

<i>Deceives multitudes by working miracles (v 13).</i>	<i>Exalts physical marvels as the ultimate proof of truth in religion.</i>
<i>Urges making of image to sea-beast—gives life to the image (vv 14, 15)</i>	<i>Creates in the New World a Church-State monopoly patterned on the Mediaeval Papacy.</i>
<i>Enforces worship of image, and reception of mark of sea-beast under pain of death (vv 15, 16, 17).</i>	<i>Repudiates man's basic freedoms—boycotts and persecutes commandment-keeping minority.</i>

3.—WHAT IS MEANT BY THE "IMAGE TO THE BEAST"?

From the days of the Emperor Constantine (A.D. 306-337), the Papal church has defended the union of Church and State, and has unblushingly allied itself with the civil power. The Papacy is not merely a church, but a combination of Church and State. This is the very essence of the Papal system. The making of religious laws and the persecution of heretics or dissenters, are therefore part of its settled policy. The State is subject to the Church, and the Church uses the arm of the State to enforce its dogmas. According to this amazing prophecy, America will take the lead in creating an image or replica of the Papal system in the New World!

This American fusion of Church and State—this super-Church—will be a repudiation of everything that Protestantism has stood for in the promotion of religious liberty. The machinery of State will be employed for the making and enforcement of religious laws. The rights of individual conscience will be sacrificed on the altars of conformity and political expediency.

4.—WHAT IS MEANT BY THE "MARK" OF THE BEAST?

This question will be answered in Lesson 34.

5.—ARE THERE SIGNS THAT THIS "IMAGE TO THE BEAST" IS NOW COMING TO LIFE?

There are many ominous signs. Here are just a few:

- The work of the National Reform Administration. Dedicated to making America a "Christian Nation" by laws and penalties, if persuasion fails.
- The activities of the "Lord's Day Alliance". Dedicated to the making and enforcement of Sunday laws, and the nation-wide observance of Sunday.
- The rapid growth of Roman Catholic power and influence in America.
- The retreat of Historic Protestantism.
- The strong Rome-ward current of the Ecumenical movement.

6.—ARE THERE SIGNS OF REACTION AGAINST THIS BETRAYAL OF INDIVIDUAL SOUL-LIBERTY?

Yes. Hundreds of Americans have refused—and many are even now refusing—to surrender the rights of individual conscience. Men are facing fines, imprisonment, social rejection and loss of employment rather than disobey the commandments of God. When the laws of the State conflict with the laws of God, these men are saying: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Conclusion What of the future?

According to the Word of God, religious freedom is facing its darkest, but finest hour! A crisis will yet develop in America, and in every land of earth, which will match the scene in ancient Babylon, when King Nebuchadnezzar set up his golden image, gathered his officers together, and commanded them, on pain of death, to bow down and worship (Dan. 3:1-7).

But when the moment of testing came, and the vast multitude bowed down as one man, there were three slim figures silhouetted against the sky—the figures of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. "Be it known unto thee, O king," they said, "That we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dan. 3:18-18).

In every religious crisis of the past, God has found such men. In earth's last great hour of testing, He will find them again. Will we be among them?