

Murl Vance And The MASTER NUMBER

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The following brief report by this writer is being sent with this preface:

(1) This writer realizes that with his growing responsibilities, he may never have the time to properly research this topic for written presentation, therefore he is writing up the following as a hurried once-over, "off-the-cuff" report. You are welcome to research out the source material yourself.

(2) This cannot and should not be considered as a doctrinal statement. It represents findings and thoughtful opinions, - yet only clear, direct Bible, Spirit of Prophecy statements can provide us with doctrinal clarity in any given topic. -vf

From time to time, we hear rumors about Murl Vance, his research studies, his mysterious disappearance, death, etc. Who was he? What were his findings? Here is part of the story:

In the summer of 1952, after my first year of college, I was engaged in construction work in the Los Angeles area. While there I heard that there was a man in Glendale that had, up to that time, already spent eleven years researching into the origins of the 666. I was astounded. What information could possibly be available about that topic - that a person would be able to spend eleven years learning about it? So I telephoned his home and made an appointment to stop over one evening and visit. He lived on Academy Drive in Glendale, California. Arriving there that evening, we spoke together for hours. Some of the things he told me that night I will relate as we continue this narration. He also showed me microfilm photographs that he had taken of pages from old books, many of which would normally be inaccessible to most folk.

Our Theological Seminary was not set on a firm footing until 1937 when it opened in its Washington D.C. location. About the year 1940, Murl Vance went to the Seminary to do advance work, obtain a master's degree, and enter the ministry of the church. In later describing it to me, he said that the turning point in his life work occurred when he asked his major professor what topic he should select for his master's thesis. Now, a master's thesis is nothing very complicated. You or I could turn one out in a few days' time, given a working resource library at our disposal. But Murl was, at heart, a deep-level researcher-once he found the topic he was after.

His professor said: "Murl, why don't you look into the 666 of Revelation 13:18. Maybe it goes deeper than our present view, which is 'vicarius filli dei'." Murl told me that he wasn't so sure about that subject; surely there could not be enough there to fill a master's thesis, but he set to work. He found enough that he did not finish his thesis that year. Returning to his home in Southern California, he continued researching into the subject. He began teaching in one of our schools, and eventually opened a store in Glendale that sold and serviced typewriters and office equipment.

Somewhere in greater Los Angeles is to be found a private library owned by a theosophical society. I have no idea as to its location, but know that the word "theosophy" or "theosophical" is part of the name. Entering the library, Murl asked permission to look through the stacks, and was told that it was a private library for the use of the members only, but that he could come in this time. Browsing through the stacks, he was amazed at what was there. Just then, a noisy book cart rolled past, as one of the assistant librarians refilled some books.

Instantly, he knew what to do. Leaving the library, he went to a hardware store and lumber yard, purchased materials, took it home - and made an excellent library cart with solid rubber wheels. Then he went back to that library and rolled it through the doors - and presented it, free of charge, to the head librarian. Durable, attractive, well-made, and completely soundless; she was delighted when she saw it.

And, "yes," she said, "you may come and browse through this library any time that you wish."

Murl located other library sources as well. Reading, studying, he kept amassing materials. Then he purchased a camera and tripod - and taught himself microfilming. Keep in mind that photocopying did not hit America until the latter 1950s.

Now he really was ready for action! With his microfilm equipment, he could locate passages of worth - and photograph them right there in the library. And this included not only text, but also intricate line drawings and symbolical artwork.

As mentioned earlier, by the time I met him in the summer of 1952 he had been working on his project for eleven years.

Here is an incident, that Murl told me of, which some of you will find of interest: One day as he sat reading in a book at one of the large oaken study tables in the main reading area of the theosophical library, he suddenly realized something. It came as such a striking thought - that he spoke it out to a member of the theosophical society who was sitting directly across from him at the study table. To this person whom he did not know, he said:

"I understand now why the priests of Baal, gathered there on top of Mount Carmel, with Elijah and the watching hosts of Israel, tried for hours to bring down fire from heaven. - They could normally do it, but were prevented on that occasion from doing so."

As calm as though he had been asked the time of day, the man across the table, replied, "Yes, that's right; we can do it now." For more detail on the implications of that brief conversation, read Prophets and Kings, page 150:1 and the surrounding passages; for a preview of coming events, read Revelation 13:13.

The thought that had come to Murl was that the reason why the priests of Baal would spend long hours in a vain effort to bring down fire - was that they may have at previous times been able to apparently do it, through the deceptive power of Satan. But they were prevented that day from doing that which at other times they had done.

Then, in desperation, they tried to ignite it themselves, but Elijah's watchful eye kept them from doing it. (Compare Prophets and Kings, 150:1 and 2.)

Murl also told me of an incident regarding the crosier of a high-ranking Catholic official. A crosier (also spelled crozier) is an ornamental staff carried by Roman Catholic bishops, archbishops, and certain abbots during religious ceremonies. It is coiled into a circle at the top, and has various intricate designs carved into it. Without going into detail, Murl had the opportunity to closely examine one - and found that it contained the symbols of the ancient mystery religions. By the way, the coil at the top represents a coiled serpent, in spite of the tradition that it is merely a fancy shepherd's staff.

I deeply appreciated what I learned that evening and very much respected Murl and his scholarship. Returning to college that fall, I took a class that required a research paper of my choice. So I decided to write on the 666. Gathering together special quotations that Murl kindly loaned me, I set to work - and produced a typed paper that was about 200 pages in length. It was filled with specialized quotations and some illustrations. In some places, the footnotes filled half the typed page. I wrote the paper, frankly, because I wanted to put these many findings together -

and then keep them for the years to come. But I had not reckoned with college policies. Remember again, that those were the years before photocopiers. Many teachers would keep the research papers that you turned in. When I went back to get it, I was refused permission to have it.

After losing that study paper on Murl Vance findings, which including research of my own at the Pacific School of Religion and Berkeley, I lost heart in trying to recollect the material. But several years later, I again met Murl. I was now a post graduate student at the Seminary - in Washington D.C. and Murl had finally, after all those years, returned - this time for a summer term. He told me that his research had not stopped, and that he was still hoping to find time to complete that master's thesis. I urged him to publish his collected research. He told me that he was thinking of approaching the leadership of the Church about publishing his research material.

I urged him to do so. Later in the summer, he told me that he did not know what to do. The brethren in the General Conference and Review had turned him down, and he was not certain what course to pursue. I regretted the entire situation. The material badly needed publication; there was nothing like it anywhere. Yet Murl had to keep his office machines business going, he did not know the procedures for independent publication, and he had such a mass of material.

He left in August to return to Southern California, and I never saw him again. Later, in the ministry, I learned that he and his family had moved to Oregon. Still later, I heard of his death by what were probably natural causes. I estimate that he was about 58 when he died.

I am acquainted with a friend of the family (his wife and daughters), and am informed that they have all of Murl's complete research material - but will not permit it to be published. They say that they intend to publish it themselves someday. If anyone has any persuasion with the family, please appeal to them to let someone publish that material!

Upon my arrival at the Seminary for my first of three years and two advanced degrees there, I met an old acquaintance from college days. He was another research bug. Graduating with me from college, he also had traveled East to attend the Seminary but, with a family to support, he found that he did not have enough money to begin Seminary class work. So he fell back on his trade of lab tech work, - and in his spare time decided to do additional research along lines penetrated by Murl Vance.

But the only primary source for such research in the Greater Washington D.C. area was the Library of Congress. With holdings larger than those of any other library in the world, it ought to have all that he would need. But the problem he encountered was that the Library of Congress, instead of putting those ancient religious materials in a section by themselves, - had, because they contained some sexual references, lumped them together with the pornography in the Delta Collection. (Delta was the library code name for Dirty)

Donald came to me one day and told me that he had given up on the project because it was such a harrowing experience trying to wade through all that pornography in his search for the ancient religious materials. I mention this so that any would - be researcher will realize what they face at that library.

Let us now turn our attention to Murl's findings. First, I shall provide you with a brief overview of the focus of it all - why it is so important; just what it all means. Then, we shall consider but a few of his actual findings. From time to time, papers and books are written that will include some of this type of information. But nothing is likely to ever equal the research productivity that Murl brought forth, but then his material is probably forever lost to us.

And now, first the focus; to be followed by a few of the details: *At the heart of it is a very special fact. It was this fact that drove Murl to spend so many years in research work; it is because of this fact that I have taken the time to write this present report: The 666 is not the title, "vicarius filii dei"*

(vicar to [vicegerent, second in command to] "the Son of God," as engraved on one of the pope's many crowns in the Vatican. If anyone inquires, you are very welcome to continue to use that application, for it is one that common people can easily grasp; but, it is the belief of this writer, - that that is not the underlying meaning of the term "666" as found in the last verse of Revelation 13 [13:18].

The 666 was the master number of the ancient heathen religions of the Near East. It was used and worshiped in Egypt, in the Fertile Crescent, and in Asia Minor. It was an identifying link that connected all of those ancient Near Eastern religions to one another. Roman paganism adopted it heavily, as they did many other features of the Near Eastern religions.

All of these corrupt elements found their way into the gradually increasing apostasy that took place in Christianity in the early centuries after the time of Christ. This apostate Christianity coalesced into that masterpiece of Satanic imperfection: the Roman Catholic Church.

And the 666 lay at the heart of it. Where do we find that 666? In some writing on a wall here or there? In a title of its leader?

The 666 was the foundation stone of the whole system; *a cornerstone by which we could identify the whole system!* For the 666 was the master number identifying all the Near Eastern paganism that, together composes Roman Catholic theology, tradition, liturgy, and practice. You have but to look at the ancient Near Eastern heathen religions, with the 6 and the 666 interlaced throughout them - and then turn to their spiritual descendant - Papal Rome, - and you have the key in hand that will unravel the mystery; the mystery of iniquity.

For it is, indeed a mysterious iniquity, this masterpiece of Satan's devising. Yet you can understand it the more clearly as you recognize its origins. Beholding it in vision, John declares:

"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." Revelation 13: 18

Or to paraphrase it:

"Here is a deep truth. But only the carefully-discerning can know it - for it means counting the master number of the Beast. For it is a human number - a man-made number: it is the number of man. And this is the number of the Beast. And you will find that number to be 666."

It is a human number. Six is the number of man; man was created on the sixth day. Seven is the divine number; the number of perfection. The mystery religions capitalized on that fact and made the triple six their master number. This would, in a sense, provide a counterfeit number to the Godhead; a counterfeit to the three perfect Ones of Heaven: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It is also a man-made number. And one that God said would identify the Beast.

As we consider a few of the many examples of the master number, we are struck by the shallowness of it all. Satanic symbolism, as with all that he inspires, is at its best - foolishness, and at its worst - immorality and death.

But we shall find these symbols running all through the Near Eastern religions, culminating in the mystery religions of Asia Minor, and thence flowing through Alexandria - into the Early Christian Church - to gel finally into Roman Catholic paganism.

A similar pattern was Sun-worship, that, from earlier paganism, thence through Alexandria, and then into Rome - provided the world with Sunday sacredness. See our studies elsewhere on that subject.

The beehive was worshiped, for it contained the six-sided cell formed by the bee, from whence issued life in the young bees - and death in their sting. Or so ran the thoughts of the mystery religionists.

The "S" sound and shape ranked with the "6" at the pinnacle of adoration. For all alike represented the serpent. And serpent worship lay at the heart of the maze.

There were three Greek letters that stood for "S." The first was the sigma, which could be written in two different ways; both formed the shape of a serpent (one viewed from above as it slithers along - like our modern "S" shape today; the other viewed it from the side as it was uncoiling in the strike). The second Greek letter was the Chi (properly pronounced "ksee" as a letter, but our "X" when used within a word). This letter also has the serpentine shape (the word "serpentine" means "snake shaped"). The Zeta, a "Z" sound, was closely-related to the serpent sound, and thus also had a similar shape, as does our "Z" today. But, strictly speaking, it was not that third Greek "S" letter of the alphabet.

Did you know that one of the letters was lost? It was called the "stigma," and is mentioned in some Greek grammars. The stigma was said by some to have been the sixth letter of the ancient Greek alphabet - which, by the time of Christ, had disappeared. It also sounded like our "S," and looked much like it. As you know, the word "stigma" means "mark." To receive the "S" is to receive the "stigma" or "mark," according to the ancients. To receive the serpent shape in your mind and hand is to receive his character, his falsehoods, his way of doing things.

The stigma was also important in the mysteries, and so sacred that it was eventually removed from common usage. That is why it disappeared from the Greek alphabet, and even from their common words.

Note the close relationship here between the "S" and the snake. - And where does the six fit into all this? "Six" is a linking of the "S" and the other primary serpent sound, the "X". *This was really why the six was so important. Not merely because it could stand as a counterfeit to the seven of divinity, - but because it was another symbol representing the serpent, who is Satan.*

Revelation 13:18 mentions the symbolic master number of paganism; Revelation 12:9 identifies the symbol for its originator. People all over the world worship the serpent. If we have space in this brief report, we will tell you a little more about that.

The sound of the serpent is the "S" sound; the shape of the serpent is the "S" shape. That made the letter in all its forms sacred to the ancients. And the numeral "6" is but another "S". It also has the serpent sound and shape. To receive the three sixes is to receive the master number of the serpent. The 666 identifies his masterpiece of deception - Papal Rome.

At this juncture, you may already have guessed at the other primary aspect of this serpent theology: "Sex." Obviously, "Six" and "Sex" are very similar in spelling and in sound. Both are heavy in the serpent sound; both are filled with "S's." Both words are very ancient.

[Editor's Note: Sex is the old Latin word for 6, but also means "sex". XXX = 666 as used by some mystic orders; also used to designate porn/sex.]

You see, Satan's religions are not designed merely to lead you away from God; they are intended to lead you into sin, and thus make you like himself. He desires to make little serpents of you, filled with his sixes, marked with his character, worshiping him on his day.

And while we are on that thought, consider that Sin, Snake, Satan, Sun, Sex, Serpent, and Six all begin with the "S" sound. There is significance there, but how far we can take it is dubious. For there are many other words that start with the "S"; more words, in fact, than initiate from any other letter of the alphabet. Just because a word begins with an "S" does not make it a bad word (Sanctuary, Sabbath, Saviour, Sanctification, etc.).

"At sixes and sevens" is an old idiom that stands for "confusion." "Babel" is a confusion of sound; "Babylon" is a confusion of organization. Glossolalia (speaking in tongues) is a good example of the former; Roman Babylon and its daughters a good example of the latter.

The Greek of 666 in Revelation 13:18 ("six hundred threescore and six") is "hexakosioi hexekonta hex." Now you can see where our word for "hex" comes from: six. A hexagon is a plane figure with six sides and six angles (the bee cell shape). A hexagram is a six-pointed star formed of two intersecting equilateral triangles. Both were important in the ancient religions. It is of interest that the hexagram - the six pointed star, - although definitely not a Biblical symbol, has for centuries been the symbol of world Judaism.

"Hex" is the Greek word for "six." According to the dictionary, a "hex" is when someone puts an evil spell on someone else, or bewitches them. The serpent and the six are both claimed by Satan as his special symbols. But why is "Hex" the Greek word for six? The rough-breathing "H" sound in was something of a soft "S" sound. Putting it together as a complete word, we have "hheeks," which is but a variant of the serpent sound.

"Hex" means to cast a spell, to enchant, or to hypnotize, which is what the serpent does to the mouse as he moves his head slowly from side to side as he approaches it.

Both "Hex" and "Six" have the serpent sound as well as the serpent shape, which is what an "S" has. One of the most ancient of the alphabetical shapes is the "O." You cannot make a clear "O" without forming one with your lips. That is why the "O" is O-shaped. The S-sound is called a sibilant by the linguists. It is easily made by the mouth, but how were the ancients to identify it in writing? It is the serpent that makes the "S" sound, so they shaped the letter "S" to match his appearance. (And, by the way, have you noticed that it is an ever-changing appearance - yet, basically, always the same?)

The "S" and the "6" stand for the serpent, and the serpent stands for the "S" and the "6." Consider the caduceus. Murl found this symbol to be of great interest, coming as it does right out of ancient pagan symbolism. The caduceus was a wand or staff carried by ancient Greek and Roman heralds who brought messages of Greek and Roman pagan mythology. It was a winged staff with two snakes twined around it, and was carried by Mercury and Hermes. They were the forerunners of the gods, bringing healing and new light from corrupt pagan sources to the common people.

The Spirit of Prophecy tells us that the medium that Satan chose in the Garden of Eden was a winged serpent. The caduceus is two serpents on a pole with wings. In Numbers 21:8, one serpent on a pole represented the One who became sin for us that we might be healed. (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24.) Therefore, a single serpent on a pole would be a Biblical symbol of Christ. That is why there are two serpents on the pole. Here we find Satan opposing Christ. It is a blasphemous representation. Satan is the same size and is directly attacking the head of Christ. This is in direct opposition to Genesis 3:17. As you may know, the professional medical association has, for some reason, adopted this heathen symbol as a fitting representation of their work.

Another important symbol is the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This is often pictured in the writings of the mysteries. In order to understand the high regard that Satan and his followers have for that symbol, we must bear in mind that our kind heavenly Father only gave us good trees to eat from. We were not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But Satan rejoices that

sinner eat of that tree every day. It is a tree of good corrupted by evil. There can be no evil by itself, for sin is insanity. On one hand are to be found the good, right principles that God gives us. On the other, the good mixed with evil that Satan offers to us. This mingling of good with evil, lies at the heart of the devil's deceptive arts. We find it all around us. As portrayed in those early pagan writings - in their engravings and line drawings, - the tree has fruit on it and a serpent is always in it or on the ground nearby. Frequently we find three snakes lined up in a row, each in a "6" configuration: their beloved 666.

This motif of three snakes in a 666 pattern is often used as border art and miscellaneous fill in the ancient heathen artwork, decorating their mystical and magical books of instructions and incantations.

Murl mentioned an old motion picture film that was issued, I believe, in the 1930s. I recall having seen it as a boy. It was called "Wheels Across Asia," and was something of an epic travelogue through Africa and then across the Near East and India. This film was not like the slicks that followed it in the 1940s and beyond. It showed paganism in all its reality. Murl's special interest lay in the scene in India of a woman kneeling before a coiled hooded cobra. She was intent on performing a great act in Hinduism. The snake was equally intent on biting her, and as, without uncoiling, his head would dart forward, she would as instantly move back with her head and trunk. Flecks and streaks of cobra venom could be seen staining her clothing. Then came that special moment; in an instant she darted her head forward -and kissed the serpent.

We find some of these symbols in the Egyptian religion, others in the Persian, yet others in the Babylonian, and the ancient Roman. The mysteries (the mystery religions) of Asia Minor arose before the time of Christ and contained full spectras of them. As you may know, if you have read our Sabbath book, **Beyond Pitcairn**, and our historical **Sabbath tracts, BS4-5, and 19-20**, although Sun worship was very important in ancient paganism, at the time of Christ it had focused in Western Civilization in Mithra, the Persian Sun-god. The mysteries, bearing the heart of the ancient Serpent-Six-Sex lore, lure, and rituals, - combined with the Sun worship of Mithra - and, under the name of Mithraism became, next to Christianity, the leading religion of the entire Roman Empire in the first centuries from Christ's time till that of Constantine. "Till Constantine"? Yes, till Constantine. By the time of Constantine, the Christian church in Rome had adopted many of the rituals, practices, and symbols of the mysteries of Mithra. But when the Sun-worship day was added under Constantine, in the early Fourth Century, - Satan no longer needed Mithraism, Isis and Horus, and all the rest - and they vanished within a few decades. The transformation had been made. Satan in triumph rejoiced. The 666 was now in Christianity. And what did the 666 represent? The essence of all the paganism that preceded Papal Rome!

[Editor's note: Mithraism, Isis and Horus have not really vanished, but have been kept alive in the mystery religions like Freemasonry and Hinduism, etc.]

Although many do not realize it, four important events occurred under Constantine: (1) The Sun-worship day came into Christianity, eventually to almost totally displace the Bible Sabbath on the Seventh day of the week; (2) the Empire adopted Christianity; (3) the local church at Rome became the most influential Christian church in the Western World. The significance of this latter point, is overlooked by many. The mysteries of Mithra, with all that they cradled within them of ancient Satanic lore, had been flowing for over 200 years, through the Christian theology seminary at Alexandria, into the local Christian church in the city of Rome. Now, under Constantine, this corrupt local church became the most influential Christian church in the Empire.

The mysteries began penetrating Christianity before the time of Constantine, primarily in the cities of Alexandria and Rome, but from Constantine's time onward - it came in even faster.

As noted in our tracts on the New Age Movement, that collection of ancient evil is directly traceable to Hinduism, which, originating in India, is one of the most ancient pagan religions in the world. The Near Eastern religions tended to flow through Mithraism into Christianity. But there were many areas of similarity or identity between the Near Eastern religions and that of Hinduism in India. We noted the snake worship in India, in the film mentioned above. Why the almost universal worship of the serpent? It,

of course, represents Satan. The snake in the Garden was the earliest representation of Satan in this world. If you study into paganism, and the secret societies which are descended from it (such as Rosicrucianism and the Masonic Order), you will find that the latter flow from the former. They, along with Roman Catholicism, are its direct descendants.

In the pagan ritual books, Satan identifies the serpent with the male organ. They called it the phallus. The dictionary says, "The phallus is a representation of the male sexual organs, symbolizing in certain religions the generative power in nature." Murl explained the identification that the ancients made between the serpent and the phallus. They considered the two to be one.

[Editor's note: That's because the Sun, worshipped as god, was often drawn encircled with a Snake. The Snake god is another symbol representing the Sun. The Snake is called "Father" and symbolically represents the phallus or Sun god's generative/creative powers by its shape. In many pagan religions, it is held to be responsible for procreation between man and wife, granting them offspring (fertility-Bael cults).]

Now we look back over all that maze of symbolic confusion, and indeed confess that it is a veritable Babylon of foolishness. Nothing has substance; just a lot of empty symbols. But that is what we said earlier in this brief study. All that Satan has to offer may appear to be gold and precious jewels, but once grasped, it will be found to be dirty cobwebs. But that grasp can lead you to capture and death.

Thus we see that, in it all, the primary aspects of the cobweb that flowed into Rome and the Secret Societies was Six, Sex, Serpent, Hex (bewitchment), Sun, and Sin. All were sanctified by the ancients and dedicated to their god, Satan. For example, consider Sun and Sin. It is sin to worship the Sun, or bow down before it. The Bible says that bowing to the Sun is sin (Ezekiel 8, etc.). But the ancients incorporated it as part of their religion in Ishtar and Mithric sunrise services, facing Eastward, thus hallowing it, - and then bequeathed the practice as part of their legacy to Papal Rome and its daughters.

Another example is the tessellated pavement that was in the ancient temples - and is found today in the inner sanctums of the Secret Societies. Murl discovered that this tessellated pavement was considered very important to a proper functioning of their rituals. The pavement is composed of small hexagonal pieces [or square pieces] of fired tile, set in the floor alternately - in black and white. Here we have the six-sided bee cell - but with black and white cells juxtapositioned next to one another: the knowledge of good and evil combined, and all inlaid in sixes. It is tile tree of good and evil - on the consecrated floor beneath the feet of the instructors and their novitiates.

All checkers and chess devotees, take note: You are playing with ancient games, and both are played on tessellated pavement boards, representing the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The word "chess" is so ancient that we know not its origin, but listen to its sound. It is but a variant of the other three special serpent-sound words: "Six," "Sex," "Chess," "Hex," and "Asp."

[Editor's note: reading about "chess" in a book about Chess History will reveal that it comes from India, and that the checkerboard was originally used for astrology/divining. It uses 8 x 8 squares - 8 is a number dedicated to the Sun god, and can be found in numerous symbols, especially the 8 spoked Sun Wheels. One of the largest 8 spoked Sun Wheels is in the Vatican.]