

The Prophetic Outlook Today – The Vial Poured Out Upon The Air; And The Three Unclean Spirits Like Frogs



(Rev. xvi. 13-16)

Continued from [The Prophetic Outlook Today – THE ANTICHRIST – Who? When? Where?](#).

“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”—James iv. 7.

The drying up of Turkey, as foretold under the Sixth Vial (Rev. xvi. 12), began in 1820, and is in rapid progress before our eyes. The Vial is strikingly marked, politically, by this drying up of the symbolic Euphrates—that is, by the decay of the once mighty Turkish Power. But it is no less strikingly marked, religiously, by the outgoing, over England and the world, of Three Unclean Spirits like Frogs out of the mouth of the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet, all united and co-operating in the one object of seducing and gathering men to war against God Almighty. This follows next after the drying up of the symbolic Euphrates has begun, and the action of these spirits progresses at the same time as does the decay of Turkey. They originate under the Sixth Vial, but their influence and work extend and develop under the Seventh Vial, the Vial of the present day.

In Rev. xiii. is described the rise of the Beast from the Sea, the Dragon’s creature, and the delegation to him of the Dragon’s former throne and power. There is also described the rise and close connection with that Beast of the Two-Horned, Lamb-like Beast, the False Prophet. From that point the Beast from the Sea or Abyss may be traced (Rev. xi. 7), without any change of form, down to this Sixth Vial. The account of the final war and the treading of the winepress is given in Rev. xix.; it is the same Dragon, Beast, and False Prophet all through. As the three are referred to in this Sixth Vial as being now on the scene, the descriptions of the three in Rev. xii., xiii. must be anterior in point of time to this Rev. xvi. Probably the Dragon, on transferring to the Beast his throne and power, has transferred also the covering skin with seven heads and ten horns, so that he now appears on the scene simply as the Dragon.

What are these Three Unclean Spirits?

1. *The Dragon* is that old serpent the Devil, who in earlier days animated and acted in the Heathenism of Ancient Rome. He has been depicted in the Vision of the final war of Heathenism against Christianity (Rev. xii. 7-11), at the opening of the fourth century, in a covering skin of a Seven-Headed Dragon, and he has remained on the scene. The spirit from the Dragon's mouth is heathen-like Infidelity, with its proper accompaniment of blasphemy, and of rebellion against God and His truth, and against rightful authority, Divine and human, when such is opposed to the spirit's action.

2. *The Beast*, or rather the Beast's Eighth Ruling Head, is the succession of the Popes of Rome, from and after the time when the Papacy began to occupy the Dragon's throne and empire in Western Christendom. The spirit from the Beast is the pure, direct principle of Popery, based on the fundamental Antichristian dogma that the Pope is Christ's divinely appointed Vicegerent on earth, the Vicar of Christ here below. It comes from the mouth of the Beast; not from his body, the peoples; nor from the Woman, the Papal Church; but from the Beast's ruling head—that is, from the Papacy itself.

3. *The False Prophet* is identified in Rev. xix. 20 with the Two-Horned Lambskin-covered Beast of Rev. xiii. 11-17, which represents the Priesthood of the Patriarchate of Western Europe, from and after the time of its subjection and official attachment to the Roman Popedom; this TwoHorned Beast being the chief agent, mouthpiece, and supporter of the Papal Beast its principal. Here the False Prophet is named without any expression of subjection to the Beast; he bears simply the generic name of an apostate priesthood in the professing Church.¹

¹ See this fully explained in the author's Present-Day Papers on Prophecy.

The most characteristic spirit of such a priesthood is the spirit of Priestcraft, and this is the spirit from the mouth of the False Prophet. Its essence is to arrogate to its own peculiar order the distinction of being the appointed and necessary mediator between man and God, the one effective deprecator of His wrath and channel of His grace and salvation; and the spirit shows itself not in the Roman Catholic priesthood only, but in all sacerdotal priesthoods in any Church. It is distinct from and independent of the spirit of direct Popery, though it is its natural and almost necessary ally. It so acted independently in the fourth and fifth centuries, before it was organised to prepare the way for the Antichrist that was to head the Apostasy; and afterwards it was his most effective instrument and supporter, still fully retaining its own peculiar spirit of Priestcraft.

All Three from the Same Source

The Three Spirits, then, are those of *Infidelity*, *Popery*, and *Priestcraft*; and all three are ultimately from the same source. The Dragon has called forth the Beast, and given him his throne and power; and the Beast has been provided with the False Prophet as his chief attendant and helper. As is the source, so will be the stream; as is the enemy who originates, so will be the influence transmitted. These Three are under one and the same evil direction,

and act with unity of effect, though to unreflecting persons they may seem to be in opposition to each other. Strategically, they are a most clever combination; for a person who may seem proof against the machinations of the one may yet fall all the more easily under the seductions of the other; or a person may be loudly condemning the doings of the spirit of Infidelity who all the while is working strenuously in the service of the spirit of Priestcraft or Popery, and so is aiding the general effect.

The purpose of the Three Unclean Spirits is to seduce and to gather together the Powers of the world—as Ahab was seduced by a lying spirit to go to Ramoth-Gilead to fall there—in antagonism against Christ’s truth and people, for the great and final conflict.

Rapid and Widespread Diffusion

Here is foretold, after a certain progress has been made in the drying up of the Turkish flood, and ere the expiration of the era of the Sixth Vial, a great revival of energy in these three Powers—Dragon, Beast, and False Prophet; a fresh but final issuing forth in strength over the prophetic scene of those three spirits of evil that had already been the chief enemies to pure Christianity during the eighteen previous centuries.

The symbols signify some extraordinarily rapid, widespread, and influential diffusion throughout the whole Roman world, if not indeed throughout the whole habitable earth, of the three unclean or unholy principles that characterise the Dragon, Beast, and False Prophet; that is, the principles of Infidelity, Popery, and Priestcraft, all alike directed and speeded by spirits of hell. It is their last great effort.

“Frogs”: Agitators

The earthly agencies employed to propagate these evil principles resemble frogs—that is, vain, loquacious talkers and boastful agitators, lofty in pretensions, deluding and seducing the minds of men. The comparison is to the noisy frogs of Southern Europe, and the symbol seems to indicate opposition by speaking and agitation rather than by active violence and persecution; where and when possible, however, these will certainly follow. But though earthly teachers and agitators may be the visible means, the real propagators are evil spirits.

Three Spirits, not one only

There is nothing whatever in Scripture to authorise the expectation that in the last days infidelity will be universally substituted for superstition and corruption of the truth. On the contrary, it is here foreshown that at the close of the dispensation three unclean spirits like frogs go forth together to the kings of the whole world. It is not one only, as from the Dragon alone; but three, from three distinct and contrasted sources, that are to gather the hosts for the last great conflict against Christ and His truth. This plainly shows that, up to the very end, error will be various in form.

HISTORIC SKETCH

The historic sketch of the doings of these three evil spirits must begin from about 1830, when the mystic Euphrates had been dried up in Greece, across the Danube, and in Algiers. Some few years before, the spirits of Infidelity and Popery had made themselves very noticeable; but at this time momentous political changes occurred in France and England, the two most influential Powers in Western Christendom. In France there was the second democratic Revolution, in 1830; in England the Roman Catholic Emancipation Act, in 1829, and the Reform Bill of 1832.

By these, though little intended by the chief authors of those changes in England, the issuing forth of the three spirits in virtual alliance with each other, at least as to common enmity to evangelical religion, was greatly helped and hastened forward. It is especially in England that their actings must be marked, for during the revolutionary era England was the chief asylum of true religion, the centre of evangelisation for the world. And as England still, thank God, occupies that position, though not without some serious falling-off, it is hither that the enemy directs his fiercest assaults. Here the working of his evil spirits would be most injurious to the cause and progress of the truth, and here, and against our land, of all Christendom, the author of evil urges their going forth in power with his deepest subtlety and mightiest energies.

1. The Spirit of Infidelity

The spirit from the Dragon, the early antagonist of Christianity in the days of Roman Heathenism, is the unholy spirit of heathen-like materialistic infidelity, with its proud rebelliousness against opposing truth, whether in religion, morals, government, or even in science itself.

It is notorious that there was a sudden furious outbreak of this spirit in England after the overthrow of the Bourbon dynasty in France, and about the time of the progress of the Reform Bill at home. An extraordinary anti-religious and revolutionary agitation took possession of the public mind. Rank and property, Church and State, were alike endangered. Frequently was seen the conjunction of the avowed infidel as to religion and the revolutionary democrat as to politics incessantly croaking to the masses, "Agitate, agitate." The Established Church was marked out as the special object of enmity and attack; its prelates were insulted, and even in the House of Lords were admonished to set their house in order. The other religious bodies seemed especially infected with that spirit.

Whoever those may have been who at the time fell under the influence of a mighty spirit of delusion, there could be no two opinions as to the real origin of the godless, irreligious spirit which at this political crisis burst forth with such singular vehemence. Nor was the unclean infidel spirit from the Dragon's mouth silenced even after that fearful crisis. It continued still alive and active, and socialism, chartism, and infidelity still kept up in England their machinery of agitation—inflammatory harangues, mob orators, newspaper articles, and halls in which infidelity and sedition were sedulously inculcated. Human reason was appealed to against the truths of

Christianity. The infidel spirit invaded and sought to establish itself even in the sanctuary of the English Church.

The same, with even yet more effect, was the case in the Continental countries, whence the draconic spirit came to England; more especially in France and Germany, but also in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Russia, and Denmark. Nor in Europe alone; its range is wider than the old Roman earth, even to the whole world. Thus in regard to India, advantage was taken of the renewal of the East India Company's charter in 1833 to send out bales of Tom Paine's Works and other like literature.

Its Present Workings

The spirit has not ceased to work from that time to this, in a variety of ways, but all leading to the same end. To its activity are due attacks of all kinds on the Old and New Testaments, not necessarily coarse and vulgar as in the eighteenth century, but refined and subtle, and with a great show of scholarship, generally reducing or discrediting the supernatural, especially in prophecy. Intelligent and reverent investigation of all that concerns God's revelation to man is not only not to be dreaded, but may with all confidence be welcomed and encouraged. Yet not a little of what shelters itself under the name of "Higher Criticism" is of this Dragon spirit and has its aims. One means of propagating these views is by encyclopaedias and dictionaries, as was done before the great French Revolution.

Our Lord's Testimony ignored

A notable feature of this kind of criticism, betraying its source, is that the testimony of our Blessed Lord Himself, both before and after His Resurrection, to the Old Testament, which prophesies of Him and of His work of Redemption, goes for nothing, and is not taken into account at all. Such teaching, whatever may be its source, and whatever use it may make of the best scholarship, does not come from the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, for it is His special function to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor. xii. 3). Attacks both open and concealed are repeatedly made on the Deity of our Lord, and all that it involves.

Effect on Missions

In the Foreign Mission Fields the effect of these teachings and pronouncements of leading men at home, in the British Universities and elsewhere, is disastrous in the extreme. Mission work is disturbed and rendered much more difficult by the diffusion of a theology that depreciates or altogether denies the foundation facts of salvation, and that questions the unique character of the revelation of God in Christ, and, as a consequence, the absolute claims of the Christian religion.

The Lord's Day and Marriage

From the influence of the same spirit come the constant efforts to secularise and degrade the Lord's Day, the bulwark of religion; and to lessen the sanctity of Marriage, the bulwark of Society, giving greater and greater

facilities for dissolving the union, with little regard to the Divine arrangements for training up a new generation. So also to lower the estimation of parental authority, and indeed of any authority whatever. The all-round weakening of authority in every form is a distressing feature of the present day. The strike mania prevails everywhere, in England no less than in other countries. Much is done to loosen morals, not least in regard to marriage, and to discredit the Divine Revelation, by the current literature and especially by the fiction of the day. Strange beliefs are put forth, and sects formed, as though at last some great truths had been discovered. The books and pamphlets that set forth these beliefs have wide circulation.

Abundant Superstition

Hence also the encouragement and practice, even among the educated and cultured classes, of various forms of superstition. In this twentieth century, astrology, crystal-gazing, clairvoyance, palmistry, medium - consulting, and other occult practices, are ominously flourishing, and bring crowds of dupes and their money to those who profess them. No thoughtful person can view without alarm the growing passion for superstition combined with decay of religious faith, reckless luxury, and irresponsible frivolity. But God is sobering us by this great war and all that it entails.

II. The Spirit of Popery

The spirit of Popery has been not less active and stirring. What the Popes did after the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte, on their restoration to the Romish See and their resettlement at Rome, before the outpouring of the Sixth Vial (A.D. 1820), must be viewed as but preparatory to what is here prefigured. They issued Bulls, Allocutions, Indulgences, which asserted or implied all the Pope's old pretensions as Christ's Vicar; and they re-instituted the Inquisition and the Jesuits, those crafty and invaluable helpers of the Beast. The authority they then sought to exercise was very much after the old model, in France, Spain, Portugal, Bavaria, Austria, Sardinia, Naples. In each of these there was a marked revival of Popery, and in some cases even the Inquisition was again set in motion. But this being against the spirit of the age, a popular reaction ensued in the first three of those countries.

Allied with Democracy

Then appeared the power and aptness of Popery to ally itself with whatever new forms of government might arise. For years Ireland had been in agitation; in 1829 the Roman Catholic Emancipation Act was passed, as a preferable alternative to civil war; in 1830 the Protestant King was expelled from Belgium. Whereupon, after some hesitation, the Papal Court, being convinced that democracy was in the ascendant in Western Europe, and finding that the French people, all democratic as they were, professed Roman Catholicism as the religion of the great majority,—for religion in some form or other the human soul craves after,—resolved to ally itself with democracy. A masked alliance was entered into between the spirit of the Dragon and that of the Beast; there being thus presented a double seduction from the truth, according as either infidelity or corrupt Christianity might best suit the

character of the country, times, or persons. Such was the state of things for sixteen or eighteen years after the second French Revolution in 1830.

Progress in England

In England, the Reform Bill of 1832 having been passed by the conjunction of Romanists (now in Parliament) and Liberals, results succeeded to strengthen the cause of Popery at home and abroad. The turning of the scale was found to be in the hands of the Irish Papal party; hence in the House of Commons the deference paid to Romish principles, discouragement of distinctive Evangelical Protestantism, assertion of the obscurity of the Bible, and equal probability of opposite views of its essential dogmas. Romish chapels, convents, and colleges sprang up with increased rapidity throughout the land. The press lent its powerful aid; fiction, music, architecture, all were pressed into service. At length, in 1850, the whole Island was astounded by the Bull of Pope Pius IX., ignoring our Protestant Church, and parcelling out England, as if prepared for it, into Romish Episcopates.

France the Protectress

France helped the Papal cause yet more than did England, for England only put the Romish Church on the same footing as Protestant sects, whereas France adopted it distinctively and alone, especially in the countries bordering on the Mediterranean. Even during the revolutionary era from 1830, democratic France still boasted of being the protectress of Roman Catholicism. Nor did she change after 1848, that third extraordinary Revolution which involved the overthrow of royalty in France, the expulsion of the House of Orleans, and the establishment of the French democratic Republic, as a transition to Louis Napoleon's revived Empire.

Restores the Pope to Rome

The world saw with amazement that when, under fear of the democratic faction at Rome, the Pope had fled from Rome, it was an army of democratic France, under direction of its then President, that fought against their brother democrats at Rome, and restored the Pope to his capital and to his kingdom. During the earlier years of Louis Napoleon's reign, even more than during the reign of Louis Philippe, France carried out the Papacy-favouring policy, as a nation priding itself upon being "the eldest son" of the Romish Church. During the same period the other European Roman Catholic States concurred in giving their support and aid to the Papacy.

All the Old Claims repeated

Recent Papal efforts show plainly that all the old claims are put forth today, as they have been all along, as to the Papal authority, the need for all to recognise and to submit to it, and to be in union with him who usurps the position of Vicar of Christ on earth. All the old and new doctrines and superstitions are vamped up afresh. Thus in Pope Leo XIII's Letter to the English People in April 1895 this prayer occurs: "O sorrowful Mother! intercede for our separated brethren, that with us in the one true fold they may be united to the supreme shepherd, the Vicar of the Son." In the same

letter the Pope brings forward prayers to the Virgin Mary, described as the "Mother of God and our most gentle Queen and Mother"; a "300 days' indulgence," and "the pious practice of the Holy Rosary." When Pius x. was crowned in St. Peter's at Rome, on August 9, 1903, these words (in Latin) were used: "Receive the tiara adorned with three crowns, and know that thou art the father of princes and kings, the ruler of the terrestrial orb, the Vicar of our Saviour Jesus Christ, to Whom is honour and glory for ever and ever." All these claims are being urged at the present time as unscrupulously as ever, but they meet with a very different reception from that they had in the Dark Ages.

Antagonistic Missions

To mar the work of Evangelic Protestant Missions has been in every case one primary object of this spirit. Not only have its Propaganda Missions been vigorously supported, but in very many instances Roman Catholic Missions have been planted where the obvious purpose was to hinder the progress or to pervert the converts of other missions.

Schemes for Reunion of Christendom

We have need to be on our guard as to specious schemes for the reunion of Christendom. By all means let Christian love and unity be cultivated and reunion between Christian bodies be aimed at, on the basis of the Word of God and truly primitive Christianity; but not a little of this effort is the work of this spirit from the mouth of the Beast, and is really intended to bring Christendom, or most of it, if possible, and especially England, the headquarters of Protestant "heresy," back under the headship of the Papacy. The invasion of England by Romish monks and nuns and convent schools is reaching alarming dimensions. This is what the Germans call "peaceful penetration."

Romeward Drift

To assimilate services and doctrine to the Roman type is another of the aims of this spirit, only too successfully accomplished in many parts of our land. Earnest Christians deplore and detest this "Romeward drift," but it is not checked, nay it is even encouraged, by not a few in authority who should be its strenuous opponents.

III. The Spirit of Priestcraft

The spirit from the mouth of the False Prophet is Priestcraft pure and simple. Its essential character has ever been to arrogate to its own order the exclusive dignity of being the earthly mediator between God and man, necessary for effectively averting God's wrath and communicating His favour and salvation.

The Oxford Movement

Who can hesitate to recognise this spirit in Oxford Tractarianism, which in 1833 so suddenly and influentially sent forth its voice from the banks of the Isis? At first the Oxford Movement was avowedly against the two others—the infidel revolutionary and the Popish spirits, and hence much of its early

strength. It was looked upon therefore at first by the friends of order, religion, and the Church, in times of fearful peril and agitation, as an ally of conservatism. Not a few of its early authors and abettors so intended it, and foresaw not whither it would lead them. For when a spirit of delusion goes abroad, its plans are not at once fully disclosed, and thus its agents and instruments are often at first led blindfold. Satan may come in as an angel of light. But the development soon became clear and unequivocal.

The Tractarian Era

The time of the issuing forth of this spirit was after some progress had been made in the drying up of the mystic Euphrates. In 1833, after the Turkoman Power had dried up in Greece, Moldavia, Wallachia, Algiers, and other countries for years overflowed by it, the first of the Oxford Tracts issued from the press. It synchronised with the going forth of the spirits from the Dragon and the Beast. Oxford Tractarianism has been accompanied with a most remarkable and almost simultaneous outbreak from the spirit of godless infidelity and the revived spirit of direct avowed Popery.

Its mode of speech and action has well answered to the symbol of a frog. There has been unceasing emission of voice in conversational or more formal discussions, by pulpit, press, essays, novels, poetry, devotional manuals of all kinds and for all ages, children's books, newspapers, music, painting, church decoration and architecture. What is unsound in doctrine is skilfully mystified, the false mixed up with the true, false picturings of evangelical religion intermingled with as false but fair-drawn picturings of the religion of Rome, incessant but delusive appeals made to the better and worse feelings of our nature, high swelling words and claims put forth as to a supposed sacerdotal office and apostolic descent and powers. To all this must be added the formation of secret societies for the promotion of the evil spirit's objects.

Tractarian Success

The speed and far range of the spirit's outgoing, not only at the first, but on each fresh emission of its voice, forces on us the idea of some supernatural influence at work—among laity and clergy, in country and town, in England and the Colonies, in all grades of Society. Nor only there has this spirit made its voice heard, but also in the United States and Canada, and in the Reformed Churches on the Continent. Its human instruments wondered at the fact, and were convinced that some higher power was helping them, not reflecting, however, that it might be an evil spirit rather than a good one.

However willingly one would admit the zeal, moral worth, and high attainments of many advocates of the movement, who knew not what spirit they were of, yet that the helping spirit was one of error, not of truth, will seem little doubtful to whoever takes God's Written Word as the one supreme standard of truth and right, or to him whose heart and reason are fully in accord with the doctrines of the Reformed Church of England in her Articles and Liturgy; still less to him who has entered discerningly into all that these Visions tell us as to the character of the Great Apostasy and of the Man of Sin.

Tractarian Characteristics

The following are some of the chief characteristics of this spirit:

1. It refuses to receive as the one rule of faith and practice the Written Word and commandments of God, a firm adherence to which is the one constant mark of the true prophets and witnesses for Christ. It makes that rule void, as did the Pharisees of old and the apostatising teachers of the fourth and fifth centuries, by addition of another rule of faith and conduct—the traditions and commandments of men.

Tradition, however, has been supplemented, or rather superseded, by the theory of development. This teaches that our Lord had committed to His Church certain seeds and germs of truth destined afterwards to expand into definite forms; consequently that He did not intend the teaching of His Church to be always the same, but ordained that it should go on continually improving under the guidance of His Holy Spirit. This theory practically abandons the claims of Christianity to be regarded in things essential to salvation as a supernatural revelation, likely to be preserved in its purest form by those who lived nearest to the times when it was given. The way of salvation does not change from age to age; those truths which were effectual for the salvation of souls in the second or third century are sufficient for salvation still. More over, the so-called developments are not seldom found to be in direct opposition to the primitive revelation.

2. It notoriously takes for its model not the really primitive age, though perpetually appealing to “primitive” practice and teaching, but the fourth and fifth centuries, or later ones, when the Church was being greatly corrupted, and the first marked development of the predicted Apostasy had appeared.

3. It has chosen for the primary and fundamental doctrine of its system the very dogma that the Church Sacraments, duly administered, are the unconditional means for communicating Divine life to man; thus superseding the Spirit of Christ, who is Himself directly and alone the Enlightener and Quickener of each dead soul. With this is connected the doctrine of a fancied apostolical succession for the sacerdotal priest hood, as the actual and only conveyancers of that Divine life.

4. It holds doctrines of reserve on the Atonement, and doctrines concerning Justification which virtually supersede Christ as our propitiatory atonement. Also it favours the mediation of living priests and departed saints, superseding Him as the One Mediator.

5. It teaches a mysterious change in the Sacramental bread and wine upon the priest’s consecration; if not transubstantiation, yet most nearly resembling it. It speaks of offering the changed elements as an offering for the living and the dead, holding a doctrine of Purgatory, and encouraging prayers for the dead.

6. It insists upon the duty of auricular confession to the priest, and the necessity of his priestly absolution, with his penances, for God’s

forgiveness.

7. It praises, if not inculcates, as marking a high attainment of grace, self-imposed celibacy, especially for the clergy; and monastic institutions for either sex, as in the fourth and fifth centuries.

8. It supports in no equivocal manner the Papal pretensions and authority; teaches reverence due to the Pope; recognises his universal primacy; deplures the "schism" at the Reformation; longs for reconciliation and reunion; regards his See as the Saviour's holy home; praises and imitates Rome's ritual in contrast with that of the English Church; and wards off all applications of the titles "Antichrist," "Harlot Church," etc.

9. It avows allegiance to General Councils—not only that of Trent—as speaking the voice of God's Spirit and possessing the Spirit's infallibility, wresting Art. xxi. It excuses and desires re-enactment of the penalties of excommunication for enforcement of the Church's decrees.

10. It displays bitter enmity against the Anti-Papal witnessing of Protestantism and the Reformation; avows as its object the unprotestantising of the National Church; unchurches the foreign Protestant Churches and the Dissenters at home; shows that it does not only not understand the "New Song," the holy and glorious doctrine of Justification by Faith, but also that above all things it abhors and rejects it. Hatred to this great doctrine of the Reformation, to the Protestant Reformation itself, and to the great earthly instrument raised up by God to effect it, has always been characteristic of the Tractarian spirit.

Our differences with Rome are far more and deeper than any questions of aestheticism and ceremonial. They touch the very springs of the spiritual life, and it is for this reason that the Reformation of the sixteenth century stands as a permanent factor, since it meant the emancipation of human consciences from a system which ruled men through the priesthood. It is this that gives point to the present crisis in the Church of England. Sacerdotalism means a system which puts the priest in command of the spiritual life of mankind.

In all these points the character, teaching, and aims of the Tractarian School agree very completely with those of the False Prophet. Dean Goode gives this summary :

"It is their avowed desire and object to re-appropriate from Popery the doctrines which our Reformers rejected; to set up a Popish rule of faith, a Popish view of the Church and Sacraments, a Popish doctrine of sacrifice in the Eucharist, available for quick and dead for remission of sins; and in regard of transubstantiation, purgatory, invocation of saints, and even on the Papal Supremacy, a doctrine which, if not Popish, is at least so near it, that it is like splitting hairs to draw a distinction between them; nay, which is admitted to be in most of these instances consistent with the Tridentine statements; and only not Popish because it does not reach all the extravagances practised in the Popish communion.

"The Tractarians must pardon me for saying that their statements, when taken as a whole, incontestably prove that they have taken up their views not from a careful and impartial perusal of the Fathers themselves, but from the works of Romish and semi-Romish writers; for they are involved in almost all their misrepresentations and mistakes."—Goode, *Divine Rule of Faith*, vol. iii. p. 96.

The Tractarian Leaders

With regard to the movement toward Rome, there was this difference between the early apostatising Church and the present Oxford School—that the latter, as professed members of the Anglican Church, had to deal with the notorious hostility of their Church to Rome and the Papacy, which the former had not. So for some time this hostility was expressed by the Tractarian writers; and it did the movement service, as open evidence against the charge that they had Popish predilections.

Very strange it seemed to reflecting men, considering the affinity of the spirit with that of Romanism, that its ardent advocates should not join the Church of Rome. The Romanists on their side looked with more and more hope continually for their secession, and even hailed the movement as the probable precursor of the re-conversion of England. Soon the anticipated event took place, and most of the Tractarian chiefs seceded to the Romish Church. Others of the leaders remained, with whatever in consistency, in the Reformed Church of England.

The Report (1906) of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline bears ample testimony to the activity of this spirit at the present time in the Church of England. So do the constant complaints in the newspapers of the advance of Romanising practices and teachings.

What are these Spirits working for?

"*To gather them together...*" Here is a statement of the object for which these three unclean spirits are working—to gather together the kings of the earth, including, of course, the people of their kingdoms or the majority of them, towards the scene and the purpose of the last great conflict. Their parentage is evil, so is their object, and they act with unity of purpose and effect, be outward appearances what they may. There has generally been an effective playing into each other's hands, even in the natural and necessary antagonism at times of the infidel spirit of the one with the superstitious spirit of the other two, especially in relentless opposition to evangelical religion.

"**Unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.**" The idea of a certain duration and continuance attaches to the word "war" (R.V.) such as does not attach to the word "battle." It is not only some single battle in Judaea or elsewhere; there is indeed a great final conflict on a great battle-field there (Rev. xix. 19; Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix.), but this is as the climax to a much wider warfare that has long been carried on.

Trouble and Distress

The era of the Sixth Vial (which began in 1820) thus includes not only the judgment upon the Turkish Power, a lengthy preliminary now fast progressing before our eyes, but also the active agency of the three unclean spirits whose purpose is to seduce mankind against the Lord of all. Though these agencies have been for several centuries at work, the latter portion of the era of the Sixth Vial is characterised by a fresh and considerable outbreak of their activity, which is to bring about the period of disorder, revolution, and warfare, leading up to the great final gathering of the nations to war, in which this dispensation is to close. That final great storm forms the main subject of the Seventh Vial. These evil influences, even now hard at work, may be expected to operate with increased effect under the Seventh Vial as the crisis draws nearer, and to bring about a state of general distress, revolution, and anarchy which will culminate in the great final war.

Physical Force

In his early warfare against Christianity, the Dragon of Heathen Rome carried it on first for two centuries by appeal through the heathen priests to the superstition of the populace, and by the infidel arguments and sneers of heathen philosophers. But then came decisive wars by physical force on the battle-fields of nations.

So here under the last two Vials. First have gone forth vauntingly the spirits of Infidelity and Superstition, then has come the appeal to physical force, in the war, now begun, of the great day of God Almighty. This terrible agency of war, under leaders consciously or unconsciously animated by each and every one of the unclean spirits here described, is waged against Evangelic Protestant Christianity, and against that country most especially which for over three hundred years has been its favoured home—England.

Does our country, and especially do our leaders in Church and State, understand all this, and recognise which are the truest and most formidable foes, how ever disguised? England and England's Church are marked out for the chief assaults of these three evil spirits, and it is useless to give in to them in the hope of obtaining peace. We have to beware of all three, not of one only, and to expect to meet their work anywhere. We must be wise to recognise them even under the guise of what may be popular movements; and to resist them to the utmost, no matter by whom their designs are being fathered or promoted.

Hatred of England

The bitter hatred of England now being shown by Germany, whatever its pretexts, springs from a most formidable source. It is wrought by these evil spirits, and really is because as a nation England loves and honours the Bible and is the home of Evangelical Protestant religion. If she could be swept out of the way or thoroughly crushed, the three evil spirits and the master spirit behind them—who are now making their great final effort before the Lord's return—would have a free course; but in God's mercy they are

checked by England's presence and influence and power. Hence their rage against us.

Whoever be our immediate antagonists, and whatever their professed motives and methods, it is essential to penetrate behind all these outworks and to understand whence and wherefore comes the remote impulse. Let England beware, and look upwards for true help and strength. She has no ordinary foes. But if God be for us, who can be against us?

German spies in our midst are a sore danger, of which our authorities should be well aware; but we are honeycombed with spies and enemies of a far more dangerous because less suspected type, as coming events will prove. These are in league with, and consciously or unconsciously are working on behalf of, the Power and the spirits whose chief aim is to crush England as the home of Evangelical religion. Do our ecclesiastical rulers realise all this? What are they doing to resist these formidable foes? Do they study these wonderful Visions, to gather from them the instruction and the warnings God in His mercy has provided?

The identifying feature as to the present time is that all these marks are found together today—Turkey's decay, Jewish Renaissance, and the three spirits' work.

"I come as a thief"

"I come as a thief"—that is, during that war to which reference has just been made. But this seems to refer especially to the outside world, who have made no use of the Divine warnings and instructions, for Christ's true people are affirmed to be *"not in darkness, that that day should overtake them as a thief"* (I Thess. v. 4). They will have studied the prophecies, and will have had light on them that will have given them the needful warning. They may not know the very day or the hour, but they will have been prepared, as Daniel was prepared by more than one Vision to expect and to recognise the Second Kingdom when it came (Dan. v. 25-28). It is a striking feature of the religious thought of the present day that a steadily increasing wave of interest on the subject of the Lord's approaching return seems to be spreading among Christians. This is good, but the expectation, to be really useful and reliable, must be based not on one or two isolated texts, but upon an intelligent and comprehensive view of the many predictions that refer to that event, and especially upon the long, orderly, connected prophetic Visions.

"Blessed is he that watcheth..." A warning suited to every age of the Church, but doubly so when the spirits of delusion are abroad, the night far spent, and the cry already raised, as it would seem, of the day of Christ's coming being near at hand. Then, if ever, should His servants, and especially the ministers and watchmen of His Temple, be watchful against putting off, like indecorous slumberers, or men drugged to sleep by the poison draught of some spirit of delusion, those garments of righteousness and salvation of which He Himself was the Giver; lest, seeing them naked, He should shut them out of His heavenly temple and kingdom, and their spiritual nakedness and shame be exposed before the world. Personal living union with and personal trust in

the Divine Saviour Himself is the true safeguard, the most effectual antidote against the poison of these evil spirits, and this is brought about by the Holy Ghost.

Many think that there is in this passage an allusion to the Jewish custom of the Prefect of the Temple going his rounds at night to see that the watchmen were at their posts (see Ps. cxxx. 6, cxxxiv.).

Har-Magedon

"And they gathered them together." "They," that is the three evil spirits, "gathered them," that is the kings of the earth. The three spirits extend their voice and influence into the Seventh Vial (see below). It is agreed on all hands that the War of Har-Magedon takes place under the Seventh Vial, and is the conflict immediately before the consummation. All the great hostile *dramatis personae* of the history of Christendom come on the stage as the end approaches. "Har-Magedon" is "The Mountain of Gathering" or "Destruction." The name has a meaning ominous of the great overthrow that is to take place there. No doubt it corresponds with the winepress of Rev. xiv. 19, 20.

Change of Opinion as to Apocalyptic Interpretation

To the era of the Sixth Vial and to the agency of the three spirits belongs a remarkable effort to change the views long held by Protestant interpreters in regard to the interpretation of the Prophecies of Daniel and St. John, and so to break down some of the strongest barriers in the Word of God against Romanism.

In 1826 appeared the first prophetic pamphlet of Dr. Maitland, followed by others, energetically assailing the whole Protestant application of the symbols of the Little Horn in Dan. vii. and of the Apocalyptic Beast and Babylon to the Roman Papacy and Church. The scheme he advocated was even more Futurist than the Jesuit Ribera's (see below), for he supposed St. John even in the very first chapter of Revelation to plunge in spirit into (but see the Greek) "the day of the Lord," as though "the Lord's day," spoken of in Rev. i. 10, could be the great epoch of the Lord's second coming and of the consummation of all things, passing over the whole of the Christian dispensation without any guidance for God's Church and people, and ignoring the statements as to "things which must shortly come to pass" in Rev. i. I, xxii. 6. Nearly contemporarily Mr. Burgh in Ireland put forth his treatise on Antichrist and the Seals, much to the same effect.

Light has Increased

It is enough to point out that light on all the topics in the Visions has greatly increased in these latter times, especially since the date of those publications, and that we have now a much longer series of historic facts than had earlier expositors to aid us in recognising the true explanations. The Year-Day system, applied according to the lengths of the different kinds of year, is now yielding the most striking and instructive results (see Paper vii. in the Author's *Present-Day Papers on Prophecy*, on "The Measurement of the Prophetic Periods"; also the new edition of Dr. H. Grattan Guinness's

Light for the Last Days). There were many points in regard to which it was impossible that the early Fathers and expositors should do more than offer their guesses, for the events were not to happen till centuries after their day. No long series of historic events and of political and religious changes could yet be referred to, by which to test or to illustrate their explanations. Hence to go back to the writings of those early ages in search of the true interpretations is to go back to the knowledge and ideas of childhood for the explanation of what cannot possibly be understood but by mature age.

However, these assaults on the Protestant explanations were not without effect, and many persons adopted these new views as to Antichrist and the Year-Day system. The strange thing is that not a few good Protestants have been drawn into following these Anti-Protestant expositions, and so into casting aside one of the mightiest weapons against Rome's errors and Rome's assaults and the deplorable "Rome-ward drift" of the present day.

Oxford Tracts and the Antichrist

Soon after, another cause appeared, which wrought with very great power to spread and to give weight to these Anti-Protestant opinions.

In 1833 began the publication of the Oxford Tracts, one main object of the writers—soon developed—being to unprotestantise the Church of England. How then could they overlook or avoid availing themselves of the help of these labourers in the Futurist School whose views set aside all application to the Roman Papacy of the fearful prophecies respecting the Antichrist, and left Protestantism open to the charge of unjustifiable schism, and the Papacy open to the Catholic desires and aspirations of the Tractarians for reunion? Accordingly, as the Tractarian views spread and found favour, so likewise did the Futurist Anti-Protestant views more and more widely prevail.

Hence the change of opinion on Apocalyptic Interpretation, and the gradual but rapid advance of the new English Futurist School, during this period. The influx of German literature into England during the same period began to familiarise the English mind more and more with the most popular German views on Scripture Prophecy, generally Praeterist, and helped on the abandonment of the Continuous-Historic, or, as it may rightly be called, the Protestant system of Prophetic Interpretation.

At the present day, however, a reaction has plainly set in, and several excellent works have appeared on Continuous-Historic lines; some of them from writers who had at first held Futurist views, but found them selves compelled to abandon them on closer examination.

Two Jesuit Expositors

Commentaries on the Book of Revelation generally state that there are three main systems of interpretation of the Visions of that Book—Praeterist, Historicist, and Futurist; and the impression is given that those three are equally the result of sincere Christian study endeavouring to discover the true meaning of the Visions, and that all three may be alike good and true,

it being left to readers to choose in safety the one they prefer.

This view of the three systems is not borne out by the history of Prophetic Interpretation. That shows plainly that the Continuous-Historic system is the one that has been followed in its main principles by true-hearted servants of Christ, by martyrs, confessors, reformers, besides a whole galaxy of learned students and expositors down to the present times, but with varying degrees of light. All these have believed that these Visions referred in some way or other to the present dispensation, and foretold and described the course of history of the Church of Christ through the centuries; but in the providence of God the full understanding and application of the Visions, especially of those nearer to our own day, has been for a time withheld, and it is only of recent years that the meaning of many details of these Visions has been made clear. There has been some slow and laborious progress all along, but much brighter light now shines for those who will turn their gaze towards it.

At the era of the Reformation the Reformers dealt from these Prophetic Visions such heavy blows to Rome and her system that it became indispensable to discover some means of blunting these formidable weapons, and of diverting their effect away from the Papacy and the Romish Church.

This was accomplished towards the close of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth by two Jesuits. One of them, the Jesuit Ribera (A.D. 1580), developed as to its main features what is now known as the Futurist system, referring most of the Visions to some era in the remote future; while the other, the Jesuit Alcasar (a.D. 1614), found their accomplishment in the past fall of Jerusalem and of Heathen Rome, thus developing the Praeterist or past system of Interpretation. Either served the desired purpose of diverting their application from Papal Rome, and, notwithstanding the serious difficulties they both raise, both have had many followers, learned and unlearned. The success of Ribera's system may be seen in that most Futurists regard as the Antichrist not the Papacy, but some personage who is supposed to appear in the future.

It is therefore not correct to represent all three systems alike as the result of sincere Christian study, searching for the right meaning. That is the case indeed with the Continuous-Historic, many of its disciples having given their lives for the truths they held; but not so with the other two. Their origin was from two Jesuits, and their object from the first was if possible to upset what is really the Protestant Interpretation. Their original aim was not to discover the true meaning of these prophecies as intended by the Holy Spirit who inspired them, but to invent plausible explanations which should seem to solve the problem, and yet should divert its application from the system which it assails with such tremendous effect.

Naturally, all who have a leaning towards the Romish system would be disposed to favour the interpretations that protect it, but sincere seekers after truth will surely pause before they commit themselves to schemes that originated with enemies of the truth, and the avowed purpose of which was to blunt the weapons of the fighters for truth.

Continued in [The Seventh Vial](#)

All Sections of The Prophetic Outlook Today by E. P. CACHEMAILLE

- [The Second Advent Order of Events](#)
- [THE ANTICHRIST – Who? When? Where?](#)
- [The Vial Poured Out Upon The Air; And The Three Unclean Spirits Like Frogs](#)
- [The Seventh Vial](#)
- [The Judgment Of The Great Harlot](#)