

Revelation 16:13, 14. The Three Frogs



This is the continuation of [The Last Prophecy: An Abridgment of Elliott's Horae Apocalypticae.](#)

The Spirits Of Infidel Lawlessness, Of Popery, And Of Priestly Tractarianism, A.D. 1830-1852.

[13] And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

[14] For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (Rev 16:13-14)

SCARCELY HAD ENGLAND awakened to the consciousness of her proper position as the bulwark of Protestantism, and applied herself to the duty of disseminating the Gospel of Christ to the world, when the Satanic agency above described began, with an insidious but too successful effort to undermine the faith and to injure the repose of the Church.

By the very remarkable symbol of this vision there would seem to be intended some rapid, widespread, and influential diffusion of three "unclean," i.e., unholy, principles, like in character to those from whom they are said to emanate – the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet, – and resembling "frogs" in respect of the noisy and agitating agents employed to propagate them, by deluding and seducing the minds of men. As the sources thus indicated have been already explained as signifying the Devil, the Papal Antichrist, and the apostate Romish clergy, we are at no loss to deduce the three corresponding principles – 1st, of Infidel rebelliousness; 2nd, of Popery; and 3rd, of Priestcraft and Tractarianism, – three spirits of evil, which, like the lying spirit to Ahab, were to go "forth and gather" the powers of the world to the coming great day of conflict. Seeing, moreover, that these three spirits issue forth just at or after the incipient drying up of the Euphrates, do we err in regarding the last twenty years as the precise period marked out in prophecy for their development?

[I] Infidel rebelliousness. – Can we forget the furious outbreak of this unquiet spirit, when, having overthrown the reigning dynasties of France and Belgium, it exhibited itself in the great political agitations of England that attended the passing of the Roman Catholic Emancipation and the Reform Bills? How the public mind was blindly impelled, almost like the herd driven by the legion of spirits into the waters of Gennesareth! And how rank and

property, Church and State, were alike endangered, till the Prime Minister himself quailed and fell before the tempest! How infidel and democrat too often united in the croaking frog-like cry, "Agitate, agitate!" Can we forget how certain legislators and peers, as men infatuated, stood in their places in parliament, some advising passive resistance to the law; others, with yet clearer token of the spirit of evil, suggesting physical force, and even murder? How the Established Church was marked out as a special object of attack; its property saved -with difficulty; its prelates insulted, and even within the House of Lords itself admonished to set their house in order? How many even of the more orthodox Dissenting body were infected with the same spirit; and, instead of confining themselves, like their predecessors, to the work of evangelists at home and the promotion of evangelic missions among the heathen, became strangely known as political agitators, and appeared as the partisans of infidelity? Much, we are persuaded, was said and done under a temporary infatuation; but this shows the more how great the spirit of delusion which had gone forth. The crisis may, for the present, seem to have passed. A reaction in favor of order has doubtless, to a certain extent, had place among the middle classes. But among the lower orders this "unclean spirit" is still active. Socialism and Chartism, political unions, and such-like revolutionary combinations, with all their machinery of agitation and inflammatory haranguings, give but too clear evidence that the evil is still abroad in the land. Moreover, the present is preeminently an age of journalism. It was calculated in 1845 that the issue of stamped and unstamped newspapers and pamphlets of a decidedly pernicious tendency from London alone was 28,862,000 yearly! The present circulation of penny or three-halfpenny unstamped pernicious publications is 400,000 weekly, amounting yearly to 20,800,000! In addition to these there is a weekly importation of French prints and novels of so indecent a character, that at one time they could only be obtained by stealth, but now they may be purchased by anyone through the vendors of the above publications."2 If then, what now? May not the lawlessness of the present time be the fruit of such seed thrown broadcast on a population uneducated so far as religion is concerned?

The Edinburgh Review for July, 1850, gave this statement: "The total (annual) issue of immoral publications has been stated as twenty-nine millions, being more than the total issues of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Religious Tract Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Scottish Bible Society, the Trinitarian Bible Society, and some seventy religious magazines!"

Nor is the poison confined to these publications. The subtle appeal to human reason against the truths of Christianity is making its way. The German skeptical spirit, that has for a length of time past displayed the most open impieties in the mode of writing upon and criticizing Scripture, is infused into our works of literature; and German works of infidel tendency are translated and freely circulated and read amongst both the lower and higher classes of life.

In France the same character prevails, and to an immense extent tinctures alike its journals, its popular literature, novels, romances, dramas, and poetry. In Spain, Portugal, and Italy the infidel spirit is combined with

Popery. Switzerland too has been agitated and revolutionized by the republican principle within it.

In truth, we may say it was the working of this spirit that prepared the mine by which, in the year 1848, the whole of Continental Europe was shaken as by an earthquake to its foundation. Nor was Europe only affected. The unclean spirits were to go to the kings of the whole world. A specimen of its "going forth" may be found in the efforts made by infidels to introduce into and inundate our Indian Presidencies with the works of Tom Paine and such-like publications. The immense injury thereby done was stated by Dr. Duff in 1837. Similar reports may be given from our colonies in all parts.

[II] Nor has Popery, "the spirit" said to come "from the mouth of the Beast," been less active or less mischievous. We turn to the Papal States for the commencement of its recently revived progress. Since the year 1815, when, the peace of Europe being established, the kings and Pope returned to their kingdoms and thrones (the latter once again in his usurped character of God's vicegerent on earth), Popery has exhibited restored energies. The Inquisition was in some places speedily re-established, as was also the order of the Jesuits. In France, Spain, Portugal, Bavaria, and Austria the revival was obvious, although not at first so clearly united with the infidel lawless spirit as has been since developed. In two places, Ireland and Belgium, this combination was evident and palpable, and though these countries were under Protestant Governments, the success was marked. After Ireland had been for years agitated to its center by Romish priests and revolutionary demagogues, the Roman Catholic Emancipation Bill was passed by our British Parliament in 1829 as a preferable alternative to civil war. The next year, through the united action of these kindred spirits, the Dutch Protestant king was expelled from Belgium. In France the astute policy of Rome quickly adapted itself to the rule of the King of the Barricades, seeing that the latter was prepared to court Papal favor and extend its influence. Again in Switzerland the revolution of 1847 threw the Government into the hands of the so-called Liberal party; and great, consequently, has been there the increase of Popery. In the Pays de Vaud the Protestant Church has been divided, and the mass of faithful ministers obliged to leave the national established Church. And both there and at Geneva a strange political alliance has taken place between the democratic party and the Roman Catholics.

As to England, it may be well to trace its movements there more particularly. The passing, then, of the Roman Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829 produced results little anticipated by the authors of the measure in strengthening the cause of Popery at home and abroad. At home the scale of political power came, with the help of the various sections of self-styled Liberals and demagogues, into the hands of the Irish Papal party, and the Government substantially devolved on its leader. Hence in the House of Commons the deference paid to Romish principles, and the discouragement of all upholding of the true principles of evangelical Protestantism. Hence the not infrequent assertion of the obscurity of the Bible, – of Popery and Protestantism being equally true, and the consequent propriety of each man following the way of his fathers, – and the approval of such assertions, shown by loud applause from both Popish and democratic members. As in the Houses of Parliament, so

alike throughout the country, while Infidelity was strengthened on the one hand, Popery was upheld on the other.

The effect was soon visible. Romish chapels, convents, and colleges sprang up with increased and increasing rapidity. Conversions became frequent. The press gave its powerful aid to the cause. Romish reviews, magazines, and newspapers, – many characterized by great subtlety of argument and not a little display of learning, – as well as cheap periodicals, religious and controversial works, and tracts fitted for the multitude, obtained wide circulation amongst Protestants; and romances and novels, works on poetry, history, music, and architecture of like character helped forward the movement. Meanwhile in Ireland Popery was rampant. As the “unclean spirit,” breathing and speaking forth from the altars of Romish chapels, swayed and infuriated the blind multitude that worshipped before them, the Protestant clergy, in respect of their property and even of their lives, were treated as without the pale of the law. Nor was the merciless system exercised only against the Protestant clergy. Their institutions for education, from which Government support and Government charters were by the influence of the Papal faction withdrawn, were marked out as special objects of persecution, and forced oftentimes to give place to the unclean teachings of Popery. Incessantly the altar curse issued against teachers, parents, and children who persevered in attending Scriptural schools. Be it remembered also that a priest’s curse in Ireland is not merely “sound and fury, signifying nothing,” for it in reality exposes those against whom it is directed to personal insult, violence, starvation, and even death.

Yet again the opportunity was seized by this spirit of Popery of speeding forth in power to our distant colonies, to India, Australia, New Zealand, the Cape, Canada, Newfoundland; everywhere Romish bishops and priests, salaried by British funds but under the Pope’s instructions, seizing if possible on the education, influencing the press, and agitating for political power in conjunction with the revolutionist and the infidel.

Nor has France less prominently helped forward the unclean spirit of Popery. Wherever her power could be exercised she has protected Romish missionaries and upheld Romish influence. When lately Pius IX. was obliged to fly from his capital, the army of France under the Republican government speedily restored the Pope and re-established his authority.

Austria has thrown herself of late years into the arms of Rome, and given it a power unprecedented in modern history. In Tuscany the spirit of persecution is revived, and the recent accounts of the sentences, pronounced and executed in Florence against nobles and respectable families because of their having possessed or read the Scriptures are even now calling forth the sympathies of Protestant Europe. Exile, hard labor, if not death, is, in 1852, the judgment attached in Florence to such a misdemeanor! Witness the case of the Madiai and of Count Guicciardini. Well may it be asked, “Is Rome changed?”

[III] Yet again a “third spirit” is said in the text to speed forth “from the mouth of the false prophet” or apostate priesthood. Looking to our own country and our own Church, may we not find it in that spirit of clerical agitation and priestly dominancy which, issuing from Oxford, was known as

Oxford Tractarianism?

Speciously putting itself forward in the first instance as the opponent of the two principles we have already noticed, this was looked upon with favor by many of the friends of order and religion. But its development has long since been sufficiently unequivocal.

The real object of Tractarianism is "to re-appropriate from Popery the doctrines which our reformers rejected, – to set up a Popish rule of faith, – a Popish doctrine of Apostolical succession, – a Popish view of the Church and Sacraments, – a Popish doctrine of sacrifice in the Eucharist, available for quick and dead for the remission of sins, – a doctrine on transubstantiation, invocation of saints, purgatory, and even on Papal supremacy, which, if not Popish, is at least so near it that it is like splitting hairs to draw a distinction between them." Confession, as practiced at Rome, or even with more secrecy, and absolution following, is now not unfrequent in some of our churches. The Word of God is not, in the system, considered as the sole rule of faith. Reserve is recommended as to the atonement and other evangelic doctrines; and the Church of Rome is characterized as the "Saviour's Holy Home." The Articles of our Church are wrested from their original meaning; and a non-natural one forced on them, specially on the subject of baptism. The Reformation is considered as an unwise and unholy schism; its song, "The Lord our Righteousness," and the glorious doctrine of justification by faith, are set aside. That the Tractarians have not yet, as a body, joined Rome, is from no want of sympathy, as their writings and practices show. Her monastic institutions and the celibacy of her clergy are the constant themes of praise. From the pulpit and the press, – in tracts, sermons, essays, reviews, romances, novels, poems, children's books, and newspapers, – they are sounded forth. In music and paintings, in church decorations and architecture, the imitation of Rome is sedulously studied. All that can excite the imagination, captivate the senses, enchain the judgment, and mislead the mind, is at work in order to gain over all ages and classes, both the spiritual and the worldly, clergy and laity, – first to Tractarianism, and thence to Rome. Such has been the progress, that many of the original leaders in the movement profess to be surprised, and even pained, at the rapidity with which their pupils are outstripping them in the Rome-ward course. Can the extraordinary spread of doctrines so startling, so unwarranted, and in many senses so repugnant to common sense, be accounted for on any principle but that of a pervading spirit of infatuation?

The question of intensest interest, under these circumstances of the Christian world, and specially of the Church in England, cannot but recur solemnly to many, – What is to be the end of these things? That the hopes are high of all those who represent the three agitating spirits of the vision, Infidel-democrats, Romanists, and Tractarians, – that they boast of their success and anticipate triumph, is most evident. It was this confidence that induced and led the Pope and his advisers to that recent act of Papal aggression to which we have already adverted. The Bull of September 1850 expressly states it: – "That having taken into consideration the very large and everywhere increasing number of Catholics, and that the impediments that

stood in the way of the spread of Catholicity are daily being removed, we judge the time come when the form of ecclesiastical government in England may be brought back to that model on which it exists in other nations." It is the same confidence that at this time urges on the deep-laid plans and inspires the hopes and exertions of many amongst ourselves, who seek, however undesignedly, to revive the essence of Popery among us. But we may, I think, augur better things of the destiny of our long-favored land. We read in the Apocalypse of no reunion of that "tenth part of the great city," viz., England, that was separated from Rome at the Reformation. Moreover, in the expressions of popular feeling that followed the aggressive act of Rome's interference, – in the Protestant spirit that led to, and that manifested itself in, the numerous meetings that were held to denounce it, – in the high-toned English Christian sentiment that ever ranges itself on the side of loyalty and order, – that is loudly indignant at Rome's persecuting tyranny abroad, and remonstrant at home against the encroachments of priestly artifice, – and, withal, that labors to extend at home and abroad the principles and teaching of a pure Gospel, which it is the object of those "unclean" and busy spirits to disfigure and destroy, – we still find ground of trust that better things are in store for England. We would adopt the language of the then first Minister of the Crown, who wrote these memorable words, "I rely with confidence on the people of England. Nor will I bate a jot of heart or hope so long as the glorious principles of the immortal martyrs of the Reformation shall be held in reverence by the great mass of the nation, which looks with contempt on the mummeries of superstition, and with scorn at the endeavors now making to confine the intellect and enslave the soul."

However this may be, the time is critical, and calls aloud on all for Selfexamination, watchfulness, and prayer. The very fact that so many spirits of delusion are thus abroad should stir us up to seek strength against them. While the thought of the place which these occupy in the course of time, as marked in the sure word of prophecy, warns us with much distinctness of sound that the night is far spent, and that the day – the day of Christ's coming – is at hand. If ever the solemn warning was suited to the Church, it is now, when we would seem to have arrived at the exact time and crisis where the next text follows: – "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

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