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Identifying Gog & Magog

The Great Battle of the End Times

by

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Introduction

Revelation twenty is among the most difficult passages in the Bible. Whole interpretative schools have grown up with names describing their particular approach to the chapter. Amillennialism, Premillennialism, and Postmillennialism describe these schools' particular interpretation of Revelation's millennia. Although disagreement exists concerning the nature and timing of the millennia, all agree that the battle of Gog and Magog immediately precedes Christ's eschatological coming in judgment upon world. If Preterists are to succeed in convincing others that Revelation is fulfilled, then they must have a firm command on the battle of Gog and Magog and be able to convincingly identify its historical referent. In this article, we will show that Gog and Magog was a symbol employed for the persecution under Nero and the Jews.

Old Testament Themes and the Prophetic Method

It will be helpful to our understanding of Revelation if we first survey the source of John's imagery and gain an understanding of the themes and method of the Old Testament prophets. The three major themes of the OT prophets were 1) the coming judgment upon Israel and Judah in which they would be carried into captivity; 2) the restoration of the nation to the land; and 3) the kingdom of the Messiah. Although

separated by several hundred years, prophecies about the return of the captivity and the nation's political restoration were often woven together with prophecies about the kingdom of the Messiah and the spiritual restoration of man in Christ. In fact, the gathering together and return of the captivity under Zerubbabel became a *type* of the Messiah, who would gather together Israel and lead them unto spiritual Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem.

Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be ***gathered together***, and appoint themselves ***one head***, and they shall come up out of the land...For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel ***return***, and seek the Lord their God, and ***David their king***: and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days. Hosea 1:11, 3:4, 5; emphasis added.

In this example, the first part of the prophecy appears to have Zerubbabel in view. In its immediate historical context, Zerubbabel was the "one head" that would lead the captivity out of Assyrio-Babylonian captivity. However, the prophecy has a *plenior sensus* (Lat. "fuller sense"), and looks beyond the return of the captivity unto Christ ("David their king"). As Zerubbabel gathered the captivity home to the land of Canaan, Christ would gather the true Israel into his kingdom by proclamation of the

gospel. Another example of this sort may be seen in Amos:

Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord. For lo, I will command, and I **will sift the house of Israel among all nations**, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth...In that day will I **raise up the tabernacle of David** that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will **bring again the captivity** of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. Amos 9:8-14; emphasis added.

This prophecy is especially poignant because it inserts a prophecy of the restoration of the Davidic throne in Christ (“the tabernacle of David”) in between prophecies of the coming captivity (“sifting Israel among the nations”) and the restoration of Israel to its land (“I will bring again the captivity of my people”). We know that the raising up of the tabernacle of David looked ahead to Christ because we have James’s inspired word for it in the book of Acts. (Acts 15:16, 17) The reason the prophets lumped together the return of the captivity and the coming of the Messiah in this way is that both were in Israel’s future and the former was a necessary precondition for bringing to pass the latter. The prophecies about Christ’s birth in Bethlehem, his flight into Egypt, his being raised in Nazareth, his rejection by Israel’s rulers, and his death, burial, and resurrection all required that the nation return from captivity. Thus, in bringing the nation back from Assyria and Babylon, God was fulfilling his promise of the Messiah.

The Return of the Captivity and Coming of Christ In the Book of Ezekiel

The imagery of Gog and Magog in Revelation is adapted from Ezekiel. Like other prophets, Ezekiel wrote about the coming captivity, the restoration to the land, and the coming kingdom of the Messiah. The first half of Ezekiel addresses the coming captivity and is laden with prophecies of wrath and lamentation; the latter half is devoted to the themes of national restoration and the coming of Christ. Ezekiel’s most graphic portrayal of the return of the

captivity is set out in his prophecy of the “valley of dry bones” (Ezek. 37:1-17): The nation was in captivity; the ten northern tribes carried away by the Assyrians; Judah carried away to Babylon. The temple was burned, the city lay in ruins. Ezekiel likened the nation unto a defeated army, whose bleached bones lay scattered across a vast plain. The question for the Jews of the captivity was did the nation have a future? The answer was, Yes! The valley of dry bones would revive and come together in a political resurrection of the nation:

Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off from our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Ezek. 37:11, 12

The prophecy of the dry bones would be fulfilled in the restoration of Israel to its land. Cyrus would allow the city to be rebuilt and the captives to return home. This happened in the great migrations under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. But Ezekiel’s prophecy didn’t stop with the return of the captivity; like other OT prophets it looked *beyond* the return of the captivity unto the spiritual restoration of man in Christ.

Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side...and **David my servant** shall be king over them. Ezek. 37:21, 24; emphasis added.

Like Hosea’s prophecy of “David their king,” David here is a symbol for Christ and speaks to the restoration of the Davidic throne that had been usurped by Nebuchadnezzar and the Gentile powers. However, Christ would not sit upon the throne of David on earth or the terrestrial Jerusalem, but in the heavenly Jerusalem above. Peter made this abundantly clear in the very first gospel sermon after Christ’s resurrection:

Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God has sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would **raise up Christ to sit on his throne**; he seeing this before spake of the **resurrection of Christ**, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are witnesses. Therefore **being by the right hand of God exalted**...For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right

hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Acts 2:29-34

Peter makes plain that the prophecies of “David their king” spoke to the resurrection of Christ and his coronation in the heavenly Jerusalem, where he sat down at the right hand of God. Premillennial hopes of Christ seated upon David throne upon earth are empty and vain; they embody the very hope that led the Jews to crucify Christ; for they looked for a national liberator, not a Savior who would deliver from the bondage of sin and death. When, therefore, Ezekiel and the prophets speak of David ruling over his people, we understand that they spoke of *Christ and the church*. The church is the restored Israel and kingdom of Messianic prophecy.

Ezekiel’s prophecies of the valley of dry bones and “David my servant” occur in Ezekiel thirty-seven; the prophecy of Gog and Magog occurs in chapters thirty-eight and thirty-nine. Thus, restored Israel (the church) under “David” is the historical and chronological context of the prophecy about Gog and Magog.

The Eschatological Battle of Gog & Magog

Ezekiel describes the great battle of the end time in terms of a pagan hoard that invades the land of Israel; a host so numerous that they ascend like a storm and a cloud to cover the land:

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, ***I am against thee***, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: ***Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya*** with them; all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the ***north quarters***, and all his bands: and many people with thee. Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. After many days thou shalt be visited: in ***the latter years*** thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but is it ***brought forth out of the nations***, and they shall dwell safely all of them. Ezek. 38:1-8; *emphasis added*.

Several points need to be made at this juncture. First, Gog has set himself as the enemy of God and his people and there is an historical account that the Lord wants to settle. When he says that “after many days

thou shalt be visited,” the prophet indicates that God has abstained from vengeance for many years, but that Gog’s day would come. Gog’s war against restored Israel was divinely permitted or ordained, and would provide occasion for judgment and vengeance against the people symbolized by Gog. Second, the invasion of Gog would occur in the *latter times*. This phrase speaks to the closing years of the world economy marked by the reign of sin and death. This places Gog’s attack upon restored Israel in the period immediately preceding the *destruction of Jerusalem* in A.D. 70, for the end of the mosaic age coincided with the end of the world order that obtained from the time of mankind’s fall. Third, the description of Gog’s territory mirrors that of the Roman empire. ***Ethiopia and Libya*** were Rome’s south-western boundary, ***Persia*** beyond the Euphrates unto the Caspian sea was its eastern-most boundary, and the “north quarters” coasting long the ***Black sea*** and the ***Danube*** unto the ***British isles*** were its northern-most holdings. Evidence that Ezekiel’s description of Gog’s territory answers to that of Rome is provided by Agrippa II’s famous speech attempting to dissuade the Jews from war with Rome, recorded by Josephus:

For all ***Euphrates*** is not a sufficient boundary for them on the east side, nor the ***Danube*** on the north, and for their southern limit, ***Libya*** has been searched over by them, as far as countries uninhabited, as is ***Cadiz*** their limit on the west.” Josephus, *Wars*, II, xvi, 4, Whiston ed.



Having established the time of Gog’s attack and the extent of his territory, it remains only to show *whom* he attacked. Ezekiel describes the objects of Gog’s invasion as those “brought forth out of the nations;” *viz.*, restored Israel under “David,” which is to say, *the church*. But if Gog’s territory answers to the Roman empire, and the time of his attack upon the church preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, then

what historical event must the prophet have in mind? That's right, the great spiritual battle that overtook the church in the first century. The battle of Gog and Magog is a symbol of the eschatological persecution of the saints by Nero and the Jews. This conclusion is corroborated by John's Revelation.

Gog and Magog in Revelation

In Revelation, the battle of Gog and Magog occurs after the defeat and symbolic thousand-year binding of the dragon in the bottomless pit. The dragon represents the embodiment of sin and death expressing themselves in the children of disobedience in the form of Leviathan, the world civil power at enmity with God and his people. The dragon first appears in Rev. 12, where he attempts to kill the Christ-child in Herod's slaughter of the innocents. (Rev. 12:4; Matt. 2:16-18) The child escapes and is later caught up to the throne of God. However, he first wages war with the dragon and his angels under the guise of Michael the Archangel (prince of angels). This was the earthly ministry of Christ, who defeated the power of sin and death by the blood of his cross (Rev. 12:11; Col. 2:14, 15), wresting the right of world dominion from dragon. Ascending to heaven, it thus became Christ's to rule all nations with a rod of iron. (Rev. 12:5)

When the dragon saw that he was defeated, he made war against the woman who bore the Christ child: not Mary, but the virgin of Zion, the mother church in Palestine. (Rev. 12:13) Following as it does upon the heels of Christ's ascension, this persecution is easily identified as the persecution that arose over Stephen, which St. Paul led under the commission of the Sanhedrin with the assent of Pilate. The dragon did not wage this persecution directly, but through its *alter ego* (Lat., *other I*) the "beast." (Rev. 11:7) The beast is the persecuting power of the civil government; it receives authority to wage war against the saints from the dragon (imperial Rome). (Rev. 13:2, 4) The persecution that arose over Stephen lasted three and a half years, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days (A.D. 34-38) (Rev. 12:6, 14); it collapsed with the removal of Caiaphas from the high priesthood; Pilate's leaving Judaea, and the conversion of St. Paul. This is represented by the earth opening its mouth to swallow the flood of persecution pouring out of the dragon's mouth. (Rev. 12:16) It is also symbolized by the beast receiving a mortal wound to one of its heads. (Rev. 13:3) In receiving the mortal wound to its head, the beast lost the power to persecute and symbolically went down in death to the bottomless pit (*hades tartarus*). (Rev. 11:7; 17:8) The dragon, which gave the beast

power, also went down to the bottomless pit. (Rev. 20:1, 2) Both the dragon and beast remained in the bottomless pit for a period symbolized by a thousand years. (Rev. 11:7; 17:8; 20:7) Greco-Roman notions of hades had it that the dead lived in hades a thousand years, after which they were born anew into earthly life. (Plato, *Republic*, Bk. X, 315-320; Virgil, *Aeneid*, Bk. VI, 734-769; Justin Martyr, *1st Apology*, VIII, Ante-Nicene Fathers, p. 165) The scriptures speak of the spiritual realm in similar terms, as essentially timeless, where a thousand years is as a day, and *vice versa*. (Ps. 90:4; II Pet. 3:8) This seems to be the significance of the thousand year internment of the dragon and beast; it points to the period during which they were "dead" in terms of their power to persecute the church.

Claudius was the "angel" that bound the dragon. (Rev. 20:1) All during Claudius' reign the church enjoyed the protection of law; even banishing Jews from Rome for rioting against the church. (Acts 18:2) St. Paul alludes to Claudius in his second epistle to the Thessalonians as "he who lets" (restrains). (II Thess. 2:6, 7) The persecution of the last day would not come so long as Claudius was upon the throne, repressing the mystery of iniquity and powers of persecution. When Claudius was taken out of the way, Nero would be revealed as the man of sin and son of perdition, and the church would be gathered in martyrdom unto Christ. John portrays this by the dragon and beast being loosed from the bottomless pit and the mortal wound to the beast's head having healed. John described the beast in Rev. 17:8 as the beast that "was and is not and is about to ascend out of the bottomless pit." That is, the persecuting power of the empire that suffered defeat by the collapse of the persecution over St. Stephen was about to manifest itself again, this time under Nero, whose name the beast bore. This is the point at which the battle of Gog and Magog begins:

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.
Rev. 20:7

"Satan" is a generic term signifying an *adversary*. The character which here in verse seven is called "satan" in verse two is called the "dragon." In other words, the adversary in this case was world civil power embodied in Rome, Nero, and the Jews. In Rome, the beast was identified with Nero, who was its driving power (Rev. 13:1-10); in Asia and other parts of the empire, the Jews, at the behest of their

leaders in Jerusalem, were the driving force. John portrays this by a harlot, riding the beast in a surfeit of blood and gore. (Rev. 17:3-6) In Palestine, the persecution was driven by the “false prophet,” the religious leaders of the Jews who bade them to make an inquisition against the church like unto the beast’s. (Rev. 13:11-18) The dragon and beast make war against the church by surrounding the “camp of the saints” (the church). But fire comes down from God out of heaven and consumes Gog and his host, and the dragon, beast, and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 19:20, 21; 20:9, 10) The harlot is also consumed. (Rev. 18) An angel calls to the birds of heaven to come and devour the carcasses of the slain. (Rev. 19:17, 18) This is a direct quote from Ezekiel and proof positive that the battle of Gog and Magog was the persecution under the beast, false prophet, and harlot. (Ezek. 39:17) Following the world-wide devastations of the last days, God renews the earth, in which the church reigns supreme with Christ. (Rev. 21, 22)

Conclusion

The battle of Gog and Magog was a symbol for the eschatological battle of the last days; the persecution under Nero and the Jews.

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The Early Days of Christianity

Book I

The World

Chapter I

Moral Condition of the World

The epoch which witnessed the early growth of Christianity was an epoch of which the horror and the degradation have rarely been equaled, and perhaps never exceeded, in the annals of mankind. Were we to form our sole estimate of it from the lurid picture of its wickedness, which St. Paul in more than one passage has painted with a few powerful strokes, we might suppose that we were judging it from too lofty a standpoint. We might be accused of throwing too dark a shadow upon the crimes of Paganism, when we set it as a foil to the lustre of an ideal holiness.

But even if St. Paul had never paused amid his sacred reasonings to affix his terrible brand upon the pride of Heathenism, there would still have been abundant proofs of the abnormal wickedness which accompanied the decadence of ancient civilization. They are stamped upon its coinage, cut on its gems, painted upon its chamber-walls, sown broadcast over the pages of its poets, satirists, and historians. “Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant!” Is there any age which stands so instantly condemned by the bare mention of its rulers as that which recalls the successive names of Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, and which after a brief gleam of better examples under Vespasian and Titus, sank at last under its hideous tyranny of a Domitian? Is there any age of which the evil characteristics force themselves so instantaneously upon the mind as that of which we mainly learn the history and moral condition from the relics of Pompeii and Herculaneum, the satires of Persius and Juvenal, the epigrams of Martial, and the terrible records of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dion Cassius? And yet even beneath this lowest deep, there is a lower deep; for not even on their dark pages are the depths of Satan so shamelessly laid bare to human gaze as they are in the sordid fictions of Petronius and of Apuleius. But to dwell upon the crimes and the retributive misery of that period is happily not my duty. I need but make a passing allusion to its enormous wealth; its unbounded self-indulgence; its coarse and tasteless luxury; its greedy avarice; its sense of insecurity and terror;¹ its apathy, debauchery, and cruelty;² its hopeless fatalism;³ its unspeakable sadness and weariness;⁴ its strange extravagances alike of infidelity and of superstition.⁵

At the lowest extreme of the social scale were millions of slaves, without family, without religion, without possessions, who had no recognized rights, and towards whom none had any recognized duties, passing normally from a childhood of degradation to a manhood of hardship, and an old age of unpitied

¹ 2 Cor. vii, 10; “Interciderat sortis humanae commercium vi metus,” Tac. *Ann.* vi, 19; “Pavor internus occupaverat animos,” *id.* iv, 76. See the very remarkable passage of Pliny (“at Hercule homini plurima ex homine mala sunt,” *H.N.* vii, 1).

² Mar. *Ep.* li, 66; Juv. vi, 491.

³ Lucan, *Phars.* i, 70, 81, Suet. *Tib.* 69; Tac. *Agric.* 42; *Ann.* lii, 18, iv, 26; “Sed mihi haec et talia audienti in incerto iudicam est, fatone res mortalius et necessitate immutabilian forte volvantur,” *Ann.* vi, 22; Plin. *H.N.* ii, 7; Sen. *De Benef.* iv, 7.

⁴ Tacitus, with all his resources, finds it difficult to vary his language in describing so many suicides.

⁵ See my *Witness of History to Christ*, p. 101; *Seekers after God*, p. 38. The ‘taurobolies’ and ‘kriobolies’ (baths in the blood of bulls and rams) mark the extreme sensuality of superstition. See Dollinger, *Gentile and Jew*, ii, 179; De Pressense, *Trois Premiers Siecles*, ii, 1-60, etc.

neglect.⁶ Only a little above the slaves stood the lower classes, who formed the vast majority of the freeborn inhabitants of the Roman Empire. They were, for the most part, beggars and idlers, familiar with the grossest indignities of an unscrupulous dependence. Despising a life of honest industry, they asked only for bread and the games of the Circus, and were ready to support any government, even the most despotic, if it would supply these needs. They spent their mornings in lounging about the Forum, or in dancing attendance at the levees of patrons, for a share in whose largesses they daily struggled.⁷ They spent their afternoons and evening in gossiping at the Public Baths, in listlessly enjoying the polluted plays of the theatre, or looking with fierce thrills of delighted horror at the bloody sports of the arena. At night, they crept up to their miserable garrets in the sixth and seventh stories of the huge *insulae* – the lodging-houses of the poorer quarters of London, there drifted all that was most wretched and vile.⁸ Their life, as it is described for us by their contemporaries, was largely made up of squalor, misery, and vice.

Immeasurably removed from these needy and greedy freemen, and living chiefly amid crowds of corrupted and obsequious slaves, stood the constantly diminishing throng of the wealthy and the noble.⁹ Every age in its decline has exhibited the spectacle of selfish luxury side by side with abject poverty; of –

“Wealth, a monster gorged
Mid starving populations:” –

But nowhere, and at no period, were these contrasts so startling as they were in Imperial Rome. There a

⁶ Some of the *loci classici* on Roman slavery are: Cic, *De Rep.* xiv, 23; *Juv.* vi, 219, x, 183, xiv, 16-24; *Sen. Ep.* 47; *De Ira*, iii, 35, 40; *De Clem.* 18; *Controv.* V, 33; *De Vit. Beat.* 17; *Plin. H.N.* xxxiii, II; *Plut. Cato*, 21. Vedius Pollio and the lampreys (*Plin. H.N.* ix, 23). In the debate on the murder of Pedanius Secundus (*Tac. Ann.* Xiv, 42-45) many eminent senators openly advocated the brutal law that when a master was murdered, his slaves, often to the number of hundreds, should be put to death. These facts, and many others, will be found collected in Wallon, *De l'Esclavage dans l'Antiquité*; Friedlander, *Sittengesch. Roms*; Becker, *Gallus*, E.T. 199-225; Dollinger, *Judenth. U. Heidenth.* ix, I, 2, It is reckoned that in the Empire there cannot have been fewer than 60,000,000 slaves (Le Maistre, *Du Pape*, I, 283). They were so numerous as to be divided according to their nationalities (*Tac. Ann.* iii, 53), and every slave was regarded as a potential enemy (*Sen. Ep.* xlvii).

⁷ *Seut. Ner.* 16; *Mart.* iv, 8, viii, 50; *Juv.* I, 100, 128, iii, 269, etc.

⁸ *Juv. Sat.* iii, 60-65; *Athen.* I, 17, 36; *Tac. Ann.* xv, 44, “quo cuncta undique atrocia aut pudenda confluent;” *Vitruv.* II, 8; *Suet. Ner.* 38. There were 44,000, *insulae* in Rome to only 1,780 *domus* (Becker, *Gallus*, E.T., p. 232).

⁹ Among the 1, 200, 000 inhabitants of ancient Rome, even in Cicero's time, there were scarcely 2,000 proprietors (*Cic. De Off.* II, 21).

whole population might be trembling lest they should be starved by the delay of Alexandrian corn-ship, while the upper classes were squandering a fortune at a single banquet,¹⁰ drinking out of myrrhine and jeweled vases worth hundreds of pounds,¹¹ and feasting on the brains of peacocks and the tongues of nightingales.¹² As a consequence disease was rife, men were short-lived, and even women became liable to gout.¹³ Over a large part of Italy, most of the freeborn population had to content themselves, even in winter, with a tunic, and the luxury of a toga was reserved only, by way of honour, to the corpse.¹⁴ Yet at this very time, the dress of Roman ladies displayed an unheard-of splendour. The elder Pliny tells us that he himself saw Lollia Paulina dressed for a betrothal feast in a robe entirely covered with pearls and emeralds, which had cost forty million sesterces,¹⁵ and which was known to be less costly than some of her other dresses.¹⁶ Gluttony, caprice, extravagance, ostentation, impurity, rioted in the heart of a society which knew of no other means by which to break the monotony of its weariness, or alleviate the anguish of its despair.

“On that hard Pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell;
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell.
In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,
The Roman noble lay;
He drove abroad in furious guise
Along the Appian Way;
He made a feast, frank fierce and fast,
And crowned his hair with flowers-
No easier nor no quicker past
The impracticable hours.”

At the summit of the whole decaying system – necessary, yet detested – elevated indefinitely above the very highest, yet living in dread of the very

¹⁰ See *Tac. Ann.* Iii, 55. 400,000 sesterces (*Juv.* xi, 19). Taking the standard of 100,000 sesterces to be in the Augustan age L1,080 (which is a little below the calculation of Hultsch), this would be L4,320. 30,000,000 sesterces (*Sen. Ep.* xcv; *Sen. Ad Helv.* 9). In the days of Tiberius three mullets had sold for 30,000 sesterces (*Suet. Tib.* 34). Even in the days of Pompey Romans had adopted the disgusting practice of preparing for a dinner by taking an emetic. Vitellius set on the table at one banquet 2,000 fish and 7,000 birds, and in less than eight months spent in feasts a sum that would now amount to several millions.

¹¹ *Plin. H.N.* viii, 48, xxxvii, 18.

¹² “Portenta luxuriate,” *Sen. Ep.* cx; *Plin. H.N.* ix, 18, 32, x, 51, 72. *Petron.* 93. *Juv.* xi 1-55, v, 92-100; *Macrobius Sat.* iii, 12, 13; *Sen. Ep.* lxxxix, 21; *Mart. Ep.* lxx, 5; *Lampridius, Elagab.* 20; *Suet. Vitell.* 13. On the luxury of the age in general, see *Sen. De Brev. Vit.* 12; *Ep.* xcv.

¹³ *Sen. Ep.* xcv. 15-29. At Herculaneum many of the rolls discovered were cookery books.

¹⁴ *Juv.* i. 171; *Mart.* Ix, 58, 8.

¹⁵ L432, 000

¹⁶ *Pliny, H.N.* ix, 35, 8.

lowest, oppressing a population which he terrified, and terrified by the population which he oppressed – was an Emperor, raised to the divinest pinnacle of autocracy, yet conscious that his life hung upon a thread;¹⁷ - an Emperor who, in the terrible phrase of Gibbon, was at once a priest, an atheist, and a god.¹⁸

The general condition of society was such as might have been expected from the existence of these elements. The Romans had entered on a stage of fatal degeneracy from the first day of their close intercourse with Greece.¹⁹ Greece learnt from Rome her cold-blooded cruelty; Rome learnt from Greece her voluptuous corruption. Family life among the Romans had once been a sacred thing, and for 520 years divorce had been unknown among them.²⁰ Under the Empire marriage had come to be regarded with disfavour and disdain.²¹ Women, as Seneca says, married in order to be divorced, and were divorced in order to marry; and noble Roman matrons counted the years not by the Consuls, but by their discarded or discarding husbands.²²

To have a family was regarded as a misfortune, because the childless were courted with extraordinary assiduity by crowds of fortune-hunters.²³ When there were children in a family, their education was left to be begun under the tutelage of those slaves who were otherwise the most decrepit and useless,²⁴ and was carried on, with results too fatally obvious, by supple, accomplished, and abandoned Greeklings.²⁵ But indeed no system of education could have eradicated the influence of the domestic circle. No care²⁶ could have prevented the sons and daughters of a wealthy

family from catching the contagion of the vices of which they saw in their parents a constant and unblushing example.²⁷

Literature and art were infected with the prevalent degradation. Poetry sank in great measure into exaggerated satire, hollow declamation, or frivolous epigrams. Art was partly corrupted by the fondness for glare, expensiveness, and size,²⁸ and partly sank into miserable triviality, or immoral prettinesses,²⁹ such as those which decorated the walls of Pompeii in the first century, and the Parc aux Cerfs in the eighteenth. Greek statues of the days of Phidias were ruthlessly decapitated, that their heads might be replaced by the scowling or imbecile figures of a Gaius or a Claudius. Nero, professing to be a connoisseur, thought that he improved the Alexander of Lysimachus by gilding it from head to foot. Eloquence, deprived of every legitimate aim, and used almost solely for purposes of insincere display, was tempted to supply the lack of genuine fire by sonorous euphony and theatrical affectation. A training in rhetoric was now understood to be a training in the art of emphasis and verbiage, which was rarely used for any loftier purpose than to make sycophancy plausible, or to embellish sophistry with speciousness.³⁰ The drama, even in Horace's days, had degenerated into a vehicle for the exhibition of scenic splendour or ingenious machinery. Dignity, wit, pathos, were no longer expected on the stage, for the dramatist was eclipsed by the swordsman or the rope-dancer.³¹ The actors who absorbed the greatest part of popular favour were pantomimists, whose insolent prosperity was generally in direct proportion to the infamy of their character.³² And while the shamelessness of the theatre corrupted the purity of all classes from the earliest age,³³ the hearts of the multitude were made hard as the nether millstone with brutal insensibility, by the fury of the circus, the atrocities of the amphitheatre, and the cruel orgies of the games.³⁴ Augustus, in the document annexed to

¹⁷ Tac. *Ann.* v, 6; Suet. *Claud.* 35.

¹⁸ "Coelum decretum," Tac. *Ann.* 1, 73; "Dis aequa potestas Caesaris," Juv. iv, 71; Plin. *Paneg.* 74-5, "Civitas nihil felicitate suae putat adstrui, posse nisi ut Di Caesarem imitentur." (Cf. Suet. *Jul* 88; *Tib.* 13, 58; *Aug.* 59; *Calig.* 33; *Vesp.* 23; *Domit.* 13.) Lucan, vii, 456; Philo, *Leg. Ad Gaium passim*; Don Cass. Lxiii, 5, 20; Martial, *passim*; Tert. *Apol.* 33, 34; Boissier, *La Rel. Romaine*, I, 122-208.

¹⁹ The degeneracy is specially traceable in their literature from the days of Plautus onwards.

²⁰ The first Roman recorded to have divorced his wife was Sp. Carvilius Ruga, B.c. 234 (Dionys. ii, 25; Aul. Gell. xvii, 21).

²¹ Hor. *Od.* iiii, 6, 17. "Raque in hoc aevo ques velit esse parens," Ov. *Nux.* 15. Hence the Lex Papis Poppaea, the Jus trium liberorum, etc. Suet. *Oct.* 34; Aul. Gell. i, 6. See Champagny, *Les Cesars*, I, 258, seq.

²² "Non consulum numero sed maritorum annos suos computant," Sen. *De Benef.* iiii, 16; "Repudium jam votum erat, et quasi matrimonii fructus," Tert. *Apol.* 6; "Corrumere et corrumpi saeculum vota," Tac. *Germ.* 19. Comp. Suet. *Calig.* 34.

²³ Tac. *Germ.* 20; *Ann.* xiii, 52; LPlin. *H.N.* xiv, *proaem.*; Sen. *Ad Marc. Consol.* 19; Plin. *Epp.* iv, 16; Juv. *Sat.* xii, 114, *seq.*

²⁴ Plut. *De Lib. Educ.*

²⁵ Juv. vii, 187, 219.

²⁶ Juv. *Sat.* vix.

²⁷ Juv. *Sat.* xiv, *passim*; Tac. *De Orat.* 28, 29; Quinct. I, 2; Sec. *De Ira*, ii, 22; *Ep.* 95.

²⁸ It was the age of Colossi (Plin. *H.N.* xxxiv, 7; Mart. *Ep.* I, 71, viii, 44; Stat. *Sylv.* I, I etc.).

²⁹ "Popoygraphia. Cic. *Att.* xv, 16; Plin. xxxv, 37. See Champagny, *Les Cesars*, iv, 138, who refers to Vitruv. vii, 5; Plin. *H.N.* xiv, 22, and xxxv, 10 (the painter Arelius, etc.).

³⁰ Tac. *Dial.* 36-41; *Ann.* xv, 71; Sen. *Ep.* cvi, 12; Petron. *Satyr.* I; Dion Cass. lix, 20.

³¹ Juv. xiv, 250; Suet. Nero, ii; Galv. 6.

³² Mnester (Tac. *Ann.* xi, 4, 36); Paris (Juv. vi, 87, vii, 88); Aliturus (Jos. Vit. 3); Pylades (Zosim. I, 6); Bathyllus (Dion Cass, liv, 17; Tac. *Ann.* I, 54).

³³ Isidor. xviii, 39.

³⁴ "Mera homicidia sunt," Sen. *Ep.* vii, 2; "Nihil est nobis...cum insaniam circi, cum impudicitia theatra, cum atrocitate arenae, cum vanitate sxsti," Ter. *Apol.* 38. Cicero inclined to the prohibition of

his will, mentioned that he had exhibited 8,000 gladiators and 3, 510 wild beasts. The old warlike spirit of the Romans was dead among the gilded youth of families in which distinction of any kind was certain to bring down upon its most prominent members the murderous suspicion of irresponsible despots. The spirit which has come led the Domitii and the Fabii “to drink delight of battle with their peers” on the plains of Gaul and in the forests of Germany, was now satiated by gazing on criminals fighting for dead life with bears and tigers, or upon bands of gladiators who hacked each other to pieces on the encrimsoned sand.³⁵ The languid enervation of the delicate and dissolute aristocrat could only be amused by magnificence and stimulated by grossness or by blood.³⁶ Thus the gracious illusions by which true Art has ever aimed at purging the passions of terror and pity, were extinguished by the realism of tragedies ignobly horrible, and comedies intolerably base. Two phrases ;sum up the characteristics of Roman civilization in the days of the Empire – heartless cruelty, and unfathomable corruption If there had been a refuge anywhere for the sentiments of outraged virtue and outraged humanity, we might have hoped to find it in the Senate, the members of which were heirs of so many noble and austere traditions. But – even in the days of Tiberius – the Senate, as Tacitus tells us, had rushed headlong into the most servile flattery,[38] and this would not have been possible if its members had not been tainted by the prevalent deterioration. It was before the once grace and pure-minded Senators of Rome – the greatness of whose state was founded on the sanctity of family relationships – that the Censor Metellus had declared in A.U.C. 602, without one dissentient murmur, that marriage could only regarded as an intolerable necessity.[39] Before that same Senate, at an earlier period, a leading Consular had not scrupled to assert that there was scarcely one among them all who had not ordered one or more of his own infant children to be exposed to death.[40] In the hearing of

games which imperiled life (De Legg. ii, 15), and Seneca (l. c.) expressed his compassionate disapproval, and exposed the falsehood and sophism of the plea that after all the sufferers were only criminals. Yet in the days of Claudius the number of those thus butchered was so great that the statue of Augustus had to be moved that it might not constantly be covered with a veil (Dion Cass. ix, 13, who in the same chapter mentions a lion that had been trained to devour men.) In Claudius’s sham sea-fight we are told that the incredible number of 19,000 men fought each other (Tac. Ann. xii, 56). Titus, the “darling of the human race,” in one day brought into the theatre 5,000 wild beasts (Suet. Tit. 7) and butchered thousand of Jews in the games at Berytus. In Trajan’s games (Dion Cass. lxxviii, 15) 11,000 animals and 10,000 men had to fight.

³⁵ Suet. *Claud.* 14, 21, 34; *Ner.* 12; *Calig.* 35; Tac. *Ann.* xiii, 49; Plin. *Paneg.* 33.

³⁶ Tac. *Ann.* xv, 32.

that same Senate in A.D. 59, not long before St. Paul wrote his letter to Philemon, C. Cassius Longinus had gravely argued that the only security for the life of masters was to put into execution the sanguinary Silanian Law, which enacted that, if a master was murdered, every one of his slaves, however numerous, however notoriously innocent, should be indiscriminately massacred.[41] It was the senators of Rome who thronged forth to meet with adoring congratulations the miserable youth who came to them with his hands reeking with the blood of matricide.[42] They offered thanksgivings to the gods for his worst cruelties,[43] and obediently voted Divine honours o the dead infant, four months old, of the wife whom he afterwards killed with a brutal kick[44].

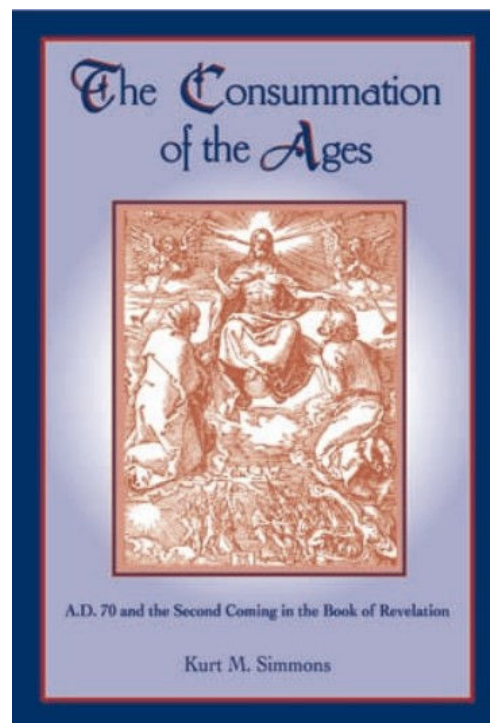
And what was the religion of a period which needed the sanctions and consolations of religion more deeply than any age since the world began? It is certain that the old Paganism was – except in country places – practically dead. The very fact that it was necessary to prop it up by the buttress of political interference shows how hollow and ruinous the structure of classic Polytheism had become.[45] The decrees and reforms of Claudius wee not likely to reassure the faith of an age which had witnessed in contemptuous silence, or with frantic adulation, the assumption by Gaius of the attributes of deity after deity, had tolerated his insults against their sublimest objects of worship, and encouraged his claim to a living apostheosis.[46] The upper classes were “destitute of faith, yet terrified at skepticism.” They had long learned to treat the current mythology as a mass of worthless fables, scarcely amusing enough for even a school-boy’s laughter,[47] but they were the ready dupes of every wandering quack who chose to assume the character of a *mathematicus* or a *mage*.^[48] Their official religion was a decrepit Theogony; their real religion was a vague and credulous fatalism, which disbelieved in the existence of the gods, or held with Epicurus that that they were careless of mankind.[49] The mass of the populace either accorded to the old beliefs a nominal adherence which saved them the trouble of giving any thought to the matter,[50] and reduced their creed and their morals to a survival of national habits; or else they plunged with eager curiosity into the crowd of foreign cults[51] – among which a distorted Judaism took its place[52] – such as made the Romans familiar with strange names like Sabazius and Anchialus, Agdistis, Isis, and the Syrian goddess.[53] All men joined in the confession ;that “the oracles were dumb.” It hardly needed the wail of mingled lamentations as of departing deities which swept over the astonished crew of the vessel of

Palodes to assure the world that the reign of the gods of Hellas was over – that “Great Pan was dead.”[54]

Such are the scenes which we must witness, such are the sentiments with which we must become familiar, the moment that we turn away our eyes from the spectacle of the little Christian churches, composed chiefly as yet of salves and artisans, who had been taught to imitate a Divine example of humility and sincerity, of purity and love. There were, indeed, a few among the Heathen who lived nobler lives and professed a purer ideal than the Pagans around them. Here and there in the ranks of the philosophers a Demetrius, a Musonius Rufus, and Epictetus; here and there among Senators and Helvidius Priscus, a Paetus Thrasea, a Barea Soranus; here and there among literary men a Seneca or a Persius – showed that virtue was not yet extinct. But the Stoicism on which they learned for support amid the terrors and temptations of that awful epoch utterly failed to provide a remedy against the universal degradation. It aimed at cherishing an insensibility which gave no real comfort, and for which it offered no adequate motive. It aimed at repressing the passions by a violence so unnatural that with them it also crushed some of the gentlest and most elevating emotions. Its self-satisfaction and exclusiveness repelled the gentlest and sweetest natures from its communion. It made a vice of compassion, which Christianity inculcated as a virtue; it cherished a haughtiness which Christianity discouraged as a sin. It was unfit for the task of ameliorating mankind, because it looked on human nature in its normal aspects with contemptuous disgust. Its marked characteristic was a despairing sadness, which become specially prominent in its most sincere adherents. Its favourite theme was the glorification of suicide, which wiser moralists had severally reprobated,[55] but which many Stoics belauded as the one sure refuge against oppression and outrage.[56] It was a philosophy which was indeed able to lacerate the heart with a righteous indignation against the crimes and follies of mankind, but which vainly strove to resist, and which scarcely even hoped to stem, the ever-swelling tide of vice and misery. For wretchedness it had no pity; on vice it looked with impotent disdain. Thrasea was regarded as an antique hero for waking out of the Senate-house during the discussion of some decree which involved a servility more than usually revolting[57]. He gradually drove his few admirers to the conviction that, even for those who had every advantage of rank and wealth, nothing was possible but a life of crushing sorrow ended by a death of complete despair.[58] St. Paul and St. Peter, on the other hand, were at the very same epoch teaching in the same

city, to a few Jewish hucksters and a few Gentile slaves, a doctrine so full of hope and brightness that letters, written in a prison with torture and death in view, read like idylls of serene happiness and Paeans of triumphant joy. The graves of these poor sufferers, hid from the public eye in the catacombs, were decorated with an art, rude indeed, yet so triumphant as to make their subterranean squalor radiant with emblems of all that is brightest and most poetic in the happiness of man. [59] While the glimmering taper of the Stoics was burning pale, as though amid the vapours of a charnel-house, the torch of Life upheld by the hands of the Tarsian tent-maker and the Galilaeen fisherman had flashed from Damascus to Antioch, from Antioch to Athens, from Athens to Corinth, from Corinth to Ephesus, from Ephesus to Rome. (For Notes, please see our web site)

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Thoughts on the Covering of I Cor. 11:1-16

The covering is an ornament and token of the woman's feminine and submissive nature. It is also symbolic of the fact that woman was placed under the authority and protection of her father and husband.

In the garden, the woman's hair was a sufficient covering. After the fall, clothing was added to both sexes, and the headship veiling was apparently added as a reminder of the headship of her father and husband. One of the consequences of the fall was that woman's "desire would be for her husband." (Gen. 3:16) This phrase appears to mean that she would desire to *rule over him*. The identical phrase occurs in Gen. 4:7 concerning sin's desire to rule over Cain, but he is told to rule over sin. Hence, woman would resist the headship of her husband because of the fall and the veil seems intended to remind and reinforce her of God's design for the race and family.

The veil also factors in for modesty; modesty not in the sense that the hair is "sensual," but in the sense of a meek and quiet spirit that does not seek to draw attention toward itself. There is something about the covering that complements godliness, shamefacedness, and submissiveness. It is no mere coincidence that the veil is a symbol of purity in a bride. On the other hand, try to imagine a veiled woman that is a CEO, or that goes to the public beach in a bikini, wears pants, etc. It is impossible. The whole tendency of the covering is to promote femininity, modesty, and submissiveness. It is as if it is a first line of defense against the long slide into immodesty, impurity and feminism. Thus, everything about the veil speaks to what God's woman is supposed to be.

We have no specific instructions regarding the size or length of covering. What is practiced today in eastern countries is not controlling, as customs come and go. Grecian woman covered the face, but there is no evidence that Jewish or Christian women did so. Paul's instruction is only that she cover the head, not face, neck, or shoulders. Nevertheless, it should answer in some degree to the woman's long hair, which it is intended to imitate. The only time she is required to wear the covering is in prayer, prophesying (teaching), and in public.

The husband is a woman's covering, but not the covering of I Cor. 11:1-16. The veil is a symbol of his covering and authority over her. Not wearing the veil shames her husband inasmuch as it is the same as renouncing his headship.

Paul (the Holy Ghost) did not include these verses in the Bible for no reason. This is something God wants obeyed for the good of his people. Christians all over the world practiced this until less than 100 years ago, when feminism began to creep into the west and women were given the vote, etc. Paul says "if any man seem to be contentious we have no such custom"...that is, we have no custom as the contentious man is arguing for. Elsewhere, Paul says those that are contentious are they that "do not obey the truth." (Rom. 2:8) Obviously, Paul is not condoning the contentious man in I Cor. 11; rather, he is condemning him for resisting his teaching on this subject.

Calvin the Prophet

"So if women are thus permitted to have their heads uncovered and to show their hair, they will eventually be allowed to expose their entire breasts, and they will come to make their exhibitions as if it were a tavern show; they will become so brazen that modesty and shame will be no more; in short they will forget the duty of nature... So, when it is permissible for the women to uncover their heads, one will say, 'Well, what harm in uncovering the stomach also?' And then after that one will plead [for] something else: 'Now if the women go bareheaded, why not also [bare] this and [bare] that?' Then the men, for their part, will break loose too. In short, there will be no decency left, unless people contain themselves and respect what is proper and fitting, so as not to go headlong overboard."

Seth Skolnitsky, trans., Men, Women and Order in the Church: Three Sermons by John Calvin, (Dallas, TX: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1992), pp. 12,13