The Coptic Apocalypse of Daniel

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There are at least nine texts calling themselves the "Apocalypse of Daniel." This text, written in Coptic, dates from the crusader period, a little after 1187 AD, and is extant in Ms. Paris, BNF copte. 58. It was published by Woide, Appendix ad editionem N. T. graeci e codici Alexandrino, Oxford, 1799, and translated into French by Frédéric Macler in 1896. The journal is online here, although non-US viewers must currently use an anonymizer in order to access it. In the manuscript which transmits the text to us, the book of Daniel appears, divided into thirteen "visions." It is then followed by this text, called the "Fourteenth vision." The translation that follows has no scholarly value; it is a translation of Macler's French version, with a short selection of his notes. But I hope that it will make this text more accessible. Roger Pearse April 2009

THE FOURTEENTH VISION OF DANIEL

[Translated by Frédéric Macler] 1. In the third year of Cyrus the Persian, who captured Babylon, a word was revealed to Daniel, whose name is Balthasar . This word is true. I, Daniel, fasted for twenty one days until the evening; I had not eaten meat, I had not drunk wine, I had not anointed myself with oil. 2. It happened, as I was on the bank of the Tigris, that this was revealed to me; I looked; and the four winds of heaven were blowing towards the great sea. 3. I saw four very frightening animals rising from the river. 4. The first animal resembled a bear, having wings like an eagle. I saw as I waited that it flew with its wings; a human heart was given to it and it stood on its feet. 5. The second animal resembled human flesh; excessively horrible, it stood to one side. I watched until three quarters of its face were broken and the fourth quarter remained firm. I looked at it until its teeth were torn out of its mouth.

6. The third animal resembled a panther; it had wings, four heads, devouring with speed and scattering what remained. 7. The fourth animal which I saw resembled a lion, an animal much more terrible than all the animals which had been before it. Power and great force were given to it; its hands were of iron, its nails of bronze; devouring, chewing, crushing with its feet what remained. I saw ten horns which came out from its head: I saw also another small horn, which came out beside these ten horns. And great power and a remarkable form were given to it. I saw four different (horns) which arose on its left, then four others which arose after all these; each of them was different from the others, and, between

them all, they made nineteen (horns). 8. And I heard a voice which said to me: ”Daniel, do you understand what you saw?” But I said: ”How can I understand, if nobody guides me?”

9. I looked and I saw an angel of God standing on my right. Its wings were extremely bright. I was afraid and I fell to the ground. The angel seized me, made me stand on my feet and said to me: ”Stand on your feet, so that I can proclaim to you what will happen in the last days. 10. The four animals which you saw are four kingdoms. The animal that you saw, similar to a bear, is the king of Persia. He will possess the land for five hundred fifty-five (555) years. Then he will perish with his kingdom; he will not be powerful for always. 11. The second animal that you saw, similar to human flesh, it is the king of the Romans: he will seize the land as if by iron; he will extend himself over it; he will dominate by his armies as far as the land of the Ethiopians, and he will reign over it nine hundred and eleven years. But he will not possess the capital of the kingdom, until many days are completed.

12. The third animal which you saw, who resembled a panther, it is the king of the Greeks. He will reign over it for a thousand years and thirty days; but his reign will not last. 13. The fourth animal which you saw, who resembles a lion, is the king of the sons of Ishmael. He will reign for a long time over the land and will be very powerful during many days. This realm will be of the race of Abraham and of the slave of Sara, the wife of Abraham. All the cities of the Persians, the Romans and the Greeks will be destroyed; nineteen kings of this race among the sons of Ishmael will reign over the land; they will reign until the time of their end . 14. The tenth of their kings will be like a prophet, the number of his name is 399. He will practise justice, will give bread to the famished, clothing to those which are naked. He will free those who are slaves. His mercy will spread over the whole land, and his justice up to heaven.

15. The eleventh of their kings will practise iniquity over all the land; he will ruin the old works. He will persecute those which are on the land, so that nobody is found who lives there or remains there. All men will groan for forty-two months. If the God of heaven treats him with indulgence, his reign will last forty months. 16. The reign of the twelfth of their kings will consequently be strengthened by the judgements of his mouth. He will carry out malicious actions in the land, so much that men will be astonished by what he did. There will be many wars during his reign. At the end of the time, a king will thoroughly disturb the kingdom of Ismaelites for one hundred and forty-seven years. In the hundred and tenth year of his reign, he will have a war with the Ethiopians. The Ismaelites will reign over them, until they have despoiled the city of the kingdom, which is Souban. They will send messengers to ask for peace; they will give them money and gold in great quantity, a tribute will be paid to them in Ethiopia .

17. The thirteenth of them will not live in this kingdom at all, and they will not fear him. His reign will be of a few days. 18. The fourteenth of their kings will receive gold and money in great quantity and he will judge the land with equity. He will engage in war with Lower Egypt, so that Egypt is in sorrow and groaning. The Ethiopians will not be subjected at all to him, they will not pay him tribute. In those days there will be war in the land of

the Romans. The Ethiopians will make war with the southernmost regions of Egypt; they will plunder the boroughs and all the cities of lower Egypt, until they arrive at the town of Cleopatra that she built herself in Upper Egypt, which city is Schmoun. After these things, the king of Syria will learn of it, he will fear the end because the war is approaching him. In the end, his reign will be established and he will enjoy a happy existence.

19. Then a child will arise among the Israelites will rise; this is the fifteenth of their kings. In his heart, he will be hard like iron; he will extend his sword to the Romans; his right hand will be on the Ethiopians. His face will be double (=cheating) and his language will be double (=crafty). During the days of his reign, there will be a great disorder over all the land, and his word will be violent like fire. The Ethiopians will bring gifts of gold to him, of silver, of pearls, and he will impose his work on everyone. He will make several nations captive in order to conscript them; throughout all his reign, there will not be enough bread; there will be no peace as long as he will reign, and in his time carnage will be frequent. 20. As for the sixteenth of their kings, there will be no war in his kingdom, and he himself will not fight with anybody, and he will be granted a long time (which he will spend) in peace, and his reign will pass in uprightness.

21. As regards the seventeenth of their kings, a war will break out between him and his nation; it is him whose name makes the number 666. He will elevate from his nation a man who will make war for him; he will pursue him as far as Egypt with the riches of its kingdom. He will neglect his nation and its great people and will scatter riches in public places and highways. While moving in lower Egypt with his riches, he will go into Upper Egypt on the side of the North, with the intention to plunder Souban, the city of the Ethiopians, with the remainder of its riches. But a man of his own nation will kill him in the southernmost regions of lower Egypt, and will take what remains to him of his riches. 22. The eighteenth of their kings, at the beginning of his reign, will work great evils, for one thousand, two hundred and sixty days. He will wage war in the western countries, and he will gain the victory until the day of his death .

23. Then among them a child will arise, who is his son. This one is the nineteenth of their kings. He will be the child of a double race, because his father is an Israelite, his mother is Roman . There will be war in Egypt and Syria for twenty one months. Their swords will fall on themselves in this war. This is the king whose name makes the number 666; he will be called by these three names: Mametios, Khalle and Sarapidos. Being a child, he will reign in order to do much evil. He will order all the Jews which are in all places to gather in Jerusalem.

All the land will be disturbed during his reign, until any man can be sold for a single dinar. He is without decency and he will forget the fear of God. He will not remember the law of Ishmael his father, nor of his mother, who is Roman; he will be arrogant, continuously drunk; he will make a great number of those who eat at his table die by poisoned beverages, and in these days there will be great devastations. He will free Syria and the territory of Jews, and will torment the East and Egypt. He will establish carriers of letters in Egypt.

Two and three times in only one year, the East will be against itself in this reign which will be the nineteeth. He will seek neither justice, nor truth, but he will seek gold all the time. He will establish managers in the regions of Africa, and a great quantity of soldiers. War will break out between him and them; they will destroy the multitude which is with him; he will be established in the regions of Africa, with what will remain of his troops, for several years, and he will not overcome it (Africa). Then a foreign nation will rise against him; it is called Pitourgos (the Turk); it will make war on him. Sarapidos will dominate over many Romans, over Pentapolis , over the Medes; from them all he will take a tribute, will command their cities and will plunder the city which he built, and regions that his father had gathered. .

The Turk will prepare for war to remove the kingdom from the hands of Sarapidos; hitherto Sarapidos remained at home. He was looking for spoils, because Sarapidos had great riches before his eyes, gold, silver, all kinds of precious stones, and desirable utensils of every kind. But it will be proclaimed to him that the Turk has made himself Master of all Syria and his borders, and he will go out in great disorder with all his troops; he will leave all the water-skins, will not carry anything with him; but he will have a heart of an animal, reflecting and knowing not what to do. Then, when he flees, going up Egypt, the Turk will precede him with his troops. They will both land with their troops, they will fight until blood runs in floods. The Turk is of Roman race. There will be war at Eschmoun the city, until the water of the river is changed into blood because of the great quantity of those wounded to death. No-one will be able to drink the water any more. Many men will die by the sword, uncountable. Those who remain will plunder their own country from where they left. The Turk will make Sarapidos perish, in order to remove his kingdom from him, for fear he will not obtain the kingdom of the Ishmaelites; but this is here the end of their number.

24. Then the king of the Romans will rise up against them, he will destroy them by the edge of the sword in the middle of the Ishmaelites in the territory of their fathers in the desert. The Ishmaelites will be governed always by the Romans; the Romans will dominate over Egypt for forty years. 25. Then two nations will rise, by the name of Gog and Magog; they will shake the ground for several days; their number is as great as the grains of sand. 26. Then Antichrist will appear who will deceive many of them. When he is strengthened, he will seduce even the elect. He will kill the two prophets Enoch and Elias, so that for three and a half days they will be dead in the public places of the great town of Jerusalem. 27. Then the Ancient of Days will bring them back to life. It is He whom I see coming with the clouds from Heaven, similar to a son of man. His power is an eternal power and His reign will have no end. It is he which will put Antichrist to death and all the multitude which is with him. There will be misfortune then in truth to any soul who will live in that time over all the land, because there will be iniquity, a great affliction and groanings; but the salvation of man is between the hands of God in Heaven. This is the end of the speech."

28. The angel said to me: "Daniel, Daniel, conceal these discourses, seal them up until the time when they will be fulfilled, because that is the end of all." I, Daniel, I arose, I put a

seal to the discourse, and sealed them. I will glorify God, the father of all things and the lord of the universe, He who knows the dates and times. To him be glory and power forever. Amen. [Condensed footnotes] 1. This name of Balthasar is indifferently given to Daniel and to the last king of Babylon. In the Hebrew text, they are distinct one from the other. The king is named Belshazar and Daniel Belteshazar; the LXX caused confusion by rendering these two words as Belthasar (cf. Dan., i, 7, et v, i). 2. The nineteen horns undoubtedly denote the nineteen kings of the race of the sons of Ishmael, i.e. the fourteen Fatimids, plus a dynasty of five kings, either Tulunids, or Ikhshidids. In the Syriac Apocalypse of Esdras (Revue sémitique, t. II, p. 334 and 335), the animal, a snake, has successively twelve horns on the head, nine on the tail, a large horn on the tail, which raises two small horns with its point; and the author takes care to refer the reader to the revelation of God touching the nine horns (cf. IV Esdras, xii, 11).

3. None of the dates given in our Apocalypse are exact; they are pure imagination. The domination of the Persians in Egypt lasted from Cambyses to the death of Darius II, to 330, or better until 332, when Alexander seized Egypt, from 532 to 330, or a hundred and ninety years, and not 555. 4. In 30 BC Octavius reduced Egypt to a Roman province; in 22 AD the Romans ventured to Ethiopia and pushed back an invasion by Candace of Ethiopia. After the transfer of the capital, from Rome to Constantinople, Egypt became dependent on the latter, which makes this figure 911 years absurd. 5. Byzantine rule in Egypt may be considered to have lasted from around 312 AD, under Constantine, until the capture of Alexandria by Amrou in 641 AD. 6. As we said in connection with the nineteen horns, this must represent the fourteen Fatimid caliphs, and probably the five Ikhshids. The expression ”the land” must mean the land of Egypt and not over the whole world; the article ”the” indicates the difference.

7. This tenth king must be the son of Moezz, i.e. Nazar ben-Maad Abu-l Mansour, named el-Aziz-Billah (”powerful in God”); his reign of twenty one years and six months was quiet; he married a Christian girl who had much influence on him. See J. J. Marcel, Egypte moderne, p. 103. 8. The cruelty, madness and pride of El-Hakem are well-known. He pretended to be God, inscribed on a register the name of his adherents, and ordered Cairo to be burned; part of the city was the prey of the flames, the other part was delivered to a most disastrous plundering by the soldiers of Hakem. As for the duration of his reign, this pure imagination. The author borrows this number forty-two from Revelation 11:2. Hakem perished, assassinated on the order of his sister; although his mother was a Christian, he cruelly maltreated the Christians and the Jews. 9. Who is this king who reigned at least a hundred and ten years and who had many wars during his reign? It is necessary to see here, either an error of the copyist, or an intention of the author to divert the reader. Daher, the successor of Hakem, assassinated the murderers of his father, and made a campaign in Syria.

The town of Souban seems to us to be Aswan or Syene, at the southern end of Upper Egypt. The Coptic orthography of this word authorizes this identification, the Coptic word being

Soouan, and in Coptic the b is equivalent to the letter w in the pronunciation. Egypt often made war on Ethiopia and plundered Aswan; reciprocal attacks also took place and the king of Nubia often descended on Upper Egypt (cf J.-J. Marcel, p. 69). 10. The thirteenth king should be Mostanser, but something is wrong here. The events of the 12th and 13th kings should be swapped. The 13th was Mostanser, who was the son of a Negro slave. He ascended the throne at the age of seven, and reigned for sixty years, one of the longest reigns by any Caliph. There were numerous wars in his reign. He was idle, cruel and irresolute. Bedr-el-Gamaly, governor of Egypt, gathered the army and made war at the extreme end of Upper Egypt ("Ethiopia"), but was obliged to return suddenly to face a Turcoman incursion by the emir Atziz, who encamped before the walls of Cairo.

11. This reign must be that of Mostaly, whose vizir Chahyn-Shah-el-Afdal was always victorious, and ensured the caliph peace and glory. It is in this reign that the first crusade took place, and the victorious march of the cross through Syria. 12. Amr, son of Mostaaly, ascended the throne at the age of five and reigned thirty; he was initially under the excellent influence of visir El-Afdal, then wearied of this dependence and arranged for his assassination. In the reign of Amr, the Christian kings of Jerusalem seized Acre, Tripoli, Sidon: the count of Saint-Gilles marched against Akkah (St. John of Acre), then governed in the name of the caliph of Egypt; he put to seige, which was long. Amr sent reinforcements (extended his sword to the Romans = Roumis = Franks); the Franks seized the city and were without pity for the inhabitants. In 1117, Baudouin I, successor of Godefroy de Bouillon, invaded Egypt as far as Faramah, in the east of old Pelusium. In 1118, the Franks seized Tyre, which depended then on the caliphs of Egypt. There were continual wars under the reign of Amr.

13. Hafed was proclaimed caliph and chose Ahmed as his vizier, who was remarkable for his integrity and his zeal. His virtues attracted the hatred of the courtiers who assassinated him; the successor of Ahmed, who had wanted to follow his policies, met the same fate. The last vizier, Baharam, a wise and skilful Christian was also assassinated. Then Hafed governed by himself and made himself popular by his wisdom and moderation. 14. El-Dhafer, son and successor of Hafed, ascended the throne aged seventeen. He lived only for his pleasures and neglected his kingdom. In his time Badouin captured Ascalon. The Moslems of Sicily revolted, landed in Egypt, burned the town of Tennys and returned loaded with captives and booty. Dhafer abused the young son of his Vizir Abbas; the latter to revenge the honour of himself and his son, poisoned the Caliph and seized the treasures in his palace.

15. The chronicles say little about the reign of Payez, which ascended the throne at the age of five became insane - the number thousand two hundred and sixty days is borrowed from Revelation 11:3. 16. The author must confuse him with Hakem, whose mother was a Christian. 17. The Pentapolis of Libya: Cyrene, Berenice, Arsinoe, Apollonia and Ptolemais. 18. It is useless to go into much detail (the details to show that this last king closes also the list of the Fatimid caliphs. Adhed ascended the throne very young; he was not the son of his

predecessor, but the grandson of the caliph Hafed. In his reign took place of the frequent wars in Egypt and Syria; it is enough to point out the names of Nour-ed-din, etc. The three names which the author of our Apocalypse gives him are imaginary. We think that it is necessary to render Pitourgos by "the Turk" and that this word is used to indicate Saladin.

19. This means the crusaders, but the forty years date does not reflect history. The crusaders occupied part of Egypt twice; at Damietta from 1219 to 1221, and during the crusade led by St. Louis (1249-50). 20. This invasion of Gog and Magog is a reference to Ezechiel 38-39. However it is possible that this may refer to a contemporary historical fact. This was the time of the great movement of the Mongol hordes and the the immense shock caused to the whole world by the formidable invasion of Genghis-Khan (1164-1227), continued by his son Octai (1227), and his grandson Houlagou (1251).

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