

WILL ONE POWER RULE THE WORLD?

Arthur S. Maxwell joins M. C. Wilcox and A. O. Tait as long-term editors of the *Signs of the Times*. He was editor of the *British Present Truth* from 1920 to 1936, during much of this time also serving as manager of the Stanborough Park Press. In 1937 he became editor of the *Signs*.

"Uncle Arthur" is beloved by today's children, as well as by thousands of children grown up, who have heard and read from the thirty-three volumes of *Bedtime Stories*, the five volumes of *The Children's Hour*, or the ten volumes of *The Bible Story*. And there is a long list of books for adults—seventy-seven books in all—such as *Discovering London*, *War of the Worlds*, and *The Coming King*. Put with these the million words written for the *Signs*—the thousands for *Present Truth*, too—and you have an array from which it is hard to pick a "major opus." Perhaps it should be *The Bible Story*. Altogether this is a great output for a man born in 1896.

The article "Will One Power Rule the World?" appeared when Hitler seemed about to crush all opposition. Thus it was a daring confirmation of belief in Bible prophecy.

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MORE than sixty years ago, in one of the earliest issues of the *Signs of the Times*, there appeared the following fearless statement concerning the overthrow of the ancient Roman Empire and the future of Europe:

"Crushed beneath the weight of its own vast proportions, it crumbled to pieces, never to be united again. Its elements lost the power of cohesion, and *no man, nor combination of men, can again consolidate them.*"

In all the long, dark, turbulent years that have elapsed since then, this journal has never once gone back on this

interpretation of the great prophecy of the second chapter of Daniel. People are saying to us: "Look at what is happening in Europe today. What are you going to say now?"

We are going to say exactly what we have said in the past. We refuse to retract one jot or one tittle. This prophecy is the only one in the Bible to which the two words "certain" and "sure" are both attached. If for no other reason, with these two seals upon it we can surely trust it with complete confidence. It cannot fail.

To refresh our minds, and to re-establish our faith, let us examine it again in detail.

To do so we must go back twenty-five centuries into the court of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. It is morning. The king has had a strange dream, and has forgotten what it was about. Yet the impression lingers; he wants to know. So he calls his counselors. Some of them are astrologers, some magicians, some sorcerers—the accomplished spirit mediums of the time.

To this assembly of the wise men of Babylon Nebuchadnezzar brings his strange demand: "Tell me what I dreamed about last night!"

None can answer. They offer to interpret the dream; but they first must know what it was.

But Nebuchadnezzar will not be put off. He suspects that they are merely trying to gain time so as to prepare "lying and corrupt words," and, finally, becoming "very furious," he gives the order for their immediate execution.

As the royal patrols go from house to house seeking their prey, they come upon Daniel, the youthful captive from Jerusalem, whose keen intellect and sterling character have already won him considerable royal favor. Informed of the reason why he has suddenly been condemned to death, he begs time to pray, and is soon on his knees before God.

That night he is shown in vision the selfsame dream that had so deeply impressed Nebuchadnezzar but a few hours before. Ushered into the throne room he finds himself face to face with the greatest ruler of ancient times. There follows the most dramatic interview ever recorded, with prophet and king thrilling with emotion as the curtain of the future is suddenly rolled back before their astonished eyes, and they stare stupefied across century after century of unborn years down to the end of time.

"There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets," begins the prophet, "and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; as for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and He that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass." Verses 28, 29.

Nebuchadnezzar evidently had been wondering about the future—wondering what would happen to his great kingdom after his demise. Now, in a wider revelation than he ever dared to hope for, the whole vast panorama of ages to come is opened before him.

"Thou, O king, sawest, and beheld a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became

a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Verses 31-35.

So this was Nebuchadnezzar's dream—a great metallic image, composed of four different metals, and with feet part iron, part clay; an image that was finally struck on the feet by some overwhelming force, which crushed it into such infinitesimal fragments that the wind blew them away.

But what is the meaning of it all? That is what Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know. He was soon satisfied.

Continued Daniel: "This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king." Verse 36.

Briefly it was this: The four metals represented four world empires, which were to follow one another in history. The fourth, typified by iron that merged into a mixture of iron and clay, was to be divided, and to remain divided until, by some spectacular divine intervention, the kingdoms of this world would be swept away to give place to the everlasting kingdom of God.

It is this interpretation that we must examine again with particular care, not only in the light of ancient history, but with the catastrophic events of recent days in mind.

No one, of course, questions the application of the four main metals of the image to the four great empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. That is so simple and so plain that the youngest child can understand it.

But the fourth kingdom—and it is most important to notice this fact—was not to be succeeded by another of similar extent and greater power. As stated above, it was to be *divided*.

This all-important revelation was repeated and emphasized in three different and most significant expressions:

"And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter's clay, and part of iron, *the kingdom shall be divided*; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

“And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be *partly strong, and partly brittle* [margin].

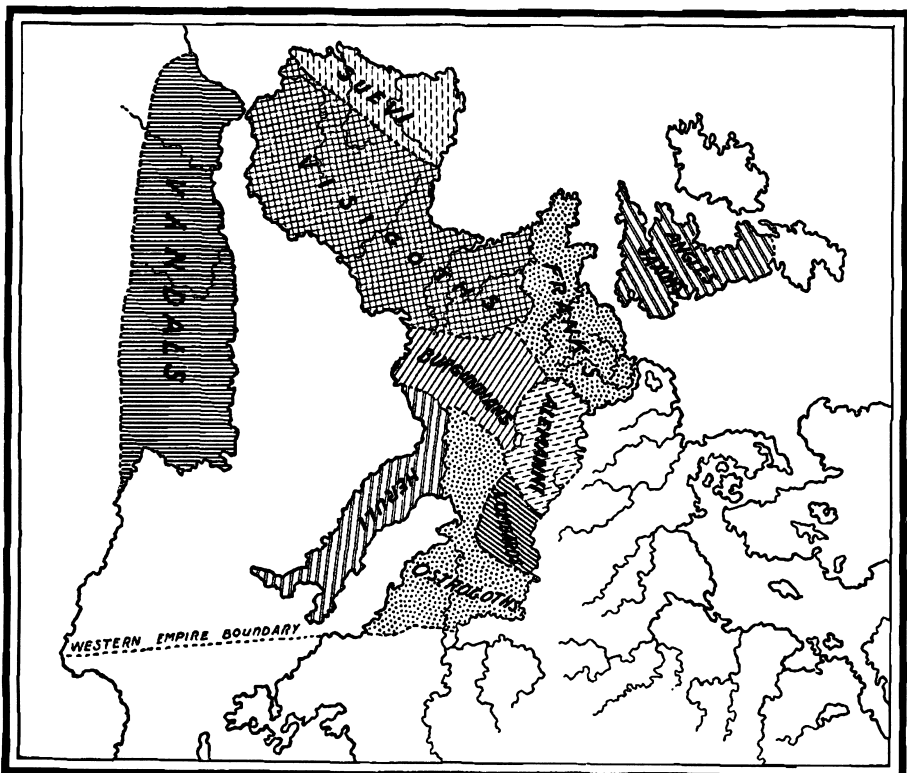
“And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but *they shall not cleave one to another*, even as iron is not mixed with clay.” Verses 41-43.

Now it is one of the most interesting, and indeed one of the most momentous, facts of history, that when the Roman Empire, weakened by internal corruption, was overrun by invading barbarian tribes from the north and east during the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., it was divided into exactly ten divisions. In fact, with the overthrow of the last of the emperors in A.D. 476, and the establishment of the Herulian kingdom in Italy, the fourth kingdom, which had been strong as iron and had broken in pieces and subdued all kingdoms, was now broken in pieces itself. “Ten kingdoms, ten distinct and independent nations,—no more, no less,—had fixed themselves within the boundaries of Western Rome; and the prophecy, spoken and written more than a thousand years before, was literally fulfilled.”

These ten kingdoms were the Anglo-Saxons, the Franks, the Alemanni, the Lombards, the Ostrogoths, the Visigoths, the Burgundians, the Vandals, the Suevi, and the Heruli; and the portions of Europe that they occupied are delineated as nearly as possible on the accompanying map. These peoples were the forerunners and progenitors of the nations of modern Europe.

All through the fifteen centuries that have elapsed since the breakup of the Roman Empire, despite the most desperate and determined efforts to bind these divisions together into one great whole again, the task has been found impossible.

Boundaries have changed, of course; but the prophecy said nothing about boundaries, or about the depredations of one nation upon another. Some nations might expand and others shrink. Some might be eliminated altogether—and were. The strong might profit at the expense of the weak. The fragments of iron might penetrate into the frontiers of the helpless clay. But the clay would remain, defying the power of the iron to weld itself together again.



Seen in the light of history, illuminated by the glow of a thousand battlefields, where men by millions have struggled to defeat the divine purpose, the ancient dictum, "THEY SHALL NOT CLEAVE ONE TO ANOTHER," is seen to be the greatest prophetic utterance of all time.

It is amazing how many schemes have been laid to unite the nations of Europe. Men have tried treaties until almost every nation was pledged in some way to every other nation. They have tried leagues until it seemed at last that peaceful unity was about to be achieved. They have tried internarrige until every ruling dynasty became related to every other dynasty and it was considered unethical for one of royal blood to wed outside this charmed circle. Yet every plan has failed.

As far back as the ninth century A.D., Charlemagne made his attempt to defeat the prophecy; he even permitted himself to be crowned emperor at Rome; but the iron and the clay that he tried to blend together quickly fell apart after his demise. As one historian has said: "His scepter was the bow of Ulysses, which could not be drawn by any weaker hand."

In the fifteenth century, Charles V became ruler of most of Europe, and had visions of completing the conquest of the Continent. It was said of him that "no monarch until Napoleon was so widely seen in Europe and in Africa." Yet, in 1555, through failing health, he was compelled to abdicate and to sign away his vast possessions to others.

Little more than a hundred years later, Louis XIV of France became the dominant figure on the Continent; he reached out in all directions for more and more authority, overturning the Netherlands, laying waste the Palatinate, and exclaiming: "There shall be no more Pyrenees." Nevertheless a combination of opposing forces finally brought his

grandiose schemes tumbling about him like a castle of cards. By the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, "his dominions were pared away on every side."

Then, less than a century and a half ago, came Napoleon, perhaps the greatest of all these would-be lords of Europe and conquerors of the world. He was thrown up, as it were, by the French Revolution, and from 1795 to 1804, when he was proclaimed emperor, he consolidated his hold upon the people of France. Then for eight fearful years he swept over nation after nation, crowning himself king of Italy, placing his brother Louis on the throne of Holland, and his brother Jerome on the throne of the new kingdom of Westphalia, which he created. His brother-in-law Murat he made sovereign of his newly established Grand Duchy of Berg, and to his brother Joseph he gave the throne of Spain. No other conqueror ever made such thorough preparation for the establishment and perpetuation of a united Europe.

Nevertheless, even before his plans were completed, rumblings of the coming disintegration could already be heard.

In 1805, the French fleet was defeated at Trafalgar. In 1812 came Napoleon's Russian expedition, his retreat from Moscow, the subsequent defeat at Leipzig in October, 1813, followed by his final crushing overthrow at Waterloo in 1815.

In 1914, well within living memory, a similar attempt at European domination was made. The kaiser's armies swept over Belgium, rolled on into France, into Italy, into the Balkans. Their shattering blows seemed, for many a long day, to indicate that the final triumph would be theirs. Those who lived through those dark and evil days will not soon forget the gloom that settled over the world as retreat followed retreat before the advancing forces of the conqueror, nor the tremendous feeling of relief as, miraculously, the course of events suddenly changed, and, before one could scarcely

appreciate the magnitude of what was taking place, it had all ended at Versailles and Doorn.

Thus has it happened in the past. Thus will it happen again. After the overspreading eruption of iron has ceased, the elements of clay will reappear, cracking and breaking the mass of metal into its old-time divisions.

But mark this well. Events may for a time seem to go absolutely contrary to the course the prophecy would indicate. In every time of totalitarian ascendancy there has been a period when it must have seemed to the onlookers as though all hope was lost. Yet it was not. After the storm had passed and the weapons of war had been laid down, the word of God was seen to be more firmly established than ever.

So it will be in our day; and we shall not have to wait long now—not in these swifly moving times.

The tyrants, the invaders, the would-be conquerors, cannot succeed. Not for long, anyway. And it matters not whether they be German or Italian or French or Spanish, their plans to dominate Europe are doomed to failure from the outset. They may achieve temporary triumphs. They may overrun Holland and Belgium and France and every Balkan state. They may pour death and destruction on Britain. Yet along the very trail of their wanton cruelty and ruthless barbarism there will grow up and accumulate the very forces that will ultimately destroy them.

They shall not cleave.

One power will not rule the world. Not until Christ Himself comes to reign,—which is indeed the next and greatest event on the calendar of human history.

The divisions of the old Roman Empire will remain until the very end, for it is “*in the days of these kings*” that the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, a kingdom that “shall not be left to other people, but it shall

break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” Verse 44.

So “cast not away therefore your confidence.” Hebrews 10:35.

“The dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” Daniel 2:45.