

The Antichrist *in America*



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I. Seeds of the Antichrist

In his second letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul predicted that the early Christian Church would fall away from the truth. When the church fell, the man of sin, also known as the antichrist, would rise up in the Christian church. Paul warned that Jesus would not come back until this “falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:3, 4). According to Paul, the antichrist, or man of sin, would not come from outside the church, but from within, taking control of the Christian church.

The apostle Paul went on to say that this “mystery of lawlessness is already at work” (2 Thess. 2:7). Even back in his day, Paul saw errors creeping into the church, which would open the door for the man of sin, or antichrist.

The deceptions entering the Christian church started out very gradual and moved in secret at first, but as time passed and the influence of the pagans gained control over the Christians, the deceptions became more open. “The mystery of iniquity” continued to move forward with its deceptive work, and pagan teachings began creeping into the Christian church. For a while, these teachings went unnoticed by most Christians.

Since the Roman armies persecuted Christians during the early centuries, this persecution protected

the church from mingling with the Romans for a short time, but after the persecution stopped, the Christians slowly began to unite with the pagans of Rome.

Many Christians were excited when the Roman Emperor Constantine claimed to be converted to Christianity in the early fourth century, but it turned out to be more of a curse to the church than a blessing. At that time, the pagans, who appeared to be good people, but were not fully converted, entered the Christian church. And from that time on, the church slowly became more and more corrupt.

Even though it seemed like paganism had disappeared, it was more predominant than ever within the church. The doctrines of paganism, the ceremonies they practiced, and their superstitious beliefs all made their way into the Christian church.

This compromise between paganism and Christianity resulted in the development of “the man of sin,” which the apostle Paul said would come into the church. He said this man of sin would oppose and exalt himself above God. This gigantic system of false religion, which culminated in Roman Catholicism, was a masterpiece of Satan’s power. By uniting pagan Rome and Christianity, Satan made a seat for himself inside God’s church and was able to rule the Christian world according to his will.

One of the main doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church is that the pope is the head of the world church. Catholics teach that the pope has been given total authority over bishops and pastors all across the world.

More than this, the pope has been given the very title of God Himself. He calls himself, “Lord God the Pope.” The people were taught to look to the pope as their mediator. They claim that the pope is infallible and say that when he speaks for the church, his words are the very words of God Himself; That he, in essence, is God on earth and worthy of worship.

Through this deception, the church transferred faith from Christ to the pope. Instead of placing trust in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and salvation, the people were led to look to the pope, the priests, and those given authority by the pope. They were taught that the pope was their earthly mediator and that no one could approach God except through him. They claim that he stands in the place of God to them and must be obeyed as God.

In spite of their claims, nowhere in the Bible does it say that any man has been appointed to be the head of the church. In fact, Jesus Himself said, “Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven” (Matt. 23:9). That is, we are not to call anyone ‘father’ in a spiritual sense. How ironic that the Catholic Church does just that. The doctrine of papal authority goes against the plain teachings of the Bible.

Since the Bible would expose their errors, the Roman Catholic Church knew that its sacred truths must be concealed and suppressed. So for hundreds of years, the circulation of the Bible was prohibited. The people were forbidden to read it or have it in their houses, while unprincipled priests and leaders interpreted its teachings in order to support their own

ideas. As a result, the pope eventually became almost universally acknowledged as God on earth, endowed with authority over church and state.

The pope had become the world's dictator. Kings and emperors bowed down to the decrees of the Roman pontiff. The destinies of men seemed to be under their control forever. For hundreds of years, the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church were fully and meticulously obeyed, all of its rituals were reverently performed, and all of its festivals were commonly observed, while its clergy was highly honored and well paid. The Catholic Church has never since attained to as great a level of dignity, magnificence, or power as it had during the middle ages.

But "the noon of the papacy was the midnight of the world" (J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, b. 1, Ch. 4). While the church thrived, the Bible was almost entirely unknown, not only to the people, but even to the priests. Like the Pharisees of old times, the religious leaders of the Catholic Church hated the light that revealed their sins, and once God's word was removed, the church was able to exercise power without limit. They practiced whatever sin they desired without restraint.

The palaces of popes and bishops were often filled with the most sinful practices. Some of the reigning popes were guilty of crimes so horrible that even secular rulers viewed them as monsters too wicked to be tolerated. For centuries a moral and intellectual paralysis had fallen on the Christian church.

II. False Doctrines Creep In

As the centuries passed, the errors that came into the church from the Roman Empire increased. Many who claimed to be converted clung to their pagan philosophy, claiming that mixing their pagan teachings with church doctrines could help extend their influence among the Romans. As a result of their union with the pagans of Rome, serious errors were brought into the church. Among these were the doctrines of saint worship, prayers for the dead, the rosary, celibacy of the priesthood, purgatory, daily Mass, the sale of indulgences, priestly confession, the doctrine of the immaculate conception, canonizing dead saints, and other false teachings that are not supported by the Bible.

Over time, the errors being brought into the Catholic Church became progressively worse. One of the errors, as predicted by prophecy, was that the church would “intend to change times and law” (Dan. 7:25). It wasn’t long before the church attempted this change. Since the pagans worshipped idols, to make it easier for the pagans of Rome to adapt to the Christian religion, the church substituted pagan idols for statues of saints, like St. Peter and the Virgin Mary.

Catholics still worship idols and saints today, but because the Bible forbids idolatry, the Catholic Church removed the second commandment right out of the Ten Commandments, then divided the tenth commandment into two parts to keep the consistent number—ten. This explains why, in many of their

Catechisms, the Catholic Church still has a different set of Ten Commandments than that of Protestant churches, as well as those found in the Bible.

Besides removing the second commandment regarding idolatry, the Catholic Church also tried to change the fourth commandment. Because the pagans worshipped the sun on the first day of the week, in order to make the transition to Christianity easier, some of the church leaders proposed to change the day of worship from Saturday, the day God Himself blessed and sanctified (Genesis 2:2, 3), for the pagan day of worship, which was Sunday, “the venerable day of the sun.” Of course, this change was not made suddenly or openly at first, but subtly and gradually.

In the first centuries, even after the apostles died off, historians record that the early Christians continued to worship on Saturday. They believed that the Ten Commandments were unchangeable and passionately upheld God’s law, but Satan worked very subtly through the church leaders to bring about a change in attitude against the law of God.

In order to introduce the idea of worshipping on Sunday, church leaders decided to make Sunday a festival in honor of the resurrection of Christ. Soon, both Saturday and Sunday were considered holy days. The day of the sun was worshipped by pagans and honored by Christians, and the Sabbath was still sacredly observed. But while Sunday was often observed as a joyful celebration, hatred towards the Jews led Christians to observe the Sabbath as a day of fasting, sadness, and gloom.

The Jewish association with the Sabbath led Christians to look upon God's holy day with contempt, while Sunday continued to grow in popularity until the early part of the fourth century. At that time, the emperor, Constantine, issued a law, officially making Sunday a public festival throughout Rome, eventually punishing those who refused to honor Sunday as a holy day.

Still, in spite of all the efforts to promote Sunday as the new Sabbath, the Catholic leaders knew that the seventh day was the Sabbath of God, while Sunday was a man-made institution. In the sixteenth century, a church council openly admitted, "Let all Christians remember that the seventh day was consecrated by God, and hath been received and observed, not only by the Jews but by all others who pretend to worship God; though we Christians have changed their Sabbath into the Lord's Day" (Thomas Morer, *Discourse in Six Dialogues on the Name, Notion, and Observance of the Lord's Day*, pages 281, 282).

Those who were tampering with God's law knew clearly what they had done. In the very heart of God's law, the fourth commandment declares, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work" (Ex. 20:8-10). In spite of this, the early Catholic Church tampered with God's law in order to appeal to the pagans of Rome.

Through the change of the Sabbath, Satan succeeded in exalting himself "above all that is called

God or that is worshiped” (2 Thess. 2:4). He had dared to change the only commandment that clearly points all people to the true and living God. In the fourth commandment, God is revealed as the Creator of “the heavens and the earth” (Ex. 20:11). In this, God is distinguished from all the other gods.

God, Himself set aside the seventh day as a holy day, a day to rest and spend time with the Creator in worship. It was a memorial of the creation of the world. It was supposed to be a constant reminder that God is our Life-giver and to strengthen our relationship with Him, but Satan is constantly trying to turn our minds away from God. He is constantly working to turn people against the law of God, and he has made a special effort to destroy the commandment that points to God as the Creator.

Today, even Protestants claim that the Christian Sabbath was changed to Sunday in honor of the resurrection of Jesus, but there is no evidence of this change in the Bible. Nowhere in the Bible does it talk about Jesus or the apostles giving Sunday this kind of honor. Throughout the New Testament, we find Paul and the apostles “in the synagogue every Sabbath” (Acts 18:4). The observance of Sunday as a Christian institution was the result of the “mystery of lawlessness” making its way into the church (2 Thess. 2:7). This and other gradual errors began to creep into the church as a result of the union of Christianity with the pagan Roman Empire.

III. The Rise and Reign of the Antichrist

The union of Christianity and Rome was not only predicted by Paul, but it was also foretold in the book of Revelation. Revelation 12:1-10 reveals in prophecy a dragon seeking to destroy Christ at His birth. While the “dragon” represents Satan (Rev. 12:9), we find, historically, that Satan was working through Rome, using the Roman Empire as a tool to try and kill the baby Jesus when He was born, to crucify Him on the cross, and to even attack God’s people during the first centuries of the Christian era. So we see that while this dragon in prophecy represents Satan, it more specifically represents Satan working through the Roman Empire.

Immediately following the prophecy of Revelation 12, we see a seven-headed beast arising in Revelation 13:1-10. A “beast” is a symbol of a “kingdom” (Dan. 7:23). The prophecy identifies the antichrist as a kingdom like a leopard, and we are told that the “dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority” (Rev. 13:2). Since the dragon represents Rome, then whoever succeeded the Roman Empire must represent the kingdom that received its power, seat, and authority from the Roman Empire.

Any student of history can tell you that the Christian era succeeded the fall of Rome, led by the Roman Catholic Church. The prophecy goes on to say that this kingdom is “worshiped,” which means it must be a religious kingdom (Rev. 13:4). These clues clearly depict the Christian era when popes ruled the world. Because these and other identifying marks are

so clear, all Protestant churches at one time identified the Roman Catholic Church as the antichrist. The first to present this revelation was Martin Luther.

Luther was a faithful Catholic who eventually entered the priesthood. In the providence of God, he was led to visit Rome, where he saw firsthand the sins that existed among the clergy. He heard the lewd jokes from the priests and was filled with horror at the profanity, even during Mass. As Luther continued to study his Bible, identifying the many errors that had crept into the church since the days of Christ, he was finally constrained to confess, "I know that the pope is antichrist" (*History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, D'Aubigne, b. 6, ch. 9).

In the October 31, 1999 issue of *Newsweek* magazine, Kenneth Woodward states, "Martin Luther was the first to identify the papacy as such with the Antichrist. At first, he discounted the value of John's Apocalypse. But then he saw in it a revelation of the Church of Rome as the deceiving Antichrist who secretly served Satan. For him, the papacy was the 'synagogue of Satan' and 'the kingdom of Babylon and of the true Antichrist'—a view that was to become dogma for all Protestant churches."

The prophecies of the Bible pointed so clearly to the Catholic Church as the antichrist that all Protestant churches eventually accepted this teaching. In fact, the very term 'Protestant' derived from Christians protesting the Catholic Church and identifying her as the antichrist. This became such common knowledge among Protestants that one historian writes, "By 1641, a clergyman could be

denounced to Parliament for declaring that the pope was not Antichrist” – (Eugen Weber, *Apocalypses*, Harvard University Press, p. 77).

Only Roman Catholicism fulfilled the prophecy of the beast of Revelation which succeeded to the power, seat, and authority once held by ancient Rome. This fact was made more evident by the horrible atrocities committed by the church during the middle ages. As the prophecy notes, “it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation” (Rev. 13:7).

As the church grew in power, anyone who refused to accept her teachings was subject to the most severe punishment. The church, united with paganism, invented instruments of torture to compel her members to obey her teachings. Church leaders studied how they could torture people for as long as possible without actually killing them. Often, people were tortured to the very worst extreme that they could possibly endure. This was repeated over and over until their body finally gave up and was taken by death as a sweet release from the pain. This was often the fate of those who disobeyed the church.

The prophecy says that “he was given authority to continue for forty-two months” (Rev. 13:5). Since there were thirty days in each month at the time this was written, and in Bible prophecy, one day equals one year, “a day for each year” (Eze. 4:6), this prophecy refers to the 1,260-year reign of the Catholic Church. However, before this period could begin, something had to occur.

When the Catholic Church attempted to unite with the Roman Empire, three Aryan tribes opposed the union. These three tribes had to be conquered, or “plucked out,” before the Rome-Catholic union could officially begin (Dan. 7:8). The Ostrogoths, the last of these tribes, were overthrown in 538 A.D. when the Catholic Church took control of the world, beginning the 1,260-year reign of terror.

During this time, Christians were forced to yield their integrity and accept the teachings of the church or be locked up to waste away their lives in dungeons, die a cruel and agonizing death on the stretcher, be beheaded, or suffer some other terrible fate. Persecution now opened against God’s faithful followers like never before. The world became a vast battlefield, and for over one thousand years, the true followers of Christ hid in mountains, caves, and secret places on the earth to survive, in fulfillment of the prophecy, which says, “the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (Rev. 12:6), or 1,260 years.

This reign, which started in 538, continued for exactly 1,260 years, lasting until the year 1798, when the French General Berthier, under the orders of Napoleon, marched into Rome and took the pope captive, taking the keys of the Roman Empire from the church, removing her political power, and fulfilling the prophecy of Revelation 13:10, which states, “He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword.”

IV. America in Prophecy

After the Catholic Church was taken into captivity in 1798, the prophecy introduces another beast, saying, “I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb” (Rev. 13:11). We know that “beasts” in prophecy represent kingdoms or nations (See Dan. 7:17, 23), but the appearance of this beast, and the way it rises to power, reveal that this nation is unlike any of those that have come up before it.

The four great kingdoms that ruled the world, which were prophesied in Daniel 7, were symbolized as violent beasts of prey, like the lion, leopard, bear, and dragon. These were seen rising when “the four winds of the heaven were stirring up the Great Sea” (Dan. 7:2). These waters, we are told, represent “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” (Rev. 17:15), while winds are a symbol of war or conflict. The four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea represent the terrible wars, conquests, and revolutions that brought the previous kingdoms to power.

However, this second beast does not come up like a beast of prey, but “like a lamb.” It is not seen coming up out of the water, which represents an already established group of people, but “out of the earth.” That means, instead of igniting a rebellion to overthrow a government in order to take control, this nation rises up in a land that was not previously established by a government. This new nation cannot arise among the crowded and struggling nations of the Old World, that turbulent sea of “peoples, and

multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” It must have risen to power in the Western Continent.

Once more, this nation arises with “two horns like a lamb.” Since a lamb in the Bible represents Christ, this nation must have the appearance of a Christian nation.

What nation of the New World was rising to power around the year 1798, as a Christian nation, giving promise of strength and greatness and attracting the world’s attention? The symbols point to only one possible answer. One nation and only one meets the specifications of this prophecy. It points unmistakably to the United States of America.

The rise and growth of America have often been described as “coming up out of the earth.” The words “coming up” literally mean “to grow or spring up as a plant.” And, as we have seen, this nation must arise in a previously unoccupied territory. While small tribes roamed through certain portions of the land, America was a previously unestablished nation that rapidly rose to power.

“And he had two horns like a lamb.” The two lamb-like horns not only show the youth and innocence of the United States as it was “coming up” in 1798, but also the two fundamental principles of government upon which it was founded—Republicanism and Protestantism. These principles are the secret of its power and prosperity. The Constitution of America guarantees the right of self-government to the people, providing freedom of religion to all those oppressed and weary pilgrims who seek its shores.

It would be nice if the story of the lamb-like beast ended on a happy note, but we are soon told that, while the second beast rose like a lamb, he then “spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed... telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived” (Rev. 13:11-14).

The lamb-like horns and dragon voice of the symbol stand in striking contradiction to the profession and practice of this nation. While rising like a lamb, this nation would eventually speak like a dragon. This “speaking” represents the action of its legislative and judicial authorities. How else could a nation speak or communicate with its people other than through its laws? According to the prophecy, the lamb-like beast will eventually violate those liberal and peaceful principles that are guaranteed in its Constitution.

The prediction that it will speak “like a dragon” and exercise “all the authority of the first beast” points forward to the spirit of intolerance and persecution that existed in the previous nations, represented by the dragon and the leopard-like beast.

The fact that this beast with two horns “causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast” shows the authority that this nation will exercise in the near future. Since we are told that this nation causes the entire earth to worship the first beast, then this nation, which rises late in history,

must rise quickly, and become a leading superpower that strongly influences the entire world. While America's influence over the world has continued to grow rapidly, we are told that this nation will soon enforce some kind of religious observance, which will be an act of honor to the first beast, the Roman Catholic Church. This act will be directly contrary to the principles of government that America was founded on. It will go against its free institutional policies, the Declaration of Independence, and will violate the very Constitution of the United States.

In the Constitution, the founders of America tried to guard the nation against the rise of such a law. The separation of church and state was to secure the people from being subject to religious laws, which would result in intolerance and persecution. To protect from this kind of oppression, the Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," and that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office of public trust under the United States." The only way for the government to force any kind of religious observance would be to first violate these safeguards to the nation's liberty, but the very symbol of America in prophecy shows us that this is exactly what will happen. America is represented by a beast having lamb-like horns—in profession pure and gentle—but speaking like a dragon.

V. The Mark of the Beast

Prophecy tells us that the first beast, the United States of America, will eventually tell “those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast” of Catholicism (Rev. 13:14). America will then cause “all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark” (Rev. 13:16, 17).

According to prophecy, the lamb-like beast of America will unite with the Catholic Church, led by the pope, to enforce some form of worship. The “image to the [Catholic] beast” points forward to a time when the Protestant churches of America will unite with the government to enforce a religious law. Since this law comes from the image made to the first beast, this religious law that is being pushed must originate from Catholicism.

This religious law must also go against God’s law, the Ten Commandments, since the prophecy contrasts those who receive “the mark” with “those who keep the commandments of God” (Rev. 14:11, 12). If those who receive the mark are against those who keep the Ten Commandments, then the mark of the beast must be a religious law that conflicts with one of God’s Ten Commandments, similar to the laws enacted in the time of Daniel (See Dan. 3, 6).

Once more, this issue revolves around worship. The prophecy speaks of those who “worship the first beast” and those who “worship the image” (Rev. 13:12, 15). Since the first four commandments refer

to how we worship God, while the last six commandments relate to how we treat our fellow man, this religious law, enforced over the issue of worship, must go against one of the first four commandments. That means, according to the prophecy, those who worship the image of the beast will be breaking one of the first four commandments.

In order to find out what this image of the beast is that leads to the mark, all we have to do is identify the special characteristic of the beast that conflicts with one of the first four commandments. This characteristic is given to us in the parallel prophecy of the little horn, where we are told that the Catholic Church “shall intend to change times and law” (Daniel 7:25). Paul also referred to this same power as the “man of sin,” who would exalt himself above God. The Catholic Church exalted herself above God by changing God’s law. By changing one of God’s commands, the Catholic Church put its own power and authority above the authority of God.

When changing the law of God, the Catholic Church excused removing the second commandment, claiming it is not needed because the same command is essentially included in the first commandment. Since the church claims that the removal of the second commandment has not changed the meaning of the law, this cannot be the change that the prophet Daniel was referring to. The prophecy says he shall “intend to change times and law.” That means the law in question will be an intentional change. The change of the fourth commandment exactly fulfills this prophecy. The only reason given by Catholics for

changing the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday is the authority of the church. In their own writings, they admit, “We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church in the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 336) transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday” (Rev. Peter Geiermann, *The Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, pg. 50). In doing this, the Catholic Church placed herself above God.

Catholics admit that the change of the Sabbath was made by their church and argue that Protestants, by observing Sunday, are recognizing her power. Again, in their own writings, they boast, “The Catholic Church for over one thousand years before the existence of a Protestant, by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday” (*Catholic Mirror*, Sept. 1893). They did this openly, boldly stating that “from the beginning to the end of scripture there is not a single passage that warrants the transfer of the weekly public worship from the last day of the week to the first” (*Catholic Press*, Aug. 25, 1900). Here, the Catholic Church admits that they changed the day without any Bible support, adding, “Sunday is our mark of authority... the church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact” (*Catholic Record of London, Ontario*, Sept. 1, 1923).

The church has plainly stated that the change of the Sabbath is the sign, or mark, of the authority of the Catholic Church – “the mark of the beast.”

As men reject the Sabbath, which God has declared to be the “sign” of His authority (Exodus 31:13), and instead honor the man-made day, which

Roman Catholicism has chosen as the token of her supremacy, they are accepting the sign of allegiance to Rome—"the mark of the beast." When the issue is plainly set before the people, they will be made to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. At that time, those who continue in transgression will receive the mark of the beast.

Up to now, those who warned against Sunday laws as the mark of the beast have been called extremists. Predictions that America would once again establish religious Sunday enforcement laws which ignite persecution, as they had in early American history, have been called unreasonable and absurd.

While many confidently declare that America could never become other than what it has been, a defender of religious freedom, our freedoms are quickly fading, and there are movements taking place even now which are pushing for the enforcement of Sunday observance.

As the question of reviving Sunday laws again resurfaces and the event that so many have doubted and disbelieved is seen approaching, many will begin to wake up from their spiritual slumber and cry out against these laws. By these warnings, the people will be stirred. Thousands will listen who have never heard warnings like these before, but as the people go to their teachers and pastors, asking if these things are true, the ministers will prophesy smooth things, giving them a false assurance in order to soothe their fears and quiet their awakened consciences.

VI. Test of Loyalty

In Revelation 17, we find an extension of the antichrist beast. Here we see the same seven-headed beast of Rome led by a harlot woman, symbolic of an apostate or fallen church (See Ezekiel 16:25-30). The woman, named Babylon, is charged with committing adultery with “the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17:2), representing the union of the Catholic Church with the pagan Roman Empire.

Babylon, “that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17:18), is also called a “mother of harlots” (Rev. 17:5). If she is a mother church, she must have daughters who came out of her. Ironically, the Catholic Church refers to herself as the mother church, making the Protestant churches that came out from the mother church her babies.

Tragically, the prophecy tells us that the Protestant daughters that come out of Catholicism also become harlots, clinging to some of her doctrines and traditions while sacrificing truth in order to form an alliance with Catholicism.

For many years in Protestantism, there has been a strong movement to unite all churches on common points of doctrine. Today, Catholics are regarded by Protestants with far greater favor than in the past. There is a growing indifference concerning the doctrines that separate the Protestant churches from Catholicism. Now, many are saying that Protestants and Catholics are not as different on the main points of doctrine as we thought they were, and that a little

compromise between the two groups would bring a better understanding of the Catholic Church.

There is a good reason why many people claim that the Catholic churches are not much different than the Protestant churches that once started the Reformation. There has been a change, but the change is not in the Catholic Church. Catholicism is very similar to many of the Protestant churches of today because the Protestant churches have spiritually declined since the days of the reformers.

Protestants used to place a high value on the freedom of conscience, which was so dearly purchased by the blood, sweat, and tears of those early reformers. The early Protestants taught their children not to hate Catholics, but to hate the doctrines and theological differences of Roman Catholicism. Protestants today are completely the opposite. Many defend the Catholic Church, claiming that the church has been misrepresented, and most of the Protestant world is inclined to accept this statement as true. Many argue that it is unfair to judge the Catholic Church by the violent and torturous crimes it committed during the past centuries. They excuse her horrible cruelty as the result of the barbarism of the times and claim that the influence of modern civilization has changed her.

Have these Protestants forgotten the claim of infallibility that the Catholic Church has held for hundreds of years? This claim is still affirmed today with greater force than ever. According to the doctrine of papal infallibility, which the church still holds, the “church never erred; nor will it, according

to the Scriptures, ever err” (John L. von Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*, book 3, century II, part 2, chapter 2, section 9, note 17). As long as Catholicism holds the doctrine of Papal infallibility, how can she renounce the principles which governed her course in past ages?

The Catholic Church will never give up her claim to infallibility. She still believes that she has done the right thing in persecuting those who rejected her teachings, and if the restraints of secular governments that now hold her back were removed, and the Catholic Church was reinstated to the same power that she had during the Dark Ages, we would see a speedy revival of her tyranny and persecution.

The Catholic Church now presents herself to the world as humble, covering up her horrible record of cruel and violent persecution with apologies. She has clothed herself in Christ-like garments, but she is unchanged. Every principle of Catholicism that existed in the past still exists today. They still hold the same doctrines that they devised in the darkest ages. Christians should not deceive themselves. The Catholic Church that Protestants are now so ready to honor is no different than the church that ruled the world in the days of the Reformation when men of God stood up in the face of death to expose her sins.

Today, many of the leading churches of the United States are attempting to unite on the points of doctrine that are held in common. When these churches influence the state to enforce their decrees and sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image of the Roman Catholic

head, and the infliction of civil penalties upon those who violate these laws will inevitably result.

In movements now taking place in America, by the state supporting the church, Protestants are following in the steps of Catholicism. In fact, in doing this, they are opening the door for Catholicism to regain the control and power she lost in the Old World right here, in Protestant America. Even more dangerous is the fact that one of the things they are trying to use as common ground is the movement to institute Sunday as a day of rest for society, the very day instituted by the Catholic Church, which she claims is a sign of her authority.

While Rome is still trying to re-establish her power as the universal head over the world, many Protestants are working behind the scenes to help Catholicism bring back Sunday worship in America, not realizing the dangers to religious liberty this movement will result in. In establishing Sunday laws, the Catholic Church will gain control once again, and the Protestant world will then see that Rome has never really changed. Only then, it will be too late.

The Protestant churches that are following Rome's example are appropriately labeled by God as "Babylon," which means confusion. These churches, claiming to follow the Bible and the Bible only, are divided into countless groups, with a mass confusion of conflicting theories. It is for this reason that the urgent message must go into the churches of Babylon, calling to God's faithful followers, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

VII. The Great Tribulation

Now the Sabbath becomes the main point of controversy throughout the Christian world. Religious and secular authorities unite to enforce the observance of Sunday. The small minority of Christians who refuse to give in to popular demand now gain the attention of the world. Their persistent refusal to keep Sunday as the Sabbath makes them objects of universal hatred.

Calamity strikes the earth, and those who honor the law of God are accused of bringing God's judgments on the earth. They are blamed for the violent outbursts of nature, as well as the wars and bloodshed that fill the earth. The warning message given by God's faithful people enrages the wicked. Their anger is stirred against all who have accepted the truth about the Sabbath and the call to come out of Babylon, and Satan now ignites hatred in their hearts, as persecution breaks out like never before.

As the Sunday enforcement movement becomes bolder, laws are brought against God's people. They are threatened with fines and imprisonment, but the public will demand that the small group who opposes the national Sunday law not be tolerated, claiming that it is better to lose a few than for the entire nation to suffer. As a result, a decree will be issued against those who keep the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, demanding harsher punishment. Finally, the wicked are given the liberty to kill all those who violate the false Sabbath.

When the protection of human laws is taken away from those who honor the true Sabbath, there will be a simultaneous movement all across the world to kill these Sabbath-keepers. As the appointed time of the death decree approaches, the people will prepare to destroy the small group of faithful Christians in a single night, so they can finally silence the voices that spoke against their sins.

As they wait, the people of God—decaying in prison cells or hiding in solitary retreats in the forests and mountains—plead for God’s protection. In every land, groups of armed men, urged on by evil angels, prepare to hunt and kill this faithful remnant.

When the death decree becomes official, the wicked prepare to attack, as shouts of triumph echo throughout the land. Now, great crowds of evil men get ready to attack their prey when suddenly darkness covers the land, deeper than the darkness of night, followed by a brilliant rainbow. At midnight deliverance finally comes. Through the darkness, the sun appears, shining in its full strength. Strange signs follow this blinding light.

Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man’s hand. It is the cloud that surrounds the Savior. In silence, the people of earth stare at the sky as the cloud comes closer to the earth. It grows brighter and more glorious until it consumes the sky. As the cloud comes nearer, every eye watches Jesus return with bated breath. Now, all faces are “turned pale” (Jer. 30:6). Those who have for so long rejected God’s mercy are gripped with the terror of eternal despair.

It is impossible to describe the horror and anguish of those who have trampled on God's holy law. God gave them His law to compare it with their characters, so they could learn their own defects of character while there was time for repentance and opportunity for change. The purpose of the law was to point out our sin, leading us to repent and turn to Christ for help to overcome, but the pastors and church leaders have ignored the principles of God's law, teaching others to break it as well. They have worked to teach people to ignore God's holy Sabbath day.

The enemies of God's law, from the ministers down to the most common, suddenly understand the right relation of the law. They see that the Ten Commandments were not to be ended under the new covenant, but to be held up even higher. They see that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment was the sign between God and His people, and realize that by downplaying God's law and upholding the false Sabbath, they have been fighting against God. But this insight comes too late.

While believing they were leading people to Christ, religious teachers actually led souls away from God to eternal loss. We will not fully see how great the responsibility of those pastors and church leaders in holy offices was, or how terrible the results of their unfaithfulness were, until the Day of Judgment. Only in eternity will we be able to properly estimate the loss of a single soul. How fearful it will be to hear the words of God, "Depart, you wicked servant."

As Christ approaches, those who were so recently mocking God now beg Him to be buried beneath the rocks of the mountains rather than to meet the One whom they have so long hated and rejected. At this time, even the righteous cry out with trembling voices, “Who shall be able to stand?” The song of the surrounding angels stops, and there is a period of terrible silence. Then the voice of Jesus finally breaks the silence with the words, “My grace is sufficient for you.” The faces of the righteous light up. Joy fills every heart. The angels strike a note higher and sing again as they continue to come closer to the earth.

The earth shakes, lightning flashes, and thunder roars, as the voice of Jesus calls to those who have died in Christ, “Awake, awake, awake, ye that sleep in the dust, and arise!” From the prison-house of death, they come, now clothed with immortality, crying, “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory” (1 Cor. 15:55)?

All the righteous living are now changed “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52). At the voice of God, they are glorified. They are made immortal and are carried up with the risen saints to meet their Lord in the air. Those separated by death are finally united, never to part again. With songs of gladness, they are taken up together to the City of God, as Jesus welcomes His faithful ones, with unutterable joy, into the presence of the Lord.

The following book has been adapted and abridged from the larger book, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, by Ellen White. Starting with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., this book carries you down through the trials that entered the early Christian Church, the eventual falling away of the church, as predicted by the apostle Paul, the errors that would creep into the church as a result, and the rise of the Reformers who stood up against these errors. Exposing the deceptive doctrines that have made their way down through history, even to our present day, this book goes on to explain the prophecies of Revelation with a clarity like you've never seen, revealing end time deceptions that await just on the horizon for God's people, in order to prepare us for the soon return of Jesus Christ. Don't be caught off guard. Get your complete copy of *The Great Controversy* today so you can be prepared for the coming events. For your copy of the complete book, visit our website at www.hopetracts.com.

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