

2.—WHAT IS MEANT BY THE "DEADLY WOUND"?

Whilst Daniel 7 makes no specific reference to this apparently fatal setback to the Papal power, we have already referred to it in our study of the 1,260 days' prophecy.

(See Chart No. 24—The 1260 Days Prophecy)

We should observe, however, that the death-wound given to the Papacy by Revolutionary France in 1798 was the climax of a long series of humiliating setbacks.

The Papacy enjoyed its noontide splendour in the days of Popes Innocent III and Boniface VIII (approx. 13th century). But this pinnacle of Papal power was followed by an increasingly violent landslide of reaction against ecclesiastical domination. The dissatisfaction with the Roman Church in England, as well as on the Continent, was a part of this reaction. The growth of a liberal and scientific spirit was another. The Protestant Reformation dealt the Papacy a crippling body-blow. The crumbling of the power and influence of the Hapsburgs in Austria and Spain left the decadent French state as a major bastion of the Roman Church. The arrest and imprisonment of the Pope in 1798 may be regarded as a symbol of the widespread and vicious reaction against the power and privileges of the Church, by the forces of Revolutionary France. Up till the Revolution France had been a leading European champion of the Papacy for 1,000 years, and when its support was suddenly and violently withdrawn, the Papal power appeared to face certain extinction.

3.—HOW AND WHEN WAS THE DEADLY WOUND "HEALED"?

This is another detail left untouched in the more condensed and distant prophecies of Daniel. But modern and contemporary history have brought it into focus as one of their most remarkable phenomena. At the end of the 18th century half Europe thought that the Papacy was extinct. In spite of its "deadly wound", however, and in spite of numerous subsequent reverses, the Church of Rome has enjoyed a steadily increasing influence in world affairs since the days of Napoleon. Some of the more obvious "healing" developments have taken place in our time:

The restoration of Papal sovereignty by Mussolini in 1929.

The phenomenal growth of Catholic influence in many countries, including the U.S.A.

The Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965.

The conciliatory attitude of large sections of modern Protestantism.

The steady Rome-ward current of the world movement for Church Union.

4.—WHAT IS MEANT BY THE MYSTIC NUMBER 666?

(See Chart No. 42—A Key to the Mystic Number 666)

As indicated in Section 1, the identification of the Leopard-beast with the Papacy does not depend upon this numerical detail alone. Even if this feature were eliminated, the identification would still be unmistakable. But it is a significant fact that this twelfth specification applies also to the Papal power. It thus becomes another strand in an unbreakable cable of prophetic evidence.

Conclusion

Before we conclude this lesson, one final question—a personal question—challenges our attention: "Does our responsibility end with the mere IDENTIFICATION of the Beast-power?"

No, indeed. An understanding of this great prophecy creates a two-fold responsibility for every reader:

(1) We must take a personal stand against the Beast-power and its influence.