

11:1 Καὶ ἐδόθη μοι κάλαμος ὅμοιος ῥάβδῳ, λέγων· ἔγειρε καὶ μέτρησον τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας ἐν αὐτῷ.
2 καὶ τὴν αὐλὴν τὴν ἔξωθεν τοῦ ναοῦ ἔκβαλε ἔξωθεν καὶ μὴ αὐτὴν μετρήσης, ὅτι ἐδόθη τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν πατήσουσιν μῆνας τεσσεράκοντα [καὶ] δύο.

In Herod's temple the outer court was marked off from the inner by "the middle wall of partition" (*to mesoitoichon tou phragmou*, Eph_2:15), beyond which a Gentile could not go. In this outer court was a house of prayer for the Gentiles (Mar_11:17), but now John is to cast it out and leave to its fate (given to the Gentiles in another sense) to be profaned by them.

3 Καὶ δώσω τοῖς δυσὶν μάρτυσίν μου καὶ προφητεύσουσιν ἡμέρας χιλίας διακοσίας ἑξήκοντα περιβεβλημένοι σάκκους.

There is no possible way to determine who they are. All sorts of identifications have been attempted.

4 οὗτοί εἰσιν αἱ δύο ἐλαῖαι καὶ αἱ δύο λυχνίαι αἱ ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου τῆς γῆς ἑστῶτες.

5 καὶ εἴ τις αὐτοὺς θέλει ἀδικῆσαι πῦρ ἐκπορεύεται ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτῶν καὶ κατεσθίει τοὺς ἐχθροὺς αὐτῶν· καὶ εἴ τις θελήσῃ αὐτοὺς ἀδικῆσαι, οὕτως δεῖ αὐτὸν ἀποκτανθῆναι.

6 οὗτοι ἔχουσιν τὴν ἐξουσίαν κλεῖσαι τὸν οὐρανόν, ἵνα μὴ ὑετὸς βρέχῃ τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς προφητείας αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἔχουσιν ἐπὶ τῶν ὑδάτων στρέφειν αὐτὰ εἰς αἷμα καὶ πατάξαι τὴν γῆν ἐν πάσῃ πληγῇ ὅσακις ἐὰν θελήσωσιν.

Whoever these two are, like Elijah and Moses, they have the power to call down rain or not, and to call down plagues.

7 Καὶ ὅταν τελέσωσιν τὴν μαρτυρίαν αὐτῶν, τὸ θηρίον τὸ ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου ποιήσει μετ' αὐτῶν πόλεμον καὶ νικήσει αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀποκτενεῖ αὐτούς.

Nothing less than antichrist will satisfy the picture here. As Swete puts it, "But his words cover in effect all the martyrdoms and massacres of history in which brute force has seemed to triumph over truth and righteousness".

8 καὶ τὸ πτώμα αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τῆς πλατείας τῆς πόλεως τῆς μεγάλης, ἣτις καλεῖται πνευματικῶς Σόδομα καὶ Αἴγυπτος, ὅπου καὶ ὁ κύριος αὐτῶν ἑσταυρώθη.

9 καὶ βλέπουσιν ἐκ τῶν λαῶν καὶ φυλῶν καὶ γλωσσῶν καὶ ἐθνῶν τὸ πτώμα αὐτῶν ἡμέρας τρεῖς καὶ ἥμισυ καὶ τὰ πτώματα αὐτῶν οὐκ ἀφίουσιν τεθῆναι εἰς μνήμα.

This delight of the spectators "is represented as at once fiendish and childish" (Swete).

In a country where burial regularly took place on the day of death the time of exposure and indignity would be regarded long” (Beckwith). See Tobit 1:18ff.

10 καὶ οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς χαίρουσιν ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς καὶ εὐφραίνονται καὶ δῶρα πέμψουσιν ἀλλήλοις, ὅτι οὗτοι οἱ δύο προφῆται ἐβασάνισαν τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

This is the reason (*hoti*) of the fiendish glee of Jew and Gentile, who no longer will have to endure the prophecies (Rev_11:3.) and dread miracles (Rev_11:5.) of these two prophets. “Such a sense of relief is perhaps not seldom felt today by bad men when a preacher of righteousness or a signal example of goodness is removed” (Swete).

11 Καὶ μετὰ τὰς τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ ἥμισυ πνεῦμα ζωῆς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσηλθεν ἐν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἔστησαν ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας αὐτῶν, καὶ φόβος μέγας ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὶ τοὺς θεωροῦντας αὐτούς.

12 καὶ ἤκουσαν φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λεγούσης αὐτοῖς· ἀνάβατε ὦ δε. καὶ ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ, καὶ ἐθεώρησαν αὐτοὺς οἱ ἐχθροὶ αὐτῶν.

13 Καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐγένετο σεισμὸς μέγας καὶ τὸ δέκατον τῆς πόλεως ἐπεσεν καὶ ἀπεκτάνθησαν ἐν τῷ σεισμῷ ὀνόματα ἀνθρώπων χιλιάδες ἑπτὰ καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ἔμβοβοι ἐγένοντο καὶ ἔδωκαν δόξαν τῷ θεῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

14 Ἡ οὐαὶ ἡ δευτέρα ἀπηλθεν· ἰδοὺ ἡ οὐαὶ ἡ τρίτη ἔρχεται ταχύ.

15 Καὶ ὁ ἕβδομος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ ἐγένοντο φωναὶ μεγάλαι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λέγοντες· ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ κόσμου τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, καὶ βασιλεύσει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

This is the certain and glorious outcome of the age-long struggle against Satan, who wields the kingdom of the world which he offered to Christ on the mountain for one act of worship. But Jesus scorned partnership with Satan in the rule of the world, and chose war, war up to the hilt and to the end. Now the climax has come with Christ as Conqueror of the kingdom of this world for his Father. This is the crowning lesson of the Apocalypse.

16 Καὶ οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι [οἱ] ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενοι ἐπὶ τοὺς θρόνους αὐτῶν ἔπεσαν ἐπὶ τὰ πρόσωπα αὐτῶν καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ θεῷ

17 λέγοντες· εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν, ὅτι εἴληφας τὴν δύναμίν σου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐβασίλευσας.

18 καὶ τὰ ἔθνη ὠργίσθησαν, καὶ ἦλθεν ἡ ὀργή σου καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῶν νεκρῶν κριθῆναι καὶ δοῦναι τὸν μισθὸν τοῖς δούλοις σου τοῖς προφήταις καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις καὶ τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά σου, τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς μεγάλους, καὶ διαφθεῖραι τοὺς διαφθείροντας τὴν γῆν.

19 Καὶ ἠνοίγη ὁ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ὤφθη ἡ κιβωτὸς τῆς διαθήκης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ ναῷ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐγένοντο ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ καὶ σεισμὸς καὶ χάλαζα μεγάλη.

12:1 Καὶ σημεῖον μέγα ὄφθη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, γυνὴ περιβεβλημένη τὸν ἥλιον, καὶ ἡ σελήνη ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτῆς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς στέφανος ἀστέρων δώδεκα,

John may have in mind Isa_7:14 (Mat_1:23; Luk_1:31) as well as Mic_4:10; Isa_26:17.; Isa_66:7.

2 καὶ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα, καὶ κράζει ὠδίνουσα καὶ βασανιζομένη τεκεῖν.
3 καὶ ὄφθη ἄλλο σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἰδοὺ δράκων μέγας πυρρὸς ἔχων κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ἑπτὰ διαδήματα,

drakōn megas purros. Homer uses this old word (probably from *derkomai*, to see clearly) for a great monster with three heads coiled like a serpent that ate poisonous herbs. The word occurs also in Hesiod, Pindar, Eschylus. The Babylonians feared a seven-headed hydra and Typhon was the Egyptian dragon who persecuted Osiris. *hepta diadēmata.* Old word from *diadeō* (to bind around), the blue band marked with white with which Persian kings used to bind on the tiara, so a royal crown in contrast with *stephanos* (chaplet or wreath like the Latin *corona*).

4 καὶ ἡ οὐρὰ αὐτοῦ σύρει τὸ τρίτον τῶν ἀστέρων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἔβαλεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν γῆν. Καὶ ὁ δράκων ἔστηκεν ἐνώπιον τῆς γυναικὸς τῆς μελλούσης τεκεῖν, ἵνα ὅταν τέκη τὸ τέκνον αὐτῆς καταφάγη.
5 καὶ ἔτεκεν υἱὸν ἄρσεν, ὃς μέλλει ποιμαίνειν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ. καὶ ἠρπάσθη τὸ τέκνον αὐτῆς πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ πρὸς τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ.

hērpasthē. First aorist passive indicative of *harpazō*, old verb for seizing or snatching away, as in Joh_10:12, here alone in the Apocalypse. Reference to the ascension of Christ, with omission of the ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ because he is here simply showing that “the Dragon’s vigilance was futile” (Swete). “The Messiah, so far from being destroyed, is caught up to a share in God’s throne” (Beckwith).

6 καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἔφυγεν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον, ὅπου ἔχει ἐκεῖ τόπον ἡτοιμασμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα ἐκεῖ τρέψωσιν αὐτὴν ἡμέρας χιλίας διακοσίας ἐξήκοντα.

ephugen eis tēn erēmon. Here, of course, not Mary, but “the ideal woman” (God’s people) of the preceding verses, who fled under persecution of the dragon.

7 Καὶ ἐγένετο πόλεμος ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ Μιχαὴλ καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ τοῦ πολεμῆσαι μετὰ τοῦ δράκοντος. καὶ ὁ δράκων ἐπολέμησεν καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ,

8 καὶ οὐκ ἴσχυσεν οὐδὲ τόπος εὐρέθη αὐτῶν ἔτι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ.

The dragon is finally expelled from heaven (cf. Job_1:6), though to us it seems a difficult conception to think of Satan having had access to heaven.

9 καὶ ἐβλήθη ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας, ὁ ὄφης ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς, ὁ πλανῶν τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην, ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ οἱ ἀγγελοὶ αὐτοῦ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἐβλήθησαν.

10 καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λέγουσαν· ἄρτι ἐγένετο ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐβλήθη ὁ κατήγωρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν, ὁ κατηγορῶν αὐτοὺς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός.

ho katēgōr. The regular form, *katēgoros*, occurs in Joh_8:10; Act_23:30, Act_23:35; Act_25:16, Act_25:18 and in many MSS. here in Rev_12:10, but A reads *katēgōr*, which Westcott and Hort accept. It was once considered a Greek transliteration of a Hebrew word, but Deissmann (*Light*, etc., p. 93f.) quotes it from a vernacular magical papyrus of the fourth century a.d. with no sign of Jewish or Christian influence, just as *diakōn* appears as a vernacular form of *diakonos*. Only here is the word applied to Satan in the N.T. In late Judaism Satan is the accuser, and Michael the defender, of the faithful.

11 καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐνίκησαν αὐτὸν διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν καὶ οὐκ ἠγάπησαν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν ἄχρι θανάτου.

They did resist “unto blood” (*mechris haimatos* Heb_12:4) and did not put their own lives before loyalty to Christ.

12 διὰ τοῦτο εὐφραίνεσθε, [οἱ] οὐρανοὶ καὶ οἱ ἐν αὐτοῖς σκηνοῦντες. οὐαὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν, ὅτι κατέβη ὁ διάβολος πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔχων θυμὸν μέγαν, εἰδὼς ὅτι ὀλίγον καιρὸν ἔχει.

The devil’s departure from his warfare in the heavens reveals to him that his time for doing harm to men is limited, and hence his great wrath (*thumon*, boiling rage).

13 Καὶ ὅτε εἶδεν ὁ δράκων ὅτι ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν, ἐδίωξεν τὴν γυναῖκα ἣτις ἔτεκεν τὸν ἄρσενά.

14 καὶ ἐδόθησαν τῇ γυναικὶ αἱ δύο πτέρυγες τοῦ ἀετοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου, ἵνα πέτηται εἰς τὴν ἔρημον εἰς τὸν τόπον αὐτῆς, ὅπου τρέφεται ἐκεῖ καιρὸν καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἡμισυ καιροῦ ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ ὄφεως.

“To the end of the present order the Church dwells in the wilderness” (Swete), and yet we must carry on for Christ.

15 καὶ ἔβαλεν ὁ ὄφης ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ὀπίσω τῆς γυναικὸς ὕδωρ ὡς ποταμόν, ἵνα αὐτὴν ποταμοφόρητον ποιήσῃ.

16 καὶ ἐβοήθησεν ἡ γῆ τῇ γυναικὶ καὶ ἠνοιξεν ἡ γῆ τὸ στόμα αὐτῆς καὶ κατέπιεν τὸν ποταμὸν ὃν ἔβαλεν ὁ δράκων ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ.

17 καὶ ὠργίσθη ὁ δράκων ἐπὶ τῇ γυναικὶ καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ.

The devil carries on relentless war with all those “which keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus”

13:1 Καὶ ἐστάθη ἐπὶ τὴν ἄμμον τῆς θαλάσσης. Καὶ εἶδον ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον, ἔχον κέρατα δέκα καὶ κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κεράτων αὐτοῦ δέκα διαδήματα καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ὀνόματα βλασφημίας.

The imagery comes from Dan_7:3. See also Rev_17:8. This “wild beast from the sea,” as in Dan_7:17, Dan_7:23, is a vast empire used in the interest of brute force. This beast, like the dragon (Rev_12:3), has ten horns and seven heads, but the horns are crowned, not the heads. The Roman Empire seems to be meant here (Rev_17:9, Rev_17:12). On “diadems” (*diadēmata*) see Rev_12:3, only ten here, not seven as there. *onomata blasphemias*). See Rev_17:3 for this same phrase. The meaning is made plain by the blasphemous titles assumed by the Roman emperors in the first and second centuries, as shown by the inscriptions in Ephesus, which have *theos* constantly applied to them.

2 καὶ τὸ θηρίον ὃ εἶδον ἦν ὅμοιον παρδάλει καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὡς ἄρκου καὶ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ὡς στόμα λέοντος. καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ δράκων τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην.

3 καὶ μίαν ἐκ τῶν κεφαλῶν αὐτοῦ ὡς ἐσφαγμένην εἰς θάνατον, καὶ ἡ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ ἐθεραπεύθη. Καὶ ἐθαυμάσθη ὅλη ἡ γῆ ὀπίσω τοῦ θηρίου

“The stroke of death” (that led to death). Apparently refers to the death of Nero in June 68 a.d. by his own hand. But after his death pretenders arose claiming to be Nero *redivivus* even as late as 89 (Tacitus, *Hist.* i. 78, ii. 8, etc.). John seems to regard Domitian as Nero over again in the persecutions carried on by him.

4 καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ δράκοντι, ὅτι ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν τῷ θηρίῳ, καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ θηρίῳ λέγοντες· τίς ὅμοιος τῷ θηρίῳ καὶ τίς δύναται πολεμῆσαι μετ’ αὐτοῦ;

Emperor-worship, like all idolatry, was devil-worship. The same thing is true today about self-worship (humanism or any other form of it).

5 Καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ στόμα λαλοῦν μεγάλα καὶ βλασφημίας καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία ποιῆσαι μῆνας τεσσεράκοντα [καὶ] δύο.

6 καὶ ἤνοιξεν τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ εἰς βλασφημίας πρὸς τὸν θεὸν βλασφημῆσαι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν σκηνὴν αὐτοῦ, τοὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ σκηνοῦντας.

The Roman emperors blasphemously assumed divine names in public documents.

7 καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ νικῆσαι αὐτούς, καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία ἐπὶ πᾶσαν φυλὴν καὶ λαὸν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ ἔθνος.

8 καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, οὗ οὐ γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου τοῦ ἐσφαγμένου ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.

9 Εἴ τις ἔχει οὖς ἀκουσάτω.

10 εἴ τις εἰς αἰχμαλωσίαν, εἰς αἰχμαλωσίαν ὑπάγει· εἴ τις ἐν μαχαίρῃ ἀποκτανθῆναι αὐτὸν ἐν μαχαίρῃ ἀποκτανθῆναι. Ὧδέ ἐστὶν ἡ ὑπομονὴ καὶ ἡ πίστις τῶν ἁγίων.

Condition of first class.

11 Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλο θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς γῆς, καὶ εἶχεν κέρατα δύο ὅμοια ἀρνίῳ καὶ ἐλάλει ὡς δράκων.

Swete thinks that he had the roar of a dragon with all the looks of a lamb (weakness and innocence). Cf. the wolves in sheep's clothing (Mat_7:15).

12 καὶ τὴν ἐξουσίαν τοῦ πρώτου θηρίου πᾶσαν ποιεῖ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, καὶ ποιεῖ τὴν γῆν καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ κατοικοῦντας ἵνα προσκυνήσουσιν τὸ θηρίον τὸ πρῶτον, οὗ ἐθεραπεύθη ἡ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ.

13 καὶ ποιεῖ σημεῖα μεγάλα, ἵνα καὶ πῦρ ποιῆ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβαίνειν εἰς τὴν γῆν ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀνθρώπων,

14 καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς διὰ τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ποιῆσαι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θηρίου, λέγων τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ποιῆσαι εἰκόνα τῷ θηρίῳ, ὃς ἔχει τὴν πληγὴν τῆς μαχαίρης καὶ ἔζησεν.

This “image” (*eikon*, for which word see Mat_22:20; Col_1:15) of the emperor could be his head upon a coin (Mar_12:16), an *imago* painted or woven upon a standard, a bust in metal or stone, a statue, anything that people could be asked to bow down before and worship. This test the priests in the provinces pressed as it was done in Rome itself.

15 Καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ δοῦναι πνεῦμα τῇ εἰκόνι τοῦ θηρίου, ἵνα καὶ λαλήσῃ ἡ εἰκὼν τοῦ θηρίου καὶ ποιήσῃ [ἵνα] ὅσοι ἐὰν μὴ προσκυνήσωσιν τῇ εἰκόνι τοῦ θηρίου ἀποκτανθῶσιν.

“That refusal to worship the image of the emperor carried with it capital punishment in Trajan's time is clear from Pliny's letter to Trajan (X. 96)” (Charles).

16 καὶ ποιεῖ πάντας, τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς μεγάλους, καὶ τοὺς πλουσίους καὶ τοὺς πτωχοὺς, καὶ τοὺς ἐλευθέρους καὶ τοὺς δούλους, ἵνα δῶσιν αὐτοῖς χάραγμα ἐπὶ τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῶν τῆς δεξιᾶς ἢ ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον αὐτῶν

Deissmann (*Bible Studies*, pp. 240ff.) shows that in the papyri official business documents often have the name and image of the emperor, with the date as the official stamp or seal and with *charagma* as the name of this seal. Animals and slaves were often branded with the owner's name, as Paul (Gal_6:17) bore the stigmata of Christ. Ptolemy Philadelphus compelled some Alexandrian Jews to receive the mark of Dionysus as his devotees (3 Macc. 3:29). The servants of God receive on their foreheads the stamp of the divine seal (Rev_7:3). Charles is certain that John gets his metaphor from the *tephillin* (phylacteries) which the Jew wore on his left hand and on his forehead. At any rate, this “mark of the beast” was necessary for life and all social and business relations. On the right hand, that is in plain sight.

17 καὶ ἵνα μή τις δύνηται ἀγοράσαι ἢ πωλῆσαι εἰ μὴ ὁ ἔχων τὸ χάραγμα τὸ ὀνόμα τοῦ θηρίου ἢ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ.

ē ton arithmon. The stamp (the mark) may bear either the name or the number of the beast. The name and the number are one and the same. They could write the name in numerals, for numbers were given by letters. Swete suggests that it was “according to a sort of *gematria* known to the Apocalypticist and his Asian readers, but not generally intelligible.”

18 Ὡδε ἡ σοφία ἐστίν. ὁ ἔχων νοῦν ψηφισάτω τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ θηρίου, ἀριθμὸς γὰρ ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν, καὶ ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτοῦ ἑξακόσιοι ἑξήκοντα ἕξ.

All sorts of solutions are offered for this conundrum. Charles is satisfied with the Hebrew letters for Nero Caesar, which give 666, and with the Latin form of Nero (without the final n), which makes 616. Surely this is ingenious and it may be correct. But who can really tell?