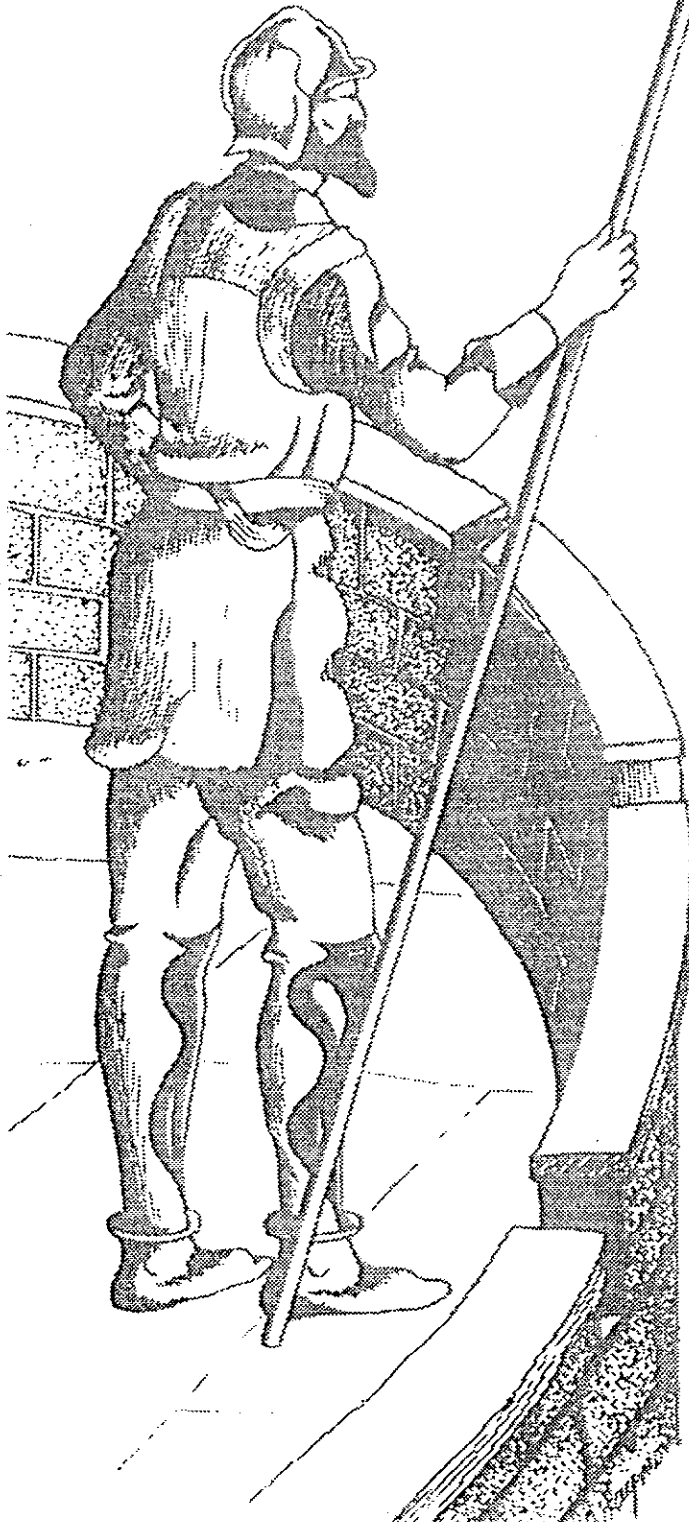


"Watchman, what of the night?"

"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
the hour and the end!"

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)



AntiChrist

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REVELATION 17 IN CONTEXT

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Editor's Preface

The Lawsuit won by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Miami this year has become fodder for the gristmill of the "historic" Adventists. Raphael Perez has been catapulted into prominence. The surface issue is the use of the name, Seventh-day Adventist. But behind it is the question, "Is the Church still proclaiming the long held prophetic interpretation concerning the Papacy, or have they denied the historic faith?" While great store has been placed in the name, Seventh-day Adventist, because of its approval through the Messenger of the Lord, other counsel as to how the message is to be presented has been ignored. The warning against trying to "jump start" a crisis has been flaunted, and now we are to see a continuing legal battle which will absorb thousands of dollars with little or no prospect of winning. The "historics" condemned the Church for spending money in legal cases, and now are launching their own legal counter attacks. Is this not the "pot" calling the "kettle" black?

Connected with this controversy is the use of prophetic symbolisms in the book of Revelation. The Protestant interpretation of Revelation 17 is vividly portrayed in full page advertisements. It is true that Luther so interpreted the woman riding the beast as the Papacy when he broke with Rome. Is this still a valid perspective, or do we need to look carefully into the context in which the symbolism is placed in the book of Revelation? In the second article, we have sought to direct attention to this context and what it indicates.

There are two approaches to the identification of the anti-Christ of Scripture as the Papacy. One is by the things she did - persecution of the saints, blasphemy against God, and the attempt to change times and laws. The second is the blurring of the Gospel, which is termed the Tridentine Gospel of Rome. This is in direct contrast to the Gospel given to Paul by Jesus Christ Himself. The tragedy is that this contrast of "gospels" is not stressed by those so eager to challenge the Church in newspaper spreads. Why?

The Antichrist

As I prepare to write this special issue of WWN, I have before me three documents: 1) A two-page (red and black) newspaper spread captioned - "Earth's Final Hour" published by the Eternal Gospel Church of Seventh-day Adventists of West Palm Beach, Florida; 2) A one page newspaper spread with the same caption, but with a variant content, prepared by the Sweetwater Seventh Day Adventist Church of Athens, Tennessee; and 3) The *Adventist Review* (May 25, 2000) which carried as its cover story under "Anchor Points" a discussion of "The Anti-Christ" asking the question - "Is the Adventist Interpretation Still Viable?" This *Adventist Review* article was written by Dr. Woodrow W. Whidden of Andrews University.

The basic factors in these three documents have been over-shadowed, and somewhat ignored because of a Federal Court case filed by the Church against Raphael Perez, pastor of the West Palm Beach Church over the use of the Church's name by his break away group. The Church asked that Perez and his congregation remove the name, "Seventh-day Adventist," from their church's designation. Perez refused, claiming the name was chosen by God and given by the authority of the Spirit of Prophecy. In the legal suit that followed, the Court upheld the Church and ordered the name to be removed. Perez complied. While he would not heed the demand of the Church, he bowed to the demand of the Federal Government speaking through its judicial system.

At this point the issue is simple. Do we refuse to bow to the request of the Church, but when the State speaks, we submit? What message is this sending as to how one is to react in the coming confrontation prophesied in Revelation? Does this not dilute the force of the message which the newspaper ad sought to convey? True Perez has appealed the court's ruling, and is counter suing the Church as to the Trademark status claimed by the Church. Did Jesus appeal the decision of Pilate? Did He seek to initiate before Pilate a counter suit protesting the Jewish Sanhedrin's claim to sole ecclesiastical authority in Judaism? You respond, that this was not possible, and thus are moot ques-

tions. However, if moot they are, there is still before us the example of Jesus in His advise to the leper (Matt. 8:4), and the counsel to Peter (Matt. 17:27). It is true that at the time Jesus gave this counsel, the Jewish Church with its leadership had not crossed the line drawn by the Angel Gabriel in his explanation of a prophetic vision given to Daniel (9:24).

Reports coming to this office is that Perez intends to fight the Church all the way to the Supreme Court with every indication that he will loose. This will take much financial resources which could be devoted to a better cause; yet we condemned the Church for expending the same, when they initiated the original suit. Now does the fact that Perez is doing it, justify it? Is this merely a way to continue to harass the Church and obtain some more publicity? Even Michael did not harass the devil, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee," and went about His objective to resurrect Moses (Jude 9). It is one thing to harass apostasy; it is another thing to expose it; and then let people make the proper decision regarding their continued relationship to it.

Overlooked Counsel

In the controversy over the use of the name, Seventh-day Adventist, great store was placed in the fact that God approved the name, and conveyed this choice through "the Messenger of the Lord." Also involved in the confrontation between Perez and the Church was the message which should be proclaimed and emphasized in the evangelistic thrust of the Church. This brings us to the first document listed in the beginning paragraph - "Earth's Final Warning." The introduction consists of three paragraphs quoted from the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 976. This is a secondary source notation, not the primary source from which these paragraphs were taken. The primary source are the Writings of Ellen G. White. This is directly contrary to the counsel she gave. It reads:

The testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front. God's Word is the unerring standard. The Testimonies are not to take the place of the Word. (Letter 12, 1890)

And again:

Our position and faith is in the Bible. And never do we

want any soul to bring in the Testimonies ahead of the Bible. (Ms. 7, 1894; emphasis supplied)

This is exactly what Perez has done not only in quoting the Writings of Ellen G. White as an introduction, but also throughout the two page article. This is flouting what Ellen White said should "never" be done. "Our position and faith is in the Bible." So be it! There let it rest.

At this point another question surfaces. Why the cover up of the source of the paragraphs by using a secondary documentation? Was this an endeavor to embarrass the Church? It is true that certain evangelists for the Church have openly denied the position which the Church has held in regard to Catholicism. It is also true that the leadership of the Church has not been happy with other advertising Perez has done including the newspaper ad under discussion. But is this the proper approach so as to bring the church to accountability with truth? In other words, to whom was this advertising really aimed? If I should flaunt a red flag in front of a bull should I be surprised at the reaction that I will obtain?

There is some other counsel that we should note before turning to an analysis of the article itself. In a testimony counselling restraint of expression, we read:

The time will come when unguarded expressions of a denunciatory character, that have been carelessly spoken or written by our brethren, will be used by our enemies to condemn us. These will not be used to merely condemn those who made the statement, but will be charged upon the whole body of Adventists . . . Many will be surprised to hear their own words strained into a meaning that they did not intend them to have. Then let our workers be careful to speak guardedly at all times and under all circumstances. Let us beware lest by reckless expressions they bring on a time of trouble before the great crisis which is to try men's souls.

The less we make direct charges against authorities and powers, the greater work we shall be able to accomplish both in America and in foreign countries. (emphasis supplied) . . .

It is our work to magnify and exalt the law of God. The truth of God's holy word is to be made manifest. We are to hold up the Scriptures as the rule of life. In all modesty, in the spirit of grace, and in the love of God, we are to point men to the fact that the Lord God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and that the seventh day is the

Sabbath of the Lord. (6T:394-395)

The Scriptures in the "Ads"

While the second ad appears to be an abridged replica of the first. there are some variations. Both give the Scriptural basis for the validity of the seventh day as the day of worship, as well as the Biblical citations of Apostolic practice in the ministry of Paul. The New Testament references of the first day of the week are also noted. But the major thrust is directed toward the Roman Catholic Church - who changed the Sabbath - as the "beast" of Revelation 13, and the "harlot" of Revelation 17. Outside of quoting from these chapters, no evidence was given that directly linked these symbols to Rome, except in the second "Earth's Final Warning" ad.

To establish beyond question the interpretation of the "beast" and "antichrist" of Bible Prophecy as the Papacy, one must first find his basis in the Book of Daniel. In Daniel 7, there is a succession of powers beginning with the symbol of a winged lion representing Babylon and moving down the course of history until the Papacy is "fingered" as "the little horn," which fulfilled the identifying marks of verse 25. Then comparing these marks of identity with the symbols in Revelation, one finds the first "beast" of chapter 13, having the same marks. However, there is in Revelation 13 a number - 666 - which can be directly applied to the Papacy. This the second ad did. The evidence behind this identification is solid and admitted by Rome itself. It should either have been concisely given, (the second ad attempted to do so), or offered to those who would send for the documentation. It is one thing to make allegations, it is another thing to give the Scriptural basis and documentation which justifies these allegations. (If someone uses the 666 evidence as given in the second ad, a "typo" should be corrected: it is "Hebrew" not "Hebron.")

Spiritual "Gorging"

When I finished college, I entered the ministry in the Texico Conference and was given as my first assignment the completion of a series of evangelistic meetings already begun in a rural area of Eastern New Mexico. The meetings on Sunday were held both in the morning and evening. The first Sunday

morning meeting after my arrival, I was given the assignment to conduct "The Trial by Jury," a unique way to present the change of the Sabbath. Needless to say, I spent the Sabbath preparing the study while the other minister rounded up a jury of nine men for the next day. That Sunday morning the local High School auditorium where the meetings were being held was well filled. The jury decision was 8 to 1 that the Papacy had changed the day of worship.

Elated over the large crowd and response, the other minister announced that at the evening meeting he would speak on the Mark of Beast. That night the attendance was even greater than in the morning. He spoke on the announced subject for three solid hours. But that was the end of the large attendance. The attendance at the meetings there after numbered in the twenties. Truth is to be presented spoonful by spoonful, in moderation; and only in the amount which can be digested at one time. We fail to realize that a presentation, to be immortal, need not be eternal. I well remember that in my youth before going to college, a saintly minister of God said to me, "William, it is just as important to know when to sit down as to stand up."

A series of ads thoughtfully prepared and arranged to add concept to concept would have been far more effective, but they would not have been as sensational. Again the motive, as to why it was done as it was done by Perez in the first instance, is suspect. What event or issue justified the all-out attack on the Papacy? True, there is obvious evidence that the "deadly wound" (Rev. 13:3) given to the beast has been healed. However, there is no evidence that a "national" Sunday Law is before Congress nor any State legislature. This is not saying that a religious crisis is not coming. But is not the advice given to the patriots, as the Battle of Bunker Hill was about to begin, good advice today? "Don't shoot until you see the whites of their eyes." When there is a concrete issue, well defined, then act with no ulterior motive, or desire for notoriety.

An Experience

At mid-century, I was serving as pastor of the First Church in Toronto, Ontario, which was then located on Awde St, a short walk from Bloor and Dufferin.

When I first assumed the pastorate in 1948, the city of Toronto was closed down completely on Sunday due to the Lord's Day Act of Canada. A year later a group of its citizens were able to bring the question of an "open" Sunday from 1 to 6 for commercialized sports to a city-wide referendum which was scheduled for January 2, 1950. In October prior to the election, the Anglican Church celebrated the 400th Anniversary of the Church of England prayer book. At a commemorative service in Toronto, Archbishop Philip Carrington of Quebec declared, "Nowhere in the Bible is it laid down that worship should be done on Sunday." (See *Bible Students' Source Book*, Vol. 9 Commentary Reference Series, art. 1589 & 1605) This propelled the religious issue in the referendum to the forefront.

What were we to do? There were negative aspects. This was a reverse Sunday question. It was not seeking to force Sunday observance, but rather to open Sunday afternoon for commercialized sports. Further, the beer producers were for the "open Sunday" which would increase their sales. To take an open stand would not place the Church in the best of company. After careful study, the Church Board voted to take a public stand and push the issue. We were encouraged by the counsel - "We should seize upon circumstances as instruments by which to work" (MH, p. 500).

One brother in the Church had a Jewish lawyer friend who helped us formulate a "\$1,000 Offer for a Bible text." It read:

The undersigned offer to pay a total reward of \$1,000 to any person or persons who can show from the Bible alone (King James Version), a single text where Christ or His disciples specifically commanded the observance of the first day of the week (Sunday) in honour of His Resurrection.

This was published in the metropolitan papers with a copy of a certified check. The previous Sabbath, I had gone before the Church with the plan and asked for their support. In less than three minutes the money was more than raised in a spontaneous outburst of enthusiasm. A series of Sunday night meetings were planned for each Sunday till the election. We began the series in the Church, but found the attendance required a larger facility, and we transferred to the Canadian Legion Auditorium located at 22 College Street, in the heart of Toronto.

The interest in the meetings, and the calls resulting from the offer became so great that the Conference brought two other ministers to the city to assist in the visitation. One, Elder O. B. Gerhart, who was connected with the Conference Bible School program, prepared a timely "news" ad headlined - "Ottawa Enacts Saturday Law." It was prepared in the setting of the Lord's Day Act amended with Saturday protected and all Sunday bans lifted. It was very effective. Two weeks before the referendum we ran each day, brief one column, Bible studies on the Sabbath question in the daily papers.

The climax came in the citywide church ads the weekend before the referendum. They covered two pages of the Toronto daily papers. Our ad noting the final lecture in the Canadian Legion Auditorium stood out as a "sore thumb" in the midst of all the others. We advertized, "Why Christians Should Vote, 'Yes'" while all the others were calling for a "No" vote. As I arrived home after the lecture, the telephone was ringing. I quickly answered, and it was the city editor of the *Globe and Mail*. He asked what I had said. I told him. He took what I had said, what an Anglican priest had suggested, and what a United Church minister advised, and wrote up an article for the Monday edition. The article was picked up by the British United Press and flashed across Canada.

We need to be ready to act when the circumstances indicate. God opens the way. We need to stick to the issues, and present just what the Bible says, no less and no more. The creation of controversy before its time only muddies up the waters and causes many sincere folk to misplace their funds on a personal ego trip, rather than on the presentation of truth as it is in Jesus. Surely the "John Osborne" interlude hasn't been so quickly forgotten. Or has it?

"Is the Adventist Interpretation Still Viable?"

This is the question asked and answered by the special article on "The Anti-Christ" in the *Adventist Review*, May 25, 2000. First, the status of the article, then some brief history. While the *Adventist Review* is no longer noted as the official organ of the Church, but rather just the "general church paper,"

it nevertheless carries the status of an official organ. This article on the Antichrist was placed as a part of the "Anchor Points" series, and was the major article of the issue. Written by Dr. Woodrow W. Whidden, a professor of religion at Andrews University, it is as an official statement of the Church's position on the subject as one can find, apart from a voted Statement by the Church in general session.

Now some brief history: In all the Statements of Belief from the first in 1872 through 1914, even including the Battle Creek Church statement which was a part of their "Church Directory" in 1894, there appeared this declaration:

That as the man of sin, the papacy, has thought to change times and laws (the laws of God), and has misled almost all of Christendom in regard to the fourth commandment, we find a prophecy of a reform in this respect to be wrought among believers just before the coming of Christ.

In the 1931 Statement, as well as the current 27 Fundamentals which were voted at Dallas, Texas, in 1980, no such statement appears. While all reference to the Papacy was removed from the Statement of Beliefs, the Evangelists and Bible Workers did not cease to teach the Biblical revelation which fingered the Papacy as the antichrist of prophecy. Having been so taught as a Baptist, it was not difficult to understand the emphasis placed by the retired Bible Worker who studied the Adventist Message with my mother and me. Such books as *The Wine of Roman Babylon* by Mary E. Walsh, a converted Catholic and well known Bible Worker, were available for reading and study. The teaching was not mitigated until after Vatican II, when some Adventist observers at the Council came back to the church with a new message.

Arthur S. Maxwell, editor of the *Signs of the Times*, and one of the observers, in a sermon given in the University Church at Loma Linda, upon his return, called for the scrapping of the old evangelistic sermons on the Papacy, and a completely new approach. (*Present Truth*, #3, p. 14). His son, the late C. Mervyn Maxwell, and "patron saint" of the Andrew University conservatives, in his commentary on the book of Daniel stated that "God purposely presented a one-sided picture of Rome as a terrible beast in order to emphasize His displeasure at persecution" (*God Cares*, Vol. 1, p. 127). Then he suggested that since "the Roman Catholic Church was

virtually *the* Christian church in Western Europe for about a thousand years," therefore, "both Protestants and Catholics may regard it as the embodiment of 'our' Christian heritage for better or for worse." (*ibid.*, emphasis his).

It is against this historical backdrop that the article in the *Adventist Review* by Dr. Whidden must be considered. He asks two questions: "What is the nature of the antichrist?" and "Has papal Rome really so changed its essential nature in the past four decades to demand that contemporary Adventism ought, in fairness, to cease and desist from its traditional prophetic interpretations?" He proposes four "litmus tests" as to how one can identify the antichrist by its teachings. The denial of: 1) The eternal authority of the ten-commandment law as an unchanging expression of the nature and will of God; 2) The gospel of justification by grace through faith alone, not by works of the law; 3) The centrality of Jesus Christ as the only "mediator" between God and humanity; and 4) When a power denies these great truths, it will ultimately seek to gain adherents by false miracles, or through compulsory force. After carefully analyzing these four "litmus tests," Dr Whidden concludes:

When these four key tests are applied to the Roman Catholic religious system, the sad but inescapable conclusion is that papal Rome is still the great power envisioned in Daniel 7 and 8; 2 Thessalonians 2; and Revelation 13. (p. 13)

The approach used by Dr. Whidden in reaching his conclusion could be called the theological "gospel" approach, the mystery of iniquity vs the mystery of godliness. To reduce it to simpler terms, it comes down to the question as to whether we are going to teach the Tridentine gospel of Rome formulated in the Council of Trent, or the Gospel as revealed to Paul, called the Pauline Gospel. In other words, we come back to the very question raised by E. J. Waggoner at the 1901 General Conference session; albeit on a different phase of the papal teaching, but very apropos:

We need to settle, every one of us, whether we are out of the church of Rome or not. There are a great many that have got the marks yet. (1901 *Bulletin*, p. 404)

Tragically, too many who are seeking to defend Perez and support his attack on the Church cannot

use the "gospel" approach in dealing with the subject of "Antichrist," because they are teaching a modified Tridentine gospel of Rome, thus having, as Waggoner would say, the "marks" of Rome themselves.

It is true, we need to take a stand; but let us see to it that the stand we take includes our "loins girt about with truth" (Eph. 6:14).

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Revelation 17

Before we enter the final confrontation, or before there are continued attempts to "jump start" the crisis, we need to take a very careful analytical look at what Revelation 17, in context, is saying. There is no question but that Luther and his associates interpreted the woman of Revelation 17 as the papacy. (See *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. II, pp. 275, 276; observe the pictorial representations from the 1534 Luther Bible) This has been the standard Protestant interpretation since that time.

However, let us take a contextual look at the overall picture. The first prophetic symbolism which represents Papal Rome is that of a beast. (Rev. 13:1-7) The representation coincides with the details given in Daniel 7 of the beasts and "little horn." The number ascribed to the first beast of Revelation - 666 - is even admitted by the Papacy. (See *Our Sunday Visitor*, Nov. 15, 1914, p. 3; April 18, 1915, p. 3) The symbolism in Revelation 17 is different. It is that of a woman sitting on "a scarlet coloured beast" (v. 3). This is not the first time that John saw this woman in the prophetic revelation. The angel which talked with John suggested, "Come hither; I will shew thee the judgment of the great whore which sitteth upon many waters" (v. 1). These "waters" were defined to him in terms of the "whore" - "the waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth" (v. 15). We are thus faced with the question, Where had John previously seen the "whore" sitting on many waters?

The angel who is instructing John is one of the angels of the seven last plagues (v. 1). The woman is declared to be "BABYLON THE GREAT" (v. 5). This leads us to the sixth plague, where the waters of the

Euphrates River, which literal Babylon spanned, are dried up (16:12). But "spiritual" Babylon's waters "are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (17:15). Again, we must reiterate a neglected factor of interpretation as applied to the Seven Last Plagues. The plagues with the exception of one - the third - are what man has done in probationary time to which God responds in judgment. For example, the mark of the beast is received during probationary time, the "noisome and grievous sore" - first plague - comes after intercession ceases (15:8).

Applied to the sixth plague, the judgment of God dries up the support of the woman sitting on the "waters" of "the great river Euphrates" (16:12). What builds this support in probationary time, and where does it center? Out of three symbols - the dragon, beast, and false prophet - come "spirits of devils" which gather the leadership of the whole world "to the battle of the great day of God Almighty (vs. 13-14). The point of assembly is defined as a "place called in the Hebrew tongue, Har-Magedon" (v. 16, ARV). But, the symbolism of Babylon does not end there. The seventh plague rends "the great city" into three parts (v. 19). The angel who is interpreting to John this symbolism declares the woman to be "that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (17:18). Thus we are brought face to face with the possibility that the woman of Revelation 17 symbolizes the Papacy at the time when the "deadly wound" is healed.

There is another factor in this array of prophetic symbolisms, that also needs to be considered. The fiery red dragon of Revelation 12 is declared to be the devil (v. 9). It has "seven heads and ten horns" (v. 3). The "beast" of Revelation 17 likewise has seven heads and ten horns (v. 3), but its color is "scarlet," a derivative of red. The use of the word outside of Revelation where apparel is involved suggests royalty, and could be the implication here as both the woman and dragon are so clothed. The woman also declares, "I sit a queen" (18:7).

The "beast" is defined by the angel of the plagues: He is declared to be the "eighth, and is of the seven (heads)" (v. 11), *not* the seventh. If the "heads" are perceived of as the powers which Satan has used to war against the purposes of God through the centuries of time, then this describes the ap-

pearance of Satan in "the last remnant of time." (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 561-562).

The ten horns upon the beast are declared to have received "no kingdom as yet, but receive power as kings one hour with the beast" (17:12). In the prophetic symbolism, the ten horns on the first beast of Revelation 13 are crowned (v. 1). The question is, are they the same, or different from the "horns" on the beast of Revelation 17? This must be considered. It is obvious from the prophecy that the time of the reign of the ten horns in Revelation 17 is of very short duration, spoken of as "one hour" (v. 12); while the horns of the first beast of Revelation 13 would be the same as the beast itself - "forty two months" (v. 5). While these last ten give their united support to the "beast," they ultimately turn on the "woman" and "burn her with fire" (v. 16).

It should be obvious that something more is intended in this prophecy, than was perceived by Luther. Before we apply it as did Luther, we need to carefully consider that the time of the "woman" as pictured is connected with the very final events of probationary time. Since the "woman" as Babylon is composed of "three parts," one being the "dragon," how do we relate this to the "beast" on which the woman rides? Then we have the problem of the "spirits of devils" coming out of the "dragon" who is defined as the "devil." We have much study to do, and desperately need divine wisdom to interpret the prophecy aright.

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