

*The Book
of*
Revelation

1996

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Reverend Father Tadros Y. Malaty has kindly permitted that his books be published in the COeRL. He has requested that we convey that any suggestions or amendments regarding their translation are welcome, and should be forwarded to:
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**Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, King of Kings and
Lord of lords**



**THE BEHOLDER OF GOD
MARK THE EVANGELIST
SAINT AND MARTYR**



*H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark*



**His Grace Bishop Daniel
Bishop of Sydney and Affiliated Regions**

**In the name of the Father, the Son and
the Holy Spirit - one God.
Amen**

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INTRODUCTION¹

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BOOK

The Holy Bible began with the Book of Genesis that proclaimed the endless love of God towards man. He created everything for him, bestowed authority upon him and granted him that much dignity. Yet the scene soon changed and the picture was distorted. Man appeared leaving Paradise expelled, degraded and bearing upon his shoulders the bitter crime of mutiny. He was afraid to meet with God and escaped from the divine justice.

But thanks be to God who did not leave man to live in this way aroused by sin. He concluded His Bible by the *Book of Revelation* giving us a joyous picture; an open gate in heaven, an eternal Paradise awaiting humanity, divine bosom hastening towards mankind, heavenly harps, joy and heavenly wedding for man.

What a delightful and splendid book that is appropriate for every believer to hold, keep at heart, meditate on, and constantly repeat day and night. It is the book of hope, victory and praise; entirely, the book of heaven.

1. THE BOOK OF HOPE

Whoever reads the *Book of Revelation* discovers what the Christian worship actually is. It is not just duties to be carried out, rituals to be performed or orders to be observed, but one sees through all that the invisible divine hands hurrying towards him to receive him, embrace him and raise him up to heavens where he lives as a partner in the eternal glory.

Whoever tastes the *Book of Revelation*, no matter how much his fasts are, how long his prayers are, his kneelings, asceticism, depravation, suffering and his everyday crucifixion; they all turn to unspeakable joy and happiness. Through this book, one is dazzled by the love that binds the Creator with His creation,

the victorious with the strugglers, and the heavenly with the human. Thus one forgets about every pain or hardship for the sake of this everlasting love.

2. THE BOOK OF VICTORY

When the soul enters into the *Book of Revelation* as a bride visiting her Bridegroom's heaven she sees a wonderful Paradise and a startling glory prepared to receive her.

There she becomes a friend of the Bridegroom. She accompanies His servants and she falls in love in the heavenly atmosphere of joy and sweetness. At that time she will not fear the slyness of her enemy "Satan," or get disturbed by him because she will recognize the power of her Bridegroom, His plans, disposals and intentions towards her.

3. THE BOOK OF PRAISE

When the believer spends some time secretly in escape from the outer and inner voices to enter in calmness and silence with the Bridegroom into the book, there he hears hymns of praise and learns the language of unceasing praise.

It is beautiful in that the believer does not listen to unknown hymns, but feels that he had learnt it before at his mother's house "the Church," when he listens to the "hymn of Moses," the "Lamb's hymn" and the hymn of the "Sanctification." These and others, the church trains every heart on, unceasingly, as we shall see.

4. THE BOOK OF HEAVEN

When the believer forgets all that's on around him withdraws from amongst the earthly treasures and enters into the *Book of Revelation*, he gets dazzled by the treasures he sees. He will see heavenly glories, words cannot describe. He will see precious stones, crowns and white robes. Therefore the heart settles there and refuses to belittle itself again by getting involved in earthly distractions. One will sell all his pearls to acquire the one

pearl of great price².

THE WRITER OF THE BOOK

The early Church unanimously agreed that the writer of the Book is St. John the Evangelist³. This was proven by the following:

I. The writings of the early Church attribute the book to him⁴.

II. He was the apostle considered by the churches of Asia Minor mentioned in the book.

III. History⁵ assures us that John the beloved was exiled by the Emperor Domitian to Patmos Island where the apostle beheld his revelation (1:9).

IV. Although the theme of his book differs from the Gospel according to St. John, some typical words occurred in both books but not in the others, like "the Word, the Lamb, the Victory..." also the word 'truth' was repeated in both books.

V. The apostle did not hide his name, but mentioned it frankly four times in this book. This is because he is talking about prophecies. In order to trust in them we need to know the writer whom God had inspired with. Yet he did not mention his name in his Gospel nor in the three epistles, out of humbleness.

PLACE OF WRITING OF THE BOOK

In a small and rocky island lies about 25 miles far from the shores of Asia Minor (modern Turkey) called Patmos, and is now called 'Patino,' and is about 10 miles long and 6 wide, where the apostle wrote this Book during his exile (1:9)⁶.

Some scholars think that he recorded the revelation he saw in his exile when he returned to Ephesus. There is no proof to support this opinion, especially that he was ordered to write what he saw without delay (1:10,11).

On this island there is a cave that the inhabitants call the apostle's residence during his exile.

TIME OF WRITING THE BOOK

The majority believe that it was written after the destruction of Jerusalem, about the year 95 A.D. St. Irenaeus⁷ says that this revelation was proclaimed at the end of Domitian's reign.

THE CONCERN OF THE CHURCH WITH THE BOOK

In spite of what the heretics as Marcion stirred up with regards of the canonicity of this book yet we find that the Church gives it a special care since the early centuries. Therefore some fathers explained it and some wrote articles about it, among them Justin the Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus⁸, Melito, Victorinus⁹, Dionysius of Alexandria, Methodios, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazniansus, Cyril the Great and Gennadius.

THE DIFFICULTY OF THE BOOK

The interpretation of the Book of Revelation is considered a difficult task for the following reasons:

1. Its being a prophetic book (22:7). It is the only prophetic book in the New Testament.

2. Its prophesies about spiritual heavenly facts that cannot be expressed by human languages, therefore it came in numbers, symbols, colors and similes.

3. It talks about matters that the faithful does not have to understand the details of its secrets, because if he knows about the times, he would get lazy and hopeless. And if he does not know about the hardships he might face during his struggle, he would also fall victim to despair.

The *Book of Revelation* therefore presents to us the events with the amount that makes the heart burn with fervor, and get filled with hope without being concerned with the times or even curious to know about the future events.

4. Its words bear profound meanings in front of which the church fathers stood in amazement.

St. Jerome¹⁰ wrote to Fr. Paulinus, bishop of Nola, saying: [The secrets of the *Book of Revelation* are as numerous as its words, each word bears a secret. Still this is little compared to the high honor of this book, that in fact every praise is counted insignificant, because every word carries many meanings. In this book I praise what I understand and what I do not understand.]

Pope Dionysius of Alexandria says: [...having formed an idea of it as a composition exceeding my capacity of understanding, I regard it as containing a kind of hidden and wonderful intelligence on the several subjects which come under it. For though I cannot comprehend it, I still suspect that there is some deeper sense underlying the words. And I do not measure or judge its expressions by the standard of my own reason, but, making more allowance for faith, I have simply regarded them too lofty for my comprehension; and I do not forthwith reject what I do not been able to discern its important¹¹.]

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

In this book the Holy Spirit accompanies the human soul on the eternal road, revealing to its inner senses how to see, hear, touch and grow stronger until it reaches the eternal wedding.

(1) It begins by showing an "**open door in heaven**" to ascend to it through our Lord Jesus, the Lamb standing as if slain, ... and what do we see?

(2) We see first "**the state of the Seven Churches**," that reveals the extent of the human weakness and how powerful the work of grace in the Church. Here our Lord Jesus comes to announce that He is the only cure to our weaknesses.

(3) Then He carries the human soul up as if with a dove's wings, towards eternity, on the road of the cross, the road of pain; to see the Lamb opening "**the Seven Seals**," proclaiming a state of permanent war between God who cares for His children and Satan who never ceases fighting against the children of God.

(4) And we hear "**the Seven Trumpets**," proclaiming God's

warnings to mankind in order not to accept Satan's deception, but to be attached to God. They also proclaim the power of the woman clothed with the Sun, against her enemy the sea monster and whoever he arouses, "the sea beast and the land beast."

(5) And you see the "**Seven Strokes**" to discipline the wrongdoers, that they might repent; revealing the destruction befalling the adulteress and her lovers.

Every time the soul discovers a bitterness that prevails mankind or a difficulty that encompasses the faithful, we find that the Person of our Lord Jesus immediately appears in one way or another to encourage, sympathize and strengthen His children in order to accomplish their struggle in peace.

6) At last, the Spirit accompanies the soul into the "**Heavenly Jerusalem**" to see and get dazzled by what must be for her sake and what God has planned for mankind; as she watches with her eyes, Satan, the enemy of humanity, thrown down into the lake burning with fire.

SECTIONS OF THE BOOK

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. The Seven Churches | 1 - 3. |
| 2. The Prophetic Revelations | 4 - 20. |
| 3. The Glory of Heavenly Jerusalem | 21 - 22. |

Important Notice

Many have distorted the *Book of Revelation* by changing its interpretation into a search for the details of future events and matters that we do not have to investigate, unaware of the noble spiritual meanings that God wants to proclaim to us in order to live with it and help us to grow spiritually. We are not required to set up prophets of ourselves, in order to see and proclaim what is irrelevant to man's life and salvation. Thus, we might not hear that reproach, "Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that You are God" (Isaiah 41: 22, 23).

Part One

The Seven Churches

Ch. I The Revealer's Identity.

Ch. II Messages to Four Churches.

Ch. III Messages to Three Churches.

CHAPTER 1

Since this book is the "*Book of Heaven*," you should not be surprised if it occasionally reveals to you "**the Person of the Heavenly Lord**," in many ways. He might kindle your heart, arousing your love to Him, so you may enter with the whole Church in a secret conversation with Him, saying: "Come, O Lord Jesus."

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. Introduction | vs. 1 - 3. |
| 2. Apostolic peace to the churches | vs. 4 - 6. |
| 3. The advent of the Revealer | vs. 7 - 8. |
| 4. The Person of the Revealer | vs. 9 - 20. |

1 - INTRODUCTION

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave Him, to show His servants things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John" Rev. 1:1.

He called it "*Revelation*" or in Greek "*Apocalypse*," which means "revealing the divine mysteries to mankind."

God was unwilling to punish Sodom and Gomorrah except after informing His beloved Abraham of His intention; also it was His will to reveal to Daniel, the man greatly beloved, what was about to take place. Therefore, it's rather more appropriate that He announces to His bride - that He paid her dot on the cross - this "*Revelation*" to show her "*things which must shortly take place*."

The more the bridegroom loves his bride the more he opens his heart to her, revealing to her his secrets, specially what concerns his love to her, and what he prepares for her or her wedding day.

The Lord could have sent the "*revelation*" directly to John, but He "*sent and signified it by His angel*," to give the angels the opportunity to have the blessing of sharing their Lord His pleasure of revealing His secrets to His bride. Thus He always gives them

the chance to serve those who are being sanctified (Heb. 10:14), to show likewise their love towards His bride.

St. John the Beloved also shared in this service, as the angel was sent to him, and he by turn recorded the revelation to the church.

But who is this John?

It is he "*who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, and to all things that he saw*" [2].

He is just a witness telling what he sees or hears, as if he is saying: I am just "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Mark 1:3). I do not have credit in myself. It is God who granted me this blessing to witness for Him.

The benefit of the Revelation

"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near" [3].

Blessed is he who reads the prophecy in his bed chamber, and he who reads it at the church, or hear it with his brethren. Because when he keeps those things, his heart will get inflamed to realize "*which are written in it, for the time is near,*" or according to the Greek text "*for the chance is favorable and near.*"

Bishop Victorianus¹² states that the Book begins by the promise to bless who reads, hears and keeps it, that he who persists on reading it learns how to perform the deeds and keep the commandments.

2 - APOSTOLIC PEACE TO CHURCHES

"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was, and who is to come."

The apostle sends the divine peace to the seven churches, to be discussed later. His peace implies "*the grace*" which is the foundation of the true peace, and the subject of our preaching and

our joy.

Tertullian reveals to us the secret of granting the apostolic grace before the peace, by saying that according to the old custom among people, they used to begin their encounter by extending peace. Jesus followed the same custom with His disciples, yet after the ascension they added "*grace*" to it and put it before peace as it was the subject of their preaching that they got through their Lord Jesus.

The apostle is concerned for describing the Lord: "*Him who is and who was and who is to come*" in many occasions in this book. To assure that the giver and the source of grace is the Lord, residing in the Church, who guarded the Church, is guarding, and will keep guarding her; worked, is working, and will continue to work for her.

Bishop Victorianus states that He "*Who is,*" because He tolerates for us continuously.

And "*Who was,*" meaning that He with the Father created everything, and took Himself a beginning (in the body) from the Virgin. And "*Who is to come*" because He will definitely come for judgment.

"*And from the seven Spirits who are before His throne*" [4].

The opinions differ in interpreting the truth about the seven Spirits who are before His throne:

The first opinion: that they are the seven angels assigned to serve the seven churches mentioned in the *Book of Revelation*, as they are spirits in the service of them who shall be heirs of salvation. The Holy Bible and the writings of the Fathers witness that God sends His angels to everybody to serve him and guard him.

Ibn-el-Assal¹³ believes that the "*seven spirits*" are the seven angelic bands, i.e. the Principalities, the Dominions, the Thrones, the Magistrates, the Powers, the Archangels, and the Angels.

St. Clement of Alexandria and St. Cyprian the Martyr

believe that they are the seven archangels¹⁴, as it shows in Rafael's words about himself that he is one of the seven angels standing in front of God (Tob. 12:15).

As for the reason why they are mentioned before the Person of our Lord Jesus the Faithful Witness, this, so as to talk about Him in length later.

The Second Opinion: that it is a description of the Holy Spirit that works in the Church through His perfect gifts in the seven sacraments.

"And from Jesus Christ, the Faithful Witness."

In this introduction the apostle calls the Person of Jesus Christ by names that prepare the reader to get in touch with the purpose of that Book, therefore he calls Him:

(1) **The Faithful Witness:** The whole book deals with our witness for the Lord on earth, that He might witness for us in front of His Father and His angels. How to be a faithful witness? By the Lord Jesus: "**the Faithful Witness**," as He says about Himself: "And for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth" (John 18:37). This testimony did not stop at the extent of talking, but it is a practical sacrificing testimony. He showed it by incarnation, engraved it on the cross, confirmed it by His death, and proclaimed it by His resurrection.

Bishop Victorianus says, [He offered witness to the world by taking a human body, that He might suffer in it also, liberating us from sin by His blood. He gained victory over hell and rose as the Firstborn Son from death, over whom death has no control any more (Rom. 6:9). By His reign, He destroyed the kingdom of the world].

(2) **The Firstborn from the dead:** This book assures us that the Lord is our Firstborn Son; and as the Head was raised, so the rest of the body will rise with Him and through Him, "Christ the first of all; then those who belong to Christ" (1Cor. 15:23).

Pope Athanasius the Apostolic¹⁵ says, [He was not named

so because He died before us but because He suffered death for us and conquered it..., and as He was risen, we procure resurrection from Him and because of Him we surely rise from death.]

And as John Chrysostom¹⁶ states, that the Lord is our Firstborn Son because He offered Himself an accepted sacrifice without blemish, which the Father accepted with content, and consequently humanity became accepted and holy in Him.

Through the Firstborn Son we become inheritors of the "Church of the firstborns," and enjoy the heavenly glory described in the Revelation.

(3) "***Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood***" [5], "*and has made us kings, and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen*" [6].

Here we can boldly say that as we have put on "the Lord Jesus," we have become related to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Supreme Head of priests. By this "*He made us kings and priests.*"

We are very weak in ourselves, but in Him we are very strong. We, as nobodies, may be defeated by the least sin, but by Him we tread on the serpents and scorpions and all the powers of our enemy.

We lay in weakness before Him, but with spiritual authority we hope and rejoice. We have nothing to offer, but with Him we present spiritual offerings accepted before God.

We have become "*kings and priests*" in a spiritual sense. We should not mix between the general authority given to the Christian, and that given to those who were assigned by God to be kings and principals. To whom we should submit, and give them the honor they are worthy of as the Book commands us to do.

We should not also mix between those who are sanctified, and devoted for service and preaching by the sacrament of priesthood and the general priesthood which St. Jerome¹⁷ calls

“Laic Priesthood,” the believer gets by the sacrament of baptism.

3 - THE ADVENT OF THE REVEALER

"Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen" [7].

As if the Apostle is blowing the trumpet for the Church saying, "The coming of the Groom is near, watch, He is sure coming."

"He is coming with clouds." The clouds refer to the brightness of His glory as in His transfiguration. The clouds also refer to His anger at evil and evildoers as the Psalmist says: "Clouds and darkness surround Him... A fire goes before Him. And burns up His enemies round about" (Ps. 97:2,3).

Pope Dionysius of Alexandria thinks that the clouds refer to the angels surrounding Him in His coming.

Saints Cyril, Augustine and Jerome think that the clouds are the symbol of His manhood that hides His divinity.

St. Augustine explains this by saying that God hides the glory of His divinity from the wicked, that they might not see Him; while the righteous enjoy the glories of God who became man, and He reveals to them alone His splendor to enjoy. The wicked see Him and weep, while the righteous see Him and rejoice.

The wicked see His wounds and fall in despair while the righteous see them - as saints Ignatius of Antioch, John Chrysostom and Cyprian say - vivid and radiant. Therefore, they never stop saying: "Even so Amen!," i.e. let it be O Lord, we are waiting for Your coming to enjoy Your Person!

And who is He who comes to judge?

He says about Himself:

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, says the Lord who is and who was, and who is to come, the

Almighty" [8].

We have already understood His saying, "*who is, and who was, and who is to come*" [4].

He is "*the Lord*," or God the Judge, who is to rule.

He is "*the Almighty*," therefore we should not doubt in His coming or His powers.

He is "*the Alpha and the Omega*," and according to Origen¹⁸ if there existed a divine language with which we read the heavenly matters, we shall find that the Son is its first and last letters. Without Him we cannot comprehend anything about heaven and the lips would be unable to utter the heavenly praises.

And He is "*the Beginning and the End*," as St. Augustine¹⁹ says that the Son is the Beginning in which heaven and earth were created, because it is said, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and "All things were made by Him." And the Psalmist says, "In wisdom (i.e. in Christ the Wisdom) You have made them all" (Ps. 104:24).

Origen²⁰ says, [He is the Beginning, because He was residing with Adam in Paradise, and became the ending or "the Last Adam," hence embracing the whole humanity from the beginning to the end of ages, caring about all to the end of time].

St. Ambrose²¹ states, that the Son of God has no beginning, because He is the actual beginning, and He does not have an end, as he is "the End."

By being Himself the beginning, how could He accept or assume what He really is (the beginning of existence as long as He actually exists, because He is the Beginning). And how could He have an end, He who is the ending of all things, and in this "ending" we find ourselves home where we reside without end.

St. Jerome and Tertullian state that this conforms with what the apostle says, that "He might gather together in one all things in Christ" (Eph. 1:10), or in whom we find all our needs. In whom He holds His Church, keep her, protect her and provide her with all her

needs.

4 - THE PERSON OF THE REVEALER

God shines on man in a way that fits his conditions and needs to give him special fullness. Therefore, before God describes Himself, the apostle showed his conditions and the state of the church saying:

"I John, both your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" [9].

When emperor Domitian arrested the apostle in his old age, to deprive him from his children and his service, and to stop his tongue from preaching, the contrary happened.

1- The brotherly and fatherly ties between him and his people were not severed, because these ties are not built upon bodily bases, but upon fellowship in the Lord. Here he proclaims to them that he is attached to them by fellowship together in tribulation (*the sufferings of Christ*), through which they shall have fellowship "*in the kingdom of Jesus Christ*" that they will be granted its guarantee, waiting together in the fellowship of "*His patience*" until they reach it in eternity.

2- His presence in Patmos did not obliterate his mind with sadness, but it was an opportunity for him to burst forth in Spirit. At the same time when his tongue stopped preaching, the Lord proclaimed to him a prophecy to announce to the Church, revealing to him unknown truths, pertaining to the end of ages, and the secret joys of the heavenly wedding.

In the middle of pains, the consolation of God gratifies the believer's soul. That is why in the middle of the stoning pit, St. Stephen saw the heavens opened and the Son of man standing to help and support him. And in the middle of the bitter trial Job saw the Lord; and in the middle of anguish He showed the heavenly ladder to Jacob the fugitive. Also in captivity Ezekiel the prophet

saw God seated on the Cherubim's vehicle.

Once more we see that the message of the apostle who was exiled "*for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ,*" did not stop, but in fact more improved. He says:

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day²². And I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet" [10].

No doubt that the apostle was not aware of the time when he was enjoying the revelation. He said, "*the day of the Lord*" because it was a period of enjoyment and delight. For what he saw is pertinent to the Lord's day or the great day of judgment.

The apostle heard a voice "*behind him,*" although he proclaims future, present and past events. The reason for this could be that man cannot see the heavenly glories until the corrupt (the body) is clothed with the incorrupt. That is why God asked Moses not to see Him except from behind, because he could not see Him and live.

Hearing a loud voice from behind signals that he was going to talk about things hidden from the human eyes. It also shows that it bears a warning, that man might stop rushing towards earthly matters and listen to the divine voice.

The voice "*as of a trumpet*" because it is a divine voice, great in its nature, authority, glory and theme!

The Person of the Revealer

1 - The Alpha and the Omega:

"Saying, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, and, What you see, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea" [11].

The Lord has introduced Himself to us before as the "*the Alpha and the Omega²³*." Here also He manifests to His churches that He is "*the First and the Last.*"

Origen²⁴ says that the Son, the Word, is the First of creation or its Head and Disposer, and when He condescended, He did not

become the second or the third or the fourth, but became "the Last." He became man and not one of the heavenly hierarchy. By that He embraced the whole creation from its beginning to its end.

This is the beautiful description that the churches see in Him, therefore, cling to Him, because they are in His bosom. He does not forsake them and they do not want to depart from Him.

As for the **seven churches**, they were real existing churches. Bishop Victorianus says that though they really existed and though the messages were directed to them, they also represent the state of the Church as a whole.

He chose number "7," because it indicates to perfection. Bishop Victorianus explains this by saying that the apostle Paul wrote also to seven churches. He addressed the rest of the epistles he wrote to certain persons by name. The prophet Isaiah prophesied about this saying, "And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying: We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel. Only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach" (Isa. 4:1).

Consequently, the church (the seven women) takes hold of the Lord Jesus, cling to Him and does not want to depart from Him. Thus, He might bestow His name on her and take away her reproach. Thus the apostle says:

"Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands" [12].

Where the man is, the "seven women" gather around him (Isa. 4:1) as **lampstands**. They take light from Him and give light to the world. The oil of the Holy Spirit illuminates them... the Spirit of her Bridegroom, the true Light. The Prophet Zechariah saw her, "a lampstand of solid gold... and on the stand seven lamps" (4:2). The prophet talked to her saying: "Arise, shine; for your light has come. And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you... The Gentiles shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising" (Isa. 60:1,3).

It is "**seven**" a sign of diversity in gifts together with the unity of work and objective. It is the sign of a covenant between God and man, at the same manner Abraham did with Abimelech when they made an oath at "Beersheba" (Gen. 21:27-31). Because number "7" indicates perfection, it is repeated in this book 54 times.

It is "**golden**" because it is heavenly, and because of its purity, glory and greatness in the eyes of the Bridegroom who says to her, "Behold you are fair, my love. How beautiful you are! Your have dove's eyes" (Song 1:15).

2 - "And in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girded about the chest with a golden band" [13].

The greatness and unity of churches lie in the presence of the Bridegroom in their midst. While He is in heaven, He is concerned with His Church, clothed with a **garment down to the foot**, so that His bride might be clothed with a garment down to the feet (19:8), proceeding together to an eternal wedding without end. It is beautiful that the presbyters are around the throne (4:4), also clothed in white garments, and everything in heaven is ready for the wedding day.

The garment down to the feet is the garment of priesthood²⁵... For the Lord never ceases His priestly work until the accomplishment of our salvation. He is constantly rising to help the humanity and pick off all people (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5: 5-10).

St. Irenaeus²⁶ says that in these words He shows us some of the glory He accepts from His Father to whom He points as the Head (1:14).

He also points to His priestly function by the long garment down to the feet. That is the reason why Moses clothed the high priest according to this rite.

As for **the golden band about the chest**, this indicates the gathering of the people around the bosom of God where they feed

on both Testaments.

Bishop Victorianus says that His breasts are the two Testaments, and the golden girdle is the host of saints who are tested like gold. Or it might point to the enlightened conscience and pure spiritual understanding granted to churches.

The golden girdle also indicates the pure love originating from God's bosom towards His children. It also shows Him as the Teacher of the Law, as the High Priest wore a girdle when offering the sacrifice.

St. John Chrysostom says that He is girded across His loins as an indication of the Law of the Old Testament, and across the breast where we find love and justice as an indication of the New Testament.

3 - "*His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow.*"

He was also described "*His garment was white as snow. And the hair of His head was like pure wool*" (Dan. 7:9).

St. Augustine believes that **the white hair** points to the host of saints who are as the hair of the Lord, not one single hair falls down without His permission. They are pure and immaculate, united together in beauty and harmony.

Bishop Victorianus says that in the white hair appear the assemblies of the Fathers like wool, as they are His simple sheep. And they are like the snow as they are countless in number, learned from heaven.

The white hair also is a sign of superior wisdom and beauty, also refers to eternity (Dan. 7:9).

4 - "*And His eyes like a flame of fire*" [14].

We see in Him the awake Bridegroom "who will not slumber or fall asleep." Nobody can snatch us from His hand.

In Him we see the Judge who examines the unknown and the known, saying with the prophet: "For your eyes are open to all

the ways of the sons of men; to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. 32:19).

His eyes burning with fire are an indication to the power of the divine word. They light the way and disperse darkness from the heart, or as Bishop Victorianus suggests that God's commandments illuminate the believers and burn the deniers.

5 - "*His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace.*"

The feet of God are mercy and justice, by them God walks among His people to ascertain their salvation and destroy the powers of evil.

They also refer to both Testaments with which He walks among His people, since they are the pure word of God.

The Lord offers His feet that are like fine brass to the believer to wear, that he might walk on the road of pains, paying no attention to stumbles, because His feet crush anything that stands in the way.

St. Gregory the Neziarius says that they indicate the Lord's manhood burning with divinity, who dwelt among us and became one of us, hence the humanity met with Him.

6 - "*And His voice as the sound of many waters*" [15].

(a) By this the Lord reveals His glory to us as in (Ezekiel 43:2), and as St. Irenaeus says²⁷: [For the voice of God is like many waters, as God is rich and great. And the word "**His voice**" crosses through those people offering free gifts to His followers, and giving His commandments to suit and benefit every group.] Likewise the Father offers His Son as many waters to irrigate the barren land that it might bring forth abundant fruit.

(b) He also reveals to us His awe, power, effectiveness (Heb. 4:12) and continuity because the sound of waters (the seas) is awesome and never stops neither day nor night.

(c) Bishop Victorianus says, [The many waters is understood to be many peoples who came through baptism], as He

had sent His disciples saying, "Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them..."

7 - "He had in His right hand seven stars."

Ibn-el-Assal believes that the **seven stars** are the seven angels or church bishops. They are in His hand [a symbol of their obedience, and that they submit to His disposal as something in His possession.]

It is good to liken the bishops to the stars which are enlightened by the Sun of Righteousness, and consequently, they reflect His light upon the rest of the stars. But they as leaders have to turn precisely in their orbit His Person, or else they would perish. They appear small to whoever looks at them, but great in the eyes of God, kept in His right hand as He loves them and does not let them go.

8 - "Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword."

The Lord appears to His people as a warrior carrying a sharp sword out of his mouth; that is His strong words.

(a) By which He disciplines and consoles. By His word the inner man grows and the darkness disperses.

(b) It is two-edged and cuts forcefully inside the speaker and the listener as well.

(c) By His word He protects and justifies the believer, cuts the evil and judges the wicked. "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him: the word that I have spoken, will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

Tertullian says²⁸: [This interpretation that is for us and not for the heretics] gives us steadfastness, as the Lord Christ appears as a warrior...

David says: "Gird Your sword upon Your thigh" (Ps. 45:3). Yet, listen to what we have read before about Jesus Christ? "You are fairer than the sons of men. Grace is poured upon Your lips" (Ps. 45:2).

How then can we relate the delicacy of the supreme beauty

and the flowing grace on His lips to the One who is girded with a sword ready for war?!

David also adds, "and in Your majesty ride on victoriously." That is, "because of truth, humility, and righteousness." How can He reach these results by using the sword that is known to be used in deception, rashness and harm?! Then, we can understand that He is the "Divine Word" who has two edges; the Law and the Gospel, by which He tears the devil into pieces and protects us from the spiritual enemies full of evil and malice. He employs it to sever us from things dear to us, for the sake of God's Holy Name. The Lord came to bring a sword on earth and not peace (Matt. 10:34).

Thus, the brightness of beauty and the grace on the lips go together with this sword the Lord bears as David says.

9 - "And His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength" [16].

The Apostle could not describe the brightness of His glory except by comparing His face to the sun, for He like the Father "dwells in unapproachable light" (I Tim. 6:16). He shines on His saints and they "will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43).

ENDING

We can summarize all revelation in that the Church finds in the Lord the Bridegroom, the Priest, the Father and the Leader. In Him she finds all her needs. He braces her, sanctifies her, keeps her and leads her to present her to His Father pure and chaste. Some see in these descriptions that we find in Him the Church - the Body of Christ - in its fullness united in Him and cannot exist other than in Him. He is the Beginning and the End, where all the righteous gather in Him:

a) Clothed with a dress down to the feet as a symbol of the righteous, **from Adam to the flood.**

b) The girdle at the breast a symbol of the righteous **from the flood to Moses**.

c) The white head and hair, a symbol of **the righteous under the Law, in the Old Testament**.

d) The burning eyes, a symbol of **the prophets** who see in a prophetic spirit.

e) The feet of brass is a symbol of **the apostles** and disciples who roamed preaching the truth.

f) The sound of many waters is a symbol of **the Gentiles** who accepted faith.

g) The sharp sword coming out of His mouth symbolizes those who are hardly saved in **the days of the Antichrist**.

h) The face bright as the sun is a symbol of the **saints in Paradise**.

THE IMPACT OF THE SCENE ON JOHN

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me: 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last [17].

I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.

Amen And I have the keys of Hades and of death'" [18].

No sooner had the apostle seen the Lord in His glory, than he fell at His feet, as the apostles did at the time of His transfiguration (Matt. 17:6). And Daniel at the Tigris River (Dan. 11:8), but the compassionate Lord put His right hand on him and raised him up.

Let us bow with the adulteress at His feet, that He might put His hand upon us and raise, us after we bury the death of sin under His feet. He is the "**Living**" who, because of our sins "**was dead**," but now He is living in whom we rise and He offers atonement intercession for us before the Father.

It is He alone who "*has the keys of Hades and of Death.*"

He raises us up shutting their gates facing us, therefore, neither eternal death nor Hades will have any authority over us.

Our Lord descended into Hades from on the cross²⁹. He is the Medicine of life who disappeared in Hades, thus destroyed its gates³⁰ releasing us victorious.

The wonderful thing is that the speaker is the Incarnate God who says, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega,*" and "*I was dead.*" He did not say "I am the Alpha and the Omega by the divine nature," or "I was dead by the human nature," because He is One *Hypostasis* with one nature of two inseparable natures.

"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this [19].

The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands:

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches" [20].

He ordered him to write what he saw: the scene mentioned before "The Lord amidst His Church," and what he sees: The state of the seven churches (Chs 2 & 3), and what he will see: "The state of the Church until the advent of the Lord, and His heavenly glory."

He called all this "*a mystery*" which man cannot comprehend, or be in touch with, unless it is through the works of the Holy Spirit who teaches and reveals the mysteries of God to His servants.

CHAPTER TWO

In this chapter the Lord is addressing special messages to four churches.

- 1 - To the angel of the Church of Ephesus (1-7).
- 2 - To the angel of the Church in Smyrna (8-11).
- 3 - To the angel of the Church in Pergamos (12-17).
- 4 - To the angel of the Church in Thyatira (18-9).

INTRODUCTION

We ought to know:

First: These churches really existed and the speech is addressed to them. But as Bishop Victorianus, St. Augustine and others say, that what was mentioned in these messages pertains to the state of the churches in every age and to the believer from time to time. Therefore, these messages are addressed to every believer.

Second: The Lord speaks to the churches through their angels, that is their bishops, ascribing to the pastoral responsibility, forcing them to carry their people's weaknesses, and care for the development of their children. At the same time He inspires the people to accept God's guidance and commandments through His bishops and priests.

Third: The following shows the **weakness** of each church and the **remedy** given to her:

1. Ephesus	Lukewarmness of love.	Contemplation on the tree of (eternal) life.
2. Smyrna	Suffering of pain.	Waiting for the crown of life.
3. Pergamos	The obstacle in the church.	Practicing the Holy Sacraments.
4. Thyatira	Evil lusts.	Cutting evil off.
5. Sardis	Hypocrisy.	Concern for Heavenly Glory (internal).
6. Philadelphia	Laziness at work.	Understanding of real Heavenly position.
7. Laodicea	Spiritual lassitude.	Perseverance with hope.

1- TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH OF

EPHESUS³¹

1) Who is he?

"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write." It is said that the angel of the church was Timothy, disciple of Paul the Apostle. St. Paul had founded that church where he served for three years (Acts 20:23), and wrote letters to her. Timothy served there as well (1 Tim. 1:3), and also the Apostle John went there after he was set free.

2) Description of the Lord

"These things, says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands" [1].

The Lord appears to each church according to her convenience, according to her needs, that she might see in Him her people and her cure from every weakness. As this church suffers from her *"Lukewarmness of love,"* that is why he declares to her that it is He who holds the seven stars (the bishops) in his right hand. In other words, it is He who protects them, cares for them and encompasses them. He also announces to her that he is *"who walks in the midst of the golden lampstands"* who wanders ceaselessly in His church, working for the salvation of every soul. As if He is saying: "I love you, so why does your love to me weaken?" On the other hand, the stars in themselves are dark; their light comes from Him who holds it "the Sun of Righteousness" assuring us that we cannot possess love by ourselves, but it comes from God who holds us in His right hand.

3) The state of the church

"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you can not bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars" [2]. Before He tells her about her weakness, God gives her confidence saying, *"I know your works..."* I don't forget the work of your love, and I don't ignore your labor, even the one you don't mention.

Zechariah forgot his prayers that he had offered to God to have a son, but God rewarded him for his prayers in due course

(Luke 1:13). Also we in our weakness think that God has forgotten our former works, labor and patience that we bore for His sake, but God assures every person that He does not forget even a cup of cold water presented in His name.

He does not forget the labor of this church, especially what she endured from those who pretended to be ministers and filled the earth with words, while they were liars and were far from her spirit, her message, her meekness, and her love. For this, God speaks to the bishop of Ephesus saying, "*And you have persevered, and have patience, and have labored for my name's sake and have not become weary*" [3].

After this encouragement, He came back to reproach the church in a very gentle way without hurting her feelings saying, "*Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love*" [4].

Sweetly, God supports the bruised reed and inflames the smoking flax (Matt. 12 : 20), and firmly without deceit or dissimulation He declares her weakness, in order to repent and come back to her full health.

4) The remedy

"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works; or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent" [5]. This is the way to the cure; repent and act. As St. Jerome³² says that we are all exposed to fall. And falling cannot be taken as a sign that we were not one day raised up, or baptized with the Spirit, as some pretend. Falling does not need re-baptism but it needs repentance and action. Without repentance our lampstand demolishes, therefore God hurries, denounces and reprimands severely because He cannot wait to see the lampstand of His children displaced. God moves from reprimand to kindness by showing the good deeds of the church saying,

"But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaites, which I also hate" [6].

He is pleased to see His bride hates what He hates, and loves what He loves, sharing His behavior, His feelings and His thoughts, and following the path of His steps.

But the Heresy of the Nicolaites is:

a) St. Irenaeus³³ says, [Nicolaites are Nicolas' followers, one of the seven deacons (Acts 6:5). These people live in lust without control, and teach different matters as allowing adultery and eating idol's offerings.]

b) Both St. Clement of Alexandria and St. Augustine acquit Nicolas from the heresy and attribute it to his followers.

c) Tertullian and St. Jerome see that when Nicolas was chosen as a deacon he abstained from his wife, but because of her beauty he came back to her. And when he was reprimanded for that he fell in and allowed adultery.

d) Others see that Nicolas was very jealous for his wife because of her beauty, and when others blamed him for his great attachment to her, he wanted to show the contrary. Thus, he allowed to whoever wanted her to take her, hence he fell into this heresy.

5) An advice to listen to what the Spirit says,

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," that is to say, he who wants to listen to God's voice has to listen to the Holy Spirit who speaks to all churches, for what He says to our church is what He says to all.

And what does He say? Tertullian³⁴ answers, that He always says, "repent."

6) The reward

"To him who overcome I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" [7].

The heart which is lukewarm in love is a hungry heart, therefore it needs to be filled with God *"the tree of life,"* for He fills and heals the heart (Rev. 22:2). And He is the reward offered to the victors. Every time the believer is in retreat and contemplates on

the everlasting eternity, he is inflamed with love and longing to the heavenly Groom and becomes apathetic to what is earthly and secular!

2- TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA

1) Who is he?

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write..." It is said that he is the bishop Polycarb. Ebn-El-Assal believed that he is the bishop Phlivarius, the disciple of St. John the Apostle.

2) Description of the Lord

"These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life" [8].

By writing to the suffering church of Smyrna, who was about to be severely persecuted, the Lord wanted to assure her that He is the First and the Last who embraces His creation to Himself. That nothing would happen to His creation without His permission, and does not allow but what is for its good. As He reminds her that He *"was dead and is alive."* If He had died for her sake how cannot she bear death for His sake? He accepted death to tread down death, giving life to whoever dies with Him.

3) The state of the Church

As the church was masked by great tribulations that befell her, that is why He describes her by saying:

a) *"I know your works."* My eyes does not part from you, as a potter who never takes his eyes away from his vessel which is in the furnace, in order not to burn. And as a father who leaves all his work to be beside his suffering son at the moment of his anguish... Whenever pain increases, the Lord declares abundance of His care for us.

b) *"Tribulation,"* I know how much can you tolerate, so I only allow the amount of tribulation that is enough for your salvation and your growth.

c) *"Poverty":* Poverty was probably due to the confiscation

of the Christian's belongings by the Roman State. The Lord knows all that happens to His children even if they were in the worst state of poverty.

d) *"But you are rich, and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan"* [9].

As Ebn-El-Assal says, [He knows his richness because of his wealth in virtues and his steadfastness in hardships]. And St. Jerome says: [Who becomes poor with Jesus becomes rich]. Bishop Victorianus believes that richness here lies in the fact that there are some of the bishop's children who refuse "the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews"... So the bishop's richness is his children's orthodox faith and straight life. Satan wants to steal this richness by means of groups of wicked Jews who are "the synagogue of Satan."

4) Advice and guidance

"Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days" [10].

As they win Satan's war that he raised through the wicked Jews, the Lord encourages them to accept the tribulation, the church goes through "ten days," the ten Roman persecutions that history recorded to us³⁵.

Number "ten" indicates abundance and unlimitation, as the righteous Job says, "These ten times you have reproached me" (19:3).

And how does He encourage them? *"Be you faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life"* [10]. For the crown of life, the believer accepts every pain and tribulation enduring death all the day to attain "the eternal life," where there is no death!

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death" [11].

This is the command of the Spirit, that man accepts death of

the body in order not to be overcome by the second death, for in the body's death, there is the soul's life which will take the body glorified forever.

Fr. Ephrahat³⁶ says that we have to fear the second death (Rev. 20:14, 21:18) filled with crying, gnashing of teeth, sighs and misery, things pertaining to the outside darkness. But happy are the believers and the righteous in this resurrection for they expect to get up and receive the good promises that belong to them.

3- TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS³⁷

1) Who is he ?

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write." It was said that he was Kerios mentioned by Eusebius. He was strong in faith and ended his life in martyrdom.

2) Qualities of the Lord

"These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword" [12].

As the church had left her door open to strangers, consequently, many stumble-blocks were found therein. The Lord appears as a jealous Judge who separates with the sharp sword His people from the strangers, even if they call themselves Christians. He is the Lord of the church who sends His word as a sharp sword, to separate what is right from what is wrong. He severs what is from Satan and cuts it, and this is always the effect of God's word.

3) The State of the Church

"I know your works, and where you dwell, even where Satan's throne is: And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells" [13].

God knows the hard times which this church goes through, since she is where the "evil spirit" dwells. Hence pastoring her is hard and painful. But remember that you have "Antipas the faithful martyr," who witnesses that it is possible for the believer to hold

firm until death, for the sake of faith, whatever the conditions are.

The historian Andrea spoke to us about this martyr as a well known person to him. He was martyred by burning him to death. He was offered to be saved but refused.

Therefore, in the midst of the hard conditions, among you are martyrs to that I witness to their faithfulness.

“But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality” [14]. “Thus you also have those that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaites, which thing I hate” [15].

And as usual, He reprimands firmly but gently, *“I have a few things against you.”*

As for the doctrines of Nicolaites, we have already discussed. However in this church a group of people started to accept these strange teachings without coming to practice its principles. This group stumble the church, as Balak did to his people in the past (Numbers 25:1,2; 31:16).

And here we Notice:

a) He starts by reprimanding for eating what was offered to idols before he blames fornication [v.14], because, as the Fathers tells us,³⁸ that greed precedes falling in adultery.

b) When He reprimands the church for the teachings of the Nicolaites, it is enough to tell her that the people are holding to what He hates. And this is sufficient without needless arguments or discussion, because she should not hold to what He hates and neglect what He loves.

c) God reprimands the pastor because of the few who deviate, and as St. Augustine says³⁹: [We, as bishops, are blamed because of the crimes of the wicked and not for our crimes, even if some of them do not know us].

4) The Remedy and the Reward:

"Repent or else I will come to you quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth" [16]. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it" [17].

The bishop is obliged to repent quickly because of the sins and deviation of the minority, as they are his children and he is responsible for them before God.

As for the reward for overcoming these stumbling blocks, it is the eating of **the hidden manna**! How wonderful it is that God offers us His holy Body and Blood, the heavenly manna (John 6:45-51), to take it as a guarantee. God gives us enjoyment while we are on earth, by giving us the heavenly food of the victors.

What a great reward that the priest and the people get, when they advance after a long struggle, troubles in life and persistence in worshipping; to enjoy the Body of the Lord and the cup of salvation in the unity of love, for fellowship and with firmness in God.

At the same time, by eating this manna the soul rejoices, so it refrains from every strange doctrine initiated by the Nicolaites. For this reason, the church intends to feed her children since their childhood with the hidden manna, as a reward and a remedy for them.

This was about the hidden manna. As for **the white pebble (stone)** it is, as St. Jerome says, a jewel that shines by night as daylight. By this he points to the Incarnate Word. This is our reward and we do not accept any substitute for it.

Ebn-El-Assal believes that the pebble or the white stone indicates the kingdom on which it is written, in a new spiritual language known only by the children of the kingdom. Some people believe that it is white pebbles used by Roman and Greek judges to announce the innocence of the accused. Some others thought that it

is one of the precious stones placed on the breast of the high priest (Exod. 28; Lev. 8).

As for **the new name**, none knows it but the one who receives, because the inside heavenly joy "is not shared by a stranger" (Prov. 14:10), and is understood only by those who live in it and taste it. Therefore, the hidden manna, the white pebbles and the new name are revelations of the winners delight in the Lord Jesus, our secret bread, our wealth and our happiness in whom rests our heart.

Bishop Victorianus believes that the hidden manna is the eternity, the white pebble is the adoption to God, and the new name written on the pebble is "Christian."

4- TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA⁴⁰

1) Who is he?

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write." He is St. Irenaeus, St. Polycarb's disciple, and he is the second one who interpreted the book. He was warm in spirit; and Jezebel, as we shall see, has offended him.

2) Description of the Lord

"These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass" [18].

Jezebel went on spreading her venom among the people. Therefore, the Lord offers Himself as two inflamed eyes so that the pastor might discern every detail concerning his children's life. And two feet of brass, to demolish firmly every evil.

St. John Chrysostom⁴¹ says, [The bishop has to be cautious. He has to have a thousand eyes, fast to see, his insight should not be dark... He has to be very vigilant, warm in Spirit, inflamed, as if he was inhaling fire. He has to be on his guard for all and caring for everyone]. As for firmness, St. John Climacus says: [He who pastors the sheep does not have to be neither a lion nor an ewe].

3) The State of the Church

"I know your works, love, service, faith and your patience, and as for your works, the last are more than the first" [19].

Here also He presents the great merits of the church and her virtues and He reveals that He does not forget her works, her love, her service, her faith, her patience and her constant growth.

The amazing thing is that He puts her works, love and service before faith, because God does not accept the theoretical and dry faith. And He does not distinguish faith from works and vice versa.

Again, the Lord as usual, reveals the weakness saying, *"Nevertheless I have a few things against you"* and what are these few things? *"because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and beguile My servants to commit sexual immorality, and to eat things sacrificed to idols" [20].*

Who is this Jezebel?

a) It is said that she is the bishop's wife, as it appears in the Greek and Syrian texts, *"the looseness of your wife Jezebel."* For she followed Jezebel's track (I Chron. 18:21), pretending to be a servant, while she was spreading the *Nicolaite* thoughts.

b) She is a paganness, who pretended to be a Christian, and she displayed zeal in worshipping, which made the bishop entrust her with some services in the church. So she was corrupting and misleading.

c) She is a rich Christian lady who used her wealth and her influence in misleading .

d) Epiphanius thinks that she is an indication of the ladies, the followers of the heretic Valentinus and their names are: Prescella, Maximiella and Cantilla.

e) She is an indication of a group of heretics, and was called Jezebel because they looked like her in:

First: As Jezebel corrupted Ahab's rule, those corrupted the pastoral work by spreading the strange thoughts.

Second: She is an atheist and a pagan in her inner thoughts pushing others towards evil.

Third: She is a killer of the prophets and she hated them.

Forth: She was spreading the spirit of fornication, corrupting the simple people's minds and pushing them into spiritual fornication.

4) The Remedy

a) **Concerning Jezebel and her lovers:** "*And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent*" [21].

How patient God is! In spite of her evil doings inside the church corrupting many people's mind, probably prolonging her life, so that in her old age she may realize the truth, but she insisted on evil doing. For this reason God is disciplining her with illness saying: "*Indeed, I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds*" [22]. It is not for her sake and her children; but for the rest so that they may not corrupt with her, as He says, "*And I will kill her children with death. And all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works*" [23].

And this is the pledge that they receive on the judgment day, as the apostle says, "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:4-6).

b) **Concerning the rest:** "*But to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira.*" "And" before "*the rest*" is not as a conjunction but is to specify, as if he was saying, "I say to you the rest" who are in Thyatira who have not this doctrine or did not follow Jezebel.

But when he says, "*And which have not known the depth of Satan as they speak,*" it is because of the heretic Gnostics who pretended to know the divine matters more than others. As they called on the necessity of experiencing the evil and the good life in order that man be acquainted with the depth of Satan.

These rest, God talks to them, "*I will put on you no other burden*" [24]. "*But hold fast what you have till I come*" [25]. As Bishop Victorianus says, God does not give them other laws and duties as a harder burden. It will be enough that they hold fast to what they have until God comes. Thus He declares to them His love; He does not want to increase this burden, as He urges them to persist until the end.

5) The Reward

The bishop's opposition to Jezebel and her followers could cause disturbance, and trouble in the church, and someone may think that the bishop's position is shaken. But the Lord affirms the contrary saying, "*And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations*" [26]. "*And He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to pieces, even as I also have received from My Father*" [27].

This power is granted to the bishop by the Lord Jesus to whom the Father said, "Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. 2:8-9).

And as he opposes Jezebel's deeds unto the end without fatigue or fear, he enjoys the Lord Jesus Himself according to the promise of the Lord, "*And I will give him the morning star*" [28], who will dissipate Jezebel's dark deeds. And as Bishop Victorianus says, [He had promised the morning star who dissipates the night and declares the light or the beginning of the day]. It is sufficient to him who cuts evil, to enjoy the Lord Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22:16).

CHAPTER THREE

In this chapter God addresses his messages:

5 - To the angel of the Church in Sardis 1-6.

6 - To the angel of the Church in Philadelphia 7-12.

7 - To the angel of the Church of The Laodiceans 14-22.

5- TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN SARDIS

1) Who is he?

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write" [1]. It is said that he is St. Melito.

2) Description of the Lord

"He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars."

As the Lord was handling the sin of hypocrisy in this church, therefore He presents Himself to her, *"He who has the seven Spirits of God,"* or the Holy Spirit. He is perfect in His deeds, together with His Spirit. He also presents Himself as *"He who has... the seven stars."*

a) This Spirit holds man, blames him, sanctifies him, and prepares him with divine powers to attain through Him the heavenly wedding feast. Through Him we obtain the adoption, and forgiveness. Through Him we enjoy fellowship with the Lord, we are inoculated in the Body of the Lord, and we are granted empowering blessings of love, joy, peace, meekness and chastity (Gal. 5:2).

All this corrupt hypocrisy by attracting the soul to steal the hidden glory and the secret communion with God alone.

b) *"Has the seven stars,"* or *"has all the bishops,"* as if He is stimulating in the bishop these feelings of being possessed by God that he might also say,

*"All the bishops are yours and you are ours O God...
I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine!"*

3) The state of the Church

"I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead" [1].

How dangerous is it! When people witness to a certain church that she is alive, having a name and reputation, but in fact she is dead. Because she is occupied with many matters far away from her mission, which is the enjoyment of her children in the Lord Jesus.

4) The Remedy

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God" [2].

Bishop Victorianus says, [The fifth group represents careless people who do other works than what they have to do. They are Christians by name, therefore by all means, He urges them to turn back from their deeds in order to be saved.]

How can they abandon carelessness?

a) **By being watchful:** while waiting for the coming of the Lord, the believer should not pay attention to people's praise, but keep awake to meet Him.

b) *"Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die."* Therefore, hypocrisy is the enemy that destroys the spiritual life; once it gets into a person it corrupts all his worship. For this reason this person has to **hurry to save his dying soul who is about to die by the work of self-righteousness**, the works that seems perfect in the eyes of people not God's.

c) **Remember the goodness of God to us** *"Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent."* Thus, acknowledging what we owe Him, knowing that every righteousness we have is from Him not from us, repenting of our love of people's praise.

d) **Remember the day of judgment:** He who is not attracted by remembering the blessings of the Lord granted to him will be restrained by His threats, *"Therefore, if you will not watch, I*

will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you” [3].

The time of the coming of the Lord as a thief upon the hypocrites, will be a wedding day for those who did not defile with hypocrisy their affections, their feelings, their senses and their goals. As He says to them,

“You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments;

*and they shall walk with Me in white,
for they are worthy” [4].*

*“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments,
and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life;
but I will confess his name before My Father and before
His angels” [5].*

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” [6].

He knows them by their names... He keeps them in the book of Life... The Lord acknowledges them before His angels... They wear white garments. Is not all this enough for us to reject every vain glory in this world?!

6 - TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA

1) Who is he ?

“And to the Angel of the church in Philadelphia write.” It is said that he is the bishop *Codranos*; however *St. Jerome* says that this father was the bishop of Athens not of Philadelphia.

2) Description of the Lord

a) As the church was marked by slackness at work, therefore, the Lord presents Himself to her saying, *“These things says He Who is Holy” [7].* It is enough for the four living creatures (Rev. 4) to understand that the Lord is Holy to permanently worship Him day and night, tirelessly. As soon as the twenty four heavenly presbyters hear the four living creatures saying, "Holy,

Holy, Holy,” they get up from their seats, take off their crowns and throw them at His feet bowing down. They do that since their creation up to this day. They remain this way forever, longing, and in love with this Holy One, not knowing what to offer Him? In the same way, when man understands the true holiness of God, he inflames with the fire of abundant love to worship the Lord, to prostrate to Him and to serve Him earnestly.

b) The Lord presents Himself as "*the Truth*," so that this church abandons her slackness to follow the way of truth.

c) He presents Himself to her "*He who has the key of David, He who opens, and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.*" This description which has been proclaimed before by Isaiah (22:12) points to Jesus.

It is as if the Lord is encouraging His church saying; why are you slacking at work, and I alone open for you the doors of heaven and shut you in, so that Satan would not approach you?!

As for the key with which He opens, it is:

a) Saints Cyril the Great and Jerome think that it is the power of binding and loosening, which the Lord granted to His bride through His disciples (Mat. 16 : 19).

b) St. John Chrysostom sees that it is the Cross with which the Lord opens for us the door of Paradise and gets us into the kingdom. Also with it, He shuts hell and Hades in our faces.

c) St. Gregory the Miracles-Worker⁴² thinks that this key is the understanding of the Holy Bible, especially the prophecies, for the Spirit of Jesus who wrote the prophecies is Himself alone who is able to clarify and reveal it.

3) The State of the Church

"I know your works. See I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word and have not denied My name" [8].

In spite of the slackness at work which this church was marked with, the Lord knows her few works and does not forget

them. Every prayer how weak it seems to be, every alms, every perseverance how negligible it may be, God does not ignore it, letting the door of salvation open in front of us. For the little we do God offers much.

Perhaps the open door here is the door of the effective service (1 Cor. 16:9). As he had little strength in preaching and pastoring, God grants him strength in serving and does not forget that he kept His word and did not deny His name . For that He tells him;

"Indeed, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not, but - lie indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you" [9].

"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" [10].

In spite of the weakness of the struggle, God does not forget this toil. For that, God grants him grace as a tool in his hand to destroy the power of Satan which is not the synagogue of the Jews. Here, God presents to us two principles:

a) The first principle is that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves in worshipping or serving, but our sufficiency is from God (2 Cor. 3:15). By the grace of God we are adequate and able to destroy with courage and trust the power of evil. We, in ourselves, "had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead." "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Cor. 1:9, 4:7).

b) The second spiritual principle is to be honest with what's in our hands so that God grants us a superhuman honesty. In keeping ourselves from evil as possible as we can, God will keep us from what is beyond our will. We should work with honesty now, and God will bestow honesty on us in the darkest moments to come.

4) The Remedy and the Reward

The remedy of slackness at work lies in understanding the reality of man's position and of what God has prepared for him in the eternal life. Thus he is filled with hope and he works with joy and trust without despair. The Lord tells him:

"Behold I come quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" [11].

"He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name" [12].

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" [13].

By this hope, the Apostle calls on His children to be full of enthusiasm saying, "Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown" (1 Cor. 9: 24,25).

God supports our hope by saying, "*Behold I come quickly.*" Therefore we should hold fast to the blessings we have which we obtained in behaving as sons of God through baptism, and as blessed temples of the Holy Spirit.

He also warns us "*that no one may take your crown,*" as the human beings have taken the fallen angels' crown. Jacob took Essau's blessing (Gen. 24), Judah took Reuben's blessing (Gen. 49); David took Saul's crown; Maetthias took Judah's crown; and the Gentiles took blessings that the Jews had rejected.

What is our crown, or our hope?

a) The winner becomes "*a pillar in the temple of the Father.*" It is amazing that He calls the Father "*My God,*" repeating it four times, showing the relationship of Jesus and the victorious believer in its best image. He brings to light the unity of the infinite love until He calls His Father with us saying, "My God." This would be enough for us as our crown, this unity that we do not

deserve and that the mind can not imagine!

b) He raises us up as living pillars in heaven, and the pillars point to the victory, as the Maccabees erected pillars on their tombs and carved their names on them (1 Mac. 13:29).

Bishop Victorianus sees that the pillars are the ornament of the building. Therefore, on the great day of the Lord, the victorious pastors are the ornament of the believers in heaven. Paul the Apostle called Jacob, John and Peter the pillars of the church (Gal. 2:9). And called "the church of the living God, the pillars and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3 : 15).

c) He will not go outside anymore; for as the pillars on which the building is based, and as a son who remains in the house forever, so are the victors in eternity.

As St. Augustine says, [Who does not long for the city from which no friend departs and no enemy enters?]

d) On the pillars are carved three names of the hidden victorious.

First: The name of the Father, for every victory is held by the love of God and His hidden plan.

Second: The name of the City of God, the New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven. The victorious City over all evil powers and she remains victorious forever, not harmed by the factors of time or attacked by the enemy anymore.

Third: The Lord Jesus' new Name. Perhaps the Name is "The Lamb," as it is repeated about 28 times in the Book of Revelation. But in any case, the name of the Lord will be registered upon every believer not in a human language, but through the hidden unity and the eternal tie between us and Him, as members in His Body. The name of the Lord will remain new in our taste of Him in eternity. The believer will not age or get tired of enjoying utterance of His name, and delight at its sweetness.

7 - TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH IN

LAODICEA⁴³

1) Who is He?

"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write."

He is Eurelius or Sepharios the martyr who was praised by Eusebius⁴⁴.

2) Description of the Lord

"These things says the Amen, the Faithful, and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God" [14].

The Lord presents Himself to the church who was marked by the "spiritual lukewarmth," by these qualities to support her.

a) The **Amen**: It means the "Truth." God was thus described as in Isaiah (65:16). In the Lord Jesus is our Amen to the glory of God through us (2 Cor. 1:20). Therefore, the church united to her Christ is working through Him so that within her we may have the Yes and the Amen. In other words, she is marked by the truth and is witnessing to Him without lukewarmth, for the Glory of God.

b) The **honest and truthful witness**: In Greek it means the "martyr." The Lord witnessed to the Father, a true, faithful and practical witness. He witnessed:

- By words, as He is "the true Teacher."
- By conduct, as He is "fairer than the sons of men."
- By love, as He "sacrificed Himself on the Cross."

Thus, He sent His disciples saying, "and you shall be witnesses to Me" (Act. 1:8), by the same true witness that is His.

The faithful witness spares no effort in bringing out the truth and in revealing what he had seen and heard, no matter how much, his witness costs him.

c) The **Beginning of God's creation**: The translation of the Greek word is "Head," or He has the right to administer, manage and work, hence He does not cease caring for His creation. It is a headship of love in action as is said about Him, "and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the

fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:22,23). He grants, to His secret Body, growth in everything. How does the head do all that while the body or one of its members remains lazy?! So every spiritual lukewarmth is a direct insult to the Head!

3) The State of the Church

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I could wish you were cold or hot" [15].

"So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth" [16].

What does He mean by cold, hot and lukewarm?

The first opinion: The cold is the unbeliever who is immersed in evil, and the hot is the believer who is inflamed with the fires of God's love, but as Bishop Victorianus says, [The lukewarm is neither an unbeliever nor a believer, he is all things to everyone. He lives without principle, cold with the cold and hot with the hot.]

The second opinion: The cold is the one who refrains from sin for fear of punishment. The hot is he who refrains from sin for his love to the Lord. As for the lukewarm, he is empty of both, fear and love.

The third opinion: Cassian believes⁴⁵ that the lukewarm is the hesitant between virtue and vice. He wants virtue but is coward to struggle, and he hates to strive for it.

The forth opinion: The cold is he who deep down perceives his weakness and his fallings as the adulterer woman, the tax-collector, the thief, St. Moses the Black, and Mary the Egyptian. This kind gets inflamed quickly by God "the consuming fire" and becomes warm in spirit. As for the lukewarm, he snores in deep sleeping. He thinks in himself that he is virtuous, a disciple of the Lord and faithful. That he himself is in need of nothing but to preach others without humbling to listen, to accept advice and to accept blame. How poor is this man because he is deceived!

St. John Cassian⁴⁶ says, [We saw many of the cold people, monks and laymen, turn to be spiritually warm but we have not seen lukewarm persons becoming warm.]

St. Augustine⁴⁷ says, [I dare to say that it is good for the proud to fall into clear disobedience that they may mourn in themselves, for their fall is because of their delight in themselves. Peter was in a better state when he wept unsatisfied with himself than when he was daring and self-conceited. This is what the Psalmist assured by saying: "Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O Lord" Ps. 83:16.]

St. Augustine sees that God allowed the disgrace of the faithful virgins when the barbarians invaded the city of Rome because they were struck with pride, so God took away from them the people's praise. He allowed them to lose their virginity to mourn and weep so that he may remove their lukewarmness to usurp the invisible heavenly praise⁴⁸.

The fifth opinion: is attributed to Father Daniel. St. John Cassian has written his conference with him, and handled the subject of "the lukewarmness of the spirit" from all aspects. He explained how the lukewarmness could be allowed by God for our good, or could be because of a satanic war, or because of our gradual carelessness. He, as well treated each kind separately⁴⁹.

As for **the danger of the lukewarmness**, it appears from the Lord's saying, "*I will spit you out of my mouth.*" The lukewarm person does not find comfort in God's mouth. He does not endure to hear His words, as God does not endure to see a lukewarm person. Therefore, St. Jerome⁵⁰ says that the Savior does not like the half and half things. He also says, [While God does not want the death of the sinner, but to repent and live, He hates the lukewarm who makes Him vomit.]

Why does God spit the lukewarm?

"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" [17].

1) Feeling rich leads to doing without God. As the lukewarm does not realize his weakness, therefore, he does not feel his need for righteousness and grace of God. He becomes like the proud Pharisee who does not know what he needs from God!

2) He thinks that he is happy although he is empty of the secret fellowship with God. He is miserable because one day his apparent worshipping will vanish and his nakedness, blindness, poverty and misery will be revealed.

4) The remedy and the reward

First: *"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich."* There is no remedy for the lukewarmness unless one comes back to the Lord to buy from Him. In other words, man should pull up his self-centralization in order to fix his eyes and heart on God to buy his needs from Him. The difficulty of this remedy is to empty oneself, to come as a needy to the Lord. The other difficulty is buying "without silver and without price" (Isa. 55:112), "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24).

What does he buy?

a) He buys the gold tried in fire, that is to possess the Incarnate Word of God, "though He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). He who bore the fire of suffering on the Cross to enrich us with all the hidden virtues.

Ibn-el-Assal sees that the gold is the patience acquired through sufferings. It is also the true and self-giving love that we obtain through the Lord Jesus.

b) *"And white garments that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed."* When we were baptized, we were clothed with the Lord Jesus. He alone takes away our disgrace and conceals us with his righteousness, as He grants the church, "to be clothed with pure linen because linen is the saints' righteousness" which is the work of His grace.

c) "*And anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see*" [18]. What could be this eye salve that opens the eye to see the depth of the word of God and His wisdom other than the Holy Spirit who opened the disciples' mind that they may understand the scriptures?!

Fr. Gregory the Great observes that it is the contemplation on the Divine Commandments which enlightens the eyes.⁵¹

Second: "*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent*" [19]. When the lukewarm accepts God's chastening and rebukes, his heart is humbled by repentance, and is opened before God who desires to enter into it as He says, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me*" [20].

It seems that the lukewarm is in a dark night and God wants to come into his heart to enlighten it and make it fruitful that he might find in it precious fruits (Song 4:16). He approaches the heart as He had approached the two disciples of Emmaus. As He was talking to them, they urged Him to stay with them for it was getting towards evening. He reclined with them, their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him (Luke 24).

How great is God's love! God hides behind the door of His commandments so that anyone who opens his heart to the commandments, God is revealed in Him.

St. Mark the Hermit⁵² says, [God hides in His commandments therefore he who asks for Him, will find Him in them.]

St. Ambrose⁵³ says, [The Lord Jesus is standing at the door of yourself; hear Him talking to the Church... He says, "Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my perfection, for my head is drenched with dew, my locks with the damp of the night" (Song 5:2). He does not stand alone. He is preceded by the angels who say, "Open the doors O Kings." What doors? In another place He says: "Open to me the gates of righteousness" (Ps. 118:19). Let us

open to Him the gates of righteousness, the gates of purity, the gates of courage and wisdom.]

What is the reward for opening the gate to the Lord?

"To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" [21].

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" [22].

For the Son, sitting on the divine throne is a natural matter, but for us, sitting on the Lord's throne is because of our unity with, and our attachment to, Him. Through Him we obtained all that the Father desires to offer us.

We are unable to bear this glory, it is the Son who owns this glory. He abandoned it ,then He took it back so that we may obtain through Him the purpose of the glory that humanity cannot bear.

Thanks be to the Son who left everything and became as one of us. He fought Satan and won, was crowned and glorified so that through Him we may have all this in Him.



Part Two

The Prophetic Visions

** Introduction*

<i>1 - Apparition of the sealed book</i>	<i>4-5.</i>
<i>2 - The seven seals</i>	<i>6-7.</i>
<i>3 - The seven trumpets</i>	<i>8-11.</i>
<i>4 - The woman clothed with the sun</i>	<i>12-14.</i>
<i>5 - The seven bowls of God's anger</i>	<i>15-16.</i>
<i>6 - The fall of Babylon</i>	<i>17-19.</i>

Introduction

In the first part, we have seen the Lord Jesus revealing Himself to the Church, in order that she might find all her needs in Him. Then He handled the state of the seven churches, their condition in every epoch and the state of the believers from time to time. He gave them advice and commandments, that no one may stumble on the road.

In this part, the Spirit lifts up John's eyes towards heaven to see God's advice and plans for His children, in spite of Satan's resistance and his soldiers' to them. Therefore, he sees three series of visions, revealing three sides of a splendid period of the Church on earth up to the last advent of the Lord for judgment:

First series: The seven seals speak of the suffering Church, the center of the Lamb's care. He concludes these seals with those who are circumcised and with the scene of the Church in the eternity, to reveal God's interest in the Church on earth as in heaven.

Second series: The seven trumpets proclaim God's warnings to the world for repentance. He concludes with the appearance of the woman clothed with the sun and her three enemies. It reveals the nullity of Satan's resistance to the church, while asking mankind to have a share with the woman clothed with the sun.

Third series: The seven bowls; God pours the bowls of His wrath that they may repent. He concludes it by revealing the reality of the adulteress, who is embellished and full of deceit and cheating, that people may run away from her.

Important Remarks

Some of our brethren the Protestant consider this section as the manifestation of God's anger at the world, after He had come and carried the church up to heaven (the second advent). He will discipline the world in preparation for His third coming to reign

with His Church on earth for a thousand years. Then He will come again for the fourth time on the day of judgment to rule over an eternal kingdom, as though God has more than two comings:

1- His first coming: He was incarnated, emptying Himself till He was risen on the Cross.

2- His second coming: Some of them believe that He will come before the fulfillment of the events proclaimed in the book of Revelation (4-20), to carry up the Church.

3- His third coming: Some believe that He will come to reign with His Church on earth for a thousand years, a materialistic earthly reign.

4- His fourth coming: He will come to judge the living and the dead and repay every man according to his works.

They already disagreed among themselves. Some are waiting for the lifting up before the great tribulation and the apostasy, others proclaimed that a part of the Church will be carried up and the other part will stay at the time of the tribulation. A third party totally refuse the idea. Even Rev. Ibrahim Said says, [No doubt, we the believers do not wish to get in the great tribulation; and many times our wishes develop a motive to find the reality that suits our hopes.]

And I think it would be appropriate to leave the subject of (the second advent of Jesus) to talk about it in more details in due course.

What we want to confirm is that the faith of the church is only two advents of the Lord:

1- The First Advent, emptying Himself to redeem us.

2- The Second Advent, glorified, that we may be with Him where He is (John 14:2,3); to repay every man according to his works (Matt. 16:27, 25:31-46); that we may reign with Him spiritually forever.

Therefore, what is in this section (Rev. 4-20), is important

to the Church because it concerns her:

First: If during these events, the Church, which was lifted up to heaven, is waiting for the millenary material kingdom, why then was this prophecy written?

Second: If the Church is carried away, why then didn't the book record it? That would be more appropriate to reassure the soul when it hears and sees the tribulations and the bitterness happening at that time.

Third: Dr. William Addy, the author of "The Great Treasure in the Interpretation of the Bible" (p. 629) says that this section of the Revelation reveals the struggle of the Church and the interest of heaven in her, so that the Church may be saved in spite of the calamities which will befall her.

The truth is that this book deals with the Person of the Lord as the slain Lamb for the sake of the Church, and speaks about His victory in His Church. The victory of the Church is not by her carrying away, but by the struggle in spite of the sufferings she will go through, especially during the time of the impostor or the Antichrist as we shall see.

Other Remark

Some Scholars misuse the prophecies of the book of Revelation and change the objectives of the living word, the life-giving word that inflames the heart with longing to eternity, while waiting for the advent of the Lord to inherit and possess forever what no eye has ever seen, or an ear ever heard, or came to the heart of man. The word that teaches the heart the life of prayer and praise. They change this objective to a means of knowing the future events and times by numbers. Some even set the date for the advent of the Lord to carry away the Church, the time when the Antichrist comes and the date of the coming of Jesus for the millenary kingdom. It is very sad, for it spoils the objective and strength of the word of God!

The Pharisees asked the Lord: "When the kingdom of God

should come?" (Luke 17:20) He answered them, saying, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation, neither they shall say behold here or behold there. For the kingdom of God is within you." He directed their attention towards their inner life, which is the pledge of the everlasting kingdom, instead of calculating the time of His coming. Then the Lord reassured them, not to be preoccupied with time but "first He must suffer many things" (Luke 17:25), as though He was turning their eyes towards the cross.

He concluded saying, "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together," that is, let us be like eagles hovering in heavens, that when the Lord comes we gather together with Him, around Him and in Him.



1

The apparition of the sealed book

A Heavenly Scene
Apparition of the Book

Chapter 4.
Chapter 5.

Chapter Four

This chapter is like a "heavenly scene" which inflames the heart of the Church. In spite of what she suffers of hardships, feelings of weakness and disgrace, her share is the Holy Trinity who is glorified by the celestials. For that reason the Apostle saw:

- 1 - The open Heaven** 1.
- 2 - The divine throne** 2-3.
- 3 - What is around the divine throne** 4-9.

1 - The Open Heaven

"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying: "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this"[1].

"After this," is often repeated, and it does not mean succession of time, but it means that he moved to a new vision. We find that some successive visions talk about one period of time in various visions for assurance, and clarification, or to reveal an aspect different from the preceding one.

He concluded describing the state of the churches by the closed door in the face of the Lord, while the Lord is decided not to depart, but insists on knocking and soliciting the soul to open her heart for Him to enter and dine with her. We find that the Lord reveals to us that the gate of heaven is always "opened" in front of us. All those who ascend to Him, enter from that gate and will know the mystery of God's love for mankind, and realize the amount of glory which is prepared for him. Thus, his soul longs to empty herself of all that is earthly to be concerned only with the celestials.

But who is the one who sees the highest heavens open?

John who is exiled in Patmos; Jacob who ran away from his brother Esau (Gen. 28:12-13), Ezechiel the captive (Ez. 1:1), Stephen lying to be stoned (Acts 7). In the middle of tribulations

and hardships, God reveals to the soul His comforting power that she may rejoice and find pleasure.

What is the opened heaven?

Bishop Victorianus says: [The open door in heaven is the New Testament. It is wide open, for the Lord Jesus went up to the Father in heaven with His humanity].

The Lord went up to heaven as a conqueror and victor and as St. Ambrose⁵⁴, states that the Lord went up ornamented with wonderful benefits; for who enters there is not one person but all the believers in the Person of the Savior. For this reason, the Lord never stops blowing the trumpet very loudly calling "*come up.*"

2 - The Divine Throne.

"Immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne" [2].

No sooner did the Lord pronounce the word "*come up,*" then the Apostle was "*in the Spirit.*"

Hence every soul that listens to the call of the Lord, will ascend immediately regardless of the ties and heaviness of the body.

And what did the prophet see?

He saw a throne and upon it sits, "The Glorified God." And because of the magnificence of His majesty he did not know how to call God, so he called Him, "*One sat on...*" and this what Isaiah (6:1), and Daniel (7:3) had done. No one could call God by a name for He is extremely dazzling.

Before we get involved in the details of what the Apostle saw, it is worthy to stop, meditate on, and be amazed at the wonderful works of God. What he saw has shadows, symbols and similarities in the Old Testament; in the tabernacle, and the temple of Solomon etc. And we find it in conformity with the church in the New Testament, for she is the pledge of heaven!

1- The Apostle saw a throne in heaven and upon the throne

"*One sat on...*" This picture had a certain significance in the past. The tabernacle in the Holy of Holies indicated the presence of God, but today we are enjoying the pledge. An altar is erected in our midst where the crucified Lord is sitting, and we eat His Body and drink His precious Blood.

2- He saw seven golden lamps of fire encountering the seven lamps of the candelabrum of the past. Now we use the candlestands in front of the Lord's altar, because He in fact is in our midst.

3- He saw in heaven, a sea of glass [6] in front of which is a sea of brass (1 Chro. 7:23). And today we have baptism, without which no man can have adoption, inherit the kingdom or behold it!

4- In heaven there are twenty-four presbyters, a celestial priesthood. Today God chooses His priests who offer incense and prayers in His name!

5- Four Living Creatures carry the throne, and in front of them the Cherubim giving shade to the tabernacle. Today the Church carries the four gospels, takes them up to His throne, and offers them to Him as a holy bride.

6- In heaven the Apostle heard hymns of Moses, and the Lamb, the *Trisagion*, and many other hymns. The church does not stop singing all these hymns everyday, and even some of them every hour of the "Canonical Hours," such as the *Trisagion*, for she does not cease participating with the celestials in their hymns.

7- And what would we say about the golden censers, the white robes, the temple and the altar, etc. I would sincerely say those who live in the true Church, the apostolic church of Christ, as our fathers did, will not find heaven with its hymns and all that is in it strange for them, because while they were here they tasted, experienced, saw, heard and enjoyed the pledge of what will be the state, later up there.

Let us return again to Him who sits on the throne to see:

"And He Who sat there was like a jasper and a sardines

stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald" [3].

As the seer was dazzled, he could not express himself and used the words "like," "as if," or "same as." He used these similes to express what preoccupies him as closely as he could.

a) He saw the Lord as jasper and sardine stone, the first and last two precious stones that mounted the front vest of the high priest (Exod. 28:17-20). These stones point out to the tribes, as though God puts on His breast the smallest man and the largest man. All humanity is kept in His heart, for it is the work of His hands.

b) Jasper is extremely transparent, and it is the symbol of God's glory (Rev. 21:11). It shows His dazzling holiness and the simplicity of His love for human beings. He will not bear a grudge against man, nor does He like revenge.

The sardine (stone) is red like fire, and indicates His fear and His justice.

The rainbow surrounds the throne from every side. Wherever we meet with God, we see the covenant binding Him with man (Gen. 9). He always desires to reconcile all people with Himself. As the apostle says, "as if God preaches through us: be reconciled with God."

This rainbow has many colors, declaring God's goodness and gifts which He bestows on His children. And it is as a bow, pointing to the bow used in war to defend us, yet without an arrow, because he does not like blood shedding; with it we conquer sin and tread upon Satan.

This bow is like emerald, which is on the high priest's vest, and points to the tribe of the Levites. This bow that surrounds the Lord points to His priestly work interceding for us through the honored Blood.

The emerald is inclined to be green, and is not affected by the sun nor by the shade, and its greenish shade gives calmness and

joy to the soul. Even Nero was putting it in front of him while he was persecuting the Christians, so that his feelings would not be affected. In the same way, every time our sight is lifted up to the throne, our souls calm down, are filled with peace, and we understand His evergreen in His work for us.

3 - What is around the Divine Throne

"And around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four presbyters (elders) sitting clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal" [4-6].

John the apostle saw:

1- **Twenty-four presbyters:** The word "*presbyter*" in the Greek text means the priestly work. For this reason, and since the first centuries, the Church has never disagreed with their regard, but understood the height of their position as a heavenly and priestly host. Therefore, she arranged a special memorial feast and doxologies, or hymns of praise for them, and put them in a special rank among the heavenly hosts, after the four Living Creatures.

But very lately when the idea of taking the Church up before the time of the apostate, and the apparition of the Antichrist started to appear, some started to try to confirm this thought by assuring that the twenty-four elders are the carried up Church. Moreover, they assume that what they do in heaven is the work of the Church, at the time of being taken up until her return with the Lord to reign for a thousand years on earth⁵⁵.

Some of our brothers the Protestants do not accept this way of thinking. As an example Rev. Ibrahim Said says⁵⁶ that some see them as angels from an excellent party who lead worshipping in the heavenly holies, especially that John the Apostle addresses one of them saying, "My Lord" (Rev. 7:14). He calls the angels elders as in Isaiah 24:23.

We can feel their position in the early Church from what St. Cyril of Jerusalem has said about them,

[The Fathers commanded that all Christians should keep their memorial, for what they have seen of their dignity and high glory. Those are the incorporeal, for they are close to God who controls everything, and they are always in front of Him, interceding for all the creation, crying together with the four Living Creatures saying, "Holy, holy, holy."

Great is their glory in the Lord's sight, more than the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs and the saints. For all these are born from human seed, but those spiritual priests are heavenly, they do not have bodies defiled by sin like the human beings...

How honorable is this rank they deserved! For while the angels and all the rest of the heavenly orders are standing in front of the just Judge; those are sitting on luminous thrones, wearing royal garments. On their heads there are crowns of honor, and in their hands golden censers filled with the prayers of the saints. They embrace golden bowls, kneeling in front of the true Lamb, and asking Him for the forgiveness of the sins of mankind!

They do not cease praising and rejoicing in front of the Lord of Hosts together with the four Living Creatures...]

Yet we should not, as St. Ambrose⁵⁷ says, think of the thrones and sitting on them in a materialistic way; for it is only to express the highness of their dignity and happiness.

As for the white robes, Ibn-el-Assal says that these robes point to their splendor, their glory, their righteousness and their holiness.

Bishop Victorianus believes that these presbyters are heavenly beings, and at the same time they symbolize the prophets of the Old Testament who surround the Lord. They prophesy His incarnation, His sufferings, His crucifixion, His resurrection and His ascension...

I shall come back to the twenty-four presbyters more than

once through this book.

2- Lightnings, thunderings and voices coming out of the throne:

We should not understand their coming out of the throne in a materialistic way, for God shines on us with His heavenly promises which are the purpose of His word and its essence... The great promises that He declares through the Holy Spirit to the soul. This is followed by tears of repentance and the thunder of the contrite heart.

God's promises or His word are like lightning that people see in the preacher's life before it thunders on his tongue.

The thunder points to the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer. He rebukes him, shakes his rejection and smashes his pride.

Once the heart had thundered, crying to the Lord, the believer hears "*voices*" coming out of the throne. It is the voices of tenderness and love of God, revealed on the mouth of His priest: "The Lord has removed your sin from you." All this takes place in the Church by the Holy Spirit. That is why the Apostle saw in front of the throne "*there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven Spirits of God*" [5].

It is the Spirit of God that illuminates the Church and works in her through the seven sacraments, so that she may be reconciled with God and obtain the eternal glory. All that will not be realized except through baptism, therefore he says:

3- "*And in front of the throne, a sea of glass like crystal.*"

The symbol ended, the shadow vanished, and "the brazen basin and the brazen sea" (Exod. 30:18-20, 1 Chro. 7:39) do not exist any more. Now we are given "baptism," with which we get the adoption, and without which we do not cross to the divine throne. For in front of Him it is as a sea of glass like crystal, and without it no one can see the kingdom of God (John 3:5). Bishop Victorianus says that this sea points to "baptism" and everyone

who desires to meet the One who is sitting on the throne, has to wade through it, so that the grace of God penetrates his soul to get him prepared for the kingdom.

As for being like crystal, it is appropriate for the baptized to be firm and steady. It is like a sea of glass, for the radiation of the One sitting on the throne, luminous as the sun, reflexes on those who enter it. Thus he is illuminated by the Lord, and puts on Christ.

It is like crystal which gives the colors of the spectrum when the rays of the sun fall on it, and gives to the baptized different kinds of gifts and virtues. They gather together to become transparent as the sun's rays. In the same way, the baptized believers gather together with different kinds of gifts and virtues giving a beautiful picture of One Christ, Holy and Pure.

The most apparent colors of the spectrum which appear through the crystal are:

a- The **red color**; for by baptism we are purified from all our sins by the blood of Jesus.

b- The **green color**; we also bear by baptism many green fruits and numerous blessings.

c- The **blue color**: by baptism we also become heavenly, as St. Macarius the Great⁵⁸ says, [God sends here His light, energetic, and heavenly Spirit who brings out the soul emerged in the water of sin. He makes her light, and lifts her up on His wings towards heaven].

4 - The Four Living Creatures

"And around the throne, were four Living Creatures."

It is delightful for the soul to talk about this heavenly rank, for it is talking about the divine vehicle that carries the divine throne. They are the two ranks of the Cherubim and the Seraphim, to whom the Church always requests their intercession, and celebrates their feast on the 8th of Hatour. It is a memorial feast and the Church calls them, "The incorporeal carriers of God's

vehicle⁵⁹.”

a- **Their honor:** St. John Chrysostom says of them:

[I tell you my dear children that nothing is like them in honor, neither in heaven nor on earth, because they are carrying God's throne, and they cannot look at the face of the Eternal Living One. They are created of light and fire. They are very strong and powerful. They appeal to God for the forgiveness of sins of mankind, and for having pity on them... The prophet Isaiah saw their glory and spoke of their honor (6:1-3). The prophet Ezechiel as well saw their glory and spoke of their honor (1:4-28). Also David, the great and the father of the prophets, and the father of Christ in flesh, saw the honor of those spiritual creatures and spoke of their glory in the psalm saying, "He bowed the heavens and came down; and darkness was under His feet. And He ascended upon the cherub and He flew; He flew upon the wings of the winds" (Ps. 18:9,10).]

b- **Without thrones or crowns** like the presbyters, for God is their crown and they are His chariot.

c- *"Full of eyes around and within"* [6]. Ibn-el- Assal states that they point to their understanding of the present and future mysteries which the Lord reveals to them.

d- *"Each of them has six wings."* As we praise the Lord saying⁶⁰, [You are the One around whom stands the Cherubim and the Seraphim, six wings to one and six wings to the other. With two wings they cover their faces, with two they cover their legs, and they fly with two. With a voice full of glory, they shout one in front of the other, sending the praise of victory and of our salvation.]

Thus, it is proper for the priest to be like them; covering his face with modesty and tremblence and his legs with hope and trust. His heart being full of love, and singing before the Lord who is slain on our behalf.

St. Chrysostom advises us saying,

[I, your father, John the poor, ask you my dear children the priests and the deacons not to approach the altar when you are not

clean; so keep your bodies and souls pure if you want to approach the pure service. For you are like the heavenly Seraphim. They do not dare looking at the face of the Living God, but they are standing faces down covered with their wings!

You, servants of God, see the Body of the Son of God and His pure Blood, which are put in front of you on the pure altar. You touch Him and eat Him, and you know the greatness and honor they deserve, so you have to stand with happy faces, fearful hearts, eyes looking at the ground, and heads bowed, for you are like the Cherubim and the Seraphim who are carrying the throne of Majesty.]

He also says,⁶¹

[When you hear that the Seraphim are flying around the throne, in its highness and dignity covering their faces with two wings, hiding their legs with two, and shouting with a trembling voice, do not think that they have feathers, legs and wings for they are invisible powers...

Even for those orders, God is truly beyond reach. They cannot approach Him. Therefore, He condescends in the way mentioned in Revelation, for God is not limited to a place and does not sit on a throne. Yet His sitting on the throne and being surrounded by the heavenly powers is out of love for them...

And when He appeared sitting on the throne, surrounded by those powers, they could not see Him, nor look at His dazzling light. They covered their eyes with two wings, and they had nothing to do, but to praise and sing hymns full of holy, trembling and wonderful songs, witnessing for the holiness of the One who is sitting on the throne. Hence if anyone dares to test the providence of a God that the heavenly powers cannot touch or describe, he had better disappear under the hills!]

e- **Their likeness:** They are incorporeal and invisible powers, but they appeared to the beloved John and to the prophet Ezechiel in the following way: "*The first Living Creature was like a lion, the second Living Creature like a calf, the third Living Creature had a face like a man, and the fourth Living Creature was*

like a flying eagle" [7].

First: The Church believes that the first Living Creature intercedes for the beasts of the wilderness, the second for the animals of the field, the third for human beings, and the fourth for birds. As for the reptiles they have none in their likeness, for, from them comes the snake that the Lord had cursed, nor the aquatic animals, for the sea points to the disturbances, while heaven is quiet and peaceful.

St. Chrysostom says, [They are spiritual creatures, God created them, raised them and crowned them with splendor and light. He made them ask on behalf of human beings and the whole creation ,beasts, animals, and birds of the sky, for they are more close to Him than all the heavenly spiritual creatures.]

Second: St. Gregory Nazianzus and Origen believe that this creation that carries the throne carries the meaning of the four forces of the soul, which is sanctified by carrying God within, namely:

- The forces of rage, which are referred to by the likeness of a lion.
- The carnal desires are referred to by the likeness of a calf.
- The gift of logic is referred to as one who has the likeness of man's face.
- The spiritual energies are referred to by the likeness of a flying eagle.

Third: St. Jerome believes that it also points to the redeeming works of the Lord.

- The one who has the likeness of man's face points to the incarnation.
- The one who is like the calf points to the slaughter on the cross.
- The one who is like the lion points to the resurrection.
- The one who is like a flying eagle points to the ascension.

Fourth: St. Irenaeus⁶² thinks that it also points to the redeeming work from another side:

- The one who has the likeness of man's face points to the incarnation.
- The one who is like the calf points to the rites of the sacrifices and priesthood, as He intercedes for us.
- The one who is like the lion, points to the power of His work, royal dominion and leadership.
- The one who is like a flying eagle points to the sending of the Holy Spirit to flutter over His church.

Fifth: St. Irenaeus also believes that it points to the four gospels. Bishop Victorianus also says,

[The Living Creature that is like the lion points to Mark in whom you hear the voice of the lion shouting in the desert (Mark 1:3).

The one in the likeness of a man is Matthew, who did his best to make known the Virgin Mary's genealogy, from whom the Lord Jesus took the body.

Luke relates Zachariah's priesthood, who presents a sacrifice on behalf of the people. He carries the calf.

John the Evangelist like a flying bird is fluttering his wings up to the great heights speaking about the Word of God.]

These creatures are distinguished by the wings, similarly the four gospels have many wings to carry mankind and fly with it up before the divine throne, to present it as a bride risen towards heaven.

The priests are around the throne, and the Living Creatures carry the throne. In the same way the books of the prophets surround us to tell us about the salvation, but the gospels lift us up, and take us to the atmosphere of heavens, to the divine throne. We cannot do without either of both⁶³.

f- **Their unceasing praise:** *"And they do not rest day or night, saying: Holy, holy, holy Lord God, Almighty, Who was and is and is to come.*

Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

the twenty-four presbyters fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they exist, and were created" [9-11].

What a wonderful view! Lord, when are we going to enjoy it and see it?!

As St. Chrysostom says: [The Living Creatures shout ceaselessly day and night. They praise the eternal living One saying, Holy, holy, holy.] They glorify Him for His might and His works with them and with all His creation, especially mankind.

The twenty-four presbyters cannot endure this view until they stand up for their chairs. Take off their crowns, cast them at the Lord's feet and kneel in front of Him for His greatness, His holiness, His love and His care.

The view is repeated not once or twice or one thousand or two thousand times, but it remains the same forever. All the creation falls in love with God and does not know what to offer Him for His splendor, His many deeds and His love for us. The amazing thing is that the subject of the praise of the heavenly creatures "is our victory and our salvation⁶⁴." How wonderful!

The Book of Revelation unveiled to us the amount of love the heavenly creatures have for us, for they praise God on our behalf, or praise Him for His deeds for us.

The Book of Revelation opened a new door for the Church, behind which it hides all her works, which is the teaching of her children, "the life of praise," for it is the melody of the Book of Revelation, the language of all heaven.

The Book of Revelation mentioned about twenty praises, as if it was blowing the trumpet for us "learn the language of heaven. Prepare yourselves for the communion with the celestials in their deeds."

I would not be exaggerating on saying that all that is in the church is nothing but thanksgiving and praise:

a- She does not allow us to celebrate "the Holy Eucharist," which is the reward of God to us while we are on earth, unless we offer long praises all night and offer incense in the matins. This being as an entry to sharing of His suffering, and confirmation through holy communion, eating His Body and drinking the Cup of salvation.

b- The Eucharist is celebrated as a sacrifice of thanksgiving, for it is "the Sacrament of Thanksgiving," in which we receive the divine grace, even more the grace-Giver, to abide in Him and He in us. All the Eucharist is a diversity of praises. For this reason the priest shouts at the end of the Eucharist saying, "O angel of this offering, rising to the highest with this praise, remember us in front of the Lord."

c- The people end the Eucharist with singing the psalm of praise, "Praise God all His saints..."

d- After Communion, the people say silently, "Our mouth is filled with joy and our tongue with praise for partaking of your holy sacraments."

e- After the priest dismisses the people, he goes to the altar and kisses it at its four corners saying, "Clap your hands for the Lord, all nations and may all people bless Him." As if he is entering clapping with his hands and praising with his heart, for God's deed for the sake of all mankind.

f- In every hour we pray, we offer a praise of joy and thanksgiving to the Lord, for example, we sing saying, "Praise of the... hour of the blessed day, I offer to Christ my King and God beseeching Him to forgive me my sins." What we find in the psalms of the book of the Canonical Hours is nothing but rejoicing, happiness, clapping, thanksgiving, and singing.

g- Even in the ritual of sad occasions as the Holy Week and the prayer of the dead, the Church presents hymns extremely

sublime, and praises which gladdens the inner soul, filling it with consolation and peace in spite of its sad tune!

h- The victorious Church in Paradise offers prayers and praises of gratitude and thanksgiving to God, with litanies for us and for the future generations!

Therefore let us behave in the spirit of our church, and always offer praises of thanksgiving she taught us. They are all taken from the Holy Bible with its two Testaments, or from the book of praises and songs "Psalms," or from the praises of heaven recorded in the Book of Revelation, or from the writings of the Fathers under the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, etc. Thus, heaven and its praises are not alien to us, we have already practiced its language and touched its spirit and lived in its atmosphere.

Chapter Five

After displaying the heavenly view, the book of Revelation explains to us the interest of heaven in the "Sealed Book."

1 - The Sealed Book	1 - 4.
2 - The Opener of the Book	5 - 14.

1 - THE SEALED BOOK

"And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals" [1].

The Apostle saw it at the right hand of the divine majesty, which is an honorable place where no creature, no matter how high he is, can open or even touch it. What could this book be?

1) Ibn-el-Assal says, [It is the scroll;... the symbol in the book is to acquaint God's knowledge with its content, and its abiding by what is coming.]

2) Bishop Victorianus says, [This book means the Old Testament, that our Lord Jesus Christ's hands had received, He who took the judgment from the Father.] That is to say, fulfill the prophecies in it, since His incarnation to the day of His coming on the cloud for judgment, to reward the innocent and condemn the wicked.

3) Origen, St. Jerome and Tikhon the African think that the sealed book is the Holy Bible with its two Testaments, for it is one book which declares God's intentions, His love to mankind, and His discipline.

It is written from inside and in the back, for its apparent meanings carry deep meanings in its folding. The inside writings point out to the New Testament, which takes the soul into the depth of fellowship with God. The back writings is like a covering for the New Testament, for it carries symbols, shadows and prophecies that only the New Testament can explain.

As for the secret of its sealing with seven seals, it is because its meaning and comprehension are hidden to the human understanding, for they rely on their human wisdom. And as the prophet says, "Pause and wonder! Blind yourself and be blind!... The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which, men deliver to one who is literate, saying, 'Read this please;' and he says, 'I cannot, for it is sealed'" (Isa. 29:9-11).

St. Jerome explained these seals in his letter to Bishop Paulinus⁶⁵ saying, [It appeared in the Book of Revelation a sealed book with seven seals, this that when you hand it to a man learned telling him "read this," he will answer you, "I cannot, for it is sealed!"]

So many think today that they have knowledge, yet for them the Holy Book is sealed, and no one can open it unless it is through Him, who has the key of David, "He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens" (Rev. 3:7).

This Book is the subject that preoccupies all heavens, for the Apostle says, "*Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice: 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?'*" [2].

An angel of high celestial hierarchy kept calling, hoping to find one who can open the book, loosen its seals, uncover its secret, and declare its objectives. No doubt he knows that the book concerns mankind, their salvation, inheritance and discipline. Although it is an angel who has no wish for glory greater than that he has, and who has no fears of incidents happening in heaven, or on earth, yet with his Master's spirit, the spirit of love; he keeps shouting preoccupied by us, caring, for what happens to us!

How strange are those who think that angels are rigid spirits, without feelings of love, as if they were pieces of rocks who serve God without love. In fact they are loving and acting with the Spirit of God.

We may sense the love of the angels towards us, as we feel

the pain in this angel's voice, for he longs to behold our salvation, "things which angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12). Besides, he understands that the opening of the book destroys the death of man, and hence their eternity without corruption, as Bishop Victorianus says.

The angel shouts for our sake, with desire that we reach the divine love, that the heart of God keeps for us. Yet with regret, he did not find among the heavenly, or the human, or the dead, any who is worthy to read the book, or even to take a look at it. Here the beloved John was helpless, and was weeping bitterly, revealing the weakness of human nature.

2- THE OPENER OF THE BOOK

"But one of the presbyters said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll, and to loose its seven seals.'

And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four Living Creatures, and in the midst of the presbyters, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne" [5-7].

One of the loving celestials presented comfort to our fainting souls, that know nothing but failure and much weeping. He drew our attention to the, "**True Comforter**," saying, "*Behold the Lion has prevailed...*"

Here is the source of comfort for every sensitive soul, that is destroyed by despair. It is the victorious Lion who alone opens the book to us. He is the victorious One, by His eternal love, represented in His sacrificing Himself as a Lamb to be slain on our behalf .

Bishop Victorianus says, [There was no one who was worthy to do so among the angels of heaven, nor the human beings on earth, nor the souls of the saints in their rest, except the Lord Jesus, the Son of God alone. Of whom he said, that he saw Him a

Lamb standing as if it were slain, having seven horns...]

The qualities of the opener of the book are:

1- Lion: The reason of calling Him Lion is as St. Chrysostom says,⁶⁶ [The Patriarch Jacob points to the cross saying, "He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?" (Gen. 49:9). As the lion is feared, not only when it is awake, but also when it is asleep, in the same way the Lord Jesus is feared, not only before the cross, but also while He was on the cross. At the very moment of His death, He was feared... Death became as nothing, for He vanished its power.]

St. Cyril of Jerusalem says,⁶⁷ [He is called Lion not for being ferocious to mankind but as a sign of His reign, His firmness and the trust in Him. He was called Lion, in contrast to our enemy the lion, who roars to devour those who are deceived by him... As the strong Lion coming from the tribe of Judah (Ps. 118:22), He saves the believers and destroys the enemy.]

2- Of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David: It is Him "about whom Moses and the prophets wrote," He is from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:9), the Root of David (Isa. 11:1). And He called Himself, "I am the Root and offspring of David" (Rev. 22:6). For He is the creator of David, and He became His son in the body.

3- A Lamb standing as if it were slain: He was called Lamb 29 times in this book, for it is the book of eternity. We fall in love with Him as a Savior, amazed at the power of the Blood which lifted us, not only to the rank of the celestial, but to God's bosom Himself! The word "Lamb," mentioned here, meant in Greek "young lamb one year old." That is to say, the lamb of sacrifice of the sin offering (Exod. 12:7), who carried our sins in His body on the cross.

He is "standing," never ceases working to accomplish the salvation of all His children, as a father who does not sleep, who does not stop moving continuously, doing his best to save His only sick son!

He is "standing," as the Mediator for atonement in front of the Father, offering His Blood as an expiation of our sins, in order not to die in them.

He is "standing," also to get ready to meet His glorious bride on the day of judgment, and to send His angels to harvest the wicked, and to throw Satan and his soldiers in their eternal dwelling!

As for the saying, "*as if it were slain*," it is because He is alive standing, and not thrown down. At the same time, He is slain to pour His Blood on the believers, to purify them.

4- "Having seven horns": The horns point to power, and "seven," is the sign of fullness of power in itself, and in us as members of His body.

5- "Having seven eyes": which are the seven Spirits of God sent to all the earth. Having the Holy Spirit, His Spirit which He sent to the Church to guide her, thus, He works with the fullness of His power, to purify, sanctify, and to embellish her with the divine virtues. And to enlighten her with the abundance of divine light, in the way of salvation, until she passes through this world, without being soiled by corruption.⁶⁸

All these qualities of God are not for His sake, but for us, as through Him we become as lions carrying the features of His love within us, and become strong, for His Spirit works in us. He came and took the book. The word "*took*," in Greek means the absolute meaning of taking without giving back again.

Once He took the book, all came to thank the Lord with joy and praise, expressing their praise in different ways: bowing, praying, playing the harps, offering incense, and singing new hymns.

a - The Four Creatures praise Him by kneeling

"Now when He had taken the scroll, the four Living Creatures and the twenty-four Presbyters fell down before the Lamb."

Here are the celestials, thanking God for His great deeds for us, and expressing their thanks and praise to Him in kneeling.

How beautiful is the spirituality of the Church, who trains her children to kneel in prostration, until the body together with the soul surrender with all their energy and desires, in submission and love to God, with supplication and thanks to the One who loved us and gave away Himself for us.

b - The twenty-four presbyters sing...

The twenty-four presbyters do not stop singing when they kneel in front of the Lamb, but *"each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of saints.*

And they sang a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; For You are slain, and have redeemed us to God, by Your blood. Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth" [8-10].

How numerous are the means of adoration through singing?! Harps point out to the hymns of the Church, the golden bowls are full of incense, and the singing of new canticles. The church uses these means and others from what is mentioned in the Book of Revelation, the book of praises (Psalms), and other books of the Holy Bible for praising the Lord as:

- Raising up hands in prayer, as the Psalmist says, "The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Ps. 141:2).
- Striking on the chest, as the tax-collector did (Luke 18:13).
- Standing in tremblence and fear (Ps. 55:5).
- Lighting of candles, as Fr. Seraphim Sarovisky says⁶⁹, [May our heart ignites with fire, and our life shines as light, in front of the Lord God, as a candle shining in front of His holy Icon.]
- Lying down at the threshold of the Lord's house, and in front of His altar (Ps. 84:5).

Let us go back to the presbyters, to see them praising the Lord on our behalf, for as priests of the High God, they pray for us,

and they offer our prayers in front of the divine throne.

What a joyful heavenly view, when you utter a word of praise, or sing a heavenly tune, or kneel down with contrition, or striking on your chest in humility. All that, with what it bears of spiritual praise inside the heart, the angels carry, to put in the heavenly golden bowls. When the twenty-four presbyters offer them, the divine throne is filled with praises of all mankind, militants or the dead, mixed with the praises of the celestial orders, in union of true love.

For this reason we all sing together with the departed members, as one Church or one person saying, "Let my prayer be set before You as incense" (Ps. 141:2).

Concerning the harps, it seems that each presbyter has many spiritual harps. They are all musical instruments, which play a sweet tune to praise God!

Concerning the new hymn, some say that the original text is translated, "*for You were slain and bought the people for God with Your blood... and made them kings...*"

In any case, he who tastes life with the Lord Jesus, understands the everlasting truth, that there is "no egoism in heaven." The incorporeal presbyters, by their love for us, do not differentiate between themselves and ours, so they utter praises on our behalf. They rejoice for our joy, and feel that we are their brothers and partners in the celestial life. In this way, the Lamb has united heaven and earth. Thus they became one.

The idea of the "new hymn," is known since the Old Testament.⁷⁰

We also praise God with new hymns and new psalms every day. Not with new words and letters, or with new expressions, but we present them every day with a new taste and new sweetness, as if it was the first time we enjoy them, thanking Him.

The mother who is a lover of her only child finds his talking and accent as if new every moment, and that is because of her

excessive love for him. In the same way every time the heart is inflamed with love, it feels that it is offering something new to God.

St. Augustine says, [The old man's praise is old, and the new man's praise is new. The praise of he who loves the earth is old, and he who loves heavens sings a new song of praise. Love is new and everlasting. It does not get old, so it stays always new.]

As Tertullian says,⁷¹ that it is a praise of thanksgiving. Its subject is the incarnation of the Lord, His suffering, His resurrection, and His new goodness towards us in every moment. All these matters are beyond time limit to which we are bound; We live in it and comprehend it forever.

We praise Him, because He attached us to Himself as members of His secret body, and He gave us all that is His. As King of kings we became kings, through Him. As the Bishop of our souls, we became priests who reign with Him, and inherit the new land of the living, which is heaven itself.

c - The angels' praise

"Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the Living Creatures, and the presbyters, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

saying with a loud voice: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. To receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing" [11-12].

The angels participated in praise on His birthday, and came the night of His crucifixion, to offer Him glory at the garden of Gethsemane. They appeared in the empty tomb and at the resurrection, and there they are in heaven, praising the Lamb standing as if it were slain, for the salvation of mankind!

They see Him (the slain Lamb) with us, for what we get they seem to get also, because of their love for us. Then they depart, saying with a loud voice, "*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. To receive...*"

- **Power...** for He is the only victor, who conquers and who grants victory.
- **Riches...** for He became poor to make us, His children, rich by His poverty.
- **Wisdom...** He became ignorant among mankind, to redeem the humble and the meek with the ignorance of the cross.
- **Strength...** He became weak to support our weakness.
- **Dignity...** He emptied Himself of dignity, to make the earthly participate in His heavenly dignity.
- **Glory...** He carried our shame, taking our sins in His body, so that we may be glorified in Him and through Him.
- **Blessing...** He bowed to carry our curse, that we may be blessed through Him.

These are the seven angels' praises, its essence is the work of God on our behalf, so that we may become celestials.

The Church trains us to say this praise in our prayers. We sing it at the end of the Lord's prayer saying: "for the kingdom, power and glory are yours," and at the end of the Thanksgiving prayer, "from whom are glory, dignity, honor and worship..." It is also said in most of the prayers and praises, which are set by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, on all occasions. By that, the tongue together with the heart and the soul are trained for the praise of the heavenly angels.

d - All creation praises Him

"And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever.

Then the four living creatures said, "Amen". And the twenty-four presbyters fell down, and worshipped Him who lives forever and ever!" [13-14].

All creation witnesses to the Lord, the Redeemer, and

praises Him for every deed.

As St. Ephram says,⁷² [All creation became mouths, proclaiming for Him: The wise men with their offerings, the sterile woman with her child, and the shining star in the air! The highest heaven is opened to the Son of the King, the water was calmed, the dove glorified Him, the angels announced Him, and the children shouted to Him "Hosanna." All the voices from the highest and from under, all shout witnessing to Him! And as in the past, the hard earth and the highest heaven were to witness to the heart hardness of the Jews (Isa. 1:2), they still witness to the work of His love for mankind.]



2

The Seven Seals

*** Introduction to the Three Chains.**

The Six Seals (the Suffering Church)

The Lamb's care for the Church

Chapter 6.

Chapter 7.

Introduction to the Three Chains

In this chapter and up to chapter twenty we find the practical execution of God's work with His people, the opposition of Satan to God's children, and the discipline imposed on the wicked for their repentance. For this reason the Apostle mentions three successive series of septuple, talking about:

1- Seven seals: The suffering Church, since its creation until the day of her encounter with the Lamb.

2- Seven trumpets: God's warnings, since the creation of the Church to judgment day.

3- Seven bowls: God's anger, to educate mankind at the time of the impostor to doomsday.

1. For this reason we find in the first series, the Lamb Himself opening the seals in order to reassure His suffering bride, that nothing will happen to her except what is allowed by Him, to the degree she can bear... The sixth seal follows, showing the view of those who are sealed, and of the Church in eternity, to reveal His care for her on earth, as she is counted and kept. And in eternity she enjoys the glories that devour the earthly memories of pain she went through.

2. In the second series, we find God's warnings to mankind. It started by silence to dumbfound every noise, that they may listen to His warnings horned on the angel's mouth.

3. This second series is followed by the apparition of the great woman and her three enemies, declaring the great hostility between the Church and Satan which started since Adam, as the first member of the Church. It remains until the period of the impostor, as the last phase in which Satan spreads his poisons in the world, through the impostor.

4. In the third series, God pours the bowls of His anger in the period of the impostor, that they may repent and not get deceived by Satan's misleadings.

5. Finally He joins to the third series, the uncovering of the

empty haughtiness of the adulteress which ends with her destruction together with her wicked lovers.

With this, this section ends, to reveal to us the "glory of the heavenly Jerusalem."

Chapter Six

This chapter reveals to us "God's work in His Suffering Church."

1- The Suffering Church (under the care of the horseman) - *The first four seals.*

2- The Church in Paradise (under the altar) - *The fifth seal*

3- The coming of the Groom of the Church as a judge of the wicked - *The sixth seal*

1 - THE SUFFERING CHURCH

"Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four Living Creatures saying with a voice like thunder, Come and see.

And I looked, and behold, a white horse. And he who sat on it had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer" [2].

The Lord, Groom of the Church, saw three horsemen going out to oppose His bride. Hence the modest Lamb; the victorious Lion appears as a conquering horseman and to conquer...

When He sees Satan as a lion, He goes out towards him as a Lion, likewise when He sees him as a horseman, He goes out towards him as a cavalier to fight him.

The Groom opened the first seal, and the Apostle heard the first Living Creature who is like a lion, roaring as thunder saying, "*Come and see*⁷³." The Lamb Himself came out as a horseman sitting on a white horse, "*conquering*" by nature, for He bears no defeat at all.

And to conquer, for... He conquers by Himself in His Church and in His children. For through Him we conquer Satan, and Christ conquers through us. Any of our victories is related to Him, for it is fulfilled by Him and on His account.

The Lord came out sitting on a white horse. The two martyrs Ignatius and Polycarp, Pope Dionysius and Irenaeus agreed

that the white horse is the group of prophets and preachers of the Good News, carrying the Person of the Lord, conquering over the forces of darkness through Him.

They compare the horse to their courage, their fearlessness of death (Zec. 10:3), and their total obedience to their horseman. By their fast movement their voices go to the ends of the earth (Ps. 18:5).

They are compared to a white horse for it is pleasant to see. As well, they are pleasant to see, for they are full of happiness and joy. They call to rejoice in the Savior, in moments of their most weakness, and He accompanies them with joy even with their tears of repentance. They are filled with inner peace, in times of tribulations. The secret of all this is God's promise to us, "but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world."

This conqueror has a "bow," which is preaching of the word of the Gospel which the preacher aims at the heart of the listeners, that it might destroy the power of evil, and cut from him all that is from Satan.

"*And a crown was given to him,*" as He is king of kings He does not cease to reign over every heart and granting crowns to the human race who is victorious through Him.

The Three Horses

"When he opened the second seal, I heard the second Living Creature saying, "Come and see.

And another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

When He opened the third seal, I heard the third Living Creature say, "Come and see." And I looked and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.

And I heard a voice in the midst of the fourth living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the

wine.

When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth Living Creature saying, "Come and see." And I looked and behold a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth" [3-8].

These are the sufferings that God allows His Church to go through in the world. It is like a storm that shakes the vine tree until it looks about to die. Yet the truth is that only the yellow leaves that are not attached to it fall down, while the trunk grows stronger, and the roots deeper.

The order of the three horses, is according to what the Lord told us, how it was going to happen in (Matt. 24, Mark 13).

The following is the summery of the interpretation of the three horses presented by some Church Fathers.

The Red horse: Wars (Matt. 24:7, Luke 21:9-14), besides it points out to blood shed (The Jews' and gentiles' persecution of the Church).

The Black horse: Famines (Mark 13:8), besides it points out to the appearance of heresy and occurrence of famine in knowledge.

The Green horse⁷⁴: Death (Matt. 24:7), besides it points out to the appearance of the impostor who was the cause of the souls' death.

a- The Red Horse

Bishop Victorianus says that it points out to the happenings of trouble and wars, preceded by humiliation and dismissal of the preachers of the truth (Luke 21:9-14).

The Church endured bitterness from both, the Jews and the Roman state. In all that, the Church did not lose her inner peace nor her joy and hope. God only allowed Satan to take away the outer peace, and to kill many of her children through their brothers in

humanity. Truly it was a strong hit.

b- The Black Horse

It is the famines that God allows, and it points out to the period of heresies, which cause famines in knowledge and the taste of truth.

Bishop Victorianus thinks that this famine is a true fact happening in the time of the "Antichrist," for disciplinary reasons.

We notice that the horseman holds a balance, which is an indication of the severe drought, as the scripture says, "I will cut off the supply of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and shall drink water by measure and with dread" (Ez. 4:16).

A quart of wheat which is less than a kilogram is not enough for a man's daily bread, which costs one dinarius, i.e. a day's wages (Matt. 20:2). How can he eat and support his wife and children?!

As for "*the wine and the oil*," he does not hurt, and that points out to the delight which prevails on feast days (Ps. 23:5). This is an indication of the inner peace and delight kept by the Church, in spite of the bitterness she suffers from the heretics, and the need of ordinary matters, even of her daily bread.

The "*oil*" points to the Holy Spirit, and the "*wine*," to love. As though God's children in whom the Holy Spirit work, and who are filled with love, are not hurt by poverty or hunger, no matter how severe they are.

c- The Green Horse

As Ibn-el-Assal says, that it is the angel of the impostor's state, or the angel of death. His rider is death and hell. He is given authority to kill by the sword, by hunger, and by the beasts of the earth.

He does not stop using every means to kill every soul, by repudiating her from God, the source of her life. The Church will flee to the mountains and the wilderness, and there she will meet

the beasts of the desert, as she is followed by the impostor's followers, even on the mountains and in the wilderness. As if she falls down on the ground, reproaching her Groom with Elijah who says, "They have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life..." (1 kings 19:10).

The Lord Himself says, "For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible even the elect" (Matt. 24:24).

The Book of Revelation will come back to consecrate many chapters, to reveal the danger of the impostor and his works, his deceit and his war against the Church etc.

2- THE CHURCH IN PARADISE

"When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth.

And a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed" [9-11].

After the Lord had revealed to His Church, through the first four seals what He allows her to suffer from the Jews, the Gentiles, the heretics and the impostors, it was necessary for Him to reveal to her the state of the departed believers, and the witnesses of the truth, during the period of our expatriation on earth. And that is what we got to know:

1- Who are they?

"Those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held."

It is enough for them, to be counted as witnesses to the word of God. They carried His sufferings, and accepted to bear His

mark in their bodies, witnessing to Him.

Even if we do not know them by their names, they know each other in Paradise. And as Tertullian⁷⁵ says, that when John was in the Spirit, he saw clearly the souls of the martyrs, and he was sure that they got to know each other in Paradise.

2- Where are they?... "Under the altar"!

They are in Paradise, they did not go yet to the eternal glories, in its perfection and completeness, but they obtained a blessed share, as "*a white robe was given to each of them and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer.*"

They are resting under the altar, for the altar does not depart from the saints, and they do not depart from it.

They see the true Sacrifice through Paradise, as they enjoy the Crucified Christ and they offer Him sacrifices of thanks and praise, as the Psalmist says, "my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness" (Ps. 51:14). "I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving" (Ps. 116:17).

Sacrifices will never stop, neither by our departure from this world to Paradise, nor by our entrance to the eternal wedding, offering Him eternal praise. The martyr Justin⁷⁶ says, [I consider praise and thanksgiving offered by considerable persons as alone, the complete and acceptable sacrifices to God.]

3- What is their state?

They want to revenge for their blood, as Abel's blood cried out to God; it is not spite or rage, but submission to the just judgment of God, and longing for the coming of the Lord. They are like the widow who asked the judge to avenge her on her adversary (Luke 18:3).

He asked them to be patient for a while till judgment day, and St. Cyprian⁷⁷ says; it is also appropriate for the militants on earth to be patient with the wicked, until judgment day.

3 - THE COMING OF THE CHURCH GROOM AS

THE JUDGE OF THE WICKED

After God has reassured us about the departed sufferers, that they are dressed in white robes, resting under the altar until doomsday, to enjoy the eternal crowns; He came back to reassure those who are on earth, particularly at the time of the impostor, that He is coming no doubt, to judge the wicked.

His strong anger appears in the revolt of nature itself before His coming, as the Apostle describes:

"I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.

And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mightily wind.

Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,

and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!

For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'" [12-17]

By studying Matthew, chapter 24, we find that these events conform to the signs concerning His coming for judgment, and the end of age that God had clarified.

As Ibn-el-Assal and many of the early Fathers, such as St. Augustine, say, that these events are accomplished in the period post Antichrist and during his misleading (three and half years), and immediately after him... and all that for discipline, so that the believers do not deviate.

So those are true and actual events, of which the Holy Bible prophesied in more than one place.

1) "And there shall be....**earthquakes** in places" (Matt. 24:7), and as the prophet says, "Behold, the day of the Lord comes,

cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger... Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of His fierce wrath (Isa. 13:9-13).

2) The **sun shall be darkened**, and the moon becomes as blood, and the stars fall, as the Lord says, "The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Matt. 24:29).

The Lord had clearly revealed in Matthew 24, that these events will be accomplished immediately before His coming for the judgment, as He continues saying, "and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect..."

As if all the talk is an answer, concerning the sign of His coming and the end of age.

The apostle assures that, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and notable day of the Lord" (Acts 2:20).

3) The **enclosure of heaven as rolled scroll**. This is explained by Tertullian,⁷⁸ as he says, [It becomes as nothing, together with the earth which was created with it in the beginning, "Heaven and earth will pass away" (Matt. 24:35), "for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Rev. 21:1). "And there was found no place for them" (Rev. 20:11), as they come to an end.]

Interpretation by Bishop Victorianus:

That Bishop, in association with St. Augustine⁷⁹ and others, consider another interpretation which completes but does not replace the first one. It says that these events, will in fact be accomplished in the period before the advent of the Lord. But it will also be fulfilled in a symbolic way, in the time of the Antichrist before the Lord's coming.

For example Bishop Victorianus says, [The sun darkens as sackcloth; that is to say the brightness of the teaching becomes obscure, because of the unbelievers. The stars will fall down, i.e. some will depart from the Church because of the great tribulation.]

St. Augustine says, that the moon or the Church becomes as blood, because of the shedding of blood which occurs to her children, by the hand of the Antichrist and his followers. The falling of the stars to the earth is an indication of the great number of apostate, and the falling of the believers, who were as stars in the Church.

Interpretation of St. Augustine:

St. Augustine sees a third interpretation, which is not third, but in agreement with the preceding interpretations as this saint adopts the three together.

This interpretation announces that these events are actually real, but they bear foldings of what will happen to the state of the Antichrist, that is devastation before the coming of the Lord, to incite people to repentance.

As an example: the earthquake indicates the shaking of the kingdom of Satan, the destruction of the state of the impostor and fear in the heart of his followers. For the Lord says, "I will shake heaven and earth. I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile Kingdoms" (Hag. 2:21).

Also the dislodging of every mountain and island is an indication of the falling of the giants and the great, and their loss of power, reputation and wealth. They will escape, but where to go from the face of the Lamb? They will cry in front of His solemnity, and "say to the mountains, "Cover us." And to the hills, "Fall on us!" (Hos. 10:8). "But who can endure the day of his coming?! And who can stand firm when he appears?" "Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him" (Nah. 1:6).

† † †

Chapter Seven

As the first six seals reveal the tiredness and pains of the Church, up to the coming of the Lord for judgment, the Lord encourages her by revealing two things.

1- His care for the Church in her struggle (1- 8).

2- His care for the Church in her rest (9-17).

1 - HIS CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN HER STRUGGLE

The first part of the chapter does not deal with a certain period of time, but it reveals God's protection and care for His Church as a whole, and for her members, everyone by his name, during the struggle on earth.

He does not cease keeping His believers unshaken (Heb. 12:27), for they "are kept by the power of God, through faith, for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5). And for their sake, the Son says: "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15).

This is the language of the book of Revelation, and the dialect of the word of God, "because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 3:10).

This is what the Apostle saw:

"After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree" [7].

He saw four angels keeping the earth from east to west, and from north to south. This is how God cares for mankind, by keeping all souls from the wind that blows, to put out the light of their lamps.

Perhaps, God, has sent His angels to calm down nature

revolting against man, for as St. John Chrysostom says⁸⁰, that man became more ignorant than the unreasonable animals (Ps. 49:12), and less intelligent than birds (Jer. 8:7). More rigid than stones, resembling the snake (Ps. 58:5), so he was called son of Satan (John. 8:44).

"Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying,

'Do not harm the earth, the sea or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads'" [2-3].

In the Old Testament, God took care of His children, and sent someone to seal them at the time of tribulation, to keep them for Himself (Ez. 9:4). And in the Church of the New Testament, He presents to us a spiritual, heavenly and eternal seal. As we are sealed on our foreheads with the holy Chrism, the Holy Spirit dwells in us, to keep and sanctify us, to be able to say, "He who has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a deposit" (2 Cor. 1:21-22).

The angel who came from the east, may point out to the Lord Jesus, who shines on us all, and gives us through the holy Chrism, this effective sign which keeps us as heirs of God. For this reason, the apostle commands us, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

We spoke before about this seal⁸¹, by which we become in the ownership of the Holy Spirit, and enemies of Satan. St. Augustine says, [The name 'Messiah' means 'anointed;' so every Christian who accepts the anointment (Chrism), becomes not only partner in the kingdom, but also fighter of Satan.] St. Ambrose says, [Remember that you accepted the seal of the Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord"(Isa. 11:2). God the Father has sealed you. The Lord Jesus empowered you, and gave you the Spirit as a guarantee (2 Cor. 5:5), according to the

teachings, you received from the apostle.]

This seal is not only a sign of distinction, but it carries love and devotion, till we say to the Lord, "Set me as a seal upon Your heart, as a seal upon Your arm" (Song 8:6).

He keeps the earth, the sea, and the trees, i.e. no harm will affect those whose souls rested (*the earth*), nor those who are still confused (*the sea*), nor the fruitful (*the trees*).

Concerning those who are sealed, he said:

"And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed, of the tribe of Judah a twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben etc." [4-5].

The readers may have some questions here:

First: What does he mean by saying, "children of Israel?"

The early Fathers⁸² clarified, that "the real Israel" is not the Jewish people as they are called, up to this day, but it is an adjective qualifying the Church alone. When the Jews were believers, and working in the vineyard, the Lord was calling them "Israel," but they removed themselves by themselves from the vineyard saying, "His blood be on us and on our children." For this reason, we say that after the Jews had their house destroyed, and carried the curse, it is of no significance to call themselves "Israel," even if they were so, according to the flesh, as the children of the old people. However, the Church of the New Testament is an extension of the Church of the Old Testament, and has all the promises and the blessings.

Indeed, St. Irenaeus saw that this is a sign, that some Jews will accept Jesus at the end of days. Yet as Pope Shenouda⁸³ clarified, that by accepting faith, they should not remain in their fanaticism and agglomerations. They should put aside their old thinking, that they are a block of chosen and distinct people (as they pretend today). Then they will no more have an independent

and distinct being. Their bitter fanaticism will end, and the materialistic zionism will vanish, as it is full of poison based on pride. Rather they should contrite and weep for refusing faith, and forget their intentions to have an independent state for worldly purposes.

This way, the right spiritual Christian's mind refuses the idea of the existence of "Israel," as a state, pretending to be the chosen people.

We come back and confirm, that in this chapter the word "Israel," points not to a state, but to the spiritual Israel. In other words, to the Church, regardless of nationality or language, and this is what the apostolic Church and other churches⁸⁴ called for.

Second: What does he mean by tribes ?

There is no doubt, that he does not actually mean the tribes of Israel, but there is a spiritual indication, especially that we know that the Jewish people are refused as people. Even the Jews who are converted to Christianity, often marry from other races. They are confused and mixed descendants and tribes, and they no more keep ties among the members of each tribe, separately, as they did before. This was the case until Jesus came, incarnated from the tribe of Judah, and proved that He was the coming Messiah. Then there was no need for the tribes to exist.

The spiritual indication is as follows:

1- The number of those who are sealed is 144, meaning that the people of the New Testament (12 disciples) multiplied by the people of the Old Testament (12 Tribes), then by one thousand, as all through Jesus became celestial or heavenly, for the number 1000 indicates heaven.

2- The number "12000" is a symbolic number, that indicates the children of God who are censured and known by their names (John 10), especially that number "12" in the Holy Bible, points to God's ownership of the thing or person. For this reason, He chose 12 tribes in the Old Testament, and 12 apostles in the

New Testament.

3- He started with the tribe of Judah, although he was not the oldest, but because the Lord Jesus came from this tribe. And he who has relationship with, and abides in the person of the Lord, comes first in the kingdom.

4- He did not mention the tribe of Dan, because he sold himself to idols (Judges 18:1-31). God has warned any person, clan or tribe of worshipping them, or else the Lord will erase their names from under heaven (Deut. 29:18-25). Thus, those who erect in their hearts any kind of statue to worship, will be banned from the book of life.

5- He mentioned the tribe of Joseph instead of Ephraim, because the tribe of Ephraim was known for his resistance to the honest Judah (Ps. 80:2, Isa. 7:17 , Jer. 7:15), and he was the first worshipper of idols (1 Kings 12:25-30).

6- The tribes came in a special order, not according to their age or according to Ezekiel's prophecies (48:1-27, 31-34), but they came carrying a spiritual indication, which unveils the characteristics with which those who are bearing the Holy Spirit, need to be sealed with.

- Judah or “confession.” Life is useless without faith and confessing that the Lord is God.
- Reuben or “the son of vision.” His faith and his confession should be seen in his work and struggle.
- Gad or “to be strong.” He who works needs to be strong, persevering to the end.
- Asher or “Happy.” In our perseverance, we should not despair, but be happy and joyful in the Lord.
- Naphtali or “wide.” The happy and joyful heart has room to love infinitely.
- Manasseh or “forget.” He who loves, forgets himself and all that is worldly.
- Simeon or “listener.” He who forgets himself, hears and understands the heavenly voice.

- Levi or “borrowed.” He who listens to heaven will realize that he is borrowed, or a stranger here.
- Issachar or “reward.” The stranger does not ask for his earthly reward, but for the heavenly one.
- Zebulun or “dwelling.” He who asks for heaven, dwells in it, freeing his heart from everything.
- Joseph or “increase.” He who frees his heart, living in heaven, grows in every good deed.
- Benjamin or “son of the right.” He who grows, has his share at the right of God.

2 - HIS CARE FOR THE CHURCH IN HER REST

That is His concern about the Church on earth, then in heaven; what does God do for His bride?

The Church from Adam to the end of ages, will gather around Him. All will gather beyond all limitations of time and nationality. All will be one in the Lord.

They are the same one hundred and forty-four thousand, mentioned before, in a glorious heavenly view⁸⁵. But here they are not counted, because on earth we should be confident that God cares for each one. About the heavenly view, St. Augustine says, that the number was not mentioned, in order to fill the souls with hope that heaven will be populous. And not to tremble and feel despair, because of the great number of the wicked on earth.

"After these things I looked, and behold a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

and crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb'"[9-10].

The white robe is the robe of holiness, that men of the Old Testament get, for their hope in the blood of the Lamb of God who cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7). As for the New Testament, Bishop Victorinus says, [They were purified by baptism in the blood of the Lamb, thus their robes became white, and they kept

the grace they had accepted.]

Its whiteness is the reflection of the shining of the divine glory on them, as in His transfiguration, "His clothes became as white as the light" (Matt. 17:2). And we become like the heavenly angels, as St. Mary saw, "two angels in white sitting " (John 20:12).

This color, as St. Clement of Alexandria⁸⁶ says, is the color of the natural truth. [If they need to ask for another color, the natural color of the truth will be enough for them], for they are dressed with the truth which is their glory!

The white dress carries the mark of purity and cleanliness, and that of victory as well (Rev. 3:5). For this reason, the Church embellishes her children with a white garment, right after their baptism.

As for the palms, it carries the mark of conquest and victory, for only the victorious enters heaven, while the slack ones will not find a place there. It also indicates the joyful life, as they used to carry them in the feast of Tabernacles, which they kept in memory of the entrance into the Holy Land. Palms were also used when the people's hearts were filled with joy, on the Lord's entry into Jerusalem.

Their happiness is expressed in their continuous praise, shouting in a holy burning zeal, "*Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.*"

Our salvation is from God; we have no merit in it, but all merit goes to the love of the Father, and to the grace of the Son, and to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Angels are not insensitive towards our salvation, but they share with us our happiness, as he says: "*And all the angels stood around the throne, and the presbyters, and the four Living Creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne, and worshipped God, saying: 'Amen! Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, thanksgiving, and honor, and power and might, be to our God*

forever and ever. Amen" [11-12].

We are confused in the middle of this heavenly love. Do the heavenly hosts share with us our happiness for salvation? Do they sing with us this hymn, offering with us a thanksgiving sacrifice, or are we the ones who share their work and participate with them in their heavenly songs of praise?!

All are in communion of love and work, for "*the praise of God.*" Being with God, liberates the tongue to utter the praise, and opens the heart to give thanksgiving, and transforms every creature into a harp, which sings songs of praise, and infinite thanksgiving.

St. Augustine says: [As His majesty is infinite, His praise is also infinite. If you want to praise God permanently, you should be jealous of the behavior of the angels and their praise.]

We say that every worship, whatever big or small, loses its life, its being and its existence, if it is deprived of praise. The work of the Church is only continual praise⁸⁷. In the Church of the Old Testament, the Psalmist says, "Seven times a day I praise You" (Ps. 119). Daniel was kneeling three times a day, praying and thanking God (6 : 18). In the Church of the New Testament, we only see daily praise in all ways of worship, and in all occasions. That is because of her faith that the Gospel is the "Good News," and her work is a heavenly angelic work. For this reason, she teaches her children to praise.

St. Basil says, [Praising God is a special concern of the angels.] For this reason, Gregory the Nizanzus thinks that by praising we become equal to angels in honor.

Pope Athanasius the Apostolic says⁸⁸, [The settled soul forgets her pains, and by singing the holy words, she looks happily at Jesus alone.]

We go back to what the Apostle saw and heard: "*Then one of the presbyters answered, saying to me, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?' And I said to him, 'Sir, you know'*" [13-14].

This question raised by one of the presbyters was not to be answered, but to stimulate searching and questioning about them, to understand their state. As the apostle John knows the rank of those incorporeal presbyters, he answered him, 'Sir,' and asked him to tell him about them in a very gentle manner, "*Sir, you know.*"

"So he said to me, These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.

They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;

for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them, and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" [14-17].

They are coming from the great tribulation, and are washed with the blood of Jesus. They are the victorious Church, who endured to the end and were saved (Matt. 10:22). The reason for their acceptance, as Ibn-el-Assal says, is the shedding of the blood of the Lamb for them, and for others. Thus, they were given great honor, and became like pure and sinless sacrifices accepted by the Father, as their robes became white and shining by the blood of the Lamb. It was said of each one of them, those who were bound to the Lion coming out of the tribe of Judah, "He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes" (Gen. 49:11).

This is what the militants get. It is enough to be in front of the divine throne, serving His altar day and night. What is the altar of God, but the Lord Himself, as the Apostle says about heavens, "But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (Rev. 21:22).

What is their service, but the continuous praise, saying with the psalmist, "Before the gods I will sing praises to You" (Ps. 138).

How glorious! The one sitting on the throne comes over them, or as it is in Greek: He will put them in His shade, keep them and hide them in Him!

As they are in Him, "they shall neither hunger nor thirst, neither heat, nor sun shall strike them; For He who has mercy on them will lead them. Even by the springs of water He will guide them" (Isa. 49:10).

They see "the Lamb who is in the middle of the throne," and then they will need nothing, because He is the Groom who brings joy and happiness, who gives Himself as bread, drink, rest and peace. We can truly say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters" (Ps. 23:1,2).

How wonderful is the loving Lamb, who took care of us since He created us, and before the Law of Moses. His care and guidance has extended since the Law, and in the grace age. And He remains caring and coddling us in Paradise and in eternity. How powerful is His love, and how wonderful is His care and His concern. They go beyond time. They are eternal.

3

The Seven Trumpets

- 1- The Four Trumpet: Natural warnings to human race Chapter 8.
- 2- The Fifth Trumpet: Preparation for the Antichrist Chapter 9.
- 3- The Sixth Trumpet: Appearance of the Antichrist Chapter 9.
- 4- God's attitude towards him:
 - First: Appearance of the sealed book Chapter 10.
 - Secondly: Sending of the two prophets Chapter 11.

Chapter Eight

This chapter talks about **God's warnings to human beings**, after he had talked about the redemptive intercession of the Lamb for mankind, and sending the Holy Spirit to rebuke them. He who does not accept the love of God, revealed gently and softly on the cross, is drawn by trials and discipline.

1. **Silence in heaven "the eternal rest"** 1-2.
2. **Redemptive intercession of the Lamb** 3-5.
3. **The four trumpets** 6-13.

- **The first trumpet: Throwing of hail and fire mixed with blood.**
- **The second trumpet: Throwing a huge burning mountain.**
- **The third trumpet: The fall of a great star.**
- **The fourth trumpet: Darkening of a third of the shining stars.**

1 - SILENCE IN HEAVEN "THE ETERNAL REST"

"When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour" [1].

Bishop Victorianus thinks that this period of silence indicated the beginning of the eternal rest. But He broke the silence, because He did not care about the temporal order of events.

In the **sixth seal**, God revealed the events of the judgment, and the fearful state to be of the wicked, who will seek the mountains and the rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of the One who is sitting on the throne. He did not speak about the response of God's children, which was revealed in the seventh seal; but "*there was silence in heaven,*" as a result of the amazement that struck the heavenly creatures, at the glory that man obtained!

Thus, the Book of Revelation leaves us for "*half an hour,*" just a short time, to admire in amazement, what He had prepared for us, forever. Yet he brought us back down to follow up the

second series.

"And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets" [2].

The seven angels are the seven archangels that Raphael said he was one of. Ibn-el-Assal thinks that the trumpets indicate here the commands given by God, and the blowing indicates their implementation.

The trumpets are used for:

1- Giving the Law (Exod. 19:16,19, and warning for the purpose of repentance and to return to God, that they may live and be engaged with God, and not to perish.

2- The call for war (Judg. 3 :27). The blowing of the angels is an indication of the state of a spiritual war, between God and Satan!

3- The celebration of feasts and jubilees (Lev. 23:24, 25:9). The trumpets will stop at the coming of the Lord Jesus (1 Thess. 4:16). Athanasius the Apostolic says, that He is our eternal feast that never ends.

4- The calling for the Kings (2 Kings 9:13). And the trumpets will end by the coming of the "King of kings," accompanied by the angels who with the sound of the heavenly trumpets, will shout proclaiming the eternal heavenly kingdom.

2. THE REDEMPTIVE INTERCESSION OF THE LAMB

"Then another angel, having a golden censer came and stood at the altar. And he was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand" [3-4].

This other angel, different from the seven, indicates:

1- The Church who does not cease offering incense, either by her victorious members in Paradise, or the militants on earth. All wish the return of the sinners to Him.

2- Ibn-El-Assal thinks that he is a real angel from the order of the Cherubim, "as they take care of the sacrifices that we offer to God" (Judges 6:21, Gen. 22:11).

At the end of the liturgy of the Eucharist, the priest says, "May the angel of the sacrifice who is ascending up with this praise, remember us before God..."

3- The preponderant opinion is that "the Lord Jesus," is whom the angel in the book of Revelation, symbolizes, as in (10:1, 18:1), and He was called the Angel of the Covenant in (Mal. 3:1,2). It is He, the Redemptive Interceder, "He ever lives to make intercession for them." He is the Bishop of our souls and the most High Priest who stands at the altar, which is His cross, where He offers Himself as a sacrifice for us. He holds a gold censer, or a spiritual censer which is His redemptive intercession, that "gives a lot of incense." He defends and pleads for His children.

In His love He accepts, "*the prayers of the saints*," the departed and the militants, to offer them in Him, to the Father, as a pure, appealing, and accepted sacrifice according to His promise: "If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).

"Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake" [5].

If the altar is the cross, so the fire of the altar is the Holy Spirit, that rebukes, and makes one repent. He gives communion with the Holy Trinity, in the merit of the blood of Jesus, shed for us on the cross.

The Son sent us the Holy Spirit. As He said, "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth" (John 15:26), "But if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged"

(John 16:7-11).

And this is the work of the Holy Spirit:

1- **Noises were heard**, when the tongues of the apostles and the preachers were released by the Holy Spirit, to preach without fear.

2- "**Thunderings**:" The preachers thunder by the Holy Spirit, as roaring lions with divine authority. As the Holy Bible says about Felix the governor, when he was judging Paul the captive, "Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid" (Acts. 24:25), and he could not tolerate his words and said to him, "Go away for now; when I have convenient time I will call for you."

3- "**Lightenings**;" for the Lord's Spirit always shines with glorious and wonderful deeds before the people, beautifying His church with divine talents, through which she shines with her Groom's light on everyone.

4- "**And an earthquake**." It is the purpose of the Holy Spirit to rebuke the believer, that his pride might be quaked and smashed, removing away his pride, to accept the Lord Jesus as the Groom. And as the heart accepts the Lord, it will accept all mankind as dear brothers.

3- THE FOUR TRUMPETS

"So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound" [6].

This vision takes us back to an old view, when the seven priests were carrying the seven trumpets of ram's horns before the ark, as they went around the city of Jericho, and the walls of the city fell down on their blowing the trumpets (Josh. 6).

After the Lord revealed to us the Lamb's care for the whole world, and His sending of the Holy Spirit for reproof, He again shifted to God's work throughout history. He granted the patriarchs, the prophets, the disciples and the apostles, as His angels, to carry trumpets of continuous warning to man. That he might understand

that only by the word of God (the blowing), the power of Satan is destroyed and smashed. Then man shall live with God in the highest heavens.

We find that, in His warning, God is so gentle and kind, yet with firmness, for the salvation of man. For this reason, He does not haste to warning, but He lets the angels get ready for the blowing, to give those who accept the tender loving Lord, a chance. He who does not accept, will hear the warnings getting stronger and stronger, until the heart is softened before God.

Two directions of interpretation;

There are two directions of interpreting the trumpets. They are not opposed, but are adherent to each other:

1- St. Irenaeus believes that the following warnings happened in the world textually before the coming of the Antichrist, and during his presence, so as to terrify the believers, that they do not accept him. And to discipline those who have accepted him, in order to repent.

2- The second direction is that the four trumpets point to God's warnings to man in any age, especially before and during the time of the Antichrist, in a metaphoric and imagery language; for example:

a) The first trumpet: *"The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up" [7].*

Hail points to the might of punishment (Isa. 28:2, 17), as fire points to God's great anger (Deut. 32:22, Mal. 4:1). God uses the opposites together, as an indicating of the strength of His warnings, as the psalmist says, "Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken. Because He was angry... hailstones and coals of fire" (Ps. 18:7-12).

The burning of a third of the trees and all green grass indicates that by this punishment God humiliates some arrogant and haughty persons (Isa. 28:2, 30:30; Ps. 18:7-13), (trees as in

Isa. 2:12,13), and fades the brightness of the earthly life. Thus, when people see how tyrants have fallen, and how the world was full of problems, troubles, and pains, they would come back to God with a contrite and humble heart.

b) The second trumpet: *"Then the second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood. And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed"* [8-9].

As the first trumpet reminds us of the first plague mentioned in Exodus 9:23,25, the second trumpet reminds us of what is mentioned in Exodus 7:20,21.

May be by this trumpet, he indicates that God permits the punishment of the agitated souls, like the sea, which are not settled in the bosom of God, the king of peace. He allows a great burning mountain to fall in their midst, so that a third of them will be killed and slaughtered... this burning mountain differs from time to time, and from a person to another. As if God allows to appoint a person characterized by violence, arrogance and without pity, in a leading religious, moral or worldly position, for the punishment of a harsh and rebellious nation. History has recorded countless examples of this kind.

This can happen in a simple repeated and daily manner. God may allow an arrogant person to have such a boss at work, a friend, a brother, or a disobedient violent son. Because of this boss at work, this friend, this brother, or this disobedient son, the first may lose many earthly matters and dignity. Thus his pride is destroyed and his "ego" is crushed before God.

The beauty of God's love is that He allows only a third to perish, to leave the majority, the chance to repent. In some individual cases, He allows man to lose earthly matters, in order to gain heavenly ones.

God does not desire to humiliate man, but he uses every way possible to lead man to repentance and return to Him.

c- The third trumpet: *"Then the third angel sounded, and there a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water; and the name of the star is Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter"* [10-11].

As this great star burning like a torch had fallen from heaven, this indicates a third kind of bitter punishment. Some personalities of great religious, and spiritual positions, may be permitted by God to deviate, by their heresies, from the spiritual and heavenly worship, and get into the waters of the living rivers, the media of true faith. Thus, empoison and embitter the water, and many souls die in it.

History recorded to us that great stars fell and embittered the life of God's children. They spoiled the spiritual teachings and caused many to perish. Some of them are, Arius, Nestorius, Macedonius, Pelagius and many others.

This kind of warning is extremely painful, but God permits it to make believers fetch the Holy Bible, to prosper and be filled with it's words, thus be able to answer the heretics.

At the same time, the Church does not stop to preach her message through the bitterness of heretics. Without them she could stay still and her children may love the world and fall in deep sleep⁸⁹.

d- The fourth trumpet: *"Then the fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened; and a third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night"* [12].

No doubt, darkness carries the meaning of tribulation in it's strongest form as a warning. For as we know, darkness paralyses the movement of man, especially if it remains for a long time. It makes him lose his vitality and deprives him of growing the plants. Thus, when man feels a kind of despair, he comes back to the truth, and search for the true light. And that's the aim of God concerning

His beloved children.

These days, we learn about the fall of some stars, and about sun explosions. Such news will strongly increase prior to the time of the Antichrist, as warnings.

Another warning:

"And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" [13].

Bishop Victorianus thinks that the flying eagle symbolizes the Holy Spirit who carries the testimony of the two prophets, that strong rage and tribulations are eminent. If any man wishes, even if it is at the end of ages, to repent, he will be saved.

In conclusion the last four trumpets are God's warnings in all ways to humankind, before the period of the Antichrist. No matter how hard and severe these warnings may appear, they are easy and slight in comparison to the tribulations at the time of the Antichrist, who will come to reign and appoint himself as God.



Chapter Nine

In the preceding chapter, God warned mankind in different ways, over the ages, and in everyone's life, for his repentance:

- **The first trumpet:** Warning touches the source of man's livelihood.
- **The second trumpet:** Warning through man's humiliation by others.
- **The third trumpet:** Warning by the appearance of heretics.
- **The fourth trumpet:** Extremely severe warning and full of trouble. Life grows dark in man's eyes.

This chapter talks about the fifth and sixth trumpets.

1- The fifth trumpet: punishment through Satanic thoughts 1-12.

2- The sixth trumpet: punishment through human wars 13-21.

THE FIFTH TRUMPET: PREPARATION FOR THE ANTICHRIST

PUNISHMENT THROUGH SATANIC THOUGHTS

The preceding four trumpets talked about general punishment, addressed by God to human beings at all times, especially during the time immediately previous to the Antichrist. But this fifth trumpet, or the first woe, is a warning of the time before the Antichrist. Before Satan puts his power and energy in a man, who makes a god of himself, calls for worshipping idols and carries away the world to disgrace, he permits himself to spread his thoughts and inclinations within some people, to prepare them to help the Antichrist at his rising.

This Satanic work that God allows, will itself bring suffering, reprimand, trouble and bitterness to those who embrace and proclaim it. By that, God changes what is evil into good, that out of the eater comes something to eat. He leaves the darkness to witness for its darkness by itself.

The Apostle says: "*Then the fifth angel sounded, And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. And to him was given the key to the bottomless pit.*"

And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace. And the sun, and the air were darkened, because of the smoke of the pit" [1-2].

Some think that the fall of a star from heaven denotes the relapse of a person of great religious position, and as a reaction, Satan works in the hearts of many. Others think that one of the dark and evil authorities who accuse us before God, will have the authority to open the doors of the abyss. He fills the air of the world with smoke of the devils, which is their thoughts.

It is a metaphorical and imaginary language, revealing the dominion of a materialistic and apostate thought, which fills the world from east to west. It hides the light of the heavenly knowledge from many hearts. The air is filled with darkness, confusion, anxiety, doubt and spiritual dryness. He means the dragon (Satan), who prepares the atmosphere for the coming of the Antichrist. Yet God used this same work to make Satan denounce himself by himself.

The following shows to what extent is the authority of this work, and its effect.

1 - He has no dominion on the believers:

"Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads" [3-4].

This reminds us of the locusts mentioned in the book of Joel. Their work was to completely destroy every green thing to the end. This destructive or ruinous has no power to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree.

How sweet is the kindness of God, who shows compassion to the weak grass before the green thing, and to the green thing before the trees. He keeps the children in faith, cares for the little ones, and looks after the weak souls, because those are more in need of kindness and compassion.

Every soul that enjoyed the waters of the Holy Spirit, and lives growing in Him, should be reassured, even if it is still green grass, or became a bush, or a high tree. For He has given us the power to tramp on the serpents, the scorpions, and all the power of the enemy. Neither the Antichrist nor thoughts that prepare for Him, like apostasy and heresies, which started to appear in the Western Church⁹⁰ under the cover of Christianity, are able to rule over such a soul.

This in regard to those who have the seal of God, who are anointed with the Lord's Spirit on their forehead. But in regard to the others, he says:

2 - They are tortured without being killed:

"And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. And their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.

In those days men will seek death, and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them" [5-6].

Those who accepted this thought are tormented, because what is not of the truth cannot give peace or joy. The wicked are tormented by their wickedness regardless of their involvement, their calling others and seducing them to commit evil. The torture does not originate from outside, but from inside man's thought and behavior.

Because of the extreme bitterness, man desires to die, but God does not allow it to them, in order not to die in their deviation. He leaves them in their impatience and confusion, that they might return to God, asking Him for help.

3 - They fight and deceive:

"And the shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces looked like the faces of men's.

They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lion's teeth.

And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the

sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle.

They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. And their power was to hurt men five months.

And they had as king over them, the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon" (and in English the Destroyer) [7-11].

a- **It does not stop fighting**, for it is like horses prepared for war. Its job is continuous destruction in the heart and mind. As the prophet says: "A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the Garden of Eden before them. And behind them a desolate wilderness... Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like swift steeds, so they run (Joel 2 : 3,4).

When man calms down in retreat, and humbles himself before God, he perceives, the intensity of the war inside him, and the extension of the destruction that happened within his soul. And he realizes how much he is deceived.

b- **Deceiving**, as they appear like kings to those who view them. They had "*crowns of something like gold.*" In reality they are not crowns, nor golden, but they make themselves a halo of greatness to rule over the heart, to possess it, and man becomes its slave.

c- **It has the appearance of rationality and meekness**, as "*their faces were like the faces of men,*" but their hearts are ferocious.

d- **Pretty**, "*They had hair like women's hair,*" but they hide teeth like lion's teeth. By their softness, and coquetry, they attract, in order to bloodshed and devour.

e- **They have strong armors**. The sound of their wings is fearful. It refers to the severity of their deeds, and the speed of their spreading.

f- **Deadly**, they torture like scorpions but for a while, "*five months!*" Their king's name is "*Abaddon,*" or "*Apollyon,*" which

means the destroyer, or the deadly.

Some people think that these descriptions, and these traces, apply to the heresies and new philosophies, which are spreading in the world, under the name of "Christianity, or religion," according to which, religion turns into a code of moral behavior and social ethics away from the faith in God, the redemptive work, and the hope for eternity. They proclaim, that there is no need to talk about the miracles mentioned in the Holy Bible, or about eternity, the cross, or resurrection⁹¹.

The thinking which has more than one name, has defenders calling themselves Christians and also non-Christians. They present embellished philosophies, tender expressions and sweet methods. All this in reality is harmful and deadly for the soul.

Of this kind of people we unfortunately, hear about some religious leaders, who reply to the atheists by proving that God has no relationship with man, and man worships God without interference of God in his affairs.

By separating the loving God from the beloved man they fall in continuous and bitter apostasy.

"One woe is past. Behold still two more woes are coming after these things" [12].

THE SIXTH TRUMPET: APPEARANCE OF THE ANTICHRIST.

PUNISHMENT THROUGH HUMAN WARS

"Then the sixth angel sounded: and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Release the four angels who are bound at the great River Euphrates.'

So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to a third of mankind.

Now the number of the arming of the horsemen was two hundred million; and I heard the number of them" [13-16].

The permission to wage a fierce war at the time of the

Antichrist, was given from the horns of the altar where the angel "*offered much incense.*" At a defined hour, day, month, and year, everything is by permission from God the Almighty. God allows wars, and a certain number of warriors. All that to discipline the people who may return and repent.

That will be at the River Euphrates, where we remember "*the lost Paradise,*" that man had lost because of Satan's envy. And we remember Babylon, which points always to showing pride and haughtiness to God. It is there, where the center of the Antichrist will be. Some say, that he will renew the old Babylon again, while his spiritual center "*the Satanic,*" will be in the holy city of Jerusalem, as we shall see.

When the Book of Revelation talks about these wars, it talks not about the external form, but about the hidden purpose, as it says,

"And thus I saw the horses in vision, those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone.

By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed by the fire, and the smoke, and the brimstone, which came out of their mouths.

For their power is in their mouths, and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm" [17-19].

This pictorial and metaphorical description shows that war hides Satan's deeds. The warriors have the following things:

- **Fearful fiery breastplates.** They devour with Satanic strength.
- **Hyacinth;** for the breastplates appear as if they were heavenly and are by God's permission.
- **Brimstone;** for revenge and perishableness.

As for the horses themselves:

- Their heads are like the heads of lions. They do not stop devouring.

- Fire, smoke and brimstone come out of their mouths. Their purpose is to burn and to disperse.
- Their tails are like serpents, that made the first man lose all he possessed.

God allowed these wars to kill some people, that the rest may repent, but the prophecy says:

"But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues; did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk;

and they did not repent of their murders, or their sorceress, or their immorality nor of their sexual thefts" [20-21].

The rest of the followers of the Antichrist who remain after some had perished at war, did not repent of:

- **Their worshipping idols**, as the Antichrist sets a statue of himself, and calls to worship it.
- **Their opposition to the church** by continuous killing. They follow her, even in the wilderness.
- **Their magic:** They do wonders to deceive people. This shows how far they can go to remove the fear of God from the heart, and cause to lose the spirit of repentance and contrite. They use magic to realize their objectives. They are absorbed in adultery, and in uncleanness, robbing the people of their lives.



Chapter Ten

As we have come to know God's warning, revealed in the time of the Antichrist, the rising of wars for punishment, we wonder, what is the attitude of the Lamb towards him, especially for the sake of His bride?

Chapter ten shows us the person of the Lord as an angel clothed with a cloud. In His hand, there is **a little book, opened**, to reveal His intentions towards mankind, especially in the time of tribulation, and in particular, at the time of the thick darkness of the Antichrist.

Chapter eleven explains his sending of the two prophets, Elijah and Enoch, two witnesses, to help the Church to flee to the wilderness, if possible, and they stand in the face of the Antichrist to resist him.

Let us go back to the angel who holds the book, to find in this chapter:

- 1. The angel clothed with a cloud** 1-4.
- 2. Swearing of the angel** 5-7.
- 3. Swallowing of the book** 8-11.

1 - THE ANGEL CLOTHED WITH A CLOUD

"And I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire;

And he had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left on the land,

and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. And when he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices"[1-3].

He is the "Angel of the Covenant," who is revealed in the hearts to reassure its trouble, saying to the believer, "I am he, do not be afraid!"

Bishop Victorianus confirms that He is Jesus Christ, and He

is:

1) Descending from heaven: Being heavenly, He is concerned, not in preventing His believers tribulation and difficulties, but in their reaching heaven.

2) Mighty: He was revealed strong to His bride, to strengthen her, that she who is engaged to Him, would not faint.

Indeed, the believers realize that they are not able by themselves to bear the difficulties, but through the mighty Lord they are capable (2 Cor. 3:5).

By himself the believer is weak, but with the Lord he is strong. By himself he faints, but he puts on the victorious Lord who defeats.

3) Clothed with a cloud: The cloud points to the the presence of God, as it symbolizes His glory and majesty. When the time of His second advent is near, to reign forever, He appears to the believers in His glory. Thus, in their waiting for Him, they do not cool down, but hear Him saying, "Surely I come quickly." They will not stop calling on Him, "Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus" (Rev. 29:20). They beg Him ceaselessly saying: "Your kingdom come."

The cloud has an old story. When God led His old people in the desert, He overshadowed them with a cloud. The cloud of glory descended between the two churches in the tabernacle, and in the temple of Solomon. When Ezekiel prophesied about the rejection of the Jews, because of their wickedness, he saw the cloud leaving the Holy of Holies to the exterior house, then moved to the wall of the city, and finally ascended to heaven.

When the Lord Jesus came at His transfiguration, the disciples saw a "bright cloud" shadowing them. The Church is now living under the cloud in heavenly glory, but in pledge, waiting for all the glory, when her Bridegroom comes, "on the cloud of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:3).

4) The rainbow on his head: The glory, with which He

crowns His head, is the reconciliation, that he gave us with God. This reconciliation is the subject of the praise of the heavenly and the humans, as they stand amazed at this great love!

5) His face is like the sun: Bishop Victorianus thinks that, this metaphoric description indicates the joy of the resurrection, and the resurrection is the defeat of death. The Lord lights the way for His children. He disperses the darkness in front of them, and gives them the life of victory and conquest until death.

6) And His feet like pillars of fire: When we are clothed with the Lord Jesus, by Him, we demolish the obstacles, as with two pillars of fire, so we do not stumble on the way, no matter how strong the tribulation is.

7) In His hand a little book was open: This is the living word of God for those who wish to enter into it, and enjoy it, by constantly meditating on it. It is a book that reveals the purpose of God towards human beings. With Him, souls feel security and restfulness, for being sure of the authority of God, and His capability in keeping His children in the hardest trials.

It is a little book, for the judgment day is near, and only a few prophecies remain unrealized yet. The believers will endure only for a short time.

8) And He placed His right foot on the sea, and his left on the land: Bishop Victorianus says, that His feet are His disciples, that fill the land and the sea, preaching, and witnessing to Him.

At the time of the Antichrist, many think that all had deviated, and there are no more believers in God. This feeling is capable of discouraging the believers, or those who wish to turn back from their deviation. For this reason, the real King assures them that "the land and its fullness, the universe and all its inhabitants" is His. He is not missing any witness to Him, on land or sea. He is present on earth to keep His Church, and His works, through His zealous children for the sake of the weak!

9) And He cried out as when a lion roars: How wonderful! When the earth is filled with the blasphemy of the Antichrist, and his followers against the Lord, many think that there is no more left of His members as a struggling church, only a handful of weak, escaping bunch. The hidden reality is that God shouts on the mouth of His children, roaring as a lion, for He is "like a strong man to run its race" (Ps. 19:5). "God thunders marvelously with His voice. He does great things which we cannot comprehend" (Job 34:5-6). *"Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write. but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them" [4].*

When He shouted out, the seven thunders obeyed, or nature thundered in obedience to His call, so we may pay attention to His call as it is said, "Hear attentively the thunder of His voice... He thunders with His majestic voice" (Job. 37:2-4). "The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered His voice" (Ps. 18:13). But if we wonder about what the thunder said, God's words are enough, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered," to fulfill our inquiry. We are sure that God demanded that for our salvation, and our good. May be, by means of these voices the prophets came to know who is the Antichrist, His name in full and His birth. The clear uncovering of this matter is dangerous.

May be, the thunder spoke extensively about sad and bitter matters, which will take place at the time of the Antichrist. And mentioning it in detail may lead those who live in this period to despair.

So let us be silent as far as the Lord wishes that.

2 - OATH OF THE ANGELS

*"And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land, lifted up His right hand to heaven,
and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should*

be delay no longer,

but in the days of the sounding of the seven angels, when he is about to sound, the the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets" [5-7].

He lifted up His hand to heaven. The lifting of the hand is an assurance to the believers, that what he is announcing is serious,, drawing their sight towards heaven, the source of comfort.

What did he announce? He announces with oath, "that there should be delay no longer," or the time of tribulation has come to an end, the time of the Antichrist.

This oath reveals the extent of bitterness that the believers endure. As the Lord says, "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matt. 24:22).

He draws our attention to the seven trumpets, which reveal the secret of God, which His servants the prophets had preached. This secret is but the end of ages and the coming of the Lord for judgment, right as the prophets had prophesied.

3 - THE SWALLOWING OF THE BOOK

"Then the voice which I heard from heaven, spoke to me and said, 'Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth.'

And I went to the angel, and said to him, 'Give me the little book.' And he said to me, 'Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be sweet as honey in your mouth.'

And I took the little book out of the angel's hands and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.

And he said to me, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues and kings'" [8-11].

This book that reveals the purpose of God towards His Church, also carries within it, the bitter pains that she will suffer, especially at the time of the Antichrist.

He saw this little book open, and He did not ask him to seal what he reads in it, as He had asked him concerning what the seven thunders were talking about (Rev. 10:4). He ordered him to take it, and eat it, which means to understand it and announce it to the human race.

The book was sweet in his mouth because it spoke about the two witnesses, who are coming at the time of the Antichrist, as we shall see soon in the following chapter. In his stomach it became bitter, because it encloses a very bitter period.

Bishop Victorianus explains that the reason for the sweetness, is the reward he gets for preaching it. Its bitterness in his stomach is because of what it contains of bitter sufferings.

He asked Jeremiah to eat "the word of God," and he said, "Your words were found, and I ate them. And Your words were to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). Also when Ezekiel ate the book, in His mouth, it was sweet like honey, but inside of him were bitterness, wailing and sorrow (Ez. 2:8, 9-3:1-3,10).

It is sweet, because of our understanding God's purpose towards His children, His justification to many, during their great distress. It is bitter because of what they go through in their troubles, and because of their grief over the perverts. They say as the psalmist said, "Indignation has taken hold of me, because of the wicked who forsake Your laws."



Chapter Eleven

This chapter brings forth God's concern with sending two witnesses to resist the Antichrist.

- 1 - Measuring the believers** **1 - 2.**
2 - Sending forth the two prophets **3 - 14.**
3 - The seventh trumpet **15- 19.**

1) MEASURING THE BELIEVERS

"Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, 'Rise, and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.

But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months'" [1-2].

The Antichrist shall call himself god, "so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:4). And he will take the city of Jerusalem, "the holy city," as a center to spread his satanic ideology.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem⁹² suggests that the wicked Jews will accept him as their Christ, and worship him, thinking that he can build them Solomon's temple, and restore for them their ancient glory. They will follow him, misled by the signs and miracles he will perform.

Some Christians too will follow him, those who are looking forward to an earthly kingdom. They will think that he is the Christ who will reign over the material world. That is why God warns us saying, "Then if anyone says to you 'Look, here is the Christ! or there,' do not believe it" (Matt. 24:23).

Here, our Lord Jesus assures that the true children of God, whose souls cling to the Lord, hoping for an eternal heavenly kingdom, are kept and known to Him.

He had given to Ezekiel a measuring rod (Ezek. 40:5). Then the prophet took a stick-like rod, that is a firm strong rod, to

measure the children of God, "the temple of God," those who worship in spirit and truth, not in desire of material worldly glory, but looking forward to an eternal life with the Lord Jesus.

But he will not measure those who are out of the temple, or the unbelievers, because they refuse dwelling with God. God does not consider them as His own children.

Bishop Victorianus thinks that the temple refers to the believers who are abiding in the Church. The outer court is those who are alien to the Church... The period of the forty-two months is the period during which the deceiver, the "Antichrist," will lead astray.

2) SENDING FORTH THE TWO WITNESSES

"And I will give power to My two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth" [3].

During the time when the world gets dark, because of the coming of the deceiver, and the spread of his deceptions, God will send His two witnesses, Elijah and Enoch, clothed in sackcloth. They are apathetic to worldly matters, in order to resist that who sets himself up as a king, while he pampers himself in luxury with his followers.

The early Fathers proclaimed that the two witnesses were Elijah and Enoch, ahead of them were Justin the Martyr, Hippolytus, Ignatius, Tertullian, Augustine, St. Ephram the Syrian and John of Damascus.⁹³

Bishop Hippolytus⁹⁴ says, [It is natural that they appear first (before the day of the judgment), as it was proclaimed by Malachi, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4 : 5,6).]

Tertullian⁹⁵ says, [Enoch was taken up (Gen. 45:2, Heb. 11:5), and Elijah also (2 Kings 2:11), without dying. Their death

was delayed, as they are kept to bear death, that by their blood they crush the Antichrist (Rev. 11:3).]

That is how the Lord bestowed the spirit of prophecy on them "*and they will prophesy*," and have the power to make miracles, preach, and debate with the Antichrist, and his followers.

As for the period of their witnessing, which is 1260 days, it will last until their martyrdom. The period of the Antichrist is 42 months, or three and a half years, i.e. 1278 or 1279 days. The difference is 18 or 19 days between their martyrdom, and the death of the Antichrist, and the end of his kingdom.

The two prophets are described by the inspiration as follows:

1) **Peace-makers:** "*These are the two olive trees*"⁹⁶. The olive tree symbolizes peace and edification, not ruination and destruction.

As Noah's dove came proclaiming the end of the deluge with an olive branch, the Holy Spirit proclaims through the two witnesses, His protection to the Church, her inner joy, and unshaken peace.

And as the people carried olive tree branches, to show their joy, at the coming of the Lord to Jerusalem, to be sacrificed on behalf of His bride, Elijah and Enoch will come forward in the same manner, as two olive branches, with which the victorious Church slaughtered for the sake of her Bridegroom, will rejoice.

2) **Two witnesses for the true Light:** "*The two lampstands standing before the God of the earth*" [4]. In their witnessing to Him, the Lord never forsakes them, but they are always standing before the Lord. This gives them courage and wisdom in their ministry.

They are like two lampstands, and we know that the lampstand was in the temple, lit by oil, which symbolizes the Holy Spirit. In the same manner Elijah and Enoch do not witness of themselves, but the Holy Spirit shines in them, the Spirit of their

Father, who speaks in them (Matt. 10:20). With the Spirit of God they help the Church in her divine work, that is, witnessing to God. Thus she will be sure of God's promise, that it is not by ability, or strength, but by His Spirit (Zech. 4), she will witness to Him.

3) **They are zealous**, "*And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner*" [5].

This reminds us of what Elijah did with the two leaders of the fifty and their soldiers, when he asked for fire from heaven that consumes them (2 Kings 1:10-12).

The two witnesses shall speak the fiery words of God, which burns the straw of innovations and heresies, spread out by the Antichrist and his followers. This will happen according to God's promise to the prophet Jeremiah, "Is not my word like a fire?" says the Lord, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:29). "Behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire. And this people wood, and it shall devour them" (Jer. 5:14).

That is how the Church is always armored by the fiery word of God, which burns the straw of sin inside us, also destroys all the powers of Satan, and disperses darkness.

4) **They make miracles**: "*These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophesy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire*" [6].

God gives them wide powers, not to show power, or authority, but for the sake of restoring the souls, and saving those who went astray behind the Antichrist. They do as Elijah had done previously with the people who fell back to worship the idols (1 Kings 17:18), and what Moses did because of the cruelty of Pharaoh.

*** Their Testimony**

"Now when they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them,

overcome them, and kill them” [7].

The war is on, all along the period of their testimony. God is their protector. In the assigned time when He sees that they have accomplished their message, and what remains is only to prove it, by their martyrdom, He will permit the Antichrist coming up out of the abyss, dwelled by Satan, to overcome them, and kill them.

By their death, their testimony will not die, but it is more and more confirmed, because they have given testimony to the truth until death.

By their death, the souls of the blasphemous will rest, thinking that those who made their conscience and hearts suffer for the word of truth they proclaimed, had died.

"And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" [8].

The Antichrist uses satanic tricks to disgrace them, leaving their dead bodies in the streets, for three and a half days.

The Greek text mentions "*their dead bodies*," in the singular form with reference to what happens to their dead bodies, not due to personal enmity, but enmity towards the one Church. As they have been working in one spirit, they get one share, which is a share of an honest witness to the truth, by being disgraced, and despised by the wicked.

Yet God turns evil to good, making of this peculiar behavior a chance to proclaim their testimony, that His name may be glorified later on.

The amazing thing is that their testimony will be in Jerusalem, which was favored by the presence of the incarnate Lord, therein.

- It is called great, not because of its holiness, but because of the evil propagated there by the Antichrist.
- Spiritually, it is called Sodom, because of its decline, and corruption (Isa. 1:10); and Egypt, because of the cruelty shown

by Pharaoh.

- It is there, where our Lord was crucified. As it had despised the Lord, now it despises His children.

"Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues and nations, will see their dead bodies three and a half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.

And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth" [9-10].

They disdained their dead bodies by disposing of them this way, as a scene to gloat over. As there is going to be delegates of the Antichrist from all the people, tribes, tongues and nations, in the city of Jerusalem, the center of his evil thoughts, they will rush and look at, and gloat over them. The wicked will rejoice, and avenge themselves, because they had suffered the prophets reprimand.

Their hearts will rest, and they will exchange gifts and congratulations, yet temporarily.

*** Their Rise and Ascension**

"Now after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them" [11].

They did not rise by their own personal powers, because they were ordinary creatures, not like the incarnate God, who has the authority to lay down His life, and the power to take it again. He who permitted their martyrdom, and allowed people to gloat over them, turned it to emphasize their message when He gave them "the spirit of life."

This action brought hope back to the souls which fainted and deviated, because the cheering hope of the Church focuses on the resurrection (1 Thess. 4:16-18). It ends its creed, by saying, "We wait for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."

By this action the Church sings saying, "Weeping may

endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Ps. 30:5).

In order that nobody dares think that they perform a satanic deed, those who saw them, "*heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.' And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them*" [12].

This was confirmed, "*In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake, seven thousand men were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven*" [13].

This earthquake confirms the divinity of the message. This was testified by the rest of the people who were not killed by the earthquake, yet unfortunately they do not repent. They still dread the "*God of Heaven,*" and give Him glory, but they do not accept Him as 'their God.' They witness to Him, but they refuse to be related to Him. They know His power, but they do not try it, fear Him, but they do not love Him.

By this, the two witnesses terminate their message, and it remains for us to know about them that:

a) They are two, because "by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.

b) They came in the spirit of their Lord and Savior Jesus, following His example in many matters:

1- The period of their ministry is about three and a half years, which is the period of manifest ministry of Jesus Christ.

2- The Lord was crucified for the sake of the truth, and they as well.

3- He granted them martyrdom in the same city, Jerusalem.

4- Through His resurrection, the Lord gave them a "spirit of life," to confirm their message.

5- The Lord rose in front of the Church to attach her heart to heaven, because where the Head is, the members also are. As for the two messengers, the Lord brought them up, while the Church is

dispersed in the wilderness. But He rose them up in front of the Antichrist's followers, to rebuke them.

6- At the crucifixion of the Lord, an earthquake took place, and saints rose from death, rejoicing for the salvation. And at the rising of the two witnesses an earthquake will happen killing one tenth of the people, known for being obstinate, giving the chance to the rest to repent.

"The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly" [14].

3) THE SEVENTH TRUMPET: THE COMING OF THE LORD FOR THE JUDGMENT

The last trumpet proclaims the final events of the advent of Jesus Christ on the clouds, right after the period of the Antichrist.

"Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'

And the twenty-four presbyters, who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying:

'We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is, and who was, and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned.

The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come. And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great. And should destroy those who destroy the earth'" [15-18].

No sooner did Elijah and Enoch ascend, than the songs of victory reigned the sky, songs of praise that the twenty-four presbyters, and all the heavenly, never cease chanting.

The purposes of God have reached their destination. Everything was accomplished, and the Lord appears victorious. The material sky, and earth disappear. Then the twenty-four presbyters chant the songs of praise, and the four Living Creatures

as give songs of thanksgiving. (Rev. 4:9).

Therefore, the Church never ceases teaching us "the praise of thanksgiving," all the time, and on every occasion. We offer our thanksgiving in our private prayers, in our family, and church prayers; in the liturgies, and in celebrating joyful and sad occasions. By that we get trained, for "praise and thanksgiving," the language of heaven.

What is wonderful about this praise is, that it relates God to what He grants us. When we are granted the great power, and reign with Him in eternity, the angels praise Him, "because You have taken Your great power, and reigned."

What is beautiful too, is that God rewards those who fear Him, the "small and great," beginning with the small (Ps. 115:13), as He never forgets anybody.

Yet His anger at the wicked and their destruction, is nothing, but a natural result of their actions, which turns against them, as "they were destroying the earth." God bears no hatred, or desire to revenge us by the human rage, but in His justice He leaves the wicked to their choice. It is the evil they chose, loved and were bound to, that destroys them.

*** Another Scene**

"Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple" [19].

In Greek the word "*temple*," means here "Holy of Holies," which is the place, where no one can enter, except the high priest once a year.

It is the first time the wedding house opens, and man enters, to see God, face to face, in the perfection of His glory and greatness. There, man sees the ark of God's covenant, or sees the presence of God in its sublimity. There, he will stay contemplating, and fascinated every moment, if we can say, as if he sees Him for the first time, and stays thus forever.

Pens should stop, and tongues be silenced and expressions

come to an end, that we may meditate on the faithful promise of God, to enter into the joy of our Master. That God be our God, and we His children.

This is the cheerful side of judgment, yet about the judgment of the wicked he says, "*And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail*" [20].

It is an unbearable violent disturbance which the wicked shall see and touch, because of their lust and sin.



The woman clothed with the Sun

- * The resistance of the dragon to the Church Ch. 12.
- * The resistance of the Antichrist to the Church Ch. 13.
- * The cheerful side of the Church Ch. 14.

Introduction

This vision "the woman clothed with the sun and her three enemies," came as an addition to the seven trumpets, and an introduction to the seven bowls.

If the seven trumpets reveal the people's indifference to the voice of God, and the seven bowls reveal the plagues by which He disciplines; between these two, He reveals this vision to show:

1- The condition of the luminous Church and her struggle against Satan, since man was found out of Paradise. Especially at the last period when the Antichrist comes, and when Satan will aim his last arrow, before he is thrown in the lake that burns with fire.

2- This war in reality, is between "God and Satan," that is why the enemy uses all tricks to mislead; and thus appears in an impure trinity:

First: The dragon tries to look like the Father.

Second: The first beast (Antichrist) tries to look like the Son.

Third: The second beast (false prophet) tries to look like the Holy Spirit.

3- The joyful side for the believers is that God is coming as a Bridegroom to the Church, and as the Judge to Satan, and to those who enslaved themselves to him.



chapter twelve

This chapter reveals the struggling Church:

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1- Opposition of Satan to the Church | 1-6. |
| 2- Support of heaven to the Church | 7-12. |
| 3- The opposition grows stronger | 13-17. |

1- Opposition of Satan to the Church

"Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth" [1-2].

Who is this woman who has this description? And who gave birth to the Son? Who was resisted by Satan, and fled away from him? And whom he is still resisting, together with her descendants, until he is thrown in the lake burning with fire?

The early Fathers confirm that this woman who gave birth to the Lord Jesus is the Church. She is the community of the believers, since the time of the patriarchs, or since Adam to the end of ages.

Bishop Victorianus said, [It is the Church of the patriarchs, the prophets, the saints, and the apostles who were characterized by their sighing and pains, longing to see the Lord Jesus, who is the Fruit of her people in flesh, promised to them long time ago. He took His body from the same people. Her clothing with the sun indicates the hope of resurrection and the glory of the promise. The moon (under her feet) refers to the falling of the bodies of the saints under the forced endless death... And they are shining as the moon in darkness... The garland of twelve stars is the group of the patriarchs from whom the Lord Jesus took the body.]

Unfortunately, some western scholars took the following interpretation in a deformed image, and were imitated by some from the east. They say that this woman is the Jewish people, and that the following chapters (12-14) concern the Jews.

It is proper for us to understand "the Church," through the right understanding of the early Fathers, taken from the previous interpretation. That the woman is "the Church of the patriarchs, the prophets, the saints, and the apostles..."

The Church started with Adam, and the patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Enoch entered its membership. At the time of Moses' Law, the Jewish people with some of the Gentiles who were converted to Judaism, joined the Church. In that period the Lord Jesus came incarnated from the Church, the Church of the Old Testament, from the Jews. Yet the Jews left the membership of the Church, deviating from faith and refusing salvation. They are not any more believers, or a Church or the spiritual Israel. They became unbelievers, but the Church's door was not closed. She had not died by their death, or deviated, but the Gentiles entered as an extension to the Church. Hence the talk about the woman concerns the Church. The one Church that is beyond the limits of time and race. Thereon, in this chapter, the talk concerns the Church, since its origination until the end of generations.

When we say "Church," we cannot separate her from the virgin Mary, to whom we are bound in the person of Jesus Christ, as mother of all the living⁹⁷. She also is, as the early Fathers say, the woman clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, for the Lord Jesus, the sun of righteousness dwelled in her, and she got a heavenly glory, she who gave birth to the Firstborn Son⁹⁸.

In the same spirit, and without windings, we say that what the Apostle saw here concerns the Church of the New Testament, because it is not separated from the Church of the Old Testament, nor independent of her. The patriarchs of the Old Testament, the prophets, the Law and the promises are all related to her.

So though the Lord Jesus has come incarnated from the Virgin Mary, or from the Jews, yet we can say that He came incarnated from the Church, who is proud of the membership of the Virgin Mary. The Virgin who extended backwards, until she contained in her membership, all those from whom the Lord came

incarnated.

Father Hyppolitus⁹⁹ says: [It is very clear that, by the woman clothed with the sun, he meant 'the Church that the Father sent the Word to, thus as her splendor surpasses the sun.' By saying, "*the moon under her feet*," he points to her being transfigured with heavenly glory, which surpasses the moon. And the expression "*on her head a garland of twelve stars*," indicates the twelve apostles who established the Church. As for the saying, that for her Son she "*cried out in labor and in pain to give birth*," he means that the Church will never cease to carry in her heart the Word, whom the unbelievers persecute.]

This is the Church that the Lord has described saying, "Who is she who looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?" (Song 6:10).

Satan is resisting this Church as he says, "*And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads*" [3].

Since man's creation, Satan, the "dragon," does not stop envying him.

This great dragon is "red," and as bishop Victorianus says, this color is because of his deeds for "he was a murderer from the beginning" (John. 8:44). He never stops ruining and demolishing among mankind trying to destroy God's children.

He has seven heads, which means he is constantly thinking of this battle.

He has ten horns, which means he is using all the power of his might and dominion, which is extended on earth, to spoil faith.

On his heads seven diadems, as he appoints himself as a king over the hearts of the wicked, to dominate their thoughts, their intentions, their senses and their behavior.

Bishop Victorianus thinks, that when the Antichrist comes at the end of times, he will deceive ten kings (10 horns), whom he uses to destroy faith.

"His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born" [4].

Some think that this is an allusion to the Antichrist who will deceive a third of the believers. But Bishop Victorinus prefers a more proper interpretation, that is, Satan in his fall, had attracted a great number of angels. They fall with him from heaven (Jude 6). Therein, we discover his danger and his readiness to destroy and spoil.

He did not stop at causing some angels to fall, and deceiving mankind, but he also thought that he could put the Lord Jesus to death. As He was not from man's seed, death did not conquer Him. The Lord rose up from the dead on the third day, raising us up from the grave of sin, causing His believers to ascend to where he stands. Therefore, the Apostle says: *"And she bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and to His throne" [5].*

That whom Satan wanted to devour, is the Shepherd who gathers all nations in His yard. He crushes the powers of evil with a rod of iron. Now He is on the divine throne lifting up the falling mankind.

That was concerning the Lord Jesus. As for the condition of the Church in her expatriation, the Apostle says:

"Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days" [6].

It is the Church who is constantly fleeing from Satan's face, to live in mortification, in the wilderness of this world. Waiting for her new dwelling place; the heavenly Jerusalem, which is prepared for her by God.

The period of one thousand two hundred and sixty days, which is about three years and a half, indicates all the days that the believers live on earth as strangers.

In the Church of the Old Testament we find Elijah fleeing from Ezebel's face for three years and half. And in the Church of the New Testament, we find the Virgin Mary with the Lord Jesus accompanied by Joseph the Carpenter, fleeing from Herod's face, who was roused by Satan, (it is said that they sojourned three and a half years).

Also, at the time of the Antichrist, the Church will suffer from him for about three years and a half. Fleeing in the wilderness and the mountains away from the severity of the tribulation.

2- The support of heaven to the Church

"And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer" [7-8].

Bishop Victorianus thinks, that this is the beginning of the time of the Antichrist. When the Archangel Michael fights against Satan, he overcomes him and makes him fall from heaven, in order to complain no more against the believers.

It is appropriate for the believers to meditate for a while on the love of "the archangel," the honorable angel who defends the sons of God (Dan. 12:1, 1 Thess 4:16, Jude 9)... It is he who as an angel of light, desires to see us luminous. He fights for us against the angels of darkness!

As a result of this war, Satan falls dead, therefore, he propagates all his poison, using all his power to revenge, during the little time left for him, before he is thrown into hell forever. Thereby, the time of the Antichrist starts and the two witnesses come.

"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" [9].

It is a great victory when Satan falls down from heaven, that he might not complain against us. Yet he will not stop

deceiving, until his last moments, for he is called:

1- The great dragon, as he is huge, severe and fearful.

2- The old serpent; he has a long experience in deceiving. His enmity for us is from the start of mankind (Gen. 3:2,15)

3- The devil or "unjust accuser," as he is always accusing the Church.

4- Satan or the stubborn.

5- "The deceiver of the whole world"...this is the nature of his work.

As the enemy has fallen at his last breath, the Apostle says:

"Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time'" [10-12].

Satan's weakness was uncovered to the heavenly, and his defeat appeared when he was thrown down from heaven. They rejoiced for the closeness of the declaration of man's victory, in the great day of Judgment, through the precious blood. In their happiness and love for human beings, they called the Church who is still struggling on earth their "*brethren*," as they will be almost like them, as angels of God.

The feelings of praise and joy are mixed with sorrow, for what the Church will suffer from Satan who came down to her, to fight her in the person of the Antichrist and his followers...

Let heaven rejoice, and those who are in Paradise be happy, let eternity be prepared for the endless wedding, for the hour is very close, and a short time remains.

3- The opposition GROWS STRONGER

"Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent" [13-14].

As the dragon wages satanic attacks against the Church, God provides her with *"two wings of an eagle,"* and she becomes like an eagle fleeing from the Antichrist, not in shame and disgrace but with power. She wanders in the wilderness away from his filthiness. As the prophet says: "But those who wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint" (Isa. 40:31).

Bishop Victorianus thinks, that the two wings of the eagle are the two prophets who warn the believers, and ask them to flee from the Antichrist into the wilderness.

And Fr. Hyppolitus thinks, that they are faith in the Lord Jesus, who compared Himself to a hen that gathers its chicken under its wings.

Many meditate on these two wings, and see that they are needed in every age, and in the life of every believer, to fly wondering in heavenly matters, away from the worldly desires. Some of them declared that they were faith and deeds, or love of the heavenly matters and the disdain of the earthy, or the love of God, and the love of the neighbor, or to desire the glory of God, and the salvation of men. However, let us benefit from these wings, and mount up through the Lord Jesus, to sit with Him in heavens.

But the old serpent will not stop crawling behind us to oppose us:

"So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood" [15].

Bishop Victorianus thinks, that this water [points to the multitudes under the power of the Antichrist who persecutes the Church.]

It seems that the opposition will be extremely severe, and if we apply, what was written in Daniel the prophet (11:31-35) on this period, we learn that the Antichrist enters the churches and defiles the altars; spoils, destroys and encumber the sacrifice. He allures the believers by all means to drive them away from God, in so much that some who are standing will fall.

But God does not leave His children perish this way, “but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits. And those of the people who understand shall instruct many” (Dan. 11:32,33).

The Apostle says: "*But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*" [16-17].

The help may be the provocation of war among some kingdoms, which spoils the power of the Antichrist and shakes his being. (see interpretation of Rev. 9).



chapter thirteen

In this chapter, the Apostle sees how the dragon fights the Church through the two beasts:

- 1- The first beast** **1-10.**
- 2- The second beast** **11-18.**



1- THE FIRST BEAST

"Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name" [1].

The Apostle stood on the sand to see a sad view, a beast rising up out of the sea, or out of troubled nations. He has the same descriptions as the dragon (12:3). This beast which is the Antichrist¹⁰⁰, is in reality, clothed by Satan who works through him.

The mission and the diadem of this beast are, "to blaspheme against God," as for his description, it is a metaphorical image which declares his great hatred to the truth and to the Church, for he is:

1- *"Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard."*

His color is disfigured by vices. He is fast in his move to persecute the Church; he is a betrayer, and no compassion or mercy is in his heart!

2- *"His feet were like the feet of a bear."*

That is to say, his feet are strong and harsh. He is inflexible in his war against the Church.

3- *"And his mouth like the mouth of a lion."*

Bishop Victorianus says, [His mouth is armed; in it dwells blood shedding, and from his tongue comes out nothing but ferocity.]

4- *"And the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority"[2].*

As the Father gave all authority to the Son, the dragon likewise, gives all his satanic power, his evil throne, and his authority to the Antichrist, until he captivates and deceives people, in order to worship him, and abandon the worship of the living God.

5- *"I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast"*[3].

Satan does not delay to use every means to deceive. As he sees that the wounds of the Lamb are the subject of praise of the angels, the departed saints and the militants, and that heaven and earth tremble praising Him; likewise he too, i.e. the Antichrist, simulates as if he was wounded, and his deadly wound was healed, to let people worship him. In fact, many were deceived by him and bowed down to the dragon, in the person of the Antichrist. As the Apostle says: *"So they worshipped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?'"*¹⁰¹[4].

This is realized, through what Satan bestows on his followers of ability to talk with blasphemy, insolence and pride. And with authority during the time of his work, which is three and a half years. *"And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle"* [5-6], or to blaspheme against the Church, the house of God, when he enters the churches and defile them.

"And those who dwell in heaven"[6]. He also blasphemes against the angels of God.

6- *"And it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue and nation"*[7]. He wrestles the believers, and pursues them in every country, and in every nation. He will conquer them through physical strain, that he makes them fall in. Yet they will

conquer him by their faith and their firmness, knowing that their names are written in the book of Life of the Lamb who was slain. *"And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose name have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain, from the foundation of the world"*[8].

The prophet's saying applies to it, "Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done... for he shall magnify himself above them all (Dan. 11: 36-37).

It is so painful news, that almost no man will believe how horrible is what about to come . Therefore he says: *"If anyone has an ear, let him hear"*[9], addressing this call to all mankind, in order not to be swept away behind him.

He encourages the suffering Church not to be afraid of what the Antichrist is doing, for his work will turn back on him *"He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity, he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints"*[10].

His punishment will be of the same kind as his deed, according to what the Lord says (Matt. 7:2), and Jeremiah the prophet said as well (Jer. 15:2).

It is a time of enjoyment for the patient militants to be crowned, showing the truth of their faith and their firmness in it.

2- THE SECOND BEAST

"Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb, and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed" [11-12].

St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Ibn-al-Assal, and others think, that he is the false prophet (Matt. 24:24), who comes before the

Antichrist or accompanies him. For this reason, St. Irenaeus calls him "carrier of the arm of the Antichrist." He and the Antichrist are one; he works on his behalf, under his name, and with his power. Therein he imitates the Holy Spirit and witnesses to the Antichrist.

Fr. Hyppolitus¹⁰² explains, [It was meant by the beast who is coming out of the earth, the kingdom of the Antichrist; and the two horns point to the Antichrist and those who are with him, or the false prophet. By saying, "*he spoke like a dragon*," he means that he is a deceiver, who does not say the truth.]

This liar has the following qualifications:

1- **He seems meek** (as a lamb), as he tries to be like the true Lamb in His gentleness and love, but his language reveals him, as he speaks a satanic language, deceiving and ferocious.

2- **He incites people to worship the Antichrist**, and he affirms that with satanic signs and wonders, i.e "*He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth, in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs, which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast, who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed*" [13-15].

St. Irenaeus says, [No one should think that he performs these miracles by the divine power, but it is by magic. Do not be surprised at that, as far as devils and the resisting spirits are in his service. Through them he does great things, which lead the inhabitants of the earth to deviation.]

Bishop Victorianus says, [The magicians do these things in our days with the help of the resisting angels. He will keep the horrible image of the "Antichrist" in the temple in Jerusalem, and the opposing angel will enter there and perform sounds and wonders. Moreover, he will suggest to his servants, his sons, to accept a sign on their foreheads and on their right hands, with the

number of his name... Daniel had prophesied before, about his disdain for God and his struggle against Him. He says about him, that he will erect his temple in Samaria, and erect an image (a statue) on the holy mountain in Jerusalem, as Nebuchadnezzar has done. Concerning this abomination of desolation, the Lord advises His Churches about the end of times and its dangers saying, "When you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, whoever reads let him understand" (Matt. 24:15; cf. Dan. 9:27). It is called the abomination of desolation because of causing God's anger by prompting to the worship of idols instead of the true God, or because of the sneaking of groups of heretics into the Church. Many will deviate, and get deceived by the false signs and threats, and will abandon their salvation.]

5- "And He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell, except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" [16-17].

We, the children of God, are proud of the mark of the Lord Jesus with which we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. In the same way the Antichrist makes for himself a mark which is prompted by the second beast that men be sealed with it. About this, it was said that:

a) It is the mark of cherishing evil and blaspheming God. Thus it is printed on the forehead. Also the mark of the violence of evil and of resisting the children of God, therefore it is printed on the right hand.

b) St. Ephram the Syrian thinks, that the Antichrist prints his mark on the foreheads of his followers, or on their right hands, that they may think no more of making the sign of the cross with their right hands on their foreheads, thereby he is sure that his evil authority permanently dominates them.

c) Fr. Hyppolitus¹⁰³ says, [It is because they are completely deceived, that they glorify him by this mark. Thus to vigorously annoy and persecute the servants of God in the world, those who do not glorify him, or offer incense to him. None of the saints can buy

or sell if he do not offer sacrifice to him. And that is what he means by the mark on the right hand.]

CONCLUSION ABOUT THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST:

"Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. His number is 666"[18].

"Here is wisdom." Means that the matter needs special wisdom, as the human wisdom is still inadequate to know the name. Here are some opinions:

1- Ibn al-Assal thinks, that God had hidden the name, so that none of the kings or the heretics may adopt it, and confuse the prophesies.

2- The second opinion: Many of the Fathers think that he mentioned his number simply to confirm the truth, that he is in fact a man and has a name, and man can count his name to find that it is 666 (In the Greek, Latin and the Coptic alphabet it has numeric indications. Each letter has a special number. If we add the indications of all the letters of the name, we find it sums up to 666).

3- The third opinion: Someone said that the numerical indications of the name of the Lord "Jesus" is 888. St. John Climacus says, that number "8" indicates the eternal life, as number "7" indicates the temporal life, and the new day of the following week is "8". Therefore, in the past, God asked that circumcision be performed in the eighth day, and the resurrection of the Lord was accomplished at the dawn of Sunday, or the eighth day, or the beginning of the new week. So the number of the Lord "Jesus" is 888, which means heavenly, surely and completely. The number "6" is inferior to "7" or incomplete which indicates that the beast is not only temporal but also totally incomplete.

4- St. Iranaeus¹⁰⁴ thinks, that number 666 indicates that the beast carries all kinds of evil and deceit, and all forces of resistance are blocked up within him. This meaning was previously symbolized in different ways:

600 years, the age of Noah when the deluge destroyed the world

- because of corruption and evil.
- 60 cubits long was the length of the statue that Nebuchanezzar erected for worshipping (Dan 30:2)
 - 6 cubits wide, and because of that statue the three young men were thrown into the furnace of fire.
 - 666 The number 666, meant the anger of God at mankind until He drowned it. The Church tolerates every hardship for the sake of the truth.

There is another opinion of St. Iranaeus. The number 666 is probably the number of heresies, which have come to rise from the beginning of mankind to the day of the coming of the Lord, and they all represent the Antichrist.

We think, as this same saint, that many investigated the matter, and came up with Greek names counting 666. But they should turn back from their thoughts, because it is not their job to prophesy, as he will be disclosed at his appearance. So they better be on guard of him and steadfast in the Lord.

Fr. Hyppolitus¹⁰⁵, Bishop Victorianus and others were about accepting this opinion. The first one says that many names in Greek total 666, but the word "I deny," in Greek also totals 666. Therefore it is enough for us to know, that he will come denying and refuting faith in the Lord Jesus, appointing himself as a king.



Chapter Fourteen

The last two chapters show how Satan resists the Church by all means. Therefore, in this chapter God as usual, reveals to the Church a joyful and happy side, to fill the believers' hearts with peace and joy in the middle of tribulation. This side is represented in three revelations:

- 1- The Lamb and the believers around Him 1-5.**
- 2- Appearance of three angels 6-12.**
- 3- The harvest 14-20.**

1- THE LAMB AND THE BELIEVERS AROUND HIM

What an extremely joyful and happy view when the Apostle says, *“Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads”* [1].

The Lamb is standing, and around Him, those who are bound and united to Him with eternal love, for He is “the true Love.” They stood with Him on Mount Zion, i.e. the high heaven, “The city of the great King” (Ps. 48:2). They reign through Him, and He reigns over them, realizing the prophesy that says, “Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion” Ps. 2:6.

What a desirable view! Who would not do his utmost and accept all suffering, in order to obtain this destiny, to be around the Lord, to accompany, be united with Him, and not depart from Him forever?!

“And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. And they sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four Living Creatures, and the presbyters; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first-fruits to God and to

the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God” [2-5].

Who are those around the Lamb? The early Fathers think¹⁰⁶, that they are the firstborn people who castrated themselves for the kingdom. They offer a heavenly life of virginity, through the Lord Jesus who is virgin.

In the middle of her tribulation, caused by the Antichrist, the Lord reveals to the Church, the view of these firstborns who enjoy this glory, to comfort their suffering souls, that God is not unjust to forget their loving labor.

We should not forget that the whole Church is called “the Church of the firstborns.” The one who is not physically chaste, but enjoys the soul’s chastity, will not be denied being firstborn, because of his union with the Lord of firstborns, as a living member in His body.

We all, virgins or married, are living members in the body of the Lord, our Head. Therefore, we are considered firstborns, and pure before God, and without blame, or deceit in His sight.

It is proper for the true believer to taste and experience the spiritual virginity, so he may offer through the Lord a virgin soul, heart, thought, and senses. All, as virgins, do not desire, are not preoccupied, or demand, but the Lord Jesus the only Bridegroom.

I do not, thereby, diminish the value of virginity, for who can describe or express that angelic condition? and that heavenly rank which the normal man cannot possess joyfully and happily, except through the Lord Jesus?! But in this concern, I wish to clarify the importance of the virginity of the whole Church. Whoever her members are, all are a “chaste virgin to Christ” 2 Cor. 11:2, “Church of the firstborns (Heb. 12:23), a kind of “first-fruits of His creatures” (Jam. 1:18).

Those members are the ones who got the right to lodge in the house of the Lord, as the Psalmist says: “Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who

walks uprightly, and works righteousness and speaks the truth in his heart; he who does not backbite with his tongue” Ps. 15.

Let us go back to the Revelation, to hear with the Apostle, many joyful and refreshing sounds. From the Church that the Apostle saw, came sweet and harmonious sounds as a marvelous symphony. He heard:

1- A voice like the voice of many waters. It is the voices of the nations and tongues, whoever their race is. Those who accepted faith, and were entirely bound to the Savior, praising Him with joy.

2- The voice of the Bridegroom rejoicing with His bride, unceasingly interchanging sentiments, after a period of reciprocal longing. The Apostle heard His voice, "like the voice of loud thunder." Thus when the Church, in her trouble, looks at that spectacle, especially, during the time of the Antichrist, she will understand the might of her Bridegroom, and His supreme potentialities.

3- And a voice like the sound of harpists, which is the voice of the virgins. It is the tune of an angelic music, having a special sweetness and beauty for their virginity in the Lord.

2- THE APPEARANCE OF THREE ANGELS

After revealing, to the Church the glory prepared for her, specially for the virgins, to encourage them to persevere, He also shows them that He does not forsake them while they are on earth. Rather He takes care of them, as the Apostle says, "*Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, tribe, tongue and people, saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea, and springs of water'*"[6-7].

Bishop Victorianus says, that the angel is Elijah the prophet who comes to help the Church. He preaches and evangelizes among the nations and tribes, encouraging the Church in every nation to persist until the end.

He confirms the believers in the fear of God, to give Him glory, and refuse to worship the dragon and the Antichrist.

As this work was huge and the time very short, the Apostle says, *“And another angel followed saying, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication’”* [8].

The other angel is “Enoch,” who accompanies Elijah, as if he were saying with the prophet, “Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drunk her wine; therefore the nations are deranged. Babylon has suddenly fallen, and been destroyed” (Jer. 51:7,8).

Babylon gives a picture of human satanic pride, showing haughtiness to God¹⁰⁷. Here, Babylon means the spirit of the Antichrist who behaves arrogantly towards God, and surely she will be defeated.

The first angel encourages and confirms the believers, and the second angel frightens the wicked and the deviants. This does not mean that Elijah speaks only about hope and confirmations without rebuking the wicked, nor does Enoch stop at rebuking and talking violently, without mixing his talk with hope, for they are working in one spirit, one mind, and have one and the same purpose. But the Revelation displays both sides of the word of God; the joyful and cheerful side of the repentant soul, and the harsh and severe side of the derisive souls.

These two angels are accompanied by a third angel, *“Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name’”* [9-11].

This third angel is the Holy Bible, particularly the prophecies mentioned in it about the Antichrist. These prophecies will preach the truth, warning and admonishing for worshipping the beast or his image, or accepting his mark, otherwise they will be tormented with eternal fire which we shall talk about later¹⁰⁸.

Certainly, the two angels are not alone in witnessing to the truth. God uses many who proclaim, and reveal the truth, and pronounce what is written in the Holy Bible at any cost!

The three angels indicate three sides of the mission of the suffering Church, in the time of the Antichrist, which are:

1. The first angel speaks about the glory prepared for those who worship the Lord, that is, "eternal life."

2. The second angel speaks about the destruction of the kingdom of the Antichrist, i.e., "vanishing of the world."

3. The third angel speaks about the suffering prepared for the Antichrist and his followers, that is, "eternal fire." These three sides or messages are announced by the two prophets, and are clarified by the Holy Bible. As the beloved John saw the three angels, he realized that the two prophets and their disciples will suffer from tribulation, so he blessed them saying, "*Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus*" [12].

How happy are the contemporaries with the Antichrist, for they endure more pain than the believers in any other age. Consequently, their patience is greater, their keeping the commandments deeper, and their faith in the Lord firmer. They are prepared for great diadems of glory, that nobody can describe .

We do not envy them, for every believer , in any age, at any place and under any circumstances, can obtain the blessing, as the Apostle says,

"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works

follow them” [13].

“*Blessed*” means “how happy or how rejoicing?!”

How happy are those who show patience, enduring pain and suffering of their cross, not only at the time of the Antichrist but at any time. For pain, fatigue of the road, and the cross, all these are the marks of the true believer, even if he is in solitary and does not see any person.

St. Augustine departed, while he was singing the psalms of repentance, with a humble heart and tears flowing from his eyes. Blessed is he!

St. Pakomius departed, while he was occupied with his children's affairs, and planning for their welfare, in spite of the severity of his sickness... Blessed is he!

Everyday, shining candles depart, melting away day by day, consuming for the love of God, until they come to an end.

3- THE HARVEST

After announcing to the Church her heavenly glory, and revealing His care for her by sending three angels, he is back to reassure her that the harvest time is near.

As the Apostle says, “*And I looked and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle*” [14].

The Church should not be afraid, because her Bridegroom is coming on a white cloud, in great glory, glowing among a thousand and ten thousand times ten thousand of angels, surrounding Him as a white cloud¹⁰⁹.

He is coming dressed in the white robe down to the feet, on a white cloud to receive His bride, who is dressed in a white robe, for she is chaste, pure, and cheerful in His eyes. She carries the reflections of His extreme beauty, and His heavenly virtues. The corporal world has little interest for her, she is pure with no defile whatsoever, for she is the heavenly bride of the Lamb.

He comes to her “*sitting on the cloud;*” He is no more

“standing,” as Stephen the martyr saw Him. For He is no more worried about His Church, for the days of her strive have come to an end. So He sat, that she may sit beside Him and join up with Him, His glory! She sees Him *“like the Son of Man.”* He is really “Son of Man.” As He became man for the sake of the Church, to accompany her, and to be accompanied by her, to declare His love for her on the Cross, that she may accept His love within her. However, in the heavenly glory she sees Him “like a Son of Man”, because of the glories of His Divinity, and the splendor of His majesty. These things are no more as in a mirror dimly, but the Church sees them and enjoys them in their perfection.

“Having on His head a golden crown,” as He is the heavenly King, King of kings, and God of gods. He comes to reign with His children an everlasting heavenly reign.

“And in his hand a sharp sickle,” when the harvest time comes, He reaps with His hands the good grapes. He rejoices and delights with the fruits. His eyes do not move away from the fruits of His grapevine, which is the Church. The sharp sickle is only for the dry, unstable branches which are gathered to be burnt in the eternal fire with the bad grapes.

The true Church sees the sharp sickle, and is not afraid of it, because it is in her Bridegroom’s hand. But the wicked and the blasphemers who lived as slaves of Satan and of Sin, can not tolerate seeing it.

How wonderful! The Lord Himself comes forward to take His bride’s hand up to the heaven of heavens, to have rest there. As for the wicked, he says:

“And another angel came out of the temple crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, ‘Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap for the harvest of the earth is ripe.’ So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped” [15-16].

The angel came out pleading, asking the Lord *“Thrust Your sickle.”* This is the desire of the angels, the longing of those who

are in Paradise (Rev. 6:10), and the goal of the militants who hope for it in every prayer saying, “Your kingdom come,” “and we wait for the resurrection of the dead and the life to come.”

"Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, 'Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.' So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs" [17-20].

The three angels came out, longing to see the glorious day of Judgment, to see the righteous, glorified, and crowned, and the wickedness of the wicked poured on them, and their darkness falling back on them.

Bishop Victorianus says, that this vision concerning the three angels points to doomsday, when the wicked perish, on the coming of the Lord.

We notice that the two first angels are coming out of the temple, which is in heaven, to declare the longing of the angels and the heavenly hosts for the Judgment day. The third angel came out of the altar, or out of Paradise, where the departed souls rest under the altar, with the authority over the fire or over Satan. He came out to declare that all the believers' struggle is accomplished, and the time has come to reap the clusters of grapes, which are swinging, staggering, and persecuting the saints and the believers, and shedding the blood of the martyrs.

As bishop Victorianus says, [They are thrown in the winepress of God's anger, and they are tread down outside the city (heaven), and this is the punishment of the wicked.]

They will be avenged by blood shedding, as the prophet previously declared, “I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall

pursue you” (Ezek 35:6).

Thus the blood shedder of innocent people will be thrown in the winepress of the eternal hell, outside heaven, and will remain there as though they were slain, and the blood reaching to their necks. They are not calm nor rested. They desire death and perishability, but they do not find them.

CONCLUSION

In the following third series, “pouring of the seven bowls,” God announces His punishment of human beings, through history in general, and particularly at the time of the Antichrist. This punishment emanates from a loving God, on hard hearted mankind. Its aim is the repentance of man. Therefore, it comes with gradual severity, and it is not poured all at once.

At the same time, he paves the way for it in chapter fifteen, revealing two visions of the Apostle in order to reassure the believers about God’s love for them.



5

The Seven Bowls

Chapter 15 Two Introductory Scenes.

Chapter 16 The Seven Bowls.

Chapter Fifteen

In this introductory chapter we see the following:

1 - The glorified church in heaven 1-4.

2 - The source of the seven bowls 5-8.

1 - THE GLORIFIED CHURCH IN HEAVEN

“Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous; seven angels having seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete” [1].

This is the core of the third series, God shows us another sign, this great sign is the wonderful plans of God for man. He deals with us in every matter, uses gentleness and force; kindness and firmness, leniency and punishment. All that for the sake of the people’s good and salvation, if they turn to Him showing repentance.

In any way, this sign, that shows God's wrath to its fullness, and reveals the bitterness the world is going to taste because of evil, he saw “in heaven,” i.e. it does not happen accidentally or without planning, but it comes from heaven.

The Lord hastens to bring the believers through the Apostle's person, to see how the state of the Church is going to be in her triumph and glory, that she might not get confused when she sees the bitter punishments, so he says:

“And I saw something like, a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.

And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

‘Great and marvelous are Your works,

Lord God, Almighty!

Just and true are Your ways,

O King of the saints!

Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?

For You alone are holy.

For all nations shall come and worship before You.

For Your judgments have been manifested” [2-4].

He moves them up to see themselves as conquerors over the devil, especially those who live at the time of persecution of the Antichrist. They will see themselves as conquerors of the beast, his image, his mark, and the number of his name. How are they going to be?

1) Standing on the sea of glass: as a sea of glass mixed with fire. We have seen before that the sea of glass which is before the throne indicates baptism. Without it no one can cross over to Him, who is seated on the throne, to be in His bosom.

As the talk here is mainly directed to people who taste the bitterness, during the period of the Antichrist as God says: “For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be” (Mark 13:19). That is the reason why He showed the sea mixed with fire of temptations they go through.

2) Having harps of God: They are victorious have gone through all the days of their expatriation. The time of escape, pain, and grief has gone, and now they are “*standing*,” visible in public, holding the harps of victory and joy. The harps are not theirs, but the “*harps of God*,” His reward to those who victor on His behalf.

He makes from the soul and the body a harp, that praises Him with a divine tune, and a spiritual heavenly praise of His inspiration.

It is worth noticing, that the victorious mentioned here are those who “*have the victory over the beast*,” by being the last group of militants on earth. This shows us clearly the eternal glory in its fullness and splendor, that the believers will not be awarded until they all finish their struggle.

3) “*And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.*”

How wonderful this view is, which we had seen symbolically when Moses and the people crossed the Red sea, and emerged to the shore singing, ‘**the song of Moses**’ (Exod. 15), the song of salvation, and the symbolic song of victory.

The Church sings this song whenever she praises God. It brings to her memory, how by baptism she crossed with the Lord, and buried Satan and his forces, and cast them into the sea saying:

“I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!
The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!”

"The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation;

He is my God, and I will praise Him.
My father's God, and I will exalt Him.
Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power.
Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces."

The song of the Lamb is itself the song of Moses. The first one is the true one, the second is the shadow and symbol. It is the song of victory over the devil.

The motives of praise are expressed in our singing: "O Lord, how great and wonderful are Your works!" What is the secret of His greatness?

1) Because He alone is holy, no holiness is away from Him.

2) For all the nations shall come, and worship before You. Here he uses the future tense, because it is worth that we sing this praise, and get used to it, here while we are on earth. Thus we shall see, that the wicked will not be able to escape from submitting to the divine justice, to give an answer for what they committed. We also see that, through God's punishments and severity - if we can say that - He brings souls over to Himself.

3) For His judgments are shown and proclaimed. All the time He reveals His thoughts and plans through His Holy Bible.

Yet it is on the great day of the Lord, when we realize God's judgments in their depth, manifest and open. Then we wonder

amazingly at all His deeds which He made for humanity.

2. THE SOURCE OF THE SEVEN BOWLS

"*After these things I looked*" [5], now the scene is changed, and the Apostle displays a second revelation.

"*And behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.*" It is the tabernacle where the Ark of the Covenant, and the two plates of the Law, were kept. The opening of this tabernacle in heaven means:

1) That the Ark of the Covenant which always symbolized the presence of God amidst His people, the two plates of the law that were the sign of His endless justice and mercy towards mankind, and the coming of the smites from there, reveals to us that although they are marked by harshness and cruelty, in its source they bear the mercy of God, His compassion and longings for the salvation of mankind.

2) In that tabernacle, the believers find their delight and happiness; and from there comes out punishments and smites.

3) These smites did not occur without warning. He had told us about them through His prophets.

"*And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.*

Then one of the four Living Creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.

The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed" [6-8].

This angelic view relates to the Person of the Lord Jesus, clothed in a robe, reaching to the feet and girded across the breast with a golden girdle (1:13), they too are clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their breasts ready for service. This shows that their work is a priestly one. Therefore, all they do, on behalf of God, is for education rather than revenge.

1) The seven angels went out ready for the task they are sent for.

2) One of the four Living Creatures gave them seven bowls.

3) However they do not pour the bowls before the issuing of the divine order. This is how God is always slow in His punishments, and the smites He allows.

As for the bowls, St. Jerome says, that each has a narrow mouth, so that anger would not pour heavily from them, but comes out drop by drop. Yet the original Greek version shows it clearly, that they were flat and wide pots.

And as for the temple which was filled with smoke of the glory of God and of His power, that no one was able to enter the temple, is nothing new. We saw that frequently in the Holy Bible and this is indicative of:

1) The greatness and glory of God. No creation can oppose His work. That is why at receiving the Law, when the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai, the whole mountain was all in smoke like the smoke of a furnace (Ex. 19 : 18).

2) The smoke indicates that the creation is unable to comprehend the divine judgments. By that we see that these plagues are divine symbols, that we cannot discover until it happens, because God's intentions are above all human wisdom.



Chapter Sixteen

This chapter shows the practical execution of the pouring of the bowls.

1- Issuing of the order for the execution 1.

2- The practical execution 2-21.

1- ISSUING THE ORDER FOR THE EXECUTION

“Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, ‘Go and power out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth!’” [1].

The order came out to the seven angels to go, and pour out the bowls, characterized by the following:

First: These bowls coincide with the plagues which happened in Egypt, yet the first agrees with the spirit of the book, which is symbolic. As for the plagues that happened in the past, they were real. Thereby, we do not find it difficult that what is brought in the bowls can be realized. We have to understand it in the spirit of the book.

- The first bowl conforms with the sixth plague.
- The second bowl conforms with the first plague.
- The third bowl conforms with the fifth plague.
- The fourth bowl conforms with the ninth plague.
- The fifth bowl conforms with the second plague.
- The sixth bowl conforms with the seventh plague.
- The seventh bowl conforms with the seventh plague.

Second: They agree with the seven trumpets except that they are more severe, and more harsh.

Third: His saying, *“bowls of the wrath of God,”* does not mean by “wrath” revenge without mercy, but as we noticed before, the wrath of God is in reality love. Perfect love of God directed to human beings, for God is never concerned for taking revenge on us, in the general meaning that we understand, but out of His love, He allows punishment, or abandons us for our repentance, or the

repentance of others¹¹⁰.

2- The practical execution

The First Bowl:

“So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and a loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast, and those who worshipped his image” [2].

The first bowl was poured upon the earth, the second on the sea, the third on the rivers, the fourth on the sun, the fifth on the throne of the beast, the sixth upon the Euphrates river and the seventh into the air.

Some scholars think that these are symbols of the punishment of God, which befalls man through history:

- God's menace to the wicked Jews, (the earth; for they were people settled in the knowledge of God).
- God's menace to the pagan Gentiles, (the sea; for they were troubled people who do not know God at all).
- God's menace to heretics, (the rivers; for it was rather that they overflow with the water of life).
- God's menace to the wicked Christians, (the sun; for it was suitable for them to enlighten the world).
- God's menace to the Antichrist.
- God's menace to his followers, (River Euphrates; and it was the old region of Babylon that opposed God, and it is said that it will raise and struggle with the Antichrist).
- God's menace just before the Judgment (the air, as it is immediately followed by the coming of the Lord on the cloud).

Let us go back to the first bowl to find a plague full of stench, for sores and ulcers will happen as a result of the pouring of the bowl. God allows this plague for His opponents, and the usurpers of His right (1kings 5:6,9).

As the earth points to the Jews,. God who gave them the Law and the promises, and bestowed on them countless blessings, returned and stanchd their odor, because of their wickedness and their refusal of the Messiah, the Savior.

As we say that, this plague happens during the time of the Antichrist, we can perceive that God will allow punishments, that the stench of the teachings, and the false proclamation of the Antichrist may appear.

THE SECOND BOWL:

“Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died” [3].

This bowl is poured on the pagan Gentiles, who did not know God, and were confused in knowing Him.

The sea is much mentioned in the Holy Bible to point to the world and its troubles.

If we accept the principle, that these bowls concern the time of the Antichrist, we will say that this plague occurs to the peoples who are submitted to him, and worship him as a God. They die spiritually. Not only their odor becomes stench like the first plague, but it becomes like the blood of a dead man, and it is the most repugnant scene that mankind cannot bear. That will be their state!

THE THIRD BOWL:

“Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.

And I heard the angel of the waters saying: ‘You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things.

For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets. And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due’.

And I heard another from the altar saying ‘Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments”’ [4-7].

Those represent a dangerous and deadly category, to whom God entrusted the springs of life, and it was suitable for them to present heavenly living water to the thirsty mankind, to drink. But after they got to know the Lord, drank from His springs, and received positions of service, preaching and work in the Church, they deviated.

These are the category of heretics whose springs became blood. Thus the angels who are full of love and mercy desire that God disciplines and besiege them, not for revenge, but for the sake of the simple souls, that drink deadly blood from their hands.

It is also a plague which happens at the time of the Antichrist. It happens to those to whom the Antichrist gave leading positions to serve and preach. Among those we find some who were once preaching the truth, and proclaiming the truthful uncheated word.

The Fourth Bowl:

“Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory” [8-9].

God has said to us, “You are the light of the world.” And also he says to us that in the kingdom of our Father, we will shine as the sun (Matt. 3:43)

The Christian, and particularly the pastor, who deviates, not from faith, but who shows a deviant behavior, stumbles those who are around him, forgetting his mission. Such a pastor is the object of this punishment, when the fourth bowl is poured upon him.

The symbolism of these bowls appears from his saying, *“men were scorched with great heat.”* If they were scorched in a literal manner, he would not continue to say, *“And they blasphemed the name of God...”* and there would be no room for later plagues as long as men were scorched.

Here, he illustrates to us the ferocity of the punishment of man, who knows much, and is entrusted as an ambassador of Christ, but does wrong to his mandatory!

If we apply this bowl on the Antichrist, we could understand that the sun symbolizes the high governing authority, where the Antichrist establishes for himself an earthly kingdom,

and will have a temporal harsh dominion, but for a while, as we have said before.

THE FIFTH BOWL:

“Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throe of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues, because of the pain.

And they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds” [10-11].

Here the plague is poured upon the Antichrist himself, thus his kingdom becomes spiritually and ethically dark. Men were filled with doubts and confusion about him, but unfortunately they did not repent of their deeds, instead they blasphemed the God of heaven.

When God says, “they did not repent of their deeds,” He uncovers the purpose of pouring this bowl, even during the dark period of the Antichrist. He aims at their repentance!

This bowl shows heavens’ challenge to the Antichrist and his followers, who say, “Who is like the beast?! Who is able to make war with him?!” Rev. 13:4 And still they did not repent.

THE SIXTH BOWL:

“Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great River, Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared” [12].

In this place, Babylon, which points to the opposition to God, is established the kingdom of the Antichrist and his assistants, who make of Babylon a center of their domination, their planning, and their management. The dryness of the Euphrates indicates the dryness of the civil kingdom of the Antichrist, and its harsh authority.

Fr. Hyppolitus thinks, that God allows this dryness to the kings, the followers of the Antichrist who live there, that they might come to him, and assemble to help him; but they turn against him.

Ibn-el-Assal thinks, that these kings are against the Antichrist, and God facilitates their way to destroy him.

Protesting View

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” [13-16].

The sixth bowl, as well as the sixth trumpet, show the intensity of the last war between the unclean trinity, i.e. the dragon, the beast of the sea (the Antichrist), the beast of the earth (the false prophet) and the Church. The three agree to wage a devastating war against the Church, in one spirit. And out of their three mouths come out three unclean spirits like frogs.

If they are like frogs, it is because:

- 1- They are evil unclean spirits, who cannot bear the Holy Spirit of God working in the Church.
- 2- They go out in the dark, for they do not bear light.
- 3- They live in muddy places, as they mislead with the unclean desires.
- 4- They fill the people's ears with uproar, urging all to resist God.

These evil spirits are:

- 1- Devils' spirits, working clandestinely and using many human tools.
- 2- They use satanic wonders and miracles, for misleading and deceiving.
- 3- They use violence, as the Antichrist deceives many kings, and gathers them to fight God, and this war will take place in *Armageddon*.

It is a symbolic site, as it is one of the famous battle fields, whose name is associated with blood shedding and grief (Zac. 12:11). In this field, Gideon conquered the Medianites. The Palestines conquered Saul. Barak and Deborah conquered Jabin the

Canaanite king and Jehu killed Ahaziah with an arrow. St. Jerome thinks, that the meaning of “*Armageddon*,” is the mountain of the thieves, for the Antichrist and his denomination are thieves, who usurp God's right and glory. Ibn-el-Assal thinks, that it means “the lowly place.”

We return to hear God's warning “*Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame*” [15].

This warning from God is addressed to every man at every time. He will come suddenly as the kingdom of God does not come with anticipation.

Maybe God did not want them to be possessed by searching for times and dates. And through these six bowls they think that the time of the Antichrist is not near yet, so they become negligent of their duties. Thereby, He declares that He is coming as a thief, without appointment known to us.

Thus it is worthy for us:

1- To obtain the blessing of being watchful and persevering.

2- To keep our garment; which means that we should not take it off during our sleep; to be awake even in our sleep, and to say, “I sleep but my heart is awake.” By that, man does not get up suddenly to find himself naked, and be disgraced. The garment points to the grace of God working within us, and God's virtues that He bestows on us, to practice it, and as we proceed they guard us, and beautify us.

The Seventh Bowl:

“*Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’*” [17].

This last bowl as in the last plague displays to us how He uses the events which were immediately before the resurrection as a last chance for disciplining.

The time of judgment has come, therefore the Apostle heard

a loud voice coming out of the temple in heaven, from the throne saying “*It is done.*” The last possible thing to offer to human beings for their salvation is done. The Apostle summarized the seventh bowl by saying:

“And there were noises and thunderings and lightning; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on earth.

Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” [18-20].

All these events were explained before in the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-17).

The fall of the great city points to the holy city, Jerusalem, which became no more holy, because of the Antichrist who uses her as a satanic center, to spread his misleading.

As for the fall of the great Babylon, and the cities of the Gentiles, will be spoken about in chapters 17 and 18.

Finally he says, “*And great hail from heaven fell upon men, every hailstone about the weight of a talent. And men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great” [21].*

This heavy hailstones coming from heaven is but a metaphor, to reveal the severity of Gods anger which destroys the world.

As the Law commanded the stoning of those who blaspheme God (Lev. 24:16), so heaven stoned them with the divine anger, for the Antichrist spread the blasphemy to a great extent. And in spite of that, they will not repent even at the moment of their death, but they blaspheme and resist the more.



6

The Fall of Babylon

- * **Babylon and the Beast**
- * **The Fall of Babylon**
- * **The Victory of Heaven**

- Chapter 17.**
- Chapter 18.**
- Chapter 19.**

Introduction

This book, being a joyful and delightful one, thus following the talk about the seven bowls, and the destruction of Babylon, the center of the beast's plots, it declares the victory of God over the beast, and the praise of the heavenly for that.

As for Babylon, there is a special story about her in the Holy Bible that can be summarized as follows:

First: The Historical Story of Babylon.

It came in Gen. 10:9, that Nimrod is the founder of the city of Babylon. He was a tyrant, a disobedient man who led many to the disobedience of God.

This city was known for the worship of idols, especially her greatest god Maroudach. Her disobedience appeared since its foundation, as it was called Babylon, "because there, the Lord confused the language of all the earth" (Gen. 11:9). That happened when men wanted to build a tower, to protect themselves from God, whenever He aims to take revenge on them.

For the Church of the Old Testament, Babylon was a source of terror. The Lord was using her to punish the Jews. She insulted, and subdued them at many stages in their history.

Therefore the word "Babylon," became an indication of the opposition to God, the love of the world, and cruelty to human beings.

Second: The Mystery of Babylon

"*Babylon*," appeared in the Book of Revelation, as an adulteress, and as a great city.

A woman in the Holy Bible indicates a certain system, or a certain group. Jesus Christ has a real bride, which is the Church (Eph. 5:23-32). She is a holy woman, immaculate and blameless. The Antichrist has also a bride, which is "*Babylon*." She is his

people who works against the true faith, opposes God, and urges others on defilement.

A city indicates the habitation, and as holy Jerusalem indicates the dwelling of God among human beings, therefore it is called Holy. We can say that every soul is also the Holy Jerusalem, because God dwells in her.

The great Babylon indicates the dwelling of the “Antichrist” among human beings. It was thus called “*great*,” because the Antichrist is violent. He can be allowed to use any other city apart from this Babylon, it makes no difference. What we can say is that every soul opposing God is ‘Babylon,’ because it is the dwelling place of Satan.

Then who is Babylon?

1 - St. Augustine¹¹¹ and Tichon the African answer, that it indicates the wicked company, that is to say those who love the world, its glory, wealth, and lust, and are attached to it.

2 - Most of the early Fathers think, that it indicates the kingdom of the Antichrist and his satanic deeds, as Babylon will be rebuilt and become the administrative center for the opposed satanic planning. Babylon will not necessarily be in the same old site. There is no need to call her literally “Babylon,” although some think that it will be called literally, and it will stand in the same place as the old Babylon.

3 - Some think, that Babylon is a metaphoric image of the form of the religious and political organization of the Antichrist, with all it carries as tools of evil, that Satan can use in his work to oppose the Lord¹¹².

It is just an expression to reveal the state of hostility against God, one way or the other, without looking into details or conditions. So that we do not disfigure the book and lose its concepts and objectives, offered for our salvation, to practice it, and not to care about knowing the details of the coming events. It is not our task, to look into these future events.

chapter seventeen

This chapter speaks about the adulteress Babylon, and her relationship with the beast:

1- Babylon's characteristics 1 - 6.

2- The secret of the woman and the beast 7 - 18.

1 - BABYLON'S characteristics

“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters’”[1].

The Lord brought John to a new vision, when one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came to him.

The coming of this angel, in particular, to show him this harlot, is to reveal to us to what extent the heart of the evil man can be cruel, especially the Antichrist and his followers who personify this cruelty. It is appropriate that one of the angels who pour out the seven bowls take this role, so that we might not accuse them of being more violent and severe than others.

The characteristics of Babylon are:

1 - “*The great harlot who sits on many waters.*”

Because the Lord offers Himself as Bridegroom to the human soul, He asks for the whole heart. And every deviation of the heart, away from the Lord, is considered a conjugal unfaithfulness, and thus called “spiritual adultery.” Therefore, the Holy Bible calls the worshipping of idols and the love of money, adultery.

As for her sitting on many waters; we know that water points to the nations. That is to say the spirit of hatred, the spirit of the Antichrist, dominates over many nations.

This description was previously used to mark the old Babylon, we read about her who deviated away from the Lord, “O you who dwell by many waters” (Jer.51:13).

2 - “*With whom the kings of the earth committed*

fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication” [2].

Meaning that other countries and kingdoms were her partners in her evil and blasphemy. This will be through the deviation of her kings.

By the fall of the kings, the people are lured by their thoughts, and get attracted with them to their blasphemies, without reasoning or thinking, as the drunk.

3- Her sitting on a scarlet beast:

“So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” [3].

The spirit carried him to her place, *“the wilderness,”* for she lives in a spiritual aridity and dryness. For the world that embraces her, whatever its wealth and pleasure are, it is still an arid wilderness, which cannot satisfy the hunger, or the thirst of the soul.

This woman hides underneath her a beast. It is Satan who works inside her, on which sits all enmity towards God, as a throne that embraces sin and sinners.

Ibn-el-Assal thinks, that this beast is the army of the Antichrist, on which he relies in resisting the Church, and who works through the spirit of Satan.

As for his color, the scarlet, it points to the shedding of blood. Being full of blasphemous names points to what he thinks of, which is kinds (names) of blasphemy.

The seven heads and the ten horns were previously spoken of ¹¹³, and will be talked about in this same chapter.

4- Her adornment and beautification:

“The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication” [4].

She is the bride of the beast...how cannot she adorn herself, in order to deceive and draw people to her poisons?

She is “*adorned with gold*,” that is to say, her beauty is not natural, but artificial and deceiving. What a big difference between this bride and the bride of Jesus, the Church who is embellished (Rev. 12)?!

The first is adorned with the worldly, to deceive; and heaven embellishes the second, and she is clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

The first has in her hand a cup full of abominations, and of filthiness of her fornication. The other one is pregnant, crying with pain and labor to give birth. She is walking in the way of the cross.

The first offers all worldly pleasures to her children, the second does not find a place, thus God prepares a place for her to support her (12:6).

The first is sitting on Satan’s throne, and the second is the subject of the dragon’s envy, and he aims at devouring her.

5- Her insolence:

“And on her forehead a name was written: ‘Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth’” [5].

Tertullian says, that in the past the adulteresses used to write their names on their doors, so that those who desire them may come in.

This woman was so insolent, to the extent that instead of writing her name on her door, she writes it on her forehead, proud of her sin, daring and clinging to her deeds.

As for the word “*Mystery*,” it is not an adjunct to Babylon, but it is a parenthetical word, which means that it has a symbolic meaning, that is, “*Babylon*” or the opposition to God: It is the lodging of the wicked, who resists God.

As the Church is called “*Jerusalem*,” and “*Zion*,” because she became consecrated to God, thus the kingdom of the Antichrist

is called “*Babylon*,” the city of Satan, the symbol of the spiritual adultery and obstinacy.

6 - Her resistance to the Lord:

“And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement” [6].

We wonder that this woman who is adorned and beautified, and who shows gentleness and sweetness, is in reality a shedder of the blood of the innocent saints. She enjoys nothing but the resistance to the Lord Jesus, by killing His martyrs.

2 - THE MYSTERY OF THE WOMAN AND THE BEAST

“But the angel said to me, ‘Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.’ The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition”[7-8].

It is obvious that this beast is Satan who was... that is to say who had authority over human beings, accusing and capturing them, ‘and is not,’ because he has no more authority over us, as by the cross, the kingdom of God became within us. Now we enjoy the freedom of the children of God, the conquerors over whom Satan, his soldiers or his works have no authority, therefore the Bible says: “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ And He said to them. ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:17-19).

“Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us, And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (Col. 2:14,15).

And as St. Chrysostom says¹¹⁴, [In prayer make the sign of the cross on your forehead, then demons can not approach you, because you are well equipped.]

The Holy Bible, the sayings of the Fathers, and the biography of the saints... all are full of what assures the fall down of the authority of Satan over the believers.

Thus, the Book of Revelation says about him, “was, and is not,” because his power is destroyed, and we entered through the Lord the millennium kingdom. This is the pledge of the eternal kingdom, which is an extension to the millennium kingdom, not in this world, and not as though they were in a puzzle, but in public eternal glories.

As for his saying, “**and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition,**” it is an announcement of the rise of his authority in the person of the Antichrist as we have seen, but he hastily goes to perdition.

Therefore he says, “*And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is*” [8].

The followers of the Antichrist who are earthly and materialistic in their thinking, will wonder when they see the beast i.e. Satan, who had authority and was stripped of him, came to being. His power was restored to him, and became as though he was invulnerable and his kingdom imperishable. He was generously giving his followers earthly things.

“*Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition*” [9-11].

Father Hyppolitus thinks, that the five heads who have

fallen were five kings, representing great countries who reigned and dominated the world.

1- Nebuchadnezer, the Chaldean.

2- Cyrus, the Median.

3- Darius, the Persian.

4- Alexander the Greek.

5- The four kings who reigned after him.

6- The Roman Empire, the state which existed during the writing of the book.

7- The kingdom of the Antichrist which will come at the end of ages.

And St. Irenaeus thinks that they represent a multitude of unjust kings, who persecuted the believers across the centuries, without being restricted to certain names or a certain number. The one who actually exists (during the writing) is Domitianos the persecutor of the Church, and the one coming is the Antichrist. Satan has dominated over all hearts.

As for the eighth or the beast who is one of the seven, he has the same antagonistic spirit, as the previous unjust kings. He mentioned him alone, to show that what he stirred up against the Church is incomparable to all persecutions and troubles that the church had endured from Adam to the coming of the Antichrist.

This is what the prophecy reveals to us about the Antichrist, who in his wickedness, will surpass all evils which were stirred up against God, since the creation of mankind.

“And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen and faithful” [12-14].

St. Jerome, in his interpretation of Daniel, chapter seven

says the same as Ibn-el-Assal does, that ten kings will submit to the Antichrist, who will deliver to him all their capabilities and energies, to wage war against the Lamb.

Out of those ten, seven will accept him, while the other three will resist him at first, and he will torture them, thus the Antichrist dominates over them all.

The amazing thing is that the Lamb does not leave them thus, but He conquers them, not for His sake but for the sake of those who are with Him, for they “are called, chosen and faithful,” and He does not forsake them till the end.

How does the Lamb conquer?

The Apostle says: “*And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth*” [16-18].

This is the beginning of the Victory of the Lamb over the Antichrist and his followers. He lets evil corrupt itself by itself, and we do not know what will happen. Probably the ten kings will turn to hate Babylon, the harlot, which is the work center of the satanic beast. Or, the two powers will split up, the earthly and the spiritual (the satanic), of the Antichrist and his followers.

Therefore the kings will rise against her and ‘will make her desolate,’ that is to say they will strip her of her vitality, so the human beings will not bear to look at her, and will not accept her.

‘And naked,’ she will be in shame and disgrace because those who supported her, became her enemies.

And ‘*will eat her flesh;*’ here he reveals how they madly assaulted on her.

And will ‘*burn her up with fire,*’ until no trace will be left of her. This was the habit of kings when they conquer great cities.

And all they do is done unwillingly, on account of the Kingdom of God. Even if the real motive is personal. God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, that is, the satanic hosts of wickedness planning for evil are in violent opposition, that they finally destroy one another.

† † †

Chapter Eighteen

This chapter speaks about the fall of Babylon, the bride of the beast :

- 1 - Proclaiming the fall of Babylon (1- 3).**
- 2 - Calling out to the believers for abandoning Babylon (4-8).**
- 3 - Those who lamented for Babylon:**
 - a) The kings of the earth (9-10).**
 - b) The merchants of the earth (11-16).**
 - c) The mediators (17-20).**
- 4 - Confirmation of its fall (21-24).**

1 - PROCLAIMING THE FALL OF BABYLON

“*After these things,*” means after seeing the harlot, Babylon, or the people who deviated and followed the Antichrist together with their leaders, the abducting wolves who obstinate God. After that he returns to talk again about that woman who sits on the beast, who is marked by the art of seduction and deception.

This talk is symbolic and metaphoric. It reveals a certain spiritual thought, concerning the angel of the kingdom of the Antichrist and the decline of his work. It is wrong to take what is mentioned in this chapter verbally, for this will lead to losing the aim of the book and distortion of its sublime meaning.

“I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory!” [1].

We cannot say that in the days of the Antichrist an angel actually appears and shouts calling for what we are going to hear next. But it is an indication of the interest of heaven - even those of high ranks and of great authority - to see the destruction of Babylon, the great city.

Probably he means by this angel, Isaiah the prophet who had previously proclaimed, by the heavenly spirit of prophecy, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen! And all the carved images of her gods, has broken to the ground. Oh, my threshing and the grain of my floor! That which I have heard from the Lord of hosts, the

God of Israel, I have declared to you” (Isa. 21:9,10). Thus what the God of the Church and Lord of hosts proclaims was heard by the prophet Isaiah. And now the Apostle hears it pronounced by a heavenly angel from a high hierarchy, shouting with what the Lord Himself had said.

“And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury’” [2-3].

It has become a ruin... it has fallen, either in this life or will fall in the life to come.

He presents to us a painful picture of that arrogant city and of what has become of her, as she became a ruin in which no human resides. It is only a dwelling place of demons. No clean spirit would accept it, but becomes a prison for every foul spirit and every unclean and hated bird. This is the end of every evil, and the end of the Antichrist's kingdom.

And what he says here about the Antichrist and his bride, would happen to every man, who behaves in arrogance, getting drunk by the wine of spiritual adultery. For as the believers are called heavenly Jerusalem, and enjoy heavenly things while they are still on earth, those who are stubborn in every generation are called Babylon. They are stricken by destruction and become ruins, dwelled only by Satan who finds rest in the desolate souls, where he sends all his satanic tools. Those waste souls also become lifeless, fruitless and the dwelling place of the unclean hated birds, which are rejected by the living souls among whom they find no place.

Isaiah the prophet had already thus prophesied of Babylon (13:21,22), and said the same meaning about Adom (34:10-15). She is desolate, although she is known for making others drunk, and offers them pleasure and abundant fruit of her richness.

2 -CALLING OUT TO THE BELIEVERS FOR ABANDONING HER

“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities’” [4-5].

After God had revealed the end of the wicked by one way or another, He began to warn His people not to participate with them in their evil.

Coming out bears two meanings:

1) Spiritual withdrawal, i.e. rejection of their principles and behaviors under any circumstance. Thus God says, “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15).

2) The actual material withdrawal as much as possible; in the same manner as the two prophets will ask the Church in the world to escape to the mountains and wilderness, that the weak might not collide with, and stumble over the Antichrist and his followers.

“Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix for her double” [6].

By saying, “Render to her,” he does not mean that the Church will wage a material war against her; but that the believer might refuse the thoughts of the wicked. When the Church rejects the thoughts of Babylon by escaping from her, spiritually and materially, this will condemn her twofold, as the Church will establish her guilt, and witness against her on the Day of Judgment.

Paying her back twice could be due to her committing a twofold sin.

1) Because she seeks her personal glory and not the glory of God.

2) Because she seeks the earthly delights and worldly pleasures, and does not search for the eternal joy.

For this the Holy Bible says:

“In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen and am no widow, and will not see sorrow. Therefore, her plagues will come in one day - death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her’” [7-8].

As if he is saying, that what she is punished with is the normal outcome of her deeds. In the same way she glorifies herself, the Lord abandons her, thus she goes back to deathlike state, grief, hunger and corruption.

The Church Fathers perceived that and experienced it. For in the period when St. Augustine lived glorifying himself, he was a nobody and dead. He did not have joy, satisfaction or comfort, as he says, [Yes... every time I keep away from You I fall in privation and corruption. How miserable am I. I never realized that my richness is in You, I, the non-existent¹¹⁵.]

He also says,¹¹⁶ [You who is the Way, the Truth and the Life... You who disperses darkness, evil, deviation from the truth and death. You are the Light without which, everyone lives in deep darkness. You are the Way without which, we are but lead to deviation. You are the Truth without which, death will devour all.]

St. Augustine¹¹⁷ also says on various occasions, that confession has two aspects. We confess our sins and weakness, thus God is glorified; and we acknowledge the glory of God and His deeds with us and by this we realize how feeble we are. Both are inseparable. As for the one who glorifies himself, he disgraces God, and vice-versa.

This is the first sin in which the devil has fallen, that is arrogance and self-glorification. It is by this sin that he fought against Adam, and let him fall together with his children. He also fought with the same sin against our Lord Jesus to whom is the true glory. Yet while He and the Father are One, He accepted the cross and the pains, giving up His glories, to take them from the Father's

hand, that humanity in turn might receive it through His person.

As for the second sin, it is the sin of living in luxury (sensuality); bodily enjoyment and earthly delights.

It is worth for the soul to know that she is a widow, and that her Bridegroom is in heaven, thus refuses earthly pleasures for heavenly happiness. But whoever says that she is a queen and has the right to enjoy the luxuries of the world as she pleases, ignoring the heavenly joy; is dead while she lives.

The Bible says rebuking, “Therefore hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, who dwell securely. Who say in your heart, ‘I am, and there is no one besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know loss of children.’ But these two things shall come on you in a moment, in one day... The loss of children, and widowhood. They shall come upon you in their fullness... Therefore evil shall come upon you. You shall not know from where it arises. And trouble shall fall upon you. You will not be able to put it off. And desolation shall come upon you suddenly, which you shall not know” (Isa.47:8-11). And also says, “But she who lives in pleasure is dead even while she lives” (1 Tim 5: 6).

3 - THOSE WHO LAMENTED FOR BABYLON:

a) The kings of the earth

“And the kings of the earth who committed fornication” and lived luxuriously with her, will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come’” [9-10].

It is a metaphoric symbolic picture. For in fact, on the same day of the destruction of Babylon, those who lived in her luxury will perish with her. Here he depicts in what state they will be. They thought she was strong and well-established, and suddenly it fell in one hour.

She too depended on them. She attracted them by her pleasures and sensuality, to conquer and victor through them. Yet

now they stand powerless and without authority, like frustrated children. Both depended on each other, and both fell together, for a blind cannot lead a blind; both will fall in a ditch.

The time of judgment is near, and many people will stand staring at those who deceived, and seduced them. As those wicked deceivers seem very weak in their eyes. However, the deceived ones will not lament for the wicked but for themselves, because they followed them and became partners in the same painful destiny.

b) The merchants of the earth:

“And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore” [11].

This group is different from the first group. The first was deceived by lusts and desires, while those were deceived by the love of silver. They became rich in this world by using evil ways and delusion. They thought, by that they could last forever on earth, getting richer day by day. Yet in one moment, in the twinkling of an eye their merchandise became stagnant and nobody bought it any more.

Those also weep over themselves and not over their wealth, lament because they came out penniless. The book of Revelation enumerates the various trades that Babylon was promoting during the days of evil.

But as St. Augustine says¹¹⁸, that all the commercial matters are not evil or good in themselves. They are good for those who are good and use them well; and evil for those who are evil and misuse them.

Both the merchants and Babylon did evil, and both misused these matters. He starts with gold and ends by the human soul as a trade, giving gold more importance than the souls. What can be more evil ?

1) Beauty ornaments, *“merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet.”*

We have seen that she was ornamented by these things and delighted with them. She did not use them for charity but for deception and delusion.

2) Luxurious furniture “*every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble*” [12]. Ibn-el-Assal says that the citron wood is of different kinds of precious wood like ebony, jujube and sandal.

3) Materials for enjoyment of food, drink and aroma as, “*and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep.*”

4) Things for pride and glory as “*horses and chariots.*”

5) Then last of all what she considers as worthless, which is enslaving people, “*and bodies and souls of men*” [13].

All these trades became unassailable and the merchants lost everything. On the day of her destruction they stand amazed, how that commerce has vanished, wondering where the buying power of the wicked had gone.

Those merchants rebuke her when she sees them, and they get rebuked when they see her. That is how all get to suffer eternally. As he says, “*And the fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all*” [14].

He reflects on those wicked merchants who were trading, not in honesty as people working for God, but they roused the wicked to do evil, for their trade to flourish. Those will stand amazed saying; “Where are the fruits of your self desire? You have spent all your life to satisfy your desires. You have never deprived yourself of anything, no matter how expensive it is, for enjoyment, that you are burst with pleasures you want to fulfill. Yet I see you now empty of all you have bought.

“*The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping. and*

wailing and, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!'" [15-16].

The same scene brings to our minds what had happened in a simpler way, when Judas the betrayer met with the priests in the temple. He could not bear carrying the silver in his hands because he realized that he had lost everything. And they could not bear touching it, because it was the price of the innocent Lord. Both were in futile agony. This incident ended by Judas committing suicide and the extinction of the Jewish priesthood.

But on the day of the eternal destruction, the one who stirs evil or accepts it will not be able to commit suicide, or escape from the eternal death by dying. It is an indescribable anguish when they reflect on their old behaviors and cry, mourning without hope.

c) The mediators:

"'For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' And every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance, and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?' And they threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate. 'Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her'" [17-20].

That painful scene reveals the group of mediators who help people to do evil. Those will stand at a distance on the day of the eternal destruction, and whenever they see them they will mourn them more. This was shown by throwing dust on their heads, crying out, weeping, because what they thought was the source of their wealth and happiness, became the reason of their misery and destruction!

The Result:

God here reveals the unity of the believers, as members in the body of Christ. Also the strong fellowship between the Bridegroom and the bride, and that between the bride and the

heavenly ones. Besides, heaven's happiness and joy and ultimate unity. He emphasizes the difference between all that and estrangement, affliction and escape in the burning lake. All who enjoy earthly wealth stand apart, for nobody can tolerate the other!

And as all see the Person of Jesus Christ - the true Righteousness - in every member of the Church, thus everyone of the wicked see his own sin in his fellow in the eternal destruction, and consequently alienates from him and couldn't bear him.

And although weeping and mourning is common among them all, yet everyone stands alone crying. They are divided among themselves, and everyone is cursing the day in which he got to know Babylon, the stubborn. But the righteous are all together in joy without any no division. "*Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets,*" who know that judgment is the work of the loving God, who grants eternity, and judges Babylon for her evil.

4 - THE AFFIRMATION OF THE FALL

As God wants to affirm to us the certainty of her fall, the Apostle says: "*Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, 'Thus with violence, the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore'*" [21].

This symbolic act which the angel did, had been done before by Jeremiah (Jer.51:63,64). And in the same manner the stone fell into the sea, also Pharaoh and his soldiers had fallen into the Red Sea (Exod.15:10). Yet her fall here was proclaimed at once with a powerful push. That is how the stubborn Babylon is thrown down into hell.

As for the scene of destruction, we have seen it before occurring in a metaphoric manner, in the Old Testament. The destruction was shown in:

- Removal of people infatuated with the love of amusement "*The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore*" (cf. Isa.14:11; Ezek.26:13).

- The disappearance of craftsmen “*And no craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore.*”
- The disappearance of work necessary for life. “*And the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore*” (cf. Jer. 25:10).
- Total darkness, “*And the light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore.*”
- Disappearance of joy and begetting children, “*and the voice of bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer*” (cf. Jer.7:34; 9;16).

The reason of her destruction is this:

“For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for deceived by your sorcery all the nations were, And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who were slain on the earth” [23,24].

This reveals to us that he did not mean by Babylon a certain city or a certain period, but all the stubborn who scorned the blood of the prophets and the saints and shed the blood of those who witnessed to God.

It is a talk that tends to generalize rather than to focus only on the period of the Antichrist. This opinion is also adopted by the non-apostolic churches.¹¹⁹



CHAPTER NINETEEN

This chapter announces the victory of heaven:

- 1- **The four Alleluias** (1-10).
- 2- **Christ the Victorious** (11-16).
- 3- **The death of the Antichrist and his followers** (17-21).

1. THE FOUR ALLELUIAS

The book of Revelation declares the fall of Babylon, and those who fell with her, and through her, and their burning in the eternal fire. Then the Apostle shifts to the talk about the heavenly hosts who are delighted at the win of the victorious humanity through Christ Jesus.

So far as the inhabitants of the eternal fire are known for their division, we find the main feature of heaven is unity. As he says, *“After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Alleluia!”*

First: The heavenly hosts represent one troop chanting with a spiritually inspired melody, saying, *“Alleluia,”* i.e. “Give thanks to the Lord,” or “We thank You Lord.”

Gladness or “Alleluia,” is the hymn of this great multitude, the song of praise of the twenty-four presbyters and the four living creatures [4], and the hymn of all the heavenly [6].

This is the hymn that the Church sings, particularly during the Eucharist, and towards its end. Also the congregation repeats this hymn during feasts, saying, “Amen! Alleluia!”

“Salvation and glory and honor and power to the Lord our God! for true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her”[1-2].

The mystery of heaven’s joy is primarily that God declares His justice, as He condemns Babylon, the great adulteress. This doesn’t mean the heavenly rejoice over the wicked, but rather they show happiness for the evil is taken away. This painful picture of

evil that caused the saints to grieve.

Second: This troop repeats with joy their hymn, as “*Again they said, ‘Alleluia! And her smoke rises up forever and ever!’*” [3]. The rise of the smoke assures heaven that they will never come out of the lake inflamed with fire. Thus they will no more cause danger to the victorious Church. Simultaneously this Church is granted her everlasting eternity. The rise of the smoke also indicates that its flame is never extinguished. And those therein are burning, as a fuel that is not consumed, but remains thus smoking!

The heavenly will behold two simultaneous scenes:

a) Taking away evil and its condemnation forever, in the lake inflamed with fire eternally!

b) Honoring goodness, and crowning the saints in the eternal wedding without turning back!

Third: The presbyters and the four living creatures will join up with the heavenly hosts in joy, as the Apostle says, “*And the twenty-four presbyters and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sat on the throne, saying, ‘Amen! Alleluia!’*” [4].

Happiness here is not expressed only by words of hymns, but by falling down and worshipping God... Through this attitude, the heavenly reveal to us that they join up with us in kneeling and worshipping, out of joy and happiness, as well as we practice it for repentance and submission.

St. Isaac the Syrian presses on the connection between kneeling and happiness: [Persistence in watchfulness, together with kneeling at times, will readily give the striving worshipper the joy of prayer. Devote yourself to prayer, and you will obtain the pleasure of kneeling, and persist joyfully in it.]

Fourth: Or the fourth “Alleluia.”

“*Then a voice came from the throne, saying, ‘praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!’ And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as*

the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!'" [5-6].

The order came out from the throne, to praise. As if all the heavenly praise is inspired by the One who sits on the throne.

The Holy Spirit who sanctified the bride and made her ready, asks the heavenly to receive the bride joyfully. Indeed, they shouted loudly, "As the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings."

As if he says, there are multiple voices belonging to numerous heavenly hosts, but they cry as one unit: "*Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready*" [7].

This is the second cause for their gladness, that the saints came to the wedding, and were crowned with the Lord their Bridegroom. Now their salvation is eternally complete. Thus the heavenly rejoice, as friends of the Groom and the bride.

This wedding is a genuine unity of the Lamb and His bride in its integrity.

The Old Testament has foretold such a wedding, by the Lord Himself, some prophets, and apostles.

- **The Psalmist** said in Ps. 45: "The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace."
- **Prophets** as Isaiah said: "For your Maker is your Husband, the Lord of hosts is His name" [Isa.54:5]. Prophet Ezekiel enumerated, giving full details of, the blessings the Lord has bestowed on the believers, as His bride (16:7-14). Prophet Hosea says: "'And it shall be, in that day,' says the Lord, 'that you will call Me my Husband'" (2:16).
- **Lord Jesus Christ** Himself mentioned it in His parables (Matt. 9:15, 22:2-10, 25:1-10).
- **John the Baptist** says, "He who has the bride is the Bridegroom" (John 3:29).
- **The Apostles**, as St. Paul who says: "For I have betrothed you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to

Christ” (2Cor.11:2). Also, “ This is a great mystery (matrimony), but I speak concerning Christ and the Church” (Eph.5:32).

This reveals to us our real position in eternity. We are not merely invited to the banquet, nor visitors to heaven, but rather we enter our Lord’s wedding as the bride of the wonderful and glorious Groom.

It is worthy to note, that the Apostle calls her, “His wife,” and not “His bride,” for the wedding has already taken place, and the union is accomplished. However, it never ages nor ends, therefore the Church is then called “bride,” as well as “wife,” for she is in the bosom of her eternal Groom whom she will never forsake!

How does heaven accepts us as a bride of such splendor?

The Book of Revelation says: “*And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints*” [8].

She made herself ready, but in spite of her perseverance and strive, besides relating the act of getting ready to her, still her beauty is not out of her, for she takes from Christ and adorns herself.

She adorns herself with all her Groom’s virtues, having His glory and light (Rev.21:11). As the Bible says: “‘Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you,’ says the Lord God” (Ezek.16-14).

We go back to the friends of the Groom and His bride, they say: “*Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!*” [6]. Relating what the bride enjoys, to God, as He reigns entirely over His Church, for she is His, and He reflects His glory and splendor on her.

Therefore, when the presbyter also enters into the altar, wearing the white linen robe to celebrate the Eucharist, he

remembers the entry of the whole Church into heaven, as an adorned bride. Consequently he sings the psalm, “The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble!”....

Finally the angel accompanying the Apostle rejoices as well, saying, “*Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ And he said to me, ‘Those are the true sayings of God’*” [9].

The guests to the marriage supper of the Lamb are blessed. What about the bride herself to whom the whole heavens was shaken joyfully?!!

Perhaps the Apostle called it “supper,” to signify that the day of temporal life draws to its end, while supper with the Lord remains forever, after a long tiresome day.

We find that the virgins, in the parable of the foolish virgins, and the wise ones, each had a lamp. For they were invited to an evening wedding...

The Apostle couldn’t stand the tender love, the angel showed, so he said:

“And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’” [10].

Pope Athanasius, the apostolic, says, [The Apostle thought the angel to be Christ, therefore he wanted to worship him as a God. For the angel showed splendor, honor and power¹²⁰.]

The Bible orders us not to worship but God. However it presents to us kneelings to reasons other than worship. As when Jacob fell down at his feet seven times before Esau, to dismiss the spirit of anger (Gen.33). Also the kneelings of Jacob’s sons before Joseph, as a sign of their loyalty to Him. Moreover, we see Abraham, the Patriarch, kneeling before the sons of Heth, as a sign of his love to them, and his giving them thanks for their favor (Gen.23). Thus the angel refused the Apostle’s kneeling before

him, declaring that he is his fellow servant, and of his brethren who have the testimony of Jesus.

This testimony of Jesus, that He came incarnated, died and was risen, and will come to judge the living and the dead, is the spirit of prophesy, its purpose and its core.

2. THE VICTORIOUS CHRIST

The announcement of the heavenly wedding and the everlasting banquet, were accompanied by two main things:

First: The talk about the Person of Christ.

Second: The talk about the defeat of the Antichrist and his followers.

For we can never mention the heavenly wedding without referring to the victorious Groom and His deeds on behalf of His bride, on her wedding day. Therefore the Apostle says:

“Then I saw heaven opened behold a white horse. And He who sat on it was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself” [11-12].

The mystery of the eternal marriage is what he had previously announced in the first seal. That is, revealing Him as a warrior against Satan and all his tricks, on behalf of His bride. He sat on a white horse, fighting with the sword of His mouth, “the word of peace¹²¹.” His eyes neither slumber nor sleep, He who keeps His bride¹²².

Faithful and True, His promise to humanity. He comes as the King of kings, and on His head were many crowns.

And His name that no one knew means that no one can conceive His essence, neither angels nor humans, for no one knows God but the Spirit of God.

“He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood.” The robe refers to the glorious body of the Lord who carries the traces of the

cross. The signs of divine love, declaring that He offers the price of the wedding: His precious Blood. Also the robe signifies the Church which is purified by the Groom's Blood.

“And His name is called The Word of God” [13], or the “Logos,” or the “Divine Utterance.” The secret of thus mentioning His name here, is to encourage His Church to be steadfast to the Word, and meditate on the words of His Scripture.

“And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses” [14].

The armies in heaven follow the Word, and do His will. *“Follow Him,”* meaning that they do nothing apart or away from Him.

As for their riding white horses, this shows that their love to Him is not fruitless. As they pray on our behalf (Zech.1:12), they walk to and fro throughout the earth to serve us (Zech.1:11). Besides they fight against Satan, our enemy (Rev.12:7).

“Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” [15].

We have previously seen that the sword is the word of God, He had sent to the nations, thus evil was crushed, and the Gentiles became His fellows, and living members in His body, that is the Church, His bride.

And He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of God, for He alone is the Almighty God who can bear the wage of sin in His body. Thus He dies on our behalf, and He lifts us up, out of our death.

On the cross, He carried our sins that makes the Father hid His face from us, for He can't bear them. Through His resurrection we are victoriously risen, for He conquered on our behalf, thus the Apostle says:

“And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

“King of kings, and Lord of lords” [16].

Now through His resurrection, His Church has the right to carry the name of her Savior on her, *“King of kings...,”* as for His thigh it signifies His human nature that is united with His divine nature.

3. THE DEATH OF THE ANTICHRIST AND HIS FOLLOWERS

“Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, ‘Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great” [17-18].

Corresponding to the banquet of eternal marriage is the supper of the great God. The supper of predatory defiled eternal birds, that enclose all mysteries.

This metaphoric picture reveals the fierceness of their destruction. There is a similar scene in the Old Testament (Ezek. 39: 17,18). It started by destroying the proud great men.

“And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image.

These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh” [19-21].

After he spoke of the fearful Judgment day, once more he speaks of the judgment of the beast (the Antichrist), and the false prophet. Those two who will terrify the Church when they appear,

but God will give them time, then finally He will destroy them. I have discussed this matter in more details in chapters [12-14].



Part Three

The Glory of the Heavenly Jerusalem

Chapter 20: Satan is bound, and we are enjoying the kingdom of heaven.

Chapter 21: Description of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Chapter 22: Blessing of those who dwell in it.

Introduction

The book of Revelation, primary talks in a symbolic way about the condition of the Church through her struggle on earth to the day when she meets the Lord Jesus, her Bridegroom. Then it starts to talk about the heavenly matrimonial home, or the eternal kingdom which is prepared for us, since the foundation of the world.

This kingdom, is not strange for the true believer, but it is the extension of what he enjoys here on earth as a pledge, and of his living in Paradise when he dies. Therefore, the Book of Revelation starts to talk about the kingdom in which we live here, and the dominion that we have over Satan and his armies, as a start to an eternal extension and a heavenly Fatherly meeting face to face with our heavenly Father.



Chapter Twenty

This chapter is considered as an introduction, or a preparation for the two following chapters; therein he tells us about “the kingdom of God that is within us” (Luke 17:21).

- 1 - Satan is bound** (1- 3).
- 2 - The first resurrection** (4-6).
- 3 -Satan is untied at the end of time** (7-10).
- 4 -The Day of Judgment** (11-15).

1. SATAN IS BOUND

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. And he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal over him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But, after these things he must be released for a little while” [1-3].

This angel who came down from heaven, who has dominion over the bottomless pit, and who is able to tie up Satan and bound him, is the symbol of the Angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus, who came down from heaven, and was nailed on the cross for the sake of human beings, in order to wipe out the writing of requirements that was against us. Thereafter, Satan will not have a place, nor right over us, and the believer thereby can tread on Satan and his power.

As the Holy Bible says¹²³, “...now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12 : 31).

“Having wiped out the writing of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us, and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, and He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it, that is the cross” (Col. 2:14,15).

“... of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” (John. 16:11).

“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I

give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:19).

We find in the New Testament many quotations to reassure our souls not that Satan’s behavior is tied down, but his authority is confined. Therefore he cannot have dominion over man so far as man gives him no place into his heart. But if man chooses to allow something of Satan’s belongings to enter in his heart, thus he surrenders willingly to the enemy.

Many are the writings of the early Church Fathers who give to the believers hope and courage to fight Satan without fear nor trouble. Thus the believer is reassured that with the cross of the Lord, he will tie him down and destroy him.

St. Augustine says¹²⁴, that the Angel coming down from heaven is the Lord Jesus, who rescued those who had the hope for salvation from hell. He as well tied down the power of Satan, so that he would not have dominion over His militants during their struggle on earth.

As for the time of **thousand years**, it could be understood in two ways:

1) That the Church in her struggle on earth lives in the day of the Lord, or “the Sabbath,” which started with the resurrection of the Lord, and it will never end. Thus will stay this way, an endless Sabbath for the saints, as they finish their strive, and finally they live in eternity as an extension to their life here.

For the Lord, a day is as a thousand years, therefore his time was calculated to be a thousand years!

2) That it points to time (after crucifixion, or resurrection), for a thousand indicates the completeness of time and its plenty.

It is the period which started on the Lord’s entry into “the strong man’s house and plundered his goods, after binding him” (Mark. 3:27). He always grants His children to strive, and overcome Satan. When the Antichrist comes, he unties Satan who will mislead even the chosen ones if possible.

Although a few Protestant dominations despise this interpretation, and say sarcastically how can you say that Satan is

tied down and we see him working and working, probably he will be tied down later¹²⁵. I will let their brethren the Protestant and especially the Lutherans answer this.

For example, Charles Erdman says, that the Lord and His disciples used words stronger than (tie, or prison,) to reveal the effectiveness of the redemptive work of Jesus on Satan, as He said “The ruler of this world is judged.”

Rev. Joseph S. Exell quoted in “*The Biblical Illustrator*” the opinions of the interpreters. Many from our brethren the Protestant insist strongly on accepting this interpretation, which is that Satan is actually tied down, in what concerns the true believer.

2. THE FIRST RESURRECTION

“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and, had not received his mark on their foreheads, or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” [4-6].

Here he tells us about the first resurrection, and the Holy Bible in all its books did not mention the “second resurrection,” so **what does the first resurrection mean?**

We know that sin entered the world, consequently death reigned over all souls. And although we were carnally alive, our souls were dead because of its separation from the source of its life, “God.” Therefore, God came to give us a **spiritual resurrection for our souls**, before the enjoyment of our bodies and souls with the general resurrection on the Day of Judgment. The Lord says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and **now is**, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live” (John 5:25).

We do not wait for this resurrection, but as the apostle says,

“buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Col. 2:12).

Also through repentance we taste the resurrection, while we are still struggling on earth, “Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light” (Eph. 5:14).

It is a daily experience in the life of the believer. The apostle says, “...and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:4-6).

Besides he says, in a continuous sense, “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil. 3 : 10).

For sure, we can say that the Church in her struggle, in spite of her suffering pains, is living in the millennium which is the first resurrection, tasting the pledge of the heavenly places.

St. John Chrysostom says¹²⁶,

[Man was the last reasonable creature, but behold! the foot became head, and through Christ, the First-born of all creation we reached the royal throne.

He sanctified our nature at the divine throne, therefore St. Paul declares, “and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6,7).

What is the exceeding riches of His grace? He gives His grace free for all people, for He sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in every heart. But the true believer alone realizes the exceeding riches of His grace, enjoys it, working within him and overflows. The Lord deals wondrously with His saints, but those who reject will not receive.]

Those who carry the cross with the Lord Jesus, and witness to Him until death, will enjoy here the first resurrection. But the rest who are spiritually dead, those who do not accept faith, do not enjoy the first resurrection, and fall under the eternal second death (Rev. 21:8).

We reassure what St. Augustine says¹²⁷, [There will be no

coming of Jesus before His last appearance for judgment, for His coming is actually happening now in the Church and in her members. As for the first resurrection in the book of Revelation, it is metaphoric, and points to the interpretation of what happens to those who die in sin, then rise for a new life through repentance. So the millennium has indeed began, for Christ has conquered death and won on the cross, and now we His saints rule with Him, and through Him.]

The idea of the “materialistic millennium”

After exposing the interpretation of the last text which talks about the millennium, or the first resurrection, we would like to explain to the reader that some thoughts came accidentally among the Father’s writings, in the first three centuries, and it came in a stronger and different way in the writings of some upstarts. It is the literal interpretation of the text that the Lord will reign on earth with His believers, a millenary earthly reign... However it is suitable for us to differentiate between what came in the early writings and the writings of the upstarts.

The literal millennium in the view of the Early Church

We know that the Jews have their own materialistic thinking, therefore they didn’t accept Christ as their Lord because of His refusal of the earthly reign. Unfortunately up to this day, they are still waiting for the Messiah who will have an earthly reign, and will give them dominion over the whole world.

This thinking was introduced into the Church in the beginning of its institution through two ways:

1- The conversion of the Jews to Christianity, and with them some of their materialistic imaginations were introduced¹²⁸. They diffused some of these thoughts haphazardly among Church writings and sermons. Therefore, we find for example Fr. Papias, from the first century, imagining a materialistic earthly reign for a millennium, where grapevines grow, every grapevine carries ten thousand branches, and every branch carries ten thousand ramification, and other hazy ideas that they accept naively, the outcome of the materialistic Jewish thought.

Eusebius says,¹²⁹ that Papias came to this materialistic way

of thinking because of his misunderstanding of the apostolic writings, not being aware that their sayings were metaphoric (spiritual). And he drove many of the Church Fathers to embrace the same views, after him. Eusebius call the matter “superstition.”

After Papias, declined Ireneaus, Tertullian, Victorianos, Justin, and Augustine at the start, who later on realized he was mistaken.

2- Reading the debate between Justin and Trypho the Jew,¹³⁰ we realize that Justin was so enthusiastic and full of zeal to assure that all what the Jews had, as promises and blessings, were totally and completely transferred to the Church of the New Testament. Thereby, he tried to confirm that what came in Isaiah 65:17-25 and Mich. 4:1-7 will be realized only for Christians.

We find the same thing in the debate of Tertullian with the Jews. After confirming the same thoughts, that all the promises and blessings mentioned in the Old Testament to belong to the Jews, were given to the Church, depriving the Jews of any of it. But unfortunately, he drew back, and adopted the Jewish materialistic thought, and intruded it into Church’s doctrine.

Awakening of the Church

The belief in the millennium was not a belief standing by itself, or was given great attention, but quickly the school of Alexandria noticed the seriousness of the matter. She seemed had looked with far sight, to see in our days how this false belief presented a dangerous and principal thought in some denominations, like the Adventist. Therefore, Origen opposed this idea; he was followed by Pope Dionysius the Alexandrian in the third century who refused the idea of the literal interpretation of the book of Revelation. Before the end of the fourth century this thought was on the point of vanishing completely in the church of Alexandria. Abroad St. Augustine, after realizing his mistake, he clarified the dangerousness of the literal interpretation of the millennium, giving unresistable strong proofs that it is wrong. And he considered heretic he who proclaims it.

The millennium in some Protestant denominations

This idea appeared in some Protestant denominations, they

made of it a principal belief, and started to set fixed dates of the coming of Christ to reign a millennium. Here we find that this idea in the early writings was different from some upstarts.

1- It came accidentally in the early writings, and its main purpose was to assure that all the promises were taken away from the Jews, the unbelievers in the Lord. Martyr Justin says, [that many of the honorable Christian do not adopt this teaching, and do not approve of it.]

2- Some Protestant denominations proclaimed this thought on the following bases:

First: The Lord Jesus comes to reign over His saints¹³¹ before the coming of the “man of sin,” and the occurrence of the great tribulation. Then He comes back once more to destroy the Antichrist.

Second: Israel repents, but she remains a distinct body from the Church¹³² and Jerusalem gets wider, embellish herself, and becomes a center for the Jewish people who will rule the world.

Third: The rebuilding of the temple and the offering of animal sacrifices.

I would not like to enter into discussions of this matter, but I will let my brethren the Protestants reply to these denominations:

1- Erdeman thinks, that these principles on which the idea of the materialistic millennium is based, are contradictory to each other and is far from the spirit of the Holy Bible.

2- Ray Summers¹³³, in his book, “Worthy is the Lamb,” thinks it is not appropriate to build a general skeleton comprising the last events, the divinity and the philosophy of history upon three verses (4,5,6 of chapter 20), in a literal insatiable interpretation.

3- H. Monod¹³⁴ refuses the literal interpretation of the millennium, giving the following reasons:

First: The spiritual and symbolic interpretation agrees with the line of the prophets in general, and especially in the book of Revelation, in which we find the Church as a candlestand, and the ministers stars, and we do not accept it literally.

Second: Notice that St. John speaks only about “souls” v.4

who came to life and reigned with Jesus, and did not say “souls and bodies.”

Third: The literal interpretation does not agree with the other verses of the Holy Bible, which speaks about the general resurrection. It never came in the Bible that the resurrection happens twice, or in two different periods. But it appears already in Isa. 12:23, John 5:5, 8:28, 1Thess. 4:16-17, that the resurrection of the dead concerning the righteous and the wicked is followed immediately by Judgment and eternal life.

Fourth: It is impossible for us to think that the return to earth gives happiness to the righteous, who died in faith, and are settled joyfully in Paradise as God’s own!

The Jews’ mistake is represented in their desire that the Messiah rules an earthly kingdom, and the millenarians have a different view.

Fifth: If we consider the literal interpretation, what would be the case of those who are born during the millennium rule?

Now, we say that through (bodily) death, the believers are saved; as they die in peace leaving trials and misery, to depart to the Lord, but this does not happen to those who will be born in the millennium reign! They assume, it is a materialistic earthly rule where they marry and get married. How can those who are born during the millennium be rightly judged? When neither do they carry the cross with the Lord Jesus, nor walk in the narrow way!

Sixth: This text is the only verse in the Holy Bible which says that the first resurrection comes before the end of the world, while great numbers of prophesies speak about the resurrection without talking about the resurrection of the bodies in a literal and materialistic way. Which is more correct? to explain all the Book and especially these prophesies on the light of this obscure text, or explain the obscure text on the light of the many and clear prophesies of the Book?

Finally, he concludes by reproaching the materialistic millenarians, hoping that great number of souls in the church of their own would understand that this Christian kingdom is such a power, so gentle, so sweet and glorious!!

And H. Monod comes out with this result: [That Jesus Christ continues to reign, by enthroning His Bible within the person who accepts the Christian faith, at that time Christianity will not be a tool at the governments hand for politics...¹³⁵ It will be a faithful expression of the way of life.]

4- J. Gible¹³⁶ refuses the idea of the earthly millennium, by refuting the idea of the resurrection of the bodies to rule a visual bodily kingdom. He says also, that the souls of the martyrs are alive, and they exercise a kind of resurrection as they taste a sort of rest, and a state of power and vitality. And somehow they practice authority with the Lord, for the amount of pain and trouble they bore at the time of their struggle for the Lord.

He also says that the saints of the Lord Jesus reign with Him in a glorious immaterial way, beyond our understanding.

He calls the millenarians, materialistic and doubtful. And he asks us to have a definite hope, not a material hope in false matters.

It is better for man to claim everything for Christ, to gain Christ, to be found in Him, and to benefit of the kingdom of heaven, knowing that the cross is the way to the crown. And not to ask for material things.

At the end, he says, that not accepting the earthly millenary rule revives consolation in the believers, when they take off their earthly tent. They know that their souls do not sleep in a state of darkness, without feelings, when their bodies are in the dust, but death becomes for them a gain.

These are some views of our brethren the Protestant, where they attack violently the idea of the earthly millennium. There is no room for more, in order to come back to the interpretation of the rest of the chapter.

3. THE RELEASE OF SATAN AT THE END OF TIMES

“Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison” [7].

When the time comes that the Antichrist appears, he would be given Satan’s dominion and power to rise and destroy, even if possible to mislead the chosen ones. Therefore it is said that Satan is released from hell, his prison, to appear working with remarkable

power.

“And will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” [8-10].

There is two interpretations to this text:

The First Interpretation, that certain tribes who submitted to one of the ten kings contemporary with the Antichrist, will gather in the city of Jerusalem to fight Elijah, Enoch and the rest of the church in Jerusalem, but God will send fire to burn them.

Some others think that, “*Gog and Magog*,” do not mean certain tribes, but all the deviated nations whose soldiers gather to oppose the Church, but God punishes them with heavenly fire.

The Second Interpretation: of St. Augustine¹³⁷. He thinks the war here is a spiritual war and not a materialistic one.

The Antichrist and his followers, “*Gog and Magog*,” use all means of severity, harshness, deception and misleading to assassinate the saints, to make them deviate from faith. However God supports the two faithful witnesses Elijah and Enoch with the heavenly fire of the Holy Spirit, which burns the misleading, takes away fear, and supports faith.

By this fire the believers are confirmed at the time of the two witnesses, and mostly after their martyrdom, and the killing of the Antichrist. For the Holy Spirit rebukes many of the Gentiles and the Jews who declined behind the Antichrist and opposed the Church, in order to repent of their sins.

Concerning Satan, his end will be with the beast and the false prophet, as the wicked are cast in to the lake inflamed with fire.

4. THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it,

from whose face the earth and heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them” [11].

Previously we were taught about the Kingdom of God which is within us, that we enjoy, the power given to us, and the tribulations that will happen to the Church as a result of the release of the devil at the end of ages. However God never forsakes us, but is working in the Church through His Holy Spirit. Now we are reassured as His children, that shortly the coming of the Lord for Judgment will follow.

Here the Lord appears sitting on a white throne, as an indication of peace, or He will no more fight or defend because the whole Church became safe. And her enemy, “Satan,” comes tied down to be cast into fire, for the materialistic earth and heaven had fled away from his presence.

He comes without a sword in His mouth. He does not appear here as a Horseman to fight, nor as a Lion to assure the fainting souls, but sitting on the throne to grant the victorious a share in the heavenly glories.

As for His description that “*from whose face the earth and heaven fled away. And was found no place for them,*” the Apostle wants to assure us that we will not go back anymore to the old materialistic life. Therefore we will neither be in need of the earth and all what is above it from seas, natural and unnatural materials, nor stars or constellation...

Thereby, He takes away from us all old memories of a life full of tribulations and troubles, the battles that were between us and Satan, however it was between God and Satan. So, the eternal glories swallows the old pictures and removes it from our memory!

“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works” [12-13].

In one moment the righteous, old and young, whose names

are written in the Book of Life will be judged according to their works. And the wicked who were in Hades, those who are spiritually dead, will also be judged according to their works, for God judges without partiality.

Here we find:

1- Books opened; St. Augustine thinks¹³⁸, that it symbolizes the opening of the secrets of all mankind, which is their hearts, and consciences in order that all understand God's equity.

2- The Book of Life is opened, which is the revealing of the Person of the Lord Jesus, and His work, as a Tree of Life, and whoever eats from it during the days of his struggle on earth, lives forever.

In the opened book the believers read about their righteousness which is not out of themselves but in the Person of Lord Jesus Himself. Then they rejoice saying, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8 : 1,2).

17. City of God, 20:14.

3- The sea gave up the dead which were in it. The sea symbolizes the world, therefore, St. Augustine thinks that the symbol here is about the wicked who will not be yet dead nor sent into Hades when the day of Lord comes. The sea of the world in which they were dipped, and the pleasures they were immersed in, will deliver them to the eternal judgment.

4- The spiritual death and Hades delivered those who were in them, and they were also rightly judged according to their wicked deeds.

"Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" [14-15].

This is the end of the death of the spirit and Hades. In other words, it is the end of those who follow their carnal desires, according to the death of their souls. And whose fate is Hades after the death of their bodies, thus they move to the second death, the

eternal fire.

St. Augustine thinks, that it points to Satan who is the leader of the spiritual death, and chief of the inhabitants of Hades. He is cast into the lake of fire.

Thereby, the image of sin is completely removed. In the following two chapters, the Apostle records to us the joyful picture of the heavenly matrimonial home full of trust and security, for the wicked is cast far away forever.

† † †

Chapter Twenty One

In this chapter the Apostle talks about the “heavenly home,” or as St. Augustine¹³⁹ calls it “the heavenly Church.”

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 - One Church | (1 - 8). |
| 2 - Holy Church | (9 - 11). |
| 3 - Universal Apostolic Church | (12 - 14). |
| 4 - Its measurements | (15 - 17). |
| 5 - Its structure | (18 - 27). |

1 - ONE CHURCH

Many of the philosophers, writers and poets like Plato kept drawings for us ideal cities according to what their minds could imagine. They introduced laws, regulations and principles for these cities according to what their philosophy and thought implied on them. Yet in the middle of all that, certain wrong and fanciful principles immediately pollute their imagination, and the result is a deficient city full of weaknesses.

The apostle John did not imitate them, but ascended in Spirit and saw a true, perfect, and eternal Church. In its truth it is: “an encounter of God with the believers,” or let us say it is a “heavenly unity.”

As it was hard for him to draw or express this matter, he recorded what he actually saw in simple symbols; leaving us to get deeper into it, that we may understand and taste this heavenly city as much as our spiritual stature can, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle says: “*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.*”

Our Lord Jesus explained to us that the new wine cannot be put in an old water-skin but in a new one. In the same manner, we, the wine of His kingdom shall take off this corrupt body to be clothed with an uncorrupted, this perishable body becomes imperishable. We are raised in glory and power with spiritual bodies (1Cor. 15:42-44). Thus the Lord puts us in a new heaven.

As children of the new kingdom, we are worth not to come back to this earth, because our Lord Jesus has assured us that “*the heavens will be destroyed... and the elements will melt.*” The apostle Peter reassured us that by the coming of our Lord, “The heavens will be dissolved being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat! Nevertheless, we, according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2Pet. 3:12,13).

We dwell in the “earth of the living,” with all the saints living in spirit.

By saying “*new heaven and new earth,*” may bear another meaning, that is all that exist now will disappear, and we will return to a new heaven where we meet with “The Lord, God of heavens.” We become in a new wonderful fellowship with the heavenly, perfect and complete. We also meet with our brethren who were with us on earth in a “*new earth.*” It will be an encounter of love of a new kind, in a total perfect unity in the Person of our Lord Jesus.

It is a meeting of one Church that tastes eternal unity in a unique way, thus he says; “*Also there was no more sea*” [1]. There is no room for the sea there, as the sea indicates division and separation. It separates the cities, the countries and the continents. But in heaven nothing will separate the members of the Church from each other.

The sea also refers to confusion and worry, as the Bible says: “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest. Whose water cast up mire and dirt” (Isa. 57:20).

Not one single wicked can hide in the heavenly Church, and in its perfect unity, inner and outer peace will prevail.

THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

“*Then I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*” [2].

The Apostle John saw what God had prepared for us. With the prophetic spirit he could see us in glory, and when he came back to tell us of what he had seen, he could not express himself in human language. He knows how much we wish to know; meanwhile the Holy Spirit wants us to know, thus he recorded what he saw in simple symbols saying that he saw “*the city.*”

I think that he was like a child who does not know the language well, and has never seen airplanes. One day he entered a big airport where he saw hundreds of planes, and he came back to say, “I saw large pigeons on the ground.” In a simpler way the Apostle says, “*the city,*” about eternity. In reality it is the house of God with His people, therefore, he called it “*the city.*” And as he realized the bosom of the Holy One opened to receive His saints, he called that encounter, “*The holy city.*”

It is an extension of the holy Church, as the Holy One is dwelling in it. And when he wanted to give her a name, he called it, “*The new Jerusalem*” i.e. the new city of God. It stays new, because all that is eternal¹⁴⁰ is new, will stay new and will never get old. It will never be affected by age or perishing factors, or lose its beauty and shine that is lightened with the Light of God.

The secret of its holiness and newness is that it is “*coming down out of heaven from God.*” Although it is heaven itself, still it is “*coming down from heaven.*” As the compassionate mother who opens her arms, and runs to hug her child she yearns for, so does eternity yearn for us, because we are not strangers to her, but members in her. By her coming down out of heaven from God, she offers us hope that we are her children, and living members in her. For this will keep us away from despair, that we are so weak to be fit for her.

In her coming down from God she proclaims God’s love to humanity, and His longing to meet them. For He loved us first, always begins with love, and cares for His people, “God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.” (Heb. 11:16).

Abraham, the Patriarch realized what God had prepared for him in eternity, thus it was said about him, “for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God” (Heb.11:10).

At last when the Apostle saw that all which is in the city glitters with beauty, he could not know how to describe her, therefore he said, “*prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*” She is one bride adorned by the ornaments that her Bridegroom gave her as a gift.

That is how the Apostle had expressed his view of the heavenly encounter when he saw it. Now how did the heavenly voice express it? The Apostle says, “*And I heard a loud voice from heaven, saying, ‘Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God’*” [3].

Heaven did not find a name to this new city, the new earth and the new heaven more appropriate than, “*The house of God with His people.*” He did not say, “The house of the people with God,” but he said, “*The house of God with the people,*” because the longing of the people to dwell with God cannot be measured or compared to God's longing to dwell with His people.

How great is God's love! God has been waiting for eternity that He might find rest in dwelling with us, though we know that He does not need our slavery, as much as we need His Lordship.¹⁴¹ He begins by saying “they become his people” i.e. they need Him and He pours His love upon them, “for God Himself will be among them, their God.”

He is the God of all humanity, and the God of the believers. Yet in eternity the children of the kingdom shall rejoice over deeper understanding, and sweeter taste of God's Lordship to them.

At last, by reading chapters 21 and 22 we can understand what the one heavenly Church means:

1) She is the eternal dwelling place about which our Lord says, “I go to prepare a place for you.” And the Apostle describes

to us its measurements, and the material of its structure in a simple symbolic way.

2) She represents being in the presence of the heavenly Bridegroom, and the permanent dwelling with Him. She is the “*dwelling of God among His people.*” Thus he talks to us about the person of the Bridegroom and His works with His people.

3) She represents the group of the victorious believers, “who are called heavens itself,” not only in the life to come, but even when they are still on earth. St. Augustine¹⁴² describes this saying, “The spiritual person in the Church, is heaven, the Church, is heaven, and heaven is the Church.”

THE STATE OF THE ONE CHURCH

1- “*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*” As Tertullian¹⁴³ says, that God shall wipe away every tear the eyes had shed before. These tears would not have dried out unless they were wiped away by God’s mercies. Blessed are those whose eyes are tearful, because God shall wipe them away and perfume them!

2- “*There shall be no more death.*” And as prophet Isaiah says, “He will swallow up death forever. And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces” (Isa.25:8).

3- “*Nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away*” [4]. The imperfect, perishable, old world had passed away! While all things in eternity became new, cheerful and joyful to all.

4- “*Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”*”

In the world to come the soul will never be bored or tired. Nothing there will become old or aging, but every moment - if it is appropriate to say that - we find all things new. For then we are present before God, whom the soul will never feel sufficiency full of, and will always be the more eager for, Him.

St. Gregory of Nyssa says, [The vision of God in the present life will not precisely fulfill us, but it grows continually day

after day, from beginning to beginning, in endless beginnings, until it reaches its fullness in eternity.]

The more man meditates on the vision of God, the more he sees Him as if for the first time. All new in his sight, so he feels more longing to kneel before Him, and gaze at Him. And thus he continues to no end.

Because this matter is so glorious that many find it hard to get, the Lord wanted to revive hope in them. Therefore the Apostle says, “*And He said to me, ‘write, for these words are true and faithful.’ And He said to me, ‘It is done!’*” [5].

These are all true and actual matters, that God had prepared for humans. The only thing left, is for us to enter and inherit. As if He says to His bride, “God in truth has prepared the matrimonial house; what remains is for the bride to come.”

He who sends out the invitations says, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.*” And as we have explained before, He means to say, I am the language of heaven, I teach you the new song of praise, and I am the head of all, I came at last to take all in my arms, and unite them with Me. I do not give scantily to anybody, but I give Myself a free source of living water, to whoever asks, “*I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts*” [6].

He gives Himself to every thirsty who feels in need of Him, who says with the psalmist: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, where is your God?” (Ps. 42:1-3). That is why God calls out saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink” (John 7:37).

Then the Apostle emphasizes that though the living water is free, yet the eternal heritage is only given to the persevering militants. Therefore He says, “*He who overcomes shall inherit all*

things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son" [7].

He gives to those who overcome, so what are they going to receive? "*Inherit all things.*" As a father who sees that his son became mature, and no more a minor, he offers to him all his fortunes and properties, and hands over to him all his affairs and secrets. And if he can offer his father all his heart, he will give everything as inheritance to his son, while he is still alive. This is what he means by "*inherit all things.*" And continues saying, "*and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.*"

Truly, through baptism we became sons, but we shall only perceive the perfection of our sonship when we receive the eternal heritage!

Yet those who are not fighters, or the unbelievers, have no share with Him. As the Apostle says, "*But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*" [8].

He started the black list with *the fearful*, i.e. the cowards who deny faith for fear of their earthly life. Those are the most wicked. Next to them "*the unbelievers,*" because without faith He cannot be pleased. And next are the wrong doers: the "*abominable and murderers,*" or those who are nominally believers, but their deeds do not relate to faith.

We notice that He focuses on lying, "*and all liars,*" mostly those who use cheating and deceit in their dealings and talking.

2 - THE HOLY CHURCH

"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the last seven plagues, came to me and talked with me, saying, 'Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife'" [9].

God chose to send one of the seven angels who have the seven bowls to show the Apostle, "*the bride, the Lamb's wife.*" This to show us the love and compassion of those angels towards mankind. Although they pour wrath from there seven bowls, they

yearn to see people in a state of full holiness. Besides, they desire to announce that to everyone.

The Church in her holiness will be the subject of the angel's admiration, and they will sing with the psalmist saying, "At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir" (Ps. 45:9). The Bridegroom Himself communes with her, when He sees her beauty, saying, "Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair!" (Song 1:15). That heavenly beauty which is the holiness radiating from God towards His children.

The secret of her holiness is:

1- Her superiority and sublimity:

"And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem" [10].

She is so high and heavenly; Satan and his soldiers cannot come close to her, because they are thrown into the lake burning with fire.

2- "Descending out of heaven from God" [10].

The secret of her holiness is her sublimity as we have seen, and that she is "*descending out of heaven from God.*" She is so high, that no one can reach her, but by her descent out of heaven, the Apostle proclaims that then God will raise us up to Him.

St. Augustine says, that no one can ascend to the fellowship of the heavenly Jerusalem, unless he believes that his ascent cannot happen with his own power, but by the work of God.

And by her descent, he also declares that we have to experience heavenly life, while we are still on earth, before the coming of the day of the Lord to ascend with Him and through Him.

St. Clement of Alexandria says, that we substitute the earth for heaven, for by good deeds we become gods¹⁴⁴. Besides, by our heavenly behavior we become as if we abide at heaven.

3- "Having the glory of God. And her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal" [11].

Her glory is not out of her, but it is God's glory shining over her. Like crystal, she receives the heavenly glories. "He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance" (Rev. 4:3), simultaneously, by unity with Him and acceptance of the brilliance of His glory, we become like a jasper stone clear as crystal.

He is the Sun of Righteousness who sparkles with beauty, and we are like the stone of crystal surrounding Him from all sides. The features of the stone of crystal will disappear, and only the strong light of the Sun of Righteousness falling upon us, that will appear.

Everyone of us as a stone of crystal shall see the glory of God in his brother, and his brother shall see the glory of God in him, thus the glory of God shall be all in all.

3 - UNIVERSAL APOSTOLIC CHURCH

"Also she had a great and high wall."

Who is that wall? The psalmist says, "For You are the God of my strength" (Ps. 43:2). God is the castle and the refuge of the heavenly Church. In His shelter we dwell, and in His shadow will abide (Ps. 91).

This wall shall gather the universal Church in complete unity. No enemy, which is Satan or his works, can enter to divide her, or separate her members. As St. Augustine says; [Blessed is he who dwells in that city from which no friend will leave, and no enemy can break into.]

This Church or this city is universal, the wall of which shall gather the whole Church in union, the Church of the Old Testament and the Church of the New Testament. She is apostolic and on the foundation of its wall is written the names of the apostles. As he says,

"And twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.

Three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three

gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” [12-14].

She brought together the names of the twelve tribes, or men of the Old Testament, and the names of the apostles of Christ, who are the men of the New Testament, as it is one Church. But the Jews who are separated from her, by rejecting faith, have no place. As their spiritual kinship with the tribes was taken away from them, and they are considered unbelievers.

The twelve gates refer to the opening of the gates from all sides to the sons and daughters of the kingdom¹⁴⁵.

The gates are distributed in all directions, so that no one of those who desire the eternal inheritance would lose the way towards reaching there.

4 - HER MEASUREMENTS

“And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall” [15].

The sons and daughters of the kingdom are known and measured by God and are kept in His possession. As for the unit of measurement, it is a gold reed or a heavenly one, because spiritual and heavenly matters are only measured by what is spiritual and heavenly.

“And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth and height are equal” [16].

It is a square and has four equal corners, a sign that it is carried by the four gospels which lift the believers up to heaven, and prepares them to be a heavenly bride, by the power of the word.

It measures 12000 furlongs, because number 12 indicates the children of God. 1000 indicates heaven, that is to say it embraces all the children of God.

“Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty- four

cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel” [17].

Number 144 refers to the universal Church (the Church of the Old Testament 12 × the Church of the New Testament 12), which is fenced by one wall to enjoy One God.

He who makes the measuring is an angel not an earthly human, that we might not imagine in heaven, earthly material things.

5 - ITS BUILDING

1- The fence:

“And the construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass” [18].

It is fenced by God Himself, who guards her; it is made of pure gold like clear glass, that is heavenly and pure.

“And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second, sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth, emerald, the fifth sardony, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst” [19-20].

First: These precious stones are indicative of the apostles of Christ, as it is an apostolic Church. As the Bible says, “having been built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20).

Second: The precious stones indicate the divine virtues that God bestows on us to adorn us. For the foundation on which we are built in eternity is the divine virtues we are granted in this life during our struggle, and there they glitter within us in heavenly glory.

That is why the Lord comforts the struggling Church saying, “O you afflicted one, tossed with tempest, and not comforted. Behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of

rubies. Your gates of crystal, and your walls of precious stones ... 'This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me,' says the Lord" (Isa. 54:11-17).

Third: Number '12' symbolizes the sons (and daughters) of the kingdom. As if each son of the kingdom is adorned by divine decoration, different from his brother, yet likewise precious and beautiful. In this way the Church is complete in a perfect union.

2- The gates

"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl."

Lord Jesus is the **"pearl"** of great value, for which man sells all that he has to acquire! (Matt. 13:46). Thus, the sons of the kingdom entering from the gates have all sold the world and bought the pearl.

We also find that on each side there are three gates, that is the Holy Trinity. Being on each side, the Holy Trinity will make the people rejoice, and thus sell all they own to buy eternity, and enter to the inheritance prepared for them.

Some scholars suggest that the twelve gates are an indication of the twelve disciples, those who are assigned by "the One and only Gate," our Lord Jesus Christ to be gates, through whose preaching, nations enter to faith.

3- The street (the courtyard)

"And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass" [21].

The street (market) of the city refers to a certain kind of the righteous. In any case the whole city is of pure gold or heavenly, nothing earthly. And of transparent glass, with no defilement or complication, but simplicity and purity of heart.

4- The temple

"But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" [22].

a) God had called His old people to set up a meeting tent,

where God meets with the people through symbols and shadows. Then He called to build a temple that bears the meaning of God dwelling among the people.

b) When the Jews deviated and refused the Lord, the temple was destroyed, then the Lord offered to us His body as a new temple (John 2:19). And when we became members of His body (Eph. 5:30), we are called the temple of God (1Cor 3:16,17), and God's building (1Cor. 3:9).

c) Simultaneously, He handed to us the non-bloody sacrifice on Holy Thursday, and called on us to offer that sacrifice in the temple of the New Testament, as a pledge of the eternal Temple.

d) Yet, in eternity the Apostle did not see a temple, not because it did not exist, but “For the Lord Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” He is a temple that wide and that powerful, an endless and eternal Temple.

5- The lighting

“And the city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God has illuminated it, and the Lamb is its light” [23].

The material means of lighting have disappeared, for the Lord became the Sun and the Lamp for us.

6- Its Glory

“And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life” [24-27].

In its illumination and light, many shall walk towards it, as the Lord says, “And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven! (Matt. 8:11).

They come with their glory and dignity, removing every earthly glory and temporal dignity for the sake of the city, to find that its gates are never closed. It receives all, without partiality for the rich or the poor, slave or free.

They come with their free will, without coercion or enforcement. The gates are opened to everybody and the invitation is addressed to all, for God desires all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

They come in daytime, for no man shall enter disguised in the darkness, and those who commit uncleanness, filth or deceit shall not sneak into it.

Chapter Twenty two

In this chapter also the Apostle talks to us about the glories and blessedness of the heavenly Church:

1 - The tree of life (1 - 7).

2 - Conclusion (8 - 21).

1. THE TREE OF LIFE

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse” [1-2].

Tertullian says, that we cannot explain this text literally. For in the eternal life there are no rivers or streets or trees. The symbolism of these descriptions is shown in his talk about the tree of life. The Apostle says, that it stands in the middle of the street of the city, and in the same time the tree itself stands on the shore of the river from both sides. How then can this be, if it is literally explained?!

1- The River of Life

Tertullian is of the opinion, that the river is the Person of our Lord Jesus who gave water to every soul. As well, He is the Lamb who saved us, and the Tree of Life who feeds His children. He is everything to those who are saved.

St. Ambrose¹⁴⁶ believes, that the river is the Holy Spirit that no one can drink from, other than he who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ who said, “if anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit whom those believing in Him would receive” (John 7:37-39).

This is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, proceeding from the Father and dwelling in the Son. The Son sent the Spirit from the

Father to rebuke, to sanctify and guide us until we reach the heavenly wedding. This is the eternal river that watered, and still waters the bride.

This also refers to the delightful flow of God's blessings in eternity, which in its truth is nothing separated from Him who gives us Himself to enjoy, and be delighted with. And as the psalmist says, "There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God. The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved" (Ps. 46:4,5).

It also indicates the eternal peace with which heavenly Jerusalem is delighted. As it says, "Behold I will extend peace to her like a river... As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. When you see this, your heart shall be rejoice" (Is. 66:12-14).

2- The Tree of Life

Thycon the African thinks, that the tree of life indicates the Holy Cross to which we extend our hands to pick all kinds of pleasant fruits. Also St. Ephram the Syrian¹⁴⁷ and others call the cross, the tree of life.

With the cross, our Lord had conquered death and opened heaven to us. He gave us His body and blood, shed for us to make us children of grace, and heirs of eternal life.

By the cross, the Holy Spirit accomplishes the holy sacraments through the presbyters, in the Church. These sacraments are the food of the Church.

The work of the cross, as we know, extended backwards that the early Fathers of the Old Testament may pick up the fruits, and forward, that the people of the New Testament may eat from these fruits everyday. And in eternity we find our fullness in meditating on the wounds of the slaughtered Lamb.

The tree is in constant blossom, and its fruits are new for us. We eat of it and become satisfied, yet our hearts become ignited with longing to eat more. Again we eat from it, and we find its

fruits are still new, thus we eat and have our fill. The more we eat the more we hunger for it. In this, Sirach says, whoever eats from it comes back more hungry, and whoever drinks from it comes back more thirsty. This makes us stand before the tree amazed and wondering without boredom.

Its fruits are '12,' and this number indicates the children of the kingdom, as if the fruits are specially for them, in it everyone finds his needs and satisfaction.

The early Fathers as St. Basil, St. Augustine and Fr. John of Damascus¹⁴⁸ elaborated on how flourishing will eternally be, and the state of fullness in which man will be there.

The prophet realized that, when he said, "I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps. 27:13).

3- Permanent Joy

"And there shall be no more curse." Our father Adam handed over to us the experience he had, when he once lived in an earthly paradise. Then he was expelled, and went out moaning on the heavy curse he was carrying on his shoulders, as a result of his disobedience. Yet in eternity, sin and disobedience do not exist. All will be serving God in perfect obedience.

"But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him" [3].

They will serve Him with love, longing to see Him, feeling proud of His name, as, *"They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads"* [4].

4 - Permanent Light

"And there shall be no night there. They need no lamp, nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever" [5].

How many the statements are, that bring joy in the book of Revelation! This luminous book that manifests the mystery of the brightness of the children of the kingdom. It is the presence of God

“Sun of Righteousness,” surrounding, and sheltering them.

The Fathers of the Church had experienced the light of God shining upon them, while they were still putting on the perishable body:¹⁴⁹ Fr. John Saba says, [One lamp I look to; by its light I get illuminated, and now I am in amazement. I am spiritually delighted, as I have a stream of life inside me. This is the ultimate goal of the unseen world!]

St. Augustine says, [My God... You are my Light, open my eyes to see Your divine beauty. I cannot walk on my way without falling into the traps of the enemy. What is light but You my God! You are the Light to the children of light! Your day does not have a sunset! Your day gives light to Your children, that they might not stumble down. But those who are away from You walk and live in darkness! Let us then get close to You who are the Light of the world. Why do we have to try getting away from You everyday?! Anyone who keeps distance from you, the true Light goes deeper into the darkness of sin. And when darkness envelops him, he would not be able to distinguish the traps set up for him, all along the road!]

Then the Apostle concluded his description of the eternal glory by saying: *“Then he said to me, ‘These words are faithful and true.’ And the Lord, God of the holy prophets, sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. ‘Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book’”* [6-7].

These are true words that we need to consider, because He who inspired them is the God of prophets. He had disclosed to us so many things concerning our salvation, which were all fulfilled. Now He is sending us the news, by sending His angel to show His servants what will shortly take place.

Some may wonder; why should we read this prophecy while it is far away, and we still have plenty of time? He answers, *“Behold I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”*

He warns us not to waste time in doubting. We should accept this prophecy with faith, keep its words i.e. its commandments, and stay vigilant waiting for His coming. Hence we pray saying:

[Behold, the Bridegroom is coming in the middle of the night. Blessed is the servant whom He finds awake. But that whom He finds negligent, is not worthy to walk with Him. Be watchful then my soul, lest you should fall asleep, thus found out of the kingdom. Keep vigilant and cry out saying: Holy, holy, holy, are You O God.

Keep awake in supplication and prayer, that you may meet the Lord Christ with fat oil, and that He may grant you the true glorious divine wedding¹⁵⁰.]

2 - CONCLUSION

“Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel, who showed me these things. And he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.” [8-9].

The Apostle assures us that what we have in our hands, he himself has seen and heard. He wrote nothing from his own mind. And now he shows his own weakness. For the second time he forgets himself, and thinks that the angel escorting him was Christ, and wanted to kneel to worship him, but the angel refused¹⁵¹.

What he wrote was also dictated by God: *“And he said to me, ‘Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand”* [10].

It could be, that it was the angel who spoke to him, yet probably it was the Person of the Lord who will carry on the speech as we shall see. Anyway, he received a heavenly order not to seal or conceal, but to write and spread out, for the time is near, for the prophecy to be revealed. So every believer should benefit of it.

“He who is unjust, let him be unjust still, he who is filthy, let

him be filthy still, he who is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is holy, let him be holy still” [11].

As if he tells everyone to do as he wishes, in complete freedom, until the coming of the great day of the Lord. He is reprimanding us as it came in the book of Ecclesiastes: “Rejoice, young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment” (Eccl. 11:9).

Or it may be that he means what St. Macarius the Great says¹⁵², that what man acquires here, will remain with him to eternity in a more perfect and complete way. He who plants corruption will fall where the chief of corruption is, and he who struggles in righteousness, will get his share in the Lord our Righteousness, where he finds delight in Him.

Man then, shall reap what he planted, and the time of the harvest is near, as the Lord calls out saying: “*And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work*” [12].

And lest the believers should be disturbed, for fear of the judgment, He says: “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last*” [13]. So He embraces all, and cares for all¹⁵³. In Him we find our hope, hence we fear not.

“*Blessed are those who do His commandments,*¹⁵⁴” by these commandments they enter into the eternal joy, “*that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city*” [14].

As for those who deny faith, and the evil doers; he says about them: “But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie” [15].

The bridegroom communes with His bride

As this book is the book of the heavenly wedding, thus the

Bridegroom comes forward to reveal His Person to His bride, saying: “I, *Jesus*,” or I, your Savior, and Redeemer and the One who cares for you all the time, and here I “*have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches.*”

“*I am the Root and the Offspring of David*,” I am his Creator, and became of his descendants in order to be One of you and not a stranger to you.

“*The Bright and Morning Star*” [16]. Neither do you fear of the darkness of sin, nor of the night of the world pleasures and anguishes, nor of the hidden foolish concepts, for I shall shine upon you and brighten you.

And when the Church hears the voice of her Bridegroom, through the Holy Spirit, she whispers: “*And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’*”

We, through the Church (the bride), whisper intimately to Jesus; for as St. Augustine, martyr Cyprian, and other Fathers say, there is no salvation outside the Church. “*And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely*” [17].

Fellowship with the Lord is:

- 1) Through the Spirit inside the Church.
- 2) To listen to the voice of God, thus we long to His coming.
- 3) By thirsting to Him, so we go closer to Him through prayer, and behaving according to His commandments.
- 4) And *‘let the one who wants take;’* we should have an active will, not a passive one.

Warning

“*For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the book of Life and from the holy city, and*

from the things which are written in this book” [18-19].

Finally, the delightful book comes to a conclusion by a sweet tender whisper, in which Christ is longing to come quickly to His bride, saying:

“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming quickly.’”

And the bride also asks the Bridegroom to hasten to fulfill His promise saying:

“Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Amen.” [20-21].



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¹ For more details see my book: *Introduction to the Book of Revelation*, Alexandria, 1993.

² Cf. St. Jerome: letter 108.

³ Although Pope Dionysius believes that the writer is another John, one of the seventy apostles, probably because of the difference in style. However the Church did not approve this opinion.

⁴ See the sayings of St. Justin the Martyr in his dialogue with Trypho 81 and Tertullian against

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- Marcion 4:14 etc.
- ⁵ St. Clement of Alexandria referred in his book "Who is the rich that will be saved?" 42 to his exile on the island of Patmos. Origen also refers to that in his Commentary on Matt. 2:22.
- ⁶ This island was an exile for fierce criminals and the Christians refusing to worship idols in the days of the Romans.
- ⁷ Eusebius 3:18.
- ⁸ Some scripts of his interpretation are found at "The Monastery of the Syrians," at Wadi-El-Natroun.
- ⁹ The series of Ante-Nicene Fathers published it in English.
- ¹⁰ Epistle 53.
- ¹¹ A.N. Fathers, vol. 6, p. 82.
- ¹² Of the 3rd century, martyred about 304 A.D as bishop of Pateu. He wrote an interpretation to this book, some texts of which were included in AN Fathers, vol. 7.
- ¹³ Meaning the son of Caesar's script - writer. From the thirteenth century.
- ¹⁴ Our church is concerned about those archangels, and asks for their intercession immediately after the Virgin's (Mother of God) as in the Psalmody.
- The archangels are entitled by names for our sake, so that we might get acquainted to them and gain benefit from their works. While in heaven they communicate without using names of human language. There names are as follows:
1. Michael, meaning "like God," because he loves humans and shows lover's jealousy. God grants him the power to fight the dragon on our behalf. The Church celebrates his feast on the twelfth of each Coptic month.
 2. Gabriel, meaning the strength of God, because he informs us with God's strength and His great works with us as he informed the Virgin and Daniel.
 3. Raphael, meaning "God's mercy," as he cured Tobia's eyes.
 4. Sourial.
 5. Sadakial.
 6. Saratial.
 7. Ananial .
- ¹⁵ Apology 1:6.
- ¹⁶ The author: The Divine Love - Article of Divine Love and Ascension (in Arabic).
- ¹⁷ Dialogue against Luciferians.
- ¹⁸ AN Fathers, vol. 10, p. 314/6.
- ¹⁹ City of God, 11: 32.
- ²⁰ Note No. 7.
- ²¹ Of the Christian Faith, 11:108.
- ²² The Coptic text is translated; "I was in the Spirit on Sunday."
- ²³ Revise commentary on v. 8.
- ²⁴ A N Fathers, vol. 10, p. 314/6.
- ²⁵ Cf. Tertullian: The Answer to the Jews, 14.
- ²⁶ St. Irenaeus against heresies 20:10.
- ²⁷ St. Irenaeus against heresies 14:20.
- ²⁸ Against Maricon, 4.
- ²⁹ The Eucharist of St. Basil.
- ³⁰ St. Ephram the Syrian: Christmas Hymns (translated of by the author unto Arabic, p. 23).
- ³¹ A city of Lydia on the west coast of Asia Minor, at the mouth of the Cayster. It was famous at the days of Romans. There was located the famous temple of Artemis (Diana), who was represented as a many-breasted mother goddess, that is counted one of the world's seven wonders, it was built in 20 years.
- ³² Cf. Jerome against Jovinianus 2:3 and against Luciferians, 24.
- ³³ St. Irenaeus against Heresies, 26:2.
- ³⁴ Repentance 8.
- ³⁵ Anba Yoanis: Martyrdom in Christianity, p. 47. (in Arabic)
- ³⁶ On the Resurrection of the dead, 19.

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- ³⁷ Or Pergamum, the most important city of Mysia, situated 3 miles north of the river Caisus, about 15 miles from the sea. It is now called Bergama (New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible).
- ³⁸ St. John Cassian: Conference 5 (Serapion about "The Eight Faults").
- ³⁹ Letter 43:22.
- ⁴⁰ A city of Asia Minor, in Lydia near the boundary of Mysia. Its inhabitants were famed for their skill in dyeing purple; Lydia, the seller of purple at Philippi, came from Thyatira (Acts 16:14).
- ⁴¹ The author: The Pastoral Love (in Arabic), p. 724.
- ⁴² Oration and Panegyric addressed to Origen.
- ⁴³ A city founded probably by Antiochus II from the third century, and named by him Laodicea, after his wife Laodice; 40 miles east to Ephesus.
- ⁴⁴ His. Eccl. 5:24
- ⁴⁵ On monks 4:12,19.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ City of God, 14:13.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid, 1:28.
- ⁴⁹ Cassian: Conferences, p. 107-132 (in Arabic, Alexandria 1968.)
- ⁵⁰ Letter 31.
- ⁵¹ Pope of Rome after the schism and he had refused the papal authority.
- ⁵² The Philokalia: translated by the author (in Arabic) p. 130.
- ⁵³ Of the Christian Faith 14:19.
- ⁵⁴ The author: The Divine Love, p. 727-29 (in Arabic).
- ⁵⁵ T. Binns: The Revelation, translated by the Brethren's Meeting, p. 86, 87 (in Arabic).
- ⁵⁶ Commentary on the Revelation, vol. 2, p. 26, 27 (in Arabic).
- ⁵⁷ Of the Christian Faith, 5:73.
- ⁵⁸ The author: The Divine Love, p. 85.
- ⁵⁹ Doxology of the four incorporeal Living Creatures.
- ⁶⁰ The Eucharist of St. Gregory.
- ⁶¹ God's Providence, chapter 3, translated by Aida Hanna Basta, (in Arabic).
- ⁶² Irenaeus: Adv. Haer., 11:8.
- ⁶³ Cf. Fr. Victorianus' interpretation of this text.
- ⁶⁴ The Eucharist of St. Gregory.
- ⁶⁵ Letter, 53.
- ⁶⁶ The author: Divine Love, p. 371.
- ⁶⁷ Lect., 10:3.
- ⁶⁸ St. Ambrose: Of the Holy Spirit, 2:179.
- ⁶⁹ The Life of Prayer (2nd edition in Arabic) p. 722.
- ⁷⁰ Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 149:1.
- ⁷¹ Tertullian: On the Resurrection of the Flesh, 26.
- ⁷² St. Ephram: Mymars on Jesus' Birth, p. 41.
- ⁷³ In the Sinai script, "Come and see," is addressed to John, to see and comprehend what happens, while in the Alexandrian script, "Come," refers to the horse man to come out.
- ⁷⁴ In some scripts, "The Yellow horse."
- ⁷⁵ A Treatise on the Soul, 8.
- ⁷⁶ Dialogue 117.

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- ⁷⁷ *On the Advantage of Patience.*
- ⁷⁸ *Against Hermogenes*, 34.
- ⁷⁹ *Letter*, 80.
- ⁸⁰ *The author: The Divine Love*, p. 738-740.
- ⁸¹ *The author: The Divine Love*, p. 863-872.
- ⁸² Such as Origen, Tertullian and Justin the Martyr.
- ⁸³ Cf. Pope Shenouda III. "Israel in Christianity's view."
- ⁸⁴ Rev. Ibrahim Said in his book "Commentary on the Revelation" says that many scholars state the same interpretation. (part 2, p. 121-122).
- ⁸⁵ Even Non-Apostolic Churches adopted this view.
- ⁸⁶ *The Instructor*.
- ⁸⁷ Cf. *Interpretation of Rev. 4:11*.
- ⁸⁸ *St. Athanasius to Marcel on Psalms*.
- ⁸⁹ See the sayings of St. Augustine on the benefit of Heretics. *Homilies on New Testament Lessons, I.*"
- ⁹⁰ *The heretics that call for ethics and social values away from the circle of faith.*
- ⁹¹ Out of these heretics, there is a group, nowadays, called "The Scientific Christianity." They call for omitting all miracles of the Holy Bible.
- ⁹² *Lect.*, 15:5.
- ⁹³ *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 26.
- ⁹⁴ "Christ and the Antichrist" 46, 47. Also see the article about "The End of the World, the Coming of the Antichrist, and the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- ⁹⁵ *A Treatise on the Soul*, 50.
- ⁹⁶ We read about the two olive trees standing by the Lord in Zech. 4:11-14, which are Zerubabel and Joshua the high priest, appointed to rebuilding the temple and bringing back the worship of God to Jerusalem. This is a symbol of the two olive trees: "Elijah and Enoch," who were appointed to help the children of God, His temple, and recovering the souls led astray by the Antichrist.
- ⁹⁷ *The Theotokia of Tuesday: part three, fifth paragraph.*
- ⁹⁸ Cf. *Ante Nicene Fathers*, vol., 6, p. 355.
- ⁹⁹ *A Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, 60 & 61.
- ¹⁰⁰ *St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, and other Fathers affirms that the beast is the Antichrist.*
- ¹⁰¹ Dan. 7:7, 25; 11:36, John 10:33, 2 Thess. 2:3-9.
- ¹⁰² *A treatise on Christ and Antichrist* 49.
- ¹⁰³ *A treatise on Christ and Antichrist* 49.
- ¹⁰⁴ *St. Irenaeus: Adv.Haer* 28-39.
- ¹⁰⁵ *The end of the world*, chapter 28.
- ¹⁰⁶ *St. Jerome against Jovinianus* 1:4; *Letter* 130; and *St. Augustine on Virginity*.
- ¹⁰⁷ We shall speak of Babylon in more detail in chapter 16.
- ¹⁰⁸ To avoid repetition, we shall speak later about the cup of God's wrath, and hell in interpretation of chapter 16.
- ¹⁰⁹ See the interpretation of Rev. 1:7.
- ¹¹⁰ See this concept in our book of "Brotherly Love," (in Arabic) in more details. (1963).
- ¹¹¹ *St. Augustine: Homilies on Psalms*, Ps. 26.
- ¹¹² Some try to confirm that Babylon, the harlot is the Roman See, and there, is the center of the Antichrist.
- ¹¹³ See the interpretation of Rev. 13:1.
- ¹¹⁴ *Homilies on St. Matt.*, 60.
- ¹¹⁵ *Divine Love* p. 171.
- ¹¹⁶ *Divine Love* p. 168.
- ¹¹⁷ Review his homilies on the New Testament and on the Psalms.
- ¹¹⁸ *Hom. Contemplations on selected verses of the New Testament*. translated by the author.

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- ¹¹⁹ Erdman; *The Revelation of John*, p. 144.
- ¹²⁰ *Against Arianism*, 3.
- ¹²¹ cf. interpretation of Rev. 1:16.
- ¹²² cf. interpretation of Rev. 1:14.
- ¹²³ Cf. Fr. Pishoy kamel: *The Millennium*, (*Our orthodox Church Faith*, no. 3).
- ¹²⁴ Cf. *City of God*, 20:7.
- ¹²⁵ We will mention this thought of theirs once more, when we discuss the millennium
- ¹²⁶ St. John Chrysostom: *Does the Devil have authority over you?! translated into Arabic by the author.*
- ¹²⁷ Cf. Magazine "St. Mark," Jan. 68. (*On the City of God* 20:6,7).
- ¹²⁸ St. Justin: *Dialogue with Trypho* 80-81.
- ¹²⁹ Cf. Fr. Pishoy Kamel: *The Millennium*.
- ¹³⁰ Eusebius H.E., 3:39.
- ¹³¹ Laura B. Hamilton says in her book "Uncovering the Future," that those who reign with Christ submit to Him, but some submit physically and not heartily. Thus when the Antichrist appears, the real submissive believers will be distinguished from the hypocrites.
- ¹³² Cf. Erdeman's interpretation of the book of Revelation p.156.
- ¹³³ Baptist's publications.
- ¹³⁴ *The Biblical Illustrator* by Rev. Joseph S. Exell M.A.
- ¹³⁵ Here, we come out with the point, that this belief has political motives of some westerns influenced by the Jews.
- ¹³⁶ *The Biblical Illustrator* P. 275/6.
- ¹³⁷ *City of God*, 20:12.
- ¹³⁸ *City of God*, 20:14.
- ¹³⁹ *City of God*, 22:27.
- ¹⁴⁰ Pertains to the future life.
- ¹⁴¹ St. Gregory's liturgy.
- ¹⁴² Contemp. on the lord's prayer p. 17, to St. Augustine.
- ¹⁴³ Ter: On the resurrection of the flesh. 58.
- ¹⁴⁴ Meaning, we will be after His image, not that we become subjects of worship, but God reflects His light on us, so we become illuminated.
- ¹⁴⁵ We notice in more than one occasion that number '12' refers to the kingdom of God.
- ¹⁴⁶ *The Holy Spirit* 3:21.
- ¹⁴⁷ St. Ephram the Syrian: *Christmas Hymns* (Mayamer).
- ¹⁴⁸ Cf. St. Augustine: *The Confessions*, Ch. 26.
- ¹⁴⁹ Cf. the author: *Divine love, God is the Light of the soul!*, p. 63-78.
- ¹⁵⁰ *The Canonical Hour: midnight prayer, first service.*
- ¹⁵¹ Cf. *Interpretation of Rev. 19:10.*
- ¹⁵² *Homilies of St. Macarius.*
- ¹⁵³ Cf. explanation of the text in (Rev. 1:11,17).
- ¹⁵⁴ In some editions it says: "Blessed are those who wash their robes with the blood of the Lamb."