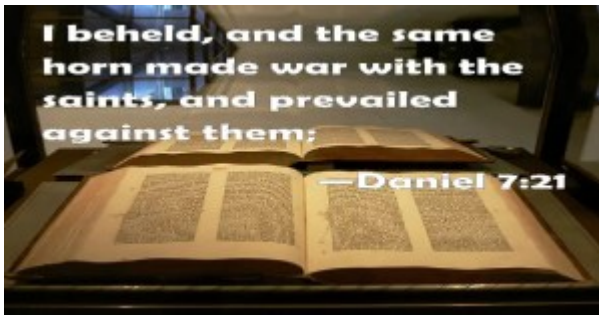


The Seventh Vial Chapter XII. War With The Witnesses



Continued from [chapter XI. Avenging Power of the Witnesses](#)

Note from the webmaster: In this article, the author J.A. Wylie seems to be saying that the power of Rome and the papacy has weakened to the point that there will be no more major future persecutions of the saints. I'm not too sure about that! In my opinion, what's happening today is the sneakiest trick of Satan ever! The papacy only *appears* to be weak though it covertly has a stranglehold on *the greatest superpower in the world*, the USA. I wonder if J.A. Wylie would edit some of his statements if he knew that the papacy in the next century would be behind the slaughter of millions in two world wars, the slaughter of one million Orthodox Serbs by Catholic Croatia, the Vietnam War, the Rwandan genocide, and other conflicts in the 20th century? I wonder if he knew the covert power and influence of the Jesuits. Even in the 19th century, they were powerful enough to assassinate three US presidents who got in their way. Some of my friends still blame the Jews / Zionists / international bankers for all the problems in the world. They don't see the hidden hand of the Vatican behind them.

"AND when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them." – Revelation 11:7 This introduces us to the solemn subject of the death of the witnesses.

Whether are we to place the slaying of the witnesses among the *fulfilled* or among the *unfulfilled* predictions of the Apocalypse? There are able expositors who regard this as by no means a past event, but one still to come. Of late, not a few in our country, whose attention has been turned to the Apocalyptic predictions, have not hesitated to avow it as their belief that the days of slaughter and extermination prefigured in the symbol before us are yet awaiting the Church. If such are correct in their interpretations, all organized societies professing the truth, all visible Churches throughout the earth, are fated yet to meet extinction. It remains that Europe shall yet be covered with the bodies of slain Protestants. Not yet has Rome reached the summit of her power, or committed the greatest of her crimes. She must lift her head higher still towards heaven, and smite the prostrate earth with more

dreadful bolts than She ever yet hurled against it. She must efface (make indistinct) the memory of all her past wickedness, by deeds of more awful cruelty—by slaughters and massacres more inhuman and exterminating than any with which her past annals are stained. All this must come to pass, if the event we are considering falls to be classed among the unfulfilled prophecies of this book.

If such, indeed, be the times we are approaching, it behooves the Church to have warning, on good authority, that she may prepare herself; but if already the witnesses have been slain, the fear such a prospect is fitted to inspire, being unfounded, cannot be salutary, and ought to be dismissed.

The witnesses were to be slain by the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit. This is the first appearance in the Apocalypse of this great enemy of God, and murderer of His saints. We here simply assume, what we shall afterwards prove, that this beast is the ten confederate kingdoms of Europe—the same that grew out of the old Roman empire—the Papacy prompting their policy, and guiding their arms. This beast was afterwards seen by John, with seven heads and ten horns, rising out of the abyss or sea. It was on this ten-horned beast that the harlot rode; and we find the interpretation of the symbol in the historical fact that the wealth and power of the ten kingdoms were lent to aggrandize the Papacy, and that their swords were ever at her service when she needed them to slay the saints.

The time when the witnesses should be slain is marked by these words—“When they shall have finished their testimony,” The verb “to finish,” is used in numerous passages in the New Testament in two distinct and different senses: First, to finish *in point of time*, so that the person ceases to act. Second, to finish *in the way of perfecting* the work on which he is employed: he has perfected, matured it; and, though he still repeats it, he ceases to perform it more completely or perfectly.

We may make our meaning clear by a few instances. We have an example of the first sense in Paul’s words to Timothy—“I have finished my course,” 2 Tim. iv. 7. Here the word clearly refers to time. We have an example of the second sense in James i. 15— “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” The meaning here, “sin, when it is finished,” is plainly not that so soon as the sinner has ended his course of sinning, but so soon as his sin is perfected, completed, ripened, it bringeth forth death. These are examples of two different sets of passages in which this word occurs. In the one set the verb “to finish” has reference to the expiration of a certain period; in the other, it denotes the perfecting or completing of a certain act.

Mr. Elliot has selected an instance of the use of the word in the latter sense, from what is said of the Jewish priests, in Hebrews ix. 6, and which is much in point:—“They enter the Tabernacle continually, *fulfilling their services*, or priestly functions.’ The which, day by day, including several acts—the receiving incense, carrying it with altar-fire into the holy place and burning it, kindling or snuffing the lamps, &c.; after the whole of which was accomplished, on any one defined occasion, then it might be said that the priest had fulfilled his service, yet not so as then to have finally ceased,

or to have resigned thereon his priestly office. Just in the same way," continues Mr. Elliot, "supposing a repetition, more or less frequent, of their testimony, required of the two witnesses of the Apocalypse—so soon as they might once have gone through the several component parts or acts of that testimony, so soon it might be said of them that they had fulfilled or completed their testimony, yet not so as to imply that their whole period of testifying was at an end, or that they thereupon ceased to be any longer Christ's witnesses."

Seeing the word is used in these two senses—that of finishing a course of acting, and that of completing an act by performing all its parts—the question remains, in which of these senses is it here used? Whether does it relate to the time of prophesying—the twelve hundred and sixty days—or to the witness-bearing abstractly viewed? The more natural reference, we admit, is to the time of prophesying; and were there no elements of judgment but such as are found in the verse before us, we would at once grant that this is the true reference. But other considerations, springing from other parts of the Apocalypse, render this supposition impossible, and constrain us to apply the words to the (word in Greek) testimony—that is, to regard the slaying of the witnesses, as foretold to happen, not at the end of the twelve hundred and sixty days, but as soon as they should have fulfilled their testimony, not in the sense of ceasing to bear it, but in the sense of making it complete and full as against the Papacy. This might be expected to happen whenever Popery should be fully developed, and the testimony of the Church pointed against all the leading errors in the Papal system, which would then be seen and proclaimed to be the Antichrist. Let us mention these considerations.

First, there is the place the prophecy of the slaying of the witnesses occupies in the Apocalypse. It comes in between the sounding of the sixth and the sounding of the seventh trumpet. This leads naturally to the conclusion that the slaughter of the witnesses would occur during this interval. The sixth trumpet was sounded at the beginning of the fourteenth century, and the seventh a very considerable while after the Reformation; and it is an historical fact, that almost all the slaughters that have been committed on the adherents of the truth occurred during this interval.

What is the very next announcement after the resurrection of the witnesses? It is this: "The second woe is past, and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly." This is a sufficiently plain declaration, one should think, that even after the witnesses were risen, the seventh trumpet was still to be sounded. Accordingly, on its being sounded, loud voices were heard proclaiming the advent, not of the triumphs of Antichrist, and the death of the witnesses, but of events of an exactly opposite character— even the time of God's wrath, and of the dead—that is, of those who had been slain in former times, that they should be judged in order that God might give reward to His servants, the prophets, and to the saints, and destroy them who had destroyed the earth.

Second, immediately after the prophecy of the slaying of the witnesses, the approach of the third woe is announced. Now, on whom does the third woe fall? On Antichrist. It consists of the seven plagues by which he is to be brought to his grave. It is natural to conclude that the slaughter of the witnesses

should take place when Antichrist was at his height, and not when he was reeling and staggering under the weight of his last plagues. It is natural to suppose that affairs would be at their lowest in the Church when they were at their highest in the kingdom of Antichrist; that the midnight of the one would correspond with the noonday of the other; and that the greatest effort of the beast would be made when his affairs were flourishing, and not when his power was broken, and his kingdom had begun to pass from him.

Third, while it is stated, at this part of the Apocalypse, that the issue of the war between the beast and the followers of the Lamb should be, that the beast would overcome them and kill them, it is stated at a subsequent part of the Apocalypse, that the issue of this same war would be, that the Lamb should overcome the armies of the beast. The only way of reconciling these apparently conflicting statements is by the natural supposition that the war was to have these different issues at different times; that the beast should for a time prevail, and seem to be carrying all before him; but the advantage would turn out to be only temporary, and, the war going on, final victory would remain with the Lamb. These two issues could not be contemporaneous; and there can be no doubt as to which of the two will be the final one. It is plain, therefore, that the slaughter of the witnesses cannot be deferred till the conclusion of the war, but must take place at a previous stage, sufficiently early to allow of a second battle being gained after the first has been lost. We presume it will not be maintained that the termination of the prophesying of the witnesses in sackcloth is earlier than the termination of the war; for what is meant by their warring with the beast, but just their testifying, in adverse circumstances, against the abominations of Popery?

Fourth, in the same hour in which the witnesses revived, there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell—Britain, one of the ten kingdoms. This renders the conclusion inevitable, that the resurrection of the witnesses is considerably prior to the fall of the Papacy; for observe what happens when the seventh vial is poured out. The great city is divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fall, which is a much more striking result than the overthrow of merely the tenth part of the city.

Fifth, it is not the manner of God to visit with punishment—at least with final judgment—before the sin has been completed.

“Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! When thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.” — Isaiah 33:1

In the Apocalypse the slaying of the witnesses is distinctly marked as the greatest of the crimes of Rome—the crowning point of her guilt. But they who hold that the judgments which have befallen the Papacy since the first French Revolution are the pouring out of the vials, and, at the same time, hold that the slaughter of the witnesses is yet to come, must believe that Rome has been overtaken by her last plagues before she has committed the greatest of her sins—that the cup of God’s wrath has been put into her hand before her own cup has been filled up. This is not very likely to be the case. We do not deny that isolated acts of persecution, perhaps of an aggravated character,

Rome may yet be guilty of, and that some startling crime may immediately precede her fall, to establish before the world her connection with former enormities of the same kind. Some of these we have seen in recent events. In the persecutions in Madeira, in the massacre in Cochin-China, in the slaughters in Tahiti, and in the carnage of Barletta, Rome has been serving herself heir to the blood of former ages. In Tahiti, especially, she has been enacting, on a small scale, the same tragedies she was wont to enact on a greater—dethroning sovereigns, ravaging kingdoms with fire and sword, and compelling submission to her authority at the point of the bayonet. But that Rome should be able again to persecute on so large a scale as to suppress all public profession of the truth in every part of the earth—for nothing short of this can fulfil the symbol of the slaying of the witnesses—appears to be scarcely credible. And what increases the incredibility of such a supposition is, the absence of all allusion to such an event in the narrative of the vials, when, according to the theory we are contending against, this occurrence ought to take place. Instead of enjoying a respite, or of regaining its former supremacy, and something more, the Papacy is exhibited under the vials as sinking lower and lower, at each successive stroke, till it is finally and irretrievably ruined. Rome is seen in the grasp of an omnipotent power, which drags her along, and, without the respite of a moment's pause, casts her headlong into the abyss.

In fine (in conclusion), the course of events during the past three hundred years, and the state and prospects of the world at this hour, strongly countenance the belief that the slaying of the witnesses is past.

From about the year 600 onward till the Reformation, the course of events ran steadily in favour of the Papacy; all the great social revolutions and political changes of the world helped it onward; even the most insignificant and trifling occurrences turned to its advantage—brought it new accessions of wealth and power. In every contest in which Rome engaged, whether with bishops or kings, she was victor; and by a course of almost unbroken prosperity of more than eight hundred years' duration did Antichrist reach the summit of his grandeur. But at the Reformation how plainly did the tide in his affairs turn! Almost every event that has happened since has gone against him. We can trace the same uniformity in the operation of events now, as before, so far as they regard Antichrist; only then they wrought his advancement—now they are working his downfall. Partial revivals and successes Popery may yet have; but we are strongly persuaded that affairs will continue to run steadily in the same course, till they end in its total downfall.

Let us think, moreover, of the state and prospects of the world. Its state is now such as to render the supposition incredible, that Popery, especially after it has been so greatly weakened by the judgments of God, should raise itself to such universal power as to be able to suppress the truth in the same degree as before the Reformation. Though the gospel should be suppressed in Europe, there are wide realms around where it has been planted, and would continue to flourish—America, India, Australia, and the islands of the Pacific. If a period of darkness yet awaits the Church, such as that foretold in the symbol of the witnesses, the gospel must be suppressed in all these

places, and all the labours of the past three hundred years, and all the efforts of missionaries, must come to nought.

But happily the world seems to be secured against a catastrophe so universal, not only by its own inherent improbability, but also by the terms of the Apocalyptic prophecy. Both the scene of slaughter and the agent of slaughter appear to be limited to Europe. It is the ten horned beast by whom the witnesses are slain, which every commentator admits to be the symbol of the ten Roman kingdoms of Europe. And it is on the streets of the great city that their dead bodies are exposed, which plainly identifies the scene of the tragedy with the European dominions of the Papacy, and restricts the time of its occurrence to the age when the true Church was confined within these limits. On all these grounds we unhesitatingly conclude that the slaughter of the witnesses is past.

But how stand the facts of history with our interpretation? They are in perfect accordance therewith. The Waldenses, the Vaudois, and other bodies of Christians, had borne an open testimony from the beginning against the various corruptions of Rome—her errors in doctrine, her idolatries in worship, and her immoralities of life,—but at last, in the end of the twelfth century—the same century in which, according to Gibbon, the meridian of Papal greatness was attained—they proclaimed her to be the Antichrist of Scripture—the harlot of the Apocalypse.

Thus and then did the witnesses fulfill their testimony. It was foretold that this should be the signal for the beast to make war with them; and so it was. Rome as a body now moved against them, which she had not done before. The war was commenced in the edicts of councils, which stigmatized the pure doctrines drawn from the Bible as heresy, and branded those who held them as heretics. The next step was to pronounce the most dreadful anathemas on those whom Rome termed heretics, which were executed in the same remorseless and exterminating spirit in which they were conceived. The confessors of the truth were denied both their civil and their natural rights. They were forbidden all participation in dignities and offices; they could not buy or sell; their goods were confiscated; their houses were razed, never more to be rebuilt; and their lands were made over to such as had the inclination or the power to seize on them. They were shut out from the solace of human converse; no one might give them shelter while living, or Christian burial when dead.

At last a crusade was commenced against them. Preachers were sent abroad through Europe, to sound the trumpet of vengeance, and assemble the nations. To stimulate their ardour in these holy wars, a full remission of all sins, from the cradle to the grave, was promised to such as might fall in battle. Nay, a service of forty days was so meritorious as to entitle the person to no less a reward than paradise. The Pope wrote to all Christian princes, exhorting them to earn their pardon and win heaven, rather by bearing the cross against these heretics than by marching against the Saracens. Army after army was assembled under such men as Simon of Montfort and Saint Louis. We do not intend to darken our page with a recital of the horrors of this war. We search in vain for anything equal to these horrors in the worst atrocities of savage tribes, when engaged in their most sanguinary conflicts. Were a faithful account of them to be given, the recital would fill many

volumes, and would shock and outrage every man in whose heart there remains the least touch of humanity. Though legions of fiends had become incarnate, and been let loose to ravage the earth, they could not have devised more exquisite torments—they could not have inflicted more ruthless slaughters and massacres—nor could they have stood by and witnessed the agonies of their victims with a more hellish delight. The peaceful and fertile valleys of the Vaudois were invaded, and speedily devastated with fire and sword; their towns and villages were burnt; while not one individual, in many cases, escaped to carry tidings to the next valley. The young and the gray-haired, the most helpless and the most unoffending, were involved in the same indiscriminate slaughter; mothers, with their infants, were thrown from the rocks; bonfires were kindled, and human beings by hundreds piled upon them; pits were dug, and vast numbers buried alive. In short, every cruelty, barbarity, and indecency, which rage, lust, and bigotry could invent and perpetrate, were inflicted on these confessors of Christ.

To accomplish what these crusades, though carried on with indescribable fury, failed to effect, it was at last resolved that the Holy Office of the Inquisition should be erected. The horrors of this terrible court far exceeded those even of the crusades. The crusades did their work quickly: they swept across the scene of their visitation like a tempest, converting in a few days, sometimes in a few hours, busy and populous seats into profound solitudes. Such a proceeding was merciful compared with the lingering and excruciating torments to which the victim was doomed in the dungeons of the Holy Office. The ravages of the crusades were acted in the face of day: the smoke of burning cities and human hecatombs (a large-scale slaughter) rose into the air, polluting the firmament with a dismal cloud; the shrieks of the mother, as in her agony she clasped her babe, when both were about to be precipitated headlong from the top of some precipice, were repeated again and again from the rocks adown (downward) which they were thrown.

"Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven."

Accordingly, history has recorded part at least of these horrible tragedies, that we may admire the grace of God, as shown in the constancy and courage of the noble confessors that endured them, and that we may know at what an expense of suffering and blood the truth has been handed down to us.

But it is not so easy to chronicle the deeds of the Inquisition. History has been forbidden to descend with her torch into the dungeons of the Holy Office. The crimes that have been there enacted, and the sufferings that have been there endured, remain untold. The familiars and the racks of the Inquisition plied their dreadful work in darkness. No eye saw the writhings of their victim; no ear heard his groans; and the much that these dungeons conceal shall remain concealed for ever, till the dread judgment-day. This terrible court ramified into every country where there were professors of the truth—into Piedmont, France, Spain, Bohemia, Germany, Poland, Flanders, England; and endeavored, by the most horrible means, to exterminate what it termed heresy and heretics—to wear out the saints of the Most High. Thus were the words fulfilled, "When they shall have completed their testimony, the

beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war with them.”

The history of the world is little else than a series of wars: many of these are sufficiently melancholy and revolting; but in no age of time, and in no country of the globe, has there been seen a war of so cruel, ferocious, and blood-thirsty a character as that which the beast carried on against the witnesses. Having partaken of her cup, and being frenzied and maddened with her wine, princes wasted, at the instigation of Rome, the blood and the treasure of their subjects, and literally beggared themselves and their heirs to carry on this war.

Philip the Second of Spain, when on his death-bed, acknowledged to the prince, his son, that he had spent on the civil wars of France, on those of the Low Countries, and other enterprises of the same nature, more than five hundred and ninety-four millions of ducats—a sum altogether inconceivable. How many millions of lives, as well as of treasure, have the efforts to extirpate the Huguenots cost the kingdom of France! France crowned this good work under Louis XIV., in the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. But when she cast out the Huguenots, she cast out with them patriotism and piety, the seeds of virtue and, the elements of order. All followed in the train of the exiles; and Revolution with its furies rushed in to fill the gap their departure had made.

As an instance of how careful Rome was to bind all secular princes to prosecute this war in the most unrelenting spirit, we may mention the decree of the council of Toledo, which was to the following effect:—

“We, the holy council, promulgate this sentence, pleasing to God, that whosoever hereafter shall succeed to the kingdom shall not mount to the throne till he hath sworn **to permit no man to live in his kingdom who is not a Catholic**. And if, after he hath taken the reins of government, he shall violate his promise, let him be *anathema maranatha* in the sight of the eternal God, and fuel for eternal fire.”

Numerous bulls of the Popes, conceived in the same terms, and enjoining the same duty, might be adduced. Who can tell what vast numbers of Christians have fallen a sacrifice in this way? When, at the last trumpet, the mounds of this great battle-field—which is wide Europe—shall be opened, what numbers of slain shall rise up to condemn their common murderer!

Calculations have been formed of the numbers whom Popery has slain. From the year 1540 to the year 1570, comprehending only the space of thirty years, no fewer than nine hundred thousand Protestants were put to death by Papists in the different countries of Europe. During the short pontificate of Paul the Fourth, which lasted only four years, the Inquisition alone, on the testimony of Vergerius, destroyed an hundred and fifty thousand. Those that perished in Germany during the wars of Charles the Fifth, and in Flanders, under the infamous Alva, are counted by hundreds of thousands. During many years, especially after the Reformation, these countries swarmed with executioners, and were covered with scaffolds and fires. In France, several millions were destroyed in the innumerable massacres that took place in that kingdom. It has been calculated that, since the rise of the Papacy, not fewer than fifty

millions of persons have been put to death on account of religion. Of this inconceivable number the greater part have been cut off during the last six hundred years—for the Papacy persecuted very little during the first half of its existence. It was not till the witnesses completed their testimony that it made war against them.

Fifty millions in the space of six hundred years gives a rate of upwards of eighty thousand every year. Had Rome but once, during her career, consigned eighty thousand human beings to destruction, a deed so cruel would have been enough to stain her annals with indelible infamy, and to confer on her a terrible pre-eminence in blood. But when we think that she has repeated this fearful deed year by year during the long period of six centuries—when we think that eighty thousand human beings has she sacrificed six hundred times told—we have no words to express our astonishment and horror at her guilt. What an HOLOCAUST! FIFTY MILLIONS OF LIVES! How fearful a meaning does this fact impart to the words of John,

“I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints. and of all that were slain upon the earth.” – Revelation 17:6

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