

The Seventh Vial Chapter XXVI – Part

2. Voices, Thunders, and Lightnings

And there were voices, and thunders, and
lightnings; and there was a great
earthquake, such as was not since men
were upon the earth, so mighty an
earthquake, and so great.
— Revelation 16:18 (KJV)

Continued from [Chapter XXVI. The Seventh Vial Poured Into The Air.](#)

Voices, Thunders, and Lightnings

In the Vision the fated monarch is seen to pause for a moment amid the deep silence of a vast hall. Its floor and walls are of black marble. It is centinelled (guarded) by two gigantic figures, who stand rigid and motionless. The one is giant Time, and bears a scythe and sand-glass; the other is the angel of Destiny, and is armed with an iron mace. The two dread figures stir not; nor word nor gesture of theirs breaks the silence of that wide funereal (solemn, mournful) looking chamber. In the glass in the hand of old Time the few remaining sands drop one after one: and the angel of Destiny watches their ebb with a stern inflexible look.

The last grain has fallen. And now is come the moment of fate. Raising aloft his ponderous club, the angel of Destiny strikes the wall against which he stands with a terrific blow, in an instant it is rent, it is shivered into a thousand pieces; and what a scene of savage warfare meets the eye. The stillness is at an end; and the roof of the vast chamber re-echoes fearfully with the tread of armies, the clang of trumpets, the clash of arms, the wild shout of the victor, and the dying groan of the vanquished.

Such, but on a scale immeasurably vaster, will the scene be when the seventh angel shall pour out his vial. Equally sudden will be the transition from deepest stillness to wildest uproar; and the calm will give character and effect to the tempest. Europe, like the Hall in the tale, will exhibit only motionless figures. It will present a floor of marble despotism, sealing down opinion, and governments standing, statue-like, leaning upon their vast armaments. No sound will break the silence save the stealthy motion and the low croak of the frogs, who will strive, in myriad swarms, to propagate their principles. One after one the years will pass. The breathless silence will remain unbroken. Moveless will stand the governments of the world, moveless, too, their vast armaments. History will appear to lack incident. Nevertheless, the years, and months, and days will keep running on. The last grain in Time's glass will drop, and now the appointed hour will have arrived. Destiny will strike asunder the marble curtain of old conventionalities which has walled in Europe, and kept its affairs moving in the old-accustomed groove, in which men will be prognosticating they will move on for ever.

And through the vast chasm effected by the rending of the curtain what a scene of fierce conflict and tumultuous revolution will meet the eye! It will be felt that the pillars of the world have been shaken, and the foundations removed out of their place. A time of great trouble will suddenly come upon the kingdoms of the earth—a time of “famines and pestilences, and fearful sights and great signs from heaven”— “signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; ” and on the earth “distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring.”

The first intimation (announcement) which will be given to the world that the last and consummating vial has been poured out will be the “great voice,” saying, “It is done.” (Revelation 16:17) By this we are not to understand a literal voice sounding from the sky, but a dispensation of Providence proclaiming unambiguously to all who have hearts to understand it, that the old order of things is for ever at an end, and that a new era has come. It will give assurance to the Christian that the Divine and wondrous plan which God has been prosecuting throughout the ages has found its predestined conclusion in the universal and total overthrow of Satan’s kingdom on the earth. “It is done.” On the empire of the great Tyrant has fallen the finishing blow, and it sinks in ruin utter and irretrievable.

This will be immediately followed by “Voices, Thunders, and Lightnings.” These are the symbols of popular tumults, insurrections, and wars. This certainly predicts an uprising of all the nationalities of Europe. The great governments will lose their controlling power, and race will be seen warring with race, and party conflicting with party. This great battle of revolted and wrestling nationalities will rage from side to side of Europe, and will, not unlikely, include Western Asia as well.

We witnessed a similar uprising in 1848, when in a single fortnight a conflagration broke out which blazed from the shores of the Atlantic to those of the Vistula (the longest river in Poland). Wider still and fiercer will the coming conflict be. The plains of Poland, the mountains of Carpathia, the vast valley of the Danube, the shores of the Bosphorus, the towns of southern Germany, and the mountains of the Tyrol, will all be stirred into tumult. The fire will run along the chain of the Alps and Apennines, kindling local conflagrations in France, in Spain, and in Italy. Everywhere will be strife; populations moved; governments menaced, or paralyzed. These will be but the beginnings of change, the first tremblings of the earth before the great shock which is to rock the world, overturn the mountains of political society, and bury them in the wide weltering ocean of revolution.

This convulsion will be the work of the three frogs; that is, the *Popish ultramontanians* (clerical political conception within the Catholic Church that places strong emphasis on the prerogatives and powers of the Pope), the *political reactionaries*, and the *atheistic revolutionists*. Each party has its own cherished project, which it will strive to the utmost to realize. The Ultramontanians will conspire to lift the Church of Rome once more to universal sway over the nations. The Reactionaries will energetically labor to bring back the palmy days of despotic governments; and the Revolutionists, inferior in numbers and energy to neither of the other two parties, will leave no stone unturned towards realizing their golden dream of a universal republic.

To realize these grand visions, a somewhat varied and extensive instrumentality is now being employed. The Ultramontanes are avowing their old theories, that the Church is vested in a supreme sovereignty over society, and they are sending forth countless swarms of Jesuits, and affiliated members, to indoctrinate the world into ultramontane principles.

The Reactionaries are prosecuting their special scheme by the open agency of armies, and the secret machinery of police.

The Revolutionists advance their projects by clubs, by public conventions, by lectures and journals. Thus do these three great parties strive together; there is no land, however remote, no city, or village, however insignificant, scarce a family is there to which their operations do not extend, and in which they do not seek to plant their principles. Day and night the work goes on: much of it is unseen; it makes little noise, and creates no great alarm; but it proceeds with an energy that never abates, and a diligence that never pauses. Europe is mined and countermined by the machinations of these parties. The ground on which men walk is hollowed. The air overhead is surcharged with explosive materials. It needs but a spark to awaken the tempest. When it does burst, the ground will fall in; the structures that repose upon its thin crust, will be engulfed; and the silence that went before will be succeeded by a roar, as if of many waters, by the wailings of sorrow and terror; by the wild shrieks of dismay and suffering; by the thunderings of artillery; by the wrathful shouts of armed millions; by the despairing cry of sinking dynasties, and the crash of falling thrones.

For the coming of these terrible events, the battle of Sadowa has been largely instrumental in opening the way. The fate of that battle called suddenly into existence a powerful Protestant empire in the center of Europe, and threw the political balance on the side of liberty. Rome was not slow to see that a grand crisis had arrived; a crisis which left her only the alternative of sitting still, and being borne down by the progress of events, which everywhere—with one most anomalous exception, England, to wit—were setting powerfully against her, or, at whatever hazard to herself, and injury to society, of striking a bold blow for supremacy. She must attack the political predominancy of Prussia. The power of the new German kingdom is a fatal menace to herself; she must labor to break it up; she must sow dissensions among the various states and kingdoms which the victory of Sadowa placed under the sway of the House of Hapsburg, and, if possible, persuade them to desert the central state, and bring back old divided Germany once more. She must if possible prevent the states on the south of the Maine (a river in Europe) uniting with Prussia. She must arrest the constitutional progress of Austria. She must keep central and eastern Europe disunited, and play off the Popish against the Protestant principalities. She must fan the flame of insurrection in Poland, and so check somewhat her dreaded Muscovite foe. She must intrigue for the restoration of the old Bourbons in France and Italy. She must distract Naples by brigands, and Tuscany and Piedmont by the Paolotti, if so be the new kingdom may be broken up.

Arms she can no longer wield since Austria is fallen. She must conquer by *principles*. **All states she must invade by her missionaries; and when her plans are ripe she will bring on a great war, and dash the European kingdoms**

one against the other, hoping to make fallen thrones and exhausted and prostrate nations the steps by which she may mount to her old dominion. This is the policy on which Rome has staked her future. It is a policy that is fraught with infinite hazard, for if it fails she must perish with it; if it succeeds she becomes the ruling power in Europe, and mistress, once more, of its nations.

This policy can be carried out only at vast suffering, for it involves the overthrow of the present order of things; but it is the plan which Rome, at this hour, boldly plots, in the hope that on the ruin of society she may be able to plant anew the foundations of a more glorious reign.

The action and re-action of the three parties upon one another will bring on

THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE.

The earthquake of the "Seventh Vial" is emphatically styled a "mighty" and "great" earthquake, "such as was not since men were upon the earth;" "Earthquake" is the apocalyptic symbol of Revolution. The revolution here foretold will bring with it greater changes than ever before passed upon society. It will revolutionize the world once for all.

Since the Church entered into her great captivity, now twenty-five centuries since, there have been at least four great revolutions in the world. First the Chaldean power was overthrown. Next the Medo-Persian, after its term of rule was fulfilled, bowed to the supremacy of the Greeks: and the Greeks in their turn yielded up the sovereignty of the world to the Romans; and thus a third time the condition of mankind was changed. There came yet a fourth mighty revolution. The great empire of Rome, which had civilized by her genius and ruled by her scepter so many of the nations of the earth, closed at last her years of sovereignty, and fell before the Goths.

But the apocalypse foretells the coming of a fifth revolution. This will surpass all the revolutions which have been before it: its plowshare will reach to the very bottom of society: it will lay prostrate in the dust the Gothic kingdoms which stood up when the great empire of Rome fell, together with all that remains upon the earth of those great empires which flourished before the era of the ten kingdoms, sweeping from off the earth in a mighty tempest all those laws, institutions, religions, and customs, which grew out of these kingdoms, and which were connected with, and helped to defend the old Pagan idolatry, which was incorporated with, and received its fullest development in the politico-ecclesiastical constitution of medieval Europe. All must fall. This great tempest will bring with it a universal purification, for, in the first place, it will clear the ground of all those evil systems which have grown and flourished these three thousand years bygone; and, in the second place, it will open a way for the diffusion throughout all lands on earth of that light and truth which alone can purify the soul and regenerate society.

This blessed influence began to operate when the first shocks of this great earthquake were felt in 1789; and heathendom began, here and there, to be spotted with light, and the ancient promise to be fulfilled,

"And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall." -Isaiah 30:25

But the instant the last and consummating shock of that great earthquake shall have shaken the world, there will burst from the sky, like the coming of a sudden spring-time, or the opening of the portals of the morning, a sweet and gracious influence, which, in a marvelously short time, there is reason to think, will convert the earth. And so will be realized the sequel of the prophecy we have just quoted.

"Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." -Isaiah 30:26

This, then, is the one grand revolution of the world. It will mark off its evil from its good days, "numbering and finishing" the one, and bringing in the other. It is that blessed change to which the prophets looked forward, with longing hearts, and kindling eyes, and whose dawn, though yet afar off, they could descry across the intervening tops of tyrannic empires and idolatrous ages. Not in a day, or in a year, will it come: it is already begun: the solemn events of our own strangely blended epoch, in which sweetest mercy walks side by side with judgments of unexampled terror, are in truth its footsteps; and mercies yet greater, and judgments still more terrible, which manifestly impend, will give to this change a consummation at once sudden, glorious, and complete.

All former revolutions looked toward this one, and prepared the way for it. The changes which they effected in the existing state of things were superficial and transient. They resembled the phenomena of a mid-winter storm, in which the rattling hail and the whirling snow descend upon the moveless surface of a frozen ocean. The waters, enchained by the frost, sealed down opinion, and presented a floor, hard and firm as a rock, on which still stood the old despotic governments, and the persecuting, idolatrous churches.

But the "earthquake" of the seventh vial will resemble the coming of a springtime. The waters will be upheaved from their bottom, the ice will be broken up, and while the mined fragments of the old tyrannies, political and ecclesiastical, are seen to sink in a stormy ocean, there will come a gush of verdure from shore to mountain-top, which will cover the earth with beauty, and evoke a universal shout of joy.

As regards the governments of Europe, those of them especially which have refused to admit into their constitution the preserving salt of Protestantism, the question is not, will they fall? but when? today or tomorrow? this year, or the year after? There is a widespread revolt against them.

Nor has this revolt arisen from any temporary cause. It is not a frenzy, whose violence will work its own cure, and when it has subsided, the

repentant nations will hail the rule they now spurn, and bow their necks to the old yoke. No: it has sprung from ideas which have been the slow growth of centuries, but which have now leavened the entire mass, and brought on a movement of mind so mighty, irresistible, and so far beyond control, that no Government now existing, or that ever existed on the earth, can withstand it. These Governments have been weighed in the balance, and the nations have found them wanting, both as respects the liberty which the individual ought to possess, and the advance which society ought to make. This result is not the achievement of one or of a few ages; it is the triumph of the race. A world has shared the toils of the arduous struggle, as a world shall reap its fruits. It forms one of the great epochs of the human mind—an epoch which can never be re-crossed, and the passage of which has for ever sealed the fate of the Gothic Governments.

They may contrive for a little to delay their dissolution. A timely concession today, and a successful battle tomorrow, may prolong their existence for a few years; but their doom is inevitable. They are in the arms of a foe whose fresh, unspent vigor is a match a thousand times over for the exhaustion and feebleness of their senility.

That which imparts to this movement its omnipotent strength, and will secure its steady onward course, is, that, in the main it is founded on reason. Illusion, like that from which the Crusades sprang, is transient;—truth is immortal. The influences now at work in the political and moral world can no more be arrested than can those secret yet all pervading powers which begin to operate in the bosom of the soil, when the months of winter have expired, and the time has come for summer to revisit the skies, and renew the face of the earth. It is now upwards of half a century since Sir James Macintosh, in his "*Vindiciae Gallicae*," reasoning from the analogy between the then state of Europe and that period of Grecian history when the heroic passed into the legislative ages, gave it as his opinion, that "*the Gothic Governments of Europe had lived their time.*"

To the same import is the testimony of another high authority—one who has studied society, not in books merely, but in the living world, and who has enjoyed the farther advantage of having acted his part in the great area. "*We are arrived*," says Lamartine, in his "*Polity of Reason*," "*at one of the strangest epochs the human race has to cross in its progress towards their Divine destiny—an era of renovation and transformation similar, perhaps, to the gospel era. Shall we get over it and yet not perish?*"

No Apocalyptic theory biased the judgments of these men. Surveying European society, from their commanding position, with a keen glance, which observation had invigorated and philosophy enlarged, they announce the approach of that great moral revolution which the interpreter of the Apocalypse, guided only by its symbols, had taught the world to look for about this period of its history. What an illustrious triumph did science obtain, when, after their long voyage across the hitherto unfurrowed Atlantic, there rose before the crew of Columbus, in far-extending line, dimly seen through a veil of haze, the shores of the New World!

A yet more blessed triumph is about to crown Revelation, and a yet more

welcome sight, after her long dreary voyage across the dark ages, is about to unfold itself to the Church, now that the more sagacious and farsighted of our philosophers and statesmen are heard to cry out, like the sailor from the mast-head, that they descry, through the mists and darkness of fearful revolutions, that renovated state of society that stands predicted in the Apocalypse.

Despotism had long withheld from society its rights: Communism has now come, affirming that society has no rights—that all centers in the individual, who is everything, and society nothing. By the atheism of its creed, Communism looses man from every sacred obligation; by its doctrines on property and other matters, it relieves him from every social bond; and thus it aims at sinking him into all the isolation, and more than the barbarism, of savage life.

If ever Heaven in His wrath sent an incarnation of malignity from the place of all evil, to chastise the guilty race of man, it is Communism. But the hell from which it has come is Rome: Communism has drawn its birth from the fetid womb of Popery, whose superstition has passed into atheism, and whose tyranny has engendered lawlessness; and now the progeny, with parricidal (related to, inclined to, or guilty of, the murder of one's immediate family) fury, seeks to devour the parent.

From a feeble infancy it gathered strength by moments, till, finding itself strong enough to make war with the divinities of the political firmament, it threw down the gage (challenge) of battle. That battle has now gone on with varying success for eighty years. It has converted the Continent into a camp, and its territory into a battle-field. Its issue must be, that one or other of the two parties shall perish.

Should the Absolutists triumph, Europe must return, at the sword's point, to her dungeon, and yield her limbs to the old manacles. Should the Communists prevail, there remains on earth no farther power of staying the Revolution, and it must roll on, avalanche-like, to the awful bourne (destination) Providence may have assigned it, crushing and burying in its progress thrones, altars, laws, rights, the fences of order and the bulwarks of despotism, the happiness of families and the prosperity of kingdoms.

But above the crash of thrones and the agonies of expiring nations we may hear the voice of the angel of the waters saying,

"Thou art righteous, O Lord, 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

Had the Reformation succeeded the world would have been spared all these dreadful calamities. The Reformation was the Elijah before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. It was the Voice crying in the Papal wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." It addressed the apostate Churches of Europe as John (the Baptist) did the Jewish Church,

"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every

tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." -Matthew 3:10

For three centuries, as John for three years, the Reformation has been a preacher of repentance to the Popish nations. Great as it was, and dignified and important as was its office, it announced itself, like John, to be only the harbinger of a mightier dispensation, saying,

"He that cometh after me is mightier than I. Whose fan is in his hand, and He will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." -Matthew 3:11b

But this great preacher's warning, like John's, was slighted.

Nevertheless, the Reformation has executed its mission, though in a different way from what had been anticipated. It has brought down the corrupt Churches and tyrannical Governments of Europe, not by the preaching of the gospel, but by the intellectual knowledge it has diffused. Had it been allowed to take its own way, it would have accomplished its mission without spilling a drop of blood, or overturning a single throne; but, fettered as it was by Governments, it has done its work amid direful wars and revolutions, for which those only are responsible who employed force to oppose it.

The Reformation gave to the European nations the printing-press and the Bible—the tree of knowledge and the tree of life. Providence designed that men should partake of both; but Governments put asunder what God had joined. The nations had access to the tree of knowledge, but were forbidden to touch the tree of life. The consequence has been, that they have acquired intellectual power, without moral principle to control it. Society has grown strong, but not wise. The Bible, with its ally the printing-press, would have reformed society without destroying it: the printing-press alone has destroyed it; though we trust that destruction will pave the way for its reformation. The wind, the earthquake, and the fire, will, as of old, be the harbinger of the "still small voice."

Viewed in this light, what an aspect of fearful retribution does the present condition of Europe bear, and how strikingly does it correspond with the symbols under which the final plagues of the Papacy are exhibited—a harvest and vintage! The Papacy is not to be destroyed by supernatural agents. It is not fire from heaven in which Rome is to be burned. Her destruction is to be an *effect* from a *cause* long past, as the harvest is an effect from the seedtime. An era is to open on Europe, in which the tyranny and priestcraft of ages will yield all their evil fruits; and what, in truth, are the atheism and lawlessness that have so often celebrated their saturnalia (pagan sacrifice) of blood on the Continent, and may do so again, but the harvest of past oppression, secular and spiritual? May not the terrible wreck which has already partially befallen, and may yet in a fuller measure befall the thrones, princes, and hierarchies, the laws, commerce, and prosperity, of Papal Europe, be the burning of the great city Babylon, and the lamentations which have been poured forth over a catastrophe so unexpected and so vast, be the first echoes of the cry, "Alas! alas! that great city Babylon?" And, be it remarked, that the symbol, "the great city Babylon," does not denote the

priesthood, but that union of the hierarchical and dynastical powers which constitutes the Government of Papal Europe.

We take much too limited a view of the overthrow of the Papacy, when we conceive of it as extending only to the country of Italy and the persons of the Pope and his clergy. The system was a European one, and so must be its destruction. The political constitutions of the various kingdoms formed the framework of the Papacy—the *body* of the beast—while Popery was its *spirit*; and therefore the destruction of these Governments must form a large part of the destruction of the Papacy.

Accordingly, at this hour we behold the ten horns, and the little horn, their head and ruler—the kings and the Pope—sinking by equal stages. On these grounds we are strongly disposed to view the present wreck of the political power, spiritual wares, and temporal merchandise, of Papal Europe, as being the begun realization of the awful tragedy of Revelation xviii.; and when that tragedy shall be complete, and when the world comes to look back upon it from a distance of two hundred years, it will be seen to contain all the magnificence, terror, and retribution, of the Apocalyptic symbols.

And is not the fact that Rome's destruction will flow directly from her crimes, analogous to God's usual procedure? and will it not form a solemn illustration of that law of moral retribution under which the world has been placed, and which, by linking the punishment to the sin, as the effect is linked to its cause, puts the idea of escape altogether out of the question? The dispensation in this way will wear a more judicial aspect. Although the Italian peninsula, as some expect, should sink in a sea of fire, that would prove nothing as regards the character of the Papacy. But when we behold the ruin of Rome growing out of her sin, her destruction is seen to be, not the result of accident, but the operation of law: her fall becomes a public execution, following, on a solemn investigation into her character, and solemn sentence on her crimes. God will not only destroy her, but He will destroy her in such a way as to make it apparent that she deserved to be destroyed. He will spare her till she has become corrupt and loathsome in the sight of all; and thus she shall perish, accursed of men, as well as abhorred of God.

We think we can see certain great ends to be gained by her destruction at this time. A scheme had been concocted in the depths of the Vatican for placing Rome once more at the head of the European kingdoms. She put herself forward as leader in the great European movement for reform; and for a short while the scheme succeeded beyond even the expectations of its authors. Italy was again prostrate at the feet of the Popedom: the journals of all Europe, England included, were hailing Pius the Ninth as the great reformer of the age. Dazzled by the visions of dominion which, after the widowhood of half a century, were again opening upon her, Rome was boasting, "I am no widow: I shall be a lady for ever." But while the words were in her mouth, the blow fell which brought to an end all these hopes. Her artfully-contriven scheme but conducted her to a height whence her fall was the greater—

"Unde altior esset
Casus, et impulsae praeceps immane ruinae."

(Latin for the bigger they are, the harder they fall.)

We think, too, that should Rome's destruction happen under the pontificate of a man personally amiable, it will teach a great truth to the world: it will show that God's anger is against the system; and that He is punishing, not so much the present race of Papists, as the system of the Papacy from its beginning. It is instructive here to observe that it is said, "Great Babylon came in remembrance before God." -Revelation 16:19

It was not so much her present wickedness that God saw, as her past crimes that He *remembered*. As generations passed away, these crimes appeared to be sinking into a profounder oblivion: they were forgotten on earth, and, as it seemed, in heaven, too, till recalled to Rome's remembrance, and to the world's, by the peculiar character and awful severity of her plagues. It is instructive to observe, likewise, that "the seven golden vials" were said to be "full of the wrath of that God who liveth for ever and ever." While this intimation (announcement) is fitted to convey an awful idea of the greatness of Rome's punishment, it also indicates the reason why its execution has been deferred. God's government is not limited to one age. Among men, when a crime is committed, it must be punished speedily, if punished at all, for both the offender and his judge will soon cease to be. But God lives for ever; and, under a government extending from the beginning to the end of time, the sins of one age may stand over and be punished in another; but the longer vengeance is deferred, as in Rome's case, it will be the more awful. It is indeed "a fearful looking for of wrath" that remains to her—the wrath of that God that liveth for ever and ever.

It was the opinion of Sir Isaac Newton, that *the main revolution foretold in the Prophets had not yet taken place*. In this opinion we thoroughly concur. The grand era of which the prophets speak with one consent, and in the description of which they have employed such a splendor of diction, and lavished such a fullness and variety of metaphor, is not yet consummated. We meet with nothing that answers to it amid all the revolutions of the past. But if the unprecedented events in progress be, as in truth they appear to be, that great coming of Christ, in the erection of His Kingdom, that is so frequently the burden of prophetic song, and that great destruction of His foes to which so many significant allusions are scattered throughout the Bible, what inexpressible grandeur does that impart to the drama now proceeding in Europe!

Viewed thus, it presents the noblest field of study which the providence of God ever opened to the mind of man. It is seen to be no mere ebullition (sudden, violent outpouring) of evil passions, chance directed, and ending in nothing: it is the winding up of a divinely-arranged drama. It is fraught with eternal principles, applicable to all ages and all nations. It reads to the world lessons the most important, and proclaims truths the most sublime; it brings truth from her grave, and consigns error to the abyss her own self had dug; it illustrates the character of God, and sheds ineffable splendor upon His government; it explains the past, and it unveils the future; it shows that the long struggles of the past—long to the Church, though not to Him with whom a thousand years are but as one day—struggles in which, in truth, iniquity hitherto has had the best of it—bear to the glory and

prosperity of Christ's Kingdom yet to come, the same relation which the early wars of a nation bear to its state of settled and prosperous empire, and serve an analogous end to the future state of society, as did those geological convulsions to the world by which it was prepared for being the abode of man.

It is to be desired that the Church should take this view of the matter, otherwise it may turn out that she has neglected to take to herself the comfort, and to give to God the glory, of events which are an answer to the cry of the martyrs and to her own prayers. She may be in danger, too, of becoming appalled at the horrors that are darkening over the world, and which may shed no little gloom upon her, forgetful that the stage on which was shed the blood of the martyrs must be purged in like manner by fire and blood—that society, like the individual, must die before it can enter on a new and higher existence—and that a gulf, “deep beyond plummet's fathom,” divides her from her kingdom, in the awful passage across which empires and societies shall perish, while she alone shall survive.

The Removal Of The Islands And Mountains

The “great earthquake” by which the world was rocked was so violent, and its shocks were so long continued, that the entire surface of the earth was changed, and presented an altogether new appearance. The mountains fell and the islands sank. The yawning earth swallowed up the former, leaving all a plain; and a raging sea covered the other with its tumultuous billows. There is no difficulty in reading this symbolic writing, but the meaning is so terrible that we fear to interpret it—

“And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.” – Revelation 16:20

It is a new earth on which we find ourselves. The old has disappeared. All the familiar landmarks which have stood for ages are vanishing around us. The mountains on whose verdant slopes men had planted the olive and the vine, and out of whose bowels they had dug the precious ore; the islands of the sea, where they had reared their habitations, and where they and their fathers had long dwelt, all that appeared most durable and stable, is passing away, and the place that knew them once is knowing them no more. Unseen but mighty forces are acting at the foundation of things, and the very framework of society is in a state of dissolution. Such is the change here foreshadowed. It is hard to believe that governments, great and small: governments which have lasted for a thousand years, which have left their imperishable footprints in history: which have molded the genius and directed the destiny of mighty nations by their institutions and laws, and which even to this very hour are upheld by the power of mighty armies, are fated to pass away—to disappear like the unsubstantial vapor which the sun lights up for a moment with a golden splendor—to shift like the painted scenes of a pantomime—and that the swelling waves of revolution are to break in and flow over, and cover the space where they stood.

Yet what other interpretation can we give to the prophecy? “Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.” The world is to awaken out of

its sleep; and the exploits of great empires —of France, of Spain, of Rome—the wars they have waged, the victories they have won, the glory, dominion, and power they have acquired, all in short that makes up their brilliant history, will be remembered, in the new and better age of the world, but as the dreams of a night that is passed, and as a tale that has been told. We cannot but heave a sigh when we think that this is the end that awaits the kingdoms of Papal Europe; and, without doubt, the monarchies also that have upheld Mohammedanism.

And it is not difficult at this hour to see the sure coming of what prophecy foretold so long before. Since they were first smitten in 1789, these governments have made no perceptible advance in inherent stability. Again and again have they been brought to the brink of ruin, but they have failed to learn the lesson these events were fitted to teach, that the principles on which they were proceeding would in the end work their ruin. Nothing effectual have they done to conciliate their subjects, or to advance the cause of rational liberty and true religion. Any ameliorations (the process of making a bad or unpleasant situation better) which have taken place have been the result of the action of other parties; and not of the governments which still retain their old attitude of antagonism to the great body of the people. Meanwhile, the principles of revolution are being more widely propagated. Pantheism is year by year enrolling more numerous disciples. Governments are every hour running deeper in debt, while their only precaution against the evil day is overgrown armies, a precaution which, by the taxation it necessitates, and the drain it inflicts upon husbandry and commerce, only renders more terrible and sure the calamities it is meant to ward off.

In fine (ultimately), while on the one hand no principle of power has been found, on the other the forces of decay and destruction are ceaselessly working; and with every sand that falls in the glass of Time, the hour of OVERTURN comes nearer, in which the islands will flee away, and the mountains shall not be found.

It is generally agreed, among interpreters of the inspired Volume, that a single year comprises the history of the Deluge. From the day that the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, till the waters had again retired within their ancient bed, and the face of earth had become dry, an interval of only twelve months and ten days had elapsed. At the expiry of this short period, the rocky peak and the verdant slopes of Ararat rose, beauteous as ever, above the retiring waters, and the fathers of the post-diluvian world came forth from the ark to till and plant anew the bosom of the earth, cleansed in this awful manner from the pollutions of its first inhabitants. But though a brief twelve months sufficed to regenerate the Old World, the purification of the New must needs be a work of longer time. The fiat of Omnipotence could bury the earth and all its guilty inhabitants in one common grave, and, when the period of entombment had expired, the same power could again bring forth the ancient hills and shores, and an election from the ancient race.

But the vast moral change which society must undergo before it can realize its own anticipations, or fulfill its divinely revealed destinies, must

necessarily form a much more lengthened process. Accordingly, the flood which 1789 poured upon Europe has not yet subsided. The waters are still upon the face of the earth: the doors of the great deep whence these waters issued have not yet been closed. Those mighty mountain billows with which they came thundering onwards at their first outbreak, have been allayed, no doubt; but the waters keep silently but steadily increasing. Inch by inch, they are swallowing up the mountains of political despotism. The springs, the pastures, and the woods, which girt their base—the tranquility and order which were enjoyed even under these despotisms—have long since been submerged; and now nothing is seen above the flood but the bare and rocky peak of military power. But a little, and even that will lie many fathoms below the dark surface of the flood, and a wide weltering ocean will cover all, from which the mountains of the political earth, unlike those of the antediluvian world, are destined never more to re-emerge, and, in their present form, appear on this scene of things.

The Vintage

In the land of Judea, the vintage followed the harvest, at an interval of about three months. So the symbolic harvest of the Apocalypse comes first, and the vintage succeeds. The harvest symbolizes, we have already said, the destruction to overtake the secular institutions of the Roman earth, and was fulfilled, we are of opinion, in the wars of the first six vials, which affected mainly, though not exclusively, the Popish thrones and nations. These have had a short term added to their existence, but not in their former power; and are reserved, evidently, that they may figure, as foretold, on the last scene with their companion the false prophet. The vine being the symbol of a Church, the vintage must necessarily symbolize, mainly, the judgments that await the ecclesiastical institutions of Papal Christendom—the corrupt Churches of the Latin earth.

It is very noticeable that the symbols now become full of a blessed meaning to the Church, even when most largely charged with wrath to her enemies.

“And I looked, and, behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle,” Revelation. 14::14

The term “Son of Man,” applied to Him who appeared enthroned upon the white cloud, leaves it undoubted that this is the Saviour. It refers back to the prophecy of Daniel, where “one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven.” How different the guise in which He now appeared, from that in which He showed Himself to His Church, immediately before the twelve hundred and sixty days! Then He was encompassed by dark clouds, His feet were as pillars of fire, and a rainbow was on His head; all denoting days of darkness, a mysterious and trying path to be trodden, in which the Church should have need to keep hope alive by recalling God’s covenant of perpetuity with her. But now He is surrounded by symbols of gladness, of prosperity, and of victory; He sits upon a white cloud; on His head is a golden crown; and in His hand a sharp sickle, the instrument of judgment. But why did Christ appear at this moment? He is seen sitting in judgment upon His great enemy, presiding over his final destruction; and thus the last act, as well as every

preceding one, is seen to be His doing, and the end of this great drama is connected in a striking manner with its beginning.

The moment to thrust in the sickle and reap the vine of the earth is announced by an angel from the altar. This angel had power over fire—that is, it was his duty to keep alive the altar-fire, and take care of the ashes of the sacrifice consumed in that fire. This is a symbol full of meaning. It plainly indicates that the reaping of the vine, and the treading it in the wine-press, is a sacrifice to justice. But what was the sin that required this great expiatory judgment? This, too, is plainly shown in the symbol. The angel from the “altar” indicates, as the procuring cause of this vengeance, the slaughter of the witnesses. s0 early as the third century, on the opening of the fifth seal, the cry of martyrs had arisen from under the altar:

“How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? ... and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” – Revelation 6:10-11

This points to a second company of martyrs to be slain before the blood of those that fell under Pagan Rome could be avenged, namely, the martyrs under the Papacy. But now the roll of martyrdom has been completed, and there is nothing to obstruct the infliction of a full measure of vengeance. Accordingly, the terms in which the pouring out of the third vial is described announce that the deferred vengeance had commenced. “They have shed the blood of saints [the primitive martyrs], and of prophets [those who prophesied during the twelve hundred and sixty days], and thou hast given them blood to drink.” The song of the angel, too, on occasion of this commencing act of retribution, refers us back to the invocation of the souls beneath the altar, seeing his song turns on the same attributes to which the souls beneath the altar had appealed:

“Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.”- Revelation 16:7

An awfully judicial character, then, shall belong to the epoch of the vintage. It is the answer to the loud cry which was heard to issue from beneath the altar while Pagan Rome was yet standing, and which has been growing louder with each succeeding age. The vengeance of that period will be on a scale commensurate with the blood Rome has shed, reaching back to the earliest days.

“And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” – Revelation 18:24

“Thrust in thy sharp sickle,” said the angel, “and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.” – Revelation 14:18

We call attention to the reason assigned for reaping now: “her grapes are fully ripe.” This has been commonly referred to the sin of the Roman Church as being filled up. We apprehend it refers to a change that is to take place within that Church, analogous to that which the vine undergoes when it

becomes ripe. When may a corrupt Church be said to be ripe? Just when the natural issue or fruit of her false faith has been fully developed, which it is when her worship passes into open idolatry, and the belief of her members into downright infidelity or atheism. This appears to fix the prophecy in its reference to our own times; for the Church of Rome has undergone precisely such a change as is here indicated. She has proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. She makes a creature the supreme object of her worship, and so she has completed and crowned her idolatry. And, as regards her people, their faith has turned into blind unreasoning submission to authority; and, in instances not a few, into grossest atheism, with works correspondingly bad. Thus the grapes of the mystic vine are fully ripe—the fields are white unto the harvest.

If the vine is allowed to overpass the period of its maturity, it becomes unfit for the wine-press. An analogous necessity exists for gathering the clusters of the mystic vine, now if ever. A century hence, if the influences at present in existence continue to operate, Popery will have rotted away, and perished in its excessive maturity, and scarce anything will remain to be gathered and cast into the wine-press. But it is not agreeable to the analogy of the Divine government, or consistent with the predictions of the Divine Word, that that Church should be permitted to pass quietly from the scene of her crimes, unvisited by punishment. No, — the vine must not be allowed to molder and perish: it must be reaped and burned; its clusters must be gathered and trodden. But, unless we can suppose an infusion of fresh sap to make it flourish anew, it must be reaped speedily, if reaped at all. Hence the urgency of the command, "Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe."

It is especially worthy of remark, that each of the three leading idolatries—Hinduism, Mohammedanism, and Popery—is in precisely the same condition. All are ripe for the sickle of the Great Reaper. Their false faith has passed, to a greater or less degree, into no faith, and the nations which adhere to them are sunk in political and moral rottenness. When the sap of superstition flowed vigorously in the veins of these mighty trunks, their roots took so firm a hold of the soil, and the strength of their gnarled boughs was such, that they could bid defiance to any storm; but now, drained of their sap, the first breeze that sets in threatens to rend their moldering stems in pieces. Hinduism is passing into skepticism : it is now a weak, timorous, and shrinking thing, which cannot long subsist. Mohammedanism has become an affair of decent Observances, and has lost the fiery zeal and proselytizing spirit that made it once formidable. Even Judaism has relinquished its peculiar glory and hope; and the only Messiah whose advent it now waits for is that of a political enfranchisement. Popery itself has become infected with infidelity, and is rotten to the very core.

It is sufficiently striking, surely, that all the leading superstitions in the world should have grown old simultaneously— that all should have reached their hoar age together. The fact is incontrovertible. Wherever we look it is the same. Everywhere idolatry is on the point of vanishing away, and a dark portentous ATHEISM is about to take its room. So far as man can see, the reign of UNIVERSAL SKEPTICISM is about to begin. But is not this the very

character of the age that is to witness the predicted coming of the Son of Man? "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" – Luke 18:8

The vine of the earth being ripe, the sharp sickle is thrust in, and her clusters are gathered. The gathering of the vine may possibly symbolize the drawing together into one place of the adherents of Papacy, so that judgment may be executed upon them without compromising the safety of others. The vine being gathered, it is cast

"into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse-bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs."- Revelation 14:20

In scriptural times and countries the wine-press was placed without the city. So this symbolic wine-press is spoken of as being trodden outside the mystic city. The "blood " indicates slaughter; and the dimensions of the wine-press are such as to show that the slaughter will be tremendous. The blood that filled it was found, when measured, to extend sixteen hundred furlongs, or about an hundred and fifty miles, and in depth to reach to the horses' bridles. If one side of the wine-press only is denoted, the area would be enormous, and the slaughter fearfully great; and even though we should understand all the four sides as included in this measurement, the catastrophe would be unspeakably awful. This is about the breadth of Italy; and not a few have fixed on the Campagna as the fated spot.

Some stress may be laid on the circumstance that the term "great" is here dropped, which in other parts of the Apocalypse is usually prefixed to "city," when the Papal system, in all its extent of territory, is meant, as "great Babylon," "the great city." This makes it not wholly improbable that, when it is said, "the wine-press was trodden without the city," the allusion may be, not to the entire extent of the Papal territory, but simply to the limits of the literal city of the seven hills. If the territory around Rome should become the scene of the vintage, then that judgment is analogous to that of the second and third vials, whose inflictions fell mainly on those very spots where the blood of the martyrs had been shed.

Others look to Judea as the locality indicated; and it is worthy of notice, that the length of that country, from Lebanon to the southern boundary of the tribe of Judah, is about an hundred and sixty miles. "Wheresoever the carcase is," said our Lord, "there will the eagles be gathered together." And where the vine grew, there, it is probable, will her grapes be gathered, and trodden in the wine-press. Than the symbol of this judgment nothing could be more awful. A sea of blood, on the lowest computation, very nearly forty square miles in area, and four feet in depth. Apart from the prophecy, to what issue do things at present tend, save to some catastrophe great beyond precedent?

We have only to think of the overgrown armies of our times, of the cruel instruments wherewith a too successful invention has furnished us, and of the millions that will meet in conflict whenever the trumpet of war shall sound,

to be able to realize, although still, very inadequately, how full of horror and blood must be the battle-fields of the future.

“As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth.” -Jeremiah 51:49

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