

# “Watchman, what of the night ?”

“The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,  
the hour and the end!”

Ezekiel 7:6 (Moffatt)

## ► THIS ISSUE'S READING

**IS THE ROMAN CATHOLIC  
PAPACY AND ITS ALLIES THE  
PROPHESIED APOSTASY OF  
THE LATTER TIMES ...  
OR NOT ?**

**JOINT CATHOLIC-LUTHERAN COM-  
MEMORATION OF THE REFORMATION:  
OCT. 31, 2016 STATEMENT**      **pg. 6**

## *Editor's Preface*

In the last issue of WWN, we began reporting on the upcoming 500 year anniversary of Martin Luther's protest of the abuses within the Roman Catholic Church. It is near unanimously understood that Luther's posting of the 95 theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31, 1517, marks the "official" beginning of the Protestant Reformation. One cannot underestimate the enormous impact the Reformation had on Western Europe and subsequently the entire world over the past half millennium. All areas of human life - political, social, economic, and religious - have been affected. Though not the only cause, Protestantism was certainly a crucial force contributing to the transition from medieval to modern society:

"Most historians agree that the breakup of the all-powerful medieval Church [Roman Catholic] was probably *the most significant factor* in bringing the Middle Ages to an end and that the Reformation was, therefore, *of major importance in the rise of modern Western civilization.*" (brackets and emphasis added).<sup>1</sup>

Considering the monumental importance of this topic, we believe the recent ecumenical dialogue



that the Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Commission will be engaged in for a year (October 31, 2016 to October 31, 2017), warrants a further, more thorough introductory examination than what was presented in the last issue of WWN. As we noted, 2017 also marks the 50th anniversary of the Study Commission which was formed by mutual agreement between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation in the wake of Vatican Council II in 1967. In light of the fact that for the last four and a half centuries before Vatican II, the "doctrinal differences between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics were fundamental and *no middle ground for a compromise was ever found*" (emph. added) <sup>2</sup>, it appears that the continuing ecumenical advances between them over the last 50 years just may culminate in a proposed dissolution of "doctrinal differences" thereby removing "fundamental" obstacles in the creation of a "middle ground ... compromise." Is it not highly noteworthy that since the closing period of the prophetic "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21: 24), Catholics and Protestants (including some Seventh-day Adventists) are steadily moving forward toward the unprecedented embracing of this paradigm?

With this before us, we are convicted that it is justly prudent at this time to present both a biblical and historical basis outlining, in review, the basic Protestant (and Adventist) positions on the Roman Church - especially before Vatican II. Though not exhaustive, as always it is our prayer that readers of the thought paper will be inspired to do further study on this subject so to draw their own conclusions to the validity and prophetic importance of this recent ongoing Roman Catholic / Lutheran series of concessions.

## **The Biblical Testimony Regarding The Roman Catholic Papacy**

The New Testament reveals satanic powers opposed to God's purpose through the victorious work of Jesus Christ under the following central prophetic figures and symbolisms:

- ▶ The Man of Sin (or Man of Lawlessness) in 2 Thessalonians 2.
- ▶ The Antichrist in 1 and 2 John.
- ▶ The Beasts in Revelation 13.
- ▶ The Woman (Great Whore) of Babylon in Revelation 17.

To establish beyond reasonable doubt the identity of these prophetic depictions as the Roman Catholic Papacy (or her allies), one must first find the basis for these portrayals in the Old Testament Book of Daniel.

The second chapter of this book outlines the historical succession of world powers from Daniel's time down to the commencement of the eternal Kingdom of God. The succession (one following right after the other) is presented under the symbolism of a metal man "image" whose "head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay." (verses 31-33). King Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom of Babylon is the first metal, the "head of gold" (verse 38b), followed by "another kingdom," ("after thee" - silver, Medo-Persia, verse 39a), "and another third kingdom of brass" (Greece, verse 39b), "And the fourth kingdom .. strong as iron" (Rome, verse 40a), followed by "the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the [fourth] kingdom shall be divided ... partly strong, and partly broken." (European kingdoms / World nations, verses 41-42). Next, "in the days of these kings shall the God of

heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed ... and it shall stand for ever." (verse 44). This continuous historical fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy establishes from a proper exegesis of this biblical text the correctness of the Historicist method of interpretation.

The seventh chapter of Daniel delineates this same historical succession of world powers under a different figure along with a more detailed explanation of the "fourth kingdom" (verses 23-27). Using the symbolism of "four great beasts ... from the sea, diverse one from another," representing "four kings, which shall arise out of the earth." (compare verse 3 with verse 17), the first of these kings (which refer to "kingdoms," verse 23), was a winged "lion" (Babylon, verse 4; see also Jeremiah 4: 6-7, 13). Next, "another beast, a second, like to a bear" (Medo-Persia, verse 5). "After this ... another, like a leopard" (Greece, verse 6). "After this ... a fourth beast, ... and it had great iron teeth: ... and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns." (Rome, verse 7). Next, Daniel "considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." (verse 8). When Daniel pondered "the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, ... And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows." (verses 19-20), "one of them that stood by ... made [Daniel] know

the interpretation of the things." (verse 16). "The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon the earth." (verse 23, Rome). "And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise" (verse 24a, the tenfold division of Imperial Rome which occurred after its takeover and break-up by the Germanic tribes in 476 A.D.). "And another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he 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." (verses 24b-25, the Roman Catholic Papacy).

Note how exact the identification of this last "horn" is, as there is only *one* power that historically followed this succession as outlined in the chapter:

- ▶ *It is a "little" horn* - Compared to the other kingdoms, the Roman Catholic Church's territorial size is small.
- ▶ *It came out of the "fourth beast"* - The Roman Catholic Church is the successor of the Imperial Roman Empire and remains rooted in its pagan / apostate Christian heritage.
- ▶ *It "came up among" the "ten horns"* - The Roman Catholic Church came to power after the tenfold division of the Roman Empire in 476 A.D.
- ▶ *It uprooted "three" of the other ten horns* - The Roman Catholic Church had three of the "first horns" destroyed, the kingdoms of the Heruli, Vandals, and the Ostrogoths.
- ▶ *It had "eyes of a man, and a mouth that spake very great things" "against the most High" (God), "whose look was more stout" than the other horns* - The Roman Catholic Church claims to be the Kingdom of God on

earth, and through the Papal Office is headed by a man who claims to be "the vicar of Christ," which by its very nature holds all the nations of the world in subservience to himself.

▶ *It is "diverse" from the other horns* - The other kingdoms were primarily only political in nature. The Roman Papacy is different. While claiming to be primarily religious in nature (a church) it is in actuality both a religious and political "kingdom."

▶ *It persecutes "the saints of the most High"* - The Roman Catholic Church put to death tens of millions of Christians who dissented from its rule during the Dark Ages.

▶ *It will "think to change times and laws"* - The Papal Church has taken many pagan "times" (seasons) and has "thought" to have changed them into "Christian times" (like Easter, Christmas, Valentine's Day, All Hallows Eve, etc.). It has also "thought" to change God's Law (like eliminating the 2nd Commandment of the Decalogue forbidding the worship of images, dividing the 10th Commandment into two separate Commandments, and changing the observance of the Sabbath from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week).

▶ *It will reign "until a time, times and the dividing of time"* - The Little Horn would rule for three and a half prophetic years which are 1260 actual years. The Roman Catholic Papacy reigned for 1260 years between 538 A.D. - 1798 A.D.

There is only one power that historically fulfills *all* these biblical identifying points: The Roman Catholic Papacy. The satanic power typified in the New Testament texts above are simply additional extensions, based on Daniel's prophecies, describing the same Papal power (and its allies) in further

progressive detail.

### **The Historical Testimony Regarding The Protestant View Of The Roman Catholic Papacy**

The roots of Protestantism stretch back to the beginning of Roman Catholic domination over nearly all of Western Europe in 538 A.D. Successively thereafter, faithful individuals both without and within the papal system stood increasingly opposed to the growing excesses, abuses, and falsehoods that were being perpetuated by it:

"The Protestant Reformation had strong political, economic, and intellectual overtones; nevertheless, *it was primarily a religious movement ...*

"In the later Middle Ages [1300 - 1500] there developed within the ranks of the Roman Catholic Church *a growing dissatisfaction with some of its fundamental doctrines*. Some had come to believe that the Roman Catholic Church had departed so far from the spirit and practices of the apostles and early fathers that it could no longer be considered God's appointed custodian of the Christian religion. They began to define *The Church* to mean the sum total of all those who put their faith in Christ, not any one specific institution. *The Scriptures alone, not the decisions and traditions of an organized church, became for these reformers the sole authoritative source for Christian dogma*. Their growing conception of the Christian religion as a direct relationship between man and God *tended to lessen the importance of the professional clergy and the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church*. They spoke of the priesthood of all believers. These ideas the reformers believed to be in harmony with those of St. Augustine and

the early Church, as well as with those to be found in the Scriptures. They clashed sharply, however, with the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic hierarchy of the Late Middle Ages. *This doctrinal split within the ranks of organized Western Christendom was the most fundamental of all the causes of the Reformation.*" (Brkts. and emph. added).<sup>3</sup>

From the beginning of the sixteenth century onward, "this doctrinal split" eventually manifested itself in a total separation of the Protestants from the organized Roman Catholic Church structure. The major reason was the almost universal belief that the papal system constituted the prophesied anti-christian apostasy of the latter times:

"Protestant reformers, including Martin Luther, John Calvin, Thomas Cranmer, John Thomas, John Knox, and Cotton Mather, felt the early church *had been led into apostasy by the Papacy and identified it as the Antichrist ...* Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other Protestant reformers *saw the Antichrist as a present feature in the world of their time, fulfilled in the papacy ...*

*"The Protestant reformers tended to hold the belief that the Antichrist power would be revealed so that everyone would comprehend and recognize that the Pope is the real, true Antichrist and not the vicar of Christ."* (Emph. added).<sup>4</sup>

The reformers came to these conclusions chiefly by following the sound interpretive method (hermeneutic) of understanding apocalyptic prophetic symbolism known as historicism - a school of thought outlined in the biblical text of a number of chapters in the Book of Daniel:

"The Historicist view was held by all the Protestant Reformers - that is, every major

preacher of the gospel on the Protestant side of the Reformation. *They all believed that the Papacy was the Antichrist ...*

"The word 'Antichrist' comes from the Greek word 'antichristos' which means 'in the place of.' The Popes all confirm this name because they all wear a triple crown, representing dominion over Heaven, Earth and Hell, and they take the name 'Vicar of Christ' which means 'In the place of Christ'" (Emph. added).<sup>5</sup>

"In the [Roman Catholic] Counter-Reformation, Preterism and Futurism, was advanced by Catholic Jesuits beginning in the 16th century in response to the identification of the Papacy as Antichrist. *These were rival methods of prophetic interpretation: the futurist and the preterist systems both of which are in conflict with the historicist method and the interpretations derived thereby.*

"Historically, preterists and non-preterists have generally agreed that the Jesuit Luis de Alcazer (1554 - 1613) wrote the first systematic preterist exposition of prophecy ... during the Counter-Reformation ...

"The view of Futurism, that the events happen in the end time was advanced by Francisco Ribera, a Jesuit priest, who developed this theory in ... his 1585 treatise on the Book of Revelation ... [Jesuit Cardinal] Robert Bellarmine codified this view, giving in full *the Catholic theory ...* of a personal Antichrist to come just before the end of the world ... *thus endeavoring to dispose of the exposition which saw Antichrist in the pope ...* Widespread Protestant identification of the Papacy as the Antichrist persisted in the USA until the early 1900s when the Scofield Reference Bible was published by Cyrus Scofield. *This commentary promoted Futur-*

*ism, causing a decline in the Protestant identification of the Papacy as Antichrist.*" (Brkts. and emph. added).<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, by "the early 1900s" most of Christendom's Protestants had abandoned the biblical Historicist method for either Preterism among the Liberal / Modernist wing or Futurism among the Fundamentalist / Conservative wing. Seventh-day Adventists were virtually about the only major Protestant church to resist and repudiate this crucial shift in prophetic doctrinal position. And while Roman Catholics and Protestants remained divided, the estrangement was no longer, on the part of Protestants, based on Scripture. Rather (with exceptions like the Adventists) it was socially sectarian - due to pride, prejudice, bigotry, etc., that clannish tradition had continued. However, during and after the sessions conducted by the Roman Church at its Vatican Council II, much of this societally induced animosity between the Romanists and the Protestants was "smoothed over" through ecumenical dialogue focusing heavily on the social issues held "in common" by both groups. Having cast away the biblical truth concerning the Roman Catholic Papacy, the last 50 years have prepared the way through ecumenically unscriptural compromises for a "visible unity" with Rome, her allies, and finally with all false religion. ❖

GLP

### **CATHOLIC-LUTHERAN CONCESSIONS TOWARD VISIBLE UNITY - 2016 THRU 2017 Joint Statement of October 31, 2016**

Pope Francis and Lutheran World Federation president Bishop Munib Younan signed a joint declaration in Lund, Sweden, to improve relations through dialogue with the

goal of bringing Catholics and Lutherans together at the Eucharistic table. October 31, 2016, was chosen to kick-start the yearlong celebration toward the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. The statement consists of five subtitled sections. Each one builds upon the previous and progressively fosters the concepts of common faith, unity, and mission. The main points of each section are highlighted as follows:

■ **"With thankful hearts."** The 50 years of ecumenical dialogue that has been going on between the two parties is cited as helping them overcome many differences and deepening their mutual understanding and trust. It is implied that this extends past their religious experience and into current social issues such as human suffering and persecution. "Through dialogue and shared witness we are no longer strangers."

■ **"Moving from conflict to communion."** The Reformation is gratefully viewed for its "spiritual and theological gifts" while at the same time lamented for wounding "the visible unity of the Church." These theological differences and historical disagreements "were accompanied by prejudice and conflicts" which led to hatred and violence. This impeded the ministry of reconciliation as "religion was instrumentalized for political ends." The past cannot be changed, but what and "how it is remembered can be transformed." A prayer for healing of the wounds and memories that cloud our view of one another is admonished because we hear God's command to set all of this aside. It is grace that moves us "towards the communion to which God continually calls us."

How clouded were the views of the Reformers for four and a half centuries? Martin Luther clearly understood the many discrep-

ancies between the teaching of the Bible and that of the Church of Rome. The huge difference made him declare that the pope is the Antichrist, deceiving the whole world. Protestants thereafter were pretty much in full agreement with this. What has changed in the Romish Church in the last 50 years that warrants such a radical departure? After all, is not apostasy from the truth the primary culprit behind the centuries of woe and misery which both sides *now* claim they want to heal?

■ **“Our commitment to common witness.”**

The people of both communities “yearn to receive the Eucharist at one table, as the concrete expression of full unity.” Partaking of the Eucharist together is viewed as the necessary step to achieving full visible unity. The ministry of both communions involving pressing social issues such as poverty, justice, human dignity, peace, and ecological concern for the environment and planet, will be better served in union with one another around “the Eucharistic table.”

■ **“One in Christ.”** As Catholics and Lutherans work toward greater unity, they urge other “Christian World Communions and Fellowships” to join them in prayer. These “ecumenical partners” are invited “to walk with us” as they “move from conflict to communion ... as part of the one body of Christ.”

■ **“Calling upon Catholics and Lutherans worldwide.”** The word, “solidarity,” is used to describe the goal of visible unity. This term is universal in contemporary ecumenical theology. Through doctrinal compromise, separation is laid aside that all Christians may come to this shared life expressed in the Eucharist and rooted in the “power of the Triune God.” ❖

DJT/GLP

1. John B. Harrison and Richard E. Sullivan, *A Short History Of Western Civilization* [“What Is The Meaning Of The Protestant Reformation”] (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1971), 519.
2. Harrison and Sullivan, *A Short History Of Western Civilization* (New York, NY: Alfred A Knopf, Inc., 1971), 521.
3. *Ibid.*, 511.
4. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, *Historicists interpretations of the Book of Revelation* (Article: Antichrist), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicist\\_interpretations\\_of\\_the\\_Book\\_of\\_Revelation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicist_interpretations_of_the_Book_of_Revelation)
5. Richard Gunther, *666 - The Anti-Christ to come?* (Historicism.com), <http://www.historicism.com/misc/666antichrist.htm>
6. Wikipedia, *Antichrist* (Article: Roman Catholicism), <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antichrist>

\* All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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“Watchman, what of the night?” is published by the Adventist Laymen’s Foundation of Iowa, Inc., P.O. Box 665, Nora Springs, IA 50458-0665, USA.

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