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War & Peace

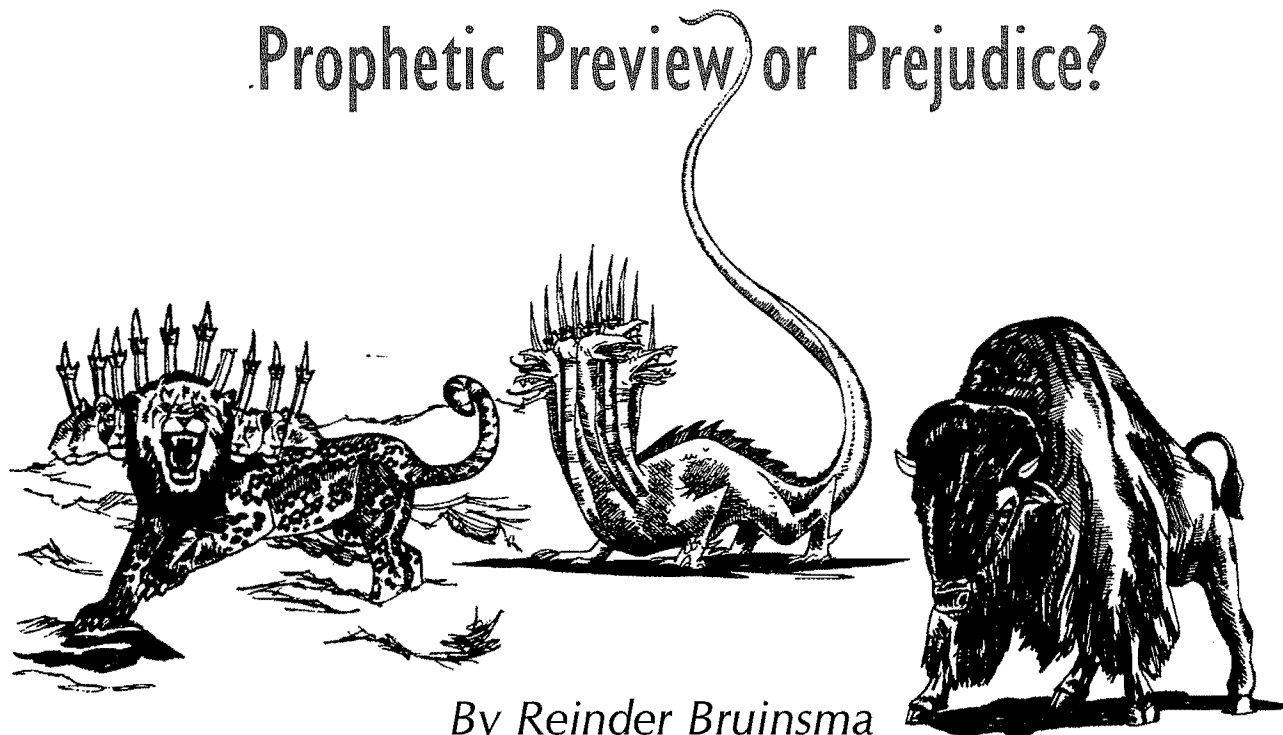
Catholics & Adventists

A Matter of
Trust at the
General
Conference

Reviewing
Star Wars

Adven†ists and Ca†holics:

Prophetic Preview or Prejudice?



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Official Adventist prophetic interpretation has not undergone any dramatic change in recent history. As a result, Adventist understanding of the historical role of Roman Catholicism and of the end-time drama—with Catholicism as one of the key players—has remained basically unaltered.

The traditional arguments for the anti-Christian nature of Roman Catholicism continue to be heard, even though they are often more carefully worded at present than in the past. More and more, however, it is recognized that the Seventh-day Adventist Church faces a problem. What does it do with end-time prophecies that are rooted in a nineteenth-century interpretation of the world?

To understand the problem it is helpful to review some history.¹

Pope Identified as Antichrist

The Adventists did not invent anti-Catholicism. Even before the Reformation drastically changed England's ecclesiastical landscape, there were strong anti-Catholic—or more precisely, antipapal—feelings. The identification of Rome with Antichrist had a long history in many parts of medieval Europe. In Elizabethan times, the view that equated the pope with Antichrist was not just the idea of a fanatical fringe of the Church of England, but had theological respectability. Objections against Catholicism were based on a historicist application of a number of

apocalyptic Bible passages and involved political enmity as well as theological disagreement, notably with regard to the sacerdotal priesthood. Among Puritans, the Roman Antichrist became an element of standard exegesis, providing the central organizing principle of their world view.

When the Puritans emigrated to New England, they transplanted the old historicist hermeneutic, complete with prophetic views of the Roman Antichrist. Already viewed as teachers of false theology, Catholics were soon accused of sinister plots aimed at delivering the New World into papal hands. Foremost in anti-Catholic statements were Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists, and Baptists, who often also joined militant anti-Catholic organizations.

In 1800, Catholics comprised only a small minority in the United States, numbering no more than fifty thousand, but they grew with the addition of new territories that had large numbers of Catholics and with massive immigration from such predominantly Catholic lands as Ireland, Italy, Germany, and Poland. In 1820, the U.S. Catholic population stood at about two hundred thousand, but grew to over two million in 1860 and rose to a staggering twelve million in 1900. With this dramatic growth came social and economic problems—especially in the cities—that fanned anti-Catholic sentiments in a Protestant nation that increasingly perceived Catholicism as a deadly threat to its future.

Millerism and the Adventist View of Catholicism

Seventh-day Adventists trace their beginnings to the Millerite movement of the 1830s and 1840s and inherited its view of Catholicism. Millerism shared the apocalyptic enthusiasm that flourished during that period in the northeastern United States, particularly in upstate New York. Members of many denominations shared Miller's preoccupation with Bible prophecy, especially the Second Coming and the Millennium, but his increasing tendency to emphasize the time of the Second Coming—which culminated in the "seventh-month movement" and set the date of October 22, 1844, as the date for the end of the world—eventually caused a split between Millerites and the churches from which they came. As a result, a separate sect came into being.

In his exposition of Bible prophecy, Miller did not focus on Roman Catholicism, but on Christ's imminent Second Coming. The Millerites agreed with most other Protestants, however, that Roman Catholicism was

an apostate power, which, though weaker since the French Revolution, still needed to be feared. The fact that U.S. Catholics still formed only a small minority during the 1840s did not lessen the threat. Catholics were Catholics, and given a chance, they would do to America what they had done to medieval Europe!

The Millerites applied a number of Bible passages to Roman Catholicism apart from the apostle Paul's statement about the "man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:7, 8), notably, Daniel 7-9, 11, 12, and Revelation 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 12-14, 16-19. The 1,260 years of papal supremacy, dating from A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798, was an essential aspect of their prophetic interpretation. Miller and his associates had no qualms about identifying the "little horns" of Daniel 7 and 8, the "beast" of Revelation 13, the "whore" of Revelation 17, and "Babylon" of Revelation 18 as the papacy.

Some points of special interest were: (1) Miller's unique explanation of the "number of the beast"—666—which he interpreted as a period that extended from 158 B.C. to A.D. 508; (2) uncertainty about the meaning of the healing of the "beast's" "deadly wound," a problem, since he did not believe that Roman Catholicism would revive globally after 1798; and (3) his interpretation of "Babylon," which expanded as 1844 approached and came to include not only Roman Catholicism but also apostate Protestantism because of its failure to heed the Second Advent message.

Millerite periodicals included a fair amount of anti-Catholic sentiment, but were more restrained as a rule than many contemporary preachers and writers. The primary burden of Miller and his associates was not to expose Catholicism, but to proclaim Christ's coming.

Early Adventists, the Apocalypse, and the Past

Sabbatarian Adventism was born in the aftermath of the Great Disappointment of 1844. When the promise of Christ's return failed to materialize, Millerism fell apart. Remnants of the movement regrouped and formed a number of denominations. One of the less prominent on the fringe accepted the seventh-day Sabbath and developed into Sabbatarian Adventism, which gradually crystallized its doctrinal position, with the Sabbath and the Sanctuary as key concepts. Sabbatarian Adventism inherited its prophetic framework, however, largely from its Millerite past and received its enduring form in the writings of Uriah

Smith. Catholicism and the papacy figured in Sabbatarian Adventism in much the same way as in Millerite writings.

In interpretations of the prophecies that Sabbatarian Adventism applied to the Roman Catholic Church the focus shifted to the papacy's role in the gradual substitution of Sunday for the Sabbath as a day of worship and/or rest. J. N. Andrews pointed to Rome as the place where this substitution was first realized and forcibly promoted. Sabbatarian Adventists saw Protestant Sunday worship as unmistakable proof that Protestants were willing to put a Catholic tradition above clear teachings of the Bible. As the movement elaborated the Sanctuary doctrine, it also criticized Roman Catholicism for its priesthood and alleged animosity toward the Heavenly Sanctuary.

Another significant aspect of this period was the rather limited attention that Sabbatarian Adventists paid to contemporary issues in the Catholic-Protestant debate of the 1850s and 1860s. The Adventist approach to apocalyptic Bible prophecy fostered intense interest in the past rather than the present. In the 1840s to 1860s, Adventist attitudes toward the papacy were not so much shaped by contemporary incidents on the American scene as by historical data that Adventists eagerly collected to undergird their convictions about the role of the papacy in past centuries.

Sabbatarian Adventists of this period were certainly no more anti-Catholic than members of most other Protestant denominations. In fact, they often showed greater restraint in expressing anti-Catholic sentiments—and certainly in taking part in political anti-Catholic activities—than in many sectors of nineteenth-century American Protestantism. A contributing factor to this restraint was undoubtedly the limited numerical strength of Sabbatarian Adventism, which prevented involvement on too many different fronts at the same time. However, emphasis on the imminent Second Coming of Christ and the beginnings of his Kingdom also inevitably discouraged political involvement and helps to explain the Adventist's refusal to become actively involved in nativist, anti-Catholic political activities. In fact, as Adventists in the 1850s contemplated their obligation toward the world, they tended to see a providential aspect in the large influx of immigrants to the United States: it enabled them to preach their message "to all nations" without needing to go abroad.

Duke University Chapel

— Bryan Ness

Inside these walls and roof of stone and glass
The light is split and broken, shattered it passes
Through my skin and flesh. I breathe the past
And present concurrently with the masses
Kneeling by these wooden benches filled
With more than light. The organ swells its song,
The sound reviving stone the workmen stilled
So long ago (their curves were cut so strong
Their edges speak). These pillars reach above
Like Adam at his birth, and as I stare
I touch the naked hand of yearning love
Between the stony heart and God's despair:
As Adam's promised seed breathes His last
The music dies, the echoes having passed.

PREVIOUSLY APPEARED IN "QUICKSILVER"

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During this phase of Adventism, key concepts were being worked out for use in following decades. These concepts were to determine the eschatological end-time scenario in which both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism would play a prominent role and in which the issue of enforced Sunday worship, combined with persecution of a Sabbath-keeping minority, would figure prominently.

In this context, it is important to note that during this period Adventists levelled criticism for moral and doctrinal corruption more against Protestant churches that had failed to heed the Advent message than against Roman Catholicism. The "fallen" Protestant churches and the "modern" resurgence of Spiritualism clearly eclipsed Catholicism as the main, immediate threat. Yet, knowing what they did about the historic role of the papacy, Adventists found it easy to imagine what might happen in the United States once a sufficiently strong Catholicism joined hands with Protestants in final opposition to God's loyal Remnant.

1863-1915: Events Support Adventist Views of Prophecy

For five decades after the Civil War, Seventh-day Adventism (the name was chosen in 1863) experienced modest but continuous growth. From a mere 3,500 members in 1863, the membership increased to 67,131 by 1900, and to 136,807 by 1915, and had a presence on several continents. At the same time, American Catholicism experienced exponential growth. From a few million in the 1860s, membership grew to an astounding 20 million by 1915. Throughout this period, anti-Catholic sentiments on the part of many Protestants continued. Although not all nativism was anti-Catholic, much was. During Reconstruction, anti-Catholic feelings temporarily receded into the background. However, Protestant misgivings about Catholic insistence on a separate school system, attempts by Catholics to secure tax support for their institutions, and the success of many Catholic public office seekers all became increasingly strong during the 1870s and 1880s. A considerable amount of anti-Catholic propaganda circulated during the 1880s and 1890s, with the American Protective Association (A.P.A., organized in 1887) as its most vocal proponent.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, anti-Catholicism remained largely dormant, but revived again after 1908 as an important element in a general resurgence of nativism. Immigrants—among them hundreds of thousands of Catholic Italians—arrived in record numbers after a relatively “quiet” period. Regrettably, but almost inevitably, this development strengthened xenophobic resentments. The significant increase in anti-Catholic feelings must at least partly be explained in the context of widespread fears that the foreign born stood in the way of social improvement and as an outlet for frustrations of unfulfilled expectations about social and economic reform. Throughout the period immediately before and during World War I, however, the “no-papery” tradition, though not lacking in propaganda outlets, never had the type of organization it had acquired during the A.P.A. years.

Seventh-day Adventists continued to operate with basically the same hermeneutical principles as Millerites and Sabbatarian Adventists. The only real change in the interpretation of Daniel’s prophecies were increasing numbers of allusions to contemporary events (such as promulgation of the dogma of papal infallibility in 1870) as added proof for earlier views that had identified the papacy as an anti-Christian power.

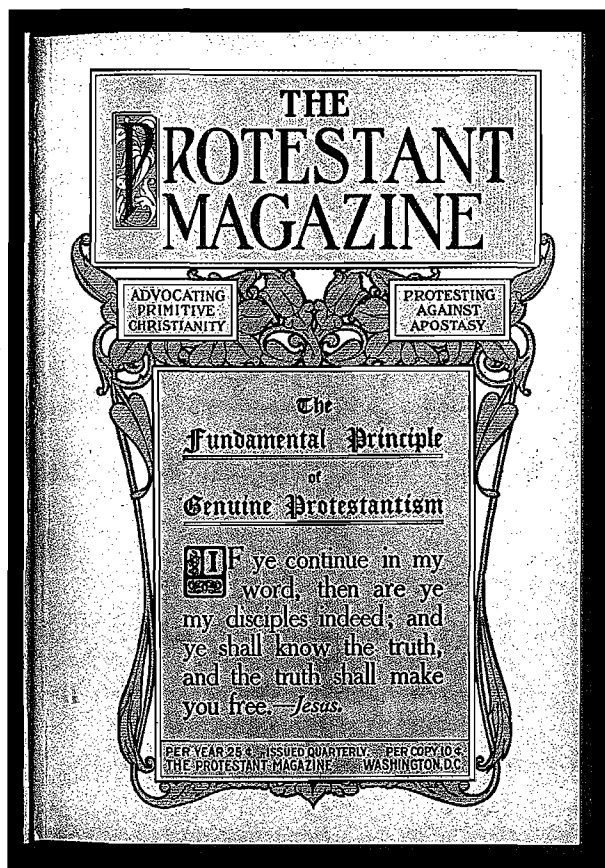
More substantial were developments in Uriah Smith’s treatment of the actions of the “second Beast” of Revelation 13, which from 1851 onward had been identified as the United States. Events unfolding during the 1880s and 1890s gave this aspect of the study of the Revelation a major boost. In general, later treatments of Daniel’s prophecies and the Revelation, though differing in emphasis and tone, followed Smith’s basic pattern. This was also true of the work of Louis R. Conradi, the first important non-American Adventist author, though he attempted to cite more European historical sources in support of his arguments.

Toward the end of the 1860s, Adventists began to feel more confident about the meaning of the enigmatic number 666. Smith suggested that the papal title “Vicarius Filii Dei,” which according to some reports was engraved on a papal tiara, had a numerical value of 666. Even though historical uncertainty enshrouded this interpretation from the beginning, the “Vicarius Filii Dei”—666 connection became a popular feature in Adventist lectures and popular literature.

The role of Catholicism in substituting Sunday for the biblical Sabbath remained a key issue, but Adventists also increasingly criticized “Rome” for introducing the concept of the immortality of the soul into the Christian church, which had supposedly led to a host of heathen superstitions.

Adventists added their voice to anti-Catholic sentiments at the time of Vatican I, whenever the papacy published encyclicals, or when Catholics attempted to claim public funding for their continuously expanding parochial educational system. However, Adventist fears regarding Catholicism peaked during the 1880s and 1890s. It was during that relatively short period that Adventist attitudes toward Roman Catholics received their definitive form. What exactly happened around that time?

Seventh-day Adventists were increasingly concerned about Roman Catholics: their growing numerical, institutional, and political strength, and their willingness to cooperate with Protestants on certain social issues. However, Adventists were just as troubled by developments within Protestantism, particularly by activities of the National Reform Association and its journal, *The Christian Statesman*, which campaigned for amending the U.S. Constitution in such a way that America would truly become “a Christian nation.” A number of other organizations subscribed to the same goal. Adventists, of course, perceived this campaign as fulfilling predictions that they had made all along: as a movement that wanted to bring the U.S. government



into alliance with Protestant as well as Catholic religious forces.

The strong lobby of various Protestant organizations, which campaigned with increased support from the Roman Catholic Church for stricter Sunday observance, created a climate that Adventists perceived as more and more threatening. They expected national Sunday laws to be passed and widespread persecution to follow. It appeared that the time of the end had come.

In 1888, Senator H. W. Blair introduced a bill in Congress that, although dressed in secular language, was seen as an attempt to enforce Sunday as a day of rest. Vigorous opposition by Jews, Seventh Day Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, and other groups contributed to the defeat of this proposal and an amended 1889 version.

A new attempt was made in 1890, however, when Senator W. C. P. Breckinridge introduced another Sunday bill for the District of Columbia. Breckinridge included in his proposal an exemption clause for those who conscientiously believed in and observed some other day of the week besides Sunday. This provision satisfied Seventh Day Baptists, but Seventh-day Adventists insisted that any kind of Sunday legislation represented a wrongful meddling of the state in religious affairs and was symptomatic of a tendency to seek a closer union between church and state. After consider-

able controversy, in which Adventists played a major role, this proposal was also defeated.

A third battle between Sunday-keeping forces and those who observed Saturday followed from 1892 to 1893 in relation to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In January 1892, the House of Representatives considered a bill requiring that "no exposition or exhibition for which appropriation is made by Congress shall be opened on Sunday." This and another proposed bill linked financial assistance to the condition that the fair remain closed on Sundays. Both bills passed the House and the Senate in modified form. Only after extensive legal battles—and several weeks after the fair had opened—did organizers obtain permission from the courts to stay open on Sundays.

Adventists Rally for Religious Liberty Issues

Adventists did not remain quiet. In 1889, they organized the National Religious Liberty Organization, which during the first decade of its existence was probably more active than it has been ever since. It produced a flood of publications—books, brochures, and journals—on issues related to religious liberty. The most prominent publication was *The American Sentinel* (1886-1900), succeeded by *The Sentinel of Liberty* (1901-4), and, in 1906, by *Liberty*.

From 1909 to 1915, Adventists also published a more sophisticated journal, *The Protestant Magazine*, which was devoted solely to the history and teachings of Catholicism and its threat to America. The journal appeared quarterly at first, but monthly from October 1912 onward. Adventist leaders felt that *Liberty* magazine was inadequate to deal with Catholic aggressiveness. The aim of *The Protestant Magazine* was to remind Protestants of their duty to protest the errors and apostasy of the Roman Catholic Church and to warn Protestants not to depart from the Reformation's original principles. Banners on the cover summed up the journal's raison d'être: "Advocating Primitive Christianity" and "Protesting Against Apostasy." Each issue consisted mainly of articles about the history of the papacy and key Catholic doctrines, particularly the primacy and infallibility of the pope, and had a section devoted to current developments in Catholicism. The journal was predominantly dignified in tone (certainly in comparison to other anti-Catholic journals of that period), but the editors could not totally escape the temptation to add some sensational material.

Ellen G. White Codifies Adventist Views on Catholicism

The most significant Adventist reaction to events of the 1880s came from Ellen G. White. Around 1883, she began to write in a systematic way about the history of the Christian church. Her classic, *The Great Controversy*, was published in its expanded form in 1888. Another edition appeared with relatively minor changes in 1911.²

Ellen G. White's treatment of the history of the Catholic Church did not differ in essence from the approach of other Adventist writers. All the usual elements of Adventist historiography with regard to "The Roman Church" were present: the rise of apostasy in the Early Church; the gradual increase in heretical beliefs and practices; suppression of the Bible; disregard for the second commandment; exchange of Sunday for Saturday observance; the establishment of the papacy; the dark ages of superstition and iniquity; the Inquisition; papal claims of supremacy over rulers; and the claim of infallibility.

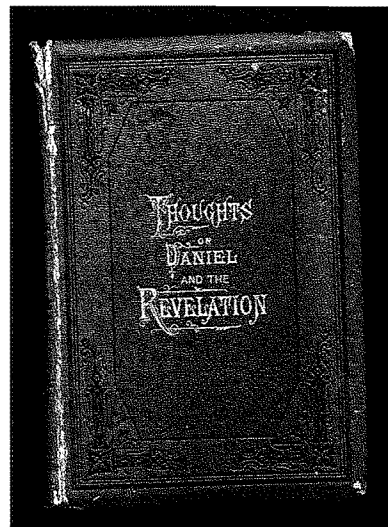
In the chapter entitled "Liberty of Conscience Threatened," we detect the same insistence as in other representative Adventist publications that Catholicism will never change and that one should be not fooled by "the fair front" it presents to the world. "Every principle of the papacy that existed in ages past exists today," she wrote (571). The author was careful, however, to distinguish between the Catholic Church as a system and individual believers, many of whom are "real Christians" (565). In contrast, "Romanism as a system is no more in harmony with the gospel of Christ now than at any former period in her history. . . . Let the restraints now imposed by secular governments be removed, and Rome be reinstated in her former power, and there would speedily be a revival of her tyranny and persecution" (564).

In the next chapter, "The Impending Conflict," she extended the scenario further into the future. There, in a few sentences, Ellen G. White summarized what has continued to be the outline of her (and Adventism's) eschatology:

"The Protestants in the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; she will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling upon the rights of conscience" (588).

Most of what Ellen G. White wrote about Catholicism originated during this period, a time in which Adventists perceived that external events on the American scene corroborated earlier predictions. Her increasing authority within the Seventh-day Adventist Church greatly contributed to the general acceptance of an eschatological scenario that received its more-or-less final formulation in this unique late-nineteenth-century American setting. Acceptance of her statements in *The Great Controversy* and elsewhere as inspired pronouncements prevented later Adventism from taking another look at contemporary Catholicism while other Protestants were increasingly prepared to do so.

Ellen G. White, however, was certainly no more anti-Catholic than most Protestants and fellow Adventist leaders of her day. In fact, she was among the first to emphasize the presence of many genuine Christians in the Catholic Church and to urge readers to direct any condemnation of Catholicism toward the papacy and the Catholic hierarchy rather than against individual believers. Still, her major writings about Roman Catholicism date from the 1880s and 1890s, and thus originated in a climate of Adventist confidence about the reality of the Catholic threat and the imminence of events predicted for decades. Once she codified those views, it became virtually impossible to reevaluate them critically without questioning her prophetic authority.



1915-1965: Catholicism Changes; Adventism Does Not

In the five decades between 1915 and 1965, Adventism became a truly global movement. By 1965, membership stood at more than 1.5 million, with 75 percent of all Adventists living outside North America. Yet, to a large extent, events within the United States continued to determine Adventist views. That was certainly true of Adventist attitudes toward Catholicism, which continued to be informed by American circumstances.

Until the 1950s and 1960s, much of American

Protestantism remained fiercely anti-Catholic. This was particularly apparent in 1928, when a Catholic Democrat unsuccessfully campaigned for the presidency of the United States, and in 1939-40, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced his intention to appoint a U.S. ambassador to the Vatican.

Adventist prophetic interpretation underwent little change during this period. Some elements of Uriah Smith's interpretation were called into question (such as his views on the role of Turkey), but his books remained in print. The events of 1929, when Italian dictator Benito Mussolini restored temporal power to the pope, stood out as undeniable proof that the papacy's mortal wound was rapidly being healed. Also ominous was the appointment in 1940 of Myron C. Taylor to represent the United States at the Vatican.

In the mid-1930s to early 1940s, considerable discussion erupted about the validity of the long-standing Adventist interpretation of 666. W. W. Prescott, a prominent Adventist editor, reiterated his earlier doubts whether "Vicarius Filii Dei" was actually an official papal title. His insistence that historical facts did not support traditional arguments led the General Conference to enlist help from several scholars, including Leroy F. Froom. Research in a number of European libraries did not produce anything to support Adventist claims. In fact, the researchers concluded that the exact wording is found only in the Donation of Constantine, a document universally regarded as spurious. Nevertheless, the popular 666 argument which so spectacularly identified the papacy as the beast continued to be used widely.⁹

By the 1960s, when John F. Kennedy became the first Catholic U.S. president, Adventist publications had abandoned the fierce language of earlier times regarding Catholicism, but the arguments remained the same. A few statements from nineteenth-century Catholic sources continued to be quoted ad infinitum (even until today) in support of Adventist criticism. Gradually more emphasis was also placed on the recruitment of new members from among Catholics and specific strategies to achieve that goal. In addition, Adventist authors tended to pay more attention to Catholic doctrine instead of referring almost exclusively to Catholic history, as they had done in the past.

However, the message remained basically the same. The Catholic threat had not diminished. The Roman Catholic Church would not rest until its teachings dominated religion in the United States, and, indeed, the world. Once that happened, the final events in Earth's history would follow quickly.

The basic premise in Adventist reports of developments in Catholicism was that "Rome" would never change. Any seemingly positive development was explained as a matter of expediency and was not considered genuine, or was interpreted as part of a vast conspiracy. Even in the momentous days of Vatican II (1962-65), when Catholicism underwent enormous change, the Adventist view remained constant, even though B. B. Beach, the chief Adventist correspondent at all four sessions, had relatively positive appraisals of the proceedings.

Thus, there are several factors behind sustained anti-Catholicism among Adventists: recurring waves of anti-Catholic agitation in American society; the hermeneutics and prophetic interpretations that early Adventists inherited from Millerism; the role of "Rome" in the history of Sabbath observance, which for years provided one of the most important foci of Adventist historical research; and Sunday legislation of the 1880s and 1890s, which, together with worldwide resurgence of Roman Catholicism in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Adventists interpreted as convincing evidence of the correctness of their eschatological views. One of the most central reasons for sustained anti-Catholicism, however, was that Ellen G. White had codified these views in her writings. Thus, it would be virtually impossible to reevaluate them critically without questioning her prophetic authority.

Conclusion

What are the consequences of this unchangeable attitude toward Catholicism? I would suggest that it raises three major questions:

1. How does Adventism want to relate to other churches?

As the Seventh-day Adventist Church has grown, it has become better known and has acquired increased respectability. That is certainly true for many church-affiliated institutions. Still, in spite of more than a century of intense public relations efforts, in many places Adventism has not succeeded in shedding its sectarian image. Some view Adventism as a bona fide evangelical movement, but others are not so certain. Consultations and dialogue with other religious bodies do occur from time to time, but can only be limited in scope: Adventists basically believe that they have much to teach and little to learn. They want respect from other churches, yet they avoid closeness to them.

Ambiguity about the relationship with other churches is, of course, to a large extent rooted in Adventist

eschatology. Whatever the actual situation today, Adventist theology clearly teaches that some time soon all other churches will turn against the Adventist Remnant.

2. Is the Seventh-day Adventist Church distancing itself from traditional end-time views?

Outside and within the church, many wonder whether Seventh-day Adventism is slowly but surely distancing itself somewhat from traditional views about the end-time and an Adventist Remnant persecuted by other religious bodies.

The church's attitude toward the Roman Catholic Church illustrates the dilemma most poignantly. When private individuals, or "independent ministries," mass-produced excerpts from *The Great Controversy* about the alleged anti-Christian nature of Roman Catholicism and then distributed them far and wide, and when some bought advertising space on large bill boards and newspapers to warn Americans about the real intentions of "the Beast"—as happened a few years ago in Florida and Oregon and, more recently, during the pope's visit to Missouri—Church leaders hastened to distance themselves and the Church. Yet, the sponsors of these campaigns had, in fact, quoted from a book that the Church officially publishes in dozens of languages and had, albeit selectively, used official Adventist teaching. Adventist church leaders anxiously emphasize that, while the future end-time scenario must be kept in mind, we should not be deterred from having friendly relations with other Christian churches. Their critics, however, see this as a dangerous dilution of the Adventist task to call people out of "Babylon." Clearly, this issue is potential dynamite. Some time soon the Church must decide unequivocally whether it is a Christian church—with its own unique witness—amidst other Christian churches, or whether it must stand alone over and against all other Christian bodies. That choice may be costly, but the attempt to find a middle road will continue to create serious confusion.*

3. How should the Seventh-day Adventist Church address the changes that have taken place in Roman Catholicism?

Although Adventists must strongly disagree with many aspects of Roman Catholic teaching and practice, honesty demands an acknowledgment that in recent decades Roman Catholicism has changed in positive ways in most parts of the world. Now, Catholics are not only allowed to read their Bibles, but are encouraged to do so. There is much spirituality in the Roman Catholic Church of which Protestants can be envious. Furthermore, the Catholic Church has formally accepted the principle of religious freedom. It is not fair to

suggest that these and other positive developments are just window dressing and must, in fact, be watched with suspicion, or that they should be seen as clever tactics to lull other Christians into sleep while Catholics await a fortuitous moment when they can wipe out other Christians, Adventists first and foremost.

In criticizing Catholic history, Adventists should try to be more balanced than in the past and should avoid offering a simple extension of the often biased and inaccurate picture that many past Protestants have offered of the medieval Church. Medieval Christianity also had positive and beautiful dimensions. Moreover, Adventists must be willing to acknowledge that modern Catholicism has changed in many ways. It bothers me, in particular, to see how modern Adventist publications still rely mainly on nineteenth-century sources to describe Catholic views and intentions. How would Adventists feel if people around them based their opinion of Adventism almost exclusively on sources more than a century old?

Dealing with this issue will, no doubt, be difficult and take time. Anti-Catholicism is so ingrained in the Adventist world view that change will not come easily, even if the Church's administrators and other thought leaders agree that a reorientation is desirable. In the meantime, the Church could at least attempt to be fairer in its descriptions of present-day Catholicism.

Notes and References

1. This article is based on the author's Ph.D. dissertation: "A Historical Analysis of Seventh-day Adventist Attitudes toward Roman Catholicism" (University of London, 1993), published by Andrews University Press in 1995 as *Adventist Attitudes toward Roman Catholicism, 1844-1865*.
2. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation*, rev. ed. (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1911). The quotations that follow have been taken from the 1911 edition.
3. Gilbert M. Valentine, *The Shaping of Adventism: The Case of W. W. Prescott* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1992), was the first Adventist scholar in modern times who pointed to the lack of evidence for the traditional Adventist interpretation of the "number of the Beast"—666.
4. Several paragraphs in this concluding section are quoted in slightly revised form from an as-yet unpublished manuscript entitled "The Challenge of Change."

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