

"Islam and The Papacy in Prophecy"

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Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

If ever I needed some encouragement to undertake a research, I received plenty of it from the responses to the last ENDTIME ISSUES newsletter (No. 85) on "Violence in the Koran and the Bible." The question that I posed was whether or not I should examine the possible prophetic role of Islam, especially as it relates to the nature and work of the Antichrist. About 500 subscribers urged me to proceed immediately without hesitation with such an investigation.

Few subscribers have advised me to leave this controversial subject alone, because it may be costly to my reputation. Some even warned me that if my investigation weakens the role of the Papacy as the prophetic Antichrist, then I will play into the hands of my detractors who accuse me of being a "Jesuit spy."

Let me assure you that I do not court controversy. Over the years I have learned that researching and writing on controversial subjects can be financially costly and emotionally draining. To this very day there are some Adventist church leaders who refuse to invite me to speak in their churches and/or institutions because I have authored such controversial books as *WOMEN IN THE CHURCH* and *THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC*. The fact that these books have been favorably reviewed by numerous Adventist and evangelical scholars, has not significantly changed their attitude toward me.

Having reached the sunset years of my life, I prefer to stay out of controversy. But in good conscience I cannot ignore the Biblical implications of the current war on terrorism. After all, the terrible chain of events following September 11, 2002, have left many Bible believing Christians wondering, what is Islam and how does it relate to the prophetic role of the Antichrist? Is Islam part of the prophetic power that has historically promoted the false worship of God through political warfare and religious deception? Are the senseless acts of terrorism we are witnessing daily to be viewed as isolated incidents of fanatical Muslims, or as part of the historical outworking of prophetic Antichrist?

There are other important questions thinking Christians are asking. For example, Why is the Pope working toward a rapprochement with Muslims by praising the Islam faith as the same faith of Abraham, in spite of the late catastrophic events? Why is the Pope welcoming and affirming the religion of Muhammad today, after condemning it for almost fourteen centuries, including two centuries of crusades against Muslims? Is there a common denominator between the agenda of Islam and that of the Papacy that brings these two strange bedfellows together today? And how do the two agendas of the Papacy and Islam relate to the prophetic role of the Antichrist?

It would be presumptuous to claim that this newsletter offers comprehensive answers to all these questions. The most I can hope to accomplish is to stimulate some fresh thinking on the prophetic role of Islam and the Papacy.

A WARNING ABOUT THE LENGTH OF THIS NEWSLETTER

May I warn you that this is the longest newsletter that I have prepared. It may prove to be one of the most significant. If your time is limited, feel free to skip the first part and jump to the last part where I deal specifically with how the Papacy and Islam fulfil the prophetic role of the Antichrist. The first part introduces the last part, by helping you to understand how the new partnership the Pope is building with the Muslims is based on striking similarities between the beliefs and practices of the two religions.

May I urge those of you who disagree with the position I develop in this essay, not to become disagreeable or hostile toward me. It is a sign of Christian maturity to learn to disagree without becoming disagreeable to one another.

AUSTRALIAN LECTURE TOUR

After several months of waiting, several service requests for my speaking in Australia have been approved. On the weekend of November 8-10, I will speak in Melbourne at a rally of Anglo believers sponsored by Pastor Neil Watts of the Lilydale SDA church. This is our largest church in the city. The following weekend, November 15-17, I will speak at a rally of our Polish believers in Melbourne. We have over 1000 Polish Adventists in Melbourne. I spoke at the campmeeting few years ago. The last weekend of November 22-23 is still undecided. We are working to arrange a rally either in Sydney or Brisbane. For the sake of the several thousand subscribers from Australia, I will post the final arrangements in a future newsletter.

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 July and August 2002. Every Sabbath it is a great pleasure for me to meet our subscribers who travel considerable distances to attend the seminars. Feel free to contact me at (616) 471-2915 for a special weekend seminar in your area. I still have a three weekends open in the latter part of 2002. Each of the three seminars on the Sabbath, Second Advent, and Christian Life-style is now presented with attractive PowerPoint slides which add a visual dimension to our message.

JULY 12-13; LOMA LINDA INDONESIAN SDA CHURCH

Location: 10827 California Street, Redlands, CA 92373

For information call Pastor Eddie Mangungsong at (909) 798-4409. Several Indonesian churches will participate in this rally. All are welcomed because the PowerPoint presentations will be given in English without translation.

JULY 19-20: KOREAN RALLY IN FORT LEE, NEW JERSEY

Location: Good Shepherd Church, 1576 Palisade Avenue, Fort Lee, NJ 07024

For Information call Pastor Hyunsok Doh at (201) 969-2283. This rally is especially for the Korean churches in New Jersey and New York City.

JULY 26-27: GLENDALE FILIPPINO SDA CHURCH

Location: 310 East Chestnut Street, Glendale, CA 91205

For information call Elder Antonio Habaradas at (818) 951-1701 This rally is especially for the Filipinos living in the Los Angeles area.

AUGUST 2-3: TROY SDA CHURCH IN DETROIT

Location: 2775 Crooks Road, Troy, MI 48084

For information call Pastor David Asscherick at (586) 825-6184 or (248) 643-6766. This rally has been planned by Pastor David Asscherick for the churches in the Detroit area.

AUGUST 9-10: WESTCHESTER SPANISH SDA CHURCH IN MIAMI

Location: 9500 SW 16th Street, Miami, FL 33165

For information call Pastor Manuel Fernandez at (305) 220-3540 or (786) 457-2746. This rally has been planned for the Hispanic churches in the Miami area.

AUGUST 16-17: DALLAS SPANISH PLEASANT GROVE SDA CHURCH

Location: 7927 Rosemont Road, Dallas, TX 75217

For information call Pastor Carlos Quintana at (817) 417-5102. This rally has been planned for the Hispanic churches in the Dallas area.

AUGUST 23-24: TORONTO RALLY OF SDA CHURCHES, CANADA

Location: Mount Zion Filipino SDA Church, 140 St. Regis Crescent, Downsview, Ontario, Canada.

For information call Pastor Edwin Martin at (416) 631-6558. This rally has been planned for the Adventist churches in the Toronto area.

AUGUST 30-31: GENTRY SDA CHURCH

Location: 21090 Dawn Hill East Road

For information call Pastor Tim Roosenberg at (479) 736-8808

NEW AUDIO, VIDEOS, DVDS RECORDINGS

During the past few weeks I have been working hard to prepare some new recordings, to upgrade existing ones, and to repackage all my lectures in beautiful plastic albums. I feel excited that finally I can offer all my seminars in attractive albums with artistically designed color jackets. For the sake of brevity I will simply list each album with the special introductory offer until July 31, 2002

NEWLY RECORDED SABBATH SEMINAR NOW AVAILABLE IN AUDIO CASSETTES, VIDEO TAPES AND DVD DISKS

The new SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR was recorded last March 15-17, 2002, at the First Fort Worth SDA Church in Texas by the TEXAS MEDIA CENTER. We spent a lot of time and efforts preparing this new recording where I use about 100 PowerPoint slides for each presentation. The initial response has been very gratifying. Even a basketball player from the New York (Nicks?) called me to order three sets for his team mates. Your church will be richly blessed by these timely and dynamic messages.

The new SABBATH SEMINAR consists of a total of 8 one-hour lectures covering the following topics: the gripping story of my search for the Sabbath at a Vatican University in Rome; the discoveries I made in Vatican libraries on how the change came about from Sabbath to Sunday in early Christianity; practical principles on how to keep the Sabbath to experience Christ's rest and peace in our lives; an update report on the most recent Sabbath/Sunday developments; and a sacred concert with two outstanding tenors entitled THE SABBATH IN SONGS. The concert was recorded in a television studio in South Bend, Indiana.

This new SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR is now available in THREE FORMATS:

8 AUDIO cassettes,
4 VIDEO tapes,
3 DVD disks.

Each of them come in a nice plastic album with an artistically designed jacket. Your special introductory offers until July 31, 2002, are as follows:

1) SABBATH SEMINAR IN 8 AUDIO CASSETTES at the special introductory offer of only \$40.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$60.00. The 8 audio cassettes come in a nice album with an artistically designed color jacket. The special introductory offer will last until July 31, 2002

2) SABBATH SEMINAR IN 4 VIDEO TAPES at the special introductory offer of only \$60.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$120.00. The price is the same for both the American and the overseas PAL system. Specify which system you need. The 4 video tapes come in a nice album with an artistically designed color jacket. The special introductory offer will last until July 31, 2002

3) SABBATH SEMINAR IN DVD DISKS at the special introductory offer of only \$80.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$120.00. The DVD disks are compatible with all TV systems overseas. No conversion is necessary. The 3 DVD disks come in a nice triple Jewel case with an artistically designed color jacket. The special introductory offer will last until July 31, 2002

NEWLY RECORDED CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE SEMINAR IN 8 AUDIO CASSETTES

This seminar consists of 8 one-hour lectures in 8 audio cassettes. In these lectures I share the highlights of four of my books dealing with Christian lifestyle: *The Marriage Covenant*, *Christian Dress and Adornment*, *Wine in the Bible*, and *The Christian and Rock Music*. Two lectures were recorded few days ago. The 8 audio cassettes come in a nice album with an artistically designed color jacket. Your special introductory offer until July 31, 2002 is only \$40.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$60.00.

The easiest way to order the new AUDIO cassettes, VIDEO tapes, or DVD disks, is with your credit card. You can order by calling us at (616) 471-2915 or by emailing us your credit card number, expiration date, and your address. If you prefer to pay by check, mail your check to: BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

ENDTIME ISSUES IN A BOOK FORM?

The other day I received a refreshing phone call from Joann Henkel, an educator living in Alta Loma, California. She is a new convert to Adventism and has been recently appointed to develop a library at Loma Linda University Church. She suggested to me to publish a selection of the ENDTIME ISSUES newsletters in a book format.

I have been giving some thought to this idea, because preparing these newsletter has been a time consuming project, which has caused me to postpone the research for my book on POPULAR HERESIES. For example, I invested about 200 hours researching and writing this newsletter on "Islam and the Papacy in Prophecy." The same has been true of several of the previous ones. There is still considerable work to be done to prepare them for publication.

What do you think of the idea of publishing in a book form a selection of about 20 newsletters, after further research, and editing? The book could be entitled: ENDTIME ISSUES: A LOOK AT SOME CURRENT ISSUES FROM A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

What do you think of this project? Should I proceed? Would you be interested to buy a copy of the book, though you have already read several of the topics? I do plan to add few new chapters dealing with such current issues as Divorce and Remarriage, Worship Wars, Left Behind, Abortion, Creation and Evolution, and Conscious Life After Death, etc.

Thank you for taking time to advise me on this project. Rest assured that I will take your comments seriously.

HELP IS ON ITS WAY!

Keeping up with the preparation of ENDTIME ISSUES newsletters, besides the countless other tasks, has put me under considerable pressure. I am pleased to inform you that some help is on its way. Some scholars whom I greatly respect, have agreed to contribute some essays. One of them is Dr. George Reid, recently retired Director of the Biblical Research Institute at the GC. He promised me to submit an essay dealing with the challenges facing Adventism today. I look forward to read this essay which I know you will greatly enjoy. George is a keen thinker with a grasp of the issues we face today.

ARE YOU MOVING TO ANDREWS UNIVERSITY AREA?

If you looking for a new home near Andrews University, you will be pleased to learn that our son, Dan Bacchicchi, who is both an architect and a licensed builder, has just completed two lovely homes of 2000 and 2400 square feet respectively. They are located only three miles from Andrews, in two large wooded lots.

Each custom designed home offers: high quality construction, many architectural features, no maintenance construction, decks, porches, 200+ ft. paved driveways and a high-efficiency geothermal heating and cooling system. The homes are reasonably priced. For more information contact Dan Bacchicchi at 616-471-9272 or email him at dan@keystonedevlopment.com

THANK YOU FOR INVITING YOUR FRIENDS TO SUBSCRIBE

Thank you for sharing these Bible studies with your friends. Just let them know that they can receive this newsletter directly simply by emailing us their request at: <sbacchicchi@qtm.net> As a result of your promotional endeavors over 15,000 people are already benefiting from these Bible studies

NEW DIRECTORY OF SABBATHKEEPING CHURCHES

The Bible Sabbath Association has just published a 246 pages directory of seventh day Sabbathkeeping churches and groups. The Directory lists over 400 Sabbatarian churches and over 1600 congregations. This new edition is the largest compilation of Sabbatarian churches and groups. This is an excellent tool for inviting Sabbatarians in your area to special programs in order to become acquainted with them.

The Directory is available for a suggested donation of \$15.00 postpaid, from The Bible Sabbath Association, 3316 Alberta Drive, Gillette, WY 82718. You may order by credit card by calling 888-687-5191, or emailing info@biblesabbath.org.

IS YOUR CHURCH LOOKING FOR A VIDEO PROJECTOR?

Is your church interested to buy a VIDEO-PROJECTOR? I would be glad to offer you my IN-FOCUS L 500 VIDEO PROJECTOR, with 2000 lumens projector, at a substantially reduced price. I bought the projector about two months ago and I have used it for the past 8 weekends. It performs beautifully, with a very bright, sharp picture. It is ideal for a congregation of 400 to 500 members. I would like to buy a more powerful VIDEO PROJECTOR with 4000 lumens or more for the large rallies with 1000 people or more. For further information, feel free to call me at (616) 471-2915.

**ENDTIME ISSUES No. 86:
“ISLAM AND THE PAPACY IN PROPHECY”
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Historically, Islam and the Papacy have been violent enemies that have fought for the control of the territories of the Roman empire. Eventually Islam swallowed up most of the Christian countries comprising the Eastern wing of the Roman Empire, restricting the influence of the Papacy to a few Western countries.

At the time of the Reformation, Muslims were more inclined to draw the sword more readily against Catholics than against Protestants, because the Catholics venerated the images of Jesus, the saints and Mary—a practice especially abhorrent to Muslims. The Catholic veneration of the images has remained the same, but her policy toward Islam has radically changed in recent years.

The first part of this essay explores the new partnership that is developing between the Papacy and Islam in the light of the past and present prophetic role of the Antichrist. Specifically, we want to find out if the past struggle for supremacy between the Papacy and Islam and the new present cooperation between them, are part of the prophetic vision of the role of the Antichrist.

This essay is divided into four major parts. The first part looks at the new partnership that is developing between the Papacy and Islam. I will argue that the Pope's attempt to win the Muslims to himself by acknowledging Allah as being essentially the same God of biblical revelation, may be politically correct, but is biblical wrong. The two Gods differ radically in their nature and teachings regarding such things as methods of evangelism, womanhood, and salvation.

The second part considers some of the distinctive beliefs and practices that the Catholic Church shares in common with Islam. I will argue that this commonality may provide the basis for understanding the future prophetic role of these two powers.

The third part reviews Luther and Calvin's understanding of Islam and of the Papacy as being the two aspects of the power of the Antichrist predicted in Daniel and Revelation. We shall see that their interpretation deserve serious consideration.

The last part examines the identifying marks of the prophetic Antichrist. I will argue that both the Papacy and Islam fulfill the distinctive characteristics of the Antichrist. It is my fervent hope that this study may equip us to better understand the current Moslem/Christian conflict from a Biblical perspective.

THE NEW PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE PAPACY AND ISLAM

In recent years Pope John Paul II 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 Kataro, 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."¹

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."²

In his final prayer, the Pope again appealed for Christians and Muslims to work together side by side in fulfilling God's will: "And in this celebration we want to pray for Kazakhstan and its inhabitants, so that this vast nation, with all its ethnic, cultural and religious variety, will grow stronger in justice, solidarity and peace. May it progress on the basis in particular of cooperation between Christians and Muslims, committed day by day, side by side, in the effort to fulfill God's will."³

In spite of the catastrophic events of September 11th, the Pope is still 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."⁴

The Catechism continues affirming that "The Church has also a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to men. They strive to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, whose faith Muslims eagerly link to their own. Although not acknowledging him as God, they venerate Jesus as a prophet, his virgin Mother they also honor, and even at times devotedly invoke. Further, they await the day of judgment and the reward of God following the resurrection of the dead. For this reason they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds and fasting."⁵

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 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...."⁶

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.

The determination of the Pope to develop a partnership with Muslims stems from the simple fact that their 1.3 billion members outnumber 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 Fatima's Appearances

In their informative paper on "Islam and the Vatican," Richard Bennet and Robert Nicholson mention a highly emotional episode which has contributed to building a common ground between Rome and Mecca, namely, the apparitions of our Lady of Fatima, in the town of Fatima, in Portugal. Since Fatima was the name of Muhammad's daughter, attempts have been made to explain Fatima's apparitions as Muslim's phenomena.⁷

Bennet and Nicholson write: "To quote a Catholic news organization, 'Our Lady of Fatima is really Fatima, daughter of the Prophet Mohammed.... On October 23, 1995, Iranian television began running stories that the apparitions in Fatima, Portugal in 1917 were religious phenomena of Muslim origin.'⁸

"Islam teaches that men can achieve favor with God by what a person does. On the Fatima site in Portugal on May 13th, 2000, the Pope proclaimed a message that could be readily accepted by both Muslims and Catholics. 'Pray, pray much and make sacrifices for sinners; many souls go to hell because they have no one to pray and make sacrifices for them'...."⁹

Heroic deeds to win the approval of God appeal to the natural man, including the devout Muslim; it is, however, light years away from the Gospel of grace. The Pope's message, and the message and veneration of heroism in Islam are a total negation of the Gospel, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us....(Titus 3:5)"

IS THE GOD OF THE KORAN THE SAME AS THE GOD OF THE BIBLE?

The difference between the teaching of Koran and that of the Bible is not limited to the doctrine of salvation, but includes the very understanding of God. In fact, all the distinctive beliefs and practices of Islam and Christianity, stem from their respective understanding of God. We noted that the Pope is attempting to build a new partnership with the Muslims by affirming that they worship the same Abrahamic God worshipped by Catholics.

In my reading I found that this view is embraced by numerous church leaders and scholars of different faiths. For example, secretaries of European episcopates met in Istanbul, Turkey, for a five-day period in June 2002 to discuss the relation between Islam and Christianity. The assumption is that by acknowledging *Allah*, the God portrayed in the Koran, as being essentially the same as *Elohim/Yaweth*, the God revealed in the Bible, it is possible to develop a relationship of mutual understanding and acceptance between Islam and Christianity.

Is this assumption correct? A careful comparison between the Koranic God and the biblical God, clearly shows that the two Gods are radically different. Though the Arabic name *Allah* derives from the Hebrew name for God *Eloha*, the similarity is only etymological, not theological. In other words, the two names sound similar, but their respective teachings are totally different. To illustrate this point, we will look at a few significant teachings.

Our aim is to show that the attempt of the Pope and other Christian Church leaders to build a partnership with the Muslims by acknowledging their God, Allah, as being essentially the same as the God of biblical revelation, grossly misrepresents the biblical God. The reason is that the two Gods differ radically in what they have revealed about themselves and their creative and redemptive acts for the human family.

From a prophetic perspective we shall show in the last part of this essay that the new partnership between the Papacy and Islam, represents the historical outworking of the power of the Antichrist—a power committed to promote the false worship of god and the persecution of God’s people. We shall see that both the Papacy and Islam fulfill the prophetic identifying marks of the Antichrist.

The Understanding of God

Muslims and Christians believe that there is one God, but the way they conceptualize God in their respective theologies is radically different. For example, while the God of the Bible is an *incarnate* Being who entered into human time at creation and into human flesh at redemption in order to be Emmanuel, God with us, the God of the Koran cannot and *will not incarnate*. He is remote, inscrutable, utterly inaccessible to human knowledge. Though human beings are his creatures, no interpersonal relationship is possible with Allah.

The difference between the *unitarian* view of the Koranic God (“There is only one God, Allah, and Muhammad, his prophet”), and the *trinitarian* view of the biblical God (consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), differs not only in numbers, but in nature and character. The God of the Bible is a triune Being because HE IS LOVE. Love cannot be exercised in isolation. You cannot be all-loving and be alone at the same time. Love is manifested in relationships. Augustine expressed this truth eloquently, when he said: “Ubi amor, ibi trinitas—Where there love, there is a trinity.” By that he meant, that where there is love, there is a lover, a beloved, and a spirit of love.

For Muslims the biblical teaching that Christ is the Son of God is blasphemous. “They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three in a Trinity, for there is no God except One God” (Surah 5:76). Islam’s teaching of the absolute Oneness of God stems from their believe that God is “far above” and beyond any intimate relationship. He lives in solitary aloofness. Such a teaching derives from gnostic sects that lived in Saudi Arabia at the time of Muhammad. By contrast, the God of the Bible consists of three Beings who live in eternal fellowship. He is both transcendent and immanent, beyond and within His creation.

The God of the Bible was not content to bless His creation from outside of it. He humbled himself to the point of becoming part of his created order through the incarnation of His Son Jesus Christ. By becoming part of His created order, God sanctified humanity. The Sonship of Jesus in the Bible, is a testimony of divine love—a love that transcends human understanding.

It is from this perspectives that we, as Christians, can help our Muslim friends to understand the uniqueness of the triune God of the Bible. Rather than wasting time to prove the Trinity—a sublime mystery that transcends any human explanation—we can affirm that the biblical God does not live in solitary aloofness, but in a holy communion of three beings, because He is love. But we need to explain to our Muslims friends that the three Beings of the Godhead are indeed ONE GOD, because they share the same center of consciousness—a mystery beyond human comprehension.

Method of Revelation

Another significant difference between the God of the Bible and that of the Koran, is in the method of revelation. In the Koran God has spoken through a book. In the Bible God has revealed Himself supremely through a Person, Jesus Christ. In Islam the great marvel of God is to be found the Arabic version of the Koran. In Christianity the great miracle is to be found in the Person of Jesus Christ. Being a personal God, the Christian God can reveal Himself more fully through a Person, than through a book.

The radical difference between the biblical God and the Koranic God, becomes even clearer when we compare their respective teachings on such areas as sin, salvation, Jesus, hell, paradise, evangelism, and womanhood. For the sake of brevity, we shall look only at the last two.

Method of Evangelism

In the last newsletter (No. 85) we noted that the Koranic God explicitly enjoins to slay the pagans, Jews, and Christians who do not embrace Islam. "When the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war). But if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity [become Moslem], then open the way for them." (Surah 9:5).

Such a coercive method of evangelism stands in stark contrast to the teachings of the biblical God to win men and women for His Kingdom by proclaiming to them the Good News of His saving grace through Christ's atoning sacrifice.

Apparently the Pope has no problem in accepting the teachings of Allah regarding the extermination of the infidels, because historically the Catholic church has taught and done the same thing. Thomas Aquinas, who is rightly regarded as the most influential Catholic theologian who ever lived, clearly states in his *Summa Theologica* that heretics are not to be tolerated, but exterminated. He wrote: "With regard to heretics two points must be observed: one, on their own side, the other, on the side of the church. On their own side there is a sin, whereby they deserve not only to be separated from the Church by excommunication, but also to be severed from the world by death. For it is a much graver matter to corrupt the faith which quickens the soul, than to forge money, which supports the temporal life. Wherefore, if forger of money and other evildoers are forthwith condemned to death by the secular authority, much more reason is there for heretics, as soon as they are convicted of heresy, to be not only excommunicated but even put to death"¹⁰.

This historical Catholic teaching that "heretics," if they did not recant, must be not only excommunicated but also exterminated, sound strikingly similar to the teaching of the Koran. Such a common teaching explains why the Catholic Church has historically used Holy Wars (crusades) to exterminate Muslim "infidels" and Christian "heretics." The fact that the Catholic church has historically embraced and used Islam's *Jihad*, Holy Wars, to exterminate dissenters, helps us understand why the Pope finds the Koranic God to be similar to the intolerant God worshipped by the Catholics. Such Gods, however, are light years away from the God of biblical revelation.

The Koran and the Bible on Womanhood

The infinite superiority of the biblical God over that of the Koran, is most evident in the teaching regarding the status of women, especially as it relates to marriage, divorce and the world to come.. A brief comparison between the two can be instructive. It will help us to see that, in spite of what the Pope says, the biblical God cannot be legitimately compared to the Allah.

The God of the Bible created woman out of man to be his counterpart (Gen 2:18), corresponding to him mentally, physically and spiritually, and making him a larger person than he would have been alone. The same hold true for man. He brings to his wife a perspective that enlarges her life, making her a more complete person than she could be without him. Thus, "in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman" (1 Cor 11:11).

The Bible consistently teaches that marriage is a sacred and permanent covenant which God Himself witnesses and protects. For this reason, marriage is effectively used in the Old Testament to portray God's relationship with Israel, and in the New Testament to represent Christ's relationship with His church.

The high esteem that the biblical God places on the role of women in the home and in the church, is foreign to the Koran. According to Allah, women exist primarily for the sexual gratification of men. To ensure this goal, the Koran allows an ordinary Muslim to marry four wives, though wealthy Muslims can fill their harems to the extent of the wealth and lust. The latter practice has been encouraged by the example Muhammad himself who did not follow the Koranic limitations of four wives.

After the death of his first wife, Khadija, he married nine wives. One of them, Aiysha, was only nine years old. She was the daughter of Abu Bakr As Siddiq who was a close friend of the Prophet and in charge of his books. Muhammad was 53 years old when he insisted in marrying Aiysha, a nine years old child, immature, and obviously ignorant of married life. He also gave his twelve years old daughter, Fatima, in marriage to his cousin Ali binAbu Taleb. These criminal acts of child abuse alone suffice to discredit Muhammad's claim to be the greatest prophet sent by Allah, even greater than Jesus Christ Himself.

It amazes me how Muslims can accept Muhammad as a greatest prophet who ever lived, in spite of the fact that he had sexual intercourse with a nine years old girl. If the Koranic God sanctions the abuse of children for sexual gratification, then He should be exposed as a criminal God, rather than worshipped as a Holy Being. Perhaps the Pope is not distressed by the sexual misconduct of the Prophet, because the Catholic Church has had its own share of sexual scandals, not only in the past when some Popes had women lovers and children (see ENDTIME ISSUES No. 82), but even today when Catholic priests are being sued in many countries for sexually abusing minors.

The fact that the Koranic God permits special people like Muhammad to do things forbidden to others, raises serious questions about His moral character and consistency. Muhammad claims that Allah gave him the permission to marry any other woman he fancied. Here is the relevant text from the Koran:

“Oh Prophet, We have made lawful for thee thy wives whom thou hast given their wages and what thy right hand owns, spoils of war that God has given thee, and the daughter of thy uncles paternal and aunts paternal, thy uncles maternal and aunts maternal, who have emigrated with thee, and any woman believer, if she give herself to the Prophet and if the Prophet desire to take her in marriage, for thee exclusively.”¹¹

The special provision granted by the Koran to a man like Muhammad to take any woman as wife, even those captured in warfare, without any regard to the will of the women, clearly shows that Allah treats women as lambs to be led to the slaughter by the whims of men. After a man has obtained whatever he desires from a woman, he is free to keep or dismiss her without fear of injustice. This is clearly taught in the same Surah: “Thou mayest put off whom thou wilt of them, and whom thou wilt thou mayest take to thee; and if thou seekest any thou hast set aside there is no fault in thee”¹²

It is evident that Allah has no respect for a woman's emotions and rights. He treats women as disposable objects. By contrast the Biblical God teaches that “husbands should love their wives as their own bodies” (Eph 5:28). “The wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does” (1 Cor 7:4). This mutual equality and complementarity taught by the biblical God, is foreign to the Koranic God. The polygamy and servile concubinage taught by the Koran, destroys the dignity of woman, the beauty of the home, besides discrediting the morality of Allah's character..

Women in the Afterlife

A most compelling example of the glaring difference between the biblical and Koranic Gods, is to be found in the teachings of the Koran regarding the role of women in the afterlife. It came to me as a shock to read in the Koran and the Hadith—traditional teachings of Muhammad—that in the afterlife, most women are consigned to Hell fire to

suffer eternally. Only some chaste maidens, known as *hur*, will live in the garden of Paradise, in order to provide sexual gratification to faithful Muslims.

The teaching that the majority of women will be consigned to Hell fire, is said to have come from a vision of the Prophet Muhammad. This vision is reported in several traditions (Hadith). According to one tradition, the Prophet related: "I saw the Fire and I have not seen to this day a more terrible sight. Most of the inhabitants are women. They [those to whom the Prophet was talking] said: O Messenger of God, why? He said, Because of their ingratitude. They said: Are they ungrateful to God? He said, No, but they are ungrateful to their companion [meaning husband] and ungrateful for the charity shown by their husband to them. Even if you men continue to do good things for them, and a woman sees one thing bad from you, she will say, I never saw anything at all good from you."¹³

The same vision is reported with minor variations in other traditions (Hadith), which speak also of the sin of breaking of confidence. Frankly, I find it appalling that the Koranic God consigns most women to Hell fire because allegedly they are all ungrateful and untrustworthy. This teaching is insulting not only to women in general, but to devout Muslim women in particular.

A visit to any Christian church shows that women outnumber men in church attendance and religious piety. It is hard to believe that Moslem women are less religious and trustworthy than their Christian counterpart and consequently they deserved to be consigned to Hell fire. The problem is not the Muslim women, but the teaching of the Koran that treats women as mentally and morally deficient. The low esteem of women is especially evident in their absence at the worship service of the mosque in most Moslem countries.

Chaste Maidens to Delight Faith Muslims in Paradise

While most women are consigned to Hell fire, some chaste maidens, known as *hur*, will live in the garden of Paradise to delight the faithful Muslim. The Koran refers four times to these chaste maidens who no man has ever touched (Surah 52:20; 56:22; 55:72, 44:54). They are described in the Koran as chaste, with glancing eyes like pearls, lovely, virginal, and of the same age of male believers (about 30 years old) for whom they are intended as a reward. Later traditions offer a great deal of elaboration.

In their book *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection*, Jane Idleman Smith and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad offer a helpful summary of the traditional teachings regarding the chaste maidens of Paradise: "In the *hadiths* [traditions] detail of their description differ, but they are generally said to be composed of saffron from the feet to the knees, musk from the knees to the breast, amber from the breast to the neck, and camphor from the neck to the head. Working often with multiples of seven, the traditionalists have described them as wearing seventy to 70,000 gowns, through which even the marrow of the bones can be seen because of the fineness of their flesh, reclining on seventy couches of red hyacinth encrusted with rubies and jewels, and the like. The *hur* [chaste maidens] do not sleep, do not get pregnant, do not menstruate, spit, or blow their noses, and are never sick. References to the increased sexual process of those male believers for whose pleasure the *hur* [chaste maidens] are intended, are numerous; the reports make it clear that the *hur* are created specifically as a reward for males of the Muslim community who have been faithful to God."¹⁴

The sensual element that pollutes even the Koranic vision of Paradise, shows the immense difference that exists between the sexual obsession of Allah and the holiness and purity that characterizes Jehovah.

The foregoing comparison between the teaching of the Koran and that of the Bible, suffice to show that the Pope's attempt to equate the God of biblical revelation with that of the Koran, may be politically correct, but it is biblically wrong. The two Gods differ like day from night in their nature, character, and plan for human life and destiny. The biblical

God offers salvation as gift of grace, koranic God teaches that salvation is a human achievement.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ISLAM AND CATHOLICISM

In the light of the radical differences we have found between the biblical and Koranic Gods, one wonders: How can the Pope work toward a new partnership with Muslims by praising their faith as being the same faith of Abraham? Could it be that the Pope feels drawn to Islam more than to any other non-Christian religion, because there are significant similarities between Islam and Catholicism? To test the validity of this assumption, let us take a brief look at some significant similarities between the two religions.

Autocratic Form of church Government

In the first place both Islam and Catholicism have a similar autocratic form of church government where the seat of authority resides in one person: the Pope in Catholicism and Muhammad in Islam. What the Pope is for Catholics, Muhammad is for the Muslims. Both of them are accepted as God's representatives on earth. The Pope claims to be the vicar of Christ, and Muhammad proclaimed himself to be Allah's greatest prophet, superceding Christ Himself. What this means is that both the Catholics and Muslims share the same admiration and veneration for a human leader who dictates their beliefs and practices.

Importance of Good Works to Earn Salvation

A second striking similarity between Islam and Catholicism is their respective understanding of the importance of good works to earn salvation. Both in Catholicism and Islam salvation is the result of a combination of grace and works. In Catholicism, God's grace is infused into believers to enable them to do the necessary good works to merit salvation on the day of judgment.

On a similar vein in Islam salvation is a combination of Allah's grace and Muslims' works. On the Day of Judgment, if a Muslims good works outweigh their bad ones, and if Allah accept their good works, then they may be forgiven of all their sins and enter into Paradise. Therefore, Islam is a religion of salvation by works because it combines man's works with Allah's grace.

Few verses from the Koran suffice to exemplify the importance of works: "To those who believe and do deeds of righteousness hath Allah promised forgiveness and a great reward" (Surah 5:9). "Then those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy, they will be successful. But those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls; in hell will they abide" (Surah 23:102-103).

The Muslims' understanding of good works is largely determined by the performance of the Five Pillars of Islam. These are (1) the recitation of the creed that there is only one true God Allah and Muhammad his prophet; (2) Praying five times a day; (3) Fasting and abstaining from sexual relations during the daylight hours of the month of Ramadan; (4) Alms-giving to the poor; (5) Pilgrimage to Mecca, if possible, at least one in the life time.

Similar Definition of Good Works

The Roman Catholic understanding of good works is strikingly similar. Like the Muslims, the Catholics recite the Apostles' Creed in their church service. The recitation of prayers is also an important part of Catholic piety. I vividly recall my Catholic relatives reciting their prayers in the evening. They held a rosary in their hands to count the number of Ave Maria and Pater Noster (Lord's Prayer) they had recited.

Fasting also is recommended to Catholics, especially as a form of penance to expiate sins confessed to a priest. Alms-giving is also an important aspect of Catholic piety. Alms are usually given to in the forms of charitable contributions to various religious (monastic) organizations that minister to the orphans and the poor.

Like the Muslims, Catholic are also encouraged to make a pilgrimage to Rome, especially during the *Anno Santo*, that is the Holy Year, which is now celebrated every 25 years. During the last Jubilee (Holy) Year of the year 2000, it is estimated that over 40 million Catholics made their pilgrimage to Rome, seeking remission of their sins, and indulgences for their loved ones in Purgatory. An indulgence is the remission of the temporal punishment for sins on behalf of loved ones, that can be obtained through prayers, pilgrimages, and special masses. These can shorten the duration of the punishment experienced by loved ones in purgatory.

It is evident that the methods of salvation in Islam and Roman Catholicism are striking similar. Unfortunately, both religious systems ignore that salvation is a divine gift of grace (Eph 2:8) and not a human achievement. Works of obedience are not the basis of our salvation, but a loving response to the gracious provision of salvation. It is because “the love of Christ compels us” (2 Cor 5:14), that we observe His commandments (John 14:15).

Human Intercessors

A third striking doctrinal similarity between Catholicism and Islam is the intercessory role of human agents. In Catholicism, believers pray to Mary and the Saints to intercede with God on their behalf or on behalf of their loved ones. We noted earlier that the new official *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, acknowledges that the Muslim “venerate Jesus as a prophet, his virgin Mother they also honor, and even at times devotedly invoke.”

For Muslim the supreme intercessory role is reserved for Muhammad. On the final day of judgment, the Prophet will prostrate himself before God who, according to tradition, will say to him: “O Muhammad! raise up your head, and speak, it will be heard; and ask, it will be given; and intercede, and it will be approved.”¹⁵ The text continues indicating that God will pull out of the Hell fire those for whom Muhammad will intercede.

The notion of human mediators interceding with God on behalf of others, is foreign to Scripture. The Bible teaches that “There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). It is only Jesus Christ, “who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us” (Rom 8:34).

Immortality of the Soul

A fourth outstanding doctrinal similarity between Catholicism and Islam, is the belief in the survival of the soul apart from the body at the moment of death. In my book *Immortality or Resurrection?* I have shown that a host of heresies derive or are largely dependant upon the belief that the soul is immortal by nature and survives the body at death.

For example, the belief in the intercessory role of Muhammad, Mary and the saints mentioned above, stem from the belief that at death the souls of the faithful ascend to the beatitude of Paradise, known as “The Garden” in the Koran. Similarly the beliefs that at death the souls of those whose sins are pardonable transit to purgatory while the souls of impenitent sinners are cast into eternal hell fire, are based on the belief in the immortality of the soul. Both Catholicism and Islam hold to the belief in purgatory and hell.

It is humorous to read some of the Islamic manuals describing the process of the extraction of the soul from the body. For example, Al-Ghazali, in *al-Durra al-fakhira* offers this colorful description: “And when one’s destiny approaches, that is, his earthly death, then four angels descend to him; the angel who pulls the soul from his right foot, the angel

who pulls it from the left foot, the angel who pulls it from his right hand, and the angel who pulls it from his left hand. . . . Then he is silent so that the his tongue is tied, while they pull the soul from the tips of his fingers. The good soul slips out like the jetting of water from a waterskin, but the profligate's spirit squeaks out like a skewer from wet wool."¹⁶

Once the soul is extracted from the body, the angels take it to one of three places: Paradise (the Gardens), Purgatory, or Hell, depending upon God's judgment on the individual. Since we discussed earlier the pleasures of the Gardens granted to faithful Muslims, we shall limit our comments to Purgatory and Hell.

Purgatory and Hell

The two doctrines of purgatory and hell are remarkably similar in both Catholicism and Islam. Both religions believe that the souls of penitent sinners need to go through a purgation or purification process before they can be admitted to Paradise. In Catholic teachings the suffering of purgatory is needed to pay for the temporal punishment of sins committed on this earth. In Islam the suffering is inflicted as punishment for sins of omission.

Jane Smith and Yvonne Haddad, explain that in Islamic teaching the suffering of purgatory is needed, because "despite all that the pious believer may have done according to the commandments of God while on earth, he still may have committed some transgressions, however slight, or failed to do certain things that he should have done. Many of the traditions suggest punishment for single sins of omission. 'Why are you punishing me when I carry out prayer and pay alms and fast in Ramadan thus and thus?' The angel replied, 'I am punishing you because you one day passed by an oppressed person who was calling for your help, but you did not help him. One day you prayed, but you had not cleansed yourself before urinating.'"¹⁷ The last sin refers to the requirement of the Koran to rinse the sexual organs before praying—a common practice in the Moslem world even today.

The notion of believers suffering in purgatory to pay for the punishment of their sins before they are admitted into Paradise, negates the all sufficiency of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice to pay the penalty of our sins. Scripture clearly teaches that Christ "has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb 9:26; cf. 1 Cor 15:3). The Good News of the Gospel is that "God showed his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). There is no need for penitent sinners to suffer the punishment of their sins in this present life or the next, because Christ's atoning sacrifice has paid the penalty of our sins.

The Islamic vision of Hell is remarkably similar to the Catholic one. In fact, some writers suggest that the seven stories *Inferno* of Dante Alighieri, was inspired by the Islamic Hell with seven stories, each of which for a distinct class of wicked.

In his thesis on the *Eschatological Teachings of Islam*, Wadie Farag writes: "Hardly a cruder or more barbarous picture of hell could be conceived than that depicted in the Koran and Hadith. The fires of hell are seventy times the intensity of terrestrial fire. The wicked who will suffer in it throughout eternity, will forget that they ever enjoyed any pleasure on this earth. Their tongues will drag out and men will stamp upon them. They will suffer hunger and when given food it will stick in their throats. They will be given 'hot water served to them, with iron hooks; and when it comes near their faces it will scorch them, and when it goes into their bellies will tear every thing there into pieces.'"¹⁸

"Scorpions as big as mules and snakes like camels torment them; stinking rivers full of vile creatures entrap them; the damned have black charred skins, huge long tongues, mouths vomiting pus and blood, entrails filled with fire; their bodies will be greatly enlarged so that they can more adequately experience the torture. All suffer by fire, although the degree of punishment differs according to one's sins. The damned attempt to escape, but each time the guardians of the Fire seize them and throw them down again."¹⁹

The gruesome and barbarous description of hell, that is common to both Islam and Catholicism, may serve the cause of promoting the worship of their awful God—a God to be feared rather than loved, but it defames the biblical God who in His mercy will annihilate the evildoers at His Coming (2 Thess 1:9; 5:2-3; Gal 6:8).

Conclusion

The preceding comparison of some of the beliefs shared in common by Catholicism and Islam, helps us to understand why the Pope is working toward a new partnership with Muslims by acknowledging the commonality between their respective faiths. We have seen that the basis for such partnership is not merely a generic view of God, but a similar autocratic form of church government, as well as similar beliefs in such areas as the role of good works in salvation, the intercessory role of human agents, the immortality of the soul, the coercive methods of evangelism, and the vision of purgatory and hell.

The commonality of certain beliefs and practices between Catholicism and Islam, encourages us now to explore the past and future prophetic role these two powers. Some may feel that this lengthy discussion has detracted from the study of Islam and the Papacy in prophecy. I would disagree. A basic understanding of the two religious systems is essential to understand what we are about to study, namely, their prophetic roles as two manifestations of the Antichrist.

ISLAM AND THE PAPACY IN PROPHECY

The prophetic connection between the Papacy and Islam has long been recognized by Christian thinkers. Thus, what I am proposing in this essay, is by no means my own original interpretation of the Antichrist. Bible students have for centuries seen the prophetic connection between Islam and the Papacy.

For example, Jonathan Edwards, the first President of Princeton University and one of the most respected American theologians, wrote in his book *A History of the Work of Redemption*: “The two great works of the devil which he wrought against the Kingdom of Christ are . . . his Anti-Christian (Romish or Papal) and Mahometan (Muslim or Islamic) kingdoms, which have been, and still are, two kingdoms of great extent and strength. Both together swallow up the Ancient Roman Empire; the (Papal) kingdom of the Antichrist swallowing up the Western Empire; and Satan’s Mahometan kingdom the Eastern Empire . . . In the Book of Revelation (chapter 16-20) . . . it is in the destruction of these that the glorious victory of Christ at the introduction of the glorious times of the Church, will mainly consist.”

Edwards’ view that the prophetic activities of the Antichrist have been manifested through Christian history through the Papacy in the Western Roman empire and Islam in the Eastern part of the empire, was ably defended already in the sixteenth century by the two Reformers Luther and Calvin. I am indebted to Dr. Francis Nigel Lee, Professor of Theology and Church History at the Queensland Presbyterian Theological Seminary, in Brisbane, Australia, for two informative essays: “Luther on Islam and the Papacy,” and “Calvin on Islam.”²¹ These two lengthy essays of about 60 pages, provide a valuable collection of statements on Islam and the Papacy from the two Reformers.

My plan is first to submit a brief summary of what Luther and Calvin had to say about Islam and the Papacy from a prophetic perspective. Then, we will test the views of these two Reformers by examining relevant biblical texts on the prophetic role of the Antichrist.

The interest of the Reformers for Islam and the Papacy stems from the fact that they lived at a time when Papacy had corrupted the Western Church, while Islam was swallowing up much of what was left of the Eastern Church. In many ways the Moslem threat was as real in Luther and Calvin’s days, as the threat of Muslims terrorists is today.

After the Turks became Moslems in their homeland of Turkmenistan, most of them embarked in a war of conquest, exporting Islam to many countries. In 1453 they brought to an end the Eastern Roman Empire by capturing Constantinople. Then they subjugated Greece, Bulgaria, Ukraine.

They continued their steady advance by subduing Albania in 1500, Moldavia in 1512, Romania in 1516, Montenegro in 1517, Serbia in 1521, Bosnia in 1527, and reached Vienna by 1529. By the time Luther died in 1546, the Muslims controlled even Hungary and Moldavia. This means that the two Reformers lived at a time when the Muslim threat was a deeply felt as it is today.

Luther on Islam and the Papacy

Luther saw both the Papacy and Islam predicted in such places as Daniel, Revelation, Matthew 24, 2 Thessalonians 2, 1 John, 1 Peter 3. For the sake of brevity we shall refer only to few of his comments. He interpreted the two legs of the statue of Daniel 2, as representing the division of the fourth kingdom. "The left leg became the Western Roman empire, under the Papacy in Rome. The right leg, the Eastern Roman Empire, with its capital Constantinople, later succumbed to Islam."²²

Luther believed that "the wrath of God had brought Muhammad and the Pope into the world"²³ to punish Eastern and Western Christians for abandoning the pure teachings of Bible. "When the Greeks despised His Word, He took it away and gave them the Turk and Muhammad. To us Germans and to the Italians, he gave us the Pope and with him all sorts of horrible things."²⁴

In Daniel 7 Luther saw the work of the Papacy and Islam represented by the emergence of the Little Horn from the ten horns of the fourth beast, which symbolizes the Roman Empire. In his *Preface on Daniel*, he wrote: "He also indicates that one small horn shall knock off three among the top ten horns— meaning Mohammad or the Turk who now holds Egypt, Asia, and Greece.... This same little horn will fight the saints and blaspheme Christ -- something that we are all experiencing and seeing before our very eyes."²⁵

In a sermon on Matthew 24:15-28 Luther expresses his views that Islam and the Papacy are but two different legs of the same Antichrist.²⁶ What unites the two together in Luther's view, is the fact that both persecute Christians and promote false teachings. The difference is that Islam persecutes Christianity from outside, while the Papacy does it from inside.²⁷

In Revelation Luther found several prophetic allusions to Islam. Commenting on Revelation 9:12-13, he wrote: "The second woe is ...the shameful Mohammed with his companions the Saracens, who inflicted a great plague on the Church—with their doctrines and with the sword."²⁸

For Luther the central message of Revelation is the final victory of the Church over Islam and the Papacy. He concludes his treatment of the book saying: "We can profit by this Book.... We can know that neither force nor lies neither wisdom nor holiness, neither tribulation nor suffering, shall suppress the Church. But it will gain the victory, and overcome at last.... Great and perilous and manifold offences come upon the Church.... This has happened before now, under the Papacy and Muhammad."²⁹

Luther attempted in several ways to clarify the relationship of Islam and the Papacy to the Antichrist. In 1532 he made one of the clearest statement: "I am entirely of the opinion that the Papacy is the Antichrist. But if anyone wants to add the Turk —then the Pope is the spirit of Antichrist, and the Turk is the flesh of Antichrist. They help each other in their murderous work. The latter slaughters bodily by the sword; and the former spiritually by doctrine."³⁰ Before commenting on Luther's view of Islam and the Papacy as being two manifestations of the Antichrist, let us see what Calvin has to say.

Calvin on Islam and the Papacy

Calvin's views on the prophetic role of Islam and the Papacy are strikingly similar to those of Luther. Calvin's comments were largely inspired by his concern over the threat posed by the Moslem Turks, who had invaded Romania, Hungary, and besieged even Nice in France.

In 1543 Calvin in Switzerland wrote to Philip Melanthon in Germany, saying: "It is not without the bitterest grief that I hear of the sad condition of your Germany! Nor are the evils which I dread, of a less serious kind than those which I bewail.... The Turk again prepares to wage war with a larger force. Who will stand up to oppose his marching throughout the length and breadth of the land, at his mere will and pleasure?"³¹

In the tract on *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, which Calvin presented in 1544 "to the Most Invincible Emperor Charles V," he urged the emperor to delay the task of reforming the church in order to give priority to the Moslem problem, if he wanted to leave his "posterity some empire."³² Calvin explains: "Why do I speak of posterity? Because even now, while your own eyes behold – it is half bent, and totters to its final ruin!"³³ The so-called German 'Holy Roman Empire' was fast disintegrating.

In the light of the Moslem's threat to the survival of Western Europe, Calvin acknowledges that Islam and the Papacy are two manifestations of the Antichrist power that will attempt to subvert the truth and destroy God's church. In his *Sermons on Deuteronomy* (18:15 and 33:2), Calvin explains: "As Mahomet says that his *Al-Coran* is the sovereign wisdom, so says the Pope of his own decrees. For they be the two horns of Antichrist."³⁴ For Calvin the common denominator between the two powers, is their appeal to higher revelations that supercede the Scripture: "Mohammed and the Pope have this religious principle in common -- that Scripture does not contain the perfection of doctrine, but that something higher has been revealed to them."³⁵

In his *Commentaries on Daniel*, Calvin explains that the fourth empire represented by the iron legs of the statue of Daniel 2, is the Roman Empire which was later divided into the "Western-Roman Papal and the contemporaneous Eastern-Roman Islamic Empire."³⁶ As noted earlier, Calvin calls them "the two horns of the Antichrist." "The Turks have spread far and wide, and the world is filled with impious despisers of God."³⁷

In his commentary on Daniel 7 Calvin explains that the Fourth Beast represents the Roman Empire. Calvin notes that the Little Horn that sprung up from the Fourth Beast is interpreted by some to refer to the papacy and by others to the Turkish kingdom. He prefers to adopt a more inclusive interpretation.

Calvin wrote: "I have no doubt that in this vision [of the Fourth Beast], the Prophet was shown the figure of the Roman Empire.... The Prophet simply means that the Roman Empire was complex.... Some twist this to mean the Pope, and others the Turk.... I have no doubt that 'the little horn' relates to Julius Caesar and the other Caesars who succeeded him.... Some take this prophecy to relate to the kingdom of Turkey; others to the tyranny of the Pope of Rome." (Lee n 10).

Calvin advocates a more inclusive view of the Antichrist, which allows for the manifestation of both powers: the Papacy and Islam. In his *Commentary on Second Thessalonians*, Calvin clearly identifies the rising of the "Man of Sin" mentioned by Paul in 2 Thess 2:3, with the Papacy. However, Calvin saw in the unprecedented "apostasy" predicted in the same text (2 Thess 2:3), the outcome of the Moslem invasion of Christian countries.

Calvin wrote: "The minds of ancients were so bewitched that they believed that Nero would be Antichrist! However, Paul is not speaking of one individual, but of a kingdom that was to be seized by Satan, for the purpose of setting up a seat of abomination in the midst of God's Temple. This we see accomplished in Popery."³⁸

Paul predicted, however, not only the emergence of the “Man of Sin,” but also an unprecedented “apostasy” (2 Thess 2:3). Calvin rightly explains that “When the word ‘apostasy’ is used without any addition, it cannot be confined to a few individuals. Now the word ‘apostates’ can be understood only of those who have previously enlisted in the service of Christ and His Gospel. Paul, then, is predicting a general defection on the part of the Visible Church. As if he were saying, ‘The Church must be reduced to a ghastly and horrifying state of ruin, before its full restoration is achieved.’” (Lee n 24).

Calvin saw the fulfillment of the general defection predicted by Paul, in the massive apostasies caused by the Moslem invasion of Christian countries. “The defection has indeed spread more widely! For, since Mohammed was an apostate, he turned his followers, the Turks, from Christ. . . . The sect of Mohammed was like a raging overflow, which in its violence tore away about half of the Church. It remained for [the Papal] Antichrist to infect with his poison the part which was left.”⁴⁰

Calvin died in 1564 at the age of 55, before he could write a commentary on the last book of the Bible. Yet on the basis of what he wrote on the Papacy and Islam in his commentaries on Daniel, Second Thessalonians and First John, we can safely conclude that his understanding of these two powers as being the “two horns of the Antichrist,” would have been reflected in his interpretation of Revelation.

ARE ISLAM AND THE PAPACY TWO MANIFESTATIONS OF THE ANTICHRIST?

Were Luther and Calvin correct in viewing the papacy and Islam as two manifestations of the prophetic Antichrist? Were their views based on a correct interpretation of the relevant Bible texts or were they influenced by the Moslem threat to the survival of Western Europe? Can we today legitimately embrace the Reformers’ view of the Antichrist as including both the power of the Papacy and of Islam?

We shall attempt to answer these questions by examining what the Bible has to say about the nature and work of the Antichrist. Our procedure will be simple. First we will define the major prophetic characteristics of the Antichrist, and then we shall ask if the Papacy and Islam equally fulfill these characteristics.

I recognize the controversial nature of this investigation, since it expands the traditional Adventist interpretation of the Antichrist, which was limited to the Papacy. May I urge you to read the following analysis, without prejudging me as a “heretic.” Please note that though I was born and brought in Rome, Italy, I do not claim infallibility. What I am submitting for your consideration, represents simply a feeble attempt to understand more fully the prophetic role of the Antichrist in the light of the historical persecution of the church and perversion of truth accomplished by both the Papacy and Islam.

What I am submitting is a “working hypothesis,” not a dogmatic truth. I am always prepared to change my views when someone shows me the flaws of my methodology and conclusions. Please do not flood me with “hate mail.” If you cannot stand what I have to share, simply ask me to remove your address and your request will be fulfilled. Let us act as mature Christians, able to disagree without becoming disagreeable to one another.

Definition of the Antichrist

The term “Antichrist” appears in the Bible only in two of John’s letters. He refers four times specifically to “the Antichrist” (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7). It is noteworthy that by the time of John’s writing (A. D. 90-100), Christians had coined a specific term, “the antichrist,” to designate the expected appearance of “false Christs and false prophets.” Presumably such a term was yet unknown few decades earlier, since Paul uses other designations: “the man of lawlessness,” “the son of perdition” (2 Thess 2:3).

Linguistically, the term “antichrist” can denote a “substitute” or an “opponent” of Christ since the Greek preposition “anti” can mean either “in the place of” or “against.” In John the term is used primarily in the latter sense. The “antichrist” is not a messianic pretender but one who opposes Christ by denying His incarnation and messiahship.

“Who is the liar,” writes John, “but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22). “Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist” (1 John 4:2-3).

The genuine incarnation of Christ was denied in John’s time by Gnostic sects. In their view matter was altogether evil, and consequently they taught that Christ could never have assumed human flesh. His body was not genuinely human but only had a human appearance.

In John’s view this teaching was a deadly heresy because it undermined the validity of Christ’s atonement. Thus he identifies the propagators of this heresy with “the antichrist”: “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist” (2 John 7).

In this passage “the antichrist” is singular and specific (preceded by the article—*ho antichristos*), but it is used to describe not one specific false teacher, but the “many deceivers” who were misleading the believers. In fact, in 1 John 2:18 the plural form is used (“Now many *antichrists* have come”) to describe these false teachers. This indicates that John sees the antichrist as a principle of hostility and opposition to God, manifested especially by those who denied the incarnation of Christ. This principle is designated by John as “the spirit of antichrist” (1 John 4:3).

Islam and the Papacy as the Antichrist

John’s definition of the Antichrist fits perfectly Islam’s denial of the divinity, incarnation, and crucifixion of Christ. The Koran teaches that Jesus, called Isa, was simply a human being, born to a virgin called Mariam, who was the sister of Aaron and Moses (Surah 19:28) While still a virgin (Surah 6:12; 19:19-21), Mariam gave birth to Isa alone in a desolate place under a date palm tree (Surah 19:22ff). Christ was not killed or crucified, and those who said he was crucified lied (Surah 4:157). “Isa [Jesus] did not die, but ascended to Allah.” (Surah 4:158).

Muhammad adopted these teachings from gnostic and Arian sects that had been exiled to Saudi Arabia. In other words, the very teaching condemned by John as “the Spirit of the Antichrists,” eventually influenced Muhammed to adopt a unitarian view of God and a strict human view of Christ that discredited His divine nature and redemptive mission.

The term “Antichrist” can also be applied to the Papacy, not in the sense of John’s definition of the denial of the incarnation, but in the meaning of “taking the place of Christ.” This is a legitimate use of the term which fits the historical claims of the Pope to be the Vicar of Christ and God’s representative on earth.

The Antichrist as the Little Horn of Daniel 7

A fuller description of the nature and work of the Antichrist, is found in Daniel 7. This chapter contains the well-known vision of the four beasts, representing the succession of four empires: Babylon, Media Persia, Greece, and Rome. Out of the Fourth Beast emerges the “Little Horn”—a power which has been rightly associated with the work of the Antichrist. Much of the discussion of the prophetic outworking of the Antichrist derives and depends upon Daniel’s vision of the Little Horn. Therefore, let us look at some of the identifying marks of the Antichrist Little Horn of Daniel 7 to see if they equally apply to the Papacy and Islam.

A Small Beginning

The name “Little Horn” (Dan 7:3) suggest a power that had a small beginning. Its roots existed prior to the Fall of the Roman Empire, because it uproots three existing horns or kingdoms. Gradually this small power was to become a dominant despot that “shall wear out the saints of the Most High” (Dan 7:25).

This distinguishing mark of the Little Horn fits well both the Papacy and Islam. The beginning of the Papacy was small. Initially the Bishop of Rome was regarded as “*unus inter pares*,” that is, “one bishop among equal.” But gradually, geographical and political factors contributed to the development of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome. With the election of Gregory I in 590, (known as the first medieval pope), the papacy became a dominant religious and political power that exercised enormous influence during the Middle Ages.

Like the Papacy, Islam also had a small beginning. When Muhammad began preaching Islam in 610 in Mecca, he faced considerable opposition and was forced to flee with his band of followers to Medina in 622. But gradually he consolidated his power and systematically subdued all the tribes living in Saudi Arabia.

During its first century of Islam’s expansion from 632 to 732, Muhammad’s successors subdued Egypt, Palestine, Syria, part of Turkey and all the countries of northern Africa. In 711 they crossed from Africa to Spain and crossed the Pyrenees into southern France until they were stopped in 732 by the Frankish ruler Charles Martel. The expansion continued for the next thousand years. Truly the description of the Little Horn as a power that began small but became exceedingly powerful fits well not only the Papacy, but also Islam.

A Different Kingdom

The Little Horn “shall be different from the former ones” (Dan 7:24). The difference is suggested by its political and religious agenda. He “shall speak words against the Most High and shall wear out the saints of the Most High” (Dan 7:25). It would be a kingdom, but its rulers would be both political and religious leaders.

Again, this distinguishing mark fits well both the Papacy and Islam. Both powers claim the right to control people’s souls as well as their bodies. They have been different from all previous kingdoms, because they have exercised political power to promote their religious agenda. To this very day, leaders of fundamental Moslem countries like Iran, act as both political and religious leaders of their people.

Uproots Three of the Ten Horns

The Little Horn power would come into prominence after the breaking up of the Roman Empire. The aggressive thrust of the newcomer “shall put down three kings” (Dan 7:24). The text says that “three of the first horns were plucked by the roots.”

This distinguishing mark fits better Islam than the Papacy. The traditional Adventist interpretation found in the *SDA Bible Commentary* and in Merwyn Maxwell’s *God Cares*, maintains that the three horns uprooted refer to the eradication of the Heruli in 493, the Vandals in 534, and the Ostrogoths in 538. The problem with this interpretation is that none of these three Germanic tribes were really eradicated. Furthermore, the Papacy never gained control of their territories.

Justinian's triumph over the Ostrogoths in Italy was short lived. First, because under their new leader, Totila, the Ostrogoths quickly recaptured most of their lost territories. Second, because three years after Justinian's death in 565, another Germanic people, the Lombards, invaded the Italian peninsula and weakened the Papal power. In other words, the Papacy never really displaced three kingdoms or nations to establish its power.

Even with the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire in 800 by Charlemagne, the power of the papacy was still constantly restrained by the ambitions of emperors, who went as far as deposing certain popes and replacing them with men of their own choosing. For example, the German Emperor Otto III in 996 entered Rome and, after putting down a faction of Roman nobles, he forced the election of his own cousin Bruno as Gregory V.

By contrast, the application to Islam of the uprooting of the three horns of Daniel 7:24, poses no serious problems. The reason is that Muhammad's successors, known as the Califs, who like him combined the priestly and kingly dignity, within ten years of the Prophet's death, ruthlessly subdued Egypt, Palestine, and Syria—three major centers of primitive Christianity and of the Roman Empire. Their wars of conquest continued within and without the boundaries of the empire, extending their territories all the way to India and Afghanistan.

Arrogant Appearance and Blasphemous Speech

Another distinguishing characteristic of the Little Horn is his arrogant appearance and blasphemous speech: "The horn which had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and which seemed greater than its fellows" (Dan 7:20). "He shall speak words against the Most High" (Dan 7:25).

This identifying mark of the Little Horn, fits well both the Papacy and Islam. The classical example of the arrogance of the Papacy is Pope Gregory VII's humiliation of the Emperor Henry IV at the castle of Canossa. The emperor was kept in the outer court of the castle for three days with uncovered head and naked feet during an unusual cold winter weather. When the Emperor was practically frozen, the door of the castle was open and the Pope accepted his confession and granted him a pardon.

The Little Horn "shall speak words against the Most High" (Dan 7:25). Later parallels (Dan 8:25; 11:36; 2 Thess 2:3,4), suggest that the Little Horn would magnify himself by claiming the place of God. History records many examples of such bold claims by the Papacy. At the Fifth Lateran Council in 1512, the Pope Julius II, who distinguished himself as a military leader, a pope in arms, was acknowledged, not only as Shepherd, Physician, and Governor, but also as "another God on earth."

Similar blasphemous claims have been made by popes in more recent times. For example, on June 20, 1894, Pope Leo VII asserted in his Pastoral Letter "The Reunion of Christendom," that "we [the popes] hold on this earth the place of God Almighty."

The arrogant and blasphemous nature of Islam is self-evident. Islam is arrogant in accusing Christians of blasphemy for teaching that God is a triune Being and that Christ is His Son. "They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three in a Trinity, for there is no God except One God" (Surah 5:76).

Islam is arrogant in claiming that Muhammad is the greatest prophet sent by God, superceding even Jesus Christ Himself. It is arrogant in boasting that the Koran is the absolute and uncorrupted word of God, replacing the earlier revelations of the Old and New Testaments.

Islam is arrogant especially in commanding Muslims to slay the people who do not accept their faith: "Fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war). But if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity [become Moslem], then open the way for them" (Surah 9:5).

A Persecuting Power

A significant distinctive mark of the Little Horn is his persecution of believers: "He shall wear out the saints of the Most High" (Dan 7:25). During the course of its history, the Antichrist power represented by the Little Horn, was to become known for persecuting God's people.

This identifying mark of the Little Horn as a persecuting power has been historically fulfilled by both the Papacy and Islam. Regarding the persecuting power of the Papacy, it is significant that recently the Pope himself has apologized for the atrocities committed by the Catholic church against Jews, Muslims, and dissenting Christians. Unfortunately, his apology does not undo the suffering and loss of countless innocent lives.

The persecuting power of the Roman Catholic Church has been manifested in the extirpation of the Albigences by means of a crusade, the establishment of the Inquisition, the cruel attempt to suppress the Waldenses, the bloody wars to exterminate the Bohemians, the burning of Hus and Jerome, and the countless other Christians executed before the Reformation. After the Reformation ferocious cruelties were practiced by the Catholic Church in England during Queen Mary's reign; in France at the massacre of Batholomew and the persecution of the Huguenots; in Spain, Italy, and Poland in the attempts to suppress by the sword those who had embraced the Protestant faith.

Comparing to the Papacy, Islam has persecuted Christians far more intensively and extensively. During the first century of Islam's existence, Muslims armies, inspired by intense fanaticism, conquered the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, extending their control all the way from North Africa, to Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and part of Turkey. They succeeded in practically uprooting the Christian presence in these country by means of the sword and forced conversions.

The persecuting nature of Islam is inspired by the example and teachings of its Founder, Muhammad. He fought all the pagans, Jews, and Christians in Saudi Arabia, until he subdued them, forcing them to accept Islam. For him fighting was a way of practice his religion: "My livelihood is under the shade of my spear, and he who disobeys my orders will be humiliated by paying Jizya [tribute]" (Hadith 4:162b). Muhammed's example was followed by his fanatical followers who systematically exterminated Christians or reduced them to a condition of virtual servitude.

A Lawless Power

Another distinctive characteristic of the Little Horn is his disrespect for God's sacred times and laws. "He shall think to change the times and the law" (Dan 7:25). The "times" are the religious times, as indicated by the translation "sacred seasons" in the Smith and Goodspeed version. Paul alludes to the same characteristic of the prophetic Antichrist by calling him "the man of lawlessness" (2 Thess 2:3). Rebellion against God is manifested in disobedience to His commandments.

In 1 King 12:25-33 we find an interesting example. King Jeroboam of Israel was determined to wean his people away from the worship of God at the Jerusalem Temple. To accomplish this he built two altars, one in Bethel and the other in Dan (1 King 12:29) and he appointed a feast for the people to attend on the fifteenth day of the eighth months. The date suggests that he wanted to lead the people away from the worship of the true God, by changing the annual feast of Tabernacle, which was the most important gathering of God's people, from the fifteenth day of the seventh months to the fifteenth day of the

eighth month. By changing the time and the place of worship, Jeroboam led the Israelites into apostasy.

The most sacred time appointed by God to worship Him as Creator, Redeemer, and Restorer, is the weekly Sabbath. In the Scripture great blessings and curses are associated with its observance or nonobservance (Ez 20:12, 20; 22:26-31; Is 58:13,14; Jer 17:19-27). This is the one commandment that affords us an opportunity to show in a concrete way our commitment to God, by giving priority to Him in our thinking and living during the seventh day.

It is not surprising that Daniel predicted that the Antichrist power represented by the Little Horn will attempt to change the sacred times (Dan 7:25) for worship. After all the day in which we worship tells a lot about HOW we worship and WHO we worship. Revelation speaks of the false worship promoted by the beast, which in many ways is the counterpart of the Little Horn of Daniel 7. Those who accept the false worship receive a mark on their right hand or forehead. In view of the close connection between the time and manner of worship, the mark of the beast is most likely connected to the day of worship.

This identifying mark finds its fulfillment in the work of both the Papacy and Islam in changing the Biblical Sabbath day of rest and worship. In chapter 6 of my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday* I have submitted compelling documentation, showing the theological, social, and liturgical methods used by the Papacy to lead Christian away from Sabbathkeeping to Sundaykeeping. The change was not merely one of numbers of names, but of meaning, authority, and experience. It was a change from a HOLY DAY into a HOLIDAY.

The Pope urged the abandonment of the Sabbath to show separation from the Jews and promoted the adoption of Sunday to prove the Christian identification and integration with the cycles of the Roman society. The Sun-god with its Sun-day became dominant in the pagan society beginning from the early part of the second century.

Muhammad, like the Pope, promoted the abandonment of the Sabbath to show separation from the Jews, but adopted Friday instead of Sunday as the weekly day for prayer and worship. Why? I intend to investigate this question more fully, when I prepare this essay for publication.

At this point it seems to me that Muhammad chose Friday, the Day of the Creation of Man, because he wanted his followers to differ not only from the Jews and Christians who observed the seventh day Sabbath, but also from the pagans and Christians who worshipped on the Day of the Sun. His abhorrence for idolatry most likely caused him to reject the Day of the Sun, because of its association with pagan Sun-worship.

Summing up we can say that in different ways and for different reasons the Papacy and Islam fulfilled the prophetic role of the Little Horn regarding the change of the sacred time of the Sabbath for the worship of God. This historical change has greatly affected the quality of religious experience of countless people through the centuries.

The Time of the Domination of the Antichrist

Another distinctive characteristic of the Little Horn is the time of his domination given in Daniel 7:25 as "a time, two times, and half a time." This prophetic period of three and a half years, is also designated as 42 months, or 1260 days. The three designations refer to the same prophetic period of time, which sometimes is given in years, sometimes in months, and other times in days. In Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, the three and a half years are the time when the Antichrist power oppresses the saints of the Most High.

In Revelation 11:2 the 42 months mark the time of the oppression of the Holy city. In the following verse (Rev 12:3), the 1260 days designate the duration of the mission of the two witnesses. In Revelation 12:6, the 1260 days denote the time of the preservation of the church in the wilderness. In Revelation 13:5, the 42 months stand for the time during which the beast is allowed to exercise his authority.

A look at the various usages of this prophetic period of three and a half years, suggests that *persecution* and *protection* are the two outstanding features of this time prophecy. We are told that during this period the Antichrist power of the Little Horn in Daniel “shall wear out the saints” (Dan 7:25) and the Beast power of Revelation will “make war on the saints” (Rev 13:7). The reassuring message is that God’s people are not abandoned to the mercy of the Antichrist. The church is protected in the wilderness “where she has a place prepared by God, in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (Rev 12:6).

Historically, our Adventist church has interpreted this prophetic period as representing the 1260 years of Papal domination from 538 to 1798. Supposedly the prophetic period of the Antichrist began in 538 when Justinian’s general, Belisarius, defeated the Ostrogoths, thus enabling the Pope to regain some of his power. The period terminated in 1798 when Napoleon’s general, Bethier, entered Rome with a French army, proclaiming the end to the political rule of the papacy, and taking with him the pope prisoner to France.

This interpretation poses two major problems, which thinking Adventists have long recognized. In fact during the past few months I have received several email messages and calls from pastors who have asked me to help them understand more fully what really happened in 538.

The first problem is the questionable significance of 538. We noted earlier that Justinian’s triumph over the Ostrogoths in 538 was short lived, because under their new leader, Totila, the Ostrogoths quickly recaptured most of their lost territories. In other words, this event did not significantly boost the power of the Papacy, which still faced constant harassments from various rulers for centuries to come.

The second problem with the traditional interpretation is its failure to account for the basic meaning of this prophetic period, namely, a time in which God’s people are *persecuted* on the one hand and are *protected* on the other hand. It is evident that the persecution and protection of the church did not begin in 538 nor did it end in 1798. These are realities that have characterized the whole history of God’s church throughout the centuries. Some of the most bloody persecutions by Roman emperors occurred during the first four centuries.

A more satisfactory interpretation of the prophetic period of three and half years, is suggested by its symbolic usage to represent, on the one hand the time of domination of the Antichrist, and on the other hand the protection of God’s people in time of persecution.

Why do Daniel and John the Revelator use the three and half years period to represent the persecution and protection of God’s people during the time of the Antichrist? Most likely because three and half is half of seven, which is the number of God’s completion and perfection. Half of seven suggests incompleteness and limitation. In other words, the forces of the Antichrist are limited, and will not reach their scope of the complete destruction of God’s people. God will have the final word and triumph over the forces of evil. This is the final message of Daniel and Revelation.

It is interesting to note the use of three and half years in the life of Elijah and in the ministry of Jesus. At the time of Elijah there was no rain for three and half years (1 King 17:1; James 5:17). It is worth noting that Revelation 11:6 associates this experience of Elijah with the 1260 days during which the two witnesses will prophesy (Rev 11:3). What stands out in the experience of Elijah, is the fact that over 7000 faithful prophets were protected and provided by God during the three and half years of drought. What

happened at the time of Elijah serves as a model for the history of God's church.

The same observation can be made about Christ's ministry that lasted three and half years. This was a period in which the Evil One tried to destroy Christ, but he did not succeed before God's protection was over him. The attacks against Christ lasted only three and a half years. Why? Because half a week stands for incompleteness, limitation. The forces of evil were limited by God and could not accomplish the complete destruction of Christ and His work.

In the light of this symbolic interpretation of the three and half year as the time of the domination and persecution of the Antichrist during which God's people will be protected, this identifying mark of the Little Horn applies equally well to the Papacy and Islam. Both powers have attempted to wear out the saints of the Most High, but during the times of persecution many believers have been empowered and protected by God.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis of the identifying marks of the prophetic Antichrist, represented in Daniel 7 by the imagery of the Little Horn and in Revelation 13 by the symbol of a Beast, has shown that both the Papacy and Islam fulfil the qualifying marks of this prophetic power. Had time allowed me, I would have examined the prophetic role of Islam in the book of Revelation, especially in the light of Revelation 9, 13, and 16. I hope to continue this investigation when I prepare this essay for publication in a forthcoming book on ENDTIME ISSUES.

The tentative conclusion that emerges at this point, is that the claim of two Great Reformers, Luther and Calvin, that the Papacy and Islam are the two legs or the two horns of the Antichrist, deserve serious consideration. We have found that both powers fulfil the prophetic identifying marks of the Antichrist. Both powers emerged out of the divided territories of the Roman Empire, both promoted false worship, both persecuted God's people, both attempted to change the sacred Sabbath time of worship, and both are to last until the fulfillment of the prophetic three and a half years.

It is unfortunate that our Adventist pioneers did not consider the prophetic role of Islam, as the counterpart of the Papal Antichrist. Let us not blame them for this shortsightedness. After all they lived before September 11 at a time when the Muslim power (Ottoman Empire) was declining. Let us be thankful for the insights they have provided us and have the courage to expand and strengthen their interpretations.

We began this study by reflecting upon the new partnership that the Pope is determined to build with the Muslims. In the light of the prophetic role these two powers have played in promoting the false worship of God and the persecution of God's people, we can legitimately assume that this new partnership will play a major role in bringing about the final showdown that will usher in Christ's glorious Return.

ENDNOTES

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Bible Prophecy wars are now taking place because some are now claiming the Antichrist will come out of Islam. There is a rather heated controversy stirring between traditional Bible prophecy authors who think the Antichrist will be a western figure and more recent authors who think the Antichrist will come out of Islam. I wrote on this in July and gave some of my thoughts why the Antichrist would not be a Muslim and his Beast Kingdom would not be Islam. <https://www.thepropheticyears.com/wordpress/will-the-antichrist-and-his-beast-government-come-from-islam.html>. In the last Jan/Feb issue of Lamplighter magazine Dr. Reagan critiques four books that make the claim that the Antichrist is out of Islam and Dr. Reagan gives his views why this is not the case and is sloppy exegesis. What is the Islamic view of prophecy? Prophecy is seen by Muslims as an essential part of human history. God, Muslims believe, has always chosen individuals to communicate with, and He then "sends" these prophets to a specific community to convey His words and will. Prophets are thus chosen by God as messengers (rasul), who convey a message (risalah). Walid A. Saleh is a Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Toronto. He is a specialist on the Qur'an and the history of Qur'anic commentary tradition. His first book was on the Qur'an commentary of al-Tha`labi (d. 1035) and his second monography was on the reception of the Bible in Islam. He is working now on an introduction to the Qur'an commentary tradition. Can a prophecy apply differently to different times—the Papacy in one generation, Islam or Protestantism in another? Going farther: can we ordain women even if the pioneers didn't? Could we do away with Union Conferences, even though Ellen White gave support to the reorganization that established them? Like a lot of eschatology at this level, the route to identifying these prophetic figures as either Islam or the Papacy is a complicated and strained one that stretches the usual contemporary understanding of what kind of information is contained in these ancient documents. Here, the fault line is between quite different views of revelation. Therefore, page 91 calls the Crusades the "first conflict between the papacy and Islam." This is historically problematic. If Daniel 11 describes the wars between Christianity and Islam, then it does not mention the most important war in the past—the Islamic conquest in the seventh and eighth centuries a.d. that wiped out Christianity in the Middle East. If Daniel 11 deals with the conflict between Christianity and Islam, why have others ignored the greatest conflict?