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February 25, 1934

Prof. W. B. Prescott  
Emmanuel Missionary College  
Berrien Springs, Michigan

Dear Father Prescott:

Instead of having to write you concerning certain important matters which I must present, I very much wish that we might sit down and talk things over together; but this is seemingly impossible. And I would give a great deal, Professor, if there were no necessity for communicating with you concerning the content of this letter. I have long enjoyed your friendship, and have admired and profited by your statements in scholarly fields. This makes it no harder to take up points that I know will distress you, and I wish you to know at the outset that I write as a friend, while at the same time constrained by an inescapable sense of obligation to duty, and a consciousness of the trust reposed in me incident to my present position, which must transcend all personal feelings.

The simple fact is, Father Prescott, that statements concerning the book, the mark, and the number of the beast, on pages 208-210 of your otherwise excellent and valuable book, are causing us grave perplexity. Your criticisms from the postcard passed on to you, and which you denigrated answering, have come to us then have led to a painstaking study of the pages in question. A superficial reading of this section might not suggest anything seriously off-color to many casual readers. But a study of its implications and the inescapable conclusions to which one is led, once your premises are accepted, creates the gravest sort of situation when it appears in a Ministerial reading course volume prepared by one of our own men.

Please do not misunderstand. There is no criticism of a chapter on the findings of archeology in construction and illustration of biblical expressions in the same used in the lines of the New Testament writers, nor of the inclusion of an explanation of chama. It centers in the context of the presentation. Every investigator of those early times knows the law is absent writers took these terms and filled them with a biblical context, and made them the vehicles for conveying the gospel message. This is a feature that has been overlooked in the past, but we must not draw wrong inferences therefrom, and we must differentiate between pagan and Christian uses.

There are three main points that, if we understand your work aright, are at variance, as you know, with our recognized denominational teaching. These may be listed thus:

1. You cast doubt upon our generally accepted method of calculating the "number of the beast" (Revelation 13:18).

Prescott-2.

2. You dispute the identity of the beast, and therefore the mark of the beast, as understood and interpreted individual wise; personal name will be the seal of the beast.

3. You dispute or more the mark with the name and the number of the beast, seeing to take the mark of the beast identical with the name and number, thus a wrong setting aside our position that the mark of the beast is the Sunday Institution. It before enlarging upon these points, let us review some of the other factors that you may have the setting for our concern.

If the publication of "The Snake and the Spider" had been purely a personal arrangement, apart from any contemplated and agreed responsibility. But it was published by Revell on the basis of a guarantee that the Ministerial Association, through the Review and Herald, our distributing agent, would use a thousand copies. It was negotiated on that basis, and you proceeded with Revell when that understanding was broken. And even while the Review and Herald was still contemplating printing it, it was with the same expectation as relates to the Association. So we were definitely in the picture from the outset.

Moreover, we have thrown our influence strongly behind the circulation of this book, recommending it in no uncertain terms to all gospel workers in the great movement, in foreign lands as well as in our own America, and with faithful results in circulation to date. Our workers trust us, and we are conscious of a very real responsibility toward them, because of our mutual relationship. Therefore, to consciously give official sanction to theories that belittle or malign a basic position in our message, or to speak, albeit with such are discovered in one of our reading course books by an Adventist author of influence and long experience, would be a betrayal of trust that is unthinkable. A question of our involvement in which we appeal for your cooperation in the rectification of a most unfortunate situation.

Also, the committee of our Review and Herald, or I, and early ready to committee when no one was chosen from the larger, or I, and early ready to committee when a review was still expected to publish the volume. These brethren had made their detailed criticisms to the Review and Herald, at least one of which, at all events, this point, these being lodged with the secretary of that institution. Naturally, they only referred general approval to us, as they were not then aware of any change in the issue of publication. The up result, therefore, between the operation of these two committees. That is how we came to be seen at as we are, for we had just turned from the former plan of selection by the Association of officers to recommendation by experienced consultants--these we have at the office did not read our letter and or officially as before.

As you have been published by the Review and Herald, or by any other of our own agencies for that matter, the book editor would have dealt these points, and I do not believe any one of them would have proceeded with publication until we had an answer effected. Of course, this is a hard case for perspective at Revell. So the great gulf between the initial or general acceptance by the Review and Herald

Reading Committee (subject to the usual book editing) and the recommendation of our own reading committee of four who say, as we all do, the otherwise general excellence of the volume, and served its value for our workers. Printed by Howell, under great pressure, per se, and delay caused by copyright complications, no one had an opportunity to read the completed proofs, save your before the first proof was placed in our hands. I had read the first half of the book with keenest satisfaction, when in manuscript form, but could only see the remaining portion because of time and circumstances. Little dreaming of difficulty, I had read about the same portion in the completed book when the criticisms led us to page 206-210.

Now, returning to the three points enumerated. You imply that no satisfactory solution of the concealed name has yet been found. No person meeting the specifications is identified, but which you infer is essential-if we are to escape his name and name. Thus we are left in ignorance, not only as to the name, but as to the very identity of the beast. This, as you can see, would if accepted, lead to deplorable confusion and futility of warning.

Next, you make the name of the beast identical with the name of the beast by the supposed word "weat" in the A.V. rendering of Rev. 13:17 which, incidentally, you do not indicate is supplied. But, apart from the unjustifiable basis for such a rendering (in view of the evidence of the Greek codices), we are, secondly, to your expressions, wrong doctrinally in our historical exposition of the mark of the beast, as the Sunday Institution in contrast to the true Sabbath. This, you see, strikes directly at the heart of the third angel's message, which is a warning against the mark of the beast, and when warning we profess to have been giving for eighty-five years. If you are right, we are all wrong.

You admonish the reader to face the issue of loyalty to the Father's name as against allegiance to the beast's name, but blur identification of the beast and his name. Incidentally, it may be added, even the Chester Beatty Papyri, on one of its lithographed plates containing Rev. 13:17 (Papyrus I and II having just been received at the Congressional Library), reads "or" in Rev. 13:17, the same as in all the codices, save one or two minor exceptions. And this papyrus is the oldest text yet discovered, antedating the Sinaitic and the Vatican Codices by at least a century, and marvelously confirming every essential of these well-known texts. Surely, it is an unjustifiable procedure to build a major and revolutionary premise upon such a weak and poorly supported foundation.

Your challenge as to the propriety of calculating the number of the beast's name by Roman numerals seems most illogical; Brother Prescott, the designation of John, written in Greek near the close of the first century, was prescriptive in character. The beast was not then in existence, nor did it come within the specific intent of the prophecy for centuries thereafter. John's description was predictive of something future. Its understanding was for those who live at the time of the beast's desecration, the period of the enforcement of his mark. It pointed forward to the Latin Institution headquartered in the West, ruling and ruling through the middle Ages-unless we are all tragically mistaken.

Its use radiated from Rome. Its liturgy, official utterances, and titles, all through the history, have been couched in Latin. The titles of the successive pontiffs of the church designated are in Latin. It is inconceivable that a Latin

Bishop, in an era when the Greek scriptures were related to the background of the Latin Vulgate, should have a Greek title-name that would be calculated on the basis of component Greek letters. Of course the church fathers and Christian writers of the first five centuries were unacquainted with this (Verse Apocalyptic, by Elliott's text and note of p. 240). But they lived and wrote before the time had come for wisdom with which to count the number of the beast, because they were before the period specified for his special acts and assumptions. If every Jew of Israel thereafter, his name would be counted or calculated, in Latin values from the Roman numerals found in his name, just as we have been wont to do through the years.

Now, Brother Prescott, I appeal to you to extricate both yourself and us from this unbecoming situation by preparing a corrective statement that will cover the three points specified. It is the right and honorable and imperative thing to do. Appeal, if you choose, to some of your old declarations in the Protestant's Magazine concerning the Papyrus as the beast. They will start you in good stead.

It is manifestly one thing to have personal reservations or to indulge in individual speculations in the field of prophecy. It is a vastly different matter to incorporate divergent views into a book for general circulation among our workers as a recommended reading course volume, when our policy of selection must be that of choosing books in harmony with our denominational positions, and that will have general support because free from such divisions. Sometimes in writings by those not of our faith, certain expressions occur that we reject, but which cannot be avoided. Under the circumstances the facts are usually understood, and the errors corrected--although even these have subjected the remaining errors to serious criticism by some. But for teachers at variance with our recognized positions to come from one of our own men, in a volume of this character, means irreparable damage and necessitates a corrective statement. This

This, Brother Prescott, can best be made by you. In fact, common courtesy, as well as the golden rule, would require that you, as opportunity be afforded you, and which I am doing, should be at least, both for your, for the satisfaction, and for the reading members. I am praying that you will respond in harmony with my appeal, and that God will help you to form just the right statement to meet the situation.

Sincerely your brother,

NSP

Copy of letter written  
by Bro. From to Bro.  
Prescott re "The Beast's  
Mark" 21 Nov 1900  
Lark Sunday.