

Mrs. Thomas Morgan,
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The King's Highway

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

"And an highway shall be there and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness."

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THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

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Some Observations on Revelation Thirteen

Students of Bible prophecy seem to stand in perpetual danger of trying to crowd too much significance into a particular time—segment of fulfillment. They tend to make too little allowance for God's perspective. Twenty-five years ago some preachers were bringing the League of Nations into their sermons on the Second Coming, precisely as they are now bringing in the United Nations. To some degree they were mistaken about the League of Nations, even as they may now be mistaken about the United Nations. Nevertheless, in one thing we need not be mistaken about either one of these movements as having prophetic significance: each in its own way and in its own day is the reflection of a trend.

It is this total trend of things that is set before us together with a picture of the consummation in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation. The chapter has details I shall not attempt to interpret and mysteries I am unable to plumb. At the same time it unfolds a process and drives toward a climax which, I am convinced, is of the utmost significance

I.

Observe, first of all, some of the broad characteristics of the chapter. One Bible expositor, in his exposition of it, gives it the title of "The Vision of the Two Wild Beasts." Verses one to ten unfold the vision of the first beast which rises up "out of the sea," and verses eleven to eighteen present the vision of the second beast, which rises "up out of the earth."

Concerning the first of these symbolical creatures John says, "And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." (v. 2). Concerning the second beast John declares, "And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast." (v. 12). It is obvious that in these and similar statements in the chapter, we are moving in the realm and atmosphere of government. The student of the Bible, and particularly the student of apocalyptic Scripture, knows that wild beasts are used as representative of governmental systems. In Daniel's vision there were four wild beasts: a lion, which represented Babylon, a leopard, which represented Medo-Persia, a bear, which represented Greece, and a beast of nondescript character, which represented Rome. Here, however, the symbol is a composite one. There

are possible reasons for this difference which cannot be discussed now.

The point to be observed is that the Holy Scriptures contain an amazingly significant revelation of what might be called the paradox of human government. On the one hand, they are "ordained of God." That is to say, they have a permissive place in the providence of the sovereign God. On the other hand, in the actual functioning of these human governmental systems God is almost universally ignored. Indeed, in our day he is increasingly defied. Hence human government, consummated as it will be in one totalitarian system, is doomed to frightful failure and collapse.

It is characteristic of beasts to look down rather than up. They have an earthward slant. That is precisely what is the matter with our vast political organizations today—they are of the earth, earthly. God is left out, and when God is left out governments invariably tend to assume to be as gods themselves. The state exacts an ultimate loyalty which is the very thing against which the early Church gave its voice even unto a martyr's death. Significantly enough, Christopher Dawson, the brilliant historical philosopher of our day, in his recent book, "The Judgment of the Nations," declares, "For lack of faith in God, the nations fall asunder and destroy each other. They try to be gods themselves, when they are but leviathans—sub-human monsters whose immense strength is guided by no spiritual power."

Let no one suppose then that there is anything inaccurate or inappropriate about the symbol which the Holy Spirit has selected to describe man's effort through the ages to govern his affairs and solve his problems without Jesus Christ.

And now a word about the relationship between the two beasts. John beholds the first one rising "out of the sea." Humanity cut loose from God as it is in its sinfulness is restless and mutinous. Hence the practical necessity of government. Government may be good or it may be bad, but the concept is one of practical necessity. Threading through all of the political machinations of men down the centuries is what the Scriptures call "the mystery of iniquity." Let's remind ourselves that it was already at work in the day of the Apostle Paul. He said so plainly. Through the ages this mystery moves toward the acquisition of more and more power, until at length its political authority is world-wide in scope and totalitarian in effect.

Curiously enough, it makes an alliance with apostate religion. That, I believe, is the real significance of the symbol of the second beast. It rises, not out of the sea, but "out of the

earth." The phrase would seem to suggest that it has its origin, not in the restlessness and chaos of humanity, but rather in connection with humanity's more organized and stable organization. How this paradox of a religious order working hand in glove with governments that are essentially godless may be brought to pass is well illustrated by certain developments that have already taken place in history and others which are unfolding before our eyes today. Think of the astounding tie-in that there has been between Roman Catholicism and powerful political leaders. Think, too, of what Joseph Stalin is now doing in Russia. He recently commended the practice of prayer to members of the Russian Orthodox Church. He is making shrewd use of that revived organization in the furtherance of his dictatorship over the lives of 170,000,000 Russians, not to mention the satellite states which he has now brought within the Russian orbit. Here is more than a hint as to the shape of things to come!

(This is the first of three articles on "The Shape of Things to Come" kindly contributed to The Highway by Dr. Rees.—Editor)

OUR EASTER OFFERING FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS

For several years now most of our churches have been taking a special offering on Easter Sunday for Foreign Missions. We come to you at this time asking that you make this year's offering as liberal as possible, for the need is great. Here are some of our commitments:

We have agreed to pay the remaining bills due on our Missionaries' Home at Hartland, for we feel all our people want it free of any indebtedness.

Grace and George Sanders are to be brought home as soon as passage can be arranged for them. They have been on the field for a long time. Brother George, I believe, has never been furloughed before. Surely we owe these young folk a year or two in the homeland.

The Barr Cottage at Beulah, which has recently become our property, needs extensive repairs to the roof. This will be a source of income to us later, but the repairs have to be made now.

These are some of the things which we have agreed to do, but there are others which need to be done, and which we want to do, but dare not undertake until more money is in the Treasury. For instance, they need a new school building and church at Altona, and a mission house at Louwsburg. These are not

(Continued on Page 8)