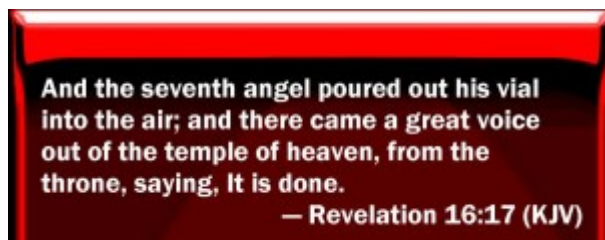


The Seventh Vial Chapter XXVI – Part 1. The Seventh Vial Poured Into The Air



Continued from [Chapter XXV. The Harvest Of The Earth.](#)

STANDING as we now do in the immediate presence of the great final catastrophe, we are tempted to look back to the beginning of the long and eventful drama. The retrospect includes a period of twenty-five centuries. In the remote past, to which we now direct our glance, the idolatrous world-power is seen mounting the throne of universal dominion, while the Church, attired in sackcloth, passes into her long captivity. Slowly the ages revolve, but they bring with them only increased power and glory to idolatry, and to the Church crueler persecutions and darker woes.

In its progress westward empire transfers the scepter of the world from the Babylonian to the Merle-Persian; from the Medo-Persian to the Macedonian; from the Macedonian to the Roman: and this last finally hands over his throne and dominion to the Papal power. In the Papacy we behold tyrannous oppression and idolatrous blasphemy finding their fullest and most monstrous development. He is the last enemy, for the very height to which he carries his wickedness precludes the possibility of a more "Wicked" coming after him: "He as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing Himself that He is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4) than which there is no higher seat to which a successor might aspire.

But all this while it was going ill with the Church. To her there came no relaxing of her chains, and no opening of her prison doors. But now the revolving years have completed their cycle, and brought round the appointed day, and the trumpet of the great Jubilee is now to be blown, announcing that the world's oppressor and the Church's great persecutor is to be hurled from his throne, and that truth and peace are to reign upon the earth. But terrible throes attend the birth of this new creation.

"And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not, since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great."- Revelation 16:17-18

A short calm, a heavy and anxious suspense, will precede this great tempest. The angels will hold the four winds of the political firmament that they may

not blow till the frogs have fulfilled their mission. These missionaries of evil will go about their work with the utmost dispatch (promptness and efficiency), and with unexampled persistency and energy. In countless croaking swarms they will spread everywhere; defiling the earth, and polluting the air. They will inspire the policy of governments, they will place them in antagonism to one another, and thus sow the seeds of wars. In one country they will stand up for the despot: in another, they will preach insurrection: skilfully sowing suspicions and fomenting passions.

Churches they will labor to corrupt and divide, or, where it better suits their purpose, to combine. They will organize in the dark, forming great secret societies, prepared against the hour of action. Thus having poisoned society by their corrupt principles, and alienated classes and interests by their stealthy machinations, there will arise, all suddenly, when perhaps the world is saying peace peace, and its wise men can see no sign of coming convulsion, a terrific tempest, which will darken the whole social and political horizon of the world, and by its lightning wars, and earthquake revolutions will shake Europe, and very probably also eastern Asia, from one extremity to the other.

"It is done," so does the great voice proclaim the moment the angel has emptied his vial. In the original the announcement is conveyed in one single word, and that a word having the sharp, clear, ringing sound of a trumpet (Greek word). The voice proceeded "out of the temple of heaven, from the throne;" from which we infer that the event, when it comes, will proclaim as with trumpet-blast, its character and mission. It will be so decisive and all-embracing, that not a doubt will remain as to who He is who has sent it, or what the work it is destined to accomplish. It will be manifest at once that it is a last and consummating blow, for the great voice is heard even before "the thunders and lightnings" which are to follow have burst over the world, or the earth quake has shaken it—which is to throw down the great city. When that knell shall strike upon the ear of antichrist, as he sits, Belshazzar-like, in his palace, his countenance will be changed, the joints of his loins will be loosed, and his knees will smite one against another. He will know that his kingdom is departed from him.

But to the Church, oh, what a welcome and blessed sound! It is, shall she say, my Saviour who comes. It is the thunder of His chariot wheels that I hear. This is the marriage supper of the Lamb. This is the day I have longed to see. The hope of its coming has kept me from despair in days of darkness. It has gladdened my heart in prison and at the stake: and now it is come! Make haste, and bring me my bridal robe, that I may go forth and meet my Lord. Let me take down my harp from the willows, and greet His coming with a song of joy. Sorrow and tears! long have I been familiar with you: now I bid you farewell. This day I begin my anthems, to which earth shall listen entranced, and whose notes, as they swell upwards, will blend with the song of prophets and apostles, and be prolonged in the alleluias around the throne!

The Vial Poured Into The Air

"And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air." -Revelation 16:17a

The preceding vials had affected each a part of the antichristian system; but this falls with destructive force upon the whole of it. The first was poured upon its earth, the second upon its sea, and so on; but this is poured into its air. The atmosphere encompasses the globe, and any derangement occurring there is fatal to the whole earth; so this vial poured into the air of the Papacy, will involve the entire system in ruin. Its earth, sea, rivers, and firmament, will all be smitten at once; and after a series of dreadful convulsions, its fabric will be for ever dissolved.

As regards the symbol before us, we can be at no loss to interpret it, seeing it has been adopted into the forms of our ordinary discourse. We daily speak of the social and political *atmosphere*. Into this atmosphere will the seventh vial be poured.

The air is the region of electric storms: accordingly, the pouring of the vial into it will be instantly followed by "voices, thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great." (Revelation 16:18) These are the usual Apocalyptic symbols of tumults, insurrections, wars, and revolutions. The great and universal changes introduced by the earthquake are further described by a reference to the islands and mountains, the symbol of great and small monarchies:

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

Contemporaneous with the shocks by which the earth will be moved to and fro, the mountains overturned, and the islands submerged, a great hail will be poured down from the firmament. **Hail is the emblem of northern war**; and this hail-storm will be of unprecedented severity, every stone being about the weight of a talent. This tremendous infliction, however, does not induce repentance; for "men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great." (Revelation 16:21)

Accordingly, the vial is consummated by a last and awful judgment on the Papacy. In the earthquake, the great city was divided into three parts, as not unusually happens to cities similarly visited; and the cities of the nations fell. This was the immediate precursor of the destruction of antichrist; for it is added,

"And great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." – Revelation 16:19

We are taught, then, to expect, at the period referred to, some sudden and great derangement of the political atmosphere of Europe—the consequence, most probably, of the action of the three spirits, who will succeed in charging it, as it were, with the most vicious, disorganizing, and antagonistic elements, which some event will suddenly bring into fierce collision; and in a single day, as it were, the whole of Europe, so far, at least, as it was included in the limits of Pagan and of Papal Rome, will burst out in violent tumults and insurrections; and these will issue in a revolution of unprecedented magnitude—unprecedented both in the largeness of its sphere and

the complete and radical character of its changes. All former revolutions have implied only a change from one form of government to another; but this will involve the destruction of government altogether.

When the Chaldean empire fell, it was succeeded by the Medo-Persian; when that was removed, it was replaced by the Macedonian; and when the Macedonian came to an end, it was followed by the Roman. But by what will the fall of the ten Roman kingdoms be succeeded? By the reign of anarchy, for a short period. The fall both of the little kingdoms and the great monarchies of Europe is plainly predicted in the Apocalyptic representation; for John saw that in the earthquake every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

This revolution will be followed, or, more probably, accompanied, by a war of unexampled severity and horrors. The hail of the first trumpet was fulfilled in the descent of the northern nations; the hail of the seventh trumpet, in the terrible wars of the French Revolution; but here we have a hail-shower whose violence is more terrific, and its effects more destructive still; for every stone is about the weight of a talent. This symbolic hail will fall on Europe from some northern region—for hail is a northern product—from France, or perhaps Russia.

Another accompaniment, or rather consequence, of the earthquake, is the division of the great city into three parts—either the formation of the European commonwealth, after its present kingdoms are broken up, into three grand confederacies, or a threefold schism in the Roman Catholic Church, or very probably both. This will be immediately followed by the destruction of great Babylon, whose doom is here intimated in terms the partial obscurity of which imparts a terrible emphasis to their meaning:

“And great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.” -Revelation 16:19b

Let us compare that part of the monarch's dream of the four kingdoms which synchronizes with the prediction before us. Nebuchadnezzar traced the image to its ten toes—the ten kingdoms. He saw the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and become like the chaff of the summer thrashing-floors; when all suddenly the winds of heaven arose, and swept away their very dust. The fourth kingdom was not succeeded by a fifth; nor was it overthrown by external violence, or removed by a foreign sword: it grew weak apace; its iron became mixed with clay: the democratic mingled with the despotic element, and undermined it. It fell at last by internal disorganization; and the winds of popular fury, bursting upon it in terrific force, swept its fragments away, and effaced every trace of its existence. Such is the catastrophe which prophecy reveals as awaiting the ten Roman kingdoms of modern Europe.

The prophecy of Daniel synchronizes with the seventh vial, and throws light upon it. The symbols of Daniel and John are different: not so their import, however; for both point most obviously to the same terrible conclusion. Both portend (indicate) an entire change in the social and political fabric of Europe—the fall of its kingdoms, the extinction of its dynasties, the

alteration of its laws and forms of government, the abolition of its offices and dignities, the dissolution of its armies, the destruction of all the symbols of its authority, and the obliteration even of the territorial boundaries of its States. Nothing short of this can fulfill the figures of Daniel and the symbols of the Apocalypse.

In the one we not only behold the image ground to powder, but its last particles swept away by the tempest. In the other we see the earthquake burying cities, overthrowing mountains, and so agitating the ocean, that its islands are submerged by its tumultuous waves. If figures have any meaning, these must import the total overthrow of all the powers that now bear rule in Europe, and the utter extinction of the last vestige of their authority. It is a new creation which the world is to undergo, and dreadful upheavings and convulsions will usher it in.

Already almost we seem to hear the great voice saying, "It is done," in the impression, strong and deep, in which men of all classes and all nations share, that a new era is opening on the world! The statesman, the Christian, the masses, all alike participate in this feeling. That awful and unknown Future discloses itself to few, but it makes its approach felt by all. It is a pillar of cloud to the world— a pillar of fire to the Church. The elements now dominant in society are altogether diverse from those which at any former period molded its institutions or governed its affairs. Thus, we lack the clue in our endeavors to explore the future. The conditions of the problem are unascertained. Induction, analogy, and even our past experience, avail us nothing. One thing only do all feel and acknowledge— that an unprecedented change is approaching, and that the Future must be altogether different from the Past.

This is no vague and ungrounded impression, like what has existed at some former stages of the world's history, springing from the ferment of men's minds, whose hopes were excited and their imaginations dazzled by the novelty of unwonted events. It is the legitimate conclusion of calm reason. It rests on a basis of well-ascertained facts. Its strength in different minds is in proportion, not to the ignorance, but to the knowledge which the person possesses, of human society. Those who have the best opportunities of making themselves extensively acquainted with the state of the world, are those who entertain the impression most deeply. Society has come to possess new powers of thought, new principles of action, new elements of change. We speak more particularly of that part of the world which is held forth in the Apocalypse as the scene of its catastrophes. In the first place, the foundation of all obligation has been completely razed in the minds of the inhabitants, generally speaking, of this portion of the world, which, let us ever remember, is, and for the past two thousand years has been, the most influential portion of the world.

The Pantheism which in the end of the last century was confined to the closets of the studios—whose three foci (plural of focus, center of activity or attention) were Clarence, Lausanne, and Ferney—whose three apostles were Voltaire, Gibbon, Rousseau—is now the vulgar creed of the European masses. God to them is but a principle, not a person. They feel that they have no relations to Him, are not accountable to Him, and have neither good nor evil

to hope for from Him. It is plain that in minds in which this creed is entertained, all sense of obligation must be at an end; and with the sense of obligation extinct, on what ground can authority longer maintain itself? It has lost its fulcrum, and finds itself paralyzed. It is plain that men with such a creed are prepared to abolish all authority, make their own will their law, and their own interest their end, the very first moment they may become sufficiently numerous and powerful to resist constituted order with impunity.

Popery has been the primary agent in bringing about so fearful a state of matters. The mummeries (pretentious ceremonies) of her priests prepared men to listen to the impieties of Voltaire. The dogmas of atheism are not more shocking to reason than those of the Papacy. And as on Popery mainly rests the guilt, so on her mainly shall fall the doom.

But along with the new mental philosophy came a new political philosophy—new theories of social life—new opinions regarding the uses and prerogatives of Government, the source of power, and the extent of popular privileges. The spread of these theories was powerfully aided by the means, of recent discovery and invention, for the instantaneous diffusion of knowledge—the daily journals, the clubs, delegates, university lectures, tracts, pamphlets, volumes, sermons, songs. Machinery the most varied and powerful was employed in the cause, and wrought with untiring energy; and converts were made by hundreds and thousands. While the two great apostles of infidelity were sleeping in the catacombs of the Pantheon, their disciples were traversing Europe, fighting with the weapons their masters had supplied, battering down the strongholds of superstition, and undermining the fabric of Government. While the guardians of the old order of things slept, the enemy was sowing his tares. Every day recruited their numbers: numbers gave them courage, and union gave them strength. They saw that without them governments were weak; they saw, too, that governments had lost them; and they stood prepared, on the first provocation, to shiver into atoms, at one mighty blow, the old powerless monarchical fabrics, whose appearance was still imposing, but whose real strength was gone. To recur to Daniel's symbol, the heavens are, at this hour, black with the gathering storm, and the merest accident may suffice to draw down the lightnings of popular fury, which are destined to shatter into a thousand pieces those political structures from which the golden splendour and the iron strength have alike departed.

Continued in [Chapter XXVI – Part 2. Voices, Thunders, and Lightnings](#)

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