

# Fragment on the Epistles to the Seven Churches (section 7.3h)

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For confirming what has been said, it may not be amiss to give a short explication of the seven Epistles.

Vpon the opening of the fift seale, the affairs of the Church begin to be considered as was said above, & the Church is represented by a Woman appearing in temple of heaven & pained in travail & bringing forth a Manchild before her flight from the Temple into the spiritually barren wilderness: & in this state she is admonished by seven Epistles sent to the seven Angels of the Churches which under the type of dressing the seven lamps which illuminate the whole Temple , that they may illuminate it the better

In The first Epistle is to the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, Christ saith, I have something against thee because thou hast left thy first love Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen & the first works or else I will come unto thee quickly & will remove thy Candlestick out of his place except thou repent. But this thou hast that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans which I also hate. And this reproof answers perfectly well to the state of the Church in the first twenty years of the reign of Dioclesian & Maximianus, thus described by Eusebius.

When Eusebius had brought down his Ecclesiastical history to the Reign of Dioclesian & the Episcopacy of Caius & Marcelline Bishops of Rome & Cyrill bishop of Antioch & Dioclesians Persecution was at hand , he thus describes the state of the Church. Qualem quantamque gloriam simul ac libertatem doctrina ——— in religionem nostram affecti erant benevolentiam. And a little after. Iam vero quis innumera bilem hominum quotidie ad fidem Christi confugentium trubam, quis numerum ————— quasi tyrannidem quandam contentissima sibi vindicantes; tunc demum juxta dictum Hieremie obscuravit dominus in ira sua filiam Sion & dejecit de cælo gloriam Israel. And to this state of the Church agrees the first of the seven Epistles to the Angels of the seven Churches of Asia, that to the . I have something against thee ,saith Christ to the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen ————— which I also hate. By the doctrine of the Nicolaitans I understand spiritual fornication coloured over with a pretence of Christianity.

The persecution of Dioclesian began in the year of Christ 302 & lasted ten years in the eastern Empire & two years in the western. And to this state of the Church the second Epistle, that to the Church in Smyrna agrees. I know,saith Christ, thy works & tribulation & poverty,( but thou art rich,)& I know the blasphemy of them ( the Nicolaitans ) who say they are Jews & are not but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison that ye may be tried & ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithfull unto death & I will give the{e} a crown of life. The tribulation of ten days can agree to no other persecution then that of Dioclesian, it being the only persecution which lasted ten years. By the Blasphemy of them that say they are Jews & are not but are of the synagogue of Satan, I understand the Idolatry of the Nicolaitans who called themselves Christians but were not Christians but of the Church of Idolaters.

These Nicolaitans are complained of also in the third Epistle as men that held the doctrine of Balaam who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to Idols & to

commit spiritual fornication. For Balaam taught the Moabites & Midianites to tempt Israel by their Weomen & invite them to the sacrifices of their Gods. Num. 25 & 31. They are complained of also in the fourth Epistle under the the Woman who now began name of the Woman Iezebel, that is, the Church of the Nicolaitans, called the synagogue of Satan in the second & sixt Epistles : she is Babylon & the Woman which now began to fly into the wilderness.

And in the sixt Epistle, that to the Church of Philadelphia Christ saith, Because thou hast kept the word of my patience I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the Temple of my God, & he shall go no more out, & I will write upon him the name of my God &c that is; Because in the reign of The Emperor Iulian the <1v> Apostate thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which, by the womans flying into the wilderness & the Dragons making war with the remnant of her seed, & the killing of all that will not worship the Image of the Beast, shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell on the earth, & to distinguish them by sealing the one with the name of God in their forehead & marking other with the mark of the Beast; & at that time I will make him that overcometh, a pillar in the second Temple of my God, & he shall go no more out of it . And at the same time I will write upon him the name of my God in his forehead. So then the Christians of the Church of Philadelphia, as many of them as overcome are sealed with the seal of God & placed in the second Temple & go no more out. And the same is to be understood of the Church of Smyrna. These are therefore the two Pillars & the two {Candlesticks} {Candlesticks} & the two Witnesses in the second Temple. And the witnessse{s} are looked upon in this Prophesy as the posterity of those two Churches, the other five being faulty.

The reign of Constantine the great from the time of his conquering Licinius, was monarchical over the whole Roman Empire. Then the Empire became divided between the sons of Constantine reigning at Rome & Constantinople : And then it was united under Constantius by his victory over Magnentius. And to the affairs of the Church in these three successive periods of time, the Epistles to the Angels of the Churches in Pergamus Thyatira, & Sardis seem to relate. After the reign of Iulian & his successor Iovian who reigned but five months, the Empire became divided again between Valentinian & Valens. And then the Church in the Epistle to the Angel of the Church in Laodicea is reprehended as luke-warm, & threatned to be spewed out of Christs mouth. She said that she was rich and increased in goods & had need of nothing ( in outward appearance ) & knew not that she was ( inwardly ) wretched & miserable & poor & blind & naked & for her luke-warmness deserved to be spewed out of Christs mouth.

Mister Mede hath explained the Prophesy of the first six Trumpets not much amiss. If he had observed that the prophesy of pouring out the Vialls of wrath is synchronal to that of sounding the Trumpets, his Explanation would have been more complete.

The sacrifices on the first four days of the Feast of Tabernacles, at which the first four Trumpets sound, & the first four Vials of wrath are poured out, are represented by four winds to the four corners of the earth. The first was an east wind, the second a west wind, the third a south wind, the fourth a north wind with respect to the City of Rome.

The first plague fell upon the Earth & signifies the invasion of {all the} Greek Empire It commenced A.C. 396 & is thus touched upon by Ierom. by the Goths & other nations presently after the death of Theodosius.

The second plague fell upon the sea or Western Empire & principally upon Gaul & Spain by the inrode of the Visigoths, Vandals, Alans, Sueves, Ostrogoths, Burgundians It commenced A.C. 407 & in these wars Rome was sackt & the western Empire broken into ten kingdoms .

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The third fell upon the {illeg} rivers & fountains of waters, that is, upon the western Empire now divided into many kingdoms, & commenced with the invasion of Afric by the Vandals A.C. 428. And by this war Afric was taken from the Romans, & Rome was sackt a second time & Italy much infested by sea.

The fourth fell upon the Sun Moon & Stars, that is upon the Western Emperor & the remainder of his dominions, It began A.C. 476 when Odoacer king of the Heruli invaded Italy & seized the dominions of Augustulus the last of the western Emperors . It was continued by the wars which the Ostrogoths under Theoderic made upon the Heruli & which Bellisarius afterwards made upon the Ostrogoths, & which the Lombards afterwards made upon Italy when they invaded it. And in all these wars Italy was miserably wasted & Rome twice taken.

The fifth Trumpet sounded to the wars which the king of the south ( as he is called ( by Daniel ) made in the time of the end in pushing at the king who had done according to his will & magnified himself above every God, & worshipped Mahuzzims.

And the sixth sounded to the wars which Daniels king of the north made against the same king who had done according to his will, in coming against him like a whirlwind & overflowing his kingdom & in conquering also Iudæa, Egypt Libya & Ethiopia.

The Prophecy of the first Trumpet lasted 12 years, that of the second 21 years that of the third 48 years , that of the fourth about 158 years that of the fifth about 624 years & according to this progress that of the sixth may last but still longer. But it is not for us to know the times & seasons which God hath put in his own Breast. Daniel calls the reign of the kings of the South & North the time of the end, & tells us that at the time of the end many shall run to & fro & knowledge shall be increased & that none of the wicked shall understand but the wise shall understand. And this is represented in Iohn by the two Witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, & then ascending up to heaven in a cloud {&} with the everlasting gospel to preach to all nations against those that worship the Beast & his Image & receive his mark. When the little horn of Daniels fourth Beast had overcome three of the ten kings, & times & laws were given into his hands then the two Witnesses put on sackcloth. They prophesy in sackcloth 1260 years, then are slain by the Beast, rise again, & upon the double fall of Babylon prophesy ( represented by the eating of her flesh & the fall of the tenth part of the great city. ) with great success as is represented by their ascending up to heaven in a cloud or great multitude . And at length by the influence{s} of the three frogs they fall into the great tribulation, & at the battle of the great day to which the seventh Trumpet sounds, come out of it with Palm-branches in their hands, & the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of God & Christ, & new Ierusalem descends out of heaven, & many that sleep in the dust awake, some to everlasting life & some to everlasting shame & contempt. But when these things shall come to pass we are not yet to know. The prophecy was given not to enable Christians to predict things, but to establish the religion which shall be set up by the predictions of the Prophets when they come to pass.

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At the sounding of the fifth Trumpet a star fell from heaven to the earth ( Manomet by Apostacy, ) & the star opened the bottomless pit ( to let out a false religion ) & there arose a smoke out of the pit as the smoke of a furnace ( a great number of disciples ) & there came out of the smoke ( a military power like ) locusts ( for multitude ) which were to hurt only the men which have not the seal of God in their forehead, & to torment them five months but not to kill them that is not to overthrow the Greek Empire. And the locusts were like horses prepared to the battle & had faces like men & hair like women ( the Arabians wearing their hair long behind ) & the sound of their wings was as the sound of Chariots of many horses running to the battle. And they had a king over them, the Calif reigning first at Damascus & then at Bagdad. And they had tails like unto Scorpions ( armies of foot ) & stings in their tails. And the fifth Angel poured out his Vial upon the seat of the Beast & his kingdom was full of darkness & they gnawed their tongues for pain. The Saracens invaded Syria Persia Egypt, Libya & Afric & Spain harassed Italy & France. Locusts live about five months & in allusion thereunto it is said twice that they should torment men five months. They began their reign at Damascus A.C. 6{illeg}

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The fifth & sixth Trumpets sounded to the wars which the kings of the south & north ( according to Daniel made upon the king who did according to his will, & magnified himself above every God.

Rut. l. 21. After Latine Empires write. In the latter end of Nero's reign when the Roma{ns} began the siege of Ierusalem, the Christian Iews seeing Ierusalem compassed with arm{ies} fled from Iudea & some of them came into Asia minor with Peter & Iohn Peter went on to Corinth & thence to Rome where he wrote his two Epistles & was soon after crucified, but Iohn staying in Asia was banished to Patmos by the Romans as being the head of a party of Iews with whom they were at war. And there Iohn wrote his Apocalyps. As the old Prophets had their several styles so Iohn had his proper style. At his first coming from Iudæa where he had been used to the Hebrew language he mixed hebraisms with his Greek, & this is the style of the Apocalyps, But when he had conversed longer with the Greeks in Asia he wrote his Gospel with fewer hebrisms & intermixt Apocalyptic figures, such as were his calling Christ the Word of God, & the Lamb of God, & the light of the world, & putting light & darkness for good & evil, knowledge & ignorance. And this way of speaking makes the style of his Gospel more lofty then that of other Evangelists.

**Sir**

I received your kind present of a roll of Brawn & return my hearty thanks for the same remembrance of me. I was glad lately to hear of your good health & wish you may continue long to do good by yo

When copies of the Apocalyps were sent to the Churches, Paul wrote his Epistle to the dispersed Hebrews which is a Commentary upon the Apocalyps . The first ten chapters of this Epistle are a commentary upon the vision of Christ appearing in the form of the High Priest in the beginning of the Apocalyps . ☉ < insertion from lower down f 2v > ☉ In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter the Apostle calls this High Priest the Word of God more quick & powerfull then a two edged sword which plainly relates to the vision of a white horse & one sitting upon him whose name was called the word of God, & out of whose mouth went forth a short two edged sword. < text from higher up f 2v resumes > In the eleventh chapter the Apostle mentions the city which hath foundations whose builder & maker is God & which in the next chapter he calls the city of the living God, the heavenly Ierusalem prepared for the general assembly of them who are written in heaven & the spirits of just men made perfect: all which alludes to the new Ierusalem with twelve foundations described in the end of the Apocalyps. And in the same 12<sup>th</sup> chapter he uses the phrase of a cloud of witnesses , a phrase not to be met with in any former author except the Apocalyps where the two Witnesses ascend up to heaven in a cloud.

The two Epistles of Peter have also much relation to the Apocalyps.

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