

“And to the angel of the Ecclesia of the Smyrneans write These things saith the First and the Last, who was dead and lived: I have known thy works and the tribulation and the poverty though thy art rich, and the blasphemy of those who say that they themselves are Jews and are not but a synagogue of the Satan.

“Fear not the things which thou shalt suffer. Behold the Diabolos will cast of you into prison, that ye may be tempted, and ye will have a tribulation of ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give to thee the coronal wreath of the life”.

“He that hath an ear let him hearken to what the Spirit saith to the ecclesias; he who overcomes shall not be injured by the second death”.

Translation by John Thomas from Eureka.

Relevant sections from Eureka volume 1. Brown p219 – 265
Section 2 Paragraphs 1-7.

This is the shortest section of any of the seven epistles in terms of the number of verses the Holy Spirit ascribes to the narrative. This may reflect the intensity of the concentration of issues when open persecution results. The matter is often simple and straightforward. The choices are stark, support Jesus Christ or compromise to your own doom. Dr Thomas spends significantly more on this subject than the latter sections of the book which are sadly under expounded.

There is no open criticism of the Ecclesia mentioned here. They were spiritually rich but materially poor. Those who are openly persecuted are often poor. The materially rich tend to be by passed or they could purchase exemption from the persecution and there by escape. They stand in stark contrast to the last of the seven Ecclesias the Laodicean, which is rich and increased

in goods and need nothing! How many prefer the comfort of a higher standard of living to security in the One True Hope.

There is a change of pronoun in these verses. The use of both thee and thou, singular, and ye and you, plural, reflects that although the angel of the Ecclesia is being addressed this represents a plural eldership. There is also the sense that the congregation and the eldership are meant to be understood by this declension. If this is so, then the deliverance of the eldership is emphasised at the silence of the congregation! It perhaps illustrates the pivotal role leadership places at such a dramatic time. Each must stand for themselves as individuals but the fate of many can be influenced by the faithful stance of a resolute few. It also implies that the Ecclesia cannot be saved as an entire unit – it is not “*I will give **ye** a crown of life*” but “*I will give **thee** a crown of life*”. Salvation is affected by the company we keep but ultimately, we stand or fall on our own decisions and actions and beliefs.

As ever, the Holy spirit reminds all the readers that it is he who hears (no individual reading necessary, you can just listen) and takes the necessary action, here – “*he that overcomes*” – that is rewarded. Faith alone without works, is never enough!

Who are these adversaries who say they are Jews and are not? Are they physical Jews who belie their inherited status by refusing to worship the God of Israel? Or does this refer to those who claim to be spiritual Jews but have no understanding of the Hope of Israel? Regarding the Truth holders there was a growing division between the false church, the mystery of iniquity “which doth already work” in the first century and themselves. Also, there was a growing difference between way that the secular world regarded the early church as no longer being a sect of Judaism but now a completely different religion in its own right and rejected by the literal children of Abraham.

In the Chronological Tableau of the Apostacy p428 Dr Thomas lists the Smyranean period of persecution as being from 167 – 177 and to include Justin Martyr Polycarp, those at Lyons and Irenaeus. This requires a precise fulfilment of each epistle in a historical context during the period of the seals. This active persecution against the growing popularity of the early church precedes the violence of the Red horse period. Much more on how that all can be understood as the drama unfolds.

The alternative view is that the epistle to the Smyrneans refers to the generic condition of a persecuted ecclesia down through the long period of the time of the gentiles, and the issues which they face. Any ecclesia being persecuted can draw strength therefrom.

There are two main difficulties with the strict limited historical view expounded in Eureka. First the period involved equate to the first six epistles covering the time up until the arrival of Constantine and the politicalisation of Christianity as a state religion. This means that the Laodicean period lasts for about 1,700 years whereas all the other six from Ephesus to Philadelphia last for a total of about 250 years or about 40 years on average. That is a massive divergence.

The second element is perhaps even more significant. These epistles are not phases of apostasy as many expound, but phases of truth! Christ walks in the midst of the seven lampstands, he continues to engage even with Laodicea as we shall see in more detail when that section is expounded more fully.

Dr Thomas lifted much of his understanding of this development from other writers who did not hold nor preach the Truth. They understood the development of the early church as one of stumbling manifestation, not utter corruption and apostasy. None of the sects mentioned in the writings of the early church fathers, believed as we do about basic Bible

doctrines, hence we must approach with extreme scepticism any interpretation which has the development of orthodox Christianity as having anything beyond a nominal association with Jesus Christ and the Hope of Israel.

As such, during the period of the Laodicean delusion, if the long-time scale is accepted, then during those centuries more is seen amongst the truth holders than being distracted by wealth. Rather it is frequented many times by complacency, open persecution, compromised situations, reticence, failing numbers and hypocrisy, unappreciation as well as affluence, that is all the issues presented in all the seven epistles, not just the last one.

The strict ten-day period cited, is not then ten years of specific persecution at a certain time in Roman history but the understanding that every persecution is time limited in the mercy of God and whilst it may seem endless while being experienced, it will be brought to a conclusion at His behest.

The section on “a day for a year” in Eureka is however very apposite and is found on page 257. This is an interesting presentation on “the ideal condensation” and such like terms and sets out the basis of how prophecy uses symbolism, as well as a thorough review of the scriptural case for why a day is often put for a year in scriptural language.

Also, the section in Eureka on the diabolos, subsection 4 page 241 is also very useful as it refocuses the reader upon the Doctor’s understanding of sin in human nature in contrast with popular theories of an immortal anti-god. Here are some of the quotes that stand out for me. “SIN is a word in Paul’s argument which stands for human nature with its affections and desires”. “So that his own lust is the Diabolos”. “This perishing body is “sin” and left to perish because of “sin”.

Sin in two counts, not just one as it is often misunderstood to be. Anyone who wants to counter false views should find this exposition useful.

A Voice from the Altar

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