

The Seventh Vial Chapter XX. The First Three Vials



Continued from [Chapter XIX. The Seventh Trumpet](#)

As the opening of the seventh seal introduced the seven trumpets, so the sounding of the seventh trumpet introduces the seven vials. The particulars we have noted above form the general characteristics of that trumpet, and they strikingly agree with the historical facts of the French Revolution, the full details of which are given under the vials:

“And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous—seven angels, having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.” – Revelation 15:1

These solemn dispensations are here beautifully personified. They are seen attired as priests, and they issue from the temple:

“And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breast girded with golden girdles.” – Revelation 15:6

From worshipping before the God of all the earth, they come to execute His vengeance on the world, now ripe for judgment. And mark the purity and beauty of their attire. They wore, like the priests of old, white robes and girdles of gold; for, though their work was awful (full of awe), it was holy. Each angel bore a vial, which was filled, we are told, with “the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.” This has respect to God’s eternal remembrance of crimes long past, and which, though unnoticed at the time, cannot escape the vengeance of the ever-living God.

The vials were put into the hands of the seven angels by one of the four living creatures. The four living creatures stood round about the throne; they received the vials from the hand of God Himself, and gave them to those whose office it was to pour them out. They show no impatience to begin their work: they feel how awful it is. The pause here is like that which reigns in the judgment-hall, preparatory to the judge passing sentence of execution. The seven ministers in white vestments and golden girdles stand silent, having each his vial in his hand, waiting the Divine behest. A great voice out of the temple thus addresses them:—

"Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth." – Revelation 16:1

Before proceeding, we would offer one remark. This Apocalyptic history has been arranged into three grand periods; and it is instructive to observe that each period has its own peculiar symbol. The symbol of the first period is a SEAL; that of the second a TRUMPET ; and that of the third a VIAL. These symbols are not arbitrary; they are selected on a principle as definite as it is important, namely, their peculiar fitness to represent the character of the period which they respectively govern. What could more fitly symbolize the introduction of a new dispensation of Providence than the opening of a Seal? Accordingly, the first period comprises a series of dispensations, the design of which was to weaken, and ultimately destroy, the Roman empire in its Pagan state.

A Trumpet summons the approach of those who are distant: it is the symbol of foreign war; and such was the character of the second period. It consisted of wars which arose not within, but which burst upon the empire from beyond its limits.

The symbol of the third great period is a Vial; and who needs be told that a vial, or *cup*, is everywhere in Scripture used to represent judgment or vengeance? Such will be the character of this era. It is the period of the seven last plagues—the time of God's wrath—the judgment-day of the Papal earth. Its calamities will not come from a distance, as did those which were summoned by the trumpets of the second period: they will spring up within the limits of the Roman earth. The cup which their sins in former ages have filled up, the apostate nations shall then be made to drink. It is instructive surely to trace so beautiful an analogy between the periods and their symbols.

Our scheme of interpretation of the vials is somewhat different from that which has hitherto been given; but we think it is more consistent and complete. It makes the vials begin at the very foundations of the Papal world, and proceed regularly upward, till at last the whole fabric is involved in ruin. The first stroke falls upon its individual men; the next upon its nations; the next upon its monarchies; then its great centralizing and governing head, the Poppedom, is smitten; and the last and finishing vial is poured into its air, thus wrapping the entire Papal universe in ruin. Like the Flood, these waters of wrath cover first the level grounds and the low valleys of the Romish earth; next, the little hills are submerged; but, the waters continuing to rise, the proudest of its mountains are overwhelmed, and the very lights of its firmament are at last extinguished.

"And the first went and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image." – Revelation 16:2

Now, there is no delay. Scarce has the voice spoken till the judgment of the vial strikes the earth. "The third woe cometh quickly." This vial fell upon the men of the Latin earth, and showed itself in the sores that immediately broke out on their persons.

A physical disorder is here used as the symbol of a moral and spiritual malady. It is the very figure which Isaiah uses to depict the corrupt state of his nation:—

“There is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.”
— Isaiah 1:6

The prophecy portends the rise, within the region of Popery, of doctrines, political and religious, of a character corrupt, abominable, and blasphemous, and peculiarly envenomed as well as infamous; for the sore was grievous, as well as noisome. It is scarce possible to doubt the correctness of that interpretation which applies the symbol to the infidelity and atheism of the French Revolution. These revolutionary and infidel principles, so industriously and insidiously propagated by Voltaire and Rousseau, after corrupting to an unprecedented extent the national morals, found vent at last in an outbreak of blasphemy and crime so fearful, that nothing like it is found in the history of the world.

In this vial there is a reference to one of the plagues of Egypt. Moses took a handful of ashes, and sprinkled it towards heaven, and it became a boil, breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast. The handful of ashes, by God’s direction, *was taken from furnace*—thus pointing to the cause of Egypt’s ruin, namely, the oppression of the Israelites. This act of awful significance was repeated at the commencement of the plagues of the mystic Egypt. The angel took an handful of ashes *from the furnace*, and sprinkled it over Papal Europe, inasmuch as the calamities of that era all sprang directly and immediately out of the crimes they were meant to avenge. The anti-Protestant wars which France carried on at so great an expense of blood and treasure, were meant to conserve the lofty claims, irrational dogmas, and idolatrous ceremonies of Rome. They did conserve these claims, but only to be the ruin of France. These dogmas engendered atheism, and atheism, in its turn, brought on the tragedy of the Revolution. Voltaire could never have succeeded in his mission against Christianity, but for the Popish religion, from which, as from a vast armoury, he borrowed his weapons. It was from Popery that he drew his illustrations, furbished his arguments, and whetted his sarcasms. These principles cast into the air of public opinion in France vitiated in a trice the whole moral atmosphere, the men who breathed that air caught the infection, the venom entered their blood, as it were, the blotch soon appeared breaking out in immoral principles and a fearful profligacy of manners. The democracy and atheism (the noisome and grievous sore which fell upon the men who had the mark of the ‘beast’) which the encyclopaedists spread throughout France, brought on the catastrophe of the second and of all the succeeding vials.

“And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea, and it became as the blood of a dead man ; and every living soul died in the sea.” — Revelation 16:2

The first vial falls upon the “earth,” denoting the stable and tranquil state of society when this judgment began. The second vial falls on the “sea,” that is, on society in a commoved (moving violently), agitated, and revolutionary state. This commotion had been brought on by atheism, which had destroyed

conscience, dethroned law, and unknit all the bonds that held society together. France was now a sea. One of the earliest of the plagues of Egypt was inflicted upon the Nile. The Nile was called the sea of Egypt, being its one great river, and the main source of its riches and power. France held an analogous place in the Papal world. It was its kingdom of chief dignity, it was the main pillar of its strength and the prolific fountain of its revenues. While the other kingdoms were the rivers of the Papal world, France was its Nile, its sea. Upon this sea, whose waves were now rolling in terrific grandeur, and swelling even to heaven by the mighty force of the tempest which atheism had let loose upon it, was this vial poured.

The 5th of May, 1789, is commonly reckoned the first day of the Revolution. The democratic and atheistic principles with which the whole nation was leavened, like peccant humours (disease) corrupting and inflaming the body, bore, for a short space only, bloodless fruits. But at last the GUILLOTINE was set up, and it then became plain to all that it was a drama of blood that was opening in France. The hostile preparations of foreign nations, joined to the apprehensions entertained of the royalists at home, led the revolutionary party to the adoption of extreme measures. The suspected of every rank, sex, and age, were hurried to prison, and, after undergoing the mockery of a trial, were led to execution.

During the years 1793 and 1794 the massacres and executions went on with scarce a pause, and blood flowed as plentifully as water in the streets of Paris. Nor were these horrible excesses confined to the capital. A civil war broke out in the provinces, attended with every circumstance of the most savage and revolting cruelty. The whole of France became, in fact, an *Acel dama* (field of blood). In Lyons the victims of the Revolution were reckoned too numerous for the guillotine, and accordingly were mowed down by grapeshot (a cluster of small iron balls shot from a cannon). In the war that raged with such frightful violence in La Vendee, there were towns where the whole male population to a man was slaughtered, and only a few women spared. Whole cities were burnt to ashes. The cattle, without owner or keeper, roamed about in terror; and throughout entire districts no sound was to be heard save the hoarse notes of carrion-crows, coming from the recesses of the forest to prey on the slain.

About two millions, it is computed, were murdered in that country, from the breaking out of the Revolution till 1794. Nowhere can we find a figure that presents so true an image of France as this Apocalyptic one. Without a throne, without an altar, without a government, she resembled a sea wrought into tempest by a mighty wind, and reddened with the blood of some immense slaughter. But the storm which had wrought such havoc in France was destined to extend its violence far beyond the limits of that country. Accordingly,

"The third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and they became blood." – Revelation 16:4

Here is a transference of judgment from France to the nations in its neighborhood. Rivers and fountains are the symbol of nations; and the nations here indicated are those of the Latin earth, on whom the propagandist spirit that accompanied the Revolution led the French to wage war. The armies which

revolutionary France sent forth were such as the world had never before seen. The legions of Alexander or Caesar, the hordes that followed Xerxes or Attila, were nothing to them. Under their terrible leader Napoleon, they entered on a career of conquest which continued from 1795 to 1815, and extended to all the kingdoms of Papal Europe.

We trace, by the carnage of the battle-field, by the smoke of burning cities, and the blackness of ravaged provinces, the progress of these armies in Savoy, the ancient persecutor of the witnesses. We follow them over the rich plains of Northern Italy; along the valley of the Rhine, and the States right and left which form the confederation of that river; and in the dominions of the "bloody house of Austria," to the banks of the Danube and the gates of Vienna. From Holland on the one side, to the waters of the Adriatic on the other, there was scarce a province in Europe that escaped the rage of the revolutionary armies. Such another stroke had not befallen the ten kingdoms since their erection.

The third vial smote not only the "*rivers*," the minor states, but the "*fountains*," or chief kingdoms of the Papal world. The year 1805 brought to an end the revolutionary wars, strictly so called; and now the imperial campaigns were commenced. Napoleon by this time had assumed the title of Emperor, and had conceived the design of annexing to his crown the titles and dominions of all the emperors and kings of Europe. To realize his scheme, the monarch of France raised armaments on a scale surpassing all previous example. To confront these immense levies, armaments of corresponding magnitude were required on the other side. The conflict that ensued was attended with more awful carnage and more dreadful suffering, both to the victorious host and to the kingdoms they overran, than had ever been endured, perhaps, since the first origin of war.

There was not a throne in Europe that escaped the shock of these wars, nor a kingdom but was scorched, more or less severely, by their plagues. In the years 1807 and 1808 most of the monarchs of western Europe were either dethroned or had their power greatly abridged. With the exception of Austria, which became the vassal of France, the thrones of the ten kingdoms were now filled with the satellites of Napoleon.

The tremendous conflict, caused by the ambition of Napoleon to acquire, and the desire of the kings of Europe to retain their territories, lasted for eight years; and the horrors that Europe groaned under during these years no language can describe. France was scorched by the weight of the taxes and the rigor of the conscription; while the other countries of the Continent were scorched by the ravages of an army which lived by plunder, and which, leaving out of view the carnage of the regular battle-field, most mercilessly and ruthlessly—themselves goaded by hunger and suffering—gave the inhabitants to the sword, and their towns and villages to the flames.

Striped of the terms with which the vocabulary of war seeks to dignify these awful events, what do we see in the armies of Napoleon but an overwhelming horde of robbers and murderers turned loose upon Europe, to slay, burn, and desolate? The narratives of the time speak of the view from Leipsic presenting only "one wide waste," with the numerous villages or hamlets

almost all entirely or partially reduced to ashes. "The destruction and distress which marked the countries through which the French army fled from the bloody field of Leipsic were altogether indescribable. Dead bodies covered the roads. Half-consumed French soldiers were found in the villages destroyed by the flames. Whole districts were depopulated by disease. For a month after the retreat, no human being, no domestic animal, no poultry, nay, not even a sparrow, was to be met with; only ravens in abundance, feeding on corpses."

It is equally astonishing and melancholy, that the nations on whom these plagues fell remained totally insensible to them in their character of judgments; evinced no repentance for their own idolatries and impieties, or the murders of their fathers, who had shed the blood of the saints; and plunged anew, as soon as these calamities were at an end, into all the excesses of their obscene atheism and gross Popish superstition. They repented not, to give God glory.

The Pope did not wholly escape the judgment which was falling on his subject kingdoms. He now began to taste the bitter cup of humiliation and woe of which he was doomed to drink more deeply under subsequent vials. The last drops of that terrible tempest which had burst over the thrones of Europe fell upon the Vatican. Napoleon, having subjected all the sovereigns of the West to his authority, next proceeded to abolish the Pope's temporal power to incorporate Rome with the empire of France, and reduce the Pope to a stipendiary of the State. This he did in the two celebrated decrees which he issued in 1809 from Schoenbrunn and Vienna.

Here we meet strong corroborative evidence that we were right in fixing the commencement of the twelve hundred and sixty years at the promulgation of Justinian's Code in A.D. 532, which gave a legal existence to the Papacy, and laid the foundation for its future wealth, power, and grandeur. Precisely twelve hundred and sixty years after, we find that spoiling of her wealth and power begin, which had been foretold by Daniel as "the taking away of dominion from it, to consume and to destroy it unto the end." (Daniel 7:26)

Elliot has condensed into a single paragraph the various acts of spoliation then committed upon the Papal Church. "One of the first measures of the Assembly," says he, "was to abolish tithes, establishing an insufficient rent-charge on the State in lieu of them; a second, at one fell swoop to sever from the Church, and appropriate as national property, all ecclesiastical lands throughout the kingdom—lands, let it be observed, which had been regarded ever before as not French property only, but that of the Romish Church, and as needing, therefore, the Pope's sanction to its alienation. Then followed the suppression of all monastic houses in the kingdom, to the number of four thousand; and in regard of the clergy, already made pensioners of the State, the substitution of popular election, for institution after the Papal Concordat; and the requirement from each of them, on pain of forfeiture of the pension, of a solemn abjuration of all allegiance to the Pope. And then, in 1793, the decree issued for the abolition of the Christian (or rather Romish) religion in France, whereupon the churches were many of them razed to the ground; others left in partial ruin; and of the rest, shut against priests and worshippers, the most sacred

places defiled, the treasures rifled, and the bells broken and cast into cannon.

So was the whole French ecclesiastical establishment then destroyed. As to the French clergy themselves, twenty-four thousand were massacred, as I have before stated, with the most horrid atrocity. The rest, for the most part utterly beggared, found refuge from the popular fury only by flight into other, and chiefly Protestant lands, bearing about with them everywhere visible evidence that the predicted hating, and tearing, and making bare, of the great whore of Babylon, had indeed begun. Begun in France, the spoliation of the harlot Church, and of its Papal patron and head, spread quickly into the other countries of Christendom. A propagandist spirit, in respect of this, as in respect of its other principles, was one of the essential characteristics of the Revolution; and the tempests of war gave it wings."

But the crowning act was reserved for 1809. The resistance which the Pope ventured to offer to Napoleon's views drew down upon him the two decrees, to which we have already referred, of Schoenbrunn and Vienna. These decrees laid the Pope's temporal authority, for the time, in the dust, and reduced the Eternal City to the rank of the second capital of the French empire. As the ancient dynasties had by this time been discrowned, and the thrones of the Roman world, with the exception of Austria, which had now become the ally of France, had been filled with the vassals of Napoleon, the act of the Emperor, by which the power of the Pope was wounded, and his treasures rifled, was not Napoleon's alone, but also that of all the nine kings of the Roman earth (Britain having fallen as a Papal power at the Reformation) who were consenting thereto—a striking fulfillment, surely, of the prophecy that the ten horns of the beast should hate the harlot Church, and make her desolate and naked, and eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

There was now a pause in the tempest, as there is in the narrative; and the voice of the angel of the waters was heard, indicating in solemn song the fearfully retributive character of the vial.

"And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus: for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets; and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy."- Revelation 16:5-6

To this song a response was made from the altar, the symbol of martyrdom:

"And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty; true and righteous are thy judgments." – Revelation 16:7

The words have reference to the great effusion of blood under both vials. This blood did justice demand, as a sacrifice for the blood shed in these countries in former ages. There is no intelligent reader of the modern annals of France who can fail to be struck with the resemblance between former atrocities and present excesses in that country. In truth, if we change the names of parties, we behold in the Revolution but the fearful drama of the Huguenot persecution passing again across the same stage. The actors in the bloody scenes of the first Revolution studied the ancient chronicles in

search of models, and avowedly imitated the Cardinal de Lorraine, who led the infuriated mob at the St. Bartholomew massacre. At both periods we find disorganizing and murderous doctrines diffused, secret societies instituted, which issued at length in the outbreak of violence and the reign of assassination.

At both periods a civil war raged in the provinces, churches were razed, property confiscated, villages and towns laid in ashes, the galleys and the dungeons filled with captives, and the frontier crowded with hordes of wretched exiles. So striking a resemblance between the fate of the victim and that of the criminal looks like a grand judicial execution.

If we look beyond France to the nations on whom the third vial was poured, what an air of retribution in the calamities that befell these nations! Where do we find the greatest carnage occurring? Is it not on the scenes of ancient martyrdom? As if the martyr-blood, sprinkled on these spots so long before, had attracted thither the avenging tempests of war. Savoy, the north of Italy, the Rhine, the Low Countries—precisely the places where the hottest persecutions had raged—became now the scenes of the greatest bloodshed. Could events more emphatically announce that the hour of judgment had come to the nations of the Papal earth? “They have shed the blood of saints and prophets,” said the angel of the waters, “and thou hast given them blood to drink for they are worthy.” “Even so,” replied the angel from the altar, “Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.” -Revelation 16:6-7.

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