

# The Synopsis

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## 1 THE REVELATION

### 1.1 Chapter 17

The characters of Babylon are first portrayed. Like the beast, she is only one thing in the judgment, but morally she is more important than all the rest. The general character is the great active idolatress that has gained influence over the mass of the nations; next, that the kings of the earth have lived in guilty intimacy with her, seeking her favours, while those that dwell on the earth have lost their senses through her pernicious and inebriating influence. This is the general idea first given, a character plain enough to mark the Roman or Papal system.

But more details follow. There was a woman, a religious system, sitting on an imperial beast full of names of blasphemy, having the form which marked it Roman. The woman was gorgeously and imperially arrayed, had every human glory and ornament on her, and a rich cup of prostituting yet gross idolatries in her hand. "Abominations" are simply idols; "filthiness of her fornication," all the horrible corruption that accompanies it. Her cup was full of them. She was in the desert; no springs of God were there. It was not, so to speak, God's land, no heavenly country. To spiritual understanding she bore on her forehead her character (yet one known only when spiritually known), of the great city of corruption, source of all seduction to men and of all idolatry in the earth: such was Popery. But this was not all. All the blood of the saints was found in her: she was the persecuting murderess of those God delighted in, and who bore witness to Jesus.<sup>1</sup> The prophet was astonished-for it was what the church had come to.

The angel then describes the beast on which she rode. It had been, ceased to exist, and then it comes up again from direct diabolical sources-comes up out of the abyss. The renewed Roman Empire, which had disappeared, is blasphemous

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<sup>1</sup>It is important to remark that formal religion, which rests on ancient claims as established, and which is left behind as to the truth by others who have received it, is the regular habitual instigator of persecution, though others may be the persecutors. So it was with the Jews, so in the universal history of the world. It always becomes false as regards truth, though it may retain some and important truths. The truths which test the heart and its obedience are not there.

and diabolical in nature, and in this character goes to destruction: yet all but the elect on the earth will be in admiration of it when they see the beast that was, is not, and shall be present. Of itself this marks the Roman or Latin Empire, only that it will reappear more formally. But Rome is more distinctly marked. It is the city of the seven hills. Nor was this even all. It was the existing authority in the time of the prophecy: five of its governing powers had fallen; one was there; there was then one yet to come for a short space, and then the beast out of the abyss, the last diabolical state of the empire, would appear, and it would be destroyed. The last however is not a new form; it is one of the seven, though an eighth. My impression is, that the first Napoleon and his brief empire is the seventh, and we have now to wait for the development of the last. The beast, though imperial, has ten horns, ten distinct kingdoms. They have their power, and for the same period, with the beast. But they all give their power to the beast, and make war against Christ, the rejected One on earth; but He shall overcome them. For, despised as He may be, supreme authority is His, and there are others coming with Him, not merely angels but called ones, His saints.

Details are then added. The waters are explained as peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues-masses of populations in their diverse divisions. Next the ten horns, the kingdoms which are associated with the beast, and the beast (for so it is to be read) hate the whore and eat her flesh and burn her with fire (first, take all her substance and fatness, and then destroy her); for they are to give their kingdom to the blasphemous beast until God's words are fulfilled. And then we are expressly told that the woman (not" the whore "-the last is her corrupt idolatrous character-but the "woman "), who as riding the beast was to be such, is Rome. All this chapter (17) is description.