world*”.

Is there an analogous situation with the post-Vatican II generation - again one of history’s worst. Is its time of probation too running out?

Those of us who are blessed to have the splendid gift of the Catholic Faith need to be exhorters and encouragers like the Apostles were to their “*perverse generation*”, to save some at any cost (cf. Romans 11:14; I Corinthians 9:22).

“Must Soon Take Place”

Revelation is a book of urgency. The events it describes are to happen **soon**. We learn that when we start reading it at its beginning. Plato, in his *Republic*, stated an important maxim: “*The beginning is the most important part of the book*”, and this principle holds a special significance for the would-be interpreter of Revelation. “*Unfortunately*”, as Gentry rightly notes (*op. cit.*, 40), “*too many prophecy enthusiasts*

leap over the beginning of this book, never securing a proper footing for the treacherous path ahead”.

The key to Revelation is found in St. John’s beginning:

*This is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants what **must soon take place** Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because **the time is near**. (1:1a,3).*

Gentry comments (*ibid.*):

*Here - **before** the dramatic visions flash on the screen and the highly wrought imagery confound the reader - John provides an indispensable clue for interpreting his book: the events of Revelation “must soon [Gk. **tachos**] take place” (v.1) because “the time is near [Gk. **engys**]”.*

Again in case we missed it, St. John repeats this at the **end** of the whole drama:

*The angel said to me, ‘These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirit of the prophets, sent His angel; to show His servants the things that **must soon take place**’ Then he told me, ‘Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because **the time is near**’. (Rev. 22:6).*

Just as it would have been senseless for the “*sign*” for King Ahaz to have been something that would not occur until 700 years later, so would St. John - according to Robert Thomas (as cited by Gentry, 42) “*be taunting [the churches] mercilessly if he were discussing events two thousand or more years distant. God answers the anxious cry “How long?” by urging their patience only a “little while longer” (6:10-11). Revelation promises there will no longer be “delay” (10:6).*

The angel’s command to St. John not to seal up the scroll is also tellingly in favour of this interpretation. The prophet Daniel, **by contrast**, had been commanded by the angel to keep his “*words secret and the book [scroll] sealed until the time of the End*”, because the things he was shown were not to happen for a long time in the future - in fact several hundred years later, in the time of the Apostles’ generation. For Our Lord himself referred to the “*abomination that makes desolate*”, of which Daniel wrote, during His important Olivet Discourse when facing the Temple of Jerusalem:

We know from Josephus’ history that the Roman armies of Cestius Gallus that came up to Jerusalem and surrounded the City in 66 AD, and had virtually conquered it, suddenly, strangely, retreated. Even Josephus recognised the hand of Providence in this most unexpected turnabout. Many Jews, he said, fled the city at the time - and no doubt these included all those obedient to Our Lord’s Olivet warning. And Josephus is correct in seeing this intermission as only intensifying the pressure ultimately, so that with the return of the Roman armies under Vespasian and Titus the final destruction of Jerusalem, when it came (in 70 AD), would be a total one.

Thus would be fulfilled Our Lord's prophecy that *'Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles are fulfilled'* (Luke 21:24). St. John recalls this in revelation 11:2): *"But exclude the outer court [of the temple]; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months"*. As Gentry has observed (*op. cit.*, 66):

... the trampling of the temple in Ad 70 (Dan.9:26-27) after its "abomination" (9:27; cf. Matt. 24:15-16; Luke 21:20-21) ends the gentiles' ability to stamp out the worship of God. In Daniel 9:24-27, Matthew 23:38-24:2, and revelation 11:1-2, the "holy city" and its temple end in destruction.

But how do the "times of the Gentiles" relate to the forty-two months (Rev.11:12)?

Gentry ranges this period from spring of 67, when Nero sent Vespasian to put down the revolt to August 70, when the Roman breached the inner wall of Jerusalem, transforming the temple and city into a raging inferno. A period of forty = two months. (66). The *five months* of Revelation 9:5, which the **AMAIC** has likened to the Five First Saturdays, pertains to the period when the Jewish defenders held out desperately from April 70 when Titus began the siege of Jerusalem until the crescendo at the end of August. According to Gentry (61): *"This five months of the Jewish war happens to be its most gruesome and evil period"* (**Wars**, 5.1.1,4-5; 10:5; 12:4; 13:6).

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The Setting

Palestine, not the world, is the stage of the drama of Revelation, despite translations that tell us of Christ's judgment bringing mourning on *"all the tribes of the earth"* (NIV). Literal translation shows that St. John actually focuses on all the tribes of *"the land"* (Gk. *tês gês*), the well-known Promised Land in which the Jews lived. According to Gentry (*op. cit.*, 48), we should probably translate the Greek word *hê gê* as 'the land' rather than 'the earth' in the great majority of cases where this occurs in Revelation. I go to Gentry again (72. Emphasis added.):

After mentioning the redeemed/sealed of Israel in 14:1-5, John turns his attention to further judgements on the land by means of three woes (14:6-21) and the seven bowls (chaps. 15-16). Though the prophecies are crafted in dramatic hyperbole, they refer to historical events. For instance, consider the reaping of the grapes of wrath: "they were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia" (14:20).

*For compelling reasons, "the city" here appears to be Jerusalem: (1) John defines the city earlier as Jerusalem (11:8); (2) the "harvest" is in "the earth/land" (Gk *hê gê*; 14:15-19); (3) this judgment falls on the place where Jesus was crucified; "outside the city" (John 19:20; cf. Heb. 13:11-13); and (4) the Son of Man "on the cloud" (Rev. 14:14-15) rehearses Revelation's theme*

regarding Israel (1:7). The distance of blood flow is 1,600 stadia, **which is roughly the length of the land as a Roman province: The Itinerarium of Antoninus of Piacenza records Palestine's length as 1664 stadia.** This prophecy refers to the enormous blood flow in Israel during the Jewish war. Allow me to document this.

In his **Wars** Josephus writes: "the sea was bloody a long way" (3.9.3); "one might then see the lake all bloody, and full of dead bodies" (3.10.9); "the whole of the country through which they had fled was filled with slaughter, and Jordan could not be passed over, by reason of the dead bodies that were in it" (4.7.6); "blood ran down over all the lower parts of the city, from the upper city" (4.1.10); "the outer temple was all of it overflowed with blood" (4.5.1); "the blood of all sorts of dead carcasses stood in lakes in the holy courts" (5.1.3); and "the whole city ran down with blood, to such a degree indeed that the fire of many of the houses was quenched with these men's blood" (6.8.5).

The Burnings

The burning up of one-third of the trees of "the land" (8:7) reminds us of the Romans' setting villages on fire in conjunction with their denuding the land of its trees. Gentry [58]:

- Note what Josephus writes about the policy of the Romans: "he also at the same time gave his soldiers leave to set the suburbs on fire, and ordered that they should bring timber together, and raise banks against the city" (**Wars** 5.6.2).
- The Romans destroyed the trees in Israel for fuel and for building their weapons: "All the trees that were about the city had been already cut down for the making of the former banks" (**Wars** 5.12.4). "They cut down all the trees that were in the country that adjoined to the city, and that for ninety furlongs round about" (**Wars** 6.1.1; cf. 3.7.8; 5.6.2).
- Of Vespasian's march on gadara, Josephus writes: "he also set fire, not only to the city itself, but to all the villas and small cities that were round about it" (**Wars** 3.7.1.; cf. 4.9.1). Galilee was all over filled with fire and blood" (**Wars** 3.4.1.). vespasian "went and burnt Galilee and the neighbouring parts" (**wars** 6/6/2).
- When the temple finally burns, Josephus moans: "One would have thought that the hill itself, on which the temple stood, was seething hot, as full of fire on every part of it" (**wars** 6.5.1).
- And, of course, ultimately the whole city of Jerusalem goes up in flames so that as the Roman take the Jews captive to Rome, they relate that they are from "a land still on fire upon every side" (**wars** 7.5.5.)

"Babylon", the code name for the impious city of Jerusalem, was "ruined within a single hour". "They see the smoke as she burns" (Revelation 18:9,19).

Now the *'great tribulation'* of which Our Lord spoke is none other than the *'great tribulation'* of which St. John writes in Revelation (e.g. 7:14). These are not to be separated by millennia. No need to shift to the C20th to find the *"great tribulation"* - though Modernism is of course a modern-day version (in the spirit) of the religious persecution that the Jews were then suffering at the hands of their own people - the seven churches at the beginning of Revelation (1:9; 2:9-10, 13) were already feeling the strain of it.

And no need to go to Rome and Nero for a terrible persecution of the early Christians. On the eve of Nero's accession, there was a great famine that *"spread over the whole empire"* (cf. Matthew Revelation). *"It was about this time that King Herod started persecuting certain members of the Church. He beheaded James the brother of John, and when he saw that this pleased the Jews he decided to arrest Peter as well (Acts 12:1-3; cf. 11:27-29).* In fact one has to wonder about the so-called persecution of Christians in Rome by Nero. The Bible tells us that Claudius expelled all the Jews from Rome, and neither his nor his successor Nero's reigns were terribly long. What Christians were left in Rome for Nero to persecute? Is this a mistaken tradition? Was the Neronic persecution really the one about which we have just read about in Acts, after Claudius.

Many Fathers though that Nero was the Beast of Apocalypse, having shown that his name adds up to 666; the Beast's heads being the succession of Roman emperors.

And in Herod he would have found an appropriate ally. Thus:

... Herod, wearing his robes of state and enthroned on a dais, made a speech to them. The people acclaimed him with, 'It is a god speaking, not a man!'; and at that moment the angel of the Lord struck him down, because he had not given the glory to God. He was eaten away with worms and died. (Acts 12:21-23).

And no need to go to Rome for the martyrdom of Sts. Peter and Paul. I was interested to read in the Opus Dei commentary re the two witnesses of Revelation 11, that *"because the two witnesses testify to Jesus Christ and die martyrs, tradition identifies them with Sts. Peter and Paul ..."*. Some of the Fathers thought that they would be Enoch and Elijah, thought not to have died. Well they might be in the sense of coming "in the spirit" of these Old Testament characters.

The next thing we read in Scripture is Jesus' telling his disciples re the Temple that *'not a single stone standing here will be left on another'* (24:2), and then afterwards telling His four chief Apostles, Peter, Andrew, James and John, privately (the famous Olivet Discourse), about what would happen to Jerusalem. The Book of Revelation is Our Lord's revealing of all this through St. John now to a far larger audience than just the select four.

Revelation is a continuation of the Gospels and especially of the Olivet Discourse. *Why, then, don't commentators realise the obvious; that Sts. Peter and John are referring to Jerusalem; but under the cryptic name of "Babylon"?*

Why "Babylon", instead of "Sodom" or "Egypt"? There is a sad and biting irony in this choice. Whereas the Babylonians had been they who had destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem the first time round, now it will be the Jews themselves, nick-named

“*Babylon*”, who will be responsible for burning to the ground their own Temple. And this time it would be irrevocable.

Hear that, all you cultist loonies out there!

Admittedly, what makes the issue of identification somewhat confusing in Revelation is that the Woman is portrayed as riding on a Beast whose description seems to point to Rome. Commentators then take the whole package, Woman plus Beast, as pertaining to Rome, which city - according to tradition - did persecute the followers of Jesus. But we have already seen in the paradigmatical Old Testament cases of Israel and Jerusalem that *two* protagonists, not one, are involved:

1. The once just Woman turned Harlot; and;
2. Her suitors who have wooed her in the past, made her rich, but who eventually come to loath her, then turn on her and destroy her.

The two are not to be identified as one.

Now the same situation is to be found now in Revelation.

The Woman, Jerusalem, rides on Roman power, but is to be distinguished from the latter which will eventually cause her destruction. The Woman is Jerusalem; the Destroyer is Rome.

When was Revelation Written?

What has exacerbated this problem, I believe, is the conventional opinion that St. John wrote the Apocalypse in hoary old age in c.95 AD, long after Jerusalem had been destroyed. Hence many commentators are loath to see any relevance for Revelation of the final destruction of Jerusalem. Protestant and Catholic writers alike accept this late date of authorship; Thomas Foster having this in common with Opus Dei and Fr. Kramer. However, with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran, there has emerged a new scholarship of great expertise as typified by Fr. Jean Carmignac, that showed that New Testament literature, esp. the Gospels, was written much earlier than originally thought.

And the signs are that the entire New Testament pre-dates 70 AD.

I believe that there is abundant evidence in the Apocalypse to indicate that it was written early. In fact the reason that prevented my writing this article months ago was: *Where to start?* There is so much! [Hear, hear. You're telling me!]. My effort has been greatly assisted by my finding Gentry's preterist interpretation on the eve of commencing this article. The whole Book of Revelation is focussed upon the Holy Land and especially Jerusalem. The Temple; the golden altar; the 24 elders keeping watch in the north from where an attack might come (and Titus did in fact take Jerusalem at this its weakest point), the Sabbath restrictions, etc.

Apart from the late dating of St. John's composition preventing commentators from recognising the obvious, that “*Babylon*” is Jerusalem, it leads to other awkward anomalies. It is commonly believed that St. Paul had already completed his missionary activity and been martyred well before St. John wrote the Book of Revelation. Paul is given the credit for having established the seven churches to which John later wrote. This

view forces commentators into making such strange observations as Fr. Kramer's, that: "... *St. John could not have interfered in the administration of the churches in the lifetime of St. Paul*" (*Ibid.*, 7-8).

Oh, no?

Was Paul-Come-Lately greater than St. John the Beloved Disciple of Our Lord? St. Paul himself would tell us 'No'! Of his visit to Jerusalem after his 14 year absence, Paul tells us: "... *James, Cephas and John, these leaders, these pillars, shook hands with Barnabas and me The only thing they insisted on was that we should remember to help the poor ... (Galatians 2:9,10)*. St. John was by no means subservient to Paul.

All the Apostles had a hand in establishing the churches throughout Judea and Samaria - as Our Lord had commanded - and then to the ends of the earth, which St. Paul boasts had been achieved. And Our Lord told them that they would not have completed the rounds of all the cities in Palestine until He came.

We had now better look at that Coming

The 'Coming' for the Apostles

The Son of Man refers on various occasions to his '*coming with His kingdom*' in the context that it would occur whilst some of those present were still alive. (e.g. Matthew 16:28; Luke 9:27). Modernist writers, like Fr. Raymond Brown, presuming that here Christ could only be referring to the Second Coming, love to point out that, because it has not occurred to this day, Christ was prone to error, was not omniscient, and that the Apostles who had expected His coming in their day were deluded.

But the fact is that Christ refers to more than one "*coming*".

Only a matter of about a week after Our Lord addressed the above words to His disciples, there occurred the Transfiguration, to which St. Peter referred in later years in the context of "*the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ*" (cf. 2 Peter 1:16 & 1:18-19). At least, it seems to have been a kind of preview of the real thing.

The risen Lord tells Peter, in relation to John, '*If I want him to stay behind till I come, what does it matter to you? You are to follow Me. The rumour then went out among the brothers that this disciple [John] would not die. Yet Jesus had not said to Peter, 'He will not die', but, 'If I want him to stay behind till I come'*' (John 21:21-23).

The Apostles yearned for the "*coming*" of Christ. Was that the definitive Second Coming at the end of the world? I suggest not. Too far away. Rather they were yearning for a "*coming*" of His that would coincide with their martyrdom. Christ had apprised them of this. St Peter wrote: "*I know the time for taking off this tent is coming soon, as Our Lord Jesus Christ foretold to me*" (2 Peter 1:14). Presumably the Master would also have told St. Paul; for did He not '*show him how much he himself must suffer for My name*' (Acts 9:16).

Was this "*coming*" the kind of consoling heavenly visitation that St. Stephen Protomartyr experienced just before his death (Acts 7:56): '*I can see heaven thrown open ... and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God*' (*).

Anyway, there must have been a "*coming*" already in the days of the Apostles, or else Our Lord's words would not have been true.

