

The Approaching End of the Age – Part IV. Section II. The Law of Completion In Weeks. Chapter III. The Week In History. Part 4.



Continued from [Part IV. Section II. The Law of Completion In Weeks. Chapter III. The Week In History. Part 3.](#)

CHRONOLOGICAL MEASURES OF THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES.

When the Egyptian captivity of his seed was announced to Abraham, chronological limits were assigned to it; and when the Babylonish captivity was foretold by Isaiah, seventy years was fixed as its duration. It might therefore be expected that the *length* of the period of Jewish affliction and degradation, which is termed by our Lord “the Times of the Gentiles,” would also be more or less distinctly foretold: yet as it includes the times of the Christian Church—those ages of waiting for Christ, over which in tender mercy God saw fit to throw, as we have seen, a veil of mystery,—it is improbable that its duration will anywhere be revealed in plain terms.

We have already shown that this period or dispensation is that, during which the Jews are either wholly cast out of their land, or allowed to occupy it as mere tributaries, and during which also, the throne is taken from the house of Judah, and from the seed of David, and given by God to Gentile monarchs. It is the period during which the *land of Canaan*, promised to the seed of Abraham, and the *throne of Israel*, secured by covenant to the seed of David, are both alienated, and occupied by Gentiles instead of Jews. During by far the greater part of this period, Israel has been scattered among all nations, Jerusalem “trodden down of the Gentiles,” and the pleasant land laid desolate.

The whole period is occupied by the duration of the four great monarchies, and it is to be closed by a fifth great monarchy, “the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed . . . it shall stand for ever”—a kingdom symbolised by the stone cut out without hands, which smites and destroys the image, becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth. (Dan. ii. 44.)

This kingdom is, as we learn from other Scriptures, the kingdom of Christ Himself, *and His accession to the throne of the earth marks the termination of the Times of the Gentiles.* "The Lord God shall give unto HIM the throne of his father David." David foresaw that of the fruit of his loins, God would raise up Christ, to sit upon his throne. God will overturn one monarchy after another, "until *He* come, whose right it is," and will give the throne to Him.

And prior to this restoration of the throne to the house of Judah in the person of Christ, will be the restoration of the land of Canaan to the seed of Abraham.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again *the second time* to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. He shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. xi, 12). God has not cast away his people whom He foreknew, they are still beloved for the fathers' sakes, and in due time, when the fulness of the Gentiles has been brought in, "all Israel shall be saved." The gifts and calling of God are without repentance; the land must revert to its rightful owners the seed of Abraham, and the throne must be filled by its predicted occupant, the Son of David, the Prince of peace, of the increase of whose government there shall be no end, who shall "order and establish the kingdom, with judgment and with justice, for ever."

However improbable it may appear that Palestine should ever again be the home of a mighty Jewish nation, Scripture leaves no room to doubt that such will be the case,—that the same Almighty arm, which to place Israel there of old, plagued Egypt, destroyed the host of Pharaoh, and extirpated almost entirely the seven nations of Canaan; which subsequently overthrew the mighty Babylonian monarchy, in order to restore Israel to it for a comparatively brief period, by means of Cyrus and Artaxerxes, will in due time overthrow the Turkish power which has so long trodden down Jerusalem, defiled the sanctuary, and desolated the land of Israel, and will, *the second time*, restore His ancient people, to their inalienable inheritance. Every barrier must fall, every obstacle be overthrown, that the purpose of God may be accomplished, and the promises to Abraham and to his seed be fulfilled.

(**Note:** The author seems to be putting a strong emphasis on the *fleshly* seed of Abraham, but the Apostle Paul clearly taught in Galatians chapter 3 that the true children of Abraham are *not* according to the flesh.

Galatians 3:26 For ye are all the children of God **by faith in Christ Jesus**. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is **neither Jew nor Greek**, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And **if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed**, and heirs according to the promise.)

God has clearly revealed that all this shall be; has He also revealed *when* it shall be? He has revealed the *character* of the Times of the Gentiles; has He also revealed their *duration*? We believe He has, very distinctly, though not in plain statements, He has given many a clue and many a mystic intimation, which when combined, by those who compare Scripture *prophecy* with Scripture *history*, and with profane history, afford no indistinct reply to this inquiry. It is of course needful to take profane history into account in considering this question, as many of the events predicted extend beyond the point at which inspired records cease. Nor should we have the slightest hesitation in doing this, for we are evidently intended to make use of uninspired historical evidence. Scripture history ceases just at the point where by common consent profane history becomes reliable, and passes from the dim regions of fable into the broad daylight of well ascertained facts. God graciously presents us with inspired records of that far distant past of which no uninspired records exist; but where authentic histories *are* in existence, He leaves us to learn from them what the course of mundane events has been. He makes provision for our unavoidable ignorance, but none for our indolence. He puts into our hands the telescope of Scripture history, to enable us to see farther into the distant past, than would with the naked human eye be possible; but He does not embody in the sacred writings, matters, such as the fall of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish people in the days of Titus, which are sufficiently well attested by Josephus and other careful historians.

Looking then both at ancient prophecy and at sacred and profane history, what do we learn as to the duration of these "Times of the Gentiles"?

THAT THEY ARE APPOINTED TO EXTEND OVER A GREAT WEEK, OVER "SEVEN TIMES," SEVEN YEARS WHOSE DAYS ARE YEARS, 2520 NATURAL YEARS.

This is *inferred* from Scripture rather than distinctly *stated* in it; but the inference is so well grounded as to be of almost equal weight with a distinct declaration.

When this long period of Jewish desolation and chastisement was first threatened (Lev. xxvi.), the expression "seven times" was emphatically used in connection with it, That this had any chronological force, was not of course understood by those who received the warning, but it is almost impossible in the light of subsequent predictions, and in the light of history, to doubt that the Omniscient God used an expression in harmony with his foreknowledge of Israel's future, and expressive of his Divine purpose—a purpose which we have seen wrought out in history. By the lips of Moses, God forewarned his people, saying,—

"If ye will not yet for all this hearken unto Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins . . . and if ye will not be reformed by Me by these things, but will walk contrary unto Me, then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet *seven times* for your sins . . . And if ye will not for all this hearken unto Me . . . then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury, and I, even I, will chastise you *seven times* for your sins.. . I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation . . . and I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after

you . . . and ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up" (Lev. xxvi.).

Old Testament history shows that Israel's oft-recurring and inveterate idolatry brought upon them judgment after judgment; that again and again God "being full of compassion forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not; yea, many a time turned He his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath; for He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away and cometh not again;" but that at last the measure of their iniquity being filled up, He sent upon them a chastisement, the *perfect* character of which is marked out by the *perfection of its period*, "seven times."

Seventy years,—the first portion of this long season of rejection, dispersion, and affliction, were spent in absolute captivity in Babylon and Assyria. The second stage was longer—it was the "seventy weeks," or 490 years of the restoration of Judah, and was passed by the restored remnant of the two tribes in a subject, tributary, and troubled state, in their own land, while the ten tribes remained captives in Assyria. This extended to the coming of Messiah the Prince, and the destruction of Jerusalem consequent on his rejection; and then commenced the *third* and longest portion of the 2520 years, which the Jews have passed in miserable exile, scattered over all the countries of the earth.

Already their chastisement has extended over "seven times," dating from the *earliest* stage in their captivities: *it will soon have done so, dating from the latest*. Does not then, the solemn threat, fulfilled in such awful justice through a long succession of ages, gleam *now* with the light of hope, and assume the cheering tones of mercy? "Seven times." *No more!* then the curse that has fallen so heavily, is all but exhausted, and everlasting blessedness is to succeed. The wrath has come upon Israel to the uttermost; the fountain for sin and for uncleanness, shall ere long be opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

And secondly, though the fourfold image which symbolised to Nebuchadnezzar, the succession of Gentile empires, which were to fill up this long interval of Jewish rejection, had no chronology attached to it, yet we know that those empires, the Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Pagan and Papal Roman powers, have as a matter of history lasted for about 2520 years. Now history is the evolution of the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, which must therefore have before assigned to "the Times of the Gentiles" *at least* this duration.

The symbol of the fourfold image declared, that these Gentile empires were to be succeeded by the kingdom of the God of heaven, but it did not reveal or even intimate when, or after what lapse of time, this should be. A subsequent vision granted to Nebuchadnezzar, did. He saw a tree, which he was told symbolised himself, cut down, and its stump left to be wet with the dew of heaven, and its portion with the beasts in the grass of the earth, its heart changed from a man's heart, and a beast's heart given it, until "seven times" should pass over it.

This vision was, as Daniel told the monarch, a prophecy of *the seven years'*

insanity, which, as a chastening for his pride, was to overtake *him*, and which was to teach him to know God, and to know that "the heavens do rule." "All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar," and at the end of the days, that is, of the seven years of his insanity, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, his understanding returned to him, and he blessed and praised and honoured the Eternal God, whose dominion is everlasting, whose will is sovereign, whose power is infinite, and who is able to abase those who walk in pride.

Now the vision of the tree is not more clearly symbolic of this remarkable incident in Nebuchadnezzar's life, than that incident itself is typical of certain moral and chronological features, of the succession of Gentile monarchies, of which Nebuchadnezzar was both head and representative.

The leading moral characteristics of all the four great empires have been, ignorance of God, idolatry, and cruel persecution of the saints. Nebuchadnezzar, prior to this incident, knew not God; he set up a great image, and commanded all men, on pain of death, to fall down and worship it. He cast into the burning fiery furnace the faithful witnesses who refused to obey the idolatrous mandate. How have all his successors with one consent followed this example! *Idolatry*, literal or spiritual, and *persecution*, Pagan or Papal, have marked the whole succession of Gentile monarchies. These episodes in Nebuchadnezzar's life are clearly typical; these features of his character have been stamped indelibly on all his successors. These incidents answer to events on the scale of nations and centuries with which history makes us familiar. So also does the *seven years' bestial degradation of the monarch during his insanity*, answer to the *period of Gentile rule* represented by the *four wild beasts* of a subsequent vision. "The king himself *represents* the succession of imperial sovereignty, till the kingdom of Christ shall come; the 'seven times' that passed over him must therefore *represent* the whole period of debasement in the Gentile kingdoms, from the times of Nebuchadnezzar till their full redemption." *

* Birks' "Elements," p. 353.

As we have alluded elsewhere to this subject we do not dwell further on it here; it affords strong confirmation of the view that the "seven times" of Lev. xxvi. has a chronological force. A further argument in support of the same view may be derived from the "time times and a half" of the "little horn." We have seen that prophecy assigns to the Apostasy of the latter days, a duration of 1260 years, and that this period is repeatedly spoken of as half a week. Where are we to find the other half of this great week? As the Apostasy is to be overthrown finally by the advent of Christ, it is clear the other half cannot follow but must precede the half which measures the existence of the Apostasy, it must date back, that is, from its *rise*. Calculating backwards then from the rise of the Papal and Mohammedan powers in the beginning of the seventh century, 1260 years lead up to the days of Nebuchadnezzar to the commencement of the Babylonish Captivity, the point at which we know the Times of the Gentiles began. Thus we see that the entire period occupied by the four great empires, represented by the golden image, and by the four beasts, is the *whole week*, whose *latter half* is the time of the dominion of the "little horn." During the whole of this period Israel has ceased to be an independent kingdom, and during two-thirds of it, Jerusalem

has been trodden down by the Gentiles. Each of the four great monarchies in turn ruled over the seed of Abraham, until at length, the cup of Jewish iniquity being full, the Romans came, took away their place and nation, and almost destroyed them as a people. Seventy years before this final judgment, Messiah came and was cut off, and his rejection and crucifixion by the Jews, which sealed and brought on their doom, inaugurated the Gospel dispensation, and the in gathering of the Gentiles to the kingdom of God. Thus the Christian dispensation, so thoroughly *Gentile* in its aspect, fills two-thirds of the Times of the Gentiles, the first third having been occupied with the growth of Gentile dominion, to the extraordinary development it had attained in the days of Augustus Caesar. We conclude therefore that the dispensation in whose closing days we live, was fore-ordained and appointed by God to run a course of 2520 years, or in symbolic language of "seven times;" and that our Lord Jesus Christ had this great week in his mind when He said, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," an expression which seems to imply that the period so designated had definite chronological limits. We proceed to inquire when it took its rise. From what great event are we to date the commencement of these "Times of the Gentiles"?

Happily the answer is not far to seek. We are not left to select among the complex changes of history, one which seems to us of paramount importance. Inspiration itself settles the question. The entire course of Gentile supremacy is symbolised by *an image* whose *head* was its beginning, and whose ten toes are chronologically its end.

Interpreting his dream by Divine revelation, to the proud monarch of Babylon, the prophet says to him "THOU art this head of gold." If by this be meant "thou" *personally*, then the "terminus a quo" or starting point of the "Times of the Gentiles" must be sought, as has generally been done, somewhere in the lifetime of Nebuchadnezzar.

But it seems clear that this was not the case, and that Daniel addressed the Babylonian king not as an individual, but as the representative of the empire, for immediately after saying "thou art this head of gold," he adds, "and after *thee* shall arise another kingdom, inferior to *thee*," alluding to the Medo-Persian Empire which succeeded the Babylonian.

Now this empire did not rise after Nebuchadnezzar *himself*, but after *his kingdom*. It rose on the fall of the Babylonian Empire, but not till four successors of Nebuchadnezzar had occupied the throne, of whom Belshazzar was the last.

Though undoubtedly its most illustrious ruler, Nebuchadnezzar was neither the first nor the last head of the Babylonian Empire, which lasted 210 years. The "head of gold" evidently represents the *whole* Babylonian power, just as the "breast of silver" represents the whole Medo-Persian, and it seems natural therefore to suppose that one main starting point of those times of the Gentiles, which include the four great empires, will be found at the era of the rise of the first of the four, *i.e., of the Babylonian power*.

This great dispensational period, the times of the Gentiles, is characterized

by two distinct features, the dominion of the four great empires, and the loss of dominion and independence on the part of the Jewish people; their subjection to and sufferings under their enemies; their dispersion among all nations, and the desolation of their land.

The commencing era of the "Times of the Gentiles" must be an era of *decay and fall of Jewish independence, coincident with a rise of Babylonian power.*

Now the seventy years' captivity of Judah in Babylon was not the beginning of the decay and fall of Jewish independence, nor was it the beginning of the rise of the Babylonian power.

The year of the accession of Nabonassar, the first king of Babylon, is an era of great historic importance. It ranks with the greatest eras of history: the Greek era of the Olympiads; the Roman A.U.C. or era of the foundation of the city of Rome; the Syrian era of the Seleucidae; the Christian era of the Nativity; the Papal era of indictions (dating from the conversion of Constantine, the fall of Paganism, and the beginning of the Imperial Church); and the Mohammedan era of the Hegira.

Moreover, the exact chronological point of this "ERA OF NABONASSAR" (N.E.) is more certain than any other date of remote antiquity, because, with it are connected a series of ancient astronomic observations, which have been verified by the labours of astronomers, during the last three centuries. It is certain not only to a year, but to a day and hour. It is noon of the 26th of February, 747 B.C.

That this important era, marking the commencement of the Babylonian power, should be one starting point of the 2520 years of the "Times of the Gentiles," seems as natural and suitable as that the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar should be another.

Like other national changes, and like many great political revolutions, the subjugation of the twelve tribes of Israel to the Assyrian and Babylonian powers, was only gradually accomplished. Monarch after monarch came up against the land; and one deportation of captives succeeded another. Ephraim first fell, then Judah: and Judah fell first partially, into the rank of a tributary kingdom, then completely, into the bitterest bondage, captivity, and degradation, Pul and Tiglath-pileser, Shalmanezar and Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Nebuchadnezzar, all played their parts in the great and mournful tragedy. The following brief summary of the facts may be verified by reference to Scripture.

The earliest invasion of the land, which resulted in a carrying captive of Israelites, was that recorded in 2 Kings xv. 19, in the reign of Menahem, king of Israel. "Pul, the king of Assyria came against the land, and Menahem gave him a thousand talents of silver." And in 1 Chron. v. 26 we read that this Pul, and also Tiglath-pileser, carried away the Reubenites and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them "unto Halah and Habor, and to the river Gozan," i.e., into Assyria.

Subsequently Ahaz king of Judah, when alarmed by the combined attack of Pekah

king of Israel and Resin king of Syria, sent to Tiglath-pileser to come to his aid, instead of trusting in God as Isaiah counselled him, and being quiet. It was like the sheep calling the wolf to his aid! He invited an enemy who soon overran the land. After taking Damascus from the king of Syria, Tiglath-pileser took a number of places in the land of Naphtali, and "*carried their inhabitants captive to Assyria*" (2 Kings xv. 29).

His successor, Shalmanezar, invaded in force the kingdom of the ten tribes, and after a three years' siege took Samaria, the capital, and carried all Israel away into Assyria (2 Kings xvii, 3-6).

Sennacherib afterwards invaded Judah, and ravaged the country for four or five years, taking every place of any strength, and at last besieging Jerusalem. Brought to the very verge of ruin, the city was at that time saved by a stupendous miracle, in answer to the prayer of the good king Hezekiah, himself similarly saved from the jaws of death not long after. The day of *Jerusalem's* fall had not yet fully come (2 Kings xviii., xix.).

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever were still.

And the widows of Asshur are loud in their wail;
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal?
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

The impious and profane Sennacherib was murdered by his sons as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead. This king carried captive another detachment of Israelites, thus finally destroying the national existence of the ten tribes, just sixty-five years after Isaiah's prediction to Ahaz, that before that interval had elapsed, "Ephraim should be broken and be no more a people." He also carried captive Manasseh king of Judah, who was however subsequently restored.

And then lastly, in the days of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came against Judah, and made that king his tributary vassal, while his son afterwards became his captive. The story is given in full in 2 Kings xxiv. We read that,—

"Jehoiachin went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon, none remained save the poorest sort of the people of the land."

Nebuchadnezzar left the uncle of Jehoiachin—Zedekiah— behind as his viceroy in Jerusalem; but this deputy proving faithless and rebelling, he returned,

besieged and took the city, and carried Zedekiah, with his eyes put out, captive to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar's captain, Nebuzaradan, finished the work of destruction, burned the Temple, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem, carrying captive the rest of the people. This was the final act in the long drama, and it is said of it, "so Judah was carried away out of their land" (2 Kings xxv. 21).

Now, as given in Scripture and verified by the most careful chronological investigations, the leading stages of this decline and fall of the Jewish monarchy were as follows:—

B.C.

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| 1. The invasion of Pul, following Menahem's accession in | 770 |
| 2. The siege and fall of Samaria | 723 |
| The captivity of Manasseh and deportation by Esarhaddon | 676 |
| 4. Final fall of the throne of Judah | 602-598 |

The invasion of Pul is probably to be assigned to the first half of Menahem's reign, the duration of which was ten years.

We have therefore first, in general, *the era* from B.C. 770 to B.C. 598, a period of one hundred and seventy-two years, as a "time of the end," a period conspicuously including all the main stages of the decline and fall of the Jewish monarchy, as well as those of the rise of Babylonian power. Wars and reverses had before been experienced by the Jewish nation; but it had never previously been subdued and carried captive as it was during this period. And the fall was final. A restoration was indeed enjoyed by two of the twelve tribes, but it was only partial and temporary; the temple was rebuilt, but not in its former glory; the city was restored, but never to *independent* sovereignty; and after "seventy weeks" of such restoration, a worse flood of desolation than ever, overtook both city, temple, and people, from which they have never yet rallied. The 168- 172 years ending with Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem, was emphatically the era of departing glory, the time when LO AMMI was inscribed on the brow of the daughter of Zion. And *in this critical era* four epochs of *special crisis* stand prominently out, as we have seen, connected with the four conquerors, Pul, Shalmanezar, Esarhaddon, and Nebuchadnezzar, the years B.C. 770-766, B.C. 723, B.C. 676, and B.C. 602-598. The first three have relation mainly to the kingdom of Ephraim or the ten tribes, the last to the kingdom of Judah or the two tribes.

Now, if "seven times" be the appointed duration of the "Times of the Gentiles" we may expect to find, after an interval of 2520 years from this Jewish captivity era a corresponding "time of the end," a period of similar decline and fall, overthrow and decadence, of the last form or forms of Gentile ruling power, ushering in the close of the dispensation, the restoration of Israel, and the kingdom of Messiah the Son of David.

And this latter decline and fall, like the former, will take place, in all probability, *under judgment from God*, on account of long-continued and terrible sin. Just as the patriarchal "seven times" died out amid the plagues of Egypt, and with the overthrow of the Red sea; and as the Jewish "seven

times" expired amid the blood and the flames of Titus' siege and sack of Jerusalem; so the Gentile "seven times" is destined as the Apocalypse reveals, to come to an end under the outpouring of the "seven golden vials full of the wrath of God," against the sins of apostate Christendom.

A very simple arithmetical calculation shows that 2520 years from this Captivity era brings us to the epoch A.D. 1751-5–A.D. 1919-1923,* and we inquire, has this period of 168-172 years, as far as it has elapsed, had any such character? And further, have there occurred in its course any years marked by such events as to be unmistakable crises in the process of decay and destruction? And if so, do such years correspond as closing termini with the critical years of the Captivity Jewish period at an interval of 2520 years or "seven times"?

* One year has to be subtracted in adding A.D. to B.C. periods.

The answer to these questions is full of solemn interest and importance, nor is it hard to find. In seeking it we have not to take into account all the empires and kingdoms of the world. The range is limited by the prophecy itself.

Gentile supremacy over Israel has been confined to one line. The Chinese and the Americans never conquered Judea, nor held Jerusalem. They never defiled the sanctuary and persecuted the Israel of God, either literal or spiritual. The line of Gentile powers who have done both, is distinctly defined in the two fourfold visions in Daniel, the image, and the four beasts, in which were symbolised the succession of the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman Empires. The three former having passed entirely away, *our search is confined to the limits of the fourth of these.*

That fourth, or Roman monarchy, was foretold as existing in two states—an earlier undivided, and a later divided one. The former of these has passed away, equally with the Babylonian, Persian, and Grecian empires. *Our search is therefore confined to the time and sphere, occupied by the kingdoms which rose out-of the ruins of the old Pagan Roman Empire.* Two politico-religious powers or dynasties, symbolised as "little horns," are represented as rising up and wielding supremacy among these kingdoms; these little horns,—the Papal and Mohammedan powers,—constitute therefore the last leading phase of Gentile power contemplated in the prophecy; both oppose God and his saints, defile his sanctuary, and tread down the holy city, spiritual or literal.

The question before us is therefore reduced to narrow limits. Only in the history of these two powers need we look for the answer; and in judging of the character and relative importance of events in their history, we must compare them, not with events in the history of other powers, or other parts of the world, but only with *other events in the history of these powers.*

Unless this is borne in mind, it is impossible rightly to estimate the historical incidents, which must pass under review in connection with this question. Again we ask then, has the 168 years between A.D. 1755 and A.D. 1923, or rather that portion of it which has elapsed, been, in any remarkable and undeniable sense, *a period of decadence and overthrow to the once mighty*

Papal and Mohammedan powers?

Historians would with one voice reply, beyond all question, it has! But as all are not familiar with the facts of modern history, and as many who are, have never considered them in this connection, it is needful to recall some leading events in the recent history of Popery and Mohammedanism.

France—ever since the conversion of Clovis, and the donations of Pepin and Charlemagne, had taken rank as the first of Papal nations, and her king as Eldest Son of the Church. France—long foremost in her persecutions of heretics,—had taken a leading place in her opposition to the glorious Reformation; by the iron heel of power, she had crushed down the new life and had extinguished the rekindled Gospel light of that glad era. In the massacre of St. Bartholomew she had all but extirpated Protestantism; and by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, she had banished from her shores her surviving Huguenot subjects. Papist to the core, France was for more than a thousand years, *a main pillar of the Popedom in Europe*.

The middle of the eighteenth century saw the beginning of a marvellous change in France. In less than half a century from 1750, this first of Papal nations had become madly and violently *anti-papal*; and this most servilely superstitious people, had become openly and even fiercely infidel.*

* Voltaire's influence was at its height about the middle of the eighteenth century, *i.e.*, just at the beginning of the period in question.

Speaking of Voltaire, Vinet says, "A partir de an A.D. 1750, il fit encore le plus populaire et le plus puissant des écrivains, . . . seconde partie du dix-huitième siècle leur dut un caractère, ou Voltaire ne reconnut pas toujours celui de ses opinions personnelles, ni l'impulsion de son esprit. . . Lorsque nous comparons la première moitié du siècle que nous occupons, avec l'époque de Louis XIV, il nous semble déjà qu'on se trouve un plein dix-huitième siècle. Mais quand on passe à la seconde moitié de cette grande période, on sent que la première n'était que le prologue, l'exposition du drame. L'explosion n'a pas encore eu lieu."—Vinet, "La Littérature Française au XVIII^e Siècle," p. 63.

"Voltaire—c'est pour le coup le dix-huitième siècle personifié; sa vie même est partagée comme cette grande période."

"L'an 1750, ou plutôt 1746, marque le point essentiel dans la carrière et dans la direction du siècle" (p. 64).

"De l'an 1750 à l'an 1780, époque où la publication complète de l'ouvrage de Raynal, est comme le dernier éclat d'une incendie, à qui rien ne reste à dévorer" (p. 74).

The middle of the 18th century is thus regarded by historians as the era of the rise of the French Revolution.

The great apostle and arch-priest of French infidelity, VOLTAIRE, was in the height of his influence at this period. With the aid of his associate Deistic and Atheistic philosophers, he was deluging France with clever, anti-monarchical, anti-ecclesiastical writings, of the most audacious and blasphemous character. These men enlisted talent and science for the attack, employed the keen shafts of ridicule, and appealed to all the evil democratic and licentious passions. They held up to hatred and contempt, the apostate and corrupt form of religion with which alone the French were familiar, and with fanatical zeal sought to overthrow all its power over the popular mind.

Unjustly, but naturally, they visited on Christianity all the falsehoods, absurdities, hypocrisies, immoralities, cruelties, and manifold wickednesses of Popery. "Ecrasez l'infame!" (crush the wretch!) was their modern version of "Crucify Him!" and their avowed object was to bring about the utter rejection of revealed religion.

They succeeded only too well! France ceased to be Catholic, and became—*infidel*; and infidel France, having thrown off all restraints of law and order, natural and Divine, plunged, before the end of the century, into the maddest excesses of revolution and crime.

In 1793 came to its crisis that tremendous, unparalleled, irresistible movement, which put an end at once to absolute monarchy, aristocracy, and to ecclesiastical power in France, and which communicated to the neighbouring nations of Europe the shocks of revolution, and the fierce fires of democracy, together with an anti-ecclesiastical mania that has never since been allayed.

The French Revolution is by common consent regarded as the commencement of a new era, for the nations of Europe; put it is not always remembered that the proximate cause of the French Revolution, *the infidelity of the nation*, dates from a generation earlier. That Revolution could never have assumed the character it did, had not the French people previously lost all fear of God, and all respect for man; had not the national mind been blinded, and the national heart hardened, against all claims human and Divine, by the pernicious teachings of the infidel philosophers.

It is needless to give details of that Revolution here, our readers will mostly be familiar with the tragic facts. How the infidel democracy suddenly uprose in its might, destroyed the Bastille, issued its declaration of the rights of man; assaulted the king and queen by night at Versailles, and murdering some of their body guard, forced them to proceed as prisoners to Paris, the bloody heads carried on pikes before the royal carriage. How the people confiscated all the vast revenues of the Church, all the domains of the Crown, and all the estates of refugee nobles, for the use of the State; subjected to themselves all ecclesiastical, civil, and judicial power throughout the country; murdered the royal guard, and some five thousand leading Royalists; dethroned, imprisoned, tried, condemned, and murdered the king, and then the queen; declared war against all kings, and sympathy with all revolutionists everywhere; how the "reign of terror" witnessed the slaughter of one million and twenty-two thousand persons, of all ranks and ages, and of both sexes, till the streets of Paris ran with blood, and the guillotines could not overtake their work. How thousands were mowed down by grape-shot fusilades; drowned in "noyades," where, in loaded vessels, hundreds of victims were purposely sunk in the rivers; roasted alive in heated ovens, or tortured to death by other infernal cruelties. How Christianity was publicly renounced, and a prostitute enthroned as "goddess of reason" at Notre Dame, and worshipped by the National Convention and by the mob of Paris, with the wildest orgies of licentiousness (morality as well as mercy having perished with religion); how the most horrid mockery of the solemn rites of Christianity, was publicly enacted, an ass being made to drink the sacramental wine; how the Sabbath itself was abolished, and the

decade substituted for the week; and how hundreds and thousands of priests were massacred or driven into exile, and the churches and cathedrals turned into stables and barracks. Taken as a whole, the French Revolution was a convulsion, in which the angry passions of men, set free from all restraint, manifested themselves, with a force and fury unprecedented in the history of the world, against monarchical, aristocratic, ecclesiastical, and religious institutions.

Let these things be considered in the light of a mighty and successful revolt against, and overthrow of, absolute monarchical power, and Papal tyranny and usurpation, and it will at once be granted that *nothing similar had ever occurred previously*, in the history of the fourth great Empire.

Terribly iniquitous had been the career of the monarchical power thus rudely overthrown; and fearfully corrupt the priesthood and religion thus utterly and with abhorrence rejected. A solemn character of retribution attaches to even the worst excesses of the French Revolution. The Papacy, in the hour of its agony, was exultingly reminded of its own similar cruelties against Protestants; Papists were treated according to the example set by Papists of other days, and the worst barbarities of Revolutionary France could not out-Herod the previous barbarities of Papal France.

"The more deeply and earnestly the French Revolution is considered, the more manifest is its pre-eminence above all the strange and terrible things which have come to pass on this earth. . . . Never has the world witnessed so exact and sublime a piece of retribution. . . . If it inflicted enormous evil, it pre-supposed and overthrew enormous evil. . . . In a country where every ancient institution and every time-honoured custom, disappeared in a moment, where the whole social and political system went down before the first stroke, where monarchy, nobility, and Church, were swept away almost without resistance, the whole framework of the State must have been rotten; royalty, aristocracy, and priesthood must have grievously sinned. Where the good things of this world, birth, rank, wealth, fine clothes, and elegant manners, become worldly perils and worldly disadvantages for a time, rank, birth, and riches must have been frightfully abused. The nation which abolished and proscribed Christianity, which dethroned religion in favour of reason, and enthroned the new goddess at Notre Dame in the person of a harlot, must needs have been afflicted by a very unreasonable and very corrupt form of Christianity. The people that waged a war of such utter extermination with everything established, as to abolish the common forms of address and salutation, and the common mode of reckoning time, that abhorred 'you' as a sin, and shrank from 'Monsieur' as an abomination, that turned the weeks into decades and would know the old months no more, must surely have had good reason to hate those old ways from which it pushed its departure into such minute and absurd extravagance. The demolished halls of the aristocracy, the rifled sepulchres of royalty, the decapitated King and Queen, the little Dauphin so sadly done to death, the beggared princes, the slaughtered priests and nobles, the sovereign guillotine, the republican marriages and the Meudon tannery, the couples tied together and thrown into the Loire, and the gloves made of men's and women's skins; these things are most horrible; but they are withal eloquent of retribution, they bespeak the solemn presence of Nemesis,

the awful hand of an avenging power; they bring to mind the horrible sins of that old France, the wretched peasants ground for ages beneath a weight of imposts, from which the rich and noble were free; visited ever and anon with cruel famines by reason of crushing taxes, unjust wars, and monstrous misgovernment, and then hung up, or shot down, by twenties and fifties, for just complaining of starvation, and all this for centuries! They call to remembrance the Protestants murdered by myriads in the streets of Paris, tormented for years by military dragoons in Poitou and Béarn, and hunted like wild beasts in the Cevennes; slaughtered and done to death by thousands and tens of thousands in many painful ways and through many painful years. . .

"In no work of the French Revolution is this, its retributive character, more strikingly and solemnly apparent than in its dealings with the Roman Church and Papal power. It especially became France, which, after so fierce a struggle, had rejected the Reformation, and perpetrated such enormous crimes in the process of rejection, to turn its fury against that very Roman Church on whose behalf it had been so wrathful, to abolish Roman Catholic worship as she had abolished the Protestant worship; to massacre multitudes of priests in the streets of her great towns; to hunt them down through her length and breadth, and to cast them by thousands upon a foreign shore, just as she had slaughtered, hunted down, and driven into exile, hundreds of thousands of Protestants;... . to carry the war into the Papal territories, and heap all sorts of woes and shames upon the defenceless Popedom, . . . The excesses of revolutionary France were not more the punishment than the direct result of the excesses of feudal, regal, and papal France. . . . In one of its aspects the Revolution may be described as a reaction against the excesses, spiritual and religious, of the Roman Catholic reaction from Protestantism. No sooner had the torrent burst forth than it dashed right against the Roman Church and Popedom. . . . The property of the Church was made over to the State; the French clergy sank from a proprietary to a salaried body; monks and nuns were restored to the world, the property of their orders being likewise gone; Protestants were raised to full religious freedom and political equality; . . . the Roman Catholic religion was soon afterwards formally abolished. Bonaparte unsheathed the sword of France against the helpless Pius VI... . The Pontiff sank into a dependant. . . . Berthier marched upon Rome, set up a Roman republic, and laid hands upon the Pope. The sovereign Pontiff was borne away to the camp of the infidels from prison to prison, and finally *carried captive into France*. Here... . he breathed his last, at Valence, in the land where his priests had been slain, where his power was broken, and his name and office were a mockery and byword, and in the keeping of the rude soldiers of the unbelieving Commonwealth which had for ten years held to his lips a cup of such manifold and exceeding bitterness, . . . It was a sublime and perfect piece of retribution, which so amazed the world at the end of the 18th century; this proscription of the Roman Church by that very French nation that had slaughtered myriads of Protestants at her bidding; this mournful end of the Sovereign Pontiff, in that very Dauphiné, so consecrated by the struggles and sufferings of the Protestants, and near those Alpine valleys where the Waldenses had been so ruthlessly hunted down by French soldiers; this transformation of the 'States of the Church' into the 'Roman Republic,' and this overthrow of the territorial Popedom by that very French nation, which

just one thousand years ago, had, under Pepin and Charlemagne, conferred these territories. Multitudes imagined that the Papacy was at the point of death, and asked, Would Pius the Sixth be the last Pontiff? and if the close of the 18th century would be signalized by the fall of the Papal dynasty, But *the French Revolution was the beginning, and not the end of the judgment*; France had but *begun* to execute the doom, a doom sure and inevitable, but long and lingering, to be diversified by many strange incidents, and now and then by a semblance of escape, a doom to be protracted through much pain and much ignominy.”*

* “The Papal Drama,” Book x. By Thomas H. Gill.

The career of Napoleon,—the second phase of the French Revolution, —was a further, and even more illustrious, stage in the fall of the Papacy. He made open war against Pius VI., and compelled him to sign that most humiliating treaty of Tolentino, by which Ferrara, Bologna, and Romagna (“Peter’s patrimony”) were ceded to France, with an indemnity of a million and a half pounds, and a hundred of the finest pictures and statues in the Vatican. Berthier, a general of the French Republic, soon after took Pius VI. prisoner; the tricolor flag was displayed from the Capitol, and the Pope’s temporal power declared to be at an end. He was carried captive to France, where, in 1799, he died in exile,

When Napoleon, for political reasons, restored the Roman Catholic religion in France, it was only to inflict on it, what its own dignitaries deem, additional insult and injury. It was put on a level with all other sects of religion, and merely tolerated.

No trace of an admission of Papal supremacy, or even of Papal influence, is to be found in the concordat between Napoleon and the Pope for France, in 1801, or in that for Italy, in 1803. At his coronation, in 1804, Napoleon required the Pope’s attendance, and made Pius VII. cross the Alps in mid-winter, not to confer a crown, but merely to adorn a ceremony. Napoleon placed the crown on his own head himself; and the Pope stood by, “an important and imposing, but purposely slighted witness of the coronation.” Napoleon did not at that time wish to annihilate the Popedom, as the revolutionary Directory had done, but to retain the Sovereign Pontiff as his vassal. But when, a few years later, the Pope resisted his will, he soon showed him who was master. In 1809, in the plenitude of his power, when he was supreme in Europe, he issued from the palace of the Schonbrunn in Vienna, a decree dividing and distributing the dominions yet remaining to the Pope in Italy, and constituting Rome itself the second city in the French Empire. At the same time he reduced the “Holy Father” to the rank of a French subject, and even in his sacerdotal character, a mere salaried official of the French Court, his income being fixed at £80,000 a year.

The bull of excommunication which the Pope fulminated against Napoleon in return, only made him ridiculous in the eyes of Europe; like his predecessor, he was carried captive by the French army, first to Savona, then to Fontainebleau, where he was forced to sign another concordat, renouncing all claim to Rome for ever.

On the overthrow of Napoleon, the Pope was restored to Rome; "but he sat not on his throne as once before; his power was crippled, his seat unstable, the riches of his Church were rifled, and a mighty precedent and principle of action had been established against him, which could scarcely fail of bearing similarly bitter fruit afterwards." (Elliott, Horae," iii, P. 375.)

The restoration of Papal supremacy in France did not last long. The year 1830 brought about another thoroughly anti-sacerdotal revolution, Charles X., who had acceded to the throne in 1824, had to abdicate, and his ministry had to flee for their lives; while the Duke of Orleans was proclaimed king under the title of Louis Philippe.

In 1848 another revolution again constituted France a republic; tumults broke out in Paris in February, the Tuileries were ransacked, and frightful disorders committed. Louis Philippe was obliged to abdicate and take refuge in England; and "the second republic" was proclaimed. A fortnight after the fall of Louis Philippe, the constitution was proclaimed in Rome, and the city and country were thrown into a state of revolution.

Before the end of the year Count Rossi, the Pope's prime minister, was killed, and the Pope had to flee from Rome. He was deposed from his temporal authority, and an Italian republic was proclaimed. It was only by the power of the French that the Pope was afterwards for a time restored, when Louis Napoleon had become President of the French Republic. With occasional pauses, and with gleams of passing prosperity now and then, the course of the Papacy has ever since been one of downfall and decay. It is not needful here to recall the details of the consuming process that has during the last forty or fifty years been going on; but recent events must receive a brief notice. In 1866 the Romish Empire of Austria was worsted by Protestant Prussia at the memorable battle of Sadowa, a battle the results of which were as decisive as those of Waterloo. Austria received a shock from which it has never recovered, and was obliged to cede Venetia, which was annexed to the kingdom of Italy, while Prussia was raised to the rank of one of the great powers of Europe. In 1868, the Spanish Revolution took place, Queen Isabella fled, and Spain was plunged into years of cruel strife, in the course of which the Jesuits were banished, their monasteries and churches confiscated and sold or pulled down, and the bones of the martyrs brought to light at the Quemadero.

The same year Pius IX, sent out his famous encyclical letter summoning the Ecumenical Council for 1870, Six archbishop princes, 49 cardinals, 11 patriarchs, 680 archbishops and bishops, 28 abbots, 29 generals of orders, 803 spiritual rulers, representing the Church of Rome throughout the world, solemnly decreed the dogma that the occupant of the Papal Chair, is, in all his decisions regarding faith and morals, infallible! It is said that arrangements had been made to reflect a glory around the person of the Pope by means of mirrors at noon, when the decree was made (18 July, 1870). But the sun shone not that day. A violent storm broke over Rome, the sky was darkened by tempest, and the voices of the Council were lost in the rolling of thunder.

On the very day following this culmination of Papal arrogance and self-exaltation, was declared that terrible Franco-German war, in which the French

Empire of Louis Napoleon,—by the soldiers of which the Pope was maintained on his tottering throne,—fell, *The temporal sovereignty of the Papacy fell with it.* No sooner had the French troops been withdrawn from Rome; and the French Empire collapsed, than the Italian Government announced its intention of entering the Roman States, and did so. On the 20th of September, 1870, Rome was declared the capital of the kingdom of Italy, and became the residence and the seat of the government of Victor Emmanuel. The *Times*' summary for that year says, "The most remarkable circumstance in the annexation of Rome and its territory to the kingdom of Italy, is the languid indifference with which the transfer has been regarded by Catholic Christendom. A change which would once have convulsed the world has failed to distract attention from the more absorbing spectacle of the Franco-German war. *Within the same year, the Papacy has assumed the highest spiritual exaltation to which it could aspire, and lost the temporal sovereignty which it had held for a thousand years.*"

Taking these and similar facts into consideration, there can be no question that the years which have elapsed since 1755, have been years of conspicuous, unprecedented, fatal calamity to the papal power.

Continued in [Part IV. Section II. The Law of Completion In Weeks. Chapter III. The Week In History. Part 5.](#)