

(From “The Messenger,” The Journal of the British-Israel Association, January 1894. Note: We have left the typical British spellings intact, as well as Napoleon’s last name. Since the original publishers also had a habit of letting paragraphs go on for a full page in some cases, we have broken up the text into more readable sized paragraphs. Other than that, no editing has been done.-James Bruggeman)

Six Hundred and Sixty-six

By Joseph Wild

“Here is wisdom, let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is six hundred three score and six.”—REVELATION xiii. 18.

One of the notable characters yet to appear among men is that of Antichrist. He has a work and a time assigned him in the Scriptures of truth, as well as by the concurrent testimony of the Churches’ expectation at large. By nearly all prophetic students it is agreed that this strange and wonderful person is referred to in the words of our text. From the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, B.C. 170, to the late Napoleon Buonaparte, men, in unreasonable haste, have chosen out from the passing millions no less than thirty-five persons whom they thought to be Antichrist. This they have done because they have not had the wisdom nor the understanding that is to characterise the interpretation of this text.

What our Saviour said to the deputation of Sadducees who on one occasion waited upon Him might have been safely said to many in the past, and to more in the present day: “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.” The inspired writers, Daniel and Paul and John, had pointed out the time and place and work and the peculiar characteristics of this person, and after all this precaution men have not had the wisdom nor understanding to save them from being deceived, and from being deceivers themselves.

To understand the meaning of “666” we must know the Greek method of numbering. They had their numbers in certain letters of the alphabet. So had the Hebrews, and so have many nations in their language to-day. Our system is the Arabic system of notation, and is independent of alphabetic letters, although we often use letters in notation. I can say “Eighteen hundred and eighty-two” in figures; I could also express the same thing by writing its value in letters, thus, “MDCCCLXXXII.,” for “M” stands for one thousand, “D”, for five hundred, “C” for one hundred, “L” fifty, “X” ten each time, and “I” one.

In Greek the first nine letters were equal to our nine digits—i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; and out of the rest of the alphabet they got their tens, hundreds, thousands, &c. You see every name would therefore contain some number, and by adding up the value of the letters that would be contained in the name, you would get the sum total of the name. The letters in the name of Antichrist will, when added, make 666, whoever he happens to be, wherever he happens to live, or whatever his name happens to be.

Take for instance the famous name “Napoleon,” which has been so wonderfully argued upon by Mr. Baxter and others, proving that he was this Antichrist, because in this word they could find the number 666. The word “Apolyon” has two forms in Greek, “Apoleon,” the present participle of the verb “ Apollumi,” that means to destroy; the other form is “Apoleo,” with its participle “Apoleon.”

Now, Apoleon and Napoleon are radically the same word. The “N” of the Napoleon is the Greek word “Nai” abbreviated, and means verily, or the very one. When the “ N “ is added, as in Napoleon, it means, therefore, “the very Apoleon,” or the very destroyer. The word, as used by John, is in what is called the inscriptive form, hence in the dative case. In the inscriptive form the word becomes “Napoleonti,” so that we have now only to calculate the value of the letters contained in the word “ Napoleonti.” “N” 50, “A” 1, “P” 80, “O” 70, “L” 30, “E” 5, “O” 70, “N” 50, “T” 300, “I” 10 ; total, 666.

There is something curious in the fact that so many have selected from time to time one of the Napoleonic family as being Antichrist. Perhaps it will be well for me to give you the reason why this has been so frequently done, for I am inclined myself to believe that when he comes into existence, and we really understand him and know him, he will be of the family of the Buonapartes, because the Buonapartes themselves are of Jewish extract and really Jews. Shall I give now what I collected some time ago on this point?

I have said that the Buonaparte family are Jews. History shows that centuries ago they were a family of rulers and aspirants. David, the second Emperor of Trebizonde, was one of this family, and was in his time the lawful heir of the throne of Constantinople. He was put to death by Mahomet the Second. His son, George Nicephor Comnene, was one of the Protogeras of the Commune of Mania, in Peloponnesus. Ten of this family succeeded one the other, until in 1665, Constantine Comnene fled to Italy with several thousand of his followers. The Genoese Senate granted to him large tracts of land in Corsica. One of Constantine’s sons afterwards settled in Florence, in Tuscany; his name was Calomeras, which, translated into Italian, becomes Buonaparte. Soon after that time the whole family adopted the name of Buonaparte. In 1783, the Genoese ceded Corsica to France, and thus came this family into the French Empire.

When Buonaparte was proclaimed Emperor of the French, he assumed the title of “Napoleon the First,” to signify, as he himself stated, his Greek origin. If you search further back into history, you will find that this family were, as I have said, Greek Jews. Old Buonaparte, as well as Napoleon the Third, believed they were of Jewish lineage. They looked for their fortune and destiny on the Jewish line. It was this belief that prompted them ever and always to look to Palestine as the chief goal of their pursuit. They both set themselves up as protectors of the Holy Land, and each of them led France to battle in defence of the same.

Of course it is difficult to make out as plain as one could desire that they are of Jewish extract; still the family, by their very disposition, are naturally qualified to furnish any number of Antichrists. The late Napoleon Buonaparte loved to have himself addressed by such titles as “Our Saviour,” “Regenerator,” “Elect of God,” “Messiah of the French Nation.” He once gave a preacher who chanced to compare him to Christ a gold snuffbox for his wisdom.

When Buonaparte called the first council of the Jewish nation, in 1807, the first thing he imposed upon them was that in getting up to speak they should address him as “The Lord’s Anointed Cyrus, the living image of Divinity.” There is at the present time a sect in Switzerland who worshipped Napoleon Buonaparte, and they believe that he will yet rise from the dead and conquer the whole world.

These and many similar facts have been the reasons why persons have settled upon this family as the one from which will finally come that singular and strange person, Antichrist. However, to be guarded against such impostors and such imposition, it is necessary that we have clear and sound views on the subject. If we have not, we are likely to be imposed upon, and we therefore need to be grounded in sound doctrine as a good and safe thing. Instability is insecurity: ignorance is positive danger. Epidemics and contagious diseases attack those first and most who are in an unhealthy condition bodily; so false doctrines and their teachers can lead those astray first and most who are not settled in some faith.

As a rule the Church affects to despise these special topics. But we all know that it is these special doctrines which have played ruin and havoc in the Church, and rent it in twain several times. When such an effect has been produced from neglect to teach people on these points, ministers in the pulpit lift up their hands in holy horror, and then begin to berate the persons who have gone astray. Had the pulpit been truly teaching these peculiar ways and methods of interpreting prophecy, our Advent brethren never could have led themselves nor any one else astray, as they have so frequently succeeded in doing. Nor can you put your finger of exception upon any one man or church who are not in danger. Unless they are posted upon these very theories, as I have said, they lay themselves open to be led astray by the first man who comes along and takes up the subject, for it is verily true that ignorance is weakness and a positive defect.

If persons would learn the order of prophetic events, they would not, I imagine, be so soon led astray. Order is said to be Heaven’s first law, and most certainly it is the method of providential procedure. We have this order laid down in the Scriptures, and why any man could have expected in the past Jesus Christ to come I cannot conceive; I am utterly at sea, utterly lost. The order of events in the prophecies is as clearly laid down as my fingers are in a row. Why a man should jump to take his little finger when he has only got to his second I cannot understand; and yet that is what they have been doing! Nowhere in God’s Word is it taught that Christ can or will come, with the Jews scattered, Israel unrecognised, and Palestine in desolation. There is no such passage, and I have challenged you time upon time on that very point.

And more, Antichrist himself, as you will naturally see, in his very appearance and work, the work that is assigned him, needs a restoration of Palestine before he can come. He appears in Palestine among the Jews, a ruler over the Jews. One of the acts for which he will be stigmatised the most is that he will set up an image in the Temple at Jerusalem.

There is no Temple there now; there has not been one for eighteen hundred years. Why then should any man suppose that Antichrist can be in existence? He could not have fulfilled his mission if he had been. Any one can see that he is to be a prince or a ruler over the Jews in Palestine, and gradually insinuate himself into the confidence of the people; and then, extending his power to other nations, he becomes absolute in his authority; and then he changes from his simple faith as a Jew, and proclaims himself to be “Antichrist,” not opposed to Christ, mind you, but Christ himself. “Anti,” not “ante,” which means going before or against. The word simply means that he will set up his image in the Temple, and command that they worship him as God.

Now, that Temple is not yet built; the Jews are not yet all gathered together there—I believe we have a few of them yet in Toronto. Now, how can men go around and be led astray? If they would only consider the order of events. The architectural drawings for that Temple are all ready; they are given in the last eight chapters of Ezekiel: how that Temple is to be built, and when it is to be built, and after all that, when the people are settled there, this Antichrist is to make his appearance in their midst.

Now, this is what I call observing the order of events. This is what I call not taking a man's little finger at a jump after one has got to the second. It is just the folly of many a young reader of novels; they cannot wait to see how this or that tragedy turns out, they turn to the last few pages to know ; these people, in their religious haste, skip a number of facts, and come to the last, and say, "Here it is." They tell you the truth about it in a very large degree, just as the other parties could tell you the truth about how the tragedy would end, but they do not know much of what intervenes, nor do they know the whole truth as to how it ends.

Antichrist, as I have said, I believe will be a Jew. Our Saviour on one occasion, when talking to these Jews about rejecting Him (and you know He was a Jew Himself after the flesh, for He was of the tribe of Judah), warned them in this manner against this very Antichrist: "I come in My Father's name, and ye received Me not; another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." Now, that is a passage that is generally understood to be a reference by Christ to the Jewish origin of Antichrist, whoever he may be.

Another thing we should keep in mind is to remember three things in studying Antichrist. They are the spirit of Antichrist, the polity of Antichrist, and the person of Antichrist. These are widely separate in the ages; hundreds of years intervene between the first and the last. Naturally the spirit of Antichrist must come into existence first. It was already in existence before John the Divine died, and he pointed it out, and so Paul when writing to the Thessalonians said, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." God is restraining, and will not allow the offence to culminate until a certain time, when he will withdraw his resisting power; then the polity will assume shape, and after that the person will soon be seen.

As again said by that same writer, "And now we know what withholdeth, that He might be revealed in His time." Do you know what withholdeth? God, as in the verse quoted, "Now we know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time." There is a time for him when he will appear, but it has not been yet. God, in His Providence, will keep His hand upon the events, and suppress them until the time comes, and then He will withdraw His power, and Antichrist shall appear, as Paul teaches; if we would only keep in mind what I have quoted in that verse, "Now we know what withholdeth," &c. In this verse you have three things—a withholding power, a person to be revealed, and a time for his appearance. All seems to be plainly written to my eyes. The spirit of Antichrist, as I have said, was already in existence in John's time: "For many deceivers are entered into the world who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh—this is a deceiver and Antichrist." That is the spirit he is talking about; the spirit was already in existence.

The polity of Antichrist is just now maturing. If you could only get an idea of what that polity is, you would see how nicely the nations of Europe are shaping themselves for its completion. This courting between Russia and Rome is very significant, because they have yet to unite, when Antichrist appears; and though these two courts have been separated for a long time, they are now courting, and have just about concluded that they will marry. Is there anything singular in it? Is there anything singular in the alienation of the old-time ally France from England? No, sir; they are all getting ready

for the polity, and when the spirit is rampant and the polity is matured, the person will appear and step into it, as a person into a new suit of clothes.

So you have this order of events—the spirit, polity, and person. The person, of course, will be the last to appear. I have an illustration for that, which I consider is a good one—one that is easily comprehended. You take the case of an uprising or rebellion. You go to the United States in their late war. Now, see, the spirit of that rebellion was manifested before Washington died, and in the very last speech that he made to the Congress, when bidding them good-bye, he warned them against certain practices, against a certain spirit that he said was being manifested among them “I warn you to depart from it, to let it alone; for if you nurse it, it will bring ruin on this country.”

Now, the spirit was there. That spirit kept being nursed for years, and finally they began to shape their policy, they began to meditate separation; and as soon as the spirit had matured the polity, and the polity was all complete, and they had put it in shape by secession, State after State, they were not long in finding Antichrist Jefferson Davis, though he was the last to appear. You see you could not get Jefferson Davis if you had not the spirit first, and then the polity into which he stepped. He is the representative, then. That is just so with the real Antichrist. The spirit has existed a long time, the polity is now forming, and we shall have to look out in a few years for the appearance of the person. He will appear suddenly, and it is difficult to say who he will be, as the actual identical person.