

Drawing Aside the Purple Curtain

The Papal System Today: an Analysis of the News

The Rat(zinger) Abandons His Ship The Astonishing Resignation of the Roman Pope Benedict XVI

by Shaun Willcock

It stunned the world: the announcement on February 11, 2013 by the pope of Rome, Benedict XVI, that he would resign his office at the end of the month – the first to do so in almost 600 years.

Contrary to popular belief, Roman popes are permitted by canon law to resign, and some have indeed stepped down, while others have been forced to do so.¹ The last one to resign was Gregory XII, in the year 1415.

Benedict gave ill health as the reason for his decision. In his announcement he said: “After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry... in today’s world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the barque [boat] of St Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognise my incapacity to adequately fulfil the ministry entrusted to me. For this reason, and well aware of the seriousness of this act, with full freedom I declare that I renounce the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, Successor of Saint Peter, entrusted to me by the Cardinals on 19 April 2005, in such a way, that as from 28 February 2013, at 20:00 hours, the See of Rome, the See of St Peter, will be vacant and a Conclave to elect the new Supreme Pontiff will have to be convoked by those whose competence it is.”

According to Robert Moynihan, the Roman Catholic founder and editor of *Inside the Vatican* magazine and *The Moynihan Report*, “Pope Benedict has not decided to ‘resign’ his office, but to renounce it. The distinction is important [even though Moynihan himself calls it a “resignation” in his article’s title, so it is really splitting hairs – S.W.]. He will not be a ‘retired Pope,’ but he will be, according to Vatican officials I spoke with today, simply ‘Cardinal Ratzinger’ once again. There will be no danger of ‘two Popes’ – this present Pope will no longer be a Pope, not even a retired one.”²

He has stated that he will retire to a convent in Vatican City itself, to spend the rest of his days in prayer. His decision to remain within the Vatican City State was a wise one on his part, for if he retired to another country this could expose him to potential legal claims, and even possible arrest and prosecution, in connection with the priestly sexual abuse cases worldwide! In 2010, as an example, he was named as a defendant in a lawsuit alleging that he failed to take action as a cardinal in 1995 when he was allegedly told about a priest who had abused boys long before. And there have been repeated calls for his arrest over the worldwide sexual abuse scandal. As a Vatican official said, speaking on condition of anonymity: “His continued presence in the Vatican is necessary, otherwise he might be defenceless. He wouldn’t have his immunity, his prerogatives, his security, if he is anywhere else.”³

But were his advanced age and ill health the *real* (or *only*) reasons for Benedict’s sudden and unexpected announcement, which even caught most of the cardinals by surprise (although some within Vatican circles suspected it might happen)?

Certainly his age is great (he is 85) and his health is not good. He had already suffered a stroke by the time he became pope of Rome in 2005, and soon after taking office he suffered another one. He also took heart medication throughout his period in office. In recent months he was in such pain when

he walked that he was transported up the aisle of St Peter's Basilica on a wheeled platform. He had watched his predecessor, John Paul II, become frailer and frailer and suffer greatly, and yet continue on till his death even though he became increasingly unable to fulfil the duties of a Roman pope. It can be taken as highly likely that Benedict did not want to suffer the same fate. When he was elected he admitted that he had actually been looking forward to retirement. Three times, when he was a cardinal, he asked John Paul II to allow him to retire (cardinals usually retire at the age of 75), but he was turned down. Then in 2010 he said in an interview: "If a pope clearly realises that he is no longer physically, psychologically, and spiritually capable of handling the duties of his office, then he has a right and, under some circumstances, also an obligation to resign." And when the interviewer asked him whether he would ever consider resigning, he replied, "Yes."⁴

Also significantly, in 2009 he spoke highly of a pope named Celestine V, who resigned in 1294 at the same age as Benedict and became a hermit. Benedict even left his own pallium (a white cloth and sign of his episcopal authority) on the tomb of Celestine. To some it was a clear sign that he was considering following Celestine and resigning.

As I wrote in an article when he was elected: "At 78, it is obvious that his reign as pope will not be a very long one. The Vatican did not want another long pontificate like that of John Paul II, the third longest in history, who was a comparatively young man when he was elected. The world is undergoing very rapid changes, and to a very great degree the Vatican has always checked to see which way the winds of change are blowing, and reacted accordingly. The last thing the Vatican needs is to be stuck with a pope who will live many long years, unbendingly following the same policies with which he began his reign even though the world might have moved on since then."⁵

But even so, were his age and his health the real (or the only) reasons for his decision? Or was there something far more sinister behind it?

The Papacy of Benedict XVI

Before seeking an answer to this question, let us briefly consider the reign of this present Antichrist:

Benedict XVI presided over a "Church" that was rocked by a scandal of such magnitude that it was potentially able to damage the institution in a way that nothing has done since the Protestant Reformation: the worldwide sexual abuse of children by its priests.⁶ And the cold fact is that despite shedding crocodile tears with victims and issuing stern warnings and rebukes, he did very little to improve the situation, with the scandal even swirling around himself, at the very least regarding his protection of guilty priests.⁷ He did not act against bishops who ignored or covered up the abuse committed by priests under their charge. It is clear that he turned a blind eye to the revelations of such sexual abuse when he deemed it prudent to do so.

There were other setbacks. He angered many Jews by calling for a Palestinian state and promoting the canonisation of Pius XII, the wartime pope who was pro-Nazi; and he angered Muslims as well on several occasions, for example when he called some of Mohammed's teaching evil. There were also scandals involving the Vatican Bank and money laundering, and the "Vatileaks" scandal as it was called, involving Benedict's own butler, who stole Benedict's personal correspondence and leaked the documents to a journalist, saying there was "evil and corruption" within the Vatican.

However, he also had a number of successes, as far as the Vatican was concerned. He pleased conservative Roman Catholics by taking a hardline approach to issues which, under John Paul II, had been dealt with in what was, to their minds, a too liberal fashion. As I have written about on a number of occasions, as referenced below:

He created the mechanism for Anglicans who were disenchanted with their "church" because of the ordination of women and sodomites to be welcomed into the Roman fold, further weakening an already severely weakened Anglican institution and thereby taking a giant step towards the eventual annihilation of Anglicanism, a long-term goal of the Vatican.⁸ His official visit to Britain in 2010 was nothing less than a triumphant victory procession, showing that Rome's plans for the eventual total reconquest of that once-Protestant land were now well advanced.⁹ He abolished the ancient Romish teaching of limbo,¹⁰ and beatified his predecessor John Paul II swiftly, which pleased millions of his followers.¹¹ He also continued somewhat with the interfaith overtures of his predecessor, holding an

interfaith event at Assisi like John Paul II had done,¹² visiting a Jewish synagogue in Rome, praying at the Nazi death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, all of which impressed and pleased many Jews, and attending a mosque in Turkey. And he promoted the concept of a Marxist New World Order, revealing that, while theologically conservative, he was politically and economically liberal at times and was laying the groundwork for a world ruled by a future Roman pope.¹³

An Imminent Scandal? Or Fear of Assassination?

Now getting back to possible reasons for his sudden resignation other than merely his advanced age and ill health: even certain Vatican insiders feel there was something “mysterious” about the announcement, and that it was “lacking some information”.¹⁴ And after all, as pointed out by influential Roman Catholic journalist Robert Moynihan, at least one other option was open to Benedict: “For example, one wonders whether the Pope, realizing that he is getting older, and more tired, might not have decided to announce that he would cancel all meetings, move to a convent in the Vatican (as he is doing), devote himself to prayer, and appear in public only rarely. In this way, he would have remained Pope, but carried out the work of the office in a very different, and physically less demanding way. Would that not have been possible? Does every Pope have to be as physically active as was John Paul II at the beginning of his pontificate?”¹⁵

It is clear then that there are good reasons for doubting the “solely due to advanced age and ill health” reasons that Benedict gave. There really does seem to be something more behind it.

But what?

One possibility some have put forward is that a scandal was about to break over Benedict’s own head, one so great that he felt the best course of action was to resign first. However, whether in office or not, such a scandal would break anyway, and being out of office would not alter the fact that whatever it was, it occurred while he was in office. So this possibility remains very unlikely.

Another possibility is a fear of assassination. Many Roman popes have been murdered while in office,¹⁶ the last one being John Paul I, who reigned for just over a month in 1978 and was then killed.¹⁷ There is the very real possibility that Benedict’s reign had become life-threatening to him in a way that had nothing to do with his age and health, and he knew it. There are always those within high places in the Vatican who have their own agendas, and if these do not tally with the incumbent pope’s agenda, he is removed by what Vatican historian Avro Manhattan used to call an “accelerated demise.” Chief among these conspirators have always been the Jesuits, the real power behind the Papal throne. If, for example, Benedict’s conservatism with regard to Roman Catholic doctrine had become a liability to powerful liberals within Vatican circles, or if his liberalism with regard to economic and political matters had become a liability to powerful conservatives within the same circles, he could very easily be removed.

Certainly the Vatican at this time is torn asunder by power struggles behind the scenes. Ex-Roman Catholic priest Richard Bennett has written, correctly: “Serious major problems have been stirring up intense turmoil within the Vatican. Many ask the question: how will Benedict XVI be able to survive? It may be that he is fearful for his life in a number of ways. Regarding corruption in financial matters [which is dogging the Papacy at the moment – *S.W.*], it is undoubtedly on his mind that Pope John Paul I was only one month in office when he died while addressing Vatican bank corruption charges at the time.... Ratzinger was a key figure in the Vatican at the time and certainly knows the facts. He would also know of strange deaths of other popes.”¹⁸ Yes indeed, the fear of being murdered could well be behind Benedict’s decision to resign. Powerful and very ambitious forces are at work in the Vatican, jostling for positions (including the supreme one), and they would stop at nothing, not even murder, to get their way. An 85-year-old Benedict would be no match for them.

It must also be borne in mind that powers well beyond the walls of the Vatican are always intensely interested in who reigns as pope of Rome, knowing well his immense power over so many hundreds of millions of people. Both the CIA and the KGB, for example, back in 1978 when John Paul II was elected, were working behind the scenes to ensure that “their” pope was chosen.¹⁹

It is by no means a stretch, therefore, that Benedict, viewing the sinister plots and schemes that are

always swirling like a polluted fog within the walls of the Vatican, decided to step down voluntarily before he was “assisted” to do so. And in the election of the next one, we can be absolutely certain that there will be intense and sinister behind-the-scenes wheeling and dealing by the intelligence agencies of various governments, and in particular the world powers. We can be absolutely certain, in fact, that this began long ago already. It remains to be seen who will be anointed in the end, and which way he will lean with his considerable political weight so as to tip the scales in favour of this country or that, this ideology or the other. Time will tell, but the machinery has been set in motion. As I wrote at the time of Ratzinger’s election to the position: “There is nothing truly secretive about the process, and the Holy Spirit is certainly not guiding the cardinals as they like the world to imagine: even before John Paul II died, and increasing the moment he breathed his last, immense political games were afoot. The choice of a new Roman pope affects the destinies of entire countries, the balance of power between the superpowers, and thus the very course of the world. At the time of the election of John Paul II in 1978, two opposing blocs were at work behind the scenes, one pro-Soviet and the other pro-American. John Paul II was favoured by America, but two popes before him (John XXIII and Paul VI) had been favoured by the Soviet Union.... So there are great intrigues, all kinds of political power plays, wheeling and dealing on a vast scale, behind the scenes at the election of a pope.”²⁰

But then again, at 85 and unwell, why should such forces behind the scenes bother to murder him? He may not be long for this world anyway. So, while the fear of murder is a possible reason for resignation, it may seem a somewhat unlikely one in Benedict’s case. But then it depends, essentially, on whether or not those behind the scenes want to wait, even a short while.

The “Prophecy” of Malachy: A Very Possible Connection to Benedict’s Resignation

But now for a third possibility, and it is a very real one. It is this: the possibility that Benedict believes he *must* resign, sooner rather than later, in order to help fulfil a mediaeval prophecy by a Roman Catholic “saint” and “prophet” named Malachy, regarding the final pope and the second coming of Christ!

Before I elaborate further, it is essential for me to make something crystal clear: Malachy (not to be confused with the biblical prophet Malachi) was a *false* prophet, and his so-called prophecy was *not* a prophecy from God. I cannot emphasise this point strongly enough, because there are those, even professing to be “Evangelicals”, who believe this “prophecy” is a true prediction from the Lord. There was even a book published last year on this entire topic, entitled *Petrus Romanus: the Final Pope is Here*. The authors, Tom Horn and Cris Putnam, make a great deal of this so-called “prophecy”, and argue from it that the next pope of Rome will be the final one before the Lord Jesus Christ returns. The book has caused a huge stir, and many are believing the claims. The authors very evidently hold the “prophecy” of Malachy in high regard, and while being against the “Church” of Rome they still treat the Romish religion at times, in their articles, as if it is Christian in some way – at least that is the strong impression given.²¹ That Malachy really was a prophet is something they certainly believe.²²

The authors have clearly done extensive research into Malachy’s document, and much of their research is very accurate and helpful. The problem lies not with their research, but with their conclusions, which, because of their Futurist views of prophecy (a future individual Antichrist, a future individual False Prophet, a future “great tribulation”, etc.) and their fondness for Malachy’s false prophecy, are often seriously in error.

But there are two very good and important reasons why Malachy’s “prophecy” is false: first, this “prophet” was a Papist, not a true Christian, and therefore no true Evangelical should ever believe any “prophecy” that came out of his mouth; and second, despite the spurious claims of Pentecostals and Charismatics, *the ministry of prophet is no longer given, and the gift of prophecy is therefore no longer given, today!* I have dealt with this, from the Scriptures, in a number of places.²³ The fact is, prophets, along with the apostles, laid the doctrinal foundation of the true Church (Eph. 2:20); but once that foundation was laid and the New Testament Scriptures were written and complete, the apostolic and prophetic gifts were withdrawn, and are no longer given today (1 Cor. 13:8-12).

Nevertheless, even though the “prophecy” is false, the distinct possibility exists that Benedict has

resigned because *he* believes it; and this is what is so interesting, and needs to be examined.

The Malachy “Prophecy” is False

Malachy was an Irish Roman Catholic archbishop of Armagh, and lived from 1094 to 1148. It is believed by many, Papists and non-Papists alike, that he was given a prophetic vision of the next 112 popes of Rome, beginning with Celestine II (who died in 1144 AD), and culminating in the one he called “Petrus Romanus” (Peter the Roman), who he said would be the final pope of Rome. The document is known as the “Prophecy of the Popes”. His words regarding this final Roman pontiff are as follows: “In the final persecution of the Holy Roman Church there will reign Peter the Roman, who will feed his flock among many tribulations; after which the seven-hilled city will be destroyed and the dreadful Judge will judge the people.”

This prediction has led many to believe that his reign will be a time of “great tribulation” for Christians (which means for Papists if one is a Papist, or for all Christians if one is a non-Papist but believes the “prophecy”); and that this time of great tribulation will end with the destruction of Rome and the judgment of Christ.

Malachy was supposedly given his vision when he was visiting Rome, and praying at the many “holy” sites in the city (which just goes to show what a devout Papist he was, and most certainly the Lord would not have spoken through him!). He believed that God spoke to him and gave him the long list of Roman popes till the very end of the world.²⁴ He presented his manuscript to the pope of Rome at the time, Innocent II, and it disappeared into the Vatican archives, only re-appearing when discovered in 1590.

It is not certain, however, that Malachy even gave these predictions, and even author Horn states, “As the legend goes, Malachy experienced what is today considered a famous vision commonly called ‘The Prophecy of the Popes.’”²⁵ It is only a *legend*, a *tradition*, which holds that Malachy had these visions.²⁶ It was a Benedictine historian named Arnold de Wion who, as far as is known, first published the “prophecy” in his book, *Lignum Vitae* (“Tree of Life”), in 1595. Some believe it really was the work of Malachy, while others believe it was actually written by Nostradamus, or by some other unknown forger. Certainly it is a fact of history that the Roman Papacy has readily forged documents in the past – one of the most notable examples being the so-called “Donation of Constantine”. And yet, despite all this uncertainty and the evidence of obvious tampering at least with part of the document, author Horn states: “While the identity of the actual prophet remains unclear, the author was a prophet whether he knew it or not.”²⁷

Read that again! The prophets of the Lord always *knew* they were prophets. They spoke with a confident “Thus saith the Lord.” It is as plain as day that the unknown author of “The Prophecy of the Popes” was not a prophet of the Lord, which leaves only one conclusion: he was a prophet of the devil. And when I say “prophet”, I mean he was a deceiver, a liar, but that his writing was *believed* to be that of a prophet, by men ignorant of the truth of God’s Word. He was a *false* prophet, doing the devil’s work, leading men astray. And via his “prophecy” he is still doing so today.

In a modern version of Malachy’s work published in 1969, the author, an archbishop named H.E. Cardinale, the apostolic nuncio to Belgium and Luxembourg, wrote: “it is fair to say the vast majority of Malachy’s predictions about successive Popes is amazingly accurate – always remembering that he gives only a minimum of information.” The “vast majority”? Well, that is just not good enough! In biblical times, the test of a true prophet was that what he prophesied came to pass. If he was not 100% accurate in his prophecies he was a false prophet (Deut. 18:21,22)!

Anyone accepting this “prophecy” as genuine (or even partly genuine) is building a house on sand; again, as I said, even apart from the definitive arguments against it – that it was the work of a Papist, not a Christian, and that prophets and prophecy are gifts which the Lord has not given since the close of the apostolic age.

It is not insignificant that through the centuries (even apart from the fact that biblically this is most assuredly a false prophecy) there have even been many *Papists* who have seriously questioned the authenticity and the accuracy of this “prophecy”. The Catholic Encyclopaedia, for example, declared

the document to be a sixteenth-century forgery. And among its most severe critics have been the Jesuits from the nineteenth century onwards. This is not surprising, as the Jesuits have so often been on the radical left wing of the Papal system, ever willing to reject even Papal teachings if it suits their own purposes. A Jesuit named M.J. O'Brien wrote *An Historical and Critical Account of the So-Called Prophecy of St. Malachy Regarding the Succession of Popes*, in the nineteenth century, in which he pooh-poohs the entire thing. Another nineteenth-century Jesuit named Herbert Thurston wrote: "not one scrap of evidence has ever been adduced to show that St. Malachy's prophecy about the Popes had been quoted, or even heard of, before it was published by Wion in 1595." Indeed there may be a single reference to it prior to then, but that is hardly much.²⁸

One reason for the doubts is because Malachy's friend, the Papist "saint" Bernard, who wrote an account of Malachy's life, did not mention the "prophecy".²⁹ Yet another reason, and a very important and conclusive one, is that some of Malachy's interpreters have had to really stretch his words to make them "fit" the various popes through the centuries. In other words, his words were sufficiently ambiguous that only with a lot of imaginative effort could they supposedly be applied to the popes he claimed they should be applied to. Well now, even apart from the finality of the biblical fact that prophets and prophecy have ceased, and that besides, Malachy was not a true Christian but a faithful servant of the Papal system, if it is only with a great deal of stretching and imagination that some of Malachy's statements can be applied to the Roman popes he claims they must fit, then how could this be a true, divine prophecy, issuing from the Lord? How then does it differ from the false "prophecies" of various other men, who were also so ambiguous that their words could be made to fit almost anyone – or no one?

Horn and Putnam claim that the first part of his manuscript, containing the first 70 predictions or so, was probably a forgery, altered in the sixteenth century; and they do indeed give solid historical reasons for believing so. Horn writes, "It appears that somebody had altered the original medieval document from 1590 backward to promote a particular cardinal to the College of Cardinals to be the fulfillment of what at that time was still a secret list of popes." He said an advocate for a cardinal named Girolamo Simoncelli probably "tinkered with the document to make it look like it was pointing toward Simoncelli."³⁰ For this reason, Horn and Putnam disregarded, in their book, everything in the "prophecy" prior to 1590 as being partially or fully tainted. However, *after* 1590 Malachy's manuscript was open to public scrutiny. As Horn, doubtless correctly, points out: "While we can see ample motivation for the redactor to modify the pre-1590 phrases, there is no logical reason that a sixteenth-century forger would craft a list so long into the future. Even more so, there is no good reason he would forecast the destruction of Rome when the papists have an obvious vested interest to the contrary. This is a powerful argument that the post-1595 prophecies are indeed an accurate representation of the original document."³¹ Of course, Horn believes there is a compelling case for accepting that the "prophecy" is "a real supernatural prophecy",³² which is incorrect; but it does appear that the original document concerning the post-1595 predictions is not a forgery.

"Glory of the Olive" and "Peter the Roman"

While most Jesuits dismissed the document, not all of them did so (at least not officially; the Jesuits always play both sides). One who believed it was a genuine supernatural prophecy was a Belgian Jesuit priest named René Thibaut, who wrote a book entitled *La Mystérieuse Prophétie des Papes* ("The Mysterious Prophecy of the Popes"), published in 1951. Among many other things, he calculated that the author of the document had an average 11-year pontificate for the forty popes prior to the final one, "Petrus Romanus"; and in this way he reached the year 2012 for the end of the world and the judgment of God.³³

Now of course 2012 has passed, here we are in 2013, and the world did not end and Christ the Lord did not come in judgment. It does not matter where men find "prophecies" of the world's end and attribute it to a certain year – we all know how many were in a froth over 2012 because of a misreading of the Mayan calculations – the fact remains that *no date can ever be specifically set for Christ's return*. Malachy's was a false prophecy, and therefore was bound to fail.

But here is the thing: even though the “prophecy” itself is false, *Benedict himself – and many others within the Vatican hierarchy – might believe it to be true!* He is a conservative Roman Catholic, devoted to orthodox Roman Catholic doctrine. A “prophecy” like Malachy’s would therefore appeal to him. Now if this is indeed the case, what is the significance? Let us see.

In Malachy’s list, the penultimate Roman pope, who answers to the present incumbent, Benedict XVI, was called “Gloria Olivae”, meaning “Glory of the Olive.” Then, Malachy wrote of the one he termed the final pope, “Petrus Romanus”, as follows: “In the final persecution of the Holy Roman Church there will reign Peter the Roman, who will feed his flock among many tribulations; after which the seven-hilled city will be destroyed and the dreadful Judge will judge the people.”

Those within the Vatican hierarchy who believe the “prophecy” is genuine and that Benedict XVI is the penultimate pope, will be looking at a few very likely contenders for the next (and in their view, final) man to hold the position of pope of Rome. One of the leading candidates to become the next pope of Rome, as is well known in Roman Catholic circles and outside of them, is a cardinal named Tarcisio Pietro [Peter] Evasio Bertone, the powerful Vatican secretary of state, who was born in *Romano*, Italy. They believe he could possibly be chosen and would then easily be referred to as “Peter the Roman.” And there is another cardinal with the name Peter as well: a black African cardinal, Peter Turkson of Ghana, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

Or there is the possibility that the next Roman pope will deliberately take the *name* of “Peter” when he assumes office. He may even do it *to* fulfil Malachy’s prophecy, if he believes it. As we have seen, others have deliberately sought to manipulate the prophecy so as to fulfil it, in the past.

Besides, as Horn and Putnam point out, since *any* pope of Rome claims to hold the “Petrine office”, *any* of them could be described, in general, as “Peter the Roman.”

Benedict XVI was not a Benedictine priest, but he chose the name “Benedict” when he was elected. The Popish “saint”, Benedict, was the founder of the Benedictine order of priests, and this order is also known as the Olivetans. The symbol of the order includes an olive branch. And it is entirely possible that Benedict *deliberately chose* that name, even though he was not of the Benedictine order, so as to do what he could to fulfil the “prophecy” of Malachy!

And therefore, there is the distinct possibility that Benedict XVI, believing there will only be one more pope of Rome before the end of the world, *deliberately resigned* in order to make way for this “final pope” and to fulfil the “prophecy” he truly believes in! Especially as Benedict is a traditionalist, with a longing for the “old days” before the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s, with all the problems which he sees as having come into being within his beloved “Church” since then. He would love to see a far more authoritarian “Church” again, with a far more authoritarian pope reigning over it again, and a clear and unambiguous position taken that the Roman Catholic “Church” is the one true Church and there is no other true church in the world,³⁴ that “outside of the Church of Rome there is no salvation”, and that the entire world should submit to the Roman pope. Well then, if he believes the “prophecy” of Malachy, he believes that he is not going to be the Roman pope to bring this about perfectly; but, since he then believes he is the *penultimate* pope, it is surely better for him (he would argue) to step aside to make way for the man who really will “feed his flock among many tribulations” and carry it through great persecution till the day of Christ’s return! And as he would doubtless know that (according to Thibaut’s calculations based on Malachy’s predictions) 2012 or thereabouts was the time for the final Roman pope to begin to reign, this would explain the urgency Benedict feels to resign *now*. After all, it is now 2013, albeit early in the year, but from his perspective no time should be lost – he must make way for the final pope of Rome!

There is even another possibility, if we look at it from a different angle: that Benedict believes that by stepping aside to make way for a stronger man, the new one could perhaps actually *prevent* Malachy’s prediction from coming to pass – that is, the part about the final persecution of the “Church” and the destruction of the city of Rome – by steering the “Church” back to the way it should be to such an extent that the Lord has mercy on it, and does not destroy it. In other words, he may think Malachy’s “prophecy” is merely a conditional threat of what will happen *if* the “Church” does not mend its ways; but that if it does, the threat of destruction will be removed.

Who knows how the mind of Joseph Ratzinger is working in these closing days of his life? All we know for certain is that he is a traditionalist who is deeply concerned about what has happened to his

“Church” since Vatican II (although he is careful in his words about this), and has done what he could to reverse those trends; but what he has done is not enough, as well he knows. Therefore, he very possibly feels he should stand aside and let another man take things even further back to how (in Ratzinger’s mind) they “should be.”

Manipulating the Malachy “Prophecy” in the Run-Up to the Papal Election

It is even entirely possible that Benedict has already “stacked the deck” so that his successor will be the man he has chosen, so as to *force* the fulfilment of the “prophecy”!

Who will this man be? It is impossible to say for certain, and we will know within a few short weeks. But there can be no doubt that for years Benedict himself has favoured the cardinal Tarcisio Pietro [“Peter” in English] Evasio Bertone, who was born in Romano, Italy, and who was appointed by Benedict as the Vatican secretary of state, essentially the No. 2 man in the Vatican. And it is entirely possible, if not probable, that Benedict *deliberately chose* Bertone *because of* his name and birthplace, believing that in this way he could manipulate history so as to bring about the fulfilment of Malachy’s “prophecy”!

In January 2010, when Bertone turned 75, he resigned (as is required of all curia cardinals when they reach this age); but Benedict did not accept his resignation.

Then in January 2012 Benedict named 22 new cardinals. Most were Europeans, mainly Italians in top Vatican positions. Consequently Europeans number over half of all cardinals at this time, and almost a quarter of all voters in the conclave will be Italian. This certainly gives Bertone a very good chance of being elected as the next pope of Rome. By resigning now, Benedict does all he can, albeit indirectly, to influence the choice of the next incumbent of the Vatican throne.

Whether or not Bertone will be chosen, we cannot say. All we can say is that it appears highly probable Benedict would like Bertone to be his successor, in fulfilment (so he believes) of the “prophecy” of Malachy.

And as always with Vatican intrigues, things got decidedly ugly last year. Another serious contender for the next Roman pope is Peter Turkson, a black African cardinal from Ghana (with, also, the “correct” name for “Peter the Roman”). Many within the college of cardinals favour Turkson. In October 2011 Turkson, in a major document, called for a global world authority to control the world economy.³⁵ This boosted his popularity immensely. But just then the Vatican secretary of state, the cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, called an emergency summit at the Vatican and declared firmly that from then on, all new Vatican documents would first have to be authorised by himself before being published to the world. It was a thinly-disguised power play, as Bertone aims to manipulate events to become the next Roman pope and will brook no opposition to that burning ambition.³⁶

But this is by no means to say that Bertone is certain to become “Supreme Pontiff” in the next few weeks! Powerful cardinals and others support him, it is true; but others equally powerful support other contenders. We will have to wait and see. One thing is certain: within the secretive walls of the Vatican, plots and counter-plots are being hatched, alliances are forming and others are breaking, ambitious men are jockeying for position and their followers are engaged in constant furtive discussions and meetings with other possible supporters, and the secret agents of the world powers have their own men on the inside as well, doing all they can to move events in the direction they would like. For all know that the man chosen will be the most powerful man on earth.

The Jesuit Futurist Interpretation of Antichrist and the False Prophet vs. The Biblical Truth

It is also necessary to look beyond the false “prophecy” of Malachy to *other* statements, by other Papists, of what they believe is yet to come in the world, according to how they have misinterpreted *Bible* prophecy. It is highly likely that a consideration of these things, *in addition* to Malachy’s words, have influenced Benedict to take the extraordinary step of resigning the papal office at this precise time.

In 1861 influential Roman Catholic cardinal, Henry Edward Manning, gave a series of lectures, based on his Futurist view of Bible prophecy, in which he stated that at a future time the Roman Catholic “Church” would go through a great crisis of the faith, when Roman Catholic orthodox doctrine would be seriously challenged. By this means many nations would depart from the Roman Catholic religion, the False Prophet would replace the pope of Rome, and this would be tied to the rise of the Antichrist. He believed that secret societies such as the Freemasons had been undermining the Roman Catholic faith for a long time and would continue to do so. He also believed, as did various other earlier Roman Catholic writers, that Rev. 18 predicted the apostasy and then the destruction, at the end of the world, of the Roman Catholic “Church” which reigns from the seven-hilled city of Rome.

He wrote: “The apostasy of the city of Rome... and its destruction by Antichrist may be thoughts so new to many Catholics, that I think it well to recite the text of theologians, of greatest repute. First, Malvenda, who writes expressly on the subject, states as the opinion of Ribera, Gaspar Melus, Viegas, Suarez, Bellarmine, and Bosius, that Rome shall apostatize from the faith, drive away the Vicar of Christ, and return to its ancient paganism.”³⁷

Manning could not deny the crystal-clear truth that the city of Rome, and *only* the city of Rome, was the city prophesied of in Rev. 18. This is a fact so obvious that even many Papist authors have admitted it, and it is incredible that so many supposedly “Evangelical” authors today refuse to acknowledge what even such blatant enemies of the truth have accepted. As Manning accepted that Rome was the city in Rev. 18, he had to accept that the time was coming when it would be destroyed for its sins, for this is what the prophecy says. Thus far he was accurate, at least.

But then we see Manning falling for and promoting the Jesuit lie of the Futurist interpretation of Bible prophecy: that of a future, individual False Prophet and a future, individual Antichrist, neither of whom is Roman Catholic (rather, the False Prophet replaces the pope of Rome in his view). This is the lie that (as I show in my book *Trappings of Popery*) was *begun by the Jesuits* centuries ago, deliberately, so as to deflect the Protestants from their deeply-held conviction (based on Bible prophecy) that the Roman Papacy was the Antichrist.³⁸ And it worked! Today the dominant prophetic scheme of interpretation is this Jesuit-created Futurist one – *among Protestants*. They believe in a future individual Antichrist, and a future individual False Prophet. Some Evangelicals, it is true, believe the final pope of Rome will be the False Prophet himself; but most see the False Prophet as some still-future religious leader, and the Antichrist as a political leader right at the end of time.

Biblically, the Antichrist of 2 Thess. 2, 1 Jn. 2, and the book of Revelation is no other than the Roman pope – *each and every Roman pope through the centuries, right up to the end of the world*. And the False Prophet of the book of Revelation is no other than the *Roman Catholic priesthood*. These biblical terms do not refer to individuals, but to systems and to groups of men. For evidence, see my writings and sermons on the book of Revelation and other prophecies.³⁹ Thus both the Antichrist (the Roman Papacy) and the False Prophet (The Popish priesthood) are part and parcel of the Roman Catholic system. We are not to look elsewhere for the fulfilment of these things. The Antichrist does not destroy the city of Rome – the Antichrist *is in* the city of Rome and *rules over* the city of Rome!

Secret Societies, the Jesuits, and Vatican Conservatives vs. Liberals

As for the Freemasons and other secret societies, the truth is that these have actually been under the overall control and direction of the Jesuits of Rome for centuries! There have been times in history, of course, when they have worked against the Papacy, and they certainly do have their own agendas for world conquest (and some, for the destruction of Romanism and indeed all religion), and there certainly has been conflict between Rome and these secret occult societies; but even so the Jesuits have used them and manipulated them and in many cases founded them, for their own purposes of world conquest.⁴⁰ Rome truly is “the Mother of abominations” (Rev. 17:5). Some within the Vatican hierarchy and priesthood, who know the Jesuit involvement with these secret societies, are deliberately promoting the idea that there is no connection, and that the secret societies always hate the “Church” of Rome and want to destroy it. But others, probably the majority, are simply ignorant, and really do

think these societies are nothing but enemies of the “Church”. They have often believed a time would come when secret forces would seek to destroy Roman Catholicism from within. And for many traditionalist Papists, this planned destruction took a giant leap forward in the 1960s, when the Second Vatican Council was held under two leftist Roman popes, John XXIII and Paul VI. Vatican II, as it was called, swung the Papal system to the left, especially with regard to its ecumenical and interfaith policies, which traditionalists viewed as very harmful to Rome. For such traditionalists, Rome’s attitude of ecumenicity towards Protestant religious bodies and sympathy with other religions such as Hinduism and Islam, and public pronouncements by popes and others on these and other issues that popes of earlier times would never have made, are indicative of a Vatican overrun by liberals, Communists and other leftists, all acting according to the dictates of Illuminism and Freemasonry.

Little do most of these traditionalists realise that these “changes” since Vatican II are *not* evidences of a Rome that has been infiltrated by enemy agents, but have in reality simply been the Jesuits’ modern tactics to conquer the world – for it is the Jesuit Order which is the real power behind the Vatican throne. As stated previously, the Jesuits have so often been the radical left wing of the Papal system. And ever since the order was created in the sixteenth century, there has been constant tension between so many within the order and right-wing popes. There most certainly *is* a battle waging between traditionalist priests, bishops, archbishops and cardinals within the hierarchy, and leftist priests, bishops, archbishops and cardinals, notably the Jesuits. That the Vatican itself is riddled with occultists is a fact well known within the hierarchy. And that these occult agents desire to control the Vatican for themselves is also not a secret to many within that hierarchy. The Jesuits and others actually *support* these plans. To make it all the more confusing, Freemasons and others can be found on both sides of the fence – traditionalist and progressive/leftist/liberal. It is a huge subject and has only been touched on here.

Benedict’s Resignation

Getting back, then, to the traditionalist Benedict XVI and his resignation: if, as is highly possible, even probable, he believes that men such as Manning correctly interpreted Bible prophecy, then he would see what has happened since the Second Vatican Council as being (at least to some extent) the departure from the true faith of which Manning and others spoke as coming one day – just as many other Roman Catholics believe. And thus, putting all these things together and tying them in with the “prophecy” of Malachy, Benedict would feel that the only hope is for him to step aside and let the final Romish pope come forward, who will put it all right before the end of time.

Conclusion

Those with an understanding of the Futurist view of Bible prophecy will have already noted the similarity between Malachy’s “prophecy” and popular (but false) present-day Futurist views (originally invented by a Jesuit and then accepted by vast numbers of Protestants) of a future (but near) apostasy, a future great tribulation, and then the second coming of Christ. And note: in this view, it is not the pope of Rome who is the Man of Sin! So this plays right into Satan’s deception. Could it be that the devil is actually setting up the world stage to make it *look (for a time at least) like* the Jesuit Futurist interpretation of Bible prophecy is correct, with an individual “False Prophet” and an individual, political “Antichrist”, which is in truth contrary to prophetic Scripture? And then, when their time is up and the world does not end, the disillusioned masses reject God’s Word as unreliable? This happens, in fact, every time some preacher has stood up and said this man or that one is the Antichrist; only to be proved wrong in time. Imagine how much greater the harm could be this time!

Again, time will tell. But one thing is for certain: this would *not* be the fulfilment of the prophecies of Antichrist and the False Prophet! It would be a satanic delusion. The truth would *still* be that the Papacy itself has always been the Antichrist, and the priesthood has always been the False Prophet. Two individuals at the end of time simply will not be able to fulfil these prophecies.

We are nearing the end of the world, as is clear from the prophecies of God’s Word. And the devil,

who knows this too, is filling people's minds with false prophecies and great happenings on the world stage, in order to deceive! With him it is always about deception, in a thousand and one diabolical ways. By rejecting the true prophetic Word of God and believing the false prophecies of Malachy, Papists will remain within this iniquitous system, unto the damnation of their souls.

All these events simply fulfil (as does the death or resignation of every pope and the ascendancy of another) the true prophecies of the Word of God regarding the Antichrist:

“For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (Matt. 24:5). Here we see that Antichrist is *one man at a time*, but nevertheless a *dynasty of men*, each one succeeding the other. Whoever is pope of Rome at any given time, he is the Antichrist at that time. Antichrist, therefore, has been here for many centuries already!

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first [which occurred centuries ago], and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition [not one individual, but each one successively]; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:3,4). During his years in office, Benedict XVI was the Antichrist foretold in the Holy Scriptures; and when his successor takes office, he will then be the Antichrist for the duration of *his* reign. And so it has ever been through the centuries.

As to whether or not the next pope of Rome will be the last is something no man can know; but if he is, this will *not* be in fulfilment of Malachy's “prophecy”, but because the Lord's great prophetic timetable has run its course.

February 2013

Shaun Willcock is a minister of the Gospel. He runs Bible Based Ministries. For other articles (which may be downloaded and printed), as well as details about his books, audio messages, pamphlets, etc., please visit the Bible Based Ministries website; or write to the address below. If you would like to be on Bible Based Ministries' email list, to receive all future articles, please send your details.

ENDNOTES:

1. *Pope Benedict XVI Not the First Pontiff to Resign Office*, February 12, 2013. Zenit.org.
2. *Reflections on Pope Benedict's Decision to Resign at the End of February*, 12 February 2013. *The Moynihan Report*, TheMoynihanReport.com.
3. *Pope Immunity: Vatican Will Protect Benedict from Sexual Abuse Prosecution*, February 17, 2013. The Huffington Post, www.huffingtonpost.com.
4. *Pope Benedict XVI Resigns: Softly Spoken in Latin, the Resignation that Shook the World*, 11 February 2013. The Telegraph, www.telegraph.co.uk.
5. *The Inquisitor-General Becomes the Pope of Rome*, by Shaun Willcock, April 2005. Bible Based Ministries. www.biblebasedministries.co.uk.
6. See the following articles by Shaun Willcock, all available on the Bible Based Ministries website: *Child Sexual Abuse by Priests: Revelations of Shocking Crimes and Sinful Cover-Ups*; *Homosexuality in the Roman Catholic Priesthood*; *The Massive Scale of Child Abuse by Priests in Ireland*; and *Is the Pope of Rome Guilty?*
7. *Is the Pope of Rome Guilty?* by Shaun Willcock, April 2010. Bible Based Ministries.
8. *From the Thames to the Tiber: Rome Builds a Bridge for Anglicans to Cross Over*, by Shaun Willcock, February 2010. Bible Based Ministries. Other articles on this topic by Shaun Willcock, and available on the Bible Based Ministries website, are: *The Anglican Institution Continues to Unravel – and Rome Benefits*; *Antichrist in the UK 2010*; and *The Arch-Druid of Canterbury*.
9. *Antichrist in the UK 2010*, by Shaun Willcock, September 2010. Bible Based Ministries.
10. *Babies Left in Limbo? Not Anymore, Says the Pope of Rome*, by Shaun Willcock, November 2006. Bible Based Ministries.

-
11. *"Blessed" or Cursed John Paul II? His Papal Beatification*, by Shaun Willcock, May 2011. Bible Based Ministries.
 12. *Assisi 2011: The Papacy's Interfaith Abomination*, by Shaun Willcock, December 2011. Bible Based Ministries.
 13. *The Pope of Rome Calls for a World Government*, by Shaun Willcock, October 2009. Bible Based Ministries. Another article related to this topic by Shaun Willcock, and available on the Bible Based Ministries website, is: *The Vatican and the "Occupy Wall Street" Movement*.
 14. *Further Reflections on Pope Benedict's Decision to Resign at the End of February*, 13 February 2013. The Moynihan Report.
 15. *Further Reflections on Pope Benedict's Decision to Resign at the End of February*.
 16. See, for example, *Murder in the Vatican*, by Avro Manhattan. Ozark Books, Springfield, Missouri, USA, 1985.
 17. *In God's Name*, by David Yallop. Corgi Books, London, 1984.
 18. *Is the Pope in Jeopardy?* by Richard Bennett. Berean Beacon, undated but approximately July 2012. www.bereanbeacon.org.
 19. *The Vatican Moscow Washington Alliance*, by Avro Manhattan. Chick Publications, Chino, California, USA, 1982.
 20. *The Inquisitor-General Becomes the Pope of Rome*.
 21. *Petrus Romanus: the False Prophet and the Antichrist Are Here*, Part 1, by Thomas Horn. NewsWithViews.com, January 22, 2012.
 22. *Petrus Romanus: the False Prophet and the Antichrist Are Here*, Part 1.
 23. For a full treatment of these issues biblically, see *Charismatic Doctrine in the Light of God's Word* (pamphlet), by Shaun Willcock, and *Pentecostal/Charismatic Doctrine in the Light of Scripture* (set of fourteen CDs), by Shaun Willcock. All available from Bible Based Ministries.
 24. *'Final Pope' Authors Predicted Benedict Would Resign*, 12 February 2013. WND, www.wnd.com
 25. *Petrus Romanus: the False Prophet and the Antichrist Are Here*, Part 1.
 26. *Will the Next Pope be the Last?* 12 February 2013. WND, www.wnd.com.
 27. *Petrus Romanus: the False Prophet and the Antichrist Are Here*, Part 2, by Thomas Horn, February 5, 2012. NewsWithViews.com.
 28. *Petrus Romanus: the False Prophet and the Antichrist Are Here*, Part 2.
 29. *Petrus Romanus: the False Prophet and the Antichrist Are Here*, Part 2.
 30. *Petrus Romanus: the False Prophet and the Antichrist Are Here*, Part 2.
 31. *Petrus Romanus: the False Prophet and the Antichrist Are Here*, Part 3, by Thomas Horn, February 12, 2012. NewsWithViews.com.
 32. *Petrus Romanus: the False Prophet and the Antichrist Are Here*, Part 3.
 33. *Petrus Romanus: the False Prophet and the Antichrist Are Here*, Part 3.
 34. *Rome Still Claims to be the One True Church*, by Shaun Willcock, December 2007. Bible Based Ministries.
 35. *The Vatican and the "Occupy Wall Street" Movement*, by Shaun Willcock, November 2011. Bible Based Ministries.
 36. *Petrus Romanus: the False Prophet and the Antichrist Are Here*, Part 10, by Thomas Horn, April 1, 2012. NewsWithViews.com.
 37. *The Present Crises of the Holy See Tested by Prophecy*, by Manning, reprinted 2007 under the title, "The Pope and the Antichrist", by Tradibooks, France; as quoted in *Petrus Romanus: the False Prophet and the Antichrist Are Here*, Part 3.
 38. *Trappings of Popery*, by Shaun Willcock, pgs. 87-102. Published for Bible Based Ministries by New Voices Publishing, Cape Town, South Africa, 2007. Available from Bible Based Ministries.
 39. See the following CD series by Shaun Willcock: *The Book of Revelation*; *The Antichrist*; and *The Papacy in 2 Thessalonians 2*; as well as the following pamphlets: *Bible Prophecy Speaks of Popery*, and *The Antichrist*. All available on the Bible Based Ministries website.
 40. See *Satan's Seat* and *"Holy War" Against South Africa*, both books by Shaun Willcock. Available from Bible Based Ministries.

Bible Based Ministries

info@biblebasedministries.co.uk

www.biblebasedministries.co.uk

This article may be copied for free distribution if it is copied in full

WORLDWIDE CONTACT FOR BIBLE BASED MINISTRIES:

Contending for the Faith Ministries

42055 Crestland Drive

Lancaster, CA 93536

United States of America

BBMOrders@aol.com