Visions of the End

Commentary on the Apocalypse by Victorinus, 304 CE

From the First Chapter.

1. The beginning of the book is the key of the things that are to be said. He says, I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. These are the names of the letters, and the letters themselves. He says these, and He will say them again, and He is not silent; but in these He has shown that in Him is the beginning of all things, and the end of all. For at His coming, when He had taken a beginning from the Virgin's womb, the Holy Spirit said by the prophet: You are my Son, this day have I begotten You. And when He comes to the end of the world to judge the world, He will be seen by the apostles as the Holy Spirit says, in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven. But what He says also is to be carefully observed: I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He says that He will give the Holy Spirit; and where He says this, He says also, I am the beginning and the end. He, therefore, who is the beginning and the end, promises to give the Holy Spirit; for the Holy Spirit is the fountain of the water of life.

3. This is the Revelation of Jesus Christ. He says this, because the Son of man is understood to be meant. But after His resurrection, when He had been seen by the apostles, He was assumed into the heavens, that He might send the Holy Spirit to the apostles, who should form the new Church, that is, the body of Christ; and thenceforth the Revelation of Jesus Christ begins.

Ver. 4. John to the seven churches which are in Asia.

What the seven churches and the seven candlesticks are, he repeats in the end of the book; and by the seven churches, he means the one Catholic Church, because the Apostle Paul also names seven churches in his Epistles, and yet he is found to have written to more; for he so speaks to the Colossians: And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. It is manifest that there was an eighth. And that this is true, the Lord says to the same John: You shall prophesy again to the peoples, and tongues, and nations, and many kings. He says again; and when he says again, it is manifest that he had prophesied before. What, therefore, he says to the seven churches, he says to the one Church. For the seven stars are the seven churches, that is, the one Catholic Church.

From the Second Chapter.

Ver. 1. Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write.

These things, says He, I have against you, that you have left your first charity. He says this, because they were then in the beginning of the faith; and who can be without fault?

From the Third Chapter.

Ver. 1. And to the angel of the church in Sardis write.

That is, you say that you live, but you are dead. The works that are manifest are not the works of God, but your own.

From the Fourth Chapter.

Ver. 1. After this, I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven.

The new testament is a door opened in heaven. And that a door was opened, means that now no one is hindered from believing on the Son of God, and on the Father through the Son. A door opened in heaven is the gift of the future life. For he who has believed on the Son of God, has a door opened in heaven.

From the Fifth Chapter.

Ver. 1. And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and without, sealed with seven seals.

This book is the Old Testament, which was given into the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ, who received from the Father the power of judgment. He it is who should open that book.

From the Sixth Chapter.

Ver. 1. And I saw when the Lamb had opened one of the seven seals.

The first seal being opened, he says that he saw a white horse, and a crowned horseman, having a bow. This is the word of the Lord, sent into the world, which has subdued the hearts of men. For the Lord says: I went out conquering, that I might conquer. And the crown on his head is the promise of the life which is to come. And the bow is the power of the word, which penetrates the hearts of men.

From the Seventh Chapter.

Ver. 2. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God.

He speaks of Elias the prophet, who is the precursor of the times of Antichrist, for the restoration and establishment of the churches from the great and intolerable persecution. We read in the Gospel that the disciples asked the Lord, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And the Lord answered and said, Elias shall first come, and restore all things. And in another place: Elias has come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. And He spoke of John the Baptist. But here He speaks of the second coming of Elias. For he who has the seal of the living God, is Elias the prophet. But that he should have the seal of the living God, is that he should have the power of God. For God is called the living God, in opposition to the gods of the nations, which are of no avail. Therefore he is sent to the last times, that he may prepare the way for the Lord.

From the Eighth Chapter.

Ver. 2. And I saw seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

The seven angels are the seven spirits which are always in the presence of God. And the seven trumpets are the announcement of the judgments which are about to come upon the whole world.

From the Ninth Chapter.

Ver. 1. And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth.

The star that fell from heaven is the devil, who was cast down from his glory. And to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. This is the power which was given to him over the wicked.

From the Tenth Chapter.

Ver. 2. And he had in his hand a little book open.

This little book is the New Testament. And he had it open in his hand, that is, the revelation which he had received from the Lord. For the Old Testament was sealed, but the New is open. And when he says that he ate the book, he signifies the grace of God, which is sweet to the believer. And when he says that his belly was bitter, he signifies the judgment of God, which is bitter to the sinner.

From the Eleventh Chapter.

Ver. 1. And there was given me a reed like unto a rod.

This is the type of the Church. A reed like a rod signifies the power of the kingdom which is given to the Church, because it has received the power of binding and loosing. And the measuring of the temple, and the altar, and them that worship therein, signifies the separation of the good from the evil.

From the Twelfth Chapter.

Ver. 1. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun.

The woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars, is the Church. The sun with which she is clothed is the Lord Jesus Christ. The moon under her feet is the world, which is subject to the Church. And the crown of twelve stars on her head, is the doctrine of the apostles.

From the Thirteenth Chapter.

Ver. 1. And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea.

The beast which rises out of the sea is Antichrist. The seven heads are the seven kings of the Romans, from whom Antichrist is to come. And the ten horns are the ten kings who will divide the world among themselves. And the blasphemy on his heads is the worship of idols, which he will establish.

From the Fourteenth Chapter.

Ver. 1. And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion.

The Lamb standing on Mount Sion is the Lord Jesus Christ, who has established His Church on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. And the hundred and forty-four thousand who were with Him, are the believers who have been sealed with the seal of the living God.

From the Fifteenth Chapter.

Ver. 1. And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues.

These seven angels are the seven archangels who stand before God, who are sent to execute the last judgments of God upon the world. And the seven last plagues are the consummation of the wrath of God, which is to be poured out upon the ungodly.

From the Sixteenth Chapter.

Ver. 1. And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

The voice out of the temple is the command of God. And the pouring out of the vials of the wrath of God is the execution of His judgments upon the wicked.

From the Seventeenth Chapter.

Ver. 1. And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto you the judgment of the great whore that sits upon many waters.

The great whore is the city of Rome, which has dominion over the kings of the earth. The many waters are the peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues, which are subject to her. And the seven heads are the seven hills on which the city is built. And the ten horns are the ten kings who will receive power with the beast.

From the Eighteenth Chapter.

Ver. 2. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.

Babylon the great is the city of Rome. Her fall is the destruction of her power and dominion. And the kings of the earth who have committed fornication with her, are the rulers who have been subject to her.

From the Nineteenth Chapter.

Ver. 11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True.

The white horse is the word of God. He that sat upon him is the Lord Jesus Christ, who comes to judge the world. His eyes were as a flame of fire, signifying the power of His divinity. And on His head were many crowns, signifying the multitude of the kingdoms which He has subdued.

From the Twentieth Chapter.

Ver. 1. And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

The angel who comes down from heaven is the Lord Jesus Christ. The key of the bottomless pit is the power of binding and loosing. The great chain is the power of His word, by which He binds the devil.

From the Twenty-first Chapter.

Ver. 1. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

The new heaven and the new earth are the future kingdom of God, in which the righteous will dwell forever. The first heaven and the first earth were passed away, signifies the destruction of the present world. And there was no more sea, signifies the abolition of all tribulations and sorrows.

From the Twenty-second Chapter.

Ver. 1. And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

The river of water of life is the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. The tree of life, which is on both sides of the river, is the Lord Jesus Christ, who gives life to all who believe in Him. And the twelve manner of fruits which it yields every month, are the graces of the Holy Spirit, which are given to the believers in every season.