

ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 127

“The Legacy of Pope John Paul II”

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The recent pictures of ailing Pope John Paul II, attempting with difficulty to raise his right hand to bless the people from the window of the Gemelli Polyclinic’s hospital, have shown to the world that the Pope is dying. The Pope suffers from Parkinson’s disease, has difficulty breathing, and walks poorly. His slurred speeches, heard around the world, have led many to question the wisdom of electing a pope for life.

It is evident that the popular acclamation of the Pope as “Vicar of Christ” and “God on earth,” does not exempt him from the frailty of old age. The prospect of the imminent death of John Paul II brings a sense of relief to the embarrassment of seeing the Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church evoking pity for his painful condition, rather than admiration for his energetic leadership.

The deteriorating physical condition of Pope John Paul II points to the imminent election of a new pope. Some of the questions in the mind of many are: What have been the achievements of John Paul II? What legacy does John Paul leave to the new pope? Who will be his successor? What role will the new Pope play in the twenty-first century? Will the papacy continue to exercise such a strong influence in the religious and political world? How does the present and future influence of the papacy fit into the prophetic scenario of our Seventh-day Adventist Church?

It was my intent to examine in this newsletter, both the achievements of John Paul II and the future of the papacy. These two topics go together, because in many ways the present pope has shaped the future of the papacy and of the Catholic church, especially by appointing the largest number of cardinals in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. Of the 135 Cardinals who will elect the new pope, 130 have been appointed by John Paul II. Vatican observers note that the future of the papacy and of the Catholic church has been shaped to a large extent by this present pope.

This means that to understand the future of the papacy, it is imperative to understand the goals and accomplishments of John Paul. This is a demanding task, because his pontificate spans 27 years, during which John Paul has travelled more than any previous pope, has canonized more saints than any previous pope, and has appointed more cardinals than any previous pope. Somebody said that John Pope has kissed the tarmac of more airports than politicians have kissed babies!

After spending considerable time examining and writing on the achievements of John Paul II, it became evident that this newsletter would become exceedingly long, if I were to discuss also the future of the papacy. Thus, I decided to limit the scope of this newsletter to “The Legacy of Pope John Paul II,” and deal with “The Future of the Papacy” in the next newsletter. Hopefully this newsletter will wet your appetite for the next one.

SABBATH DEVELOPMENTS

One of the rewards of my ministry, is the interaction with pastors who are accepting the Sabbath through the printed page. Hardly a week goes by without receiving phone calls or emails from ministers who have accepted the Sabbath.

This morning I received a call from a pastor in Sarasota, Florida, who kept me on the phone for almost an hour. He called me to order a supply of my books and recordings, but in the course of the conversation, he shared with me his experience. His father is a Baptism minister and he himself has served first as a Baptism and then as a Church of Christ minister.

The reading of two of my books, *Immortality or Resurrection?* and *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*, caused him to accept the biblical wholistic view of human nature and the validity of the Sabbath. He resigned from the Church of Christ and started his own independent church.

He was eager to order, not only my books, but also my recordings to share with his congregation. He extended me an invitation to speak at his congregation. At present my calendar is full, but I hope to minister to

these believers later this year. It is a heartwarming experience to see how the Lord can use the printed page to lead sincere Christians to an understanding of His revealed truths.

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the upcoming seminars for the months of February and March 2005. Every Sabbath it is a great pleasure for me to meet subscribers who travel considerable distances to attend the seminars.

FEBRUARY 4-5: LOS ANGELES: ROLLING HILLS SDA CHURCH

Location: 28340 Highridge Road, Rolling Hills Estates, California 90274-3405.

For information call Pastor Jeff Rosenthal at (714) 522-5280 or (714) 928-6596.

FEBRUARY 11-12: VICTORIA SDA CHURCH, BRONX, NY

Location: 1271 Burke Avenue, Bronx, New York 10469

For information call Pastor Bancroft Daughma at (914) 381-1292

FEBRUARY 18-19: NEW YORK - JACKSON HEIGHTS SDA CHURCH

Location: 72 - 25 Woodside Avenue, Woodside, New York 11377

For information call Pastor John Pirotsky at (718) 343-2171

FEBRUARY 25-26: LAS VEGAS PARADISE SDA CHURCH

Location: 4575 South Sandhill Road, Las Vegas, Nevada 89121

For information call Pastor George McLain at (702) 456-3538

MARCH 4-5: CERES SDA CHURCH (MODESTO, CA)

Location: 1633 N. Central Avenue, Ceres, California 95307.

For information call Pastor Keith Mulligan at (209) 538 1024 or (209) 537-0601.

MARCH 11-12: LONDON GHANA SDA CHURCH, ENGLAND

Location: John Loughborough School, Holcombe Road, Tottenham, London EN N179AD.

For information call Pastor Emmanuel Osei at 020 8699 7881

MARCH 18-19: GREENWICH SDA CHURCH, ENGLAND

Location: Devenshire Drive, Greenwich, London SE10 6JZ.

For information call Pastor Terry Messenger at 020 8262 6535

MARCH 25-26-27: BERMUDA- ROCKAWAY SDA CHURCH

Location: Mt. Zion A. M. E. Church, Whale Bay Road, Southampton, Bermuda.

For information call Pastor Mike Faison at (441) 234-0888.

SPECIAL OFFER ON *THE PASSION OF CHRIST IN SCRIPTURE AND HISTORY*

The timely ***THE PASSION OF CHRIST IN SCRIPTURE AND HISTORY*** (208 pages), came off the press few weeks ago. 3ABN invited me to share the highlights of this book in the two hours 3ABN TODAY program. The response has been overwhelming. Thousands of people have called from all over the world to order copies. The first printing was sold out in few weeks.

You will be proud to have copies of this timely book for your personal study of the Sabbath School dealing with *His Wondrous Cross*, and to give with confidence to your friends. The book is factual, not confrontational. It is designed to help many people to recognize the fundamental Catholic heresies embedded in Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. More important still, the book presents in a clear and compelling way the unique Adventist understanding of the redemptive accomplishments of the Cross, within the context of Protestant and Catholic teachings.

To make it possible for many to benefit from this timely study, we offer the book by the case of 30 copies at the special offer of only \$5.00 per copy, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$20.00. You can order a single copy or a case of 30 copies online at <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/passionoffer.htm>, or by emailing us your order at <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>, or by calling us at (269) 471-2915, (269) 978-6878.

NEW OFFER ON HITACHI LCD PROJECTORS

The large volume of HITACHI projectors purchased by Adventist churches and schools, has led HITACHI to reduce their price for the fourth time on most of their projectors. For example, the new price for the award winning 2000 lumens HITACHI CP-X328 is now only \$1,695.00, including 3 years of 24/7 replacement warranty, instead of the factory suggested retail price of \$7,495.00. The new price on the 2700 lumens HITACHI CP-S420 is only \$1995.00, instead of the factory suggested retail price of \$8,495.00.

If your church needs a powerful projector to throw the image from the balcony (80' to 100' feet away from the screen), HITACHI has just come out with an outstanding 4500 lumens projector CP-X1250 High Resolution, that will project a very bright picture from far away even with the flood lights on. The projector has many new features like shift lens and four interchangeable lenses that can throw a picture from 10' to 100' feet away. The special price to our churches and schools is only \$4,400.00, instead of the factory listed price of \$14,995.00.

For specific information on all the complete series of HITACHI projectors, visit the new **BP Projectors** website at: <http://www.biblicalpherspectives.com/projector.html>. If you have a problem accessing the NEW website, just email us your enquiry or call us at (269) 978-6878 or (269) 471-2915. We will be glad to give you all the information about the special HITACHI offer.

DOES YOUR CHURCH NEED A SCREEN?

If your church is looking to buy a screen, the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY, one of the largest in the world, has agreed to offer to our churches and schools, their line of screens at 30% discount. To view the various models and their factory prices, visit the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY website at www.da.lite.com. For special prices call us at (269) 471-2915 or email us your request about the size of the screen to: sbacchicchi@biblicalpherspectives.com. The screen will be shipped to you directly by DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY.

IS YOUR CHURCH LOOKING FOR AN AUDIO OR VIDEO TAPES DUPLICATOR?

If your church needs an AUDIO CASSETTES or a VIDEO TAPES duplicator, I will be glad to offer you either of them at a bargain price. The RECORDER cassette duplicator consists of four units, capable of copying 15 audio cassettes at one time.

The 16 SONY and MITSUBISHI VCRs are practically new and can copy 16 video tapes at one time. They come with a special sound splitter and enhancer. Since I am no longer duplicating audio or video tapes, I am prepared to let this excellent equipment go at a bargain price. For details, call me at (269) 471-2915.

THE BEST SDA COMMENTARY ON REVELATION

Much of the prophetic message and mission of the Seventh-Adventist Church derives from the Book of Revelation. Yet until now our church did not have an authoritative commentary. Finally, Andrews University Press has published a thorough *Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, authored by an outstanding Adventist scholar. This new commentary provides a wealth of information needed to unlock the meaning of the prophetic message of Revelation for our times.

Read the full story at my website: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/RevelationofJesusChrist.htm>. If you have a problem ordering the book through my website, just email us your order or call us at (269) 978-6878 or (269) 471-2915. We will be glad to take your order and mail you the book immediately.

SPECIAL OFFER ON ALL MY RECORDINGS

At this time you can order the complete package of all recordings for **ONLY \$100.00**, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$490.00. The package includes the late **3ABN two hours interview** on a DVD disk, **ONE CD-ROM** with all my research (over 7000 pages), **ONE CD-ROM** with all my PowerPoint lectures, **TWO MP3 AUDIO** disks with 22 popular lectures, and the **FIVE DVD DISKS** or **FIVE**

VIDEO TAPES with 10 live PowerPoint lectures of my SABBATH/ADVENT seminars, taped few months ago by a TV crew at Andrews University.

The special price is **ONLY \$100.00**, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$490.00. Read the details at my website: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/SPECIALPACKAGEOFFER.htm>. If you have a problem ordering the package through my website, just email us your order or call us at (269) 978-6878 or (269) 471-2915. We will be glad to take your order by phone and mail you the package immediately.

BED AND BREAKFAST IN LONDON, ENGLAND

If you are planning to travel to London, England in the near future you will be pleased to learn about a most gracious Adventist couple who offer the best bed and breakfast service you can find in London for only £20.00 a day. I stayed with this couple numerous times and they have always treated me so well that I promised to announce their services in this newsletter. They have three nice guest rooms, a lovely garden, and a modern bathroom. The home is close to Heathrow airport and at a walking distance from the Subway. You will be treated royally at a bargain price. You can see the pictures and read the details at my website <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/BED&BREAKFAST.htm>

“The Legacy of Pope John Paul II”

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Pope John Paul II’s current precarious physical conditions, should not obscure his political, social, ecclesiastical, and ecumenical achievements of the last quarter century. John Allen, a Vatican correspondent for the *National Catholic Reporter* and the author of *Conclave*—a book that examines how the next pope will be elected—rightly notes: “There are a lot of people who believe that John Paul II will be remembered as John Paul The Great. And there are very few popes who have received that appellation. We are talking about Gregory The Great, Leo The Great. It’s not a very

long list.” What makes the present pope great in the estimation of many people, are especially his achievements in three distinct areas: political, ecclesiastical, and ecumenical. Let us take a look at each of them.

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

The political achievements of John Paul II are well-known. He played a major role in the collapse of Soviet Communism, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Eastern and Western Europe. Hywel Williams, writes in *The Guardian* of London: “John Paul II is a political activist who knows that the world can be changed as long as you are well organised and mentally sorted. Not for him the cultivated pessimism of some Catholic intellectuals. He has a powerful record of opposition to totalitarianism in both its fascist and its communist form. And from that struggle he has learned the central lesson of his life: evil only seems to triumph, but faith-driven politics can win through.”

John Paul has condemned, not only the totalitarianism of communism, but also the materialism of capitalism. In his article on “The Future of the Papacy,” William H. Shannon observes that John Paul’s “influence has been global. He was a major factor in breaking the power of Communism, but he has also been quick to point out the evils inherent in a capitalistic system devoted to consumerism, greed and profit. He has spoken out vigorously against what he rightly calls a culture of death: a culture in which rampant violence breeds war and genocide, abortion and euthanasia, poverty and homelessness—all these and so many other crimes against the inalienable dignity of human persons. In many ways Pope John Paul II has been the conscience of a troubled world.”

Today the Pope is revered by many as the man who embodies the political and spiritual aspirations of mankind. Hywel Williams notes that “When it comes to the need to defend the rights of nations as well as individuals against the rule of might, Wojtyla has been a Catholic hero. From the defence of Polish independence rights through to the condemnation of American aggression in the Middle East, the papal words are always a powerful reminder that the very notion of international order is rooted in Catholicism.” The role of the papacy as an international power-broker, has prophetic implications to be examined shortly.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

The ecclesiastical achievements of John Paul II can be seen in his tireless efforts to save the Catholic Church from disintegration by reaffirming the commitment of its members and leaders to the historical teachings of Rome. Noteworthy are his efforts to stem the decline of Sunday observance through his Sunday homilies and his two historical Pastoral Letters, designed to revive Sunday observance. His worldwide travels have brought the papacy to the people in an unprecedented way.

An important lesson that John Paul learned in the hot battle he fought against Nazism and communism in his own country of Poland, is that the church can survive only if it is rigorously disciplined and strongly united in essential doctrines and piety. Consequently a major goal of John Paul's pontificate has been to forge a united church, updated in its external forms, but strongly traditional in its adherence to church discipline and teaching.

One of the first steps he took to achieve this goal, was to revive the Sacred Congregation for Doctrine of Faith—formerly known as the Inquisition. This watchdog organization, presided by the German-born Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger—a possible papal candidate—has pressed charges against such theologians as Edward Schillebeeckx of Holland, Jack Pohier of France, Bernard Hasler of Switzerland. It has stripped Hans Kung of his post as teacher of Catholic theology at the University of Tubingen, and has suspended Father Charles Curran from his teaching post at the Catholic University of America, in Washington, D.C.

John Paul's Impact on the Future of the Catholic Church

Another step taken by Pope John Paul has been to gradually build up a Vatican curia with a core of tough disciplinarians who will support his conservative program. The same is true of the bishops and cardinals that he has handpicked every year on the basis of their conservative views. All but 5 of the 135 cardinals who will elect the new pope, have been appointed by John Paul. By changing the makeup of the hierarchies, John Paul has ensured that long after his death, the Catholic Church will remain loyal to her traditional teachings that he has fought hard to defend. The Catholic

Church of the future will be to a large extent the church that John Paul has forged.

“Wojtyla's instinct,” writes Hywel Williams, “is that the 21st century will be the great Christian century—a real springtime for Catholic humanity, despite all the present evidence of a decline in communicants and vocations. For vision and consolation he turns away from western Europe—populated for him by bourgeois and parochial wimps. Africa and Latin America are where the action lies: continents of peasant vitality and all signed up for the voyage on that ark of salvation.”

Catholic revisionists and feminists accuse John Paul of being out of touch with the reality of the Catholic Church, especially in America. The truth of the matter is that it is these Catholic dissenters who are out of touch with the reality of the Catholic Church in Rome. These fail to realize that John Paul is not running a democracy, but a pyramidal hierarchy whose head is the pope and whose center is Rome. John Paul believes in a centralized form of church government, ruling the church top down from the center. The paradox is, as Hywel Williams puts it, that “He [John Paul] decided to fight totalitarianism in the secular world by cultivating a corresponding totalitarianism on Peter’s throne.”

To genuine Catholics the Pope speaks with the unique authority of one who claims to be the vicar of Christ on earth. He embodies the teaching authority of the church which, Catholics believe, was given to the Pope by Christ through the power of the keys bestowed upon Peter and his successors.

This high Catholic view of the Pope as the impersonation of Christ on earth, makes the words of his speeches, encyclicals, and pastoral letters, the final word that any true Catholic must and eventually will accept. While most Catholics may publicly express their disagreement with their Pope's teachings, privately and inwardly they welcome his word of authority. It gives to them a sense of assurance, certainty and stability, amidst the confusing and conflicting teachings and values of our time.

The Revival of Sunday Observance

A significant landmark of John Paul pontificate is his tireless effort to revive Sunday observance by encouraging the participation in the Sunday Mass, known to Catholics as the Sunday Eucharist. He strongly believes

that the decline in the attendance to the Sunday Mass, must be reversed, if the Catholic church is to survive as a viable institution.

To accomplish this goal, John Paul has not only repeatedly reminded Catholics of the importance of the Sunday Mass during his Sunday homilies from his Vatican residence, but he has also promulgated two historic Pastoral Letters devoted specifically to the revival of Sundaykeeping.

The Pastoral Letter “*Dies Domini*—The Lord’s Day. The first Pastoral Letter “*Dies Domini* —The Lord’s Day,” was issued on July 5, 1998, in anticipation of the Year of Jubilee (2000). In this 30 pages historical document, John Paul makes a passionate plea for a revival of Sunday observance, by appealing to the international community of nations to promulgate a Sunday legislation to facilitate its observance.

The appeal is based on the Pope’s conviction that Sundaykeeping is a moral imperative rooted in the Sabbath commandment that must be defended by civil legislation. Contrary to the traditional view of Sundaykeeping as a Catholic institution establish by the authority of the church, in his pastoral letter John Paul attempts to make Sunday observance a biblical institution, rooted in the Sabbath commandment, and to be protected by civil governments.

A lengthy 50 pages analysis of the Pastoral Letter *Dies Domini*, is found in chapter 1 of my book *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*. Incidentally, this analysis has been favorably reviewed in major newspapers like *Washington Post*. The latter’s article “When is the Lord’s Day? Adventist Says Pope Unfairly Promotes Sunday Sabbath” (Jan 23, 1999), acknowledges that John Paul’s attempt to promote Sunday as the biblical Sabbath, poses biblical and legal problems.

The conclusion of my study is that John Paul has legitimate reasons for making a passionate plea for a revival of Sunday observance at a time when church attendance is dwindling at an alarming rate. But, the solution to the crisis of declining church attendance must be sought, not by making Sunday the biblical Sabbath, or by calling upon the international community of nations to promulgate Sunday laws, but by summoning Christians to “REMEMBER,” what they have long forgotten, namely, that the seventh day is Holy unto the Lord our God.

Unfortunately, Pope John Paul fails to realize that the essence of the Sabbath Commandment, is not the Sunday Eucharistic celebration, but giving priority to God in our thinking and living during the 24 hours of the seventh day. The biblical vision of the Sabbath as the consecration of the seventh-day's time unto the Lord, is missing in the two pastoral letters.

The Pastoral Letter “*Mane Nobiscum Domine— Stay with Us, Lord.*” The second Pastoral Letter “Stay with us, Lord,” was released on October 8, 2004, to inaugurate THE YEAR OF THE SUNDAY EUCHARIST, beginning on October 2004 and ending on October 2005. This Pastoral Letter is less known than the first one, yet it is equally important. In many ways it represents the culmination of John Paul's burning desire to revive Sunday observance by encouraging the faithful to participate in the Sacrament of the Sunday Eucharist. He appeals to Catholics “to rediscover the celebration of the Eucharist as the heart of Sunday” (#7). He urges Catholic bishops “to stress particularly *the Sunday Eucharist* and *Sunday* itself, experienced as a special day of faith” (#8).

The Sunday Eucharist is fundamental to Catholic Sunday worship, because, as John Paul puts it, “under the species of the bread and wine, Christ offers Himself to the Father in the same act of sacrifice by which He offered Himself on the Cross” (*Dies Domini*, #43). Catholics believe that when the priest elevates and consecrates the Eucharist, the wafer is miraculously transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus. This miracle is known as transubstantiation.

This view of the Mass as a reenactment of Christ's atoning sacrifice before God and on behalf of the faithful, makes attendance to the Sunday Mass “a grave obligation.” By participating in the Sunday Mass and by partaking of the Eucharist, Catholics are nourishing themselves with the physical body and blood of Jesus and are promised the immediate benefits of Christ's sacrifice which is reenacted on their behalf before their eyes.

Theological Problems. This sacrificial and sacramental view of the Lord's Supper poses theological and practical problems. *Theologically*, the Scripture invites us to partake of the *Words of Christ*, not of the *Body of Christ*. Christ explained what He meant by eating His flesh and

drinking His blood, saying: “It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63).

In ancient Israel sacrificial offerings took place at the Temple on the Sabbath (Num 28:9-10), but Sabbath observance did not entail participating in the sacrificial rituals of the Tabernacle or of the Temple. Jesus or His followers did not go to the Temple on the Sabbath to watch the priestly sacrificial liturgy. Instead, they went to the synagogue to participate in the study of Scripture, to pray, and to sing praises to God.

Paul explains that the Lord’s Supper is a “proclamation,” not a reenactment of Christ’s death. “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26). The verb “proclaim—*katangellein*” is used in the New Testament for heralding the Gospel (1 Cor 9:14) and for making known one’s faith (Rom 1:8). This suggests that the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is a proclamation of the Gospel directed manward, not a reenactment of Christ’s sacrifice directed Godward, as taught by the Catholic church and now popularized by Gibson’s movie on *The Passion of the Christ*.

Pope John Paul and the Catholic dogma ignore that the essence of the Sabbath commandment, is not participating in a sacrificial liturgy but consecrating the Sabbath time to God. The Sabbath commandment invites us to offer to God not sacrifices, but our time, which for many is the most precious commodity to sacrifice. By giving priority to God in our thinking and living on the Sabbath, we show in a tangible way that God really counts in our lives.

Practical Problems. *Practically*, by making the Eucharistic (the Lord’s Supper) celebration the core of Sunday observance, the Pope is facilitating the secularization of Sunday—the very trend he is trying hard to reverse. The reason is that many sincere Catholics believe that once they have fulfilled “the Mass precept” by watching the priest celebrating the Eucharist, they are free to spend the rest of their Sunday time as they wish.

The problem is compounded by the provision of Second Vatican council which allows for the anticipation of the first Sunday Mass (Eucharist) to Saturday afternoon or evening—a practice which has been

adopted worldwide by all the Catholic churches. By attending the Sunday Mass on Saturday evening, Catholics are free to spend their Sunday seeking for pleasure or profit, since they are relieved from the obligation of Sunday church attendance.

The preceding observations serve to highlight the problems that the Pope has created by changing the Sabbath to Sunday in early Christianity. It was not just a change of numbers or names, but a change of meaning, authority and experience. It was a change from a divinely established *Holy Day* into what has become a man-made *holiday*. For the Pope to reverse today the trend of declining church attendance, is a monumental task, because most people today want *holidays*, not *Holy Days*.

ECUMENICAL UNITY UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE POPE

The achievements of John Paul extend beyond the parochial concerns of the Catholic Church, to include people of all Christian and non-Christian religions. Thus, a major goal of his pontificate has been to enhance his role as the moral and spiritual leader of mankind. John Paul sees himself as a man called by God to serve as the spiritual leader not only of his own church but also of mankind.

The global vision of John Paul is evident in his important encyclical, entitled “*Ut Unum Sint*—That All May Be One,” issued on May 25, 1995. He addresses himself to all the Christian churches asking them what changes need to be made in the papal office in order for the pope to become a source of unity, rather than division, among Christians. He sees this as an immensely important issue that requires the cooperation of all Christians. Thus, he invites Church leaders and their theologians to engage with him “in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for his Church and allowing ourselves to be deeply moved by his plea that ‘they may be one.’” (#96).

The aim of the dialogue is “to find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation” (# 95). In this bold statement, John Paul suggests the “new situation” in which Christians live today, call for discovering new ways of exercising his primacy. The implication is that the present role of papacy needs to be modified to meet the new challenges. What is “the new situation” to which the papacy must adapt itself.

The “new situation” John Paul has in mind, is most likely the longing that has arisen in the hearts of many Christians to overcome divisions and become one visible Church of God. He writes: “In recent times, The Lord of the Ages has begun to bestow more generously upon divided Christians remorse over their divisions and a longing for unity. Everywhere, large numbers have felt the impulse of this grace and among our separated brothers and sisters also there increases from day to day a movement, fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, for the restoration of unity among all Christians” (# 7).

The Need to Return to a More Collegial Role of the Papacy

In his encyclical John Paul suggests the direction in which the papacy needs to move in order to promote Christian unity without compromising the essence of the primacy. He says: “For a whole millennium [the first millennium] the Churches [of the East and the West] were ‘linked in a union of faith and sacramental life...if disagreements in belief and discipline arose among them, the Roman See acted by common consent as moderator’” (# 95).

In this startling statement John Paul suggests that today for the pope to exercise his primacy over all Christians, it is necessary to return to the role of the Bishop of Rome during the first millennium, when “the Roman See acted by common consent as moderator.” During the first millennium the Bishop of Rome saw himself as a bishop among bishops, with the special responsibility of maintaining the unity of the churches, protecting Catholic teachings, and serving as the spokesman of the church at large.

The Emergence of Papal Supremacy in the Second Millennium

Until the ninth century the Bishop of Rome was chosen by the local clergy and laity living in the city. The election in 882 of Marinus from Tuscany, was a significant departure, because he was the first bishop of another see. Drastic changes occurred in the power of the papacy during the second millennium, especially during the Pontificate of Gregory VII (1073-1085) and Innocent III (1198-1216).

Gregory VII described himself as the “universal pastor” and claimed the right to appoint and depose not only bishops, but also emperors and kings. Similarly Innocent III saw the pope as “set midway between God and man, below God, but above men, given not only the universal Church but the whole world to govern.” He changed the designation of his office from “Vicar of Peter” to “Vicar of Christ.” He said of himself: “Although successor of the prince of the apostles, we are not his vicar or that of any man or apostle; we are vicar of Christ himself.”

The culmination of the development of the power of the papacy came in the nineteenth century when the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) proclaimed the dogma of papal infallibility and of the supreme papal authority. In its constitution on the church, *Pastor Aeternus*, Vatican I declared: “We teach and declare that, by divine ordinance, the Roman church possesses a preeminence of ordinary power over every other Church and that this jurisdictional power of the Roman Pontiff is both episcopal and immediate. Both clergy and faithful...are bound to submit to this power....” The council proclaimed the dogma of papal infallibility, by claiming that the Roman Pontiff possesses divine assistance in defining truths *ex cathedra*, that is, when speaking in his official capacity.

This understanding of the power of the papacy dominated the Roman Catholic church until the 1960’s Second Vatican Council. This Council attempted to establish a balance between the power of the pope and that of the bishops. In its constitution on the Church, Vatican II affirms that the bishops govern the church, not as papal delegates, but as Vicars of Christ. “They are not to be considered as vicars of the Roman pontiffs, because they exercise a power that is proper to them.”

John Paul's Rethinking of the Papacy

In the light of Vatican II, John Paul issued on May 25, 1995 the encyclical "*Ut Unum Sint*—That All May Be One." In this historical document the Pope proposes a rethinking of the papal primacy as it was during the first millennium, when the pope served as a bishop among bishops, acting as the spokesman of the church at large. John Paul believes that in order for the pope to meet today the need for Christian unity, he must develop a more collegial role, willing to dialogue with different Christian denominations as well as non-Christian religions.

To achieve this goal, John Paul has traveled more than all the previous popes of history put together, in order to foster ecumenical understanding and cooperation among people of all religions under the moral and spiritual leadership of the papacy. John Paul sees himself as a man called to serve as the spiritual leader not only of his own church but of the whole of mankind. To gain global acceptance, John Paul is willing to mend fences by asking forgiveness for the past sins committed by the Catholic Church against the Moslem, Protestants, Jews, and Greek Orthodox.

Special conferences have been organized by the Pope to examine the dark chapters of Catholic history such as the crusades against the Moslem and the heretics (Albigences, Waldenses, Huguenots), as well as the inquisition against the Protestants. The outcome of these conferences has been an open admission of the grievous sins committed by the Catholic church in the past against people who refused to accept her dogmas.

John Paul Apologizes to Greek Orthodox

In May 2001 John Paul took a six days pilgrimage to Greece, Syria, and Malta. To calm the anger of Greek Orthodox nuns and monks who took to the streets of Athens to protest at the visit of a man whom they dub the "arch-heretic," Pope John Paul asked God on Friday, May 4, 2001, to forgive Roman Catholics for a 1,000 years of sins against Orthodox Christians.

Deep animosity still remains over the A. D. 1204 sacking of Constantinople, which was the seat of the Eastern Greek Church. The sacking was done by Crusaders sent by the powerful Pope Innocent III to free Palestine from the Muslims. But, instead of sailing to Alexandria, Egypt, and proceed to Palestine, the Crusaders were diverted to Constantinople and, after a siege, captured the city in 1204, establishing a Latin Kingdom ruled by the Pope until A. D. 1261. The Greeks have never forgotten that the Pope treated them like infidels, by conquering and subjugating them for almost 60 years.

Fully aware of this embarrassing chapter of papal history and of the awful action of Roman Catholic Crusaders against their Greek brethren, John Paul said: "For occasions past and present, when the sons and daughters of the Catholic Church have sinned by actions and omission against their Orthodox brothers and sisters, may the Lord grant us the forgiveness we beg of Him."

The positive effect of the Pope's plea for forgiveness was immediately felt. Greek Archbishop Christodoulos, who had grudgingly gone along with the Pope's visit but refused joint prayers, immediately burst into applause. The two men later embraced. Afterwards, the Archbishop told reporters: "I am very happy. The Pope was very nice to us, but of course there are still problems between our two churches that we have to face."

New Partnership Between the Papacy and Islam

The ecumenical outreach of John Paul II extends to the Muslim. He has worked hard to woo Mecca to Rome. In May 2001 the pope made history by becoming the first Catholic leader to set foot into a mosque and participate in an organized prayer service. The symbolic meeting took place when the Pope entered the *Umayyad Mosque* in the Syrian capital of Damascus. This mosque has significance for both Muslims and Christians. For Muslims it is the oldest stone mosque in the world, while for Christians it is the alleged place where John the Baptist was buried.

The Pope led in Christian prayers, while his Moslem counterpart, Sheikh Ahmed Katara, led in Moslem prayers. By this dramatic act of worshipping in a mosque, the Pope underlined his commitment to work toward a rapprochement with the Muslims.

Twelve days after the horrors of September 11, 2001, the Pope renewed his commitment to work toward a new partnership with Moslems in his message to the predominantly Muslim nation of Kazakhstan. The Pope declared: “There is one God.’ The Apostle proclaims before all else the absolute oneness of God. This is a truth which Christians inherited from the children of Israel and which they share with Muslims: it is faith in the one God, ‘Lord of heaven and earth’ (Lk.10:21), almighty and merciful. In the name of this one God, I turn to the people of deep and ancient religious traditions, the people of Kazakhstan.”

The Pope then appealed to both Muslims and Christians to work together to build a “civilization of love.” “This ‘logic of love’ is what he [Jesus] holds out to us, asking us to live it above all through generosity to those in need. It is a logic which can bring together Christians and Muslims, and commit them to work together for the ‘civilization of love.’ It is a logic which overcomes all the cunning of this world and allows us to make true friends who will welcome us ‘into the eternal dwelling-places’ (Lk.16:9), into the ‘homeland’ of heaven.”

Muslim Included in the Plan of Salvation

In spite of the catastrophic events of September 11th, John Paul has been committed to work toward a partnership with the Muslims. The basis of this partnership is the belief that Catholics and Muslims worship the same God of Abraham. This belief is clearly expressed in the new official *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which speaks of the new Catholic relationship with the Muslims in these terms: “The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day” (Paragraph 841).

It is evident that the Catholic estimation of Islam has undergone a fundamental change from the religion of “infidels” to that of believers who worship the same God of Abraham. While in the past the Catholic Church denounced Islam as an evil religion to be suppressed by crusades (Holy War), today she welcomes and affirms Muslims as having the same faith of Abraham as herself.

The determination of the Pope to develop a partnership with Muslims stems from the simple fact that their 1.3 billion members outnumbers the 1 billion Catholic members. By acknowledging the legitimacy of the Islam faith, the Pope is facilitating the Muslims' acceptance of His role as the leader of a future New World Order.

The driving force behind this tactical reappraisal of Islam is the determination of the Vatican to bring about a New World Order under the moral and religious leadership of the Pope. This goal was expressed at Vatican II which declares: "The encouragement of unity is in harmony with the deepest nature of the [Roman Catholic] Church's mission...." (*Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, No. 64, *Gaudium et Spes*, Vol. I, Sec. 42, p. 942).

Global Spiritual Leader

To foster his role as the moral and spiritual leader of mankind, the pope welcomes regularly to the Holy See delegations and leaders from Christian and non-Christian religions. In 1986 over 270 religious leaders of Christians and non-Christian religions joined John Paul in Assisi in a prayer service for peace. Only a pope with a global vision like John Paul II, could have thought of calling such a meeting. It is evident that today the pope is accepted by world religious leaders as the champion of the spiritual aspirations of mankind.

Why are religious and political leaders so eager to meet the Pope? Why do millions of non-Catholic Americans have joined their Catholic neighbors in cheering the Pope during his four visits to America? This would hardly have happened fifty years when conservative Protestants nourished deep hostility toward the papacy. A papal procession fifty years ago might have brought out rock-throwers and perhaps bombers.

Similarly, diplomatic recognition of the Vatican by the United States would have been impossible fifty years ago. In 1951 President Truman had to abandon the plan to extend diplomatic recognition to the Vatican, because of the strong protests from Protestants. In 1984, however, President Reagan was able to recognize the Vatican and the Pope as a Head of State by appointing Mr. Wilson as official ambassador to the Holy See, without any significant Protestant reaction.

The profound danger facing Evangelical Christians today is to naively accept the Pope's claim to be the official spokesman for Christ on earth—a deception that is deeply embedded in the new thrust to create a global coalition of nations on the basis of a politically constructed god which can be adapted to different religious systems.

Prophetic Fulfillment of the Global Role of the Papacy

Social analysts describe with surprise this radical Protestant change of attitude that has taken place, from foes to friends of the Pope and of the Catholic Church. Seventh-day Adventists are not surprised by this Protestant change of attitude toward the Catholics, because for 100 years they have announced to the world, on the basis of their interpretation of Biblical prophecy, that American Protestantism would be foremost in bridging the gulf of separation from Roman Catholicism and in cooperating with Rome. A century ago Ellen White, a founder of Adventism, wrote with prophetic foresight: “The Protestants of the United States . . . will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power” (GC 588).

The warm reception and ecstatic admiration of the Pope by millions of Protestants, clearly points to an unprecedented acceptance of the religious leadership role of the papacy. The gulf of separation between Catholicism and Protestantism is truly being bridged, but the bridge is being built at Protestant expenses.

Protestants have no longer a reason to protest, because their faith has become so diluted that acceptance of Catholic beliefs and piety is no longer a major problem. An indication is the enthusiastic praise by million of evangelicals for Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ*—a strict Catholic movie that promotes in a subtle and deceptive ways such fundamental Catholic heresies, as the prominent role of Mary in our salvation.

Tolerance toward Non-Catholics

Three major factors have contributed to the radical change of attitude, from hostility to friendliness between Catholics and Protestants. The first and foremost is the new Catholic policy of benign tolerance

toward non-Catholics. Paradoxically, while the Pope is intransigent toward Catholics by expecting them to uphold traditional church discipline and teachings, he is now tolerant and open toward outsiders. Protestants, for example, have been rehabilitated from heretics, to “separate brethren,” and now to brothers and sisters in Christ. Similarly, members of world religions are now treated with openness and respect.

The reason for this new tolerance appears to be a new Catholic awareness—expressed even in the Constitution of the Church of Vatican II—that salvation is no longer found only inside the Catholic Church but also outside the Catholic fold, by all who live according to their conscience. The traditional view expressed in Pope Boniface VIII's Bull, “Unam Sanctam” that “there is one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and that outside this Church there is neither salvation nor remission of sins,” has been replaced by the current view that there is salvation inside and outside the Catholic Church. This new Catholic attitude of tolerance and respect toward outsiders, is obviously paying back dividends in terms of good will and admiration toward Catholics and their Pope.

The Pope is successfully gaining global acceptance by adopting, what Jesuit Professor Vernon Ruland calls “The Catholic Double Standard” [*The Christian Century* (Dec 16, 1981), p. 1311]. This consists of strict intransigence toward Catholics and “benign tolerance toward outsiders.” From Catholics the Pope expects uncompromising adherence to the official church teachings. From outsiders the Pope expects them “to strive sincerely to live according to their conscience.” By adopting this double standard the Pope is succeeding admirably today in being widely accepted as the *Papa urbis et orbis*, the spiritual Father of Rome and the world.

Pope's Stand for Morality

A second reason that accounts for the Pope's popularity, especially among evangelicals, is his strong stand for certain fundamental doctrines of Biblical faith. Though evangelicals cannot agree with the pope on such points as the role of the Virgin Mary, the Mass, the intercession of the saints, masses for the dead, priestly celibacy and so on, they admire his strong commitment to the authority of Scripture, to the sacredness of marriage, to a Biblical sexual ethics, to protect the life of unborn babies, and to discipline the most blatant opponents of evangelical faith.

Instead of attacking Catholicism, evangelical are choosing to attack liberal Protestantism for undermining the authority of Scripture, for promoting unbiblical moral values, for conforming to the contemporary secular values. To them the Pontiff has become, as Prof. Martin E. Marty puts it, “a walking fortress of faith” (TV Guide, Sept 5, 1987, p. 34) in the midst of a godless society.

Unintentionally, perhaps, liberal Protestantism has contributed to enhance the authority of the Pope by eroding confidence in the authority of the Bible. One might say that to the extent that Protestantism weakens the authority of the Bible for defining Christian beliefs and practices, to that same extent it strengthens the authority of the Pope. The reason is simple. Most Christians resent tyranny but welcome the voice of authority, certainty and assurance. They want to hear from their church leaders, “This is the way, walk you in it!” When they fail to hear this voice of authority from the Scripture as proclaimed by their pastors, they become attracted to the Pope who claims to offer the infallible interpretation of Scripture.

Pope's Advocacy of Social Justice

A third reason that endears the Pope to mainstream Protestants and to people in general, is his advocacy of social justice, respect for the rights of all people, even of the unborn, a more equitable distribution of resources, peace based on justice, an end to the arm race, and especially, love toward the poor and downtrodden. By championing these legitimate human aspirations with zeal, dignity and devotion, the Pope has become for many the symbol of the noblest aspirations mankind must struggle to achieve.

Summing up, we could say that John Paul has learned to be a man of many things to many people. To devout Catholics he is the symbol of their piety, certainty and assurance of salvation amidst the conflicting teachings and values of our time. To evangelicals, he is a man of faith and courage, willing to withstand the secular, humanistic pressures of our times. To mainstream Protestant and people in general, he is the champion of peace based on social justice.

A Final Warning

The many positive facets that make John Paul attractive and popular must not blind evangelicals to the fact that he strongly stands for traditional Catholic teachings and practices. With more enthusiasm and greater communication skills than his predecessors, he stands for the teachings that have divided Protestantism from Roman Catholicism. The great Protestant truths of Scripture alone, Christ alone, grace alone, and faith alone, are still unacceptable to Roman Catholicism.

In his messages John Paul has repeatedly reiterated his strong commitment to the interpretation of the Scripture by the magisterium of the church, the intercessory role of Mary and of the Saints, transubstantiation, papal infallibility, the sacramental role of the priests, forgiveness only through the sacrament of penance, salvation by faith plus meritorious works, and masses for the dead. These are part of the list of Catholic teachings which John Paul views as not negotiable.

Ecumenical Christian unity for John Paul is possibly only in Catholic terms. At the 1979 meeting in Chicago with the nation's Catholic bishops, he quoted the testament of Pope Paul VI, who said: "Let the work of drawing near to our separated brethren go on, with much understanding, with much patience, with great love: but without deviating from the true Catholic doctrine."

Let us never forget that John Paul stands for both social progress and Catholic conservatism. While in the area of social justice Rome has changed and John Paul has been a strong advocate of such changes, in the area of church doctrine and discipline, Rome is still the unchangeable Rome and John Paul is simply its most effective communicator.

John Paul has travelled around the world, not to negotiate deals with Catholic dissenters or with Protestant admirers, but to remind his own parishioners and the whole world, that historical Catholic beliefs are not negotiable. What should all of this mean to Catholic and non-catholics? To Catholics, it means that they should make no illusion that their Pope and their church is about to change their historical teachings, especially on sexual ethics.

To Protestants, it means that, on the one hand, we must admire John Paul's courageous and unpopular stand for the Biblical view of the sacredness of marriage and human life as well as his uncompromising denunciation of homosexuality and of sex outside marriage as sinful acts. On the other hand, we must never forget that the same Pope is equally uncompromising on the fundamental Catholic teachings that have divided Protestantism from Catholicism because they rest on venerable ecclesiastical traditions.

Conclusion

The political, social, ecclesiastical, and ecumenical achievements of Pope John Paul II, have enhanced in an unprecedented way the influence of the papacy, in both the political and religious world. The global vision and popular acceptance of the Pope as the legitimate leader of a New World Order, reminds us of the prophetic endtime vision of Revelation 13:3: "And all the world marvelled and followed the beast."

John Paul II has laid the foundation for a stronger papacy, more readily accepted by people of all faiths and political systems. The new pope will face the formidable task of building upon this foundation and making the papacy the undisputed leader of mankind. In the next newsletter we will take a closer look at "The Future of the Papacy," and some of the possible candidates that are being suggested by Vatican observers.