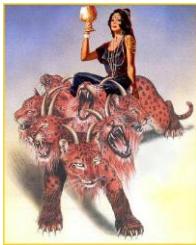


When dealing with how punishments are dealt out according to the Papacy, we read:

"The Catholic Church is a respecter of conscience and of liberty ... Nevertheless, when confronted with heresy ... she has recourse to **FORCE**, to corporal **PUNISHMENT**, to **TORTURE**" (Catholic Professor Alfred Baudrillart, *The Catholic Church, Renaissance, and Protestantism*, pp. 182- 183)

"Heretics may not only be excommunicated [from the church], **but also justly put to death.**" (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911 edition, vol. 14, pp. 766, 768)

"Wherever and whenever there is honest Catholicity, there will be a clear distinction drawn between truth and error, and Catholicity and all forms of heresy. **When she thinks it good to use physical force, she will use it** ... But will the Catholic Church give bond that she will not persecute at all? Will she guarantee absolute freedom and equality of all churches and all faiths? The Catholic Church gives no bonds of her good behavior." (*The Western Watchman* [A Catholic Publication], December 24, 1908)



As we know from church history, not only the Roman papacy, but even Protestants resorted to force and corporal punishment and torture when dealing with those whom they deemed as heretics— all in the name of the LORD. One of those methods was burning people alive at the stake.

"Death by burning, or immolation, refers to the process of death resulting from combustion or extreme heat exposure. Historically, it has been employed in various cultures as a form of capital punishment, particularly during the medieval period, where methods like burning at the stake were used to punish crimes such as heresy, witchcraft, and treason." (Jack Lasky, *ebsca.com*)

Do these images of people being tortured by fire truly express the above claim that "The Catholic Church is a respecter of conscience and of liberty"?



Contrary to all of this, Scripture reveals that God's law, being a transcript of God's very own character, cannot be changed because

it defines the design protocols upon which life operates and any deviation from these protocols results in natural, or inherent, consequences and not from an imposed punishment from an angry Lawgiver. When Scripture says, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), it is not saying, "The wages of sin is God is going to kill you."

The *Weymouth New Testament* expresses it correctly, "For the wages **paid by Sin** are death." Scripture is clear that the natural consequence of sin is death:

"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and **sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.**" (James 1:14-15)

"Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature **will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature.** But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit." (Galatians 6:8)

While Satan's government is founded upon force and coercion, God's is not. Ellen White explains:

"The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; **His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan.**" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 22)

Because "the exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government", God will never use force and coercion upon the sinner. George Fifiield, an SDA pastor and promoter of the 1888 message, understood this concept:

"Thus every attribute of God is simply the attribute of love. And love includes the all in all of our Father. His laws are simply the laws of a kind Father, intended to promote the happiness of his children. **They are not arbitrary. It is not that God, sitting up on some high throne, said to mankind, You do thus and so, and I will let you live; but you do otherwise, and I will kill you. God does not kill. He is the Fountain of life. His laws are not so simply because he said so, but even so because they were so.**

In infinite wisdom he foreknew the underlying principles of happiness and life, and in infinite love he foretold these principles, saying, This way, my child; here is the joy and peace and life forevermore. Don't go that way. That way is misery and death. **Every precept of the Decalogue, which is the epitome of his law, directly speaks from this principle.**" (*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, February 19, 1897, page 90)

Also understanding the difference between design law and a penal legal law. Ellen White wrote:

"God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but he leaves the rejecters of his mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown. Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown, which yields its unfailing harvest. **The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan.**" (*Great Controversy*, p. 36, 1888)

From all that we have read prior, whose government does the Roman Papacy reflect? God's or Satan's? They believe it is God's. The first church historian, Eusebius, recounts how the Roman Church monarchy was believed to be the express image of the monarchy in heaven when he wrote:

"With the Roman Empire monarchy had come on earth as the image of the monarchy in heaven." (S. L. Greenslade, *Church and State from Constantine to Theodosius*)

Thus, the church established her own standards against "heretics" and enforced arbitrary punishments, claiming these punishments were "divine justice."

"Besides the condemnation of divine justice, they must expect to suffer the severe penalties which our authority, guided by heavenly wisdom, shall think proper to inflict." (Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Ch. 27)

Again, they believe this because this is the way they "think" God and His law operate. Since Pope Leo said, "We [the Popes] hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty" (*Encyclical Letter*, June 20, 1894), when they enforce these penal decrees, they believe they are advancing the kingdom of God.

However, is this really the character of Jesus? Does Jesus really summon men or angels to physically fight against those who do not believe in Him? What did Jesus say?

"... 'My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world.'" (John 18:36, New Living Translation)

Jesus' kingdom does not use the methods employed by earthly kingdoms such as force, violence, retaliation, coercion and extortion. This is why the kingdoms of this world are represented in Bible prophecy as ferocious beasts, while a meek and humble lamb represents Jesus' kingdom.

And please remember, Jesus came to this earth to demonstrate the character of His Father. He said, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father" (John 14:9).

This reveals that Jesus nor His Father ever use the methods of worldly kingdoms and governments.



When discussing last day events such as the mark of the beast and the destruction of the lost, we SDAs need to be extremely careful that we do not present God as acting no differently than the Papacy. God's justice isn't exercised by Him lashing out to cause sinners harm for "The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands" (Psalm 9:16). Ellen White expands on this:

"I was shown that the judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord upon them, but [rather] in this way: they place themselves beyond His protection. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then, if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course independent of the Spirit of God after repeated warnings, if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them." (*Letters and Manuscripts*, Vol. 4, Letter 14, 1883)

Do these images of people being tortured by fire depict God as a respecter of conscience and of liberty?



There's no doubt that Scripture speaks of those who receive the mark of the beast "shall be tormented with fire and brimstone" (Revelation 14:9-11), but have we misinterpreted this "torment with fire" according to our own fallen sense of justice? Have we too projected the satanic spirit of the Papacy onto our heavenly Father? Will God act any different from His own law which states, "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire" (Deuteronomy 18:10)?

To truly understand the mark of the beast, we SDAs must understand why the Sabbath and Sunday are involved. The Sabbath came into existence through the **design** of Creation. It is designed as a channel of divine blessing (a magnification of Christ's presence) bringing to humanity rest (freedom) from our own works and rest in Christ's creative and redemptive works (cf. Exodus 20:11; Deuteronomy 5:15). It stands as a mark (or sign) of **design-law** and how God governs His creation, leaving the sinner free to step outside of **the design** and reap the inherent consequences.

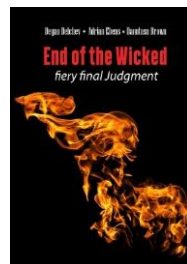
"This is the rest which He offers to us. **It is not something He imposes on us**, but which He in everlasting love and kindness gives to us. **Rest is not a task that is laid on one.** It is not a burden. They who look upon the Sabbath as a burden, have no idea of what the Sabbath of the Lord is. It is rest, perfect, unalloyed rest." (E.J. Waggoner, *The Three Sabbaths*)

The transfer from Sabbath to Sunday observance, however, came through **legislative force** and decreed by Roman church magistrates, and thus is a mark (or sign) of **imperialism** — a government that functions like sinful humans who impose rules that require infliction of punishment for disobedience. This is why the first angel calls us back to worship the Creator/Designer (Revelation 14:6-7). To further illustrate this, I challenge you to present yourself before the legislature and try to propose a change in the law of respiration, which imposes that human beings will now be able to breathe naturally underwater.

Attribute	God's Kingdom	Satan's Kingdom
Law	Unchanging design protocol upon which life operates	Arbitrary imposed rules that require imposed punishments
Government	Family	Survival of the Fittest
Currency	Love/Mercy/Free Choice/Faith in God	Power/Assets/Force/Faith in Self
Citizenship	Sons and Daughters of God	Performance and Achievement

"The real question is, Who do we understand God to be: [1] Creator/Designer whose laws are the protocols upon which life is built and who created the Sabbath for our spiritual health, or [2] an imperial dictator who makes up rules and then enforces those rules with threats of punishment—just like the church of the Dark Ages did for those who violated her Sunday?" (Dr. Timothy Jennings, *comeandreason.org*)

For more info on God's true character and justice, including biblical answers to how the lost will be destroyed, please visit the *Questions Concerning God's Character* section and/or download the free e-book ***End of the Wicked***



Designer or Imperial Dictator?

Do Seventh-day Adventists truly depict God as a respecter of conscience and of liberty?



In Daniel 7:25 we read:

"And he [the little horn] shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."

We as Seventh-day Adventists know that this is referring to the characteristics of the Roman Papacy. During our prophecy seminars, when we come to the phrase "and think to change times and laws" we generally discuss what times and laws the Papacy has thought to change, such as the Sabbath.

But we rarely (if at all) discuss *why* the Papacy even thinks that God's law can be changed. Sure, we show historical comments claiming that the Pope has been given the authority to change God's law, but I am talking about the belief that God's law can be changed in the first place because this is actually the root of the problem.

The core reason why anyone would believe that God's law could be changed is because they view God's law as operating like human law, which has arbitrary rules that require imposed legal punishments from the offended lawmakers. To further show this, on page 168 in his book, *A History of the Reformation*, Thomas Lindsay, explains the infiltration of Roman thought in the church:

"The great men who built up the Western Church were almost all trained Roman lawyers. Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Gregory the Great (whose writings form the bridge between the Latin Fathers and the Schoolmen) were **all men whose early training had been that of a Roman lawyer**, a training which moulded and shaped all their thinking, whether theological or ecclesiastical. **They instinctively regarded all questions as a great Roman lawyer would.** They had the lawyer's craving for exact definitions.

They had the lawyer's idea that the primary duty laid upon them was to enforce obedience to authority, whether that authority expressed itself in external institutions or in the precise definitions of the correct ways of thinking about spiritual truths. **No Branch of western Christendom has been able to free itself from the spell cast upon it by these Roman lawyers of the early centuries of the Christian church."**