

Revelation 10:5-7. The Angel's Oath

But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.
— Revelation 10:7 (KJV)

This is the continuation of [The Last Prophecy: An Abridgment of Elliott's Horae Apocalypticae.](#)

Chronological Notice Of The Reformation.

[5] And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

[6] And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

[7] But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. (Rev 10:5-7)

ANOTHER GRACIOUS ANNOUNCEMENT, revealed at the same juncture, proceeding from the same Divine Messenger of the Covenant, and bearing the attestation of his own solemn oath! And to what end? Is it not that they "might have a strong consolation" who have fled to Jesus, the hope anew set before them? At a time when truth was struggling to emerge from long-continued darkness – when the conflicting principles and forces of Christ and Antichrist were gathering for the battle, and fresh trials and tribulations were preparing for the faithful witnesses for Jesus – how consolatory to these to be assured by God's own Word that the desired consummation was drawing nigh, and that yet a little while, and the great mystery of God in providence and in prophecy shall be accomplished! How solemn and quickening too the thought! For time, it was said, would be extended no further (such seems the meaning of the clause) to the Antichristian tyranny whose thunders had just before echoed on the scene; but that in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, at what time soever he might be destined to sound, all would be consummated according to the glad tidings declared to the prophets.

Truly it must have cheered the heart of St. John in this prolonged vision of good overborne by evil, and of the flock of Christ harassed and persecuted by the world of ungodliness, to have been enabled to mark, as it were, on the chronometer of heaven the advance of the hour of deliverance, and to have the assurance of his Lord himself that the longed-for day was approaching. But here, as in other places, the Apostle must be considered in his representative character; and the inference follows, that there ought to have been at this period, both with Luther and amongst the other fathers of the Reformation, a strong and prevailing expectation of the approaching end. We have seen in former visions how impressions were widely and deeply experienced in the Church that corresponded with the solemn chronological

notices 'on the Apocalyptic scene. According to the intimation under the fifth seal given to the souls under the altar, the Church at the epoch corresponding did expect, we saw, that a new and distinct period of martyrdom would intervene before the end. Again, agreeably with the cry of "Woe to the earth by reason of the three trumpets yet to sound," occurring just before the blast of the fifth angel, there was at the corresponding date a very general portending of the world's end, and of fearful trials accompanying it. In like manner, correspondently with the intimation here made to St. John, we learn that a strong persuasion existed just at the time of the Reformation, not only that the era was remarkable, but that a new dispensation was near at hand. The burst of intellect and of literature consequent on the invention of printing, the discovery and so-called Christianization of a new world, excited expectations among all, and Papists said the glory of the Pope's kingdom was about to be extended over the world.

Very different truly, and grounded chiefly on very different considerations, was the expectation of the true Church, though in it too high anticipations were raised. Once that Antichrist had been discovered to exist, and that in strength and power, they looked for his downfall; and now that the Bible was drawn forth from its concealment, they expected that Papal superstition should fall by means of the "breath of the Lord," as well as by the "brightness of his coming," according to the Scriptural predictions referred to in the angel's oath. (Dan. 7:26; 2 Thess. 2:8) Specially then did Luther and the German Reformers look forward with hope to the fulfillment of these promises; while the Reformers of England and Switzerland seized on this very passage of the Apocalypse, and, calculating that the chronological place then reached in the prophetic history of the Church was that of the sixth trumpet, waited in expectation of the sounding of the seventh, and the consummation consequent on it.

In answer to the Pope's bull of condemnation Luther writes, "Sure that our Lord Jesus reigneth, I fear not thousands of popes. Oh, that God may at length visit us, and cause to shine forth the glory of Christ's coming, wherewith to destroy that man of sin!" Writing to Staupitz the next year he says, "The abominations of the Pope, With his whole kingdom, must be destroyed; and the Lord does this without hand, by his word alone." Again, "The kingdom of Antichrist, according to the prophet Daniel, must be broken without hand; that is, the Scriptures will be understood by and by, and every one will preach and speak against Papal tyranny from the Word of God, until (and here he quotes St. Paul) this 'man of sin' is deserted by all his adherents, and dies of himself." Again, to the Duke of Savoy, on hearing that he favored the Reformation; – "Let those who sincerely preach the Gospel be protected; this is the way in which Christ will destroy Antichrist by 'the breath of his mouth;' and thus, as it is in Daniel, 'he shall be broken without hand,' whose coming is with lying wonders." Nor did the adoption and misuse of the same idea by fanatics alter his views. It only seemed to him quite in accordance with the usual device of Satan to attempt to overthrow truth by counterfeit. As he advanced in life, he only gathered that some things yet remained to be accomplished before the end, – some wasting away of the Papal power through the Gospel word, some temporary apostasy possibly of the Protestant body, and consequent brief revival of Papal ascendancy;

perhaps, too, some confederation of Pope and Turk against Christ's faithful protesting ones. To the last (though baffled in attempting to fix a date in accordance with Scripture), the idea did not forsake him, and this thought cheered him in his dying hour, that soon the coming of Christ should appear. Melanchthon's views were very similar. Like Luther he explained the apostate king of Daniel 11, in respect of his "abomination making desolate," his pride, tyranny, and fated end (as well as the little horn of Daniel 8), to mean the popes and popedom. He also used the chronological argument, long noted before his time by Christians, of the seven days of the creation being a type of the duration of the world. "Six thousand years shall this world stand, and after that be destroyed, 2000 years without the law, 2000 years under the law of Moses, and 2000 years under the Messiah; and if any of these years be not fulfilled, they will be shortened on account of our sins, as intimated by Christ." He felt persuaded that the protest against Antichrist, and the consequent Reformation, was that very consumption of the enemy predicted by Daniel and St. Paul to occur just before his end and final destruction at Christ's coming.

The Swiss Reformers contemporary with Luther and Melanchthon wrote in the same strain. One of these, Leo Juda, in A.D. 1552, in a commentary on the Apocalypse, applying the charges of murder, idolatry, sorceries, fornications, etc., in the ninth chapter to the then Church of Rome, and the tenth chapter generally to the Reformation, writes of the passage before us, "Christ taketh an oath, and sweareth by God his heavenly Father, even with great fervency, that the time of his coming to judge the quick and the dead is now nigh at hand, and that when the victory that was prophesied to be fulfilled of Antichrist (which victory the seventh angel must blow forth according to his office) were once past, then should altogether be fulfilled what all prophets did ever prophesy of the kingdom of Messiah the Saviour, which is the highest mystery." Bullinger, in A.D. 1555, speaks in similar terms and with a like application; – "Christ swears that there is but one trumpet remaining; therefore let us lift up our heads, because our redemption draweth nigh."

In Britain, that isle of the sea, on which the Angel planted his right foot, we find Bishop Latimer expressing the same hope; – "St. Paul saith the Lord will not come till the swerving from the faith cometh, which thing is already done and past. Antichrist is known throughout the world. Wherefore the day is not far off." He also takes the chronological view of the world's endurance to be 6000 years, and says, "So there is now left but 448 years, and even these days shall be shortened for the elect's sake." Moreover, in an Advent sermon he says, in allusion to the shortening of the days, "So that peradventure it (the second Advent) may come in my days, old as I am, or in my children's days."

Another example is furnished by Bale, afterwards Bishop of Ossory. In a commentary on the Apocalypse he applies the passage before us to his own time, A.D. 1545, as being then in the sixth age of the Church, and the seventh trumpet only as being yet to come. Again, on Rev. 20:3, after recounting a list of Christian confessors, including Luther, Melanchthon, etc., by whom Antichrist's tyranny had been disclosed, he says, "I doubt not

but within few days the breath of Christ's mouth, which is his living Gospel, shall utterly destroy him."

We need not adduce more to establish the fact that, from the time of Luther's and Zwingli's discovery of the Antichrist of prophecy being none other than the Roman Popes, the conviction was strongly impressed on their minds, as by divine communication, that the time of Antichrist's destruction, though not yet come, was not far remote, and therewith an expectation of the coming of Christ's kingdom and the ending of the mystery of God.

Nor did this prophetic chronological discovery die away through the whole of this and the subsequent century. Indeed from it, as from a point of light, Protestant interpreters have made their way to the solution of other parts of the Apocalyptic prophecy, even to the present day.

Not the Reformers only, but numbers of the Lord's faithful and tried servants ever since that time have found in the Angel's information, thus conveyed, a source of comfort and encouragement most influential and practical, suited above all things to animate them for the great work they have had before them, – the doing and suffering, in all their subsequent conflicts, as the Lord's witnesses, with Antichrist, the world, and Satan. Must we not see and admire the goodness and wisdom of God in this revelation?

Continued in [Revelation 10:8-11 And 11:1-2. The Covenant Angel's Commission](#)

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