**“The Papacy. No. 3” The Present Truth 6, 21.**

E. J. Waggoner

**THE CHURCH CORRUPTED**

Since the Bible alone is the true standard of faith and morals, it is very evident that when any power sets itself above the Bible, corruption must follow. The history of the Roman Catholic Church shows that this is absolutely true. The power that sets itself above God necessarily sets itself against God; but as God is the embodiment of all goodness, that which is opposed to him must be the embodiment of all wickedness. Therefore, according to the prophetic declaration concerning the assumptions of the Papacy, we should expect to see in it the very depths of iniquity. A very few quotations will be given concerning the apostasy which resulted in the full development of “that Wicked,” “the man of sin.” Dr. Wylie, in his “History of Protestantism,” says:- {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 329.1}

“The moment inspired men cease to address us, and that their disciples and scholars take their place-men of apostolic spirit and doctrine, no doubt, but without the direct knowledge of their predecessors-we become sensible of a change; an eclipse has passed upon the exceeding glory of the gospel. As we pass from Paul to Clement, and from Clement to the Fathers that succeeded him, we find the gospel becoming less of grace and more of merit. The light wanes as we travel down the patristic road, and remove ourselves farther from the apostolic dawn. It continues for some time at least to be the same gospel, but its glory is shorn, its mighty force is abated; and we are reminded of the change that seems to pass upon the sun, when after contemplating him in a tropical hemisphere, we see him in a northern sky, where his slanting beams, forcing their way through mists and vapors, are robbed of half their splendor. Seen through the fogs of the patristic age, the gospel scarcely looks the same which had burst upon the world without a cloud but a few centuries before.”-*Book I, chap. 2, paragraph 11.* {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 329.2}

The Doctor was more charitable than the facts will warrant, in saying that the Fathers were no doubt men of apostolic spirit and doctrine. They were at best but half heathen, whatever their intentions may have been, for they drank from the muddy pool of heathen philosophy instead of at the pure fountain of divine revelation; and their great effort was to assimilate Christianity and pagan philosophy. In this they succeeded but too well. Again we quote from Wylie:- {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 329.3}

“The gates of the sanctuary once forced, the stream of corruption continued to flow with ever-deepening volume. The declensions in doctrine and worship already introduced had changed the brightness of the church’s morning into twilight; the descent of the Northern nations, which beginning in the fifth, continued through several successive centuries, converted that twilight into night. The new tribes did change their country, but not their superstitions; and, unhappily, there was neither zeal nor vigour in the Christianity of the age to effect their instruction and a genuine conversion. The Bible had been withdrawn; in the pulpit fable had usurped the place of truth; holy lives, whose silent eloquence might have won upon the barbarians, were rarely exemplified; and thus, instead of the church dissipating the superstitions that now encompass her like a cloud, these superstitions all but quenched her own light. She opened her gates to receive the new peoples as they were. She sprinkled them with the new baptismal water; she inscribed their names in her registers; she taught them in their invocations to repeat the titles of the Trinity; but the doctrines of the gospel, which alone can enlighten the understanding, purify the heart, and enrich the life with virtue, she was little careful to inculcate upon them. She folded them within her pale, but they were scarcely more Christian than before, while she was greatly less so.”-*Ib., book 1, chap. 2, paragraph 8.* {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 329.4}

Thus was the church becoming paganized, and not long did it take to complete the transformation. Wylie continues:- {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 329.5}

“Apostasy is like the descent of heavy bodies, it proceeds with ever-accelerating velocity. First, lamps were lighted at the tombs of the martyrs; next, the Lord’s supper was celebrated at their graves; next, prayers were offered *for* them and *to* them; next, paintings and images began to disfigure the walls, and corpses to pollute the floors of the churches. Baptism, which apostles required water only to dispense, could not be celebrated without white robes and chrism, milk, honey, and salt. Then came a crowd of church offices whose names and numbers are in striking contrast to the few and simple orders of men who were employed in the first propagation of Christianity.”—*Ib., paragraph 9.* {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 329.6}

That the church should be corrupted was the inevitable result of the methods employed to make converts. Says the historian:- {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 329.7}

“As the lower ranks of society are governed by imitation, the conversion of those who possessed any eminence of birth, of power, or of riches, was soon followed by dependent multitudes. The salvation of the common people was purchased at an easy rate, if it be true that, in one year, twelve thousand men were baptized at Rome, besides a proportionable number of women and children, and that a white garment, with twenty pieces of gold, had been promised by the emperor to every convert.”-*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. 20, paragraph 18*. {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 329.8}

There is no reason to disbelieve this statement, for it is related upon good authority that Gregory Thaumaturgus (Gregory the miracle worker), bishop of Neo-Cæsarea, on the anniversaries of the martyrs (and they were numerous) allowed his flock to give a loose rein to pleasure, to indulge in conviviality, and to do all the things that the worshipers of idols were accustomed to do in their temples, on their festival days, hoping thereby to gain the heathen, and thinking that in process of time they would, as “Christian,” voluntarily leave off such customs. (See Mosheim’s Ecclesiastical History, book 1, cent. 2, part, 2 chap. 4, sec. 2, note 3.) This was not an isolated case, for Mosheim says that “the Christian bishops purposely multiplied sacred [?] rites for the sake of rendering the Jews and the pagans more friendly to them.” Thus was pure Christianity crowded into obscurity, and that which took its name was in reality paganism with all of its corruption. Speaking of the barbarians who conquered Rome, Wylie says: {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 329.9}

“These rude warriors, who had overturned the throne of the Cæsars, bowed down before the chair of the popes. The evangelization of these tribes was a task of easy accomplishment. The ‘Catholic faith,’ which they began to exchange for their paganism or Arianism, consisted chiefly in their being able to recite the names of the objects of their worship, which they were left to adore with much the same rites as they had practiced in their native forests. They did not much concern themselves with the study of Christian doctrine, or the practice of Christian virtue. The age furnished but few manuals of the one, and still fewer models of the other.”-*History of Protestantism, book 1, chap. 3, paragraph 9*. {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 330.1}

How could there be any models of virtue, when the truly virtuous were slaughtered, and the only virtue recognised was adherence to the dogmas of Rome? Henry Charles Lea, in his “History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages,” graphically portrays the condition of the papacy. On this point he says, among other things:- {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 330.2}

“Uniformity of faith had been enforced by the Inquisition and its methods, and so long as faith was preserved, crime and sin were comparatively unimportant except as a source of revenue to those who sold absolution. As Theodoric Vrie tersely puts it, hell and purgatory would be emptied if enough money could be found. The artificial standard thus created is seen in a revelation of the Virgin to St. Birgitta, that a Pope who was free from heresy, no matter how polluted by sin and vice, is not so wicked but that he has the absolute power to bind and loose souls. There are many wicked popes plunged in hell, but all their lawful acts on earth are accepted and confirmed by God, and all priests who are not heretics administer true sacraments, no matter how depraved they may be. Correctness of belief was thus the sole essential; virtue was a wholly subordinate consideration. How completely under such a system religion and morals came to be dissociated is seen in the remarks of Pius II. quoted above, that the Franciscans were excellent theologians, but cared nothing about virtue. {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 330.3}

“This, in fact, was the direct result of the system of persecution embodied in the Inquisition. Heretics who were admitted to be patterns of virtue were ruthlessly exterminated in the name of Christ, while in the same holy name the orthodox could purchase absolution for the vilest of crimes for a few coins. When the only unpardonable offense was persistence in some trifling error of belief, such as the poverty of Christ; when men had before them the example of their spiritual guides as leaders in vice and debauchery and contempt of sacred things, all the sanctions of morality were destroyed, and the confusion between right and wrong became hopeless. The world has probably never seen a society more vile than that of Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.”-*Vol. 3, pp. 641, 642*. {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 330.4}

The custom of selling absolution, which was devised for the purpose of filling up the depleted papal treasury, is one of the worst things that the Papacy has ever done against God and his worship. It set at naught the atonement, counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and fastened the world far more securely than it had ever before been in “the bond of iniquity,” which must hold those who think that the gift of God can be purchased with money. {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 330.5}

Perhaps some may think that the Papacy has improved, since we no longer see crimes so openly committed under its sheltering wing. They think that its wickedness was due to the ignorance of the age, and that “advancing civilization” has made such wickedness impossible. Such should remember that “Rome never changes.” The only reason why crimes are not so openly committed under its protection is because it has not now the power to protect them. As evidence that the seeming improvement in the character of the Papacy is due to lack of power and not to the spread of education, we quote the following:- {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 330.6}

“In Italy the revival of letters, while elevating the intellectual faculties, had been accompanied with deeper degradation in both the moral and spiritual condition of society. Without removing superstition, it had rendered skepticism fashionable, and it had weakened the sanctions of religion without supplying another basis for morality. The world has probably never seen a more defiant disregard of all law, human and divine, than that displayed by both the church and the laity during the pontificates of Sixtus IV. and Innocent VIII. and Alexander VI. [1471-1503.] Increase of culture and of wealth seemed only to afford new attractions and enlarged opportunities for luxury and vice, and from the highest to the lowest there was indulgence of unbridled appetites, with a cynical disregarded even of hypocrisy.”-*Id., p. 203*. {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 330.7}

The principles of the Papacy are the same to-day that they were five hundred years ago. The system is as corrupt to-day as it ever was, and it cannot be reformed. It is denominated by Inspiration the “man of sin,” and as such it will remain to the end of its career. Men do not put new wine into old bottles, nor does God entrust His truth to the hands of those who have proved their unfaithfulness. {PTUK October 9, 1890, p. 330.8}

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**“The Papacy. No. 4” The Present Truth 6, 22.**

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The prophet says: “And they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.” The “they” of course refers to the “saints of the Most High” and the “times and laws,” which are mentioned in the same verse. The “time and times and the dividing of time,” then, indicates the period of Papal supremacy, and of the unlimited reign of lawlessness. {PTUK October 23, 1890, p. 346.1}

In the first place we may notice that in the Douay Bible, as well as in the Revised Version, “time and times and the dividing of time,” is rendered, “time, and times, and *half* a time.” We have no need to conjecture what this means, for the Bible is its own interpreter. In Revelation 12:14 we find the same period of time mentioned: “And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.” Now in verse 6 of the same chapter the same event is brought to view in these words: “And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.” From these two verses we learn that “a time, and times, and half a time” is only another expression for twelve hundred and sixty days. Then the little horn of Daniel 7 was to have supremacy for twelve hundred and sixty days. {PTUK October 23, 1890, p. 346.2}

The question now arises, “Is it possible that 1,260 days, or three years and a half years, cover the whole time which the prophecy allows to the Papacy?” We answer, No; and the explanation is simple. The prophecy is symbolic; four mighty empires are represented by short-lived beasts; the Roman Catholic power is represented by a little horn of one of these beasts. It is obvious, then, that the prophecy would not be consistent if it should express the duration of those powers in literal years. The time would be out of proportion to the nature of the symbol representing the power. Therefore it is evident that the time must also be symbolic. We inquire, then, What is the standard of time when used in symbolic prophecy? In Ezekiel 4:4-6 we read the answer:- {PTUK October 23, 1890, p. 346.3}

“Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it; according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days; so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days; I have appointed thee each day for a year.” {PTUK October 23, 1890, p. 346.4}

Since all prophecy of Scripture proceeds from the same source, and is not of private interpretation (2 Peter 1:20, 21), the interpretation given to a symbol in one prophecy; therefore the “time, and times, and half a time,” or twelve hundred and sixty days, indicate just twelve hundred and sixty years. {PTUK October 23, 1890, p. 346.5}

The next question to be settled is, When does this period of time begin and end? There are several dates given by various authors to mark the rise of Papal supremacy, but 538 A.D. seems to be the one that has the only just claim to consideration. The prophet, in describing the rise of the little horn, says, “He shall subdue three kings.” Daniel 7:24. This is in explanation of the fact that three horns were to be plucked up before it. Of course the only powers that would be rooted up to make room for the Catholic power would be those who were opposed to it. Now long before 538 A.D., paganism, as a State religion in the Roman empire, was dead. Since the time of Constantine, Rome had been nominally Christian. The barbarous tribes by which the empire was divided into the ten parts, also embraced the Christianity of the empire. {PTUK October 23, 1890, p. 346.6}

But not all of these tribes were favorable to the pretensions of the bishops of Rome. Some of them, especially the Heruli, the Vandals, and the Ostrogoths, were professedly followers of Arius. The contest between the Catholics and Arians was bitter and unrelenting, and so long as these powers held Italy and the adjacent country, the pope could not assert papal authority. {PTUK October 23, 1890, p. 346.7}

In the year 493 A.D., the power of the Heruli was annihilated by the death of Odoacer. From that time it is impossible to trace them in history. In 534 the Vandals were conquered by Belisarius, the general of Justinian; and in 538 A.D., Rome, which until that time had been in possession of the Arian Ostrogoths, was occupied by the Roman army, and the Catholic religion was established. These conquests are described in detail in the thirty-ninth and forty-first chapters of Gibbon. When the last of these Arian powers was overthrown (A.D. 538), there was nothing to hinder the bishop of Rome from occupying the proud position for which he had so long been striving. {PTUK October 23, 1890, p. 346.8}

To show plainly the object of these wars against the Arian powers, and what was gained by them, we make two brief quotations from Gibbon. After having rehearsed the defeat of the Vandals and the capture of Carthage by the Romans, the historian speaks as follows concerning Justinian:- {PTUK October 23, 1890, p. 347.1}

Impatient to abolish the temporal and spiritual tyranny of the Vandals, he proceeded, without delay, to the full establishment of the Catholic Church. Her jurisdiction, wealth, and immunities, perhaps the most essential part of Episcopal religion, were restored and amplified with a liberal hand; the Arian worship was suppressed, the Donatist meetings were proscribed; and the synod of Carthage, by the voice of two hundred and seventeen bishops, applauded the just measure of pious retaliation.”-*Decline and Fall, chap. 41, paragraph 11*. {PTUK October 23, 1890, p. 347.2}

The victory of Belisarius over the Ostrogoths (A.D. 538) is thus described:- {PTUK October 23, 1890, p. 347.3}

“The Goths consented to retreat in the presence of a victorious enemy; to delay till the next spring the operations of offensive war; to summon their scattered forces; to relinquish their distant possessions, and to trust even Rome itself to the faith of its inhabitants. Leuderis, an aged warrior, was left in the capital with four thousand soldiers; a feeble garrison, which might have seconded the zeal, though it was incapable of opposing the wishes of the Romans. But a momentary enthusiasm of religion and patriotism was kindled in their minds. They furiously exclaimed that the apostolic throne should not longer be profaned by the triumph or toleration of Arianism; that the tombs of the Cæsars should no longer be trampled by the savages of the North; and, without reflecting that Italy must sink into a province of Constantinople, they fondly hailed the restoration of a Roman emperor as a new era of freedom and prosperity. The deputies of the Pope and clergy, of the Senate and people, invited the lieutenant of Justinian to accept their voluntary allegiance, and to enter the city, whose gates would be thrown open for his reception.... The first days, which coincided with the old Saturnalia, were devoted to mutual congratulation and the public joy, and the Catholics prepared to celebrate, without a rival, the approaching festival of the nativity of Christ.”-*Id., paragraphs 22, 23*. {PTUK October 23, 1890, p. 347.4}

These quotations show most conclusively that in A.D. 538 the bishop of Rome did become literally “the pope,” *i.e.*, the father, or head and ruler, of the churches. The last opposing horn had then been plucked up, and the Papacy was free to enter upon that career of ecclesiastical tyranny for which it had long been preparing; and the “mystery of iniquity” which had been working so long was given full liberty. {PTUK October 23, 1890, p. 347.5}

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