THE POPE & THE FALSE PROPHET – PART I

All right, let me get this straight. The Bible tells us that a religious figure, the False Prophet will be the main partner and enabler of the Antichrist, a political figure, during the first part of the Tribulation. Extra-biblical Catholic seers and prophets and saints believe that this False Prophet will be a ‘Prince of the Church,’ a sitting pope who will fall into gross apostasy, denying the faith. Catholic St Malachy put forth a prophecy based on a vision that says that – pope #112 – since his vision - should be the last sitting pope before the return of Christ. This last pope is referred to as Petrus Romanus. That would make him the False Prophet. Other luminaries of the Roman faith have confirmed this view. And now the current Pope Francis is running around the globe, eschewing the traditions of his church as well as Biblical precepts; drawing a new vision of Catholicism (perhaps) and preaching, it seems, another Gospel. Is this really going on here? Is Pope Francis campaigning to play the role of the False Prophet? Is Francis setting up to assume the position of Petrus Romanus?

In order to effectively answer that we must explain again just what we’re talking about. All of this is based on a prophecy by the Catholic St Malachy that has accurately identified all the popes and described some significant aspect of their careers since it was first uttered in the 12th century. It details what many believe will be the end of the Church under the last pope, who Malachy called; - Peter the Roman. Here are just some examples of Malachy’s prophecies and how they lined up with history. Benedict XV he called Religio depopulate, or Religion laid waste. He reigned during the height of the atheistic slaughters of the faithful during the Bolshevik Revolution. Pius XI was named “Intrepid faith”. He stood up to the Fascists and Communists in the run-up to World War II. Paul VI was correctly identified as “Flower of Flowers”. His coat of arms, chosen when he was made a bishop decades before his ascension to the papacy, sported 3 fleur-de-lis. John Paul II was “of the half moon”. His reign lasted one month, from one half-moon to the next. John Paul II, “the eclipse (or) labor of the sun”. He “labored” for Mary, the woman clothed with the sun, and was born and buried on a solar eclipse. Then came the last Pope Benedict XVI; - “the Glory of the Olive”. He came from the Benedictine order called the Olivetians. He took the name to honor the last pope of the same name, widely known as a peacemaker.¹

According to Malachy, there remained only one pope to go: “Peter the Roman”. He will see “the final persecution of the Holy Roman Church…[and]…guide his flock through many tribulations…the town of seven hills will be destroyed and the terrible Judge shall judge his people”. So does Pope Francis qualify? Is he somehow; ‘Peter the Roman,’ ‘Petrus Romanus’?

Tom Horn is probably the leading researcher on the subject and here’s what he has to say. “We had given interviews [prior to the election of Pope Francis] saying it would be a mistake to try to nail down the last pope having the Christian name Peter, that in fact the only thing that it would take to fulfill the prophecy would be a cardinal of Italian descent. And low and behold Jorge Bergoglio, Italian descent, parents full-blooded Italians, or in the old language ‘Romans.’ “But he names himself after Francis of Assisi. Now this is a Catholic friar who lived in the late 1100s and the early 1200s, but his name of birth Giovanni Di Pietro Di Bernardone, Peter. He was an Italian, or Roman in the old language, a man whose name can literally be translated as ‘Peter the Roman.’ So to take that as a namesake, well it was intriguing to say the least.”²

Then we have the testimony of Rene Thibaut, a Jesuit who wrote extensively on the very subject of Malachy’s prophecies back in the 1950’s. It is noteworthy that Thibaut predicted that the papal office would be abdicated in 2012. (In point of fact, Pope Benedict made his decision in 2012 – but did not make it public until early 2013.) Thibaut was adamant that the last prophesied pope – who he held would qualify as Petrus Romanus – would not in fact take the name Peter. “There is only one Peter, the first of the Roman pontiffs, and he was seen in his many successors. He still to serve in the final as in the first persecution. We believe Petrus Romanus represents all the Roman Pontiffs from St. Peter to the recipient Gloria Olivae.”³ In their book Petrus Romanus, Horn and co-author Cris Putnam wrote that this pope “will reaffirm the authority of the Roman

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Then there’s Catholic seer Ronald Conte, who all the way back in 2002 predicted that the successor to Pope John Paul would take the name Benedict. He put it this way: “I never expected Peter the Roman to be Italian or Roman or to have the first name Peter, or to take the papal name ‘Peter’. So these points do not imply that Pope Francis is not Peter the Roman. The prophetic phrases of St. Malachy describe the Pontificate of each Pope, not his name.” And just what is that pontificate supposed to bring. Perhaps a lot, if one believes Catholic prophecy. Conte, the Catholic mystic with some degree of accuracy says that: “During the reign of Pope Peter the Roman, the great apostasy begins.” We will, according to Conte, see “the first part of the tribulation during our generation.” And not long before his death, the revered St Francis of Assisi himself gave a prophecy of the End Times. “At the time of this tribulation a man, not canonically elected, will be raised to the Pontificate, who, by his cunning, will endeavor to draw many into error and death…. for in those days Jesus Christ will send them not a true Pastor, but a destroyer.” The famous Catholic TV personality of the 1950’, Bishop Fulton Sheen added this. That “final pope will have a religion without a cross...He will sell the mystical body to the Antichrist.”

Through all of this, Francis and Conte and Sheen and others are just echoing the words of Scripture. Revelation 13:11 speaks of the coming False Prophet. “Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.” (ESV) Notice he is described as having the two small horns of a lamb; gentle, unthreatening. But he speaks the words of a dragon. It is Satan that is described as the dragon, who has deceived and continues to deceive mankind since the days of Eve and Adam. The eventual mission of this False Prophet is to induce, even force, all of humankind to worship the Antichrist. Revelation 13:12 tells us that this beast “exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast.” (ESV) Thus whoever holds this role will be posing as a religious figure while offering lies and demonic deception, leading people away from the truth.

So is it even possible that this Pope Francis – gentle and un-assuming as he is – could possibly be Peter the Roman or the False Prophet. Even Horn will not say for certain. However the pope’s actions after taking over as head of the Catholic Church raises some interesting questions. It began very early in his papacy when he had a few interesting things to say about salvation. Here are the words of Catholic Online. “Pope Francis has good news for atheists. Jesus died and was raised for them as well…. On Wednesday he declared that all people, not just Catholics, are redeemed through Jesus, even atheists.” As the Pontiff explains it: It’s all about doing good. Here are the words of the Pope. “The Lord has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ, all of us, not just Catholics. Everyone! Father, the atheists? Even the atheists. Everyone! We must meet one another doing good. ‘But I don’t believe, Father, I am an atheist!’ But do good: we will meet one another there.”

The next shoe fell not long after that when he was queried about homosexual clergy. Here is his response. “Who am I to judge them if they’re seeking the Lord in good faith. When I meet a gay person, I have to distinguish between their being gay and being part of a lobby. If they accept the Lord and have good will, who am I to judge them? They shouldn’t be marginalized. The tendency [to homosexuality] is not the problem … they’re our brothers.” The Pope did not say it was ok to act on homosexual tendencies. If he was trying to say ‘Hate the sin — not the sinner,’ he was on good ground. But what he did say opened the door to a more accepting theology on the part of the Roman Church. The biggest issue in his remarks however seems to be his unwillingness to judge sin. As Scott Lively explained in World Net Daily: “There is no such thing as a ‘Gay Christian.’ The very notion is anti-biblical. The concept of ‘Gay Christians’ originates in sexual-orientation theory, an ideological invention of the homosexual movement designed to advance the idea that homosexuality is ‘immutable,’ meaning unchangeable.” Shortly after that he reaffirmed his pronouncement that opened the gates of God’s Kingdom to atheists. That’s all a good atheist need do is to follow his conscience. “Sin, even for those who have no faith, exists when people disobey their conscience.” Unfortunately this contradicts what Jesus Himself said. “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)
Everyone has his own idea of good and evil??? Really? Is this what Christianity is reduced to? Apparently in the eyes of this pope and the Catholic Church. All of this is patently unbiblical nonsense. Let’s address this systematically.

1. **His claim that we are all God’s children** – Scripture clearly teaches this isn’t so. Here’s John 1:12. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”

2. **As to the notion that Atheists will be saved** – You must believe in someone…and that someone is Jesus, the very Son of God. Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Besides, as Jesus taught Nicodemus: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Atheists by definition are not born again. Hence….

3. **Is it OK to be homosexual?** – 1Corinthians 6:9-10 says this: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” Now that passage doesn’t single homosexuals out …any more than the rest of us.

4. **We get there by our works?** – (This is what is implied in the notion that it is only necessary to follow our consciences.) But Ephesians 2:8-9 blows that out of the water. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (We’ll take this up next time – in detail.)

So all the positions taken here by the head of the Catholic world are in direct contradiction of Scripture. Then what the Pope is preaching is nothing short of a false gospel. And that is a scary thing. But as we’ll see next time: This isn’t new territory for the Catholic Church. It is right in line with much of their long-held beliefs. It was Paul who gave judgment on this in Galatians 1:9. “As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” A false gospel is a very dangerous thing. It leads people astray, gives them false confidence in their salvation and prevents them from seeking the true way. Let us pray instead that God’s light will be given and the error will be perceived.

**FROM REBELLION TO REDEMPTION – PART I**

“Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us.’” (Psalm 2:1-3)

Why DO the nations rage? Why DO we rebel against the things of God? And is our culture totally lost? What is the answer to our predicament? Our culture is in free fall because we have rejected the mores of our past. Without that constant we are trying to build a culture based upon our changing view of morality and personal preference. We have lost any coherence we may have once possessed. We are a society in perpetual rebellion. And since we’ve rejected the Law and the God who gave the Law – we have destroyed the very foundations upon which Western Culture was built.

We’ve been running with God for a long time now….what with the whole ‘created in His image thing.’ In this short series, we’ll explore just how we got into this condition – and what may be done to escape from. The answer is surprisingly simple – but not necessarily easy.
REJECTION
There are three stages to man’s journey with God. Rejection, Rebellion and finally Redemption. Mankind’s initial rejection of God’s ways – in the Garden – led to an ages-long rebellion. We are trapped in its consequences – and there is only one hope – salvation or redemption. But we must ask of the starting point: Rejection of what – and from what point?

The fact is mankind began from the position of total communion with God. The Creator walked with Adam and Eve “in the cool of the day.” (Genesis 3:8) In the beginning our first parents walked in the Truth of God; they had God’s values and Worldview. Now any philosophy or worldview must address four key areas: Origin, Meaning, Morality and Destiny. And each of the answers flows from the previous answer. Because Man originated from God and was created in His image, we were therefore endowed with meaning and purpose. The morality that flowed from that was based on continued ‘walking with God’. And the future destiny was assured: That communion with God was to be eternal. Then came the Fall; Man’s tragic decision. It was giving in to the temptation of raising the Self above God. In the process it denied the Truth of God. “And the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”” (Genesis 3:3) At its essence the temptation was this: To raise one’s self over God; putting claim on His eternal nature. It was to raise our selfish worldview over God’s worldview by claiming the right to define morality. This then was the birth of Humanism; making Man the ‘measure of all things. And by arrogating to ourselves the right to define good and evil it was a rejection of the God-given moral law. And with that….came consequences. That brought sin into the world…and we all in our character, ratified Adam’s decision.

This brought Mankind to its second position. No longer walking with God, we became a law unto ourselves. Thus our Worldview; how we answered those four essential questions – changed. In fact it broke down at every point. The introduction of paganism assigned to idols and demons the role of creator. Thus we rejected the meaning God intended – and in the process lost our personal purpose. Unredeemed Man lives for himself. Without purpose and running from true morality there was not future; at least not the Destiny that God intended. Thus we can easily get to Pilate asking the Creator of the Universe and Source of All Truth: “What is truth?” (John 18:38) And in the process, Pilate is serving as the proxy for all of us. For we are no less guilty. We reject God’s laws or pick and choose those we prefer. Faced with an intrinsic need, but having rejected the true God; Mankind went so far as to replace Him with pagan idols that reflected their own blood lust and sexual perversion.

But God did not leave Man to his own devices. There are two threads that run through history after the Fall in the Garden: Not only Man’s Rebellion….but also God’s Pursuit. That Divine Thread manifested itself in the promise of a coming Messiah. Even as God was dealing with Adam and Eve he gave the first indication of that promise. Genesis 3:15 reads: “I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel.” Throughout the First Testament the prophets fleshed out that promise. About 600 years before Christ Isaiah 7:14 promised a virgin-born Immanuel. Isaiah 9:6-7 fleshes out for us just what Messiah is all about. God the Father promises us His only Son, God incarnate, to come in the form of a human child. “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom.”

God’s promise was not about judgment – it was about mercy. God’s heart, was ultimately, for man. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” (2Peter 3:9) The Prophet Ezekiel spells out God’s tenderness and justice in some detail. “But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord GOD, ‘and not that he should turn from his ways and live?’” (Ezekiel 18:21-23) Man may have rejected – but God made a way and is in pursuit!

Man’s rejection of God’s system, His worldview, morphed into full-fledged rebellion. Over the centuries Satan has built his World System – opposed to everything Godly. And over the last several decades that rebellion has grown. God takes that behavior very seriously. 1Samuel 15:23 tells us: “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.” That’s the subject we’ll be tackling next week; Stage 2: Rebellion.

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