

ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 129

“ The Papacy: Retrospect and Prospect: Part I”

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The unprecedented TV coverage given to John Paul II's last days, his funeral, and the election of his successor, have brought the Vatican, the papacy, the splendor of St. Peter's basilica, and the pomp and pageantry of the Catholic liturgy, into the home of countless millions around the world.

Never before mankind had seen three United States Presidents kneeling for about five minutes in front of a pope's casket, heads bowed, as choral music filled the majestic St. Peter's Cathedral. Joining the American delegation were first lady Laura Bush and Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice.

More than 100 official delegations attended the funeral, including four kings, five queens, and more than 70 prime ministers. Countless dignitaries, cardinals, bishops, and over 700,000 people rubbed shoulders in St. Peter during the three hours ceremony of John Paul II's funeral.

Beyond St. Peter in the streets of Rome an estimated 4 million pilgrims watched the funeral through large screens. Around the world it is estimated that over 2 billion people watched the funeral in stadiums, churches and private homes. Flags were flown at half-mast in many countries, including Cuba, that declares three days of mourning. Never before in human history so many people of all political and religious persuasions honored, not a rock star, or a king, or a queen, or a president, but a pope: JOHN PAUL II.

The gathering was a rare display of religious plurality with “Catholic cardinals, black-clad Orthodox clerics, Arab head scarves, Jewish skull caps, Central Asian lambskin hats, and black veils worn by some women.” It seems as though the whole world came to Rome to pay tribute to a man who had touched their lives.

An editorial in *USA TODAY* captures the unprecedented outpouring of sympathy for John Paul II with these vivid words: “In life, Pope John Paul II reached out to the world as no pope ever had. This week, the world reached back with a dramatic outpouring of respect and affection. An unprecedented flood of presidents and prime ministers, royalty and religious leaders and at least 4 million simple pilgrims swept into Rome to celebrate his life and mourn his death. They came to attend Friday's funeral, to view his three-day lying-in-state or to feel they had gotten close, at least one last time, to the man they felt they knew personally. Scores burst into tears when authorities cut off the line. It was dramatic testimony to the powerful impact of the onetime quarry laborer from Poland who became the larger-than-life leader of the Roman Catholic Church.”

Captivating Power of Catholic Liturgy

As President Bush flew back from Rome to the United States on Air Force One, he talked with reporters “in extraordinarily personal terms, saying it [the funeral] strengthened his own belief in a ‘living God.’ He remarked on how affected he was by the services, particularly the music and the sight of the plain casket being carried out with the sun pouring down on it. . . . ‘I knew the ceremony today would be majestic but I didn’t realize how moved I would be by the service itself,’ the president said. ‘Today's ceremony, I bet you, was a reaffirmation for millions’ (*AP* article). He also admitted that witnessing firsthand the outpouring of respect and devotion to John Paul II, was “a high point of his presidency.”

President Bush’s testimony reminds us of Ellen White’s description of the captivating power of the Catholic liturgy: “Many Protestants suppose that the Catholic religion is unattractive and that its worship is a dull, meaningless round of ceremony. Here they mistake. While Romanism is based on deception, it is not a course and clumsy imposture. The religious service of the Roman Catholic Church is a most impressive ceremonial. Its gorgeous display and solemn rites fascinate the senses of the people and silence the voice of reason and of conscience. The eye is charmed. . . . The ear is also captivated. The music is unsurpassed. The rich notes of the deep-toned organ, blending with the melody of many voices as it swells through the lofty domes and pillared aisles of her grand cathedrals, cannot fail to impress the mind with awe and reverence” (*Great Controversy*, p. 566).

The captivating funeral service served to promote worldwide in a subtle and deceptive way such fundamental Catholic heresies as the veneration of Mary whose name was carved on the coffin with a large letter “M,” and the intercession of the saints, a host of whom were invoked during the so-called “Litany of the Saints.” The saints were petitioned to help John Paul’s soul to ascend immediately to heaven without suffering in Purgatory. This would make it possible, as expressed in the eulogy of Cardinal Ratzinger, to bless the crowd in St. Peter’s Square from “the window of heaven” —an allusion to the custom of the pope to bless the crowd from the window of his residence.

Three weeks after the death of John Paul II, on Sunday, April 24, millions of people around the world watched again on their TV St. Peter’s Square crowded with dignitaries and over 500,000 pilgrims. This time they came to attend the installation ceremony of the new pope, Benedict XVI. The ceremony was attended by 140 official delegations. An estimated 100,000 pilgrims came from the pope’s native Germany, and a host of dignitaries were present, including German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, Prince Albert II of Monaco and Florida Governor Jeb Bush, the U.S. president’s brother.

QUESTIONS ADVENTISTS ARE ASKING

The unprecedented world outpouring of sympathy and admiration for the life and legacy of John Paul II as well as the extraordinary media coverage of the election of his successor, Benedict XVI, are causing many thinking Adventists to ask: “Are we witnessing the fulfillment of the prophetic scenario of Revelation 13 that speaks of “all the world marvelled and followed the beast” (Rev 13:3)?

Email messages have been pouring in from Adventists in different parts of the world, asking me to help them understand how the recent emergence of the pope as the political, moral, and spiritual leader of mankind, fits into our Adventist interpretation of the prophetic scenario of the two beasts of Revelation 13.

Some of the questions Adventists are posing are: Can we still legitimately apply the blasphemous beastly power of Revelation 13 that

promotes false worship and persecutes God's people to the papacy, when recently the pope openly apologized to Protestants, Jews, Moslems, and Greek Orthodox for the crimes committed by the Catholic Church in the past? How do we reconcile our traditional interpretation of the papacy with the praise bestowed upon John Paul II for promoting social justice and biblical morality?

Is it conceivable that the Catholic Church will “regain control of the world to re-establish persecution” (GC 566), when John Paul II has openly condemned religious intolerance as a grievous sin and has influenced the collapse of Soviet Communist by promoting the inalienable rights of people to be free from oppressive political systems? How do we reconcile John Paul’s preaching of religious tolerance to foreign governments with his intolerant policy toward his Catholic members? We shall see that John Paul silenced and suspended over 100 Catholic theologians and priests, including the General of the Jesuit Order.

Will the United States of America, represented by the two horns lamb-like beast of Revelation 13, form an image of the papal power by promoting its teachings through civil legislation, when the Pope has openly condemned the American war campaigns against Iraq as well as the American “culture of death:” a culture in which widespread violence breeds war, abortion, euthanasia, poverty, and homelessness?

How can we reconcile the notion of the papacy seeking the political support of the USA government, with the Pope’s blunt criticism of America’s war policies and “culture of death”? Is the Pope seeking to win the political support of the United States through diplomatic channels or is he trying to win the heart and mind of the American people through moral persuasion? Should we as Adventists redefine the way the papacy is using the United States to accomplish its purpose of global domination?

These are legitimate questions that need to be addressed, if we want to defend the credibility of our prophetic interpretation of the alliance

between papacy and the United States in the final endtime showdown. Exhaustive answers to these questions can hardly be provided within the limited scope of this newsletter. The best I can hope for is to suggest a few answers by looking back in retrospect to the pontificate of John Paul II and forward to the prospects of the newly elected Pope Benedict XVI.

Objectives of this Newsletter

Our study is roughly divided into two parts. The first part of this study posted in this newsletter focuses on the pontificate of John Paul II. We shall seek to understand how he succeeded in endearing to himself million of people of all faiths, thus becoming the symbol of the moral and spiritual aspirations of mankind. We shall ask: What lessons can we learn from his successful evangelistic and pastoral methods? What are also some of the negative aspects of his pontificate, that qualify him as the apocalyptic promoter of endtime false worship? To answer the latter question we will look at a few fundamental Catholic heresies passionately promoted by John Paul II.

The second part of our study posted in the following newsletter, deals with the prospects of the newly elected Pope Benedict XVI, formerly Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. He served for the past 25 years as the powerful Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith—the doctrinal watchdog organization of the Catholic Church. We shall consider how the goals he has set for his pontificate will boost the power of the papacy, thus fulfilling the endtime prophetic scenario.

It was my original intent to post the complete study in this newsletter. But after spending over 100 hours researching and writing about 40 pages on the pontificate of John Paul II, it became evident that I had no time or space left to deal with the prospects of the newly elected Pope Benedict XVI. Thus I decided to cover the latter in the next newsletter.

Please excuse my delay in posting this newsletter. Some of you have been urging me to comment immediately on the funeral of John Paul and the election of Benedict XVI. I would have loved to do so, but I was overseas for two weeks in Singapore and Malaysia speaking practically every day—sometimes several times in one day. The same will be true for the next four weeks as I am scheduled to speak at a rally in Atlanta and then for 16 days (several times a day) in South Africa. As you can understand this leaves me little time to research and write, while attending to the volumes of messages you send me every day. I mention all of this simply to reassure you that the delay of my newsletters is not intentional. The problem is that there are not enough hours in the day to do all what I love to do. I invested over 100 hours researching and writing this newsletter. It is my fervent hope and prayer that it will be a blessing to many.

If you find this newsletter informative and timely, be sure to email it to your friends. Many of them like you may be eager to understand the significance of current events from a biblical, prophetic perspective. Let your friends know that they also can receive this newsletter FREE. To subscribe they only have to email me their request at <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>

RECENT VISIT TO SINGAPORE AND PENANG, MALAYSIA

From April 15 to 26, 2005, I spent 10 delightful days ministering to our Adventist fellow-believers and friends of other faiths first in Singapore and then in Penang, Malaysia. The reception and response has been heartwarming,

On Friday/Saturday April 15-16, we had a great rally in Singapore with about 400 people, of whom about 100 were non-Adventists. The president of the Singapore Mission, Elder Danson NG, was so happy by the response that he has invited me to return to Singapore for a three weeks series of meetings.

On Tuesday, April 19, I spoke in Singapore to a group of 45 ministers, 23 of whom were non-Adventist. The theme of my two lectures was HUMAN NATURE AND DESTINY and THE SABBATH AND THE SAVIOR.

I discussed first the practical and doctrinal implications of the biblical wholistic view of human nature by contrasting it with the popular dualistic view of the mortal body and immortal soul.

In the second lecture THE SABBATH AND THE SAVIOR, I shared some reflections on how the Sabbath is designed to enable us to experience more fully and freely the awareness of Christ's presence, peace and rest in our lives. The ministers were very attentive and receptive. Practically all of them purchased my publications and recordings, especially my book IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?

From Singapore I flew to Penang, Malaysia, where on Thursday, April 22, I spoke 4 times at an ABUNDANT LIFE conference planned for non-SDA at a prestigious holiday resort right on the beach. About 200 persons attended, including some professors from a Baptist seminary. On Friday morning they invited me to visit the Baptist Seminary.

A generous brother ordered via FEDEX 100 copies of my book THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE to donate to the non-SDA ministers. A charismatic minister of one of the largest churches in Penang invited me to speak to his congregation, but I had to decline because I was already committed.

On Friday/Saturday/Sunday April 22-24, I spoke five times to our Penang SDA Congregation. The response was marvellous. Even on Sunday evening the church was filled to capacity. A gage of the interest is the unprecedented number of orders I received for my publications and

recordings which I offered at 70% discount. When I learned that most people earn less than \$250.00 a month, I decided to offer my research at the basic cost price.

Looking back to this latest trip to Singapore and Malaysia, I can only express my heartfelt gratitude to God, for making it possible for me to touch the lives of some many people with the message of a soon-coming Savior.

A SABBATH EXPERIENCE

While in Singapore I had an unusual experience. My wife called me to tell me that she received a phone call from a non-Adventist minister interested to buy an HITACHI projector. She gave me his phone number. I called him with my new SKYPE lap top phone system that enables me to call anyone around the world for only ¢2 a minute. We talked for half-an-hour. In the course of the conversation he told me how my research helped him to lead his congregation to observe the Sabbath. I asked him if he would write out his Sabbath experience. He did it and emailed it to me.

You might be interested to read this experience, which has been repeated many times during the past few years. It is encouraging to see how the Lord can use the printed page to bring conviction to the heart of sincere people.

Monday 18 April, 2005

Dear Dr. Bacchiocchi,

I spoke with you last night on the phone regarding the purchase of an HITACHI projector for our church.

You asked me to share with you how my congregation moved the church service from Sunday to Saturday.

Well, a little background about me and my congregation would help. I earned a Bachelor Degree in theology. Then while earning a Master Degree in theology, I planted a church in Pennsylvania, named Gospel Fellowship. We began five years ago with 14 members. Now we are 314 members. I am pastoring the congregation while finishing my Doctor of Ministry degree.

While doing research for my doctoral dissertation, I started questioning the observance of Sunday. The reason is that my dissertation is about worship during the time of Christ and the worship customs of the apostolic church.

I couldn't find any references to Sunday worship services in the Bible! So, I went to www.google.com and typed "Sabbath changed to Sunday" in the search engine. Your biblicalperspectives website came up on the list.

I looked at the books you had to offer and I ordered FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY. The day the book I arrived I immediately started reading it. I finished the book by the next day!!! So I reread it again. I read it twice in 5 days. After reading all of your scholarly work, I realized that there was no refuting it. I had to accept that the Sabbath is still the Sabbath. Thus, I put together a six-parts sermon series.

The results? 314 of the 329 members have accepted the Biblical Sabbath.

We now have a Friday evening Bible study and fellowship. Then we have Sabbath services at 11:00 a. m. followed by a lunch/fellowship. We still have our Wednesday evening study and prayer time.

Our change from Sunday to Sabbath worship has created quite a stir. I have literally received more than 125 phone calls from people inquiring why we changed our day of worship. To respond to these inquiries I decided to hold

a seminar on Thursday evenings entitled, "Why We Now Worship on Saturday."

We have had 265 visitors who have attended one of our Thursday evening informational meetings. Of the 265 visitors, 103 are now regularly attending our Sabbath services. This has pushed our attendance up to over 400 people weekly. To accommodate the new comers, we have moved to double services! Now we have the first Sabbath service at 9:15 a. m. and the second service at 11:00 a. m.

On a side note, I also ordered your book IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION? The wholistic view of man makes a lot more sense to me than the dualistic Platonic model. I will study this even further and then present this biblical truth in a study-format for future Wednesday evening Bible studies.

Dr. Bacchiocchi, you are quite a thorough scholar. You leave no stones unturned. I plan to order all your books and check them against the Bible.

It's strange how I missed certain vital biblical truths, though I was trained at a respectable seminary. Your education as well the years of investigation really do shine bright.

Thank you for your book FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY and may God continue to bless your ministry.

Ron Christman
Pastor, Gospel Fellowship

Since receiving this message, Pastor Christman informed me that a former Adventist distributed 200 copies of Dale Ratzlaff's book, *The Sabbath in Christ* to his members, causing considerable unrest. I sent him

priority mail 2 copies of my book *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*, which is largely a response to Ratzlaff's book. This book has helped many ministers of all denominations to accept the Sabbath. It provides compelling answers to all the arguments against the Sabbath. If you do not own a copy, feel free to call me at (269) 471-2915, and we will mail you a copy immediately.

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

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

MAY 6-7: LAKEVIEW SDA CHURCH- ATLANTA

Location: 4010 Fambrough Drive, Power Springs, GA 30127

For information call Pastor Peter Kulakov at (770) 947-0504 or (678) 571-1743.

SOUTH AFRICA LECTURE TOUR

MAY 13: Cape - Stellenbosch Auditorium -Theology Seminary

For information call Pastors Bustav van Niekerk & Berbard Ficker at 082 8814982 or 021-8551312

MAY 14: Cape: Helderberg College Church

For information call Pastors Bustav van Niekerk & Berbard Ficker at 082 8814982 or 021-8551312

MAY 15: Cape: Riverside SDA Church

MAY 16: Stellenbosch Auditorium -Theology Seminary

For information call Pastor Gustav van Niekerk at 072 2119133

MAY 17: Stellenbosch Auditorium -Theology Seminary and Parow SDA Church

For information call Pastor Gustav van Niekerk at 072 2119133

MAY 19: Pretoria - City SDA Church

For information call Pastor Leon de Villiers at 0823312132 or 012-5674824

MAY 20: Pretoria - Magaliessig NG Kerk Montana, Veronica 154, agter Montana Crossings

For information call Ria Verster at 082 487 5422 or 012808-5938

MAY 21: Pretoria: Sangdiens & Afrikaanse Sabbatskool NG Faerie Glen, Glenwood-straat 429, Faerie Glen

For information call Ria Verster at 082 487 5422 or 012808-5938

MAY 22: Bassonia SDA Church

For information call Pastor Mauro Cardoso at 082 460 1396 or 011-4354728

MAY 23: Bassonia SDA Church

For information call Pastor Mauro Cardoso at 082 460 1396 or 011-4354728

MAY 24: Bassonia SDA Church: Meeting for Pastors

For information call Pastor Dave Spenser at 011-6166800

MAY 26: Krugersdorp

For information call Dennis Burger at 082 389 0004

MAY 27: Klerksdorp Primary School

For information call Psastor G Visser at 011-9531416 or 083 751 3415

MAY 28: Klerksdorp Primary School

For information call T Steyn/J Coetzer at 018-5963036 or 082 267 2230.
Ivan Hiten at 018-4626137 or 0836270596

May 29: Klerksdorp

For information call Pastor G Visser at 011-9531416 or 083 751 3415

CAN YOU HELP ME MAN MY BOOTH AT THE GENERAL CONFERENCE?

If you plan to attend the General Conference in St. Louis and are willing to help me man my booth for a few hours a day, I would be glad to pay \$10.00 an hour and offer you some free books or recordings. My daughter, Loretta, will assist me for 5 days, but I need one or two persons more for few hours each day. Feel free to call me at (269) 471-2915.

SPECIAL OFFER ON ALL MY RECORDINGS

At this time you can order the complete package of all my recordings for ONLY \$100.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$490.00. The package includes 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; 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; the recent 3ABN two hours interview on a DVD disk about my latest book *THE PASSION OF CHRIST IN SCRIPTURE AND HISTORY*.

The special offer is ONLY \$100.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$490.00. Read the details at my website: <http://www.biblicalpherspectives.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.

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.biblicalperspectives.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.

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A EXCELLENT REMOTE FOR YOUR POWER POINT PRESENTATIONS?

If you are looking for an excellent Power Presenter Remote for your PowerPoint presentations, you will be pleased to know HONEYWELL has just come out with the smallest and most powerful remote in the market. You can view it at <http://www.powerremote.com/>

The size of the transmitter is smaller than a credit card. You can stick it inside the palm of your hand and nobody can see it. The operating distance between the remote and the receiver is officially 150 feet. But I

tested the remote in an open environment, and the radio signal can go up to 400 feet of distance. IT IS INCREDIBLE! The transmitter has three buttons: forward, backward, and laser.

The brand new model is hard to find in the market, but I signed a contract with HONEYWELL to distribute it to our churches and schools. By buying 50 units at a time, I can offer this incredible remote for only \$120.00, postage paid. To order a remote, call me at (269) 471-2915.

THE BEST SDA COMMENTARY ON REVELATION

Much of the prophetic message and mission of the Seventh-day 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.

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**A RETROSPECTIVE LOOK
AT THE PONTIFICATE OF JOHN PAUL II**

In the ENDTIME NEWSLETTER No. 127 on “The Legacy of John Paul II,” we examined at some length the political, ecclesiastical, and ecumenical achievements of John Paul II. We noted that *politically*, John Paul II played a major role in the collapse of Soviet Communism, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Eastern and Western Europe.

Ecclesiastically, John Paul II has worked tirelessly to restore unity, and identity to the Catholic Church. To accomplish this goal, he used a twofold strategy. First, he endeavored to win the confidence of Catholics to himself by utilizing effectively all the modern means of communication. Second, he has stood with holy conviction to Catholics his unpopular stand against divorce and remarriage, artificial birth control, extramarital sex, homosexuality, abortion, optional celibacy and ordination of women as priests. He passionately promoted the revival of Sunday observance by promulgating two historic Pastoral Letters “*Dies domini*–The Lord’s Day” on July 1998, and “*Mane Nobiscum Domine*– Stay with Us, Lord” on October 2004.

Ecumenically, John Paul II has fostered his role as the moral and spiritual leader of mankind, by reaching out to people of all faiths. He made pilgrimages to Athens, Damascus, Jerusalem, and Protestant churches, to ask forgiveness for the past sins committed by the Catholic Church against the Greek Orthodox, Moslem, Jews, and Protestants. He welcomed 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.

To appreciate what made John Paul II so successful in winning the sympathy of million of people inside and outside the Catholic church,

let us consider three outstanding characteristics of his personality: 1) John Paul II Had Passion for People, 2) John Paul II Was a Fearless Defender of Traditional Catholic Beliefs, 3) John Paul II Was a Gifted Communicator.

JOHN PAUL II HAD A PASSION FOR PEOPLE

From the beginning of his pontificate, John Paul II made it clear that he would break the mold set by his predecessors by taking the papacy on the road. Previous popes, like Paul VI and Pious XII, immersed themselves in the managerial details of running the Vatican state, venturing seldom beyond its confines. By contrast, John Paul II saw himself first and foremost as a pastor-evangelist, called to minister to his flock around the world. He inspired the faithful and strengthened the faith of new converts, by making them feel as brothers and sisters of the Catholic household of faith. By taking the papacy on the road, he transformed the figure of the pope from a distant icon to a familiar face.

During a visit to Zaire in 1980, John Paul said: “Some people think that the pope should not travel so much, [that] he should stay in Rome, as before. I often hear such an advice and read it in newspapers. But the local people here say: ‘Thank God you came here, for you can only learn about us by coming. How could you be our pastor without knowing us? Without knowing who we are, how we live.’ This confirms me in the belief that it is time for the bishops of Rome . . . to become successors not only of Peter but also of St. Paul, who, as we know, could never sit still and was constantly on the move” (*U.S.NEWS & WORLD REPORT*, April 11, 2005, p. 31).

John Paul lived out his conviction making an outstanding 104 pilgrimages to 129 countries around the globe. Even in the pain-filled waning days of his pontificate, he continued to travel. He seemed energized and at best when meeting with his flock. He understood that few people will ever read his encyclicals and 40 books. Thus, he believed that it was

imperative for him to minister to people directly where they lived. For many people their brief encounter with the lit-from-within smile of the pope during his visit, meant an infusion of new hope and a reason for living their faith.

A Lesson for Adventist Leaders. John Paul has set a worthy example for denominational leaders to follow, including our own Adventist church leaders. To lead a worldwide church, with members scattered in different parts of the world, our church leaders cannot afford to manage the church at a distance from their headquarter, with occasional visits to selected rallies. They must be willing to travel near and far to share with as many church members as possible, their pastoral concerns, their doctrinal convictions, and their vision for the church. As the General Conference approaches, this is an important criteria to keep in mind in the election of new church leaders.

Believers tend to define their faith and church identity, not only in terms of the instruction and guidance they receive weekly from their local pastor, but also on the basis of the inspiration and directives provided by their Conference, Union, Division, and General Conference leaders. The President or Head of a church, embodies in many ways the identity, mission, and message of the church.

The question is, How many Adventists around the world have seen or heard their Union, Division, and General Conference Presidents speaking at some rallies? How many of them know their names or recognize their faces? How many of them would be willing to travel long distances to attend their funeral, as millions have done for John Paul II? Most likely, very few.

Few days ago I asked our lovely congregation in Penang, Malaysia, how many of them knew the name or the face of our General Conference

President. Out of about 300 members, 6 hands went up, mostly physicians at the Penang Adventist Hospital. I surprised my wife, who has lived for the past 30 years at Andrews University, by asking her if she knew the name of our General Conference President. To her dismay, she could not remember his name and vaguely his face, though she saw him at a distance in Toronto, at the last General Conference. (It may be a sign of old age! Please laugh!).

Lest I be misunderstood, I hasten to say that our church leaders do a lot of travelling to speak to Adventist gatherings around the world. Though I am not a church leader but a retired teacher, I myself have logged over a million miles during the past 20 years, speaking an average of 40 weekends every year. Yet I am still unknown by the vast majority of Adventist members. The point of my comments is simply that our Adventist church leader must have a passion for people like the pope. They should view themselves, not merely as managers of the church spending most of their time in administrative sessions, but primarily as pastors called to minister to the spiritual needs of our members whenever and wherever possible.

JOHN PAUL II WAS A FEARLESS DEFENDER OF TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC TEACHINGS

A second outstanding characteristic of John Paul II is his unwavering commitment to defend traditional Catholic teachings. What I admire is not the Catholic heretical teachings for which he stood, but his willingness to stand firm in his beliefs in spite of the enormous opposition from his critics. A church leader must be committed to uphold the teachings of his denomination. He cannot afford to be political correct by allowing different views to satisfy different factions within the church.

There is no question that John Paul saw himself as a man called by God to save the Catholic Church from disintegration by reaffirming the commitment of its members and leaders to the historical teachings of Rome. 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. To achieve this objective, John Paul used a twofold strategy. First, he endeavored to win the confidence of Catholics to himself by utilizing effectively all the modern means of communication. Second, he sold with holy conviction to American Catholics his unpopular stand against divorce and remarriage, artificial birth control, extramarital sex, homosexuality, abortion, optional celibacy and ordination of women as priests.

The Strategy of John Paul II

To win the confidence of Catholics in particular and of Christians in general, during his visits to various countries, John Paul did not engage publicly in tongue lashing and finger wagging, but he has wooed friendly crowds to himself by delivering warm homilies, bestowing blessings, listening to complaints, and showing his genuine concern and compassion for the poor and suffering ones. By winning first the confidence and respect of millions of Catholics who saw his sincerity, piety and compassion in action, the pope was better able to gain support for his unpopular stand on official church discipline and doctrines.

Considerable pressure was exerted on John Paul to open the priesthood to women, especially in view of the priests shortage. The pope

responded by issuing in 1995 an Apostolic Letter “*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*—The Ordination of Priests,” in which he declares that the Catholic Church has no power to ordain women, since Jesus had chosen only male Apostles. To close the door to any further discussion, he declared “this judgment to be held by all the Catholic faithful.”

John Paul did not try to be politically correct by avoiding speaking out on controversial doctrinal or social issues. Everybody knew where he stood. This can hardly be said of church leaders like Billy Graham who avoided preaching on divisive subjects such as the “secret Rapture,” though it is part of his Baptist heritage. The reason is that he did not want to alienate segments of the Evangelical community that believes otherwise.

Steps Taken by John Paul II to Restore Unity

One of the first steps John Paul took to restore unity to the Catholic Church, was to revive the Sacred Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith—formerly known as the Inquisition. This watchdog organization, was presided for the past 25 years by the German-born Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the newly elected Pope Benedict XVI. Later we shall see that through this organization stripped outstanding Catholic professors and church leaders of their post. This is the dark side of John Paul that helps us understand how the papacy can easily become in the future an intolerant and persecuting power.

Another step taken by Pope John Paul was to gradually build up a Vatican curia with a core of tough disciplinarians who would support his conservative program. By changing the makeup of the hierarchies, the Pope enjoyed greater support and ensured the future preservation of traditional Catholic teachings. An indication can be seen in the composition of the College of Cardinals who elected Benedict XVI—115 of the 117 cardinals were appointed by John Paul II.

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 was not running a democracy, but a pyramidal hierarchy whose head is the pope and whose center is Rome.

A Lesson for Adventist Church Leaders. We can only deplore the autocratic form of papal church government that ignores or even suppress the legitimate concerns and convictions of informed Catholic members. God has not entrusted the monopoly of truth to a single person or to a few selected church leaders. When issues developed in the Apostolic church, all the church leaders came together at the Jerusalem council to seek divine guidance in formulating a unanimous position.

What Adventist church leaders can learn from John Paul II, is the importance to take a bold stand on fundamental Adventist beliefs and practices that define our church identity, message, and mission. Our Adventist church today is divided on such vital areas as worship styles, women ordinations, the inspiration of Ellen White, creation/evolution, prophetic interpretations, the Sanctuary, the Trinity, and others.

Some Adventist churches sound like night clubs, while others look like funeral homes. Some churches have women pastors who preach, baptize and officiate at the Lord's Supper, while others do not even allow women on the platform to pray or announce hymns. Some Adventists believe in the verbal inspiration of Ellen White, while others no longer accept or use her prophetic guidance in preaching or personal devotion. Some Adventist teachers believe in a *fiat* creation that occurred about 6000 years ago, while others (mostly science teachers) espouse some forms of theistic evolution that occurred over million of years. Some Adventists tenaciously defend the traditional (Uriah Smith) interpretation of Daniel

and Revelation, while others are advancing new interpretations. The result is that many Adventists are confused and disoriented. An increasing number are leaving the church, disappointed by the state of confusion.

Some of these issues are complex with no easy answers. Our church leaders are wise in allowing a certain latitude of understanding and expression. But to restore unity and identity to our Adventist church, a basic consensus must be developed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Like John Paul, our church leaders must have the courage to draw a line in the sand and face the criticism for upholding some unpopular positions. Failure to do so, will only intensify the fragmentation and loss of identity of our Adventist church.

JOHN PAUL II WAS A GIFTED COMMUNICATOR

Pope John Paul II will be remembered as a gifted communicator, not only for his language skills, but also for his use of the media to share his message with Catholic members and the world at large. In 1995 he ushered in at the Vatican the age of information by launching the Vatican web site which he used effectively to publish his weekly sermons, speeches, and articles.

A famous photograph of John Paul shows him typing on his lap top. He had his own email account and supporters were encouraged to email him messages during his recent illness. Text messaging also became an instrumental tool for the pope to communicate his messages. In 2004, the Vatican signed a deal with *Verizon* to deliver daily papal SMS messages to subscribers. The news that the pope had died was first reported via SMS message from the Vatican to journalists.

During the April 3, 2005 interview on “Meet the Press,” Archbishop John P. Foley, president of the Pontifical Council for Social

Communications, recalled the answer John Paul gave to Cardinal William Keeler of Baltimore when he asked permission for a television camera to tape the presentation he was about to make. The pope replied: “If it doesn’t happen on television, it doesn’t happen.”

In a speech delivered on *World Communication Day* in 2002, John Paul said: “The Internet can offer magnificent opportunities for evangelization if used with competence and a clear awareness of its strengths and weaknesses. Above all, by providing information and stirring interest it makes possible an initial encounter with the Christian message, especially among the young who increasingly turn to the world of cyberspace as a window on the world. It is important, therefore, that the Christian community think of very practical ways of helping those who first make contact through the Internet to move from the virtual world of cyberspace to the real world of Christian community.”

The Pope closed his speech with this appeal: “I dare to summon the whole Church bravely to cross this new threshold, to put out into the deep of the Net, so that now as in the past the great engagement of the Gospel and culture may show to the world ‘the glory of God on the face of Christ’ (2 Cor 4:6).”

During his 26-year pontificate, John Paul used various technologies to help communicate his messages to the one billion Catholics around the world. His funeral would prove to be no different. Advanced technology allowed the ceremony to be witnessed by billions around the world. Some 27 large screens were installed in and around Rome for citizens and pilgrims to watch the event as it was beamed live. Internet users were also able to watch the funeral online as it was streamed live around the world.

A Lesson for Adventists Leaders. Our Adventist church has been a pioneer in the use of the Media to proclaim our message. The Voice of

Prophecy is one of the oldest continuous radio broadcast, founded in 1929 and presently aired by more than 1500 radio stations around the world. In addition to radio, TV programs produced by “It Is Written,” “Amazing Facts,” and “Faith for Today,” are being broadcasted through commercial TV stations as well our own HOPE channel and 3ABN broadcasting company.

The problem is that the speakers in these programs are mostly pastors or evangelists. Top church leaders and scholars are conspicuous for their absence. I must thank 3ABN for giving me the opportunity last November 2004 to share the highlights of my book *The Passion of Christ in Scripture and History* in a two hours interview. The response was overwhelming as thousands of viewers called from around the world. Few weeks ago I offered to speak on “THE FUTURE OF THE PAPACY,” but I have not heard from 3ABN or HOPE channel. Personally I feel that Adventist and non-Adventist viewers appreciate hearing Bible scholars addressing current issues from a Biblical perspective.

I am not aware of a weekly message from the General Conference President or Division President being broadcasted through our media channels. Yet our Adventist members need to hear from our top leaders, because they can best communicate their vision and concerns for the world church. They can best serve as the icon of the worldwide Adventist church, just like the pope serves as an icon of the Catholic Church.

Perhaps, like the Vatican, our General Conference may wish to consider developing a website where sermons and messages from our World Leaders are posted on a regular basis. The website could also offer the possibility to church members to email their notes of appreciation, questions, or prayer requests. At present many of our Adventists members do not know where to turn when struggling with unsettling issues. It would be reassuring for them to know that they can email their problems to the

GC internet service, knowing that some church leader or competent scholar will eventually offer them the needed guidance.

Last week, our son Gianluca who works as a corporate lawyer in Chicago, had lunch with an Adventist lawyer who shared with him the impact that Dale Ratzlaff's book *The Sabbath in Christ* is having on some Adventist families. One family has already left the church and other are considering to do so. These people hardly know where to turn to find answers to their troubling questions. In recent years we have lost thousand of members. In some instances, like the Damascus SDA Church in Maryland, the vast majority of the 500 plus members left the church. We discussed with my son the possibility of organizing a meeting with these people in Chicago, either privately at his home or publicly at his church on August 20, 2005. This is one of the few weekend left open in my calendar. But such a meeting hardly solve the larger problem facing our church today.

At present I receive dozen of messages every day from fellow believers asking for help to resolve theological or personal problems. It would be reassuring for these church members to know that the General Conference or the Theological Seminary have a special internet service where questions can be emailed and help can be received. Such service can be used, not only to deal with questions, but also to share significant research produced by respected Adventist scholars.

Our Adventist church has been blessed with gifted Bible scholars who serve at the Biblical Research Institute of the GC, Theological Seminaries, and Religion Departments of Universities located in various parts of the world. Much of the biblical research produced by Adventist Bible scholars never reaches thinking Adventists. The few books that are published after a long and laborious editorial process, may sell a few thousand copies, before going into oblivion.

A newsletter addressing current issues from a Biblical perspective (obviously more elegant than the present one), could be easily produced by our leading theological institutions and made available via email to our church members at large. Such a service would be greatly appreciated by thinking Adventists. An indication is the constant flow of subscriptions we receive for this newsletter that now goes out to over 30,000 readers.

A newsletter produced by our Theological Institutions for our church at large, could offer a popularized, short version of significant research produced by our scholars. Such service, inspired by the example of John Paul II, would be welcomed by many Adventists around the world, who are seeking for a deeper understanding an experience of biblical truths. Most of them have limited research resources and depend on studies the church provides.

Summing up, we have seen that John Paul II stands out in several areas as a worthy example to emulate for Adventist Church leaders. His passion for people, his fearless defence of Catholic traditional teachings, and his gift of communication, are examples worth emulating by anyone called to lead a world church. To this could be added his deep spirituality. Despite his grueling schedule, John Paul spent hours each day praying, usually on his knees. Unfortunately, his positive virtues are overshadowed by negative aspects of his beliefs and practices. To the dark side of his pontificate we must now turn our attention, by looking at three areas:

- 1) John Paul II Was Blinded by Tradition
- 2) John Paul II Was the Most Marian Pope of History
- 3) John Paul II Was Most Intolerant toward Dissidents

JOHN PAUL II WAS BLINDED BY TRADITION

It is hard to believe that a brilliant man like John Paul II, who was totally dedicated to proclaim Christ to the world, could be so blinded by the

traditional teachings of the Catholic, that caused him to fearlessly defend as truths what in reality are blatant errors, condemned by Scripture. The most outstanding example was his belief to be the foundation of the unity and fidelity of the church, because he served as the successor of St. Peter

This belief was reaffirmed at Vatican II in the document known as *The Constitution of the Church*: “The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity of both the bishops and of the faithful” (*Lumens Gentium* 23). John Paul reiterated this belief on the morning after his election (October 17, 1978). In his first message *Urbi et Orbi*, that is, to the City and the World, he said: “We, who are called to hold the Supreme Office in the Church, must manifest this fidelity with all our might . . . because we make entirely our own the commands of Christ, who, after Peter was made the rock on which the Church was built, gave him the keys of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt 16:18-19), who bade him strengthen his brethren (cf. Lc 22:52), and to feed the sheep and the lambs of his flock as a proof of his love (cf. Jn 21:15-17).”

John Paul firmly believed that as the successor of Peter he was the visible foundation rock of the church, and consequently he should not be afraid to be called “Vicar of Christ” or “Holy Father.” In his book-interview, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, John Paul writes: “I would like to recall the words of Christ [‘You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church’] together with my first words in St. Peter’s Square: ‘Be not afraid.’ Have no fear when people call me the ‘Vicar of Christ,’ when they say to me ‘Holy Father,’ or ‘Your Holiness,’ or use titles similar to these, which seem even inimical to the Gospel. Christ himself declared: ‘Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called ‘Master’; you have but one master, the Messiah’ (Mt. 23:9-10). *These expressions, nevertheless, have evolved out of a long tradition, becoming part of common usage. One must not be afraid of these words either*” (Emphasis supplied).

Note that John Paul acknowledges that the use of such divine appellatives like “Vicar of Christ” or “Holy Father” seem to be “inimical to the Gospel,” because Christ himself declared: “Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called ‘Master’; you have but one master, the Messiah” (Mt. 23:9-10). In spite of Christ’s teaching, John Paul justified their use, not because they are biblical, but because they have been hallowed by “a long tradition.”

Indeed, this is the fundamental problem of gifted and sincere persons like John Paul II or his successor, Benedict VI: they choose to be guided by the broken cisterns of church tradition rather than by the teachings of the Word of God. For them the meaning of Bible texts is to be found in the traditional interpretation of Church Fathers, rather than in an objective exegesis of the text.

Petrine Theory

In view of the fundamental importance attached to the Petrine theory and the apostolic succession, frequently mentioned during the recent ceremonies, to defend the Primacy of the Pope, it is important to briefly comment on the pivotal text of Matthew 16:18 used to prove the so-called “Petrine Primacy.” Christ told Peter: “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the power of death shall not prevail against it.”

The question is, Who is the “rock” upon which Christ built His church? Obviously for Catholics, the “rock” is Peter as the foundation stone upon which Christ built His church. They rightly point out that the play on words “You are *Petros* and on this *Petra*” shows that there is an unmistakable connection between the two. Thus, *Peter* is the *Petra* upon which Christ has built His Church.

Protestants obviously reject the Catholic interpretation, arguing instead that the “rock” is either Jesus Himself or Peter’s confession of Christ. According to the former the text would read: “You are Peter and on myself as a rock I will build my church.” According to the latter: “You are Peter and on the rock of Christ you have confessed, I will build my church.”

Peter is the First Building Block. The problem with both of these popular interpretation, is that they do not do justice to the play on words. In the Greek there is an unmistakable connection between “*Petros*” and “*Petra*.” The question is not whether “*Petra*— the rock” refers to Peter, but in what sense Peter is “*Petra*—the rock.” In my view Peter is “*Petra*—the rock,” not in the Catholic sense of being the foundation stone upon which Christ built His church, but in the sense that Peter is the initial stone or building block of the church, which is built upon the foundation of the apostles, with Christ as the corner stone.

This interpretation rests on two major considerations. First, the New Testament pictures the church as a building, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph 2:20; cf. 1 Pet 2:4-8; 1 Cor 3:11). The imagery of the church as a building suggests that the church does not rest on the foundation rock of Peter, but that began with Peter as the first stone. Peter is the first building block because he was the first person to confess and accept Jesus of Nazareth, as the Christ, that is, the Messiah, “the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16). Being the first convert to publicly accept Christ, Peter became in a sense “the first charter member” of the new community of believers, or the first building block of the spiritual edifice which is the church.

A second important point, ignored by the Catholic Church, is that the New Testament views the church, not as a visible hierarchical organization run by the Pope with his bishops, but as an invisible community of believers who are united by the same faith in Christ. In the

Bible “the church” is not a hierarchical structure, governed by one man, but the “people of God,” united by the common bond of faith and love. Both the Hebrew *qahal* and the Greek *ekklesia*, translated “church,” actually refer to the “congregation” of believers, who have been called out from the world (Deut 7:6; Hos 11:1; 1Peter 2:9) in order to be a light in the world (Deut 28:10; 1 Pet 2:9).

This means that when Jesus spoke about building His church, He meant, not the establishment of a hierarchical religious organization, but the building up of a community of believers who by faith would accept Him and confess Him before the world. In this context, Peter, by being the first person to confess and accept Jesus as “Christ,” which means “Messiah,” became the first living stone of the spiritual edifice consisting of a community of believers. The idea of Peter being the foundation of the church as a hierarchical organization identified with the Catholic Church, is foreign to the text, to the teachings of the New Testament, and to the organization of the Apostolic Church.

Apostolic Succession

A fatal blow to the Catholic view of the “Petrine Primacy,” is the lack of any New Testament support for the primacy of Peter in the Apostolic Church. If, according to the Catholic claim, Christ appointed Peter as His vicar to govern the church, then we would expect Peter to function as the leader of the Apostolic church. But this is hardly the case.

For example, there are no indications that Peter ever served as the presiding officer of the Jerusalem church. The organizational structure of the Jerusalem Church is characterized as collegiality with a presidency. But there are no indications that Peter ever served as the presiding officer of the church. At the Jerusalem Council, it was James, not Peter, who presided in the deliberations (Act 15:13).

Furthermore, the ultimate authority of the Jerusalem Church resided, not with Peter, but with the apostles, who were later replaced by “elders.” For example, it was “the apostles” who sent Peter to Samaria (Acts 8:14) to check on the new Christian communities. Had Peter been the leader of the apostolic church, he would have counseled the apostles to send him to Samaria, rather than being told by the apostles to go there.

It was the “apostles” who sent Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11:22). It was “the apostles and the elders” who sent Judas and Silas to Antioch (15:22-27). It was “James and the elders” who advised Paul to undergo a rite of purification at the Temple (Acts 21:18, 23-24). Had Peter been appointed by Christ to serve as the Head of the Church, he would have played a distinctive leadership role in the decisions mentioned above.

Paul Did not View Peter as the Head of the Church. Moreover, there are no indications that Paul viewed Peter as the leader of the church. We are told that when Peter went to Antioch, Paul “opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned” (Gal 2:11). Paul’s action hardly suggests that Peter was recognized and respected as the infallible head of the church.

Furthermore, Paul refers to the “pillars” of the Apostolic Church as being “James, Cephas, and John” (Gal 2:9). The fact that “James,” the Lord’s brother, is mentioned before “Cephas,” the Aramaic for of “Peter,” indicates that James, rather than Peter, served as the leader of the church. Had the apostles understood that Christ had appointed Peter to serve as the Head of the church, they would have entrusted to him the leadership of the church. But the fact is that Peter is never seen in the NT as the sole or chief leader of the Apostolic Church.

Origin of the Apostolic Succession Theory. The notion that Christ invested Peter with the authority to govern the church and that such an authority has been transmitted in an unbroken succession to his

successor, is a pure Catholic fabrication devoid of biblical and historical support. It first appears in the writing of Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon (A. 175-195), who uses the argument of the apostolic succession to refute gnostic heretics. He argues that the gnostic teachings are heretical because they are rejected by those churches which can trace their apostolic pedigree (succession—*Against the Heresies* book 3).

The argument of the apostolic succession served a useful purpose in the early church when the formation of the New Testament was still in a progress. Church leaders needed an objective authority to refute heretics, and they found it in churches like Antioch, Ephesus, and Alexandria, which could trace their origin to an Apostle. These churches could serve as the touchstone of orthodoxy. But to extend the concept of the apostolic succession to the whole course of Christian history is unwarranted, because of the interruption and apostasy that these churches have experienced. The Moslem invasion of the seventh and eight centuries wiped out completely most of the ancient Eastern churches.

Missing Links in the Papal Successions. The same hold true for the Bishop of Rome. Anyone familiar with the history of the papacy, knows how difficult it is even for the Catholic church to prove the unbroken succession from Peter to the present pope. There have been times when the papacy was in the hands of several corrupt Popes, who fought among themselves for the Papal throne. For example, in 1045 Pope Benedict IX was driven out of Rome by the people because of his unworthiness and Silvester II was placed on the Papal throne. Later Benedict IX returned and sold the Papal throne to a man who became Gregory VI.

During the course of events Benedict refused to lay down his papal claims, so that there now were three Popes claiming to be the rightful pope. To resolve the problem the German Emperor Henry II called a synod at

Sutri in A. D. 1046, which deposed all the three popes and elected Clement II instead. One wonders, which of the three deposed popes fits into the apostolic succession? How can the Catholic Church still legitimately defend the notion of an unbroken succession from Peter to the present pope, when some of her popes were deposed for their corruption! It is evident that there are some broken links in the chain of the Apostolic succession.

It is unfortunate that brilliant and sincere men like John Paul II and his successor, Benedict XVI, are so blinded by the traditional teachings of the church, that they are unable to look objectively at the teachings of the Bible. Tradition colors their sight and condition their thinking to the extent that error appears to them as truth.

A Lesson for Adventists. The blinding effect of tradition affects all churches, including our own Adventist church. I recall the exchanges I had with Dr. James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Ministry, in Florida. His TV audience supposedly consists of over 25 million viewers. After spending countless hours refuting his accusation that Adventists fabricate history to prove that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday in the fourth century by Constantine and Pope Sylvester, he finally replied saying that he is bound to his Calvinistic tradition.

Dr. Kennedy was right in exposing the fallacies of the Constantinian origin of Sunday. I explained to him that such a position is held only by a few uninformed Adventists who are blinded by a traditional teaching rejected by Adventist scholarship. But he himself is wrong by clinging to a Calvinistic tradition of the origin of Sunday that lacks biblical and historical support. It is distressing to see how traditional teachings colors and conditions the thinking of both Catholic and Protestant church leaders.

Our Adventist church is not exempted from the blinding effect of tradition. I could give numerous examples. But for the sake of brevity and

peace, I will mention only one simple recent incident. Few weeks when I went up to our bedroom at 10:30 p. m. at the end of a busy day, I found my wife watching 3ABN. My attention was caught by a report on the Waldenses given by a man who recently worked or visited Italy. I do not know the details because I watched the program only for few minutes. When the man was asked if the Waldenses still observed the Sabbath, he replied by suggesting that the Waldenses became Sundaykeepers in 1978 when they joined the Methodist Church.

I could not believe that the man would utter such a misinformation before a TV audience. It is a known fact that the Waldenses themselves have never been seventh-day Sabbathkeepers. The reason is simple. They were organized in the 12th century by Peter Valdes as a lay Catholic revival movement to exposed worldliness and promoted primitive godliness.

The movement was initially approved by Pope Alexander III at the Third Lateran council of 1179. The restriction placed upon them was to preach only at the invitation of the local clergy. Eventually they violated this restriction and came under the ban of excommunication. But their beliefs structure was essentially Catholic until they made contact with the Reformers in the 16th century (Synod of Chanforans in 1532). For further study, see the symposium *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, written by about 20 Adventist scholars and published by Review and Herald in 1982.

In the light of these historical facts, why would some Adventists wish to fabricate history by making the Waldenses Sabbathkeepers until recent times? The reason is simple. It is the blinding effect of tradition that affects not only Catholics and Protestants, but Adventists as well. Since an Adventist pioneer wrote that “Through ages of darkness and apostasy there were Waldenses who denied the supremacy of Rome . . . and who kept the Sabbath” (GC 65), some Adventists choose to believe and teach that some Waldenses have been Sabbathkeeper, even if the historical facts prove otherwise.

It is imperative for all honest truth-seekers to resist the blinding effect of tradition, by searching, accepting, and proclaiming truth as found in Scripture, not in the broken cistern of human traditions.

JOHN PAUL II WAS THE MOST MARIAN POPE OF HISTORY

The blinding effect of tradition can be seen especially in John Paul II's devotion to and veneration of Mary. He is rightly regarded as the most Marian pope of history. At his coronation, he officially adopted as his motto "*Totus Tuus*—Totally Yours," meaning totally committed to Mary. In his official coat of arms, a large "M" for Mary, occupies the entire lower right section of the quadrant. A large "M" was also carved upon his coffin. Thirteen days after his election he made his first official pilgrimage, not to the Holy Land, but to the shrine of Mary of Mertorella (October 29-1978). During his pontificate, he made 13 pilgrimages to shrines of Mary.

The May 1996 issue of *Inside the Vatican*, a conservative Roman Catholic magazine, is dedicated to Pope John Paul II's devotion to Mary. The cover shows the pope praying before a full-cover-size image of Mary. The caption read: "The most 'Marian' Pope in history has entrusted his pontificate—and his life—to the Virgin Mother of God." At the bottom of the cover are the words "TOTUS TUUS," which means "Totally Yours."

The article offers valuable insights into John Paul II devotion to Mary, as indicated by the following excerpts: "The election of Karol Wojtyla to the papacy in 1978 brought about a profound and widespread resurgence of Marian spirituality. In fact, Wojtyla took as his episcopal motto *Totus Tuus*, signifying his devotion to Mary. In many respects this has been the basis of his charism and ministry.

"We can truly say that the Marian dimension in the Catholic magisterium and apostolate has never been stronger than now, in the

pontificate of Pope John Paul II. No other Pope has made so many pilgrimages to Marian sanctuaries throughout the world.

“Before John Paul II no Pope had devoted as much space and emphasis to Mary in both catechesis and liturgy. No other Pope has consecrated so many countries and continents to her care. In fact, after he recovered from the assassination attempt upon his life (May 13, 1981), John Paul II, following the indications of Our Lady of Fatima, dedicated the world of our times to the Immaculate Heart of Mary (March 25, 1984).”

The clearest articulation of John Paul II’s Marian thought is found in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*—Mother of the Redeemer” (March 25, 1987). He clearly expresses his desire to promote worldwide the devotion to Mary, as Mother of God, Mother of Christ, and Mother of the Church. Three times he refers to Mary as “*Mediatrix*—Mediator” and twice as “Advocate.” The entire third section develops the theme of “Maternal Mediation.” He proclaimed the year 1987 to be the Marian year.

In his speeches and writings, John Paul frequently refers to Mary as “*Co-redemptrix*—Co-redeemer.” For example, in 1985, in Guayaquil, Ecuador, the pope said: “Mary goes before us and accompanies us. The silent journey that begins with her Immaculate Conception and passes through the ‘yes’ of Nazareth, which makes her the Mother of God, finds on Calvary a particularly important moment. . . . In fact, at Calvary she united herself with the sacrifice of her Son that led to the foundation of the Church; her maternal heart shared to the very depths the will of Christ ‘to gather into one all the dispersed children of God’ (Jn. 11:52). Having suffered for the Church, Mary deserved to become the Mother of all the disciples of her Son, the Mother of their unity. . . . In fact Mary’s role as *Co-redemptrix* [Co-redeemer] did not cease with the glorification of her Son” (*Inside the Vatican*, July 1997, p. 23).

In his book-interview *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul II explains the origin his personal Marian piety. “*Totus Tuus*. This phrase is not only an expression of piety, or simply an expression of devotion. It is more. During the Second World War, while I was employed as a factory worker, I came to be attracted to Marian devotion. At first it had seemed to me that I should distance myself a bit from the Marian devotion of my childhood, in order to focus more on Christ. Thanks to Saint Louis of Monfort, I came to understand that true devotion to the Mother of God is actually *Christocentric*, indeed, it is very profoundly rooted in the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption.

“Mary is the new Eve, placed by God in relation to Christ, the new Adam, beginning with the Annunciation, through the night of his birth in Bethlehem, through the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee, through the Cross of Calvary, and up to the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Mother of Christ the Redeemer is the Mother of the Church.”

Is Marian Worship Christocentric?

For John Paul II the worship of Mary is *Christocentric*, because, according to Catholic traditional teachings, she participates with Christ in our redemption. This means that by worshipping Mary, indirectly one is supposed to worship Christ, her Son. This belief is expressed in the prayers offered to Mary, especially during the Masses celebrated at Lent. *The Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary* explains that “The Mass in celebration of Christ’s saving passion [at Lent] also honors the part played by the Blessed Virgin in achieving our salvation. When Mary became the mother of Christ ‘by the power of the Holy Spirit,’ she became by a further gift of divine love ‘a partner in His passion,’ a mother suffering with Him. The prayers of the Mass recall the plan of salvation, by which God joined the suffering of the mother with the suffering of her Son, and

decreed that ‘the new Eve should stand by the cross of the new Adam.’” (*Excerpts from the Introductory commentary to the Mass, Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Volume 1, (Sacramentary, Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1992), p. 65.

Catholics believe that Mary participates in our Redemption by undoing the disobedience of Eve. “As Eve indirectly contributed to the Fall of Man, so Mary indirectly contributes to our Redemption. As Eve gave Adam the instrument of the Fall (the forbidden fruit) so Mary gave Jesus the instrument of the Redemption (His Body). . . . Because a woman was involved (indirectly) in the Fall, God wanted the sins of the first man and woman to be reversed, not by a Man alone, but by a woman as well. . . . Mary participates in our redemption in three ways: she obeyed God and so brought the Redeemer into the world, she united her sufferings to His on the Cross, and she participates in the distribution of the graces of salvation” (“Is Mary the ‘Coredemptrix’?” <http://home.nyc.rr.com/mysticalrose/marian14.html>).

Two Unbiblical Assumptions

The Catholic belief in the present participation of Mary in redemption as mediator and intercessor, is based on two unbiblical assumptions. The first is that she suffered with her Son throughout the ordeal of the Cross. Consequently, as a partner in Christ’s suffering, Mary is supposed to have the right to share in Christ’s intercession and glorification in heaven.

The second unbiblical Catholic assumption is that Mary ascended to heaven body and soul, so that she might be close to her Son and intercede before the Father on behalf of the church. The new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explicitly teaches that “The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and

soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of His Body" (p. 276, paragraph 974). The *Catechism* continues saying: "We believe that the Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven to exercise her maternal role on behalf of the members of Christ" (p. 276, paragraph 975).

Intercession is an Exclusive Prerogative of Christ

Historically, Protestants have strongly rejected the Catholic belief in Mary as a partner with Christ in our redemption. They have condemned such belief as a fundamental Catholic heresy that obscures the centrality and uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice and mediation. By attributing to Mary and the saints an intercessory ministry in heaven on behalf of penitent sinners on earth, the Catholic Church has developed an idolatrous religion that offers salvation through a variety of intercessors.

This belief was exemplified during the funeral of John Paul II. In the liturgical section called "The Litany of the Saints," Mary and a host of lesser saints were invoked on behalf of John Paul. Apparently their intercession was needed to ensure that his soul would ascend immediately to heaven so that he might bless the crowd in St. Peter's square from the "window of heaven"—a phrase used by Cardinal Ratzinger during the eulogy to allude to the window used by the John Paul to bless the crowd.

The Bible is abundantly clear that only Christ ascended to heaven to minister in the heavenly sanctuary as our intercessor and mediator. "When Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God" (Heb 10:12). Contrary to the Old Testament levitical ministry where "priests were many in number" (Heb 7:23), Christ is the only priest and intercessor in heaven. "Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always

lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). The Bible consistently presents Christ as the sole High Priest, Mediator, and Intercessor, ministering in the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf (Eph 4:5; 1 John 2:1; Heb 4:14, 16; 7:23-25; 9:24; 10:11-12).

There are no allusions in the Bible to Mary or the saints, interceding in heaven on behalf of sinners on earth. Intercession is an exclusive prerogative of Christ, our Savior. To elevate Mary to a co-redemptive role with Christ, means to attribute divine qualities and attributes to a mortal human being. The ultimate result is the widespread idolatrous worship of Mary—a worship condemned by the first and second commandments, which enjoin us to worship God exclusively: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex 20:3). A false worship promoted by the endtime Antichrist of Revelation.

Growing Acceptance of Mary as Co-Redeemer

An increasing number of Protestants are embracing the Catholic belief of the co-redemptive role of Mary. The cover of March 21, 2005 of *TIME*, has a full page picture of Mary with the caption: “Hail, Mary.” The report indicates that sermons on behalf of Mary are being preached, not only from modest churches, “but also from mighty pulpits like that at Chicago’s Fourth Presbyterian Church, where longtime senior pastor John Buchanan recently delivered a major message on the Virgin ending with the words ‘Hail Mary . . . Blessed are you among us.’”

Time notes that “Mary is also gaining popularity at Protestant divinity schools, where her icons adorn future pastors’ wall. . . . Arguments on the Virgin’s behalf have appeared in a flurry of scholarly essays and popular articles, on the cover of the usually conservative *Christianity Today* (headline: THE BLESSED EVANGELICAL MARY), and the usually liberal *Christian Century* (ST. MARY FOR PROTESTANTS).”

A contributing factor is John Paul's promotion of Marian devotion, which was hallmark of his pontificate. Another factor is the effort of Feminist Theologians to promoting Mary as the female counterpart of God, thus, attributing to her divine attributes and prerogatives.

A more immediate contributing factor to the acceptance of Mary as co-redeemer, is the subtle way in which Mary participates in the suffering of her Son throughout Gibson's movie on *The Passion of the Christ*. In many ways the movie portrays the Passion of Mary as much as the Passion of Christ. You will find an in depth analysis of the exaltation of Mary in Gibson's movie in my book *The Passion of Christ in Scripture and History*. If you have not received your copy yet, please call me at (269) 471-2915 and we will mail you a copy immediately.

In an interview with *Christianity Today*, Gibson himself expressed his amazement at the way evangelical Christians are embracing what he calls Mary's "tremendous co-redemptrix and mediatrix" role ("Mel, Mary, and Mothers," *Christianity Today*, March 2004, p. 25). When the movie came out over a year ago, I predicted that the film may prove to be one of the greatest Catholic evangelistic success of our times by leading many Evangelicals to accept Mary as a co-redeemer. The report of *Time*, mentioned above, proves the accuracy of my prediction.

Conclusion. The few references to Mary in the Gospels indicate that God chose her to bring His Son into the world, because she was an extraordinary godly woman of profound faith and transparent sincerity who "found favor with God" (Luke 1:30). She must have done a superb job in bringing up her Son in a dysfunctional family with several children of her older husband.

Mary deserves our respect, but not our veneration or adoration. To exalt her as a partner with Christ in our salvation, interceding in heaven on

our behalf, means to make a mortal human being into an immortal divine being. It means to make the human mother of Jesus in the divine “Mother of God,” as John Paul has done throughout his pontificate. It means to promote the endtime false worship of God predicted in Revelation 14.

JOHN PAUL II WAS MOST INTOLERANT TOWARD DISSENTERS

The paradox of Pope John Paul II is that on the one hand he fanned the flames of resistance of the people in Eastern Europe, victim of oppressive communist regimes, while on the other hand he douzed the Liberation Theology movement that was fighting similar oppression and social injustice in Latin American countries. He fiercely fought the intolerance of the Communist regimes because they violated the fundamental right of human freedom and dignity, yet he furiously denied the same freedom to Catholic theologians and priests who dared to disagree with him.

The Media usually reports the positive quantitative achievements of John Paul II: He visited more countries, named more saints, and issued more documents than any other pope. But it tends to ignore the dark side of his pontificate. There are negative statistic that are seldom reported: He silenced, defrocked, and reprimanded more that 100 Catholic theologians and Catholic church leaders during his 26-year pontificate.

Sister Joan Chittister, a Benedict nun from Erie, PA, laments that “Suppression of thought, loss of ideas, closing down discussion—that is not an act of faith. That is not of the Holy Spirit.” She notes that there is “a dark side” to the unity of the church John Paul tried to achieve that is seldom reported.

Some Victims of John Paul II's Intolerance

Early in his pontificate in 1980, John Paul ordered Jesuit priest Robert Drinan, a 10-year congressman from Massachusetts' 4th District, to resign his post and leave politics. The reason was not a Vatican law against the involvement of priests in politics. The Vatican has appointed ambassadors to 172 countries. These men are actively involved in influencing the political process behind the scenes. Rather, the reason is that Drina's voting record on abortion bills was not strictly pro-life.

The Archbishop of Boston had no problems with Drinan's voting records. His Jesuit superior had no problem. The previous Pope, Paul VI, had no problem. Nor did the voters have any problems with his performance. But John Paul did have a problem. After fruitless appeals to the pope to reconsider his decision, Drinan obeyed and left Congress.

“Another victim of papal wrath was the Rev. William Rewak, a Jesuit who served for more than 20 years as president of two colleges. In September 1998, his order appointed him president of the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif. Neither they nor Rewak foresaw any objections from the Vatican, which had final hiring and firing power because the school offers pontifical degrees. But papal underlings uncovered some 20-year-old writings of Rewak's on married clergy and women's ordination that differed mildly from the pope's view. It was enough to quash the pending appointment, even after Rewak left a college presidency to take the job” (<http://www.thinkingpeace.com/skyblog/the-bully-pope/>).

Suspension of Catholic Theologians

Through the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, directed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, John Paul II pressed charges against such theologians as Edward Schillebeeckx of Holland, Jack Pohier of France,

Bernard Hasler of Switzerland. He stripped Hans Kung of his post as teacher of Catholic theology at the University of Tübingen for questioning papal infallibility. He suspended Prof. Charles Curran from his teaching post at the Catholic University of America, in Washington, D.C., for advocating that sterilization and contraception were not always wrong. He forced Jesuit priest Terrance Sweeney to resign from his order, because he refused to destroy the results of a survey of American Bishops about celibacy and the ordination of women. A quarter of those surveyed reportedly approved optional celibacy.

The Swiss theologian Hans Küng, who was banned from teaching at the Catholic University of Tübingen, describes the internal atmosphere of the Church during John Paul's pontificate with these words: "[The pope is] the authority behind an inflationary number of beatifications, who, at the same time, with dictatorial power directs his inquisition against unpopular theologians, priests, monks and bishops; above all, believers distinguished by critical thinking and energetic reform are persecuted in inquisitorial fashion. Just as Pius XII persecuted the most important theologians of his time (Chenu, Congar, de Lubac, Rahner, Teilhard de Chardin), so too has John Paul II (and his grand inquisitor Ratzinger) persecuted Schillebeeckx, Balasuriya, Boff, Bulányi, Curran as well as Bishop Gaillot (Evreux) and Archbishop Hunthausen (Seattle). The consequence: a Church of surveillance, in which denunciation, fear and lack of liberty are widespread. . . . The theologians write in a conformist manner—or not at all" (<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2005/apr2005/pope-a06.shtml>).

In 1981 John Paul II went as far dismantling the leadership of the Jesuit order because of their perceived leftist sympathies, manifested in supporting Liberation Theology. He suspended the charter of the order and placed a man of his own choosing as a temporary head of the largest Catholic monastic order. Within two years the Jesuit self-governance was

restored, but John Paul had shown his determination to suppress dissident voices.

John Paul II showed the same intransigence toward the laity. He made it clear that believer have no right to question the church's position on such teachings as birth control, divorce, abortion, and women ordination. He wrote: "Opposition to church's pastors, cannot be seen as a legitimate expression of Christian freedom. It is prohibited to everyone in every case to violate these precepts" (*Time*, April 11, 2005, 41).

Evaluation of John Paul II Intolerance

The shocking intolerance of John Paul II tell us that behind his cunning smile designed to woo large crowds to himself, there was an iron determination to impose his beliefs to Catholic laity and clergy. His sincere conviction to be the rock foundation of the church, caused him to silence any dissenting voice.

Dialogue was possible and encouraged with leaders of other religions, because efforts must be made to bring other religions within the Catholic orbit of influence. But, no dialogue is possible for those who are or become part of the Catholic Church. Absolute, blind obedience is expected from Catholic members and church leaders. Dissenting voices are not tolerated. They are to be silenced and suppressed with all the means available to the pope.

Such an intransigent and intolerant mentality is fraught with frightening future prospects. The very pope who promotes peace and reconciliations of all religions and nations, could eventually show its true colors, by becoming the apocalyptic endtime persecuting power. The newly elected pope Benedict XVI, may well fulfil more than his predecessor the double role of unifying mankind under the umbrella of the papacy on

the one hand, while unleashing an unprecedented persecution of dissenters on the other hand.

In the next newsletter we shall look at Benedict XVI from his past record as the “Grand Inquisitor” of the Catholic Church, to his future goal to be “The Pope of Peace,” as predicted by St. Malachy’s prophecy. This is an interesting study that requires investigation and reflection. Please be patient with me if a month will go by before I can post the next newsletter. I will be on the road (mostly South Africa) during much of the month of May. Remember me in your prayers. I need divine wisdom and strength to continue this ministry of research and lecturing. Thank you for your prayers.