

Drawing Aside the Purple Curtain

The Papal System Today: an Analysis of the News

The Global Roman Catholic and Muslim Populations

by Shaun Willcock

For centuries the Roman Catholic religion has been the world's largest, with the Muslim religion coming a close second. Even today, Roman Catholics still comprise almost one fifth of the world's population.¹ But this year the head of the Vatican's statistics office has said that, for the very first time, the world's Muslim population is greater than the number of Roman Catholics. At the end of 2006, Muslims represented 19.2% of the world's population, and Roman Catholics represented 17.4%. "For the first time in history, we're no longer at the top. The Muslims have surpassed us," he said.²

However, these figures must be put in their proper context and understood. Firstly it must be understood that statistics for the numbers of Muslims worldwide are estimates rather than exact figures. Statistics on Roman Catholics are tabulated methodically, whereas statistics on Muslims are estimates transmitted to the United Nations. It therefore may not be as great as it is – or perhaps it may even be greater. Nevertheless, statistics from other sources, including the World Almanac, have reported for several years that the world's Muslim population now exceeds that of the world's Roman Catholic population.

Secondly, according to the Vatican, the greater number of Muslims today is the result of Muslims having larger families. This is doubtless true. In the past, Roman Catholics traditionally had very large families. Setting any kind of limit on the number of children one had was taboo within Roman Catholicism. Although, worldwide, multitudes become Roman Catholics in adulthood, it must be remembered that Rome counts, as its own, infants who are "baptised" as Papists. And the fact remains that most additions to the worldwide Roman Catholic religion come from babies born to Roman Catholic parents. They are not converted to the religion, they are automatically taken in as Roman Catholics merely by being baptised in infancy. And of course, as they grow up within their Roman Catholic families they just automatically accept that they are Roman Catholics, and owe allegiance to the "Church".

Today, however, despite the "Church's" ban on contraceptives, Roman Catholics are having smaller families than they used to have, on average. This is a trend in western countries, among all segments of their populations, including Roman Catholics. For example, despite the fact that 25% of the world's Roman Catholics live in Europe, the growth in the number of Roman Catholics for the period 2000 - 2006 was less than 1%. Even in Asia, where families tend to be larger, the number of Roman Catholics remained more or less stable with respect to population growth. The "Church" is growing the fastest in Africa, where the number of Roman Catholics increased from 130 million in 2000 to 158.3 million in 2006. But clearly even the phenomenal growth in Africa was not enough to prevent the worldwide Roman Catholic percentage from being overtaken by the percentage of Muslims in the world. In Africa and South America, families may still tend to be large; but clearly the Muslims are having even larger ones.

Oh, and this is rich: Rome has always prided itself on being (in her own eyes at any rate) "the one true Church". It was not that long ago when the Vatican issued a document declaring that Protestant churches are not true churches in the Vatican's eyes.³ And yet, when it suits her, she is more than willing to lump them all together with her! The Vatican's head of statistics said that, if "other Christian denominations" are taken into consideration, the global "Christian population" is about 33% of the total, which is far greater than the Muslim population!⁴ The Vatican seems so desperate for "Christianity" to have more followers than Islam, that it's even willing to count all the other "Christian denominations" along with

itself, to achieve the desired result!

No true Christian, however, should make the mistake of assuming that because Muslims now slightly outnumber Papists worldwide, the Muslim religion is a greater threat to the world, or to the true Church, than the Roman Catholic religion. This would be a serious error to make. By no means are we downplaying the serious threat which Islam is in the world. For Christians living in Islamic countries, that threat is very real, and it is deadly. For Christians living even in non-Islamic countries where Islamic influence is growing at a phenomenal rate, that threat is real as well. It is described in Bible prophecy as a religion from the bottomless pit. It has from its very beginnings been a religion of cruelty and bloodshed, and Islam is described in God's prophetic Word in Revelation 9, as it existed centuries ago but with lessons which are still applicable today. But the Popish religion is described in chapter after chapter of Revelation, and in the prophecies of Daniel, and in 2 Thess. 2, and in 1 John! It is not Islam, but Popery, that is the religion of Antichrist. It is not the Ayatollah of Iran, but the Pope of Rome (and each and every Pope of Rome), who is the biblical Antichrist himself. It is not Mecca, but Rome, which is the city on seven hills, described for us in Revelation 17, the nerve centre of Satan's operations on earth.⁵

Even if the day ever came when there was double the number of Muslims in the world as Roman Catholics, this wouldn't mean a thing. It is not the size of the religion alone that makes it a threat. Muslim fanatics may bomb buildings and slit throats (and let's not forget that Papist fanatics have done this as well, even in recent times!), but the smiling harlot sitting on the seven-hilled city (Rev. 17) is a far more subtle foe than the locusts with scorpions' stings in their tails (Rev. 9)!

Roman Catholicism and Islam: the world's two largest religions. Both of them intolerant, cruel, ruthless, deceptive, born in the bottomless pit, driven by the ambition to rule the world. Between them, they control about two fifths of the world's population. Both are massive mission fields, the largest in the world. But it is Romanism which, from the standpoint of Bible prophecy, must be the Bible believer's primary focus. And it is Romanism which is Satan's chief instrument in the world to deceive men, for although Islam is a devilish religion, it is not counterfeit "Christianity". Roman Catholicism *is* counterfeit "Christianity". It has its own counterfeit "christs" (the mass-wafer, the supposed images of Christ, the pope himself, the priesthood), it is a counterfeit "Church", it preaches a counterfeit "Gospel". And there is nothing more deadly than a false religion masquerading as the true Church of Jesus Christ. Islam is one form in which the devil walks abroad in daylight; but Popery is the form in which the devil walks in the twilight, with fair speech and flattering lips (see Prov. 7:6-27). Be not deceived!

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ENDNOTES:

1. *About 17% of World is Catholic*, May 27, 2008. Zenit.org.

2. *The Southern Cross*, April 9 to 15, 2008.

3. *Rome Still Claims to be the One True Church*, by Shaun Willcock, December 2007. Bible Based Ministries, South Africa. www.biblebasedministries.co.uk

4. *The Southern Cross*, April 9 to 15, 2008.

5. *The Pope of Rome vs. the Ayatollahs and Sheikhs of Islam*, by Shaun Willcock, October 2006. Bible Based Ministries, South Africa. www.biblebasedministries.co.uk