

PREDICTIONS ¹

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Predictions have always played a definite role in political revolutions. There were few Roman emperors, for example, who, before mounting the throne, did not have an oracle regarding their piety, a sacred sound coming from afar that imperceptibly spread throughout the Empire. One could also make speak the tripods² of Asia, the oaks of Gaul, of Greece, and of Brittany; one had friends and Sybils everywhere. The people, struck by a religious fear, listened attentively and compared predictions. Their hair stood up on seeing the resemblance; suddenly, one learned that Vespasian had been greeted as emperor in the East, that Julian had declared himself against Constance, and that the populace, spectators in the activity of the gods, admired their power, trembling all the while. I remember having noticed this so often in ancient history, that I am surprised how such craftiness could retain its power. But the craze to learn the future is so great here below that people will never be insensitive to the mysterious counsels that intrigue or credibility will pour at their ears.

Indeed, since Christianity, history does not mention as frequently this abuse of prophetic revelations: dreadful if it arises from fraud, and wretched when it is the fruit of an imagination excited by great events. Unlike the pagans, we do not have permanent and official oracles but we have a unique court, a sovereign judge of popular beliefs, which alone, to everything that tempts the mind of the faithful, can display credible authority along with a dose of reality. Nonetheless, in catastrophes that compromised religion — at the time of the religious wars in England, Germany, and France — everywhere one heard of minds, said to be inspired, that announced the fall of empires, the ruin of Babylon, the kingdom of the Antichrist, and the end of the world; all this is was meant to be. Heresy was especially rich in prophets; it had times when no preacher mounted the pulpit without offering some prediction against the Pope and the papists, against Francis Ist or Charles Vth. Men who are frightened by these kinds of matters ought to read about them at least once, so as to learn how far the fertility of the mind can extend in inventions of this kind, and what the imagination, even in good faith, is capable of producing when agitated by great fears, grandiose desires, or even by false theories. There are today some good people who

sincerely believe in the need for a miracle to save Europe, and their only reason is that they themselves were not able to do it. Human conceit can reach that far! They had set up a Europe according to their ideas some fifteen or sixteen years earlier; now they are seeing it disappear in flames and they cry out, they prophesy. Excellent souls, no doubt, because I do not believe their error to be voluntary. Other paints will be needed to portray these men who sometimes met each other, bold enough to cause evil, so as to draw from it what they believed was good. Lost men, who do not see that the major obstacle that Providence places between us and events is not death, but evil, and who dare to cross this divide in the name of God, Who pushed them back, and in the name of a future that despises them. We leave in their darkness those scandals of human politics; the illusion explains too much for us not to believe in it.

Indeed, in all ages, there were political predictions, and there are still some today, as witnessed by a book that suggests those thoughts to us. It is a guileless collection of a few so-called revelations already published here and there, revelations that deal with the present or future destinies of Europe and of religion. When a book like this falls into your hands, your first reaction — because of your sins — is this: Here are some people who tell me: “Such and such will happen, for sure.” What proof do I have that they are not lying? Assuredly, it is not sufficient, in order to predict, simply to pronounce boldly these words: “This will happen, God has told me so.” At least one part of the prediction needs to have happened so as to give credence to the other part, or that God has made known his prophet to people by remarkable signs. Our small book does not fall into the latter category. I pray you, who is this *Martin*? What is that unnamed *ancient religion*? Who is that *cleric of exemplary life who, for several years, has seen everything in black*? Who are *Sister Nativité* and *Philippe-Dieudonné-Noël-Olivarius*, and *Jean de Vatiguero*, and the venerable *Barthélemy Holzhauser*? They were, or they are, I believe with all my heart, some very pious persons, but, really now, by what divine signs were they declared prophets?

Perhaps at least part of their predictions came true, and guarantees us the truth of the rest? Come now! Martin predicted, in 1816: “that such a big hole would be made in the crown as to bring it close to ruin.” The *Gazette* and the *Quotidienne*, since their appearance in the world, have said the same thing every day: are they prophets?

In 1816 the ancient religion saw a cloud overshadowing France, and in that cloud there were confused voices: some cried out: Long live the Republic! — others: Long live Napoleon! — others still: Long live religion and the illustrious monarch that God preserves

for us! Indeed, that religion has seen and heard all of that!

As for Philippe Dieudonné-Noël-Olivarius, this is another story. He himself saw the entire history of Napoleon, word by word; he counted his infantry, his cavalry, his artillery, almost man by man. That has been proven; the prophecy had been published in 1542, in a convent of Benedictines. But where is it today? In the journal of Josephine, printed in Paris in 1827, and nowhere else.

Finally, here is Jean de Vatiaguero, otherwise called St. Cesarius, printed in 1524. Listen to him: “In the year of the Lord . . . will begin the tribulations. There will occur a mortality and a pestilence that will ravage the world in a spectacular way; almost half of mankind will die in the space of sixty-five months.” The rest is a long description of wars and of disagreements that some wanted to apply to the Revolution, to the Empire, lastly, to our recent troubles; it is impossible to coordinate all these chronologically or morally. To learn in greater detail, we have to await that pestilence which is to carry off half of mankind; until then, we will belittle Jean de Vatiaguero, or at least his book.

Nevertheless, you have here the dreams that flood France and that contribute to disturb the public spirit. The ground is strewn with prophets, male and female, who peddle from one bell-tower to another some hearsay from the other world, specters emanating from their mind, and a piety that is blind to the genuine needs of nations. Notice to what end they push these mournful games: to inertia, to fatalism, to the idea that all is lost if God does not bring about a *coup d'état*. Strange men! So weak, so empty that they need God to appear in person for them to become something. They go so far as to dream of the universal destruction of all evil men — something that is contrary to everything that the Gospel and the Church have taught us about the plans of Providence, contrary to all the feelings of the Christian who has to love his enemies and to die so that they might live. Come now! If there are always evil men, then we must always be struggling against them. Yes indeed; to struggle is man, as well as life.

ENDNOTES

1. *Recueil de prédictions depuis le seizième siècle jusqu'à la consommation des temps* [Collection of predictions from the 16th century to the end of time]. Paris, Libr. catholique d'Ed. Bricon, rue du Vieux-Colombier, n° 19. — septembre 1830.

2. Three-legged bowl dedicated to the gods and given as a prize to a winner of public games: a trophy.

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