

THE ARGUMENT OF THE APOCALYPSE OF S. IOHN.

That which the old Testament foretold of Christ himself, the Apostles could report the fulfilling thereof in the new Testament, by way of an historie, euen from his Conception to his Glorification. But of his Church, they could not doe the like: because in their time it did but begin: being to continue long after them, euen to the end of the world, and then at length to be glorified, as Christ her Spouse al-readie is. Hereupon God would haue S. Luke to report in the Actes of the Apostles the storie of the Churches beginning, and for the rest of it to the end, (that we might receiue this benefit also by the Apostles hands) he would S. Iohn to tel vs of it in this booke by way of a prophecie.

*Hier. ad
Paulin.*

Of which booke S. Hierome faith: *The Apocalypse of S. Iohn hath as many sacraments or mysteries, as words. Yea more then that, In euery word there are hid manifold and fundrie senses.* Therefore it is very litle that can here be noted, in respect. Yet to giue the good Catholike (whose comfort is here) some litle help, the booke may be deuided into fiue partes.

Ca. 1. 2. 3.

The first (after the Proceme) containeth seuen Epistles from Christ now in glorie, to seuen Churches of Asia, or (for, these he maketh al one) to the seuen Bishops of those Churches: meaning not to those only, but to al his Churches and Bishops through-out the world: saying therefore in euery one of them, to al in general: *He that hath an eare, let him heare what the Spirit saith to the Churches.* As also in euery one he exhorteth vs to fight manfully (in this spiritual warfare of ours against sinne) for the victorie, and in euery one accordingly promiseth vs a reward in Heauen. But before this, in the beginning of euery one, he partly commendeth, partly reprehendeth, and exhorteth to penance. Where this is much to be noted and feared, that among so many, he reproveth some-what in al, saue only in two, which

1. part.

are the *second* & the *fixt*. In the beginning also of every one, he taketh some peece out of the apparition going before, to frame thereof his style agreeably to the matter of each Epistle.

Ca. 4. to the 8.

After this admonition to Pastours and their flocks, the second part followeth, wherein the Church and whole course thereof from the beginning to the end, is expressed in the opening of a booke in God's hand, and the seven seales thereof, by Christ. For the which, he seeth praise sung now in Heauen, and earth, not only to the Godhead, as before, but also (after a new manner) to Christ according to his Manhood. And here, when he is come to the opening of the last seale, signifying

Ca. 8. to the 12.

Domes-day, he letteth that matter alone for a while, and to speake more fully yet of the said course of the Church, he bringeth in another pageant (as it were) of seven Angels with seven Trumpets. The effect of both the Seales and Trumpets, is this: That the Church beginning and proceeding, there should be raised against it, cruel persecutions, and pestilent heresies: and at length after all heresies, a certaine most blasphemous Apostasie, being the next preparatiue to the coming of Antichrist: After all which, Antichrist himself in person shall appear in the time of the sixth seale, and sixth trumpet, persecuting and seducing (for the short time of his reigne) more then all before him. The Church notwithstanding shall still continue, and wade through all, because Christ her Spouse is stronger then all these aduersaries. Who also straight after the said sixth time, shall in the seventh come in maiestie and iudge all.

Ca. 12, 13, 14.

Of the which iudgement, differing yet a while to speake at large, he doth first in the third part intreat more fully of the Diuels working by Antichrist and his companie against the Church, that the iustice of Christ afterward in iudging may be more manifest.

C. 15. to the 21.

At length therefore in the fourth part he cometh to the seven last plagues, the seventh of them containing the final damnation of the whole multitude, societie or corps of the wicked, from the beginning of the world to the end. Which multitude, in the *Ghospel*

and *first Epistle of this fame S. Iohn* (as also in the other Scriptures commonly) is often called *Mundus, the world*. And here he calleth it partly, *Meretricem, a whore or harlot*, because with her concupiscence she entifeth the carnal and earthly men away from God: partly, *Ciuitatem Babylon, the Citie of Babylon*, because it maketh warre againft Hierufalem the Citie of God, and laboureth to hold God's people captiue in finne, as it was shadowed in Nabuchodonofor and his Babylonians, leading and holding the Iewes with their Hierufalem, in captiuitie, vntil Cyrus (in figure of Chrifft) deliuered them. But whether al thefe feuen plagues should be vnderftood (as the feuenth) of Domef-day it-felf, it is hard to define. More like it is, that the first fixe are to goe before Domef-day: but whether corporally and literally, (fo as Moyfes plagued Ægypt) or rather fpiritually, it is more hard to define. Yet it feemeth more eafie, to vnderftand them corporally, as also the plagues wherewith Elias and his fellow shal in the time of Antichrift plague the wicked (which peraduanture shal be the fame laft plagues) whereof we read in this booke *c. 11. v. 6*. But not content to haue defcribed thus the damnation of the whole adulterous and bloody focietie, he doth also exprefly report of their three grãd Captaines damnation, which are thefe, Antichrift, and his Falfe-prophet, and the Diuel himfelf the Authour of al this mifchiefe.

C. 21. 22. Finally, on the other fide, in the fifth part he reporteth the vnſpeakeable and euerlafting glorie, that the Church after al this fuffering shal by Chrifft her glorious Spouſe be affummed vnto. And fo concludeth the booke. 5.