The Beasts of Revelation: Glamour and Maya

Zachary Lansdowne

Abstract

The Revelation of St. John, sometimes called the Apocalypse or Book of Revelation, is the last book of the Bible. It has been a mystery ever since it first appeared about 2000 years ago because it is written entirely in symbols. This article uses a psychological approach of interpretation that takes every symbol as representing some aspect of an aspirant who is on the spiritual journey. Using this approach, we show that the two beasts depicted in chapter 13 of Revelation can be interpreted as representing the concepts of glamour and maya.

Psychological Interpretation

The traditional approaches to interpreting *Revelation* could be characterized as "external-temporal," because they assume that the various episodes denote events that occur in the external world at definite past or future times. A few commentators, however, have used a psychological approach. For example, Helena P. Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society, made the following point: "The fact is . . . the whole *Revelation*, is simply an allegorical narrative of the Mysteries and initiation therein of a candidate, who is John himself."

Edgar Cayce, the well-known medium, made a similar point:

Why, then, ye ask now, was this written (this vision) in such a manner that is hard to be interpreted, save in the experience of every soul who seeks to know, to walk in, a closer communion with Him? For the visions, the experiences, the names, the churches, the places, the dragons, the cities, all are but emblems of those forces that may war within the individual in its journey through the material, or from the entering into the material manifestation to the enter-

ing into the glory, or the awakening in the spirit.²

When interpreted psychologically, the meaning that emerges from the *Revelation* is similar to the teachings of the Ageless Wisdom, such as found in Theosophy or the writings of Alice A. Bailey. Although Bailey did not give her own analysis of *Revelation*, she spoke highly of its value and accuracy:

In the *New Testament*, John, the beloved disciple, was privileged to gain a cosmic picture and a true prophetic vision which he embodied in the Apocalypse, but he is the only one who so achieved and he achieved because he loved so deeply, so wisely and so inclusively.³

Blavatsky and Cayce interpreted only a few symbols in *Revelation*, and neither attempted a verse-by-verse analysis of any chapter. Based on the psychological approach, we give a verse-by-verse analysis of chapter 13 and show that the two awesome beasts depicted in that chapter can be interpreted as the concepts of glamour and maya from the Bailey writings.

Glamour

he first verse in chapter 13 of *Revelation* is:

Rev. 13:1. And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.⁴

About the Author

Zachary Lansdowne, Ph.D., served as President of the Theosophical Society in Boston. His latest book: *The Revelation of Saint John*, which provides a verse-by-verse analysis of the entire *Revelation*, has just been published. A Commentary on the Book of the Revelation interprets standing on the sand of the sea to be the "detached state of observation." This quotation is an interpretation that a study group made based on Cayce's messages, so it is not from Cayce himself.

Bailey says, "Water is the symbol of the emotional nature," and so the beast from the sea is the adversary that the aspirant must eventually face and overcome on the emotional level. A Commentary on the Book of the Revelation says that this beast symbolizes "emotional urges for expression of selfish desires." Bailey uses the term glamour to denote the emotional adversary: "Glamour, in its turn, veils and hides the truth behind the fogs and mists of feeling and emotional reaction."

The vital body is an energetic counterpart of the physical body and has been given many other names: "biofield" in alternative medicine; "golden bowl" in the Bible (*Ecclesiastes* 12:6); and "etheric double" or "etheric body" in Theosophy. The vital body is discussed in several Hindu Upanishads, where its Sanskrit name is *pranamayakosha*, and it is called the "meridians" in Chinese medicine.

What are the seven heads of the beast? In yoga philosophy, the seven major chakras are the principal energy centers in the vital body. Each chakra is a center of authority, as Bailey explains: "Each of the seven major centres governs or conditions . . . the area of the physical body in which it is found." The seven heads are taken as the seven major chakras, because the numbers match and because a head has the shape of a chakra and is a center of authority.

Horns are symbols of power and dominion, since they are the chief means of attack and defense for animals endowed with them (*Deuteronomy* 33:17). Because desires are the emotional forces that move us into activity, the horns are taken as desires. What does ten mean? Ten patriarchs are mentioned before the Flood (*Genesis* 5), the Egyptians were visited with ten plagues (*Exodus* 7-12), and there are ten commandments (*Exodus* 34:28). The *New Bible Dictionary* concludes: "The number 10, therefore, also signifies completeness." ¹⁰

Accordingly, the ten horns represent the full range of desires. In addition, having horns with crowns means that fulfilling desires is the paramount goal.

Blasphemy is a translation of the Greek word that means slander, verbal abuse, or evil speaking. Although the English word means "contempt for God," the original Greek word is not necessarily concerned with God.

What does the name of something signify? John L. McKenzie says, "It is a widespread cultural phenomenon that the name is considered to be more than an artificial tag which distinguishes one person from another . . . but it is thought to tell something of the kind of person he is." The Bible often uses a personal name as an indication of the bearer's nature. For example, 1 *Samuel* 25:25 states: "for as his name is, so is he." A change in the personal name often indicates a change in the person, such as the change from Abram to Abraham (*Genesis* 17:5). Thus, the name of something could symbolize its nature.

Consequently, Rev. 13:1 has the following meaning: From a position of detachment, the aspirant studies his emotional nature and learns about glamour, which is the aggregate of his emotional reactions. Glamour controls the seven chakras and the full range of desires. It gives paramount importance to fulfilling desires, and is judgmental in nature.

Rev. 13:2. 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.

The beast in this verse is a composite of the four beasts of *Daniel* 7:4-7, which also come up from the sea: a winged lion, a bear, a four-headed leopard, and a beast with ten horns. *A Commentary on the Book of the Revelation* interprets the leopard as "treacherous," feet of a bear as "blundering," and mouth of a lion as "boastful." ¹²

What is the dragon? *Rev.* 12:9 equates the dragon with "Satan." The original Hebrew word for Satan means "adversary," which is the translation used in *Numbers* 22:22.

Charles Fillmore interprets Satan to mean "the deceiving phase of mind in man that has fixed ideas in opposition to Truth." Accordingly, the dragon is taken as illusion, which is the aggregate of false beliefs accepted by the mind. Bailey says, "*The Problem of Glamour* is found when the mental illusion is intensified by desire. . . . It is illusion on the astral plane." ¹⁴

Thus, Rev. 13:2 has this meaning: Glamour is also treacherous, blundering, and boastful. Illusion gives glamour its power of deception, controls the personality via glamour, and makes glamour the authority for judging the worth of whatever is perceived.

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Rev. 13:3. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

This verse depicts the false form of redemption offered by feelings. Robert Perry gives a related description: "We feel that the past wounded us and we would desperately like to heal those wounds. But the past is gone. It

cannot be changed. What, then, to do? We will bring the past into the present. We will put on a play that re-enacts the past. This time, however, we will change the ending. This time there will be a happy ending. We will be the hero, we will get the love and recognition denied us the first time around. All injustices will be rectified, all wrongs made right, and we will be redeemed."15

Bailey says that the "Solar Plexus Centre... is the outlet—if such a word can be used—of the astral body into the outer world, and the instrument through which emotional energy flows." In this verse, the wounded head is

taken as the solar-plexus chakra, and the "world" as the emotional, or astral, body.

Consequently, Rev. 13:3 has this meaning: The aspirant realizes that his solar-plexus chakra, under the influence of glamour, seems wounded by the past, but can also feel redeemed by the present. The emotional body, following the lead of glamour, desires external circumstances that engender this feeling of redemption.

Rev. 13:4. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make

war with him?

This verse parodies the praise of God found in such passages as *Exodus* 15:11: "Who *is* like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods?" Bailey writes, "Many good people today . . . deify their glamours and regard their illusions as their prized and hard won possessions." 17

Rev. 13:4 has this meaning: All desires accept without question the false beliefs that lie behind glamour and give it power. All desires act as though glamour were an infallible

guide, rather than something that can or should be overcome.

Rev. 13:5. And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

What is the meaning of 42 months? This period of three and a half years could be represented as the following sum: a year and two years and half a year. This period has its origin in *Daniel* 7:25, in which the power of evil is said to last "until a time and times and the dividing of time." Robert H. Mounce says, "The temporal designation of 42 months... became a standard symbol for that limited pe-

riod of time during which evil would be allowed free rein."¹⁸ In this verse, the period of 42 months represents the length of time that the aspirant suffers from glamour due to his own decisions.

Rev. 13:5 has this meaning: Glamour appears attractive because it offers selfaggrandizement and judgments of others. The aspirant will continue to give glamour its power as long as he believes that it is attractive and worth maintaining.

Rev. 13:6. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

Specialness claims that some people in the world are better than others. *A Course in Miracles* asks: "For what is specialness but an attack upon the Will of God?" A tabernacle of God is a dwelling-place of God on earth (*Exodus* 25:8-9). Paul, in 1 *Corinthians* 3:16, indicates that human beings are such dwelling-places: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

Rev. 13:6 has this meaning: Glamour's boast of privilege is a slanderous attack on God and God's nature, for all human beings are created equal and are spiritually united.

Rev. 13:7. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

Arthur E. Powell writes: "The causal body owes its name to the fact that in it reside the causes which manifest themselves as effects in the lower planes. For it is the experiences of past lives, stored in the casual body, which are the *cause* of the general attitude taken up towards life." The Bible refers to the casual body as the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 *Corinthians* 5:1). The saints of all religions are known for possessing and expressing wisdom. Within a human being, the causal body has the function of storing and expressing wisdom, and so the saints in this verse are taken as symbolizing the causal body.

The personality of a human being has many parts, namely, the mental, emotional, vital, and physical bodies. In this verse, "all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" refers to these parts.

Thus, Rev. 13:7 has the following meaning: Glamour distorts and subverts even the wisdom of the causal body, and it controls all parts of the personality.

Rev. 13:8. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Bailey says, "The elemental of earth . . . is the sum total of the many lives which form the physical body." Similarly, A Commentary on the Book of the Revelation considers earth to be a symbol of the "physical body." This meaning is justified by Genesis 2:7, which states that "the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground." Accordingly, "all that dwell upon the earth" refers to feelings that are identified with the physical body.

The name of a feeling is taken as its underlying belief, because that belief determines the nature of the feeling. The foundation of the emotional world is the set of all such beliefs.

The plane of divine ideas is a repository for the thoughts of God, and it is sometimes called the "buddhic plane," "archetypal plane," "plane of the intuition," or "world of ideas." In this verse, the "book of life" is taken as the plane of divine ideas, because a book is also a repository for thoughts.

What is the Lamb? In the Bible, a lamb is sometimes used as a symbol for innocence (*Jeremiah* 11:19, Luke 10:3). In this verse, the Lamb is interpreted as the soul, or higher self, of a human being, because the soul is the voice of innocence in our minds. Similarly, Cayce interprets "the Lamb" as "the mind, spiritual" and as "the Christ-Consciousness," both of which are synonyms for the soul.²⁴

Bailey says "the soul is consciously aware . . . of the thoughts of God" and it is "possible for the soul to act as the intermediary between the plane of divine ideas and the mental plane." This quotation shows that the plane of divine ideas is accessed by the soul, and so it is con-

sistent with the phrase "the book of life of the Lamb."

Thus, Rev. 13:8 has the following meaning: All feelings of identification with the physical body pay homage to glamour, yet such feelings are based on beliefs that are inconsistent with divine ideas. The soul can convey divine ideas to the aspirant, but the aspirant's beliefs, which are the foundation of his feelings, cause him to ignore or forget about the soul.

Rev. 13:9. If any man have an ear, let him hear.

In this verse, "hear" is a translation of the Greek word that sometimes means hear with the ear of the mind, or understand, as in *John* 8:43, 47 and 1 *Corinthians* 14:2.

Rev. 13:9 has this meaning: If the aspirant has the capacity to understand the following key points, let him do so.

Rev. 13:10. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

In this verse, killing is interpreted as hatred, as in 1 *John* 3:15: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." The sword is interpreted to be what *A Course in Miracles* calls the "sword of judgment." Thus, the message of this verse is similar to that of *Luke* 6:37: "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."

Biblical patience is a self-imposed restraint in face of opposition or oppression. For example, God is said to be "slow to anger" (*Nehemiah* 9:17; *Psalms* 103:8). In the context of self-observation, patience is taken as a self-imposed restraint on all reactions, such as fear or pride, that could interfere with self-inquiry. Paul, in 2 *Corinthians* 13:5, International Children's Bible, encourages this kind of observation: "Look closely at yourselves."

The "faith of saints" is interpreted as the perception of the divinity within others. Joel S. Goldsmith describes this practice: "When I look at a person, I must not look at his outer

human appearance and love that. I must look through him and realize that in the midst of him God is, and that God is living his life."²⁷ Bailey describes this practice as the "definite and sustained effort to sense the Presence throughout the Universe in all forms and in all presentations of truth."²⁸

Thus, Rev. 13:10 has this meaning: Whoever is angry with other people will be held captive by guilt. Whoever condemns other people will suffer from self-condemnation. Herein lies the wisdom of being detached from emotions and perceiving the essential divinity within other people.

Maya

Rev. 13:11. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

The beast from the earth is the adversary that the aspirant must eventually face and overcome on the physical level, because the earth is the physical body. Bailey uses the Sanskrit word *maya* to denote this adversary: "Maya is predominantly (for the individual) the aggregate of the forces which control his septenary force centres to the exclusion, I would emphasise, of the controlling energy of the soul." The beast's lamb-like appearance shows that maya is a false prophet in the sense of being a counterfeit version of the soul. Its two horns symbolize the two powers of maya.

Consequently, Rev. 13:11 has the following meaning: Next, the aspirant studies his physical nature and learns about maya, which is the aggregate of his compulsions. Maya is a false prophet with the powers of both glamour and vitality, and it embodies illusion.

Rev. 13:12. 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, whose deadly wound was healed.

Bailey distinguishes between glamour and maya: "In the case of glamour, the forces of a man's nature are seated in the solar plexus. In the case of maya, they are seated in the sacral centre. Glamour is subtle and emotional.

Maya is tangible and etheric."³⁰ Here, etheric is a synonym for the vital body.

Rev. 13:12 has this meaning: More specifically, maya has glamour's power of deception as well as the vital energy that causes the physical body and all self-images that are identified with that body to seek the false form of redemption offered by glamour.

Rev. 13:13. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

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10) represents maya...

times 10) represents

the symbol is fire."³¹ In this verse, "heaven" is taken as the plane of mind, and so "fire" represents thoughts. Bailey says that maya gives energy to mental illusion: "Maya is vital in character and is a quality of force. It is essentially the energy of the human being as it swings into activity through the subjective influence of the mental illusion or astral glamour or of both in combination."32

Thus, Rev. 13:13 has this meaning: Maya has the power of manifestation, because it can make thoughts come down from the mind and appear outwardly as physical behavior.

Rev. 13:14. And deceive them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

Bailey notes the close relationship between maya and identification with the physical body: "The average man . . . believes himself to be the form, the medium through which he attempts to express his desires and ideas. This complete identification with the transient creation and with the outer appearance is maya."³³

In this verse, an image of the beast is a fantasy of wish-fulfillment. According to *Proverbs* 6:16-18, one of the "six things doth the LORD hate" is "An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations." *A Course in Miracles* says, "There is no fantasy that does not contain the dream of retribution for the past."³⁴

Thus, Rev. 13:14 has the following meaning: Maya reinforces feelings of identification with the physical body by fulfilling desires fostered by glamour. Maya encourages fantasies of using the physical body for self-glorification. Each of these fantasies contains a dream of

retribution for the past.

Rev. 13:15. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

Bailey says, "Potencies produce precipitation."³⁵ Thus, a strongly felt fantasy precipitates a glamour from the emotional body down to the vital body, which means that it is transformed into a compul-

sion. The reference to killing in this verse is interpreted as a form of hatred, which is also the interpretation made in *Rev.* 13:10.

Rev. 13:15 has this meaning: Maya gives vital energy to any strongly felt fantasy, resulting in an impulse to act out that fantasy and to resent anything that blocks its fulfillment.

Rev. 13:16. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

The "right hand" is a symbol of strength, as in *Exodus* 15:6: "Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." The "forehead" is a symbol of mind or consciousness, as in *Jeremiah* 3:3: "thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed."

Rev. 13:16 has this meaning: Maya compels all parts of the physical body—whether minor or great, healthy or sick, voluntary or involuntary—to use their strength and consciousness to act out strongly felt fantasies.

Conclusions

Rev. 13:17. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

In ancient times it was widely believed that numbers are the essential elements of all things. For example, this doctrine can be found in Plato's *Timaeus* (53b) and in the *Wisdom of Solomon* (11:20). Bailey says, "The mathematics which underlie the construction of a bridge . . . are the bridge itself, reduced to its essential terms." Here, the mathematics refers to the numbers that characterize the architectural pattern, or blueprint, of the bridge. In this verse, the "number" of glamour is taken as illusion, because illusion underlies the construction of glamour and is the essence of glamour.

Rev. 13:17 has this meaning: The aspirant would not value external things unless he were affected by maya, or glamour, or illusion.

Rev. 13:18. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

Six is a numerical symbol of illusion, which can be arrived at in two ways. First, the dragon in *Rev*. 12:3 symbolizes illusion and has 24 features: 7 heads, 10 horns, and 7 crowns. According to ancient Greek numerology, the digits of a decimal number can be added together to obtain an equivalent number.³⁷ Thus, as Bailey points out, "the number 24 . . . in its turn equals 6."³⁸ Second, William E. Vine says, "six . . . sometimes suggests incompleteness, in comparison with the perfect number seven."³⁹ For examples, see *Job* 5:19 and *Proverbs* 6:16.

The number in this verse can be written as the sum of the three numbers obtained from its decimal expansion: "Six hundred and sixty and six" (American Standard Version). Here,

six represents illusion on the mental level. Sixty (6 times 10) represents glamour, which is the product of illusion and the desiregenerating process of the emotional body, because ten signifies completion of a process. Similarly, six hundred (6 times 10 times 10) represents maya, which is the product of illusion, the desire-generating process of the emotional body, and the energizing process of the vital body. Bailey speaks of "the Great Illusion, in its three forms of illusion, glamour and maya." Accordingly, 666 symbolizes the Great Illusion—the composite of illusion, glamour and maya.

This verse describes a principle of wisdom and encourages us to understand it. Such understanding might include Bailey's point: "A deep distrust of one's reactions to life and circumstance, when such reactions awaken and call forth *criticism*, *separateness* or *pride*, is of value." Such understanding might also include Krishnamurti's point: "Ignorance of the ways of the self leads to illusion; and once caught in the net of illusion, it is extremely hard to break through it. It is difficult to recognize an illusion, for, having created it, the mind cannot be aware of it."

Consequently, Rev. 13:18 has the following meaning: Here is a key principle of wisdom: illusion operates throughout the personality, pervading the mental body as false beliefs, the emotional body as glamour, and the vital body as maya. Understanding this principle implies deeply distrusting all reactions of the personality to life and circumstance, because illusion cannot even be recognized as illusion without the illumination of the soul.

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⁴ All Biblical verses come from the King James Version (KJV) unless stated otherwise.

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