

The Seventh Vial Chapter VI. The Little Book



Continued from [Chapter V. Vision Of The Mighty Angel](#). Rev. Wylie gives in this chapter a very interesting interpretation of the Little Book of Revelation chapter 10, one that I never heard before but I think makes a lot of sense.

Revelation 10:2 And he had in his hand a **little book** open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,
Revelation 10:8-10 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the **little book** which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the **little book**. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the **little book** out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

IN the hand of this mighty and glorious angel was a little book open. In the Old Testament we often find a book employed as the symbol of a *prophetic communication*. Such is its plain meaning in Ezekiel (chap. ii. and iii.) ; and here, we are persuaded, it denotes a *revelation additional or supplementary* to that of the regular Apocalyptic visions.

This idea accords well with the sequel. John was commanded to take the book out of the angel's hand, and eat it; and when he had done so, he found it sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly. No sooner had John digested the book, than he received a commission to prophesy again. This seems to connect the little book with the predictions that follow, and to lay a ground for the supposition that these predictions form the contents of the little book. It was pleasant to know these events, but painful to announce them to the Church, seeing to her they were tidings of sackcloth, and summoned her to conflict with a dual foe, the most terrible she had yet encountered—the Beast from the abyss, whose animating soul was the old Dragon.

The little book naturally suggests a larger book, with which it is contrasted. Had it symbolized the Bible, as some have thought, it would have been described simply as a *book*. But the little book (Greek word) in the angel's hand is obviously contrasted with the Lamb's book (Greek word). It is represented with great propriety as a little book, because the space of time comprehended in it is much shorter than that included in the other.

The Lamb's book comprehends the whole period from the opening of the first seal till the coming of Christ. The little book comprehends only twelve hundred and sixty years; or, to come nearer the truth, it comprehends only that part of these years which includes the rise and reign of Antichrist; for it leaves off his history when his overthrow commences—the point where the sealed roll takes it up, to carry it on under the symbol of the vials. Without this little book the sequel of the Apocalypse would scarce have been intelligible; for then we should have seen the third woe inflicted, without having had the object on whom that woe fell described.

During the infliction of the woes of the Fifth and Sixth Trumpets in the East, Popery was gradually rising in the West. On it the third woe was now to be inflicted; therefore it was necessary to retrograde in the symbolic narrative, in order to bring up the history of affairs in the West from the time the western empire had been overthrown. This the little book does. It exhibits the rise of Antichrist, and his gradual ascent to a dominion till then unexampled, and which, overtopping all other authority and power, laid the earth, with its nations, prostrate at the foot of his throne.

Once, again, and a third time, are we told the story of that eventful period: first, in the witnesses who prophesy in sackcloth, are slain, and rise again; next, in the woman clothed with the sun, persecuted by a dragon, and obliged to flee into the wilderness ; and yet again, in the history of the beast of the sea and the beast of the earth; which last grew to such a height of power, and waxed so self-willed and imperious, that he would permit no one to buy or sell who did not wear his mark in his forehead or in his right hand. Thus the prophecy is thrice given, and each time under different imagery; because God had established the thing, and would surely bring it to pass; and also, that opportunity might be given minutely to paint Antichrist in his character and actings, in order that the Church might know him when he appeared.

Such, then, is the subject of the little book. It supplies the history of some most important events which took place during the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets—that is, from the close of the fifth to the beginning of the sixteenth century—and the knowledge of which is essential to the right understanding of the closing acts in the great Apocalyptic drama. The little book extends from the beginning of the eleventh chapter to the close of the fourteenth, exclusive of those verses in the end of chapter eleven which pertain to the sounding of the seventh angel.

“He set His right foot upon the sea, and His left foot on the earth.” A striking representation this of His universal dominion as Mediator. The sea is the symbol of nations, particularly in a state of convulsion, and therefore may be here taken to denote secular society. The earth is society in its more settled state; but being that out of which the Papacy arose, it is sometimes put elliptically to denote the Papacy, and may be here taken to mean ecclesiastical society. As the world is composed of sea and dry land, so society is made up of secular and ecclesiastical. Christ is here seen standing on both—on the sea and the earth of the antichristian system—denoting His power over both civil and ecclesiastical society. He had His foot on the nations, and He had it planted, too, on Antichrist; and

notwithstanding that for a long period he appeared to practise and prosper against God, Christ was all the while subserving His own purposes by him; and when these were accomplished, He trod him into the dust.

"And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth." By the voice of Christ is meant the dispensations of His providence. By these He speaks to the world. His voice was loud, majestic, terrible, as when a lion roareth. The world resounded and shook, as does the wilderness when the lion roars; and its tribes became mute with terror. This denotes the awful character of those events He was now to introduce, and by which He was to rebuke the nations for their sin, and proclaim His power and justice. "And when He had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices"—(three Greek words) *the* seven thunders, and not simply seven thunders.

Various, and in some cases very extraordinary interpretations have been given of this symbol. The "seven thunders," says Vitringa, mean the "seven crusades." The explanation of Mr. Elliot is scarcely more satisfactory. These seven thunders symbolise, according to him, the excommunications which the Pope launched against the Reformers; and he rests not a little stress upon the fact that the Papal bulls, in common phrase, are denominated *thunders*. But the rise of the beast had not yet been shown; and it is contrary to all propriety to introduce his thunders or roarings before he himself had received existence.

What, then, are we to understand by the seven thunders, and the command given to John to seal up what they uttered? Let us follow the leadings of the figure. The angel speaks with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth; and the seven thunders are the re-echo of the angel's voice. Similar in character to the original sound must be the reverberations. The voice of the angel announced the awful events of the coming dispensation, especially "the consummation;" and so, too, the seven thunders which were the echoes of that voice. They relate, we are strongly persuaded, to the seven last judgments by which the ruin of the Papacy was to be accomplished. They are the same as the plagues of the seven vials, and the words of the angel that follow give ground to conclude that as they correspond with the vials in number, so do they also in time; that, in fact, both relate to the same events. In short, they are the thunders of the third woe; and we are thus noways obscurely informed that the vengeance of that woe would be SEVENFOLD.

Why, then, was it said to John, "Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not?" Obviously because the events they announced were to be afterwards revealed to him in symbol under the seventh trumpet. They were sealed up now, because John had first to be shown the rise and reign of that terrible power on which the plagues which the thunders announced were to be inflicted. It would have violated the proprieties of the Apocalyptic drama to write the DOOM before the OBJECT of that doom had arisen. These disclosures were to be introduced at their proper place in the Apocalypse, with this difference, that whereas the thunders described—most probably without any figure or metaphor—the judgments by which Antichrist was to be overthrown, the revelation afterwards made of these things was given in symbolical language. If this be the right interpretation—which we are persuaded it is—then, although the things that were uttered by the seven

thunders were scaled up at the time, they are now in course of being revealed.

The days in which we live are the days of the voice of the seventh angel; and the events of Providence are now publishing to all men what it was unlawful then for the pen of the apostle to write; and when the hour of Antichrist's overthrow shall have arrived, we shall know more fully still what these seven thunders uttered.

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