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## The Seven Seals of the Apocalypse: Medieval Texts in Translation

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**THE SEVEN SEALS  
OF THE APOCALYPSE**  
**Medieval Texts in Translation**

*Translated with an Introduction and Notes*  
*by*  
*Francis X. Gumerlock*



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**THE SEVEN SEALS  
OF THE APOCALYPSE**

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THE SEVEN SEALS  
OF THE APOCALYPSE  
Medieval Texts in Translation

TRANSLATED WITH INTRODUCTION  
AND NOTES BY

Francis X. Gumerlock

TEAMS • Commentary Series

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*In memory of  
Kay Denise Gumerlock,  
a very loving wife and mother*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- ANF* *Ante-Nicene Fathers of the Church*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885–96. Numerous reprints by T & T Clark, Eerdmans, and Hendrickson Publishers.
- BnF Bibliothèque nationale de France
- CCSL Corpus christianorum, series latina. Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–.
- CSEL Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum. Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1866–.
- FC* *The Fathers of the Church*. New York: Cima Publishing Co., 1947–49; New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1949–60; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1960–.
- PL Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina. Edited by J. P. Migne.
- PLS Patrologiae latinae, supplementum. 5 vols. Edited by Adalbert Hamman. Paris: Garnier Frères, 1958–74.

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# *Introduction*



## MEDIEVAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SEVEN SEALS

A recent survey showed that 40 percent of all Americans believe that there will be a final battle of Armageddon between Jesus Christ and the Antichrist. One series of fictional books, whose plots are based on futuristic doomsday scenarios gathered from the Apocalypse, has sold over sixty million copies.<sup>1</sup> Underlying these phenomena is a basic assumption—that the Apocalypse, or Book of Revelation, is primarily a prophecy about the end of the world. Consequently, filling today's religious book market are Apocalypse commentaries teaching that the seven seals of Revelation 5–8 describe tragedies that are to take place in the last days.<sup>2</sup>

Medieval Europeans, on the other hand, thought very differently about the seven seals. Some used the seven seals for catechetical purposes and associated them with seven major events in the life of Christ or seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Other medieval writers taught that the seven seals contained symbols about life in the church between the first and second comings of Christ. Still others viewed the seven seals as milestones in a grand outline of salvation history from creation to the consummation, or as transitional markers in a blueprint of early church history from the apostles to the emperor Constantine. The medieval world also had its share of those who believed that the seals were signs indicating imminent cosmic changes, and there was no shortage of apocalyptic messiahs who, like David Koresh of the 1993 tragedy at Waco, believed that they themselves were divinely chosen to open the seven seals.<sup>3</sup>

This book illustrates this vastness of medieval interpretive tradition on the seven seals. It includes fifteen texts from the sixth through fifteenth centuries. Although most of the texts are portions of Apocalypse commentaries, the collection contains a wide genre of literature including homilies, a reference Bible, biblical handbooks, catechetical literature, and a confession by a self-proclaimed visionary. The texts have been organized and categorized under three headings: those illustrating Christological interpretations of the seven seals, those proposing ecclesiastical interpretations, and those giving historical interpretations.

Christological readings of the seven seals are represented by an Apocalypse commentary of Apringius of Beja, a pseudo-Alcuinian treatise on the seven seals, a portion of the so-called *Irish Reference Bible*, a tenth-century Celtic catechism, and the commentaries of Dominican writers Hugh of Saint Cher and Nicholas of Gorran. In these texts, the seals represent seven prophecies in the Hebrew scriptures believed to have been opened or fulfilled by the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, seven gifts of the Holy Spirit operative in the life of Christ and in his body the church, or seven miracles associated with Christ's presence in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

The early medieval Apocalypse commentaries of Caesarius of Arles, Cassiodorus, pseudo-Jerome, and Alcuin reflect ecclesiastical interpretations. Departing from futuristic interpretations of the seven seals in the early church, these writers saw in the vision truths applicable to the church as it triumphed over paganism and expanded its influence in the European world.

Joachim of Fiore's tract and the remaining texts illustrate historical explanations of the seven seals common in the later Middle Ages. Joachim viewed the seven seals as successive periods of redemptive history from Abraham to the Last Judgment. Peter Auriol and Giovanni Nanni saw the seals as markers in an outline of primitive Christian history from Nero to Constantine, while Proux Boneta associated the opening of the seals with historical events and figures occurring in her own generation.

This introductory essay will first summarize the contents of the biblical text that contains the vision of the seven seals, then explain in greater detail these three medieval interpretive approaches toward that biblical



text. In the process, it will introduce the translated texts, their authors, and their unique contributions to medieval exegesis on the seven seals.



### THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT OF THE SEVEN SEALS

The English word *apocalypse* comes from the Greek word *apocalypsis* meaning an “unveiling” or a “revelation.” The first words of the last book of the Greek New Testament are *Apocalypsis Iesou Christou*, that is, “The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:1). In the Latin translations of the scriptures used in the Middle Ages, these words read *Apocalypsis Iesu Christi*. Hence, the text was most often referred to as the Apocalypse. In medieval commentaries on the Apocalypse, however, *revelatio* was recognized as a synonym for *Apocalypsis*; and in the early modern period certain English versions rendered its opening words “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, throughout this introduction the words “Apocalypse” and “Revelation” will be used interchangeably.

In the Apocalypse, the scene of the vision of the seven seals is the heavenly throne room into which John, the book’s author, claims to have been caught up.<sup>5</sup> The contents of the throne room, described in Revelation 4, include a main throne upon which God is sitting, twenty-four surrounding thrones on which twenty-four elders are seated, and four living creatures who together with the elders unceasingly worship God.

John relates, in chapter 5, that he sees in the right hand of the one sitting upon the throne a book sealed with seven seals. After an angel proclaims that no one in heaven, on earth, or under the earth was found worthy to open the book and break its seals, John weeps. Then one of the elders tells John to stop weeping because the Lion from the tribe of Judah is worthy to open the book and break its seals.

The Revelator next sees a lamb having seven heads and seven eyes take the book out of the right hand of the one sitting on the throne. At this, the four living creatures and twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb, and sing a song proclaiming his worthiness to open the seals of the book, a worthiness due to the Lamb’s having been slain and having redeemed for God persons from every tribe, nation, and tongue. Myriads of angels encircle the throne room and also proclaim the Lamb’s worthiness.

ness; and John hears every creature in heaven, on earth, and below the earth singing and giving praise to God and the Lamb. To this, the four living creatures respond with an “Amen,” and the elders fall down worshipping.

Then, as recorded in chapter 6, John watches the Lamb successively open the seven seals. The opening of the first four seals reveals a white, red, black, and pale horse respectively, each having a different rider. The rider of the white horse holds a bow and wears a crown. The rider of the red horse wields a sword. The rider of the black horse holds a pair of scales, and the rider of the pale horse is named Death. When the Lamb opens the fifth seal, John sees under an altar the souls of those slain for the word of God, crying to God for vengeance. Having been given white robes to wear, they are told that they should rest a little longer until their fellow servants are killed as they were.

With the opening of the sixth seal John beholds a great earthquake, the darkening of the sun and moon, stars falling from heaven, the heavens departing, and the moving of every mountain and island out of their places. He also sees all manner of humans, from kings to slaves, hiding themselves in the rocks of the mountains and begging those rocks to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of God and the Lamb.

Between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals, John writes in chapter 7 that he sees four angels to whom it is given to harm the earth. However, another angel tells those angels not to harm the earth until one hundred and forty-four thousand servants of God, twelve thousand from each of the varying tribes of Israel, have been sealed on their foreheads.

John next sees an innumerable company of people standing before the throne and before the Lamb. Clothed with white robes and having palms branches in their hands, they cry, “Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb,” at which the angels, the four living creatures, and the elders fall down in worship. The author then relates a conversation between himself and one of the elders about the identity of those clothed in white robes. The elder says that they had come out of great tribulation, had washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, and that they are now before God’s throne, serving him in his temple day and night, where they no longer hunger, thirst, or experience sadness.

In Revelation 8:1, the Lamb opens the seventh seal, and there is silence in heaven for half an hour. After this silence, seven angels sounding seven trumpets successively unleash various plagues upon the earth. These seven trumpet judgments are described in Revelation, chapters 8 through 11. Although the seven trumpets issue forth from the seventh seal, because of John's elaborate description, commentators often treat them separately from the seals. These trumpet judgments also take us beyond the scope of the present study.



### CHRISTOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SEVEN SEALS

To some extent, medieval exegetes discussing the seven seals depended upon earlier exegesis of Revelation 5–8. Paula Fredriksen, in an article on the interpretation of the Apocalypse in the early church, indicates that in the patristic age there were three main responses to the Book of Revelation.<sup>6</sup> One was to repudiate the text altogether, as did Gaius of Rome (fl. 197–217) and others.<sup>7</sup> A second response, fairly popular and illustrated by Hippolytus (d. 235), was to interpret the book in a futuristic and apocalyptic manner.<sup>8</sup> A third response, represented by Alexandrian exegetes, was to allegorize the book's historical and temporal references.<sup>9</sup>

For Christians of the early church, even theological heavyweights like Jerome (d. 420) and Augustine (d. 430), interpreting the Apocalypse was puzzling.<sup>10</sup> One complaint, expressed by a second-century sect in Asia Minor called the Alogi but probably reflective of a more widespread attitude, was that the Apocalypse was not relevant. "What good does the Revelation of John do me when it tells me about seven angels and seven trumpets?" was their question.<sup>11</sup> The feeling that the Book of Revelation was not very relevant continued in some corners of Christendom; and in early medieval Spain, some clerics refused to read or preach from it in their churches. To combat this rejection of the Apocalypse, the Fourth Council of Toledo in 633 threatened excommunication to anyone who refused to preach from the Apocalypse and required that passages from it be read in the liturgies near Easter.<sup>12</sup> Just like many in the early church who attached a Christological hermeneutic to the Hebrew scriptures in

an effort to make them more meaningful, so also some early medieval exegetes on the Iberian peninsula applied a Christological reading to the Apocalypse. Such a reading of the seven seals can be traced back, in seminal form at least, as early as Irenaeus of Lyons (d. 202), who interpreted the rider of the white horse as Jesus Christ,<sup>13</sup> but more specifically to a fourth-century bishop, Hilary of Poitiers (d. 368), who in a preface to his commentary on the Psalms interpreted the opening of the seven seals as events in the life of Christ from his incarnation to his final coming for judgment. According to him, the seven seals represent Christ's corporality, passion, death, resurrection, glory, kingdom, and judgment.<sup>14</sup>

In this collection, the first text illustrating a Christological reading of the seven seals is a sixth-century tract on the Apocalypse by Apringius, a bishop of Beja, Portugal, during the reign of the Visigothic king Theudis (531–48). The tract was known to Isidore of Seville (d. 636), Braulio of Saragossa (d. 651), and Beatus of Liébana (d. ca. 800), but did not enjoy a very wide circulation. A large portion of its middle section did not survive;<sup>15</sup> the two large fragments of the tract that did survive in twelfth-century manuscripts explain Revelation 1:1–5:7 and 18:6–22:20.<sup>16</sup> Several editions of it were printed in the twentieth century, along with a few Spanish translations.<sup>17</sup>

For Apringius, the book sealed with seven seals in Revelation 5:1 represented the Old Testament, which contained sealed or unfulfilled prophecies about Christ. In this interpretation Apringius was following Victorinus of Pettua (Ptuj in modern Slovenia), a bishop martyred in the Diocletian persecution at the beginning of the fourth century. The coming of Christ opened the seals, which for Apringius symbolized seven chronological events in Jesus' life—the incarnation, nativity, passion, death, resurrection, glory, and kingdom. These seven events, however, are not found in Victorinus's Apocalypse commentary.

Apringius, whose thought had been heavily influenced by North African theology, strongly emphasized the sovereignty of God. Consequently, the seven seals also represented for him secrets related to God's providence over all things, secrets no one except Jesus could understand.

The pseudo-Alcuinian tract *On the Seven Seals* also contains a Christological interpretation of the seven seals. It exists in four manuscripts and has been associated with the dubious writings of Alcuin of York (d. 804), for example, in Migne's *Patrologia Latina*. E. Ann Matter, however,

in her pivotal study and critical edition of the text, demonstrated that the text was of Spanish provenance and written in the sixth or early seventh century.<sup>18</sup> By the ninth century it had been circulating in two forms, both of which are translated here, the shorter “Version A” being the older one. In this tract the seven seals represent seven events in the life of Christ—the nativity, baptism, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, ascension, and judgment—a list Matter showed was related to a Mozarabic liturgical rite called *fractio panis*, “breaking of the bread.” In the ceremony, pieces of the host were arranged in the shape of a cross and symbolized major events in the life of Christ, events that very closely resemble those mentioned in our text.<sup>19</sup> In addition to representing aspects of the life of Christ, the seven seals in this text are related to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Isaiah 11:2.

The commentary on the seven seals from the *Irish Reference Bible* is part of a late eighth-century Bible with references, a precursor to our modern one-volume commentary. Also known as *Das Bibelwerk*, the full commentary exists in two ninth-century manuscripts, although fragments of it have survived in other manuscripts.<sup>20</sup> For its comments on the Apocalypse, the anonymous author used source material that included the Apocalypse commentary of Primasius of Hadrumetum (fl. 550–60) and the exposition of the Apocalypse by the Venerable Bede (d. 735).<sup>21</sup>

In the *Irish Reference Bible*, the book sealed with seven seals (Rev. 5:1) represents the Old Testament opened by the life of Jesus Christ. The seals, signifying the nativity, baptism, passion, burial, resurrection, ascension, and second coming of Christ, are said to have been “sealed” in the Old Testament because no one was able to comprehend their veiled meanings. Jesus Christ is then portrayed as the fulfillment of those prophecies, and the author supports this with passages from the New Testament. For example, in the text of the *Irish Reference Bible*, the birth of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of Luke opened the seal of his nativity in Isaiah 7:14, which foretold that a virgin would conceive and bear a son. Likewise, Christ’s death on the cross, recorded in John’s Gospel, opened the seal of his passion, prophesied by the words of Isaiah 53:7 about a sheep being led to slaughter. Passages of the Hebrew scriptures representing the other five seals of Christ’s life and ministry are quoted from the Psalms, and are presented as having been opened by the life of Jesus

as recorded in the New Testament. According to the text, even the seal of his second coming has already been opened by the prophecy of Christ's return in 2 Peter 3:12.

The *Celtic Catechism*, a tenth-century collection of sermon material also having Irish affiliations, contains explanatory glosses on the seven seals. The sources of these glosses, according to a study by Martin McNamara, include the Apocalypse commentaries of Victorinus, Tyconius (fl. 370–90), and Primasius.<sup>22</sup> The anonymous compiler interprets the book sealed with seven seals (Rev. 5:1) not as the Old Testament but as the entire Bible consisting of both testaments. The seals also represent various events in the life of Christ—the conception, nativity, passion, burial, resurrection, ascension, and second coming. These seals, according to the *Celtic Catechism*, “were proclaimed in the Prophets, but the keys with which the seals are opened are in the New Testament.” However, the passages chosen from the Hebrew scriptures to represent the seals of Christ's resurrection and ascension differ from those in the *Irish Reference Bible* (see Table 1). While the *Irish Reference Bible* portrayed the seventh seal as having already been opened by 2 Peter 3:12, the compiler of the anonymous catechism understood that seal as not yet having been opened.

The next two texts in our compilation representing Christological interpretations of the seven seals are from thirteenth-century Apocalypse commentaries. The *Exposition on the Apocalypse* by the Dominican preacher and theology professor at Paris Hugh of Saint Cher (d. 1263) was composed about 1235–36 and circulated under the title of its opening words *Aser pinguis*.<sup>23</sup> At least thirteen manuscript copies survive, and it was printed in a number of European cities throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>24</sup>

Hugh offered many interpretations of the seven seals current in the thirteenth century, including a Christological reading which viewed the seals as symbols of Christ's incarnation, nativity, passion, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Holy Spirit, and coming for judgment. However, the passages from the Hebrew scriptures that he cites as those containing prophecies of these events are entirely different from those mentioned in the *Irish Reference Bible* and the *Celtic Catechism*. In addition, a unique Christological feature that Hugh brings to medieval exegesis of the seven seals in his commentary is the correspondence of

Table 1

## THE SEVEN SEALS OF CHRIST'S LIFE IN OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES

	<i>Irish Reference Bible</i>	<i>Celtic Catechism</i>	<i>Hugh of Saint Cher</i>	<i>Nicholas of Gorran</i>
1st	Nativity Isa. 7:14	Conception Isa. 7:14	Incarnation Isa. 8	Incarnation/Conception Gen. 21; Isa. 8
2nd	Baptism Ps. 66:12	Nativity Gen. 49:10; Num. 2:19	Nativity Gen. 22	Nativity Gen. 21; Isa. 7, 9; Num. 17
3rd	Passion Isa. 53:7	Passion Isa. 53:7	Passion Ex. 12; Num. 7	Passion Gen. 4; Ex. 11; Num. 19; Isa. 53
4th	Burial Isa. 11:10; Ps. 88:6	Burial Isa. 11:10	Resurrection Judg. 16	Descent into Hell Judg. 16; Zech. 9
5th	Resurrection Ps. 102:14	Resurrection Ps. 16:10	Ascension Lev. 14; 2 Kings 2	Resurrection 1 Kings 17; Hos. 6
6th	Ascension Ps. 110:1	Ascension Ps. 24:10	Sending of H. Spirit 1 Kings 18; 2 Kgs. 1	Ascension Gen. 9; 2 Kings 2; Isa. 63; Ps. 46
7th	Coming Ps. 50:3	Coming Ps. 50:3	Coming Dan. 7	Coming Gen. 9; Isa. 3

them with seven miracles that occur in the Eucharist, miracles associated with how Christ is truly and bodily present therein. Hugh was keenly interested in Eucharistic theology, and during his tenures as provincial of the Dominican order in France, cardinal in Germany, and papal legate, he was very influential in gathering support for the introduction of the Feast of Corpus Christi into the liturgical calendar.<sup>25</sup> Hugh's interesting explications of these miracles associated with the real presence of Christ in the sacrament correspond with other detailed speculations on the Eucharist and Aristotelian metaphysics in the thirteenth century, discussions that resulted in a dogmatic pronouncement of the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Later in the thirteenth century another Dominican preacher, Nicholas of Gorran (d. 1295), wrote a commentary on the Apocalypse that was falsely attributed to John Duns Scotus. Composed in Paris between 1263 and 1285, the commentary exists in at least four manuscripts located in Oxford and Cambridge and was printed in Antwerp in 1620.<sup>26</sup> Like Hugh of Saint Cher, Nicholas gave several interpretations of the seven seals, including a Christological one in which the seals represented seven mysteries of our redemption, hidden in the writings of the Hebrew prophets but opened by the coming of Jesus into the world, namely, the conception or incarnation, the nativity, the passion, Christ's descent into hell, his resurrection, ascension, and coming for judgment.

One of the unique features of Nicholas's exegesis is his bringing of grammar to the interpretation of Revelation 5. For him, the passage's relation of the different visions was clarified by identifying the part of speech of certain words. For example, he notes that the word "and" in Revelation 5:1 is a copulative conjunction, signaling a continuous vision and contrasts this with the temporal adverbial clause in Revelation 4 which signals a vision separate from the one that preceded it. Also, of the nearly twenty passages that he cites from the Hebrew scriptures as describing the seven seals, only a few are the same as those cited by Hugh of Saint Cher. This suggests that although both interpreters flourished in the thirteenth century, lived in France, and were part of the Dominican order, their translations display a great deal of difference and interpretive freedom.

In the six texts which illustrate Christological interpretations of the seven seals, Table 2 shows that similar events in the life of Jesus were cited regularly. Some combination of incarnation, conception, and nativity appear consistently, as do Christ's passion, resurrection, ascension, and second coming. However, the baptism of Jesus was represented in only two of the six commentaries, and Christ's sending of the Holy Spirit was mentioned only once.

Although the events that the seals symbolized remained fairly steady in the texts, Table 2 demonstrates that there was considerable variety concerning which passages from the Hebrew scriptures contained the "seals," or prophetic signs of these events. Almost all agreed that Isaiah 53 prophesied about the death of Christ. However, early medieval Irish texts, represented by the *Irish Reference Bible* and the *Celtic Catechism*,



reveal an entirely different exegetical tradition from that of the thirteenth-century Dominican commentators. The former saw the seal of the nativity or conception in Isaiah 7:14, Christ's burial in Isaiah 11:10, and the seal of Christ's second coming in Psalm 50:3. The latter associated the conception of Jesus with Isaiah 8, his birth with the birth of Isaac in Genesis, his passion with the sacrificial lamb in Exodus, his resurrection with the breaking of the gates of Gaza by Samson in Judges 16, and his ascension with the catching away of Elijah to heaven in 2 Kings.

Table 2

## CHRISTOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SEVEN SEALS

	<i>Apringius</i>	<i>ps.-Alcuin</i>	<i>Irish Ref Bible</i>	<i>Celtic Catechism</i>	<i>Hugh Saint Cher</i>	<i>Nich of G.</i>
1st	Incarnation	Nativity	Nativity	Conception	Incarnation	Conc./Inc.
2nd	Nativity	Baptism	Baptism	Nativity	Nativity	Nativity
3rd	Passion	Crucifixion	Passion	Passion	Passion	Passion
4th	Death	Burial	Burial	Burial	Resurrection	Descent
5th	Resurrection	Resurrection	Resurrection	Resurrection	Ascension	Resurr.
6th	Glory	Ascension	Ascension	Ascension	Sending of H.S.	Ascension
7th	Kingdom	Judgment	Coming	Coming	Coming	Coming



## ECCLESIASTICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SEVEN SEALS

As indicated earlier, some commentators in the patristic period interpreted the Book of Revelation and its vision of the seven seals in a futuristic manner. They believed that the vision contained symbols corresponding to historical events that would take place in the future, events associated with the second coming of Christ and consummation of the world. One example is the commentary of the first Latin exegete of the Apocalypse Victorinus,<sup>27</sup> who wrote that the four horsemen “very plainly signify the wars, famines, and pestilences” that the Lord announced were going to take place in the last days. Victorinus was referring to statements in Jesus’ Olivet Discourse as recorded in the synoptic gospels. The red horse corresponds to Jesus’ prophecy of “nation rising against nation” (Luke 21:10), while the black horse depicted a famine that Christ predicted would occur in “the times of Antichrist.” Victorinus also wrote

that the white horse corresponds to Christ's promise that the gospel would be preached throughout the whole earth before the end comes (Matt. 24:14). He continued that the earthquake of the sixth seal signified the very last persecution, and that the angel in Revelation 7:2 alluded to the prophet Elijah who would return in the times of Antichrist.<sup>28</sup>

In the fourth century, Mediterranean society significantly changed and, along with it, Christian interpretations of the seven seals. Many of the extreme forms of hostility between Christians and the Roman government during the first few centuries of the Christian era diminished after Constantine the Great embraced Christianity and issued his edict of religious toleration. What earlier had been a small, persecuted sect now rose to become the official faith of the empire. With an apocalyptic mindset, some early commentators on Revelation believed and taught of an imminent and cataclysmic judgment of a world hostile to Christianity, but this judgment had not taken place. On the contrary, the church's place in society began to grow, and before long its presence was all-pervasive. In this period of social transition, Latin-speaking commentators began to interpret the Apocalypse allegorically with an emphasis upon ecclesiastical themes. Commentators did not entirely discard belief that the Book of Revelation and the vision of the seven seals within it contained information related to the eschaton, but more and more they began to see in the Apocalypse symbols of timeless Christian truths that pertained to the life of Christ's body, the church now triumphing in the world.

Certain writers were influential in this transition, especially a Donatist theologian from North Africa named Tyconius. He wrote a *Book of Rules* for biblical exegesis, and then applied those rules to his interpretation of the Book of Revelation.<sup>29</sup> His first rule of interpreting scripture was entitled "Concerning the Lord and his body." According to this principle, because of the interconnectedness between Christ and his church portrayed in scripture as a head-body union, passages that seemingly speak about Christ may actually be speaking about his body, the church.<sup>30</sup> After Augustine praised Tyconius's rules in his *On Christian Doctrine*, the exegetical principle of "the Lord and his body" gained popularity in the West.<sup>31</sup>

Through the dissemination of John Cassian's (d. 435) *Conferences* in monastic communities of the West, a method of scriptural exegesis set forth in them became widespread in the early Middle Ages, and this

method would affect the interpretation of the Apocalypse. Cassian's *Conference* 14 encouraged exegetes to move beyond a passage's historical facts and literal meaning, and expound it using allegory, tropology (a passage's moral teaching), and anagogy (the passage's ultimate spiritual sense).<sup>32</sup> An allegorical approach to interpreting scripture had long dominated Alexandrian exegesis; but through Cassian, who had spent considerable time laboring among the desert fathers of the East before establishing monastic communities in Gaul, the approach gained strength in the West.

Consequently, several early medieval Latin commentators on the Apocalypse tended to "de-eschatologize" the vision of the seven seals and preferred to expound upon its mystical meanings related to the church.<sup>33</sup> The sixth-century *Exposition of the Apocalypse* by Caesarius of Arles is a wonderful example of this trend. After having joined the clergy in Chalon, Gaul, and later moved to a monastery at Lerins, Caesarius served as bishop of Arles for forty years, from 502 to his death in 542. Over two hundred of his homilies are extant, among which are nineteen on the Apocalypse that make up the *Exposition*.<sup>34</sup> Written between 510 and 537,<sup>35</sup> but possibly never preached, these homilies have been erroneously attributed to Gennadius of Marseilles (fl. 490s) and for a long time were considered pseudo-Augustinian. However, in the twentieth century they were restored to Caesarius largely through the scholarship of Germain Morin, who also published a critical edition of them.<sup>36</sup>

The two main sources for Caesarius's *Exposition* were Victorinus and the now lost Apocalypse commentary of Tyconius.<sup>37</sup> In the preface Caesarius mentioned that some of the ancient fathers understood the Book of Revelation, or at least the greater part of it, as pertaining to the coming of the Antichrist and Judgment Day. Caesarius, however, exhorts his hearers to understand everything in the Apocalypse as typifying Christ and the church.<sup>38</sup> Applying Tyconius's rule of "the Lord and his body," Caesarius interpreted the Lamb in Revelation 5:1 as not only Christ who was slain, but also Christ's body, the church, which suffers as he did. The four living creatures and the elders also represent the church.

The white horse of Revelation 6:2 was not viewed as an instrument of divine eschatological judgment as it had been in earlier futuristic interpretations of the Apocalypse. For Caesarius it was a picture of the church made pure and snow-white through grace.<sup>39</sup> This ecclesiastical

reading extended to the wheat and barley in Revelation 6:6, which symbolized different ranks of people in the church. For Caesarius, the sun, moon, and stars, (Rev. 6:12–13) were also portraits of the church spread throughout the world, while the fig tree shaken by the wind (Rev. 6:13) symbolized the church shaken by persecution.

For Caesarius, the half hour of silence before the opening of the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1) represented eternal quietude, the rest that the saints will experience after Judgment Day. This interpretation of the silence, dependent upon Victorinus and Tyconius, is later repeated by Bede and Alcuin. By contrast, later medieval exegetes of the historical interpretive school on the seven seals will see the half hour of silence as representing not eternal rest but an earthly period of rest for the saints *before* the Last Judgment.

Applying the principle of “the Lord and his body” to the seven seals, the brief comments of Cassiodorus (d. 580) also wonderfully illustrate the transition in the early Middle Ages away from an eschatological reading of the seven seals. Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator was born into a noble Christian family in southern Italy in the late fifth century and served as a statesman in the Ostrogothic kingdom. About 537 or 538, he retired from political life and focused his energies in study and writing on theological and scriptural subjects. Soon afterward he moved from Ravenna to Constantinople, where he wrote a large commentary on the Psalms. After having lived in Constantinople for over ten years, he returned to Italy and the Viviarum, a monastery he founded earlier on his family estate near Scyllaceum in Calabria. There he resided in community with other Christian scholar-monks until his death in 580.<sup>40</sup>

During his residence at the Viviarum, Cassiodorus wrote *Complexiones*, which are brief explanations on the Pauline epistles, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Apocalypse. He wrote those on the Apocalypse around 580 when very advanced in age.<sup>41</sup> This text, which I have entitled *Brief Explanations of the Apocalypse*, was not widely known and survived in only one manuscript dated to the end of the sixth or beginning of the seventh century. It was discovered in 1712 by Scipio Maffei and is preserved in a library in Verona.<sup>42</sup>

The commentary is in essence an abstract, a brief narrative summary of the Apocalypse designed as an introduction. Cassiodorus’s eclectic interpretive approach suggests a variety of influences.<sup>43</sup> Cassiodorus begins

the commentary with an eschatological emphasis. In his explanation of Revelation 1:1–3, Cassiodorus says that the Apocalypse was a vision that John was shown “concerning the end of the world,” but he does not apply this interpretation consistently.<sup>44</sup> For example, he sees the ascension of Jesus in the catching up of the boy to heaven in Revelation 12:5 and explains that John in this passage was “joining things in the past with things in the future.”<sup>45</sup> The commentary often explains a passage’s mystical significance *per allegoriam*; and at several places it gives credit to Tyconius for an opinion.

Cassiodorus believes the seven seals and their openings have eschatological, Christological, and ecclesiastical significance. The darkening of the sun and moon in the opening of the sixth seal, he says, will take place literally at the end of the world. The horsemen released by the opening of the first and second seals are symbols of Christ, the white horse representing the purity of his life, the red horse his shed blood. The seven seals also contain timeless truths about the church and allude to the moral behavior expected of her members. For example, the one hundred and forty four thousand (Rev. 7:4) represent the “congregation of the saints” and “sum of all of the blessed.” The harps of the elders (comments on 4:1–11), signify the harmony between faith and works in members of the church, while the bowls full of odors represent the prayers of the righteous and the quality of their good works.

The *Handbook on the Apocalypse* of pseudo-Jerome, extant in a late eighth-century manuscript and several manuscripts of the ninth century and later, also took an ecclesiastical view of the seven seals.<sup>46</sup> Although the *Handbook* was credited to Isidore of Seville in one manuscript and most often attributed to Jerome, scholars accept neither as its author. The date of composition is set between 540 and 787, because the handbook mentions Primasius’s commentary on the Apocalypse, written about 540, and is quoted in Ambrose Autpert’s Apocalypse commentary, written about 787. However, within this almost 250-year span, there is a wide range of opinion about the handbook’s date and provenance. In it, Bernhard Bischoff found parallels with two Hiberno-Latin commentaries on Matthew. Following Bischoff, several scholars hold that it was produced in a continental Irish circle in the eighth century. Kenneth B. Steinhauser argued that it was most likely authored by a student of Cassiodorus at the Viviarum in Italy about the year 600. And Roger Gryson, in his in-

roduction to the latest edition of the text, placed it in the second half of the seventh century.<sup>47</sup>

One manuscript contains a prologue, considered original to the work, which lists some source material. These include “a book explored by us upon this [Apocalypse] which was written in ancient times, but whose author is unknown,” twelve homilies of Origen on the Apocalypse, the tract of Tyconius, and the commentary of Primasius, which the author says was written “in modern times.”<sup>48</sup> Choppy in style, the handbook consists of brief spiritual interpretations of short phrases of the biblical text, leading Joseph T. F. Kelly to conjecture that it served as a quick reference guide for preachers.<sup>49</sup>

The handbook’s author took an eclectic exegetical approach, sometimes claiming to explain things “historically,” but more often relating the seals to ecclesiastical themes through allegory. For example, the four horses, which come forth in the opening of the first four seals, are pictures of the body of Christ, martyrs, persecutors, and hypocrites respectively. The oil and wine associated with the opening of the third seal signifies those in the church who are strong in faith and those who have the gift of mercy. The blackening of the sun caused by the opening of the sixth seal are the saints laboring in persecutions. The moon turning to blood represents the saints, while the stars falling from heaven signify souls falling from the church.

The final text in this collection representing an ecclesiastical view of the seven seals is an excerpt from the *Question and Answer Manual on the Apocalypse* believed to have been written by Alcuin, the famous educator associated with Charlemagne’s palace school. Contained in a ninth-century manuscript from the monastery of St. Emmeram in Regensburg and now preserved in Munich, the text is a series of questions and answers on passages of the Apocalypse. Its answers are often drawn from Bede’s *Explanation of the Apocalypse*.<sup>50</sup>

For Alcuin, Christ opened the seals after he died, rose, ascended to heaven, sent the Holy Spirit, and established the church. The beauty of the primitive church is shown in the first seal, while in the following three seals the wars waged against the church can be seen. The fifth seal pictures the glory of those triumphant in those wars, the sixth seal refers to the times of Antichrist, and the opening of the seventh seal refers to the beginning of eternal quietude.

Ecclesiastical interpretations, dominant in early medieval exegesis of the seven seals, gave way to historical interpretations in the later Middle Ages.



#### HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SEVEN SEALS

To posit a third medieval interpretive approach to the seven seals, the historical, is not to imply that the Christological and ecclesiastical interpretations are ahistorical. Indeed, the Christological view is rooted in the first-century life of Jesus as it is presented in the New Testament, and the ecclesiastical view interprets the seals as figures of the church as it lives and grows in the time period between the first and second comings of Christ. However, *historical* is an appropriate appellation for this third approach because it interprets the seven seals as milestones in a grand blueprint of history.<sup>51</sup>

The division of world history into seven ages was popular in early Christianity, but these seven ages were usually associated with the seven days of creation in Genesis. In the Middle Ages, however, the seven ages were increasingly associated with the seven seals of the Apocalypse. Such an interpretation of the seven seals was expressed in a very general way in the early medieval commentaries of Primasius and Bede, and the Spanish monk Beatus of Liébana (d. ca. 800) specifically discussed seven ages of world history within his commentary on the seven seals (ca. 786). But two other medieval writers, Berengaudus (ninth c.?) and Anselm of Havelberg (d. 1158), were influential in popularizing the historical interpretation of the seals.<sup>52</sup>

Berengaudus, whose person is obscure and whose Apocalypse commentary is dated between the ninth and twelfth centuries, interpreted the openings of the seven seals as very specific periods of *world history* as he understood it from the scriptures—before the flood, the patriarchal period, under the law, under the prophets, the period of the martyrs after Christ, the rejection of the Jewish nation and calling of the Gentiles, and the second coming of Christ.<sup>53</sup> Anselm of Havelberg, in his *Dialogues* written about 1150, laid the groundwork for interpreting the seven seals as chronological periods of *church history*, writing, “Truly the seven seals which John saw as he tells us in his Revelation are seven successive states

of the church from the coming of Christ until all things will be consummated at the End and God will be all in all.”<sup>54</sup>

The first text in the collection of historical interpretations of the seven seals is the tract *On the Seven Seals* written by Joachim of Fiore (d. 1202). Joachim served as abbot of a monastery in Calabria and was considered by many to be a prophet.<sup>55</sup> His division of world history into three ages corresponding to the three persons of the Trinity, his apocalyptic interpretations of prophetic scriptures, and his opening of the door for millenarianism to once again flourish in the church influenced European thought including later exegesis of the Book of Revelation, Franciscan apocalypticism, millenarian Protestantism, Hegel’s developmental view of history, and the Nazi dream of a third reich.

Since many prophetic works circulated under Joachim’s name after his death, establishing his canon is difficult. *On the Seven Seals*, found in at least six manuscripts, is probably genuine.<sup>57</sup> According to Delno West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, the brief treatise served as “a summary of Joachim’s more extensive presentation of the seven seals and their openings in the *Liber Concordie novi ac veteris Testamenti* and the *Expositio in Apocalypsim*.”<sup>58</sup> The *Liber Concordie* and *Expositio* are two of Joachim’s more lengthy writings.

To the Calabrian abbot the seven seals formed a pattern of history in which the course of the Old Testament was divided into seven periods, each typified by one of the seals. Joachim also divided New Testament history, that time between Christ’s first coming and the Last Judgment, into seven *tempora*, signified by the opening of each seal. Between each seal in the Old Testament and its corresponding opening in the New, there is a concord or harmony; that is, there are similarities in respective characters and events, the opening being a fuller accomplishment of the types in the seal.<sup>59</sup>

The first seal covers the time from Abraham to the settling of the twelve tribes of Israel in the promised land after the exodus. Its corresponding opening is the span from John the Baptist to the establishment of the churches in major centers of the ancient world by the apostles. The second seal is the era of the conflict between Israel and the Canaanites, from Joshua to David. Its corresponding opening is the time of conflict in the Christian era between martyrs and pagans. The third seal is the era in Old Testament history when Israel was engaged in war with Assyria



and the division of the kingdom into Judah and Israel occurred. Its corresponding opening is the period in late antiquity when Catholics were in conflict with nations infected with Arianism, for example the Goths and the Vandals, up to the occurrence of the schism between the Eastern and Western churches. The fourth seal envelops the era of Elijah and Elisha when Assyria prevailed over Israel. Its opening is the time when virgins and hermits shined in the church and the conflicts between the Saracens and Christians began.

For Joachim, the fifth seal symbolizes the generation when the ten tribes were taken into captivity into Assyria, when the kingdom of Judah was strengthened, when mighty prophets arose, and when the kings of Egypt and Babylon persecuted God's people. Its opening is the period when the Latin church grew in strength, spiritual men appeared in the church, and the church experienced tribulation at the hands of groups like the Teutons. The sixth seal is the time when Judah was taken captive into Babylon, Babylon was overthrown, and Jerusalem was rebuilt. Its opening corresponds with events that were happening in Joachim's own day and his imminent future. Soon Babylon, the professing church which is not the true church, would be overthrown. In the opening of the sixth seal, Joachim also expected Jerusalem to be rebuilt and Satan to be bound.

The seventh seal, for Joachim, represents a time of rest that was given to Israel up until the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, after which the Son of God came into the world. Its opening is the Sabbath rest that he believed would be given to the church in the near future, characterized by an abundance of peace, worldwide dominion of Jesus Christ, and the saints reigning with him on earth. Although the length of this status is not put in terms of a literal thousand years, in other respects the seventh time resembles the millennialism or chiliasm of early Christianity, and many of its descriptions are derived from Revelation 20. At the end of the seventh status, Satan will be loosed (Rev. 20:7) and Gog will briefly persecute the saints (Rev. 20:8) before the Lord returns for the Last Judgment (Rev. 20:9–15). A chart of the openings of the seven seals according to Joachim's treatise is provided in Table 3.

Table 3  
THE OPENINGS OF THE SEVEN SEALS  
IN CHURCH HISTORY ACCORDING TO JOACHIM OF FIORE

<i>Seal</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
1	Birth, death, and resurrection of Christ; establishment of major churches
2	Conflict between martyrs and pagans
3	Conflict between Catholics and Arians; schism between Eastern & Western churches
4	Virgins and hermits shine; conflict between Christians and Saracens
5	Latin church strengthened; spiritual men arise; conflict with Teutons
6	Transmigration of spiritual Jerusalem; fall of Babylon; Satan bound
7	Sabbath rest; Satan loosed; persecution of Gog; second coming of Christ

Early medieval exegetes using an ecclesiastical hermeneutic to explain the seals, for example, Caesarius and Alcuin interpreted the opening of the seventh seal as the beginning of eternal rest in heaven. However, for Joachim and many who followed his lead, the opening of the seventh seal was a period of *earthly* refreshment for the saints before the Last Judgment.<sup>60</sup> Our next text illustrates this change in interpretation of the half hour of silence (Rev. 8:1) which occurs with the opening of the seventh seal. It comes from an Apocalypse commentary believed to have been written by a Franciscan teacher, Vital du Four, between 1292 and 1307.<sup>61</sup>

Vital's *Commentaries on the Apocalypse* interprets the seventh *status*, signified by the seventh seal, as a brief period of peace and tranquility after the death of the Antichrist but before the coming of Christ for the Last Judgment. Not linking this period of rest with the millennium of Revelation 20 as Joachim had done, Vital found confirmation of it in the period of forty-five days (although Vital has forty days) mentioned in Daniel 12:12 and in Jerome's commentary on that passage.<sup>62</sup> For Vital, the length of forty days for the seventh time should not be taken literally, because then the exact day of the Last Judgment could be known, and

this would contradict the words of Jesus in the Gospel which say, “But of that day or hour, no one knows” (Mark 13:32). However, Vital does leave room for the possibility that such knowledge of the exact length of the seventh *status*, and consequently of the Day of Judgment, may be given by special revelation to some saint.

As previously mentioned, Joachim spoke of “spiritual men” arising in the church during the sixth *status*. When Francis of Assisi (d. 1226) began his movement emphasizing humility and poverty, not a few believed that he was the angel of the sixth seal mentioned in Revelation 7:2 whom God had chosen to strengthen the church against Antichrist.<sup>63</sup> Belief in Francis’s stigmata helped confirm his followers’ elevation of him into the angel “having the seal of the living God”; and apocalypticism was in the air as many lesser brothers, i.e. Franciscans, believed that their movement had cosmic eschatological significance, being the fulfillment of Joachim’s prophecies of “spiritual men” of the last days.

As the movement grew in numbers, divisions also occurred mainly over the issue of poverty and the application of Francis’s *Rule*. In the century after Francis’s death, some of the lesser brothers who wanted to reform the order from a perceived laxity in the observing of poverty and who held Joachimist eschatological views were called Spirituals. These were concentrated in three regions—in the March of Ancona under the leadership of Angelo Clarenus (d. 1337) where they were called Fratirelli, in Tuscany under Ubertino da Casale (d. 1330), and in Provence under Peter John Olivi (d. 1298) where they were called Beguins.

Olivi was trained in Paris, and possessed both a charismatic personality and a devoted following in southern France. He taught that those lesser brothers who were not observing strict poverty were in breach of their vows and living in mortal sin. He combined these rigorist views with eschatological teachings about the imminent overthrow of Babylon, that is, the carnal church, beliefs that he set down in his *Postilla super Apocalypsim*. Although these written lectures on the Apocalypse were condemned by officials of the Roman church after his death, many of Olivi’s followers revered the commentary as divinely inspired and synonymous with the Gospel. Ignoring the condemnation, and they translated and read the commentary in the vernacular.

After Pope John XXII (r. 1316–34) issued a decree that condemned absolute poverty and played a role in the 1318 burning at the stake of

four Spirituals, many Beguins believed that he was the Antichrist, that divine authority had transferred from the papacy to their sect, and that their persecution was part of the last days' tribulation.

One such Beguin was a young visionary from Montpellier named Na Prous Boneta (d. 1328). Her *Confession* reveals an interpretation of the seven seals that is historical, but in some ways markedly different from that of Joachim. For example, for Joachim each seal and its opening represented a long epoch, all seven of which spanned the entire period of Old Testament, or church, history. For Boneta, on the other hand, all seven seals were opened within the three decades of her short lifetime, a period that she regarded as transitional from the age of Christ to the age of the Holy Spirit.

Although Boneta herself was probably unlettered, her home had been a center of Spiritual activity where the Apocalypse, Daniel, and condemned writings of Olivi were read and discussed.<sup>64</sup> After being arrested for heresy, Boneta made a rather lengthy *Confession* before the Inquisition at Carcassone on August 6, 1325. From this *Confession*, parts of which are translated in this book, it is gathered that she believed that Francis of Assisi was the angel "having the seal of the living God" (Rev. 7:2) and Olivi the angel with "the face of the sun" (Rev. 10:1). Boneta believed these men were the two witnesses of Revelation 11 symbolized by Elijah and Enoch and whom the Antichrist, Pope John XXII, killed through his condemnation of absolute poverty and Olivi's writings.

Boneta seems to have believed that she herself was the woman of Revelation 12, appointed to crush the head of Satan. According to Boneta's understanding, the course of end times events was rapidly unfolding and she was divinely called to play a major role. As a bearer of the Holy Spirit similar to the way that the Virgin Mary bore Christ, Boneta believed that she was the instrument of God being used to bind Satan (Rev. 20) and inaugurate the reign of the Holy Spirit.

Boneta also saw herself as the one worthy to open the "book sealed with seven seals" (Rev. 5:1–5), seals that had been opened recently—the first seal by Olivi, the second by her friend and religious comrade, Raymond John, the third by someone else that she named to the inquisitor. Details about the openings of the fourth through seventh seals are not given in her *Confession*, but Boneta believed that all of the seals had been

opened, for she mentioned to the recording secretary that the entire book was now opened to him.

While according to Boneta the seven seals were opened in succession at the end of the church age, according to the author of our next text the seven seals were opened successively at the church's infancy. This historical interpretation of the seven seals is reflected in the commentary of Peter Auriol, a Franciscan who became archbishop of Aix in 1321.

Auriol's *Compendium on Holy Scripture*, written in 1319, was a summary of the entire Bible. In the compendium's section on the Apocalypse, Auriol followed a new linear historical reading of the Book of Revelation begun by Alexander of Bremen (d. 1271) and continued by Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1349). This approach rejected a principle that dominated earlier interpretations of the Apocalypse called recapitulation, an understanding that events symbolized in one portion of the Apocalypse were often repeated in a later chapter under a different symbol. For Auriol, the Apocalypse foretold, chapter by chapter in chronological sequence, events of church history from Christ's ascension to Judgment Day, and the section on the seven seals symbolized events in the early church from the reign of Tiberius (14–37) to Julian the Apostate (361–63) (see Table 4).<sup>65</sup>

The opening of the first seal signifies the dissemination of the gospel by the apostles under the emperors Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius. The second seal describes Nero's persecution of Christians, most notably his putting to death of the apostles Peter and Paul. The third seal represents the destruction of Jerusalem under the Roman generals Vespasian and Titus. The fourth seal symbolizes the second major persecution enacted by the emperor Domitian, while the fifth seal foretells seven subsequent persecutions of early Christians during the second and third centuries. The sixth seal, according to Auriol, describes the tenth and last of the great persecutions waged by the emperors Diocletian, Maximianus, and Gelerius. Finally, the seventh seal signifies the time of tranquility that was brought about for the church under the emperor Constantine, the half hour of silence (Rev. 8:1) signifying the brief persecution of Julian the Apostate in the mid-fourth century.

Table 4  
HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF  
THE SEVEN SEALS BY PETER AURIOL

<i>Seal</i>	<i>Emperors</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
1	Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius	Spread of the gospel
2	Nero	First persecution
3	Vespasian, Titus	Destruction of Jerusalem
4	Domitian	Second persecution
5	Trajan through Aurelian	Third through ninth persecution
6	Diocletian, Maximian, Galerius	Tenth persecution
7	Constantine, Julian the Apostate	Tranquility; brief persecution

Table 5  
TEN MAJOR PERSECUTORS OF EARLY CHRISTIANS  
ACCORDING TO AURIOL

- |                               |                                     |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Nero (54–68)               | 6. Maximinus (235–38)               |
| 2. Domitian (81–96)           | 7. Decius (249–51)                  |
| 3. Trajan (98–117)            | 8. Valerian (253–60)                |
| 4. Marcus Aurelius (161–80)   | 9. Aurelian (270–75)                |
| 5. Septimus Severus (193–211) | 10. Diocletian & Maximian (286–305) |

As mentioned previously, Prous Boneta and others saw in the symbol of the angel of the sixth seal (Rev. 7:2) a last days prophet, specifically Francis of Assisi. By contrast, Auriol saw in the angel of the sixth seal Constantine, a political liberator who was separated temporally from Francis by almost a millennium. This is a case in point for one of the main criticisms of historical interpretations of the Apocalypse. With centuries of historical events and personages from which an exegete of this school can choose, the variety of interpretations that can be applied to any one passage is almost limitless. Nevertheless, Auriol's historical interpretation of the seven seals is truly a stepping stone toward modern exegetical approaches to the Apocalypse. Auriol seems to have made a conscious effort to interpret the symbols of the seven seals in light of records of early Christian history that were available to him, namely, Josephus's first-century account of the Jewish wars and Eusebius's fourth-century narration of ecclesiastical history from the apostles to his own time.<sup>66</sup> It

would be several centuries before the Jesuit Luis Alcasar, in 1614, would interpret the entire Apocalypse as prophecies that were fulfilled in the first three centuries of the Christian era;<sup>67</sup> and it would be several more centuries before scholars began to use historical-critical methods in which the Apocalypse would be interpreted in light of the culture from which it sprang, for example, seeing in the text allusions to the legend of a revived Nero and first-century conflicts between Christians and the state.<sup>68</sup>

The last translated text in this collection of medieval treatises on the seven seals is a brief excerpt from Giovanni Nanni of Viterbo's *Gloss on the Apocalypse*, written in 1480. Like Auriol, Nanni interpreted the seven seals as symbols of historical events that occurred between the time of the apostles and the emperor Constantine. He too saw Constantine pre-figured in the angel of the sixth seal.

As this collection shows, in medieval exegesis historical interpretations of the seven seals ranged from seeing the seals as markers of epochs in the grand scheme of salvation history and indicators of persecutions which Christians of the early church endured at the hands of Roman emperors, to viewing the opening of the seals as events immediately preceding imminent cosmic changes associated with Christian eschatology. Besides these historical readings of the seven seals, medieval writers also used Christology and ecclesiology as theological lenses for understanding the mystery of John's vision of the opening of the seven seals.

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*Part 1*  
*Christological Interpretations of the Seven Seals*



APRINGIUS OF BEJA  
*Tract on the Apocalypse*

ON REVELATION 5:1-7

5.1. *And I saw in the right hand of the one sitting on the throne a book written inside and outside, sealed with seven seals.* This book, which is said to have been written on its interior and exterior, is the creation of the entire present world whose interior things God perceives and whose exterior things he knows, whether he goes beyond the world circumscribing it with the strength of his power, or he searches it in its interior with a manifestation of his majesty. It is said to be *sealed with seven seals* in order to give a definition of the present week within which the world exists.<sup>1</sup> Again, in another sense: this book signifies the teaching of the Old Testament, which was given into the hands of our Lord who received judgment from the Father (cf. John 5:22, 27).<sup>2</sup>

These seven seals are first, the incarnation;<sup>3</sup> second, the nativity; third, the passion; fourth, the death; fifth, the resurrection; sixth, the glory; and seventh, the kingdom. Therefore, Christ fulfilled all these things through his humanity. All the things in the scriptures that were closed and sealed, he opened and unsealed.

5.2. *And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to take the book and to break its seals?* This strong angel, who is said to have cried out in inquiring who was most worthy to open the book and to break the seals of all of the scriptures, should be interpreted as

the chorus of the holy fathers who, having lived in divine friendship, and seeing with the eyes of faith that the arrangement of the present times and the order of all things were entirely sealed by the providence of God, understood their Operator to be the Lord of majesty, and cry out and say, *Who is worthy* to understand everything and to unlock the secrets of the Lord? In this week of the world, he arranged these secrets in wonderful holiness, erected them by ordination, sealed them with wisdom, established them with counsel, and constructed them with power.

5.3. *And no one in heaven nor on earth nor under the earth was able to open the book, or to look into it.* Therefore, from all of the creatures which are in heaven and on earth and in the deep, *no one was found* who could either open the seals, or understand the things ordained, or relate how they were made. Again, in another sense: Therefore, *no one was found worthy*, neither *in heaven nor on earth nor under the earth* to open the seals. For a human to conquer death *no one was found worthy* to do this, neither among the angels of *heaven*, nor among humans *on earth*, nor among the souls of the saints in their rest, except Jesus Christ the Son of God alone.<sup>4</sup>

5.4. *And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it.* Conscious of his frailty and humanity this saint wept because he thought that there was no one worthy enough to understand or truly perceive these things.

5.5. *And one of the elders said to me: Do not weep. Behold, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has prevailed to open the book and to break its seven seals.* *And one of the elders* signifies the message of holy scripture, which when someone reads through it, it teaches that our Lord Jesus Christ *from the tribe of Judah* is the bravest lion, about whom it is said, *Recumbent, you have crouched like a lion* (Gen. 49:9). He is the *root of Jesse* (Rom. 15:12) and the *offspring of David* (Rev. 22:16), and has conquered the world and death, and he alone is able *to open the book and to break its seals*, because he is the Creator of all things and the wonderful Sustainer of everything.

5.6. Then also there follows: *And I looked, and behold in the midst of the throne and of the four animals and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent into the whole earth.* Behold, he obviously indicated our Lord Jesus Christ, who is described not as dead, but as *if slain* because of

his passion, and because after he completed it, he *tasted death* (Heb. 2:9). And he says that he saw him *in the midst of the throne*, that is, in the power and magnitude of his divinity. *And the four animals*, which is understood in the fourfold order of the gospels. *And in the midst of the elders*: he signifies the chorus of the law and of the prophets, and of the apostles. In this passage, the Lamb is not described as “slain” but “*as if slain*,” that is, he testifies to have seen him who both conquered death and trampled under foot the same. *Having seven horns and seven eyes*: In horns there is power and strength. In the number seven he indicates the state of the world, which he mightily rules and which he most powerfully governs. Next, he calls the seven eyes, the seven spirits of God, that is, he signifies the Holy Spirit through his numbering of the seven glorious virtues which dwelt in our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Isa. 11:2). About the Holy Spirit, the Apostle says: *And we know that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself* (2 Cor. 5:19). And again: *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus Christ from the dead dwells in you, he will also raise your mortal bodies because his Spirit dwells in you* (Rom. 8:11). Because *their sound has gone out into the whole world* (Ps. 19:5), he says the *spirits* were *sent*; he calls to mind that the gifts of the Holy Spirit had been abundantly diffused throughout the whole world.

5.7. *And he came and took the book from the right hand of the one sitting on the throne*. Moreover, it should be considered very diligently who is said to have taken [the book], and it should be answered: the Lamb, that is, the assumed man, who willingly *offered himself* up to death for our salvation (Heb. 9:14). He worthily *took the book*, that is, authority over all the works of God. *And from the right hand of the one sitting on the throne*. He received all things from God the Father, just as he himself says: *All things which the Father has are mine* (John 16:15). He took this book at the time when, rising from the dead, he showed the *mystery* of the Trinity *which was hidden in ages past* (Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:26), and revealed it to the world (cf. Matt. 28:19).



PSEUDO-ALCUIN  
*On the Seven Seals*

VERSION A

HERE BEGINS *On the Seven Seals*

We read in the Apocalypse that there is a book *sealed with seven seals* which *no one was able to open or break its seals* (Rev. 5:1–2). No one *in heaven*, not the angels. No one *on earth*, no human. No one *under the earth*, no spirit<sup>5</sup> except *the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David*, that is, Christ (Rev. 5:3–5).

The first seal is the nativity of the Lord. The second, the baptism. The third, the crucifixion. The fourth, the burial. The fifth, the resurrection. The sixth, the ascension. The seventh, the judgment.

And these<sup>6</sup> are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. Isa. 11:2; Rev. 5:6). First, there was the spirit of wisdom, as Christ was born from a virgin without the seed of a man. Second, there was the spirit of understanding, as through the three immersions of baptism to forgive the sins of all.<sup>7</sup> Third, the spirit of counsel, as Caiphaz said, *It is better that one person should perish than for the whole nation* (John 11:50). Fourth, the spirit of fortitude, when his body was in the grave, and Christ bound the devil, and released from hell those souls that were held there, as it is said, *he tasted hell* (Gospel of Nicodemus, 9). Fifth, the spirit of knowledge, when Christ arose from the dead and caused us to believe and to rise again. Sixth, the spirit of piety, when Christ ascended into heaven, and when the souls of the just ascend to him. Seventh, the spirit of the fear of the Lord. When Christ will come for judgment there will be great fear in sinners.

The seven patriarchs had these seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. The spirit of wisdom was in Adam who gave names to every creature which is under heaven (cf. Gen. 2:20). The spirit of understanding was in Noah who was worthy to hear from the Lord, *Make yourself an ark from squared off wood* (Gen. 6:14).<sup>8</sup> The spirit of counsel was in Abraham who did nothing but the counsel of the Lord (cf. Gen. 12–25). The spirit of fortitude was in Isaac who endured the injuries of the people with whom

he had lived (cf. Gen. 26). The spirit of knowledge was with Jacob who spoke with the Lord in the valley of Naboth (cf. Gen. 32:23). The spirit of piety was in Moses when he said, *Forgive. And if you do not forgive the sins of your people, blot me out of the book which your right hand has written* (Num. 32:31–32). The spirit of the fear of the Lord was in David when the Lord handed over Saul into his hands and David said, *It is not right for me that I should raise my hands against the holy one of my Lord* (1 Sam. 26:11).

#### VERSION B

#### ON THE SEVEN SEALS IN THE APOCALYPSE

The first seal is the nativity. The second, the baptism. The third, the cross. The fourth, the burial. The fifth, the resurrection. The sixth, the ascension. The seventh, the judgment. These are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. Isa. 11:2).

The first was wisdom, since Christ was born from a virgin without the seed of a man. The second was the spirit of understanding, since in baptism sins are forgiven through those three immersions, as it is said.<sup>9</sup> The third was of counsel, as Ciaphas said, *It is better that one man should die than that the whole nation should perish* (John 11:50). The fourth was the spirit of fortitude, since his body was in the grave, and Christ bound the devil in hell, and led to the kingdom those souls that were unjustly detained there. As God he conquered hell. The fifth was the spirit of knowledge, since when he had arisen from the dead he caused us to believe and to rise. And we all rise, as it is said, *Arise, Lord, you and the ark of your strength* (Ps. 132:8). The sixth was the spirit of piety, as it is said, because of when Christ ascended to heaven, and because the souls of the just ascend to him, as Paul says, *I preferred to be set free and to be with Christ* (Phil. 1:23). The seventh is the spirit of fear, because when Christ will come for judgment and will reward the righteous, there will be great fear in sinners, as it is said, *Depart from me, you cursed*, etc. (Matt. 25:41).

These seven gifts of the Holy Spirit were in the seven patriarchs. Wisdom was in Adam because he gave names to all the wild animals, or beasts, and to birds of the sky, and to fish of the sea (cf. Gen. 2:19–20). And he was the first prophet since he said, *This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh* (Gen. 2:23). Understanding was in Noah who built an ark

and was its captain in the flood. Counsel was in Abraham, as it is said, *Get out of your land and from your kindred, and from the house of your father* (Gen. 12:1). Fortitude was in Isaac since he loved his enemies (cf. Matt. 5:44). Knowledge was in Jacob since the angel of the Lord blessed him and said to him, *You will no longer be called Jacob, but Israel* (Gen. 32:28). Piety was in Moses since he said, *If you do not forgive the sin of this people, blot me out of the book of the living, in which you have written me* (Num. 32:32). Fear was in David when Saul entered the cave to relieve himself, and David said, *May it never be that I should put forth my hand against the anointed of the Lord* (1 Sam. 26:11).

Isaiah was in contemplation when he begins [to prophesy] about wisdom (Isa. 6). Concerning fear, it begins to arise by gradations in young people, as the prophet Solomon says, *The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord* (Prov. 1:7). Therefore, the first gradation of the fear of the Lord is the first beatitude, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 5:3). Many are poor, but not blessed; so for this reason he adds in spirit. Again, there are those who will be poor voluntarily for the sake of God, as it is said, *Go, sell everything that you have and give to the poor, and come follow Me* (Matt. 19:21).



### IRISH REFERENCE BIBLE

#### ON REVELATION 5:1-3

*And I saw in the right hand of the one sitting on the throne a book [written] inside and outside, sealed with seven seals. And no one was able to open the book neither in heaven nor on earth nor under the earth. I saw in the right hand, that is, the right hand is of Christ, by which he made and redeemed the world. A book [written] inside and outside, sealed: the book signifies the Old Testament. Inside and outside, that is, in history and in [its spiritual] meaning; [inside and outside] also speak of the humanity and divinity of Christ. With seven seals, that is, the seven that are principally read concerning Christ, that is, the nativity, etc. Likewise, they were sealed in the Old [Testament] since no one was able to know: Behold a virgin will*

*conceive* (Isa. 7:14), etc. up to the time Christ was born of a virgin. These are the seven seals in the Old [Testament].

[The first seal] is about the nativity of Christ, as it is [said]: *Behold a virgin [will conceive] in the womb*, etc. (Isa. 7:14). Christ opened the seal when he was born, as it is said:<sup>10</sup> *Unto us our Savior is born this day*, etc. (Luke 2:11).

The second seal is about the baptism, as it is [said]: *We have gone through fire and water*, etc. (Ps. 66:12). Christ opened it, as John [the Baptist] says: *Behold, I ought to be baptized by you*, etc. (Matt. 3:14).

The third seal is about his passion, as [it is said]: *Just as a sheep led to the slaughter*, etc. (cf. Isa. 53:7). Christ opened it, as [it is said]: *With his head bowed he gave up the ghost* (John 19:30).

The fourth seal concerns his burial, as [it is said]: *His burial will be honorable* (Isa. 11:10). Again, *Free among the dead* (Ps. 88:6). Christ opened it, as [it is said]: *When Joseph had taken the body of Jesus, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth* (Matt. 27:59).

The fifth seal is about the resurrection, as [it is said]: *Rising, Lord, you will have mercy on Zion* (Ps. 102:14). Christ opened it, as the angel says: *He is not here, for he arose*, etc. (Matt. 28:6).

The sixth seal is about the ascension, as [it is said]: *Sit at my right hand*, etc. (Ps. 110:1). Christ opened it, as the angel said: *In the same manner that you saw him going into heaven*, etc. (Acts 1:11).

The seventh seal is about his coming, as it says: *Our God will come openly* (Ps. 50:3). Christ opened it, as Peter says: *The elements will burn with fire in the coming of the Lord* (2 Pet. 3:12).

*No one in heaven, nor on earth, nor under the earth is able to open the book* (Rev. 5:3), that is, *no one in heaven*, because none of them took on flesh except Christ; *no one on earth* because no one is without sin; *nor under the earth*, because no one was freed from hell until Christ rose from the dead.



## CELTIC CATECHISM

## ON REVELATION 5:1–3

*I saw in the right hand of the one sitting on the throne a book written inside and outside, sealed with seven seals. I saw in the right hand, that is, in Christ, because he is the right hand of God.<sup>11</sup> Through him God made all things and redeemed the entire human race. Or, in the power of God the Father. Or, in the wisdom of Christ.*

*Book.* Because both testaments form one book, since there cannot be a New Testament without an Old Testament, nor an Old without a New. For the Old is a messenger and a veil of the New; and the New is the fulfillment and interpretation of the Old.<sup>12</sup>

*Written inside and outside.* Through the writing inside we understand the divinity of Christ, as is written: *In the beginning was the Word* (John 1:1); and through the writing outside we see the incarnation of Christ, as is written: *But the generation of Christ* (Matt. 1:18). Or, it is said concerning that book *written inside and outside*, outside through history, but inside through the spiritual meaning. Or, outside through the simple literal meaning fit for the weak, inside because he promises visible things. Or, outside because he arranges the morals of the church on earth on account of the righteousness of his precepts, inside because the church is enriched with heavenly things.

*Sealed, that is, closed with seven seals.* That is, the conception of Christ, the nativity, the passion, the burial, the resurrection, the ascension, and concerning his coming. The seals were proclaimed in the Prophets, but the keys with which the seals are opened are in the New Testament.

Concerning the seal of the conception, Isaiah says: *Behold a virgin will conceive in the womb and she will bear a Son, and his name will be called Emmanuel* (Isa. 7:14). The key is, when it is said: *Hail, Mary, full of grace up to the place where it says your womb* (Luke 1:28–42).

The seal of the nativity: *A man will be born from the seed of Judah and he will reign over all the nations* (Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:19). The key is: *Unto you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ* (Luke 2:11).



The seal of the passion: *Just as a sheep is led to the slaughter* (Isa. 53:7). The key is: *Crucifying him, they divided His clothes among themselves* (Matt. 27:35).

The seal of the burial: *His burial will be honorable* (Isa. 11:10). The key is: *Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus* (Matt. 27:59).

The seal of the resurrection: *Thou will not suffer thy holy one to see corruption* (Ps. 16:10). The key is: *Christ rose just as he told you* (Matt. 28:6).

The seal of the ascension: *Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory* (Ps. 24:10). The key is: *Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking into heaven? In the same way that you have seen him going into heaven, he will come* (Acts 1:11).

The seal of his coming: *God, our God, will come openly. He will not keep silent. Fire will devour before him, and it will be very tempestuous around him* (Ps. 50:3). This seal has not yet been opened. For its key is not yet realized.

*And no one was able in heaven nor on earth nor under the earth to take the book and to open its seals. In heaven, that is, an angel. On earth, that is, a righteous person living. Under the earth, that is, a dead<sup>13</sup> righteous person, or a soul from hell, was not able to understand the meaning of this saying, In the beginning was the Word. Why is Christ called the Word? It is not difficult. There are three<sup>14</sup> ways in which this is said of him, that is, it is the nature of a word to be invisible, intangible, and impassible. Fire cannot burn a word, nor sword cut it, nor sea drown it. From the heavens he came to earth; and from where he came he did not leave (cf. John 3:13), and through him the human race has been restored.*



HUGH OF SAINT CHER  
*Exposition on the Apocalypse*

ON REVELATION 5:1

The *book* is Christ, as we have said, whose *seals* are seven works of our redemption. The incarnation was signified in Isaiah 8a,<sup>15</sup> *And I approached the prophetess, and she conceived, and gave birth to a son.* The nativity from the womb, this was signified in the birth of Isaac in Genesis 22a.<sup>16</sup> The

passion was prefigured in the sacrifice of the lamb in Exodus 12a and of the goat in Numbers 7g. The resurrection was signified in Sampson who broke through the gates of Gaza in Judges 16a. The ascension was signified in the passage in Leviticus 14a, where one live bird is left [and flies away], and in the rapture of Elijah in 2 Kings 2b. The sending of the Holy Spirit is in the figure of the fire descending from heaven in 1 Kings 18f and in 2 Kings 1c. The coming for judgment [is signified] in Daniel 7c, *And the books were opened.*

The *book* can also be interpreted as the body of Christ which we consume everyday in the sacrament of the altar, [as it is written in] Ecclesiasticus 24c, *All these things [are true] of the book of life*, and in John 6d, *He is the true bread which came down from heaven and gives life to the world.* It was *written inside*, that is, [the body of Christ in the sacrament] is full of consolations and benefits. *And written outside*, because [Christ] is not visible to us but is hidden under the species [of bread].

Here also is signified by the *seven seals*, seven miracles that occur [in the sacrament]. The body of Christ is complete, not increased, just as a pot full of cinders [is not increased when] it receives just as much water for the cinders to be put out. When it enters into the mouth of a person, its power is not diminished, by which [is signified] his coming forth from the closed womb of his mother, his coming forth from the grave, and when he entered through closed doors [and appeared] to his disciples (cf. John 20:19). Concerning the bread, it is not changed in matter, but remains the same as it was before, just as my idea, in a certain way, may be communicated by your voice, yet it is your mind not another's, and the idea is not something other than it was before. It is eaten but not consumed, just as when the greenness of herbs is seen returning; the plant was not dead. It is consumed by unclean people yet is not contaminated, just as a ray of the sun illuminates dark places yet the ray itself does not become dark. It sees us, but is not seen by us, as a certain precious mirror causes someone not to be seen, while the one [looking through it can] see others. It is wholly consumed by many, yet is not divided, just as candle-light is not diminished if many candles are burning at once.



NICHOLAS OF GORRAN  
*On the Apocalypse of the Apostle John*

ON REVELATION 5:1

*And I saw in the right hand of the one sitting on the throne a book written inside and outside, sealed with seven seals.*

*And I saw in the right hand of the one sitting upon the throne*, etc. Here begins the second vision, in which a *book* is seen *in the right hand of the one sitting* on a throne. This part contains four subsections. The first is about the vision of the book. The second is about the angel declaring, *Who is worthy to open the book?*, in which is inferred the arrangement of our redemption to be completed by the Desire of the ancients (cf. Hag. 2:7). [It begins]: *And I saw an angel*. The third is about the weeping of John, in which is shown the affliction of the ancients because of the delay of the promise of redemption. [It begins]: *And I wept*. The fourth is about the consolation of the elders. [It begins]: *And one of the elders*.

Therefore, he says: *And I saw*. He uses a copulative conjunction [i.e. “and”], because what is said here is not a different vision from the preceding one, but they are joined as one section with another. But in the beginning of the fourth chapter, where it is said: *After these things*, a temporal adverbial clause [i.e. “after these things”] is used because that vision was different from the one that preceded it.

*In the right hand of the one sitting on the throne*, that is, of Christ, who was established by God as judge of the living and the dead. *Book*, that is, holy scripture, which is said to be in the right hand of God, because God is the Lord of all knowledge, [as it is written in] Deut. 33: *In his right hand is the fiery law*. The law, because it binds us by restraining evil; fiery, because it inflames us to ardently love our Creator.

*Written inside*, the Old Testament in which our redemption was hidden in figures; *and outside*, the New Testament where that redemption has been made manifest. Or, *written inside*, its mystical meaning; *and outside*, its historical meaning. Also, *the right hand* of God can be understood here as [God’s] mercy; and the *book* as the divine arrangement of

the redemption of the human race made through Christ. Also, the *book written inside* represents the mystery of [God's] foreknowledge; and *outside*, represents [his] present reckoning of justice.

*Sealed with seven seals*, that is, with all obscurity. And because all time is enveloped in seven days, wholeness is rightly signified by the number *seven*. And the book was *sealed with seven seals* because the mode of our redemption was known to very few, and unknown to all others, [as it is written in] Psalm 17:<sup>17</sup> *Dark water in the clouds of the air*; and in Isaiah 29: *Your whole vision will be as the words of a sealed book*, whose seals are seven mysteries of our redemption, sealed in the law and by the aforementioned prophets.

First is the conception or incarnation, which was sealed in the conception of Isaac in Genesis 21, and in the prophecy of Isaiah 8: *And I approached the prophetess, and she conceived a son*.

Second is the nativity, which was sealed in the nativity of Isaac in Genesis 21, and in the prophecy of Isaiah 9: *Unto us a child is born, and to us a son is given*. It is also touched upon in Isaiah 7: *Behold a virgin will conceive, and will bear a son, and his name will be called Emmanuel*. And it is sealed in Numbers 17, in the rod of Aaron which in one night budded, blossomed, and bore fruit.

Third is the passion, which was sealed in the death of Abel in Genesis 4, and in the sacrifice of the red heifer in Numbers 19 and of the lamb in Exodus 11, and in the prophecy of Isaiah 53: *Just as a sheep is led to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearers, he will be mute and will not open his mouth*.

Fourth is the descent into hell, which was sealed in Sampson, who broke through the gates of Gaza in Judges 16, and in what was prophesied in Zechariah 9, where it says: *in the blood of your covenant you have sent forth your prisoners from the pit in which there is no water*.

Fifth was the resurrection, which was sealed in the raising of the son of the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17, and in the prophecy of Hosea 6: *He will revive us after two days; on the third day he will raise us up; and we shall live in his sight*.

Sixth is the ascension, which was sealed in the translation of Enoch in Genesis 9, in the rapture of Elijah in 2 Kings 2, in the prophecy of Isaiah 63: *Who is this one who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from*

*Bozrah?*, and in Psalm 46:<sup>18</sup> *God ascended with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.*

Seventh is the coming for judgment, which was sealed in the color of fire in the rainbow after the flood in Genesis 9, and was prophesied by Isaiah 3: *The Lord will come for judgment against the elders of his people and his princes.*

These seals were sealed and this book was closed until Christ opened it for us.

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## *Part 2*

### *Ecclesiastical Interpretations of the Seven Seals*



CAESARIUS OF ARLES  
*Exposition of the Apocalypse*

ON REVELATION 5–8  
HOMILY 4

5.1. *And I saw in the right hand of the one sitting on the throne a book written inside and outside.* Understand it as both testaments! By the outside the old, by the inside the new, which is concealed within the old. He says *with seven seals*, that is, darkened with the fullness of every mystery, which remained sealed until the death and resurrection of Christ. For, something is not called a testament except what people, who are about to die, make; and it is sealed up to the time of the death of the testator. And after his death, it is opened. Thus, also, after the death of Christ, all mysteries are revealed.

5.2. *And I saw a strong angel crying out with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?* Since, first seals are broken and then a book is opened, surely there is a reason [that the order is reversed in the passage]. It is because Christ opened the book when he undertook the work of the Father's will, was conceived, and was born. Then he broke its seals when he was slain for the human race.

5.3. *And no one was able, neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor under the earth, that is, neither angel, nor anyone living on earth, nor any of the dead, to open the book nor to look into it, that is, to contemplate the brightness of the grace of the New Testament.*

5.4. *And I wept much because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it.* The church, of whom John is a figure, wept, burdened and weighed down with sins, and seeking redemption for them.

5.5. *And behold, one of the elders.* Understand from the elders the whole body of the prophets! For, the prophets consoled the church, announcing Christ *from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David*, since he overcomes every sin in us, and if anyone has something good, he has it from him.

5.6. *And I saw, and behold in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as if slain.* The thrones, living creatures, and elders represent the church. The Lamb as if slain is the church with its Head. The church dies for Christ so that she may live with Christ. The Lamb as if slain is also able to be interpreted as the martyrs in the church. He says, *having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent into the whole world.* It is clearly made known here that no one other than the church is able to have the Spirit of God.

5.7. *And he came and took the book out of the right hand of the one sitting upon the throne.* We interpret the one sitting upon the throne as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Lamb took it from the right hand of God, that is, from the Son it<sup>19</sup> took the work of fulfilling the book, as he himself says, *Just as the Father sent me, so also I send you* (John 20:21), in so far as he would fulfill in them what he gives.

5.8. *Each one having harps, that is, stringed instruments of praise, and golden vials.* These are the vessels in the house of the Lord, because in them it was customary for incense to be offered. Therefore, they are rightly understood as the prayers of the saints.

5.9–10. *And they sang a new song, that is, the New Testament.* Singing a new song means publicly bringing forth their profession. And truly it is new that the Son of God became man, died, rose again, ascended into heaven, and gives forgiveness of sins to humans. For, a harp, made up of strings stretched over wood, signifies the flesh of Christ corresponding with the passion; but *the vials* signify confession and the propagation of a new priesthood. The opening of the seals is the opening up of the Old Testament.

5.11–12. *And I saw and heard the voice of many angels.* He calls humans angels, who are also called sons of God (cf. Gen. 6:2; Job 38:7). *Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom,*



etc. He says this not about the divinity [of the Lamb], *in whom are all the treasures of wisdom* (Col. 2:3), as if it should receive wisdom, but about his assumed humanity and his body which is the church, or about his martyrs who have been slain for his name. For, through its head the church receives everything, as it is written, *with him he has given to us all things* (Rom. 8:32). For, the Lamb himself, who says in the Gospel, *All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me* (Matt. 28:18), receives, but he receives according to the humanity, not according to the divinity.

5.13. He said, *I heard everyone saying to the one sitting on the throne*, that is, to the Father and Son, *and to the Lamb*, that is, to the church with its head,  *blessing and honor and glory forever*. To him be honor and glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

#### HOMILY 5

6.2. As is customary, when the divine scripture was read, you listened. In this manner blessed John says, *And behold a white horse, and the one who sat upon it, has a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering*. The horse is the church, the rider Christ. This horse of the Lord with its bow of warfare was promised beforehand through Zechariah in this manner: *The Lord God will visit His flock, the house of Israel, and I will make him like a majestic horse in battle, and from him he will examine, and from him he will order, and from him a bow in anger, and from him will go out everyone pursuing* (Zech. 10:3–4). Therefore, we understand the crowned horseman holding a bow not only as Christ, but also as the Holy Spirit. For, after the Lord ascended into heaven, and opened all things, he sent the Holy Spirit, whose words [spoken] through preachers penetrated the hearts of the people like arrows, and conquered their unbelief. And the crown upon his head should be understood as the promises [made] through the Holy Spirit.

6.3–4. *And when he had opened the second seal, I heard a second animal saying, Come and see! And a red horse went forth and it was given to the one sitting upon it to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another, and a great sword was given to him*. The red horse, that is, sinister and evil people, bloodthirsty from its rider, the devil, went forth against the victorious and conquering church. Although we read in Zechariah about a horse of the Lord that is red, there it was red by reason of his own

blood. But here it is red from the blood of another. To him *a great sword was given, that he should take peace from the earth*, that is, his own peace which is worldly. For, the church possesses eternal peace which Christ left to it (cf. John 14:27).

6.5–6. Therefore, just as has been said above, he calls the church *a white horse*, and its rider Christ or the Holy Spirit. The bow which he holds in his hand represents his precepts which were shot throughout the whole world like the *sharp arrows of a warrior* (Ps. 120:4) for killing sins and inflaming the hearts of believers. The crown on his head is the promise of eternal life. The *red horse* represents evil people, and its rider the devil. Therefore, he called it red because it was red from the blood of many people. Also, there *was given to him a sword and to take peace from the earth*, that is, through the persuasion of the devil, people wickedly and continually have not ceased to incite contentions and fights among themselves, even to the point of death. Also, by the *black horse* is understood sinister people agreeing with the devil. Also, [its rider] *held a pair of scales in his hand*, because although the wicked pretend that they uphold the scale of justice, for the most part they are deceptive. And where he says, *do not harm the oil and wine*, by the wine is understood the blood of Christ, by the oil the anointing of chrism. In the wheat and barley is understood the whole church, either with its greatest and its least, or certainly with its ecclesiastical superiors and its people.

6.7–8. Also, by *the pale horse*, is understood evil people who do not desist in inciting persecutions. These three horses are one, who have gone out after the white horse; and they have as their rider the devil, who is *Death*. Therefore, the three horses are understood as famines, and wars, and plagues. This also the Lord predicted in his Gospel, things which are already happening and which will occur more frequently as the day of judgment approaches (cf. Luke 21:10–11).

6.9–11. Also, where he says that he has seen *the souls under the altar of those killed*, the martyrs are understood.

6.12–17. Also, where he says *a great earthquake*, this is the last persecution. Where he says, *the sun became black, and the moon blood, and the stars fell from heaven*, the sun, moon, and stars are the church which has been spread out over the whole earth. Also, he says “the stars fell,” not “all the stars fell,” so that a part is understood from the whole.<sup>20</sup> For, in every persecution the good persevere, but evildoers fall away from the church

as if falling from heaven. Also, then he says the following: *Just like a fig tree shaken casts off its figs when it is shaken by the wind.* Thus, the wicked fall from the church when they are upset by some tribulation. Also, where he says, *the kings of the earth fled and hid themselves in the caves of the earth,* he signified this, that the whole world would take refuge in the good and holy, [fleeing] to the church. For, once the world is placed under the church's protection it is able to reach eternal life, through the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns forever and ever.

#### HOMILY 6

7.2–3. *And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun.* He says *another angel*, about the same catholic church. *From the rising of the sun*, from the death and resurrection of the Lord. *Crying out to the four angels* of the earth. Also, *he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom were given power to harm the earth and sea, Do not harm the earth or the sea.*<sup>21</sup>

6.4. [The rider of the red horse] received a sword. He received [it to do harm] in a broad manner, as he literally takes the life of some, but persuades others among them to become entangled with temporal things to the point of death.

6.5. Concerning the third seal, a *black horse* went forth, *and the one who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.* He says, *he had a scale in his hand*, that is, a measure of equity because while he pretends to uphold justice, he does harm through pretense.

6.6. And while he is in the midst of animals, that is, in the midst of the church, it is said [to him], *Do not harm.* Here it is shown that religious superiors do not have the power of doing evil against the servants of God unless they are permitted by God. *Do not harm the wine and oil.* Through the wine and oil is understood the blood of the Lord and the anointing of chrism; and through the *wheat* and *barley* he speaks of the church, either with its great Christians and least, or with its ecclesiastical superiors and people.

6.8. About the fourth seal, [there is] a *pale horse*, and *the one who sat upon it, whose name was Death, and Hell followed him.* *And power was given to him over a fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, with famine, with death, and with the beasts of the earth.* These three horses are

one. They have gone forth after the white horse and against the white horse; and they have one rider, the devil, who is *Death*. For, in the sixth seal, he shows that the rider is the devil and his allies, and also says that horses will be present in the last battle (cf. Rev. 6:12–17). Therefore, the three horses are understood as famines and wars and plagues, just as is foretold by the Lord in the Gospel (cf. Luke 21:10–12). The white horse is the word of preaching in the world. In the red horse and its rider are signified wars, which are future, but are already happening as *nation rises against nation* (Luke 21:10). Through the pale horse and its rider, a great plague and death is signified. *And Hell followed him*, that is, hell awaits the devouring of many souls.

6.9. *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those killed.* He calls the church the altar of God, under whose eyes the martyrs have been killed. Although it is granted that the souls of the saints are in paradise, because the blood of the saints is being shed upon earth, they are said to be under the altar crying out. This is similar to the passage which says, *The blood of your brother cries to me from the earth* (Gen. 4:10).

6.12–13. *When he had opened the sixth seal, a great earthquake occurred, that is, the last persecution. And the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood, and the stars fell to the earth.* The sun, moon, and stars represent the church; and a part is understood from the whole. For, the whole church does not fall from heaven, but only those who are evil in the church. However, he put it in terms of a whole because the last persecution will be throughout the entire world. And then those who are righteous will remain in the church as in heaven; but the lustful, the unrighteous, and adulterers must submit to sacrificing to the devil (cf. Rev. 13:15; 19:20). And then those who say that they are Christians but are such only in words, will fall as stars from heaven, which is the church. *Just as a fig tree shaken by a great wind casts off its figs.* With the tree he symbolizes the church, shaken by a great wind of persecution. The evildoers, who will be shaken and will fall from the church, he compares to figs.

6.14. *And heaven departed like a scroll rolled together.* Also, in this passage he calls the church heaven, since the church departs from evildoers. And just like a scroll rolled together the church contains within itself the mysteries known only to itself, mysteries which sinners do not want to

understand and are entirely incapable of understanding. *And every mountain and island were moved from their places.* This heaven, these mountains, and these islands signify the whole church, which having experienced the last persecution, departed from its place, either in the case of its good [members] fleeing the persecution, or in the case of its evildoers falling from the faith. For, it is able to be spoken about both parts, because even the good part is moved, fleeing from its place. That is, it loses what it has, like when it is said, *I will move<sup>22</sup> your candlestick from its place* (Rev. 2:5).

6.15. *And the kings of the earth and the magistrates.* The kings, we interpret as powerful people; for, people from every rank and condition are converted to Christ. The others who will be kings at that time, along with the one persecutor<sup>23</sup> *will hide themselves in the caves and rocks of the mountains.* In the present age, everyone flees to the faith of the church, and are covered in the hidden mystery of the scriptures, and *say, Fall,* that is, cover us (cf. Hosea 2:9; Luke 23:30), and *hide us,* that is, so the old man may be hidden from the eyes of God (cf. Col. 3:3, 9). And in another sense, the one who thinks about the future day of judgment is converted to the mountains, that is, to the church, so that his sins may be hidden through penance in the present time, in order that they should not be punished in the future.

7:3. *Until we seal the servants of our God in their foreheads.* He denounces the church, and says to the evildoers, that is, to the sinister part [of the church] which does harm, *Do not harm!* This is the [same] voice which says in the midst of the four animals, *Do not harm the wine and oil* (Rev. 6:6). In the wine and oil are understood all who are righteous, those whom neither the devil nor evildoers are able to harm, except when God permits it for their testing.<sup>24</sup> He says, *Do not harm the wine and oil.* The Lord commanded that His whole spiritual earth should not be harmed until all are sealed.

7.4. *And I heard the number of those sealed from every tribe of the children of Israel.* The one hundred and forty-four thousand is the whole church in its entirety.

7.9. *Afterward I saw, and behold, a great multitude of people, which no one was able to number, from every nation and tribe and people and language.* He does not say, "After these things I saw *another* people," but "I saw people," that is, the same people that he had seen in the mystery of the one hundred and forty-four thousand. He sees this innumerable [com-

pany] from every tribe, language, and nation, because all of the Gentiles have been grafted into the root through faith (cf. Rom. 11:17). The Lord shows in the Gospel that the whole church, [made up of those] from the Jews as well as from the Gentiles [are designated] by the twelve tribes of Israel, saying, *You will sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel* (Matt. 19:28). *Wearing white robes*. One understands the white robes as the gift of the Holy Spirit.

7.13. *And one of the elders answered me saying, These, who are clothed in white robes, who are they? One of the elders who answered* indicates the duty of priests, since they teach the church, that is, the people of the church, that there is a reward for the labor of the saints.

7.14. *Saying, These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb*. For, these are not only martyrs, as some say, but all of the people in the church, because he does not say that they have washed their robes “in their own blood,” but “in the blood of the Lamb,” that is, in the grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, as it is written, *And the blood of His Son cleanses us* (1 John 1:7).

7.15. *And he who sits on the throne dwells among them*. For, the people in the church represent the throne, and among them God dwells.

7.16. *Neither will the sun shine upon them nor heat*, as it is said in Isaiah about the church, that He will be a *shade from the heat* (Isa. 25:4).

7.16. *And He will lead them to living fountains of waters*, etc. All these things also happen both in the present life spiritually in the church when we rise again with [our] sins forgiven, and in our past, when with weeping the old man was despoiled, and we *put on Christ* in baptism (Gal. 3:27), and we were filled *with the joy of the Holy Spirit* (1 Thess. 1:6).

8.1. *And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven, that is, the church, for about half an hour*. By half an hour he shows the beginning of eternal quietude.



CASSIODORUS

*Brief Explanations of the Apocalypse*

## ON REVELATION 5–8

5.1–10. *And I saw a book in the right hand of God sitting upon the throne, written on the front and back,*<sup>25</sup> etc. Among these things he saw a book in the right hand of the Father sitting on the throne, written inside and outside, because in the law some things were still hidden, while other things are known to have been manifest. It was sealed *with seven seals*; that is, it was perceived to have been sealed by the sevenfold Spirit, because mysteries of the Lord are always unknown for a certain period of time. Then, with the *angel proclaiming that no one was found worthy*, who was able to take and read it, John was afflicted with great weeping. *But one of the elders* indicated to him that Christ was worthy *to open the book, and to break its seals*. And lifting his eyes he saw a *Lamb as if slain* having fullness of power and the purest proclamation. He *took this book* for the purpose of opening it, as had been indicated. To him the *four living creatures and twenty four elders* with their *harps and bowls full of odours*, that is, with the quality of good works, *sang a new song, saying* that he who died for the salvation of all, and conferred priesthood in a general manner, and promised the kingdom of heaven to the faithful, is worthy of such a sacred honor. Moreover, the harps signify the perfect harmony of faith and works, but the bowls full of odours, as was said, signify the prayers and supplications of the just.

5.11–6:11. *And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels encircling the throne*, etc. He also heard the voices of *thousands of thousands* of angels, speaking the praises of the Lord Christ: He is *worthy to receive glory, power, riches, and honor*, namely, from the Father because he suffered. To him every creature should give devoted homage. To them,<sup>26</sup> *the four living creatures responded, Amen!*, to which *the twenty four elders* displayed agreement, and falling down on their faces, worshipped. Then *when the Lamb opened the first seal* of the book he had received, *a white horse* was seen, which indicates a very pure life; *and the one sitting upon it held a bow so that he might conquer every adversity* by his penetrating word. *When he*

*had opened the second seal, a red horse was shown, which carried the image of the shed blood of the Lord. And to the one sitting upon it a great sword was given so that he might take peace from the land of his subjects, who were under great terror, and his adversaries might destroy each other through mutual contention. When the third seal was opened, a black horse came out, as we think, showing the power of domination over the impious. While sitting, he held a pair of balances in his hand because the impious are without doubt going to be judged. To him the four living creatures said that the wheat and the barley reached the price of a penny, but that the oil and wine should not be harmed. When the fourth seal was opened . . .<sup>27</sup> When the fifth seal was opened, he saw under the altar of God the souls of the martyrs seeking swift vindication, to whom were given the solace of patience, having been promised that they would see it when the number of their fellow servants was fulfilled.*

6.12–7:12. *And I saw, when he had opened the sixth seal, behold a great earthquake occurred, etc.* Moreover, when the sixth seal was opened, he says through allegory that the earth trembled. *The sun became black, the moon was darkened* with the color of blood, and other things [are described] which have been predicted to happen at the end of the world. Then there sounded the loud praises of the angels and of the congregation of the saints, that is, the *one hundred and forty four thousand*, in which number is encompassed the sum of all of the blessed, *holding palm branches, and clothed in white robes. They washed their robes in the blood of the Lord, and will rejoice with everlasting happiness in his sight. Neither will they who have been perfected by the majesty of Christ the Lord have need any longer.*

8.1–13. *And when he had opened the seventh seal there was silence in heaven for half an hour.* Moreover, when the seventh seal was opened, an angel came before the tribunal of God bearing a golden censer, in which he offered *the prayers of the saints* in the form of incense in the sight of majesty. Then *the first angel sounded a trumpet, and hail and fire mixed with blood was thrown on the earth so that the third part of the earth was burned up.* When *the second angel sounded a trumpet, a burning mountain was cast into the sea which became blood, and the third part of the creatures and ships, which it was seen to contain, perished.* Indeed, when *the third angel had sounded a trumpet, a great star which is called Wormwood fell from heaven upon a third part of the rivers and fountains, which made the waters*



extremely *bitter*, and those drinking it *died*. When *the fourth angel sounded* a trumpet, it happened that *the third part of the sun, moon, and stars was darkened*, and the same part of the day and night was lost. Then there was seen something like an eagle which said, *Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth* who are going to see such things of this magnitude.



PSEUDO-JEROME  
*Handbook on the Apocalypse*

ON REVELATION 5–6

Chapter 5. Verse 1. On *the book, written* is understood the entire holy scripture. *Inside*, the spiritual sense; *and outside*, because according to its historical meaning it feeds souls. *Sealed with seven seals*, that is, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. 2. *And I saw an angel*. This was an angel of any kind.<sup>28</sup> 3. *And no one was able to open or to look into that book* because they were not able to understand it. 7. *And he took the book* when he took on flesh, as if he had received a book from the Father. 9. *From every tribe*, from the twelve tribes; *and language*, from all languages; *and people*, the people of the Jews; *and nation*, from the Gentiles. 11. *Thousands of thousands*, that is, an innumerable multitude. 12. *And power*, after he conquered the devil; *and riches*, after he ascended into heaven according to his assumed flesh. 13. *And every creature which is in heaven*, that is, the nine orders of angels, and ten orders of the saints. *And on earth*, he says about the inhabitants of the earth; *and under the earth*, he says about the inhabitants of hell.

Chapter 6. 1. Through *the seven seals* are understood seven proclamations. *Come* 2. *and see*. Here John has [in mind] a picture of the human race, since it is spoken to the human race. The *white horse* is understood [to be] the body of Christ. *The one who sat upon it*, that is, majesty in the body, *had a bow*, a proclamation. *And a crown was given to him*. A crown is not given except after a victory. 4. The *red horse* is a figure of the martyrs; *the one who sat upon it*, Christ; *a great sword*, the word of God. 5. Through the *black horse* persecutors are understood. *The one who sat upon it*, that is, the devil. He has *a pair of balances in his hand* because the devil does not

tempt except when he is permitted by God (cf. Job 1:12). 6. *Two measures* are two sisterces. They signify the Old and New Testament. *Penny* is understood as eternal life; *three measures*, the faith of the Trinity. *Do not harm the wine and oil*, those who are strong in faith and those who have mercy and spiritual anointing. 8. Through the *pale horse* hypocrites are understood. *And Hell followed him*, that is, sinners; *over the four parts<sup>29</sup> of the earth*, over those who are earthly-minded in the world. Here the *sword* is fornication. *From famine*, that is, [from a lack] of the word of God. *And with death*, that is, with the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6 and 14; 21:8). *By the beasts of the earth*, by adversarial powers. 10. *How long, O Lord, will you not judge?*, etc. They are not desiring [their judgment], but that they would amend themselves from sins, or that Judgment Day would come quickly so that they would sin less.<sup>30</sup> 11. *Robes to each*, eternal life, but among them there is a diversity of merits.<sup>31</sup> 12. *A great earthquake occurred*. Some moved into the faith; others moved outside the faith.<sup>32</sup> *The sun became black*, the saints in persecution. *The moon as blood*, similarly the saints. 13. *The stars will fall from heaven*. Souls [will fall] from the church. 14. *Heaven departed*, that is, the saints; *mountains*, likewise the saints are understood. The *islands*, those who have tribulations. Again in another sense, *mountains* signify sinners, and *islands*, those who are [tossed about] by the fluctuations of the age. 15. *The kings of the earth*, saints or sinners; *princes*, their subjects; *tribunes*, according to their rank in evil. *And the rich*, those who are [rich] in sins, *and the strong*, that is, in evil, *every servant*, who is enslaved in sin, *and freed person* who is outside the bond of servitude to God,<sup>33</sup> *hid themselves in the caves*, in their consciences. *In the rocks* is understood as their stubbornness. 16. *Say to the mountains*, to adversarial powers. 17. *That the great day*, the Day of Judgment *is coming*. *Who will be able to stand* but one who is righteous?



## ALCUIN OF YORK

*Question and Answer Manual on the Apocalypse*

## ON REVELATION 5–6

Question: What is, *And I saw in the right hand of the one sitting upon the throne a book written inside and outside* (Rev. 5:1)?

Answer: This vision shows us the mysteries of holy scripture made manifest through the incarnation of the Lord. Its harmonious unity contains, so to speak, the Old Testament outside and the New Testament inside.<sup>34</sup>

There follows: *Sealed with seven seals* (Rev. 5:1).

Answer: That is, either covered by all the fullness of hidden mysteries, or written by the direction of the sevenfold Spirit. For the whole succession of the Old and New Testament forewarns that penance should be done for sins, that the kingdom of heaven should be sought, and that the weeping of hell should be avoided.<sup>35</sup>

Question: *And no one in heaven nor on earth nor under the earth was able to open the book* (Rev. 5:3).

Answer: Neither angel nor any of the just, even one released from the chain of the flesh, was able to reveal or search out the mysteries of the divine law. Neither were they able to look at it, that is, to contemplate the splendor of the grace of the New Testament, just as the children of Israel were not able to look at the face of the lawgiver of the Old Testament, which contains the New.<sup>36</sup>

There follows: *And I wept greatly* (Rev. 5:4).

Answer: That is, he grieved, knowing the common misery of the human race.<sup>37</sup>

There follows: *And one of the elders said to me, Do not weep. Behold the Lion from the tribe of Judah has prevailed* (Rev. 5:5).

Answer: He is prohibited from weeping because already then the

mystery, which had lay hidden for a long time, had been fulfilled in the passion of Christ.<sup>38</sup>

Question: *And I saw that the Lamb had opened one of the seals* (Rev. 6:1).

Answer: Since first seals are broken, then a book is opened, certainly there was a reason that he inverted the usual order. For, dying and rising, the Lord taught that he *is the end of the law* (Rom. 10:4). And ascending into heaven, having sent the Holy Spirit, he established the church with the gift of a more hidden mystery. Therefore, at that time he opened the book, and now he breaks its seals. Therefore, in the first seal one understands the beauty of the primitive church. In the following three, the threefold war against her. In the fifth, the glory of the triumphant in this war. In the sixth, those things which are going to come in the time of the Antichrist. And a little after, a recapitulation of the things mentioned above. In the seventh, one understands the beginning of eternal quietude.<sup>39</sup>

*Part 3*  
*Historical Interpretations of the Seven Seals*



JOACHIM OF FIORE  
*On the Seven Seals*

THE FIRST SEAL

In this time are contained [the deeds] of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and his children and grandchildren; about the sojourn of the same children of Israel into Egypt; about Moses and Aaron and the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt; about the persecution of Pharaoh and the crossing of the Red Sea; about the giving of the law on Mount Sinai; about the raising up of Moses and Aaron, the twelve rulers of the people, and also the seventy-two elders who had gone out of Egypt. In this time also the twelve tribes, indeed first five and later seven, received the inheritance. Moreover, all these things were completed from the days of the patriarch Abraham up to the death of Joshua.

*The Opening of the Same*

In this time is especially contained the events in the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, in which [information] is related about Zacharias the priest and John his son, by whom Christ was baptized; also about the nativity of Christ and his death, and about the first twelve apostles the other seventy-two disciples. Similarly also, the book of the Acts of the Apostles was written by the same Luke, in which it was written about the separation of the faithful from the synagogue of the Jews; about the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the faithful; and about the two last apostles,

Paul and Barnabas, who were first set apart for preaching to the Gentiles, up to the time of the falling asleep of Saint John the Evangelist. In this [seal] is also especially contained the first part of the book of the Apocalypse, in which John says that a revelation of mysteries was given to him *on the Lord's Day* (Rev. 1:10), that is, that in the time of the Lord's resurrection holy mysteries began to be revealed. Also in this time the five major churches were established along with the other seven that were in Asia, about which are discussed in this section.

#### THE SECOND SEAL

In this second time are contained the battles of the children of Israel waged with the Canaanites and diverse nations, according to what has been written in the deeds of Joshua and the book of Judges, that is, from the days of Joshua up to King David.

##### *The Opening of the Same*

In this second time are contained the struggles between the pagans and the holy martyrs, according to what is especially contained spiritually in the second part of the Apocalypse, where the diverse kinds of persecution are shown in the opening of the seven seals and in the appearance of the horsemen and horses and other images.

#### THE THIRD SEAL

In this third time are contained the battles of the children of Israel waged with the Assyrians, Philistines, and other nations, and also between Judah and Israel because of the schism which happened in the days of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. Jeroboam, the son of Nabath, led away ten tribes to himself. Also, causing them to commit whoredom against their God, he taught them to worship two golden calves and to withdraw from the house of the Lord. When he was killed, they returned to Jerusalem and to David their king. Moreover, that controversy between the house of David and the house of Joseph lasted from the beginning of the reign of Rehoboam up to Elijah the prophet, according to what has been written in the books of Samuel and Kings.

*The Opening of the Same*

In this third time are contained the conflicts of the Catholic teachers waged with certain nations that were stained with Arian falsehood, namely, the Goths, the Vandals and the Lombards, and also the conflict with the people of Persia. And also, dissension occurred between the churches of the Latins and the Greeks, similar to that between Jerusalem and Samaria. And the Arian error and the error of many others in the churches of the Greeks lasted up to the end, just as when in Israel it lasted up to the times of their transmigration, although some among them, who remained behind, were not taken away, as also in the case of the tribes of Israel. Moreover these conflicts, which Catholics had with heretics, are contained in the third part of the Apocalypse typologically in the seven angels sounding trumpets and in the images of other things that are shown through each angel.

## THE FOURTH SEAL

In this fourth seal are contained the deeds of Elijah and Elisha leading the solitary life, and of the sons of the prophets leading the communal life, which also Elisha presided over for a time. And also the battles of Azael and of the king of the Assyrians prevailing against the children of Israel [are contained in this seal]. [This is] according to what is contained in the fourth volume of the Kings, from the days of Elijah and Elisha up to Isaiah the prophet and Hezekiah, king of Judah.

*The Opening of the Same*

In this fourth time the virgins and hermits shined, according to what has been designated in the fourth part of the Apocalypse in the *woman clothed with the sun* (Rev. 12:1) fleeing into solitude, just as Elijah fled, each remaining hidden *for a time and times and half a time* (Rev. 12:14). And also the wars of the Saracens began under this fourth time, according to what is shown in the same section in the appearance of the *beast ascending from the abyss, having seven heads and ten horns* (Rev. 13:1).

## THE FIFTH SEAL

In this fifth time the battles of the Assyrians ceased, since the ten tribes had been given into their hands. Also, the kingdom of Judah was strengthened under the hand of Hezekiah. He also caused the house of the Lord to be cleansed, and restored the duties of the Levites so that they might seek the Lord their God with the prophets Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah and other holy men. These [men] poured out vials of the wrath of their God upon the sins of the people, from the days of Isaiah the prophet up to the transmigration to Babylon, pronouncing misfortunes that were going to come upon Judah, Egypt, Babylon, and many of the people who were in the neighboring lands. It is possible that he spoke spiritually not about these, but about other people similar to these. Moreover, there was a fifth persecution against the children of Judah, that of Nechao king of Egypt and Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon up to the transmigration to Babylon.

*The Opening of the Same*

In this fifth time the Latin church, which is another Jerusalem, was strengthened. And there came from her spiritual men who were jealous with the jealousy of God *for taking vengeance upon the nations and punishments upon the peoples* (Ps. 149:7). Indeed, they did not carry a sword, but carried the sword of the spiritual word. This is according to what is contained typologically in the fifth part of the Apocalypse, about the temple of the Lord, and about the seven angels going out from it, pouring out vials of the wrath of God upon the earth for purpose of blinding the minds of sinners who remain in it. This is according to that passage in Isaiah, *Blind the heart of this people, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest perhaps they be converted and I should heal them* (Isa. 6:10).

And it should be known that in all these times, the exact temporal boundaries that are noted in this tract should not be applied rigidly. But the beginning of the time following should be reckoned from the middle of the time preceding. But the brightness of that particular time occurs within its own temporal boundaries. But the tribulation of this time against the Roman church, as if a state, was from certain princes of the world, especially from the Teutons who severely afflicted the church for her sins.



## THE SIXTH SEAL

In this sixth time is contained the transmigration and the overthrow of Babylon; indeed also, the two tribulations of the children of Israel, of which one is contained in the history of Judith, the other in the book of Esther. However, the temple of God and the walls of the city were rebuilt in the distresses of these times.

*The Opening of the Same*

In this sixth time spiritual Jerusalem began to transmigrate spiritually until the new Babylon should be overthrown, just as it has been written in the sixth part of the Apocalypse. For truly Babylon, that is, the people who are called Christians and *are not, but are the synagogue of Satan* (Rev. 2:9), will also be overthrown. And those who are true Christians shall be released<sup>40</sup> in two tribulations, of which one is similar to that which Holofernes, the prince of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, waged, the other similar to that which Ammon waged. Meanwhile, however, many of the faithful will be crowned with martyrdom. Also, the holy city, which is the church of the elect, will again be rebuilt in the distresses of these times, as was done in the days of Zerubbabel and Joshua, and Ezra and Nehemiah, under whom the old Jerusalem received consolation. But also the devil, who works every evil, will then be chained in the abyss *so that he should no longer deceive the nations* (Rev. 20:3) up to the appointed time for him to be loosed.

## THE SEVENTH SEAL

In this seventh time history and prophecies ceased, a *sabbath rest* was given *to the people of God* (Heb. 4:9), and peace was given to the remaining Jews. [And it extended] up to [the time of] King Antiochus. Not long after that persecution had been completed, with John sent beforehand, the only-begotten Son of God came into the world, so that *he might appear on earth and live among humans* (Bar. 3:18).

With the histories of the Old Testament completed, and the only-begotten Son of God, *who was born under the law so that he might redeem those who were under the law* (Gal. 4:4), died, the time of the resurrection arrived. In it also *many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep* (Matt.

27:52) were raised. And having been gathered into one body of believers, an abundance of peace was shed upon it. Also, filled with the Holy Spirit, it experienced that beatitude about which the prophet says, *God, beside you, eye has not seen what you have prepared for those who love you* (Isa. 64:4; cf. 1 Cor. 2:9).

#### *The Opening of the Same*

In this seventh time, which is in the near future, the opening of the seals and the work of expositing the books of the Old Testament will cease, and truly *sabbath rest* will be given *to the people of God* (Heb. 4:9). And there will be *in those days righteousness and abundance of peace and the Lord will have dominion from sea to sea* (Ps. 71:7–8). And his saints will reign with him up to the hidden end of that time. Then, the devil shall be loosed from his chain, and that most wicked man who is called Gog, about whom many things have been written in the book of the prophet Ezekiel, is going to reign. Therefore, as the Apostle says, *there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God* (Heb. 4:9). At the end of this rest that tribulation is going to come. Afterward, with Elijah sent beforehand, the Lord is going to come for the Last Judgment, according to what is contained very clearly in the seventh part of the Apocalypse, and in no way disagreeing with the previous seals.

With the works of the New Testament completed, and when that great tribulation which will be in the days of Gog, similar to that which was executed under Antiochus and signified in the passion of the Lord, is completed, the time of the resurrection of the dead and of the consolation of the heavenly Jerusalem, out of which *a river of living water* (Rev. 22:1) will flow in that time, will come. This is according to what is contained in the eighth part of the book of the Apocalypse. And there will be in it eternal joy.



VITAL DU FOUR  
*Commentaries on the Apocalypse*

ON REVELATION 8:1

*And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for half an hour.* After the tribulation that will be in the time of Antichrist, shown in the seventh status of the church, shown here is a brief period of quietude, which will come after the death of the beast. Accordingly, note that the opening of this seventh seal is the opening of the seventh status in which there will be silence, that is, peace and tranquility for a brief time!

Therefore, he says, *And when he had opened the seventh seal*, that is, when the future status of the church after the death of Antichrist comes, *there was silence in heaven*, that is, peace and tranquility in the world. And he uses the past<sup>41</sup> for the future, in order to show greater certainty. *For half an hour*, that is, this tranquility will last a very short time. According to Jerome's *Commentary on Daniel*, after the death of Antichrist there will be granted forty days for people to do penance, which space of time is called here *silence for half an hour*.<sup>42</sup> This is just like when God gave to the Jews forty years to do penance after the death of Christ, up to the destruction of Jerusalem through Titus and Vespasian. In like manner also, out of his mercy he will give a space of time to people after the death of Antichrist up to the Last Judgment. But how long this space of time is, or will be, between those forty days and the end of the world no one knows, unless perhaps it is revealed to some saint. For, Matthew 24: [says], *But concerning that day and hour, no one knows except the Father alone.* Nevertheless, *When you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place, let the one who reads understand* (Matt. 24:15).<sup>43</sup>

*The Confession of Prous Boneta*

[Prous said and asserted] that just as Christ had given to himself a name more beautiful than that of every person in this world, so also

Christ gave to that pope [John XXII] a name more horrible than that of every person in this world, namely Antichrist.

Again, Jesus Christ said to her, as she asserted, that Christ himself placed Elijah and Enoch in the earthly paradise. And that Elijah was Saint Francis and Enoch was the holy father, Brother Peter John [Olivi]. Both, namely Saint Francis and Brother Peter John, gave witness to Jesus Christ in this manner: Saint Francis bore witness of the poor life that Christ began, and Brother Peter John bore witness of the divinity through his holy writings.

Again, Christ told her, as she asserts, that Antichrist killed Elijah and Enoch, that is, Saint Francis and the previously mentioned Peter John. He killed them in the middle of the street (cf. Rev. 11:8), . . . and that street is the holy church.

Again, she asserted that the Lord Jesus Christ showed her . . . a serpent. And seeing it on her foot, she attacked it and crushed it . . . She asserted that the Lord told her that the serpent was the dragon that blessed John saw in the Book of Revelation *who persecuted the woman* (Rev. 12:13), whom she did not name.

Again, that Saint Francis is as great a saint in paradise as blessed John the Baptist, because as John the Baptist prepared the way before the Lord (cf. Luke 1:76), so Saint Francis prepared the way before the Holy Spirit.

Again, she said and asserted that the Lord God told her that the *book, sealed with seven seals*, that blessed John says that he saw, Prou herself opened. She also said that the first seal was opened by the writer about whom she spoke above. And the second was opened by a certain apostate lesser brother about whom she spoke above.<sup>44</sup> And the third was opened by some other person whom she named. And she said that the whole aforementioned book was [now] opened to me, the notary Meneto who wrote these things.

Again, she said that the horse which blessed John saw in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 5:1) is Prou herself, and the one who is sitting upon that white horse is Jesus Christ himself.

Again, the Lord God spoke to her, as she asserts, that the truth of these predictions, or some of them, will be found in three sections of holy scripture, namely, in the books of the Apocalypse, the Gospels<sup>45</sup>, and Daniel.

Again, she said and asserted that just as the sin of our first parent Adam was wiped away and redeemed through the passion of Christ, whose time of passion she said was now finished and completed, so it was necessary that the sin of the pope, which is as great as the sin of Adam, should be wiped away and redeemed through the power of the Holy Spirit. This beginning [of the reign] of the Holy Spirit is the termination and end of the previously mentioned passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. She asserts that the new time of the previously mentioned Holy Spirit and the new status of the church had its beginning in the previously mentioned Peter John, and continues in her, the one who is speaking. And thus, as she said, now is the new status of the church in which it is necessary to believe in the work of the Holy Spirit as it is declared above.

Again, the Lord told her, as she asserts, that holy John saw three angels of whom the first carried the *seal of the living God* (Rev. 7:2), and this was Saint Francis. And the second had the *face of the sun* (Rev. 10:1), and this was Brother Peter John. And the third carried the *keys of the abyss* (Rev. 20:1), and this is the Holy Spirit whom God gave to her, the one who is speaking.



PETER AURIOL

*Compendium on Holy Scripture*

ON REVELATION 6–8

In [this] first vision is described prophetically the whole time from the foundation of the church among the nations, and of the persecutions of the pagan emperors, to its liberation through Constantine. Indeed this time lasted from the emperors Gaius<sup>46</sup> and Claudius up to and including Julian the Apostate. And this vision begins at the beginning of the fourth chapter, which begins, *After these things I looked* (Rev. 4:1), up until the beginning of the eighth chapter, where it is written, *And I saw seven angels standing* (Rev. 8:2). And this vision is divided into five main parts.

... Truly in the fifth part [from Revelation 6:1 to 8:2] the clear and firm truth of the procession of future things is explained in order, from

the emperors Gaius and Claudius up to Julian the Apostate. And this part begins, *And I saw when the Lamb had opened one of the seven seals* (Rev. 6:1), where there are prophetically designated, in order, eight notable things that happen in that time with respect to the church.

#### THE FIRST SEAL.

##### *The Spread of the Gospel.*

6. 2. For, first John represents and indicates beforehand the very free procession of the spreading of the gospel. And this [is represented] in the opening of the first seal, where it is said, *And behold a white horse*. Here it should be known that, according to Eusebius, the preaching of the name of Christ was spread abroad throughout the whole world in a short time under the emperors Tiberius, Gaius, and Claudius.<sup>47</sup> For, the aforementioned emperors permitted the apostles and disciples to run to and fro throughout the whole world. There, in the beginning of the fourth chapter, [Eusebius] says that divine providence operated in the mind of Caesar so that he threatened danger to all the accusers of the Christians. In those initial times the word of the gospel ran forth quickly, as if a divinely manifested light, and a ray of the sun breaking forth, were illuminating the whole world with the brightness of heavenly light. And the prophecy was fulfilled, *Their sound has gone out throughout the whole earth* (Ps. 19:4; cf. Rom. 10:18). And throughout all the cities and all the towns immense multitudes of people were gathered into the churches, as when grain is gathered to the threshing floors in the time of the harvests. Therefore, John saw in the book of divine foreknowledge this free dissemination. And this was [designated as the] first [seal] because it was at first closed, and because Christ opened it first. Therefore, it is called the opening of the first seal.

For, the *white horse* designates the army of the apostles and disciples, who were white in doctrine and in life, like horses running to and fro very quickly. Upon it, Christ was sitting with the weapons of preaching and with the grace of the word, which penetrated them, just as he had promised saying, *Behold, I shall give you a mouth and wisdom, which your adversaries will not be able to contradict* (Luke 21:15). And because a crown of victory was given to him, *he went forth conquering and to conquer*, because he subjugated the world to his faith in the space of a short time, as was said.

## THE SECOND SEAL.

*The Edict of the First Persecution.*

6.3–4. *And when he had opened the second seal*, John designates and indicates the edict of the first general persecution. I say “general” so as to exclude partial persecutions, which the faith experienced from the beginning, in Jerusalem and Judea. And Nero was the first among the Roman emperors who issued an edict for Christians to be punished, as Eusebius says.<sup>48</sup> And I say that he made martyrs of the most blessed apostles Peter and Paul and many others throughout various parts of the world.

Therefore, through the *horse* is understood the Roman Empire. For it is customary in scripture for horses to designate kingdoms, as is shown in Zechariah 6:2, etc. Also, the Roman empire was then *red* through its shedding of blood, because Nero had advanced into such evil that he did not hold back the sword from even his own family and servants, as Eusebius relates. He committed murders against his mother, his brother, his wives, and everyone closely related to him by blood. And he was incestuous. Or, it is called red because of the multitude of his unspeakable evils, since among all of the emperors he led the most wicked and most impious life, as is shown in the histories. Or, [it is called red] because of the flames and fire, since he wanted to see Rome burn. Accordingly, it seemed red because of the flames of the fire.

Therefore, it *was given to Nero sitting upon a red horse*, upon the Roman empire, *to take peace from the earth and that they should kill one another*, because of the people that he also killed among the Romans. Accordingly, fleeing from the people and the senate, he killed himself with his own hand. Therefore, *there was given unto him a great sword*, since it was given to him by divine permission to kill the great apostles and to stir up the first great persecution against believers.

## THE THIRD SEAL.

*The Just Judgment of God.*

6.5–6. In the place where it says, *And when he had opened the third seal*, he indicates beforehand the just judgment of God in the punishment of the Jews, somewhat silenced by the persecution of the Christians. For Vespasian and Titus were sent by Nero against the rebelling Jews. Af-

ter Nero's death, Vitellius, Otho, and Galba reigned for a limited time, and afterward Vespasian was elected emperor by the soldiers stationed in Judea. When he left for Rome, he left it to his son Titus to procure the siege of Jerusalem, who took Jerusalem in the second year of the reign of his father.

Therefore the *black horse* represents the kingdom of the Romans under Vespasian and Titus, either because of their animosity, since the color black is a sign of animosity in a horse, or because in that time the Roman empire had blackened and exterminated Judea. Therefore *he who was sitting* as emperor at that time, namely Vespasian and Titus, has *a pair of balances in his hand*, that is, divine justice and equity. Concerning the first scale [i.e. justice], blame was attached to the Jews since they had waged war against Jesus Christ by crucifying him and by persecuting and killing his disciples. Concerning the other scale [i.e. equity], their punishment was merited. Accordingly, Vespasian and Titus were sent by God in order to punish the Jews according to the balance of justice.

And then *a voice* was heard saying, *A measure of wheat for a penny and three measures of barley for a penny*. This corresponds to when the Jews, for thirty pieces of silver, had sold Jesus Christ, who called himself wheat and a *grain of wheat* (John 12:24). Also, as Josephus wrote, Titus sold eleven hundred thousand Jews by giving thirty for a penny.<sup>49</sup> And the Jewish nobles are called *wheat* here, and the ignoble are called *barley*, and five Jews are able to be understood for one measure. Therefore, it says *three measures* because Titus sold ten of the more noble for a penny; however, he sold *three measures of barley*, that is, thirty of the less noble for another *penny*. And so five Jews are rightly put for one measure, because they have five books of the law to measure themselves, and by which they ought to measure themselves. Against this law, they killed the Lord and His disciples.

And there follows, *Do not harm the wine and oil*, because although Titus literally overturned Judea and Jerusalem, he harmed no Christian. For, Eusebius related in his third book that when the siege was nearing, the church that had been gathered in Jerusalem received an oracle from God. They were ordered to leave and to travel across the Jordan to a certain town by the name of Pella.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, the Christians who fled into Pella are understood as *the wine and oil* because they were unharmed. For they were full of the wine of charity and the oil of piety.



## FOURTH SEAL.

*The Edict of the Second Persecution.*

6.7–8. In that place where it says, *And when he had opened the fourth seal*, he symbolizes prophetically, and indicates beforehand again, an edict of a second persecution, promulgated by Domitian. And so Domitian followed Titus, his brother.<sup>51</sup> Titus, lifted up in the height of pride, talked boastfully about himself because neither his father nor his brother had taken Jerusalem, but the city had been taken by his industry and labor.

He [Domitian] led a very defiled and evil life. He immersed the apostle John in a caldron of boiling oil, sent him into exile on the island of Patmos, and incited persecution through the whole world against the Christians. Therefore, the Roman empire in the time of Domitian is called a *pale horse*, either because of envy, since Domitian also envied the glory of his father and brother, Vespasian and Titus, or because of his vileness, since just as the color pale is vile, so Domitian was vile in life.

And there follows, that since he sat upon a horse, *the name of it was Death, and Hell followed him*. For, Domitian was literally condemned by the senate, and was killed in his palace. Nevertheless, *power was given to him over the four parts*<sup>52</sup> *of the earth* against Christians, *to kill* with four types of tortures, namely, *with famine, with the sword, with death*, through which is inferred suffocation or burning, and *with the beasts of the earth* (Rev. 6:8). For, the martyrs were exposed to beasts and afflicted with the other kinds of aforementioned tortures.

It should also be known that in the opening of the four seals, it is read that the four aforementioned animals had said, *Come and see!* (Rev. 6:1). For, these four openings are spoken about in the four gospels. For, in the Gospel of Mark the spread of the gospel is spoken about in the passage, *Going into the whole world, preach the gospel to every creature. And going forth, they preached* (Mark 16:15). And, therefore, the first animal, which is Mark, speaks in the opening of the first seal, saying, *Come and see!* Indeed, in the Gospel of Matthew much is expressed about the persecution of the church, where it is said, *Then they will hand you over to tribulation, and they will kill you* (Matt. 24:9). Therefore, the second animal, obviously Matthew, speaks in the opening of the second seal. Indeed, in the opening of the third seal the third animal, namely Luke, speaks, since he speaks about the destruction of Jerusalem through Titus

and Vespasian and about the weeping of the Lord over the city, saying, *If you had known, even you* (Luke 19:42). Indeed, in the opening of the fourth seal the fourth animal, namely John, speaks. He writes about the greatest tribulation which believers were going to have in the world, which Domitian, second after Nero,<sup>53</sup> waged. Accordingly, he says, *In the world you will have tribulation, but in me peace* (John 16:33; cf. 14:27).

#### THE FIFTH SEAL.

##### *Later Persecutions.*

6.9–11. In the place where it says, *And when he had opened the fifth seal*, John foretold the vastness of later persecution. For, it should be known that after Nero and Domitian, who waged the first two persecutions against the Christians, Trajan mounted a third, Marcus Antonius a fourth, Severus a fifth, Maximus, who is also called Maximinus, a sixth, Decius a seventh, Valerian an eighth, and Aurelian a ninth. One may say that there were many emperors in between these, under whom also Christians were martyred. Nevertheless, these are said to have waged persecutions, because edicts against the Christians were renewed. However, some did not renew them, but if any Christians were killed in their times, it was done on the basis of their predecessors' edicts, which they had not renewed.

Therefore, in the times of those emperors, the churches and altars were not safe, but Christians celebrated and prayed in underground tombs. Therefore, because of the length of the persecution, believers wondered about divine justice, and cried out praying for vindication from the true God. And this is what John predicts here, *We saw under the altar the souls of those killed*. And what they expected was given in answer to them: *Until the number of martyrs should be fulfilled*.<sup>54</sup> And if it should be asked how it is said that souls are under the altar, it can be understood by reason of the holy bodies of the martyrs who were buried in tombs. In these tombs also altars were erected, since we have read that Masses were celebrated in the tombs of the martyrs.

## THE SIXTH SEAL.

*The Tenth Persecution.*

6.12–17. In the place where it says, *And I beheld, when he had opened*, he also describes the magnitude of the last persecution. For, we have read that Diocletian waged the tenth persecution with his colleague Maximian, which also Galerius Maximus augmented, continued, and consummated.

However, this persecution was the greatest and most excessive, since Maximian began to destroy the churches in the east, and Diocletian [the churches] in the west, so that there was not a place on earth in which there was not persecution. It was also very intense, for they commanded that the churches be burned down and that the divine scriptures be set on fire and burned. And we have read that within a space of thirty days, seventeen thousand people, indiscriminate of their gender, were crowned with martyrdom throughout the various provinces. Even Pope Marcellinus succumbed to sacrificing; and afterward repenting of this deed, was beheaded by Diocletian.<sup>55</sup> And the Roman episcopacy ceased for three years and six months on account of the cruelty of this persecution. It was also the gravest persecution due to its length, since the burnings of the churches, the proscriptions of the innocent, and the slaughter of the martyrs went on incessantly for ten continuous years.

Therefore, this cruelty is foretold<sup>56</sup> by John in the opening of the sixth seal when it is said that *there was a great earthquake*. This is the commotion of the people from the east to the west. *And the sun*, Christ, *became black* and vile as *sackcloth of hair* in the opinion and reputation of everyone. *And the whole moon*, namely the church, *became as blood* due to the slaughter of the martyrs. *And the stars*, perfect men, so much higher than others, *fell from the heaven* of perfection, *just as a fig tree casts off her figs when shaken by a great wind*. For, at that time the wind of persecution was very great and very violent. *And heaven departed like a scroll rolled together*, since at that time the books of the divine writings were burned. *And every mountain and island were moved from their places*, since the church buildings in the desert places, in the mountains, in swampy places, and on islands—in short, those that were hidden everywhere—were moved and destroyed. And at that time there were among the number of believers in the various parts of the world, some *kings*, some *princes*, some

*tribunes and nobles, some rich and strong, some servants, and some freedmen.* Therefore, all tried to hide *themselves in the rocks* so that they might escape the persecution. And everyone wondered about *the wrath* of God and *of the Lamb*, which believers seemed to be experiencing through this, and [concluded] that God and the Lamb were permitting this persecution to be waged against them for such a long time.

#### THE SEVENTH SEAL.

##### *The Peace of Religion.*

7.1–3. In the place where it says, *After these things I saw four angels*, where the seventh chapter begins, John foretells the end and termination of the whole persecution, the peace of the Christian religion, and the time of tranquility.

First, he introduces the perverse attempt of four tyrants. For, as we have read, after Diocletian and Maximian laid aside their imperial positions in one day, Galerius and Constantius were made emperors.<sup>57</sup> And Galerius instituted two Caesars, one in Italy by the name of Severus, and the other in the East by the name of Maximian. But in the city of Rome, Maxentius, the son of Maximian, was made emperor.

But Constantius and Helen bore Constantine the Great, who was made emperor after the death of his father, and he assumed the position jointly with the emperor Licinius, who one may grant was at first peaceful toward the Christians,<sup>58</sup> but afterward became a persecutor.

Therefore, the *four angels* of Satan, messengers and ministers of persecution, were Maximian in the East, Severus in Italy, Maxentius in Rome, and Licinius in Egypt and Alexandria. And thus they stood *upon the four corners of the earth*, as John says, and they held *the winds, that they should not blow on the earth*, because after Diocletian and Maximian, believing teachers could not preach *on the earth, nor in the sea, nor on any tree*, that is, to any believers.

Then he introduces the triumph of the liberator. For we have read of Constantine, that first at Marseilles he beheaded the colleague of Diocletian, Maximian, who again aspired for control of the empire. Then, marching on Rome against Maxentius and solicitous about war, he had a vision from heaven that he should conquer in the sign of the cross. And with the sign of the cross shown to him, it was said to him through

angels, "Constantine, in this [sign], you will conquer!" And, therefore, he made the sign of the cross on his forehead and put it on his military banners. And having been strengthened for war against Maxentius, he triumphed. And when he came in triumph to Rome, the senate erected an image in his honor, and ordered that a banner, with the cross of the Lord on it, to be put to the right of his image, and under it to be written, "This is the sign of the invincible living God." Therefore, this Constantine is the other *angel ascending from the east*, because he went to Rome through revelation and divine or angelic inspiration, *having the seal of the living God. And he cried out* against those four angels who were ministers of nefarious persecution, about whom was spoken. Indeed, he cried out, striking fear and waging war so that they would not *harm the earth, or the sea, or the trees*, that is, any Christian, until all were *sealed on their foreheads* through the free reception of baptism. For, he passed an edict that every person throughout the whole Roman world was free to be baptized and signed with the cross, and that churches were able to be built, and everywhere images of the crucifix could be depicted on them. Also, he too was baptized and sealed publicly.

Then he [John] put the number of those sealed, that is, the number of the children of Israel, up to the place where it says, *They shouted with a loud voice saying* (Rev. 7:10). For, that number signifies the multitude of the faithful, who believed from all of the tribes of Israel and were baptized. [He put this number] not so much [to indicate the exact number of the] many who believed, but because the number carries a mystery and is a number of completion.

7.9–10. Then, in the place where it says, *After these things I saw*, he puts an innumerable gathering, namely, of those who believed from the Gentiles. After this, in the place where it says, *They shouted with a loud voice saying*, he foretells the free worship of the liberated believers, which from then on they offered to the divinity. For, churches were built and praises were given *to God and to the Lamb* through angels, that is, through bishops and priests throughout the whole world.

7.13–17. Lastly, in the place where it says, *And one of the elders answered*, he puts forth a figure and a type of the whole aforementioned vision, showing that the whole multitude, about which already has been spoken, signified believers and Christians, who from then on were free to serve Christ throughout the whole world without any persecution from

the pagans. And, therefore, he says that *the sun will not shine upon them nor any heat of persecution*, and there will be no *tears in their eyes*.

#### THE SEVENTH SEAL.

*The Persecution of Julian the Apostate.*

8.1. Eighth and lastly, John foretells a very brief residue of persecution. For, we have read that Constantine's sons—Constantius, Constantine [II], and Constans—succeeded the most Christian emperor, Constantine.<sup>59</sup> And Constantius favored the Arians. And Constantine II called Julian the Apostate to the office of emperor, who turned from Christianity to paganism, and persecuted the church. And he *brought about in it silence* from divine worship. But since he only ruled for a year and eight months because he was killed in the war against the Persians, his persecution is compared to *half an hour*.



### GIOVANNI NANNI *Gloss on the Apocalypse*

#### ON REVELATION 4-7

The four living creatures and twenty-four elders in the heaven of the universal church are sitting around the Roman Church (Rev. 4). In this heaven of the universal church is a closed book (Rev. 5), which is divine foreordination concerning the future state of the church, which only the Lamb opens and reveals to his beloved, Saint John. Also, first he opened to him the mysteries of the seven seals (Rev. 6) by which were especially signified seven persecutions of martyrs before the emperor Constantine.

Therefore, these things in the first six chapters have been explained literally by some. Then, they assert that in the seventh chapter there is a prediction concerning Constantine *having the seal of the living God* (Rev. 7:2). He was preceded by four Roman emperors *to whom it had been given to harm* the church (Rev. 6:4). But afterward he did not harm Christians (Rev. 7:3), as ecclesiastical history and those things which [have been written] about Constantine [testify]. In his reign, many Jews and an infinite number of Gentiles came to faith in Christ.

# Notes



## INTRODUCTION

1. The results of the survey, conducted by *Newsweek*, were summarized in the newsletter of John L. Bray Ministry, Inc., October 23, 2000, 3. The first in the book series, a *New York Times* best seller, was *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days* by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1995). On the sales figures, Jeanne Halgren Kilde, review of *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America*, *Church History* 74 (2005): 410–12; David Malcolm Bennett, *Why Left Behind Should Be Left Behind* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2005), 11.

2. Bruce Bickel and Stan Jantz, *Revelation: Unlocking the Mysteries of the End Times* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2003), 89–91; Edward Hinson, *The Book of Revelation: Unlocking the Future* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002), 80–83; Tim LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 142–45; C. Marvin Pate, ed., *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 179–229; Thomas Ice and Timothy J. Demy, *Fast Facts on Bible Prophecy from A to Z* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997), 181–83; John F. Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1990), 552–58.

3. Koresh was composing a commentary on the seven seals during the siege of Mount Carmel, the Branch Davidian compound in Waco. The beginning of the commentary survives in “The David Koresh Manuscript” available online at <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/gopher/text/religion/koresh/Koresh%20Seals>. Cf. James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, “Unlocking the Seven Seals,” in *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 52–79; James Trimm, “David Koresh’s Seven Seals Teaching,” *Watchman Expositor* 11:4 (Arlington, TX: Watchman Fellowship, Inc., 1994): 7–8.

4. Pseudo-Alcuin: “Apocalypsis, ut dictum est, ex Graeco in Latinum revellatio interpretatur” (“Apocalypse, as is said, is interpreted from Greek into Latin as Revelation.”), *Commentariorum in Apocalypsim libri quinque*, PL 100:1090; Haimo: “Est autem Apocalypsis Graecus sermo, et Latine dicitur revellatio sive manifestatio” (“Moreover, Apocalypse is a Greek word, and in Latin it is called a revelation or manifestation”), *Haymonis halberstatensis episcopi expositionis in Apocalypsin B. Joannis Libri Septem*, PL 117:939; Berengaudus: “Apocalypsis, revellatio vel manifestatio interpretatur” (“Apocalypse is interpreted revelation or manifestation”), *Expositio super septem visiones libri apocalypsis*, PL 17:765; Rupert of Deutz: “ut apud Latinos diceretur Apocalypsis: quod nomen poterat in revellationem transferri” (“Among the Latins it is called Apocalypse. Its name could also be called Revelation”), *Commentaria in Apocalypsim*, PL 169:827. A twelfth-century manuscript of Beatus of Liébana’s commentary reads “Incipit Liber Revellationis Iohannis” (“Here begins the Book of the Revelation of John.”), *Sancti Beati a Liebana commentarius in Apocalypsin*, ed. E. Romero Pose, 2 vols. (Rome: Typis Officinae Polygraphicae, 1985), xvii, 3.

5. The name John is mentioned in the introduction (Rev. 1:1, 4) and conclusion (Rev. 22:8) of the book. Most of the authors of the texts translated in this volume associated this John with the apostle John. The commentary of pseudo-Jerome, however, while holding to the apostle’s authorship, shows awareness of the patristic controversy over the identity of the author (*Handbook on the Apocalypse*, CCSL 107:193).

6. Paula Fredriksen, “Apocalypse and Redemption in Early Christianity from John of Patmos to Augustine of Hippo,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 45 (1991): 151–83.

7. Hippolytus, a contemporary of Gaius, responded to his denial of the Apocalypse’s apostolicity with a polemical writing. Syriac fragments of it with English translations are found in John Gwynn, “Hippolytus and His ‘Heads against Caius,’” *Hermathena* 14 (1888): 397–418. Dionysius of Alexandria’s (d. 265) *Two Books on the Promises* (ANF 6:82) and Epiphanius of Salamis’s (d. 403) *Panarion* 51.3 (in Philip R. Amidon, trans., *The Panarion of St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990)) mention the repudiation of the Apocalypse by some in early Christianity.

8. Fragments of Hippolytus’s commentary, taking an eschatological approach, survived in a sixth-century Greek Apocalypse commentary by Andrew of Caesarea of Cappadocia, a twelfth-century Syriac Apocalypse commentary of Dionysius of Bar Salabi, and an anonymous thirteenth-century Arab commentary. These are gathered and translated into French in Pierre Prigent, “Hippolyte, commentateur de l’Apocalypse,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 28 (1972): 391–412; and Pierre Prigent and R. Stehly, “Les fragments du De Apocalypsi d’Hippolyte,”



*Theologische Zeitschrift* 29 (1973): 313–33. Although Tertullian of Carthage (d. 210) did not write a commentary on the Apocalypse, there is evidence in his treatise, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, chap. 25, that he interpreted it in an eschatological fashion (*ANF* 3:563).

9. Greek scholia on the Apocalypse attributed to Origen are edited in Constantine Diobouniotis and Adolf Harnack, eds., *Der Scholien-kommentar des Origenes zur Apokalypse Johannis*, Text und Untersuchungen 38:3 (Leipzig, 1911); J. Armitage Robinson, "Origen's Comments on the Apocalypse," *Journal of Theological Studies* 13 (1912): 295–97; C. H. Turner, "Document. Origen, Scholia in Apocalypsin," *Journal of Theological Studies* 25 (1923): 1–16; Caesarius of Arles and Origen, *L'Apocalypse expliquée par Césaire d'Arles. Scholies attribuées à Origène*, trans. Joël Courreau and Solange Bouquet, Collection les Pères dans la foi 36 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1989), 161–203. For recent scholarship on the authorship of the scholia, Éric Junod, "À propos des soi-disant scolies sur l'Apocalypse d'Origène," *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 20 (1984): 112–21.

10. Jerome declared that the Apocalypse contained as many mysteries as it did words, and that manifold meanings lie hidden in every word of it (*Epistle* 53, chap. 9). According to Augustine it contained many obscure passages and few passages plain enough to help interpret the obscure ones (*City of God* 20.17).

11. This is recorded in Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 51.32.2, in Amidon, *Panarion of St. Epiphanius*, 187.

12. Alberto del Campo Hernandez, *Comentario al Apocalipsis de Apringio de Beja* (Navarra, Spain: Editorial Verbo Divino, 1991), 40; E. Ann Matter, "The Pseudo-Alcuinian 'De Septem Sigillis': An Early Latin Apocalypse Exegesis," *Traditio* 36 (1980): 111–37 at 117 n. 11. On the liturgical use of the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages, C. Clifford Flanigan, "The Apocalypse and the Medieval Liturgy," in Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn, eds., *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 333–51.

13. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, IV.21. 3, *ANF* 1:493. Cf. Zane C. Hodges, "The First Horseman of the Apocalypse," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 119 (1962): 324–34; J. S. Considine, "The Rider on the White Horse (Apocalypse 6:1–8)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 6 (1944): 406–22.

14. Hilary of Poitiers, *Tractatus super Psalmos*, ed. Antonius Zingerle, CSEL 22:7.

15. The comments of Apringius on Rev. 1:1–5:7 and 18:6–22:20 have survived. However, in the Middle Ages a copyist supplied the missing middle section with the commentary of Victorinus-Jerome, see Roger Gryson, "Introduction," CCSL 107:17–9.

16. Braulio of Saragossa, *Letter 25*. FC 63:64; E. Reichert, "Apringius of Beja," *Dictionary of Early Christian Literature*, ed. Siegmur Döpp and Wilhelm Geerlings (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 45.

17. Marius Férotin, ed., *Apringius de Béja: Son commentaire de l'Apocalypse écrit sous Theudis, roi des Wisigoths* (531–548) (Paris: A. Picard, 1900); A. C. Vega, ed., "Apringii Pacensis Episcopi tractatus in Apocalypsin," *Scriptores Ecclesiastici Hispano-Latini Veteris et Medii Aevi*, Fasc. X–XII (Madrid: Typis Augustinianis monasterii escorialensis, 1941); PLS 4:1221–48; Campo Hernandez, *Comentario al apocalypsis*; Roger Gryson, ed., *Commentaria minora in Apocalypsin Johannis*, CCSL 107. Brief descriptions are in Martin McNamara, "The Newly-Identified Cambridge Apocalypse Commentary and the Reference Bible: A Preliminary Enquiry," *Peritia* 15 (2001): 208–56 at 213; Martine Dulaey, *Victorin de Poetovio premier exegete latin*, vol. 1 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1993), 360–62; and Kenneth B. Steinhauser, *The Apocalypse Commentary of Tyconius: A History of Its Reception and Influence* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 153–57.

18. Matter, "Pseudo-Alcuinian 'De Septem Sigillis,'" 111–37; PL 101: 1169–70.

19. Matter, "Pseudo-Alcuinian 'De Septem Sigillis,'" 119–20; PL 85:118.

20. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14276 and 14277 from the early ninth century; and Paris, BnF, lat. 11561, fols. 1v–217v from the mid-ninth century. There are also several fragmentary manuscripts. For descriptions of the reference Bible, Joseph F. Kelly, "A Catalogue of Early Medieval Hiberno-Latin Biblical Commentaries," *Traditio* 44 (1988): 538–71 at 552; Martin McNamara, "Plan and Source Analysis of *Das Bibelwerk*, Old Testament," in Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter, eds., *Irland und die Christenheit* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), 84–112; and Joseph F. Kelly, "*Das Bibelwerk*: Organization and Quellenanalyse of the New Testament Section," in Chatháin and Richter, *Irland und die Christenheit*, 113–23.

21. For a description of the Apocalypse commentary within the reference Bible, see Joseph F. Kelly, "Bede and the Irish Exegetical Tradition on the Apocalypse," *Revue Bénédictine* 92 (1982): 393–406 at 395–99. The large Apocalypse commentary of Primasius was edited by A. W. Adams in CCSL 92. Bede's commentary was translated into English by Edward Marshall, *The Explanation of the Apocalypse* (Oxford and London: James Parker and Co., 1878), but two new translations of it are forthcoming, one by Faith Wallis of McGill University for Liverpool University Press, and another by William Weinrich of the Luther Academy in Latvia for InterVarsity Press.

22. Martin McNamara, "The Affiliations and Origins of the *Catechesis Celtica*: An Ongoing Quest," in *The Scriptures and Early Medieval Ireland*, ed. Thomas

O'Loughlin (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 179–203 at 191; Martin McNamara, “Sources and affiliations of the *Catechesis Celtica* (MS Vat. Reg. Lat 49),” *Sacris Erudiri* 34 (1994): 185–237 at 217–18. See also Benjamin Hudson, “Time is Short: The Eschatology of the Early Gaelic Church,” in Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman, eds., *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2000), 101–23 at 109; and Diarmuid Ó Laoghaire, “Irish elements in the *Catechesis Celtica*,” in Chatháin and Richter, *Irland und die Christenheit*, 146–64.

23. A. Smith, “Hugh of St. Cher,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 7 (New York: Gale, 2003), 156; David M. Solomon, “The Sentence Commentary of Richard Fishacre and the Apocalypse Commentary of Hugh of St. Cher,” *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 46 (1976): 367–77 at 368.

24. *Aser pinguis* was printed in Basel in 1502 and 1504, Paris in 1531, Venice in 1600, Cologne in 1621, and Lyons in 1645. Robert E. Lerner, “Poverty, Preaching, and Eschatology in the Revelation Commentaries of ‘Hugh of St. Cher,’” in Katherine Walsh and Diana Wood, eds., *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley* (New York: Blackwell, 1985), 157–89 at 158, no. 2. Lerner argued that Hugh later composed a second Apocalypse commentary about 1240–1244 entitled *Vidit Jacob* that was printed among the works of Thomas Aquinas, e.g. *Super Apocalypsim I*, “*Vidit Jacob . . .*” (Milan: Editoria Elettronica Editel, 1992); and Aquinas, *Opera omnia* (New York: Musurgia, 1950), 23:325–511.

25. Coleman Jerman, “Hugh of St. Cher,” *Dominicana* 44 (1959): 338–47; Hyacinthe-Francois Dondaire, “Hugues de S. Cher et la condamnation de 1241,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 33 (1949): 170–74.

26. “Nicholas of Gorran,” in *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, ed. Michael Walsh (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 914; L. Meier, “Nicolas of Gorham, O. P., Author of the Commentary on the Apocalypse Erroneously Attributed to John Duns Scotus,” *Dominican Studies* 3:1 (1950): 359–62.

27. Dulaey, cited earlier, refers to Victorinus as “premier exégète latin” in the title of his two-volume study of Victorinus.

28. Victorinus-Jerome, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, ANF 7:350–52.

29. William S. Babcock, trans., *Tyconius: The Book of Rules* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989). Pamela Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius: Its Purpose and Inner Logic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 185, suggested that the *Book of Rules* not only served as an introduction to biblical exegesis, but was more specifically an introduction to Tyconius’s exegesis of the Apocalypse.

30. Paula Fredriksen, “Tyconius and Augustine on the Apocalypse,” in Emmermson and McGinn, *Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, 20–37 at 26; Bright, *Book of*

*Rules of Tyconius*, 43–44. Tyconius's commentary on Rev. 6:6–13, found in a fragment in Budapest, was edited in Gryson, "Fragments inédits du commentaire de Tyconius sur l'Apocalypse," *Revue Bénédictine* 107 (1997): 189–226.

31. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. and trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Pierre Cazier, "Le Livre des règles de Tyconius: Sa transmission du *De doctrina Christiana* aux *Sentences* d'Isidore de Séville," *Revue des études augustinienne*s 29 (1973): 241–61.

32. John Cassian, *Conferences* 14.8, trans. Colm Luibheid (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 160–61; Sandra M Schneiders, "Scripture and Spirituality," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff, and Jean Leclercq (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 1–20.

33. T. W. Mackay spoke of a "de-eschatologizing" of the Apocalypse that began in the fourth century and influenced the Apocalypse commentaries of Primasius and Bede in the early middle ages. As factors, Mackay highlights the preoccupation with the church and its triumph, the absorption of *Romanitas* into biblical exegesis, and the influence of Tyconius's rules and Augustine's approval of them, in MacKay, "Early Christian Exegesis of the Apocalypse," in vol. 3 of *Studia Biblica* 1978, edited by E. A. Livingstone. Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 3 (Sheffield, UK: 1980), 257–61.

34. Most of Caesarius's homilies were translated into English in the *Fathers of the Church* series (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press), vols. 31, 47, and 66. The homilies on the Apocalypse, however, have not been translated into English, although Spanish and French translations of them exist. E. Romero-Pose, ed., *Cesáreo de Arlés: Comentario al Apocalipsis* (Madrid: Editorial Ciudad Nueva, 1994); Joël Courreau, trans., *L'Apocalypse expliquée par Césaire d'Arles: Scholies attribuées à Origène* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1989). On the allegorical exegesis of Caesarius, H.G. Hamman and Joël Courreau, introduction to *L'Apocalypse expliquée par Césaire d'Arles*, 26–30; Joël Courreau, "L'Exégèse allégorique de Saint Césaire d'Arles," *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 4 (1977): 181–206, 241–68.

35. Steinhäuser, *Apocalypse Commentary of Tyconius*, 45–68 at 51.

36. Georg Langgärtner, "Der Apokalypse-Kommentar des Caesarius von Arles," *Theologie und Glaube* 57 (1967): 210–25; Germain Morin, "Le Commentaire homilétique de S. Césaire sur l'Apocalypse," *Revue Bénédictine* 45 (1933): 43–61; Montague Rhodes James, "Pseudo-Augustine on the Apocalypse," *Classical Review* 3 (1889): 222. The homilies are in PL 35:2417–52 under the name of Augustine, and the critical edition is in Germain Morin, ed., *Sancti Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis opera omnia*, vol. 2 (Bruges, Belgium: Desclée, De Brouwer et Cie, 1942), 209–77.

37. Romero-Pose, *Cesáreo de Arlés*; Steinhauser, *Apocalypse Commentary of Tyconius*, 267–316.

38. “Ea quae in Apocalypsi sancti Iohannis continentur, fratres carissimi, aliquibus ex antiquis patribus hoc visum est, quod aut tota aut certe maxima pars ex ipsa lectione diem iudicii vel adventum antichristi significare videatur; illi autem qui diligentius tractaverunt, quod ea quae in ipsa revelatione continentur, statim post passionem domini et salvatoris nostri fuerunt inchoata, et ita sunt usque ad diem iudicii consummanda, ut parva portio temporibus antichristi remanere videatur. Et idea quicquid in ipsa lectione recitari audieritis, sive filium hominis, sive stellas, sive angelos, sive candelabra, sive quattuor animalia, sive aquilam in medio caelo volantem, et reliqua omnia in Christo intellegite et in ecclesia fieri, vel in typo eius praedicta esse cognoscite.” Caesarius of Arles, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, 210–11.

39. Caesarius, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, 223–24. Cf. Primasius of Hadrumetum, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, ed. A.W. Adams, CCSL 92:94; Bede, *Explanation of the Apocalypse*, 38.

40. F. X. Murphy, “Cassiodorus Senator, Flavius Magnus Aurelius,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., 3:208–9; W. Bürgens, “Cassiodorus,” in *Dictionary of Early Christian Literature*, ed. Siegmund Döpp and Wilhelm Geerlings (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 117–19; S. J. B. Barnish, “The Work of Cassiodorus After His Conversion,” *Latomus* 48 (1989): 157–87.

41. In the preface to Cassiodorus’s treatise on orthography, where he says he is writing at age 93, he listed as a work written shortly before that treatise “a very brief explanation” of the Apocalypse (PL 70:1241). Roger Gryson’s introduction to the critical edition of the *Complexiones in Apocalypsi* (CCSL 107:101) dates the text about 580, as does A. J. Fridh, ed., *Magni Aurelii Cassiodori variarum libri XII*, CCSL 96:xi.

42. James J. O’Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 225; Leslie Webber Jones, introduction to *An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings*, by Cassiodorus Senator (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), 55. Descriptions of Cassiodorus’s Apocalypse commentary are in McNamara, “The Newly-Identified Cambridge Apocalypse Commentary,” 214; Dulaey, *Victorin de Poetovio*, 1:358; Steinhauser, *Apocalypse Commentary of Tyconius*, 89–98.

43. The patristic commentaries on the Apocalypse, which Cassiodorus possessed in the library at the Vivarium, are listed in his *An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings* 1.9, pp. 94–95.

44. Cassiodorus, *Complexiones in Apocalypsi*, CCSL 107:113.

45. Cassiodorus, *Complexiones in Apocalypsi*, CCSL 107:121.

46. The handbook is edited as “Incerti auctoris commemoratorium de Apocalypsi Johannis Apostoli” in Gryson, ed., *Commentaria minora in Apocalypsin Johannis*. CCSL 107:159–229. Grazio Lo Menzo Rapisarda edited the commentary from several manuscripts in her *Incerti Auctoris Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, *Miscellanea di Studi di letteratura Cristiana Antica* 16 (Catania: Centro di Studi sull’Antico Cristianesimo, 1967), reprinted in PLS 4:1850–1863. An edition of the commentary from a Bamberg manuscript was published in K. Hartung, *Ein Traktat Apokalypse der Apostels Johannes in einer Pergamenthandschrift der K. Bibliothek in Bamberg* (Bamberg: Gustav Duckstein, 1904). Descriptions of the handbook are included in Dulaey, *Victorin de Poetovio*, 1:358–59; Joseph F. Kelly, “A Catalogue of Early Medieval Hiberno-Latin Biblical Commentaries,” *Traditio* 45 (1989–90): 394–434 at 432–33; Joseph F. Kelly, “Bede and the Irish Exegetical Tradition on the Apocalypse,” *Revue Bénédictine* 92 (1982): 393–406 at 394–95; McNamara, “The Newly-Identified Cambridge Apocalypse Commentary,” 214–5; Martin McNamara, *Biblical Studies: The Medieval Irish Contribution*, *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 1 (Dublin: Dominican Publ., 1976), 143; Steinhauser, *Apocalypse Commentary of Tyconius*, 99–108.

47. Gryson, introduction to *Complexiones in Apocalypsi*, CCSL 107:181–82; Kenneth B. Steinhauser, “Bemerkungen zum pseudo-hieronymischen *Commemoratorium in Apocalypsin*,” *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 26 (1979): 220–42.

48. Pseudo-Jerome, *Handbook on the Apocalypse*, CCSL 107:194. This handbook is the main source of evidence for the lost twelve homilies of Origen or of pseudo-Origen on the Apocalypse, Joseph F. Kelly, “Early Medieval Evidence for Twelve Homilies by Origen on the Apocalypse,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 39 (1985): 273–79. Steinhauser (“Bemerkungen,” 232–36) suggested that material from these homilies of Origen may exist in the ninth-century homilies on Rev. 1:1–6, 4:1–10, and 14:1–5 of Smaragdus of Saint Mihiel, PL 102:48–50, 331–39, 475–77.

49. Kelly, “Bede and the Irish Exegetical Tradition on the Apocalypse,” 395.

50. Alcuin, *Explanatio Apocalypsis per interrogationem et respensionem*, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 13851, fols. 3r–31r. For description and its attribution to Alcuin, Marie Hélène Jullien and Francois Perelman, eds., *Clavis des auteurs latins du moyen age: Territoire Français 735–987*, vol. 2, *Alcuin*, *Clavis Scriptorum Latinorum Medii Aevi* 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 367–68; E. Ann Matter, “Alcuin’s Question-and-Answer Manual Texts,” *Revista di storia della filosofia* 4 (1990): 645–56. This text is not to be confused with the Apocalypse commentary attributed to Alcuin in PL 100:1085–1156, but which many scholars doubt is his. This latter commentary makes use of the Apocalypse commentary of Ambrose Autpert, making it later than 786. However, on Rev. 3:5:

*And I will not erase his name from the book of life*, is the phrase, “Magna nobis hoc loco oritur quaestio.” If this refers to the Gottschalk controversy on predestination, the commentary may have been written in the mid-ninth century.

51. For justification of this hermeneutical approach that saw all of human history encompassed in the visions of the Apocalypse, expositors pointed to Rev. 1:19 in which John is told to write down what was, is, and is going to come.

52. Primasius, *Commentarius in Apocalypsim*, CCSL 92:78–80; Bede the Venerable, *Explanation of the Apocalypse*, 37–38; Bede, *Bedae presbyteri expositio apocalypseos*, ed. Roger Gryson, CCSL 121A:295; Beatus, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, 1:617. Cf. Marjorie Reeves, “The Development of Apocalyptic Thought: Medieval Attitudes,” in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, ed. C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 40–72 at 67–68, no. 43.

53. Berengaudus, *Exposition of the Seven Visions*, PL 17:812. For recent discussion of the identity of Berengaudus and date of the commentary, see Derk Visser, *Apocalypse as Utopian Expectation (800–1500: The Apocalypse Commentary of Berengaudus of Ferrières and the Relationship between Exegesis, Liturgy and Iconography)* (New York: Brill, 1996).

54. Anselm of Havelberg, *Dialogues*, 1.7, cited in Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Tradition in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979; repr. 1999), 114; Jay T. Lees, *Anselm of Havelberg: Deeds into Words in the Twelfth Century*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 79 (New York: Brill, 1998); Walter Edyvean, *Anselm of Havelberg and the Theology of History* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1972).

55. Bernard McGinn, ed., *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1985); Delno West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore: A Study in Spiritual Perception and History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983); Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

56. Warwick Gould and Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, reprinted 1993; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Robert E. Lerner, “Joachim of Fiore’s Breakthrough to Chiliasm,” *Cristianesimo nella storia* 6 (1985): 489–512; Delno West, ed., *Joachim of Fiore in Christian Thought: Essays on the Influence of the Calabrian Prophet*, 2 vols. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1975).

57. M. F. Laughlin, “Joachim of Fiore,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed, 7:876–77; Marjorie Reeves and Beatrice Hirsch-Reich, “The Seven Seals of Joachim of Fiore,” *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale* 21 (1954): 211–47

at 226; Marjorie Reeves, "Appendix A: The Genuine and Spurious Works of Joachim," in her *Influence of Prophecy*, 511–26 at 516.

58. West and Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore*, 100. Modern printed editions of Joachim's *Liber de Concordia Novi ac Veteris Testamenti* include a facsimile reprint of a 1519 edition (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1983) and an edition by E. Randolph Daniel (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1983). A facsimile of a 1527 printed edition of Joachim's *Expositio in Apocalypsim* was published in Frankfurt in 1964.

59. McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 128; E. Randolph Daniel, "Joachim of Fiore: Patterns of History in the Apocalypse," in Emerson and McGinn, *Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, 72–88 at 79; E. B. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticæ*, 5th ed. (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1862), 4:387.

60. Robert E. Lerner, "Refreshment of the Saints: The Time after Antichrist as a Station for Earthly Progress in Medieval Thought," *Traditio* 32 (1976): 97–144.

61. The commentary was published with the works of Bernard of Siena (d. 1444) in Bernardinus Senensis, *Opera* (Paris: D. Moreau, 1635). On the proposed date of Vital's commentary, see David Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom: A Reading of the Apocalypse Commentary* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 45.

62. On the medieval development of the forty-five days of Dan. 12:12 into the concept of chiliasm, Robert E. Lerner, "The Medieval Return to the Thousand-Year Sabbath," in Emerson and McGinn, *Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, 51–71. A medieval tradition holding the length of the silence of Rev. 8:1 to be forty days and forty nights is represented in a fragment of an Irish Apocalypse, translated in Máire Herbert and Martin McNamara, *Irish Biblical Apocrypha: Selected Texts in Translation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 95.

63. These included Gerard of Borgo San Donnino, John of Parma, Bonaventure, Raymond Rigaud, Peter John Olivi, and Vital du Four, see Francis X. Gumerlock, *The Day and the Hour: A Chronicle of Christianity's Perennial Fascination with Predicting the End of the World* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2000), 69, 75; Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom*, 28, 49; Reeves, "Development of Apocalyptic Thought," 54–5; Reeves, *Influence of Prophecy*, 176, 207–9; West and Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore*, 102–3; P. Stephanus Bihel, "S. Franciscus Fuitne Angelus Sexti Sigilli?" *Antonianum* 2 (1927): 59–90.

64. On Proust Boneta's life and *Confession*, Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200–1350)* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 183–86; Gian Luca Potestà, "Radical Apocalyptic Movements in the Late Middle Ages," in Bernard McGinn, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 2:110–42 at 119–20; William Harold May,



“The Confession of Prouis Boneta Heretic and Heresiarch,” in *Essays in Medieval Life and Thought Presented in Honor of Austin Patterson Evans*, ed. John H. Mundy, Richard W. Emery, and Benjamin N. Nelson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), 3–30. A member of the Beguin community at Montpellier, Raymond John, possessed the Apocalypse commentary of Olivi.

65. On this linear historical reading of the Apocalypse, see Robert L. Thomas, “Literary Genre and Hermeneutics of the Apocalypse,” in *The Master’s Perspective on Biblical Prophecy*, ed. Robert L. Mayhue and Robert L. Thomas (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2002), 93–112 at 98; Arthur W. Wainwright, “The Apocalypse as a Chart of History,” chap. four of his *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 49–66; David Burr, “Antichrist and Islam in Medieval Franciscan Exegesis,” in John Victor Tolan, ed., *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam* (New York: Garland, 1996), 131–52 at 139; Philip Krey, “Many Readers but Few Followers: The Fate of Nicholas of Lyra’s ‘Apocalypse Commentary’ in the Hands of His Late-Medieval Admirers,” *Church History* 64 (1995): 185–201 at 189.

66. Rupert of Deutz (d. 1129), in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, interpreted the opening of the sixth seal in light of the historical information provided by Josephus and Eusebius (PL 169:957–58).

67. Ludovici Alcasar, *Vestigatio Arcani Sensus in Apocalypsi* (Antwerp: Heredes Martini Nutii, 1614; repr., 1619).

68. Kym Smith, *Redating the Revelation* (Blackwood, South Australia: Sherwood, 2001); David A. DeSilva, “The Social Setting of the Revelation of John: Conflicts Within, Fears Without,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 54 (1992): 273–302; Martin Bodlinger, “Le mythe de Néron de l’Apocalypse de Saint Jean au Talmud de Babylone,” *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 206 (1989): 21–40; Larry Kreitzer, “Hadrian and the Nero Redivivus Myth,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 79 (1988): 92–115; Paul Trudinger, “The ‘Nero Redivivus’ Rumour and the Date of the Apocalypse of John,” *St Mark’s Review* 131 (1987): 43–44; Adela Yarbro Collins, “Myth and History in the Book of Revelation: The Problem of Its Date,” in Baruch Halpern and Jon D. Levenson, eds., *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 377–403; Albert A. Bell, Jr., “The Date of John’s Apocalypse: The Evidence of Some Roman Historians Reconsidered,” *New Testament Studies* 25 (1978): 93–102.



## PART I

1. Apringius is expressing a common idea in early Christianity that the time allotted by God for the existence of the world from its creation to consummation is seven thousand years, mystically signified in the seven days of creation. Cf. 2 Pet. 3:8; pseudo-Barnabas, *Epistle of Barnabas* 15, *ANF* 1:146.

2. “This book . . . Father” is from Victorinus-Jerome, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, *ANF* 7:349.

3. “Corporatio.”

4. “Again, in another sense . . . alone”; cf. Victorinus-Jerome, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, *ANF* 7:349–50.

5. “No one *in heaven* . . . no spirit” is dependent upon Victorinus-Jerome, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, *ANF* 7:350.

6. *Haec* as in manuscript R, although the edition has *hoc*.

7. The mention of three *undas*, or immersions in baptism, helps to date the text before 633, when the Fourth Council of Toledo decreed a single immersion baptism for Catholics in Spain.

8. “Squared-off wood” is from the *Vetus Latina* “de lignis quadratis.”

9. Perhaps referring to a creed.

10. “Dicitur.” The multipliform use of the verb “dicere” in this section of the commentary governs the use throughout of “said” and “it is said” in brackets.

11. Cf. Primasius of Hadrumetum, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, *CCSL* 92:61.

12. “Because both . . . Old”; cf. Primasius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, *CCSL* 92:61; Ambrose Autpert, *Exposition on the Apocalypse*, *CCCM* 27:231.

13. “*In heaven* . . . dead”; cf. Victorinus-Jerome, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, *ANF* 7:350.

14. The edition and manuscript from which the edition is taken has the number *VII*, but it should more likely read *III*, and refers to a word’s invisibility, intangibility, and impassibility. Thus, the editor writes, “VII [sic ms; lege iii].” On the other hand, seven is possible because the author also elaborates on a word’s indestructibility from fire, impenetrability by sword, incapability of drowning, and heavenly origin.

15. Hugh’s Bible was apparently divided into chapter and letter rather than chapter and verse.

16. Genesis 21 in our Bible.

17. Psalm 18:11; Vulgate Psalm 17:12.

18. Psalm 47:5; Vulgate Psalm 46:6.



## PART II

19. The church, represented by the Lamb. Cf. Bede the Venerable, *Explanation of the Apocalypse*, 36: “Tichonius says that the Lamb is the Church, which has received all power in Christ.”

20. Morin’s edition has this reversed as “a parte totum intellegitur.” See, however, Caesarius’s comments on Rev. 6:12 in Homily 6: “a toto pars intellegitur.” The reversal is understandable, as the figure of synecdoche covers both when a part signifies a whole and when a whole signifies a part. Cf. Tyconius, *Book of Rules*, Rule 6.

21. In Morin and the PL editions of Caesarius, the paragraph of comment on Rev. 7:2–3, up to *sea*, is placed here at the beginning of this homily before the comments on Rev. 6:6. To me, it has all the appearance of a misplacement, the more appropriate place seeming to be between the comments on Rev. 6:15 and 7:3. However, there is no manuscript evidence to support such a placement. These comments are also placed before the comments on Rev. 6:6 in Beatus’s *Apocalypse commentary* and in a recension of Tyconius, leading Kenneth B. Steinhauser (*Apocalypse Commentary of Tyconius*, 61) to believe that this was its order in Tyconius’s original text, and that in copying from him Caesarius did not deviate from that order.

22. Although most English translations have “remove,” the Latin here and in the Vulgate is simply “movebo” or “I will move.” Hence, Caesarius sees a parallel between Rev. 2:5 and 6:14.

23. That is, the Antichrist.

24. Cf. Tertullian of Carthage, *On Flight in Persecution 2*. ANF 4:117.

25. While the Vulgate has “intus et foris,” Cassiodorus’s biblical version had “intus et retro”; hence the translation “front and back.” In the comment below this verse, however, Cassiodorus has “intus forisque,” probably indicating familiarity with a variant or another version.

26. The angels.

27. Cassiodorus’s explanation of the fourth seal has been cut out of the manuscript probably through an error of homoeoteleuton. Cf. Cassiodorus, *Complexiones in Apocalysin*, CCSL 107:119: “explicationem quarti sigilli per homoeoteleuton excidisse manifestum est.”

28. The commentator is saying that this was an angel in the generic sense, not a specific type from the nine orders of angels. See his comments on Rev. 5:13.

29. “Quattuor partes.” Modern critical editions of the Vulgate read “quartam partam” or a “fourth part.”

30. Here the commentator gives two solutions to the theological problem of reconciling the martyrs’ imprecations against their enemies with the gospel ordinance to love and pray for one’s enemies.

31. In the late fourth century, Jovinian and Helvedius, in their efforts to equalize the status of all believers in reaction to an exaltation of the state of celibacy, were accused of denying that there is a diversity of glory in heaven based on merits earned on earth. Therefore, lest one think because all in Rev. 7:11 were wearing the same color robes they all had received the same reward, the student of Cassiodorus asserts the “orthodox” position, i.e., that there is a diversity of rewards.

32. The Latin word for earthquake is *terraemotus*, literally, “a movement of the earth”; hence, the comments about movement in and out of the faith.

33. “Qui liber est a servitute dei.”

34. Cf. Bede the Venerable, *Explanation of the Apocalypse*, 34. Bede, *Bedae presbyteri expositio apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A:287.

35. Cf. Bede the Venerable, *Explanation of the Apocalypse*, 34–35. Bede, *Bedae presbyteri expositio apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A:287.

36. Cf. Bede the Venerable, *Explanation of the Apocalypse*, 35. Bede, *Bedae presbyteri expositio apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A:289.

37. Cf. Bede the Venerable, *Explanation of the Apocalypse*, 35. Bede, *Bedae presbyteri expositio apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A:289.

38. Cf. Bede the Venerable, *Explanation of the Apocalypse*, 35. Bede, *Bedae presbyteri expositio apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A:289.

39. Cf. Bede the Venerable, *Explanation of the Apocalypse*, 37–38. Bede, *Bedae presbyteri expositio apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A:295.



### PART III

40. That is, from the body through death.

41. The verb in the phrase, “factum est silentium in coelo,” or “there was silence in heaven,” is in the perfect (past) tense.

42. Jerome, “On Daniel 12:12,” in his *Commentary on Daniel*. In actuality, however, Jerome said that it would be a period of forty-five days, not forty days.

43. Vital infers that the duration of forty days should not be interpreted literally; for if the Last Judgment were to take place exactly forty days after the death of Antichrist, it would contradict Jesus’ teaching as recorded in Matthew

24:36, which says that that day has not been revealed. Vital continues that, on the other hand, Jesus did give an indication of when it would be near, that is, the sign of the abomination of desolation.

44. A Spiritual Franciscan by the name of Raymond John.

45. "Bibliae."

46. Caligula.

47. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.3. This source of Auriol was written in the fourth century.

48. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.2, 26.

49. Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.9,3. Josephus wrote this history in the late first century.

50. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.5.

51. The edition here has Titus as Domitian's "pater" or "father," but it should read "frater," that is, his "brother."

52. Ariol's biblical text contained the variant "quatuor partes," or "four parts." Modern critical editions of the Vulgate have "quartam partam," or "a fourth part," a quantity that is significantly less.

53. Second in Ariol's list of emperors who enacted general persecutions.

54. In answer to their question, "*How long, O Lord, . . . ?*" (Rev. 6:10).

55. The story of the apostasy of Pope Marcellinus (296–304) was spread by the Donatists in North Africa. Augustine (d. 430), however, said that the story was not credible.

56. The edition has *praedicatur*, or "is preached," but it should probably read *praedicitur*, "is foretold," since Auriol uses the word *praedicit* consistently throughout the discourse.

57. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, bk. 9.

58. *Pacificus Christianis*, or "peaceful toward the Christians," was supplied by the editor of the printed edition whose exemplar contained *pacificus Christianus*, or that Licinius was at first a "peacemaking Christian."

59. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, bk. 10.

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