

Study for the Month of November, 2010

## ***Apostolic Succession of the Papacy?***

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**Reference Source for the study of *The Great Controversy*, (see pages 86, 87, 103-104, 1911 edition).**

According to the English Dictionary, the word papacy refers to four things: "1. the position or authority of the pope 2. the period during which the pope rules 3. the line of succession of popes 4. the government of the Roman Catholic Church, headed by the pope." *Webster's Student Edition Dictionary, 1976 edition*. But the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, by the inspired pen of Ellen G. White, also refers the papacy to "the Roman Church," "the Romish church," "the Roman Catholic Church" and her power, also oftentimes referring to this power with either the personal pronouns "he," "him," "she," or "her" in these specific contexts.

It is important to remember this definition whenever referring to the papacy, which Daniel first introduces in prophecy as "the little horn power." Apostle Paul styles him as "the man of sin," and "the son of perdition," adding that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work" in his time. John describes him in the introduction of Revelation 13 as already possessing the composite major characteristics of the three previous beast-powers-- the lion (Babylon), bear (Medo-Persia), and the leopard (Greece). All in all the papacy is *the beast of prophecy*.

It would also be good to remember that the not one single or any particular pope is the papacy or the beast, even as not one single or any particular president is the presidency or the senator the senate or the congressman congress itself. This would prevent many a false interpretation that has plagued some groups studying end-time truths. For instance, while he was still alive, it was confidently declared by some that Pope John Paul (the first Polish pope) was the "last pope" who was going to bring about the "New World Order" together with Gorbachev of Russia and George Bush Sr., i.e., according to their fanciful Futuristic interpretations. If we would believe their interpretation that the beast is *the pope*, then when John Paul died the beast is already dead. Far from it! John Paul has been replaced by Benedict (the first German pope), and the same error is being repeated, warning that Benedict is the last pope, again. Time and time again, such interpretations have caused panic and paranoia, resulting in premature movements. Worse, it has led others to eventually give up in disillusionment and disgust, and faith in the Bible itself. This is one of Satan's deadliest deceptions for those zealous of end-time truths, but turn to man's wisdom instead of the Word.

### ***The Falling Away of the Christian Church Prepared the Way for the Papacy***

Not only did Daniel and John foretell of the papacy. So did Apostle Paul, who warned that the great apostasy of the Christian church by entering into a compromise with paganism would give birth to the "man of sin," that "mystery of iniquity."

"The apostle Paul, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, foretold the great apostasy which would result in the establishment of the papal power. He declared that

the day of Christ should not come, 'except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 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, showing himself that he is God.' 2 Thess. 2: 3, 4, 7. Even at that early date he saw, creeping into the church *errors* that would prepare the way for the development of the papacy.

"Little by little, at first in stealth and silence, and then more openly as it increased in strength and gained control of the minds of men, 'the mystery of iniquity' carried forward its deceptive and blasphemous work. Almost imperceptibly the customs of heathenism found their way into the Christian church. The spirit of compromise and conformity was restrained for a time by the fierce persecutions which the church endured under paganism. But as persecution ceased, and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of the kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and His apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions. The nominal conversion of Constantine, in the early part of the fourth century, caused great rejoicing; and the world, cloaked with a form of righteousness, walked into the church. Now the work of corruption rapidly progressed. Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror. Her spirit controlled the church. Her doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ.

"The *compromise* between paganism and Christianity resulted in the development of "the man of sin" foretold in prophecy as opposing and exalting himself above God. That *gigantic system of false religion* is a masterpiece of Satan's power—a monument of his efforts to seat himself upon the throne to rule the earth according to his will." — *Great Controversy*, pp. 49, 50, 1911

### **The Death of the Papacy?**

Not a few godly expositors of the Bible, including Uriah Smith, believed that the papacy permanently lost its power in the year when Pope Pius VI was taken captive by General Berthier of Napoleon's French Republican army in 1798 and taken to France to die there a year later. And yet prophecy tell us that:

"The influence of Rome in the countries that once acknowledged her dominion is still far from destroyed. A prophecy foretells a restoration of *her power*. 'I saw *one* of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.' Rev. 13: 3. The infliction of the deadly wound points to the downfall of the papacy in 1798. After this, says the prophet [John], 'his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.' *Paul states plainly that 'the man of sin' will continue until the second advent.* 2 Thess. 2: 3-8. To the very close of time *he* will carry forward the work of deception. And the revelator declares, also referring to the papacy: 'All that dwell upon the earth shall worship *him*, whose names are not written in the book of life.' Rev. 13: 8. *In both the Old and the New World, the papacy will receive homage in the honor paid to the Sunday institution, that rests solely upon the authority of the Roman Church.*" — *Great Controversy*, p. 579, 1911.

### **CLAIMS OF THE PAPACY TO BE THE VICAR OF CHRIST**

The Roman Catholic Church claims that the pope is the Vicar of Christ on earth. But the Bible tells us that Christ himself left an altogether different Vicar or Representative in His place, who was not a mortal but the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead. (John 14: 15-18; 16:7). Of His Representative, Christ says: "He shall teach you all things." "He will guide you into all truth." John 14: 26; 16:13. (Compare to 1 John 2: 20, 27). The Holy Spirit, being the author of the Bible (2 Pet. 1:2), certainly should be the proper interpreter of it.

To this the Roman Catholic Church answers: "Nor can it be said that being a divinely inspired book, its prime Author, the Holy Spirit, will guide the reader to the right meaning. The Church which made the Bible, likewise interprets the Bible." – *"Things Catholics Are Asked About," Martin J. Scott, S.J., Litt.D., pp. 119, 120. N.Y. : Kennedy, 1927. Quoted in Facts of Faith, pp. 198-9.*

Pope Leo XIII says:

"But the supreme teacher in the Church is the Roman Pontiff. Union of minds, therefore, requires, together with a perfect accord in the one faith, complete submission to the will of the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, as to God Himself." – *"The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII," p. 193. N.Y: Benziger Bros. 1903.* He further says:

"We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty." – *Id., p. 304. (Ibid).*

"All the names which in the Scriptures are applied to Christ, by virtue by which it is established that He is over the church, all the same names are applied to the Pope." – *Robert Bellarmine, "On the Authority of the Councils," p. 17, 1628 ed. vol. I, p. 266.*

"For nor man, but God separates those whom the Roman Pontiff (who exercises the functions, not of mere man, but of the true God), having weighed the necessity or benefit of the churches, dissolves, not by human but rather by divine authority." – *"The Decretals of Gregory IX, book I, title y, chap. 3, in Corpus Juris Canonici, 1555 ed., vol. 2, col. 203.*

"The pope is supreme judge of the *law of the land*. . . He is the vicegerent of Christ, and is not only a priest forever, but also King of kings and Lord of lords.- *"La Civiltà Cattolica, March 18, 1871.*

"The Pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ, *but He is Jesus Christ Himself hidden under the veil of the flesh*. Does the Pope speak? It is Jesus Christ who speaks. Does the Pope accord a favor or pronounce an anathema? It is Jesus Christ who pronounces the anathema or accords the favor. So that when the Pope speaks we have no business to examine. We have only to obey. We have no right to criticize his direction or discuss his commands." – *"The Archbishop of Venice, prior to becoming Pope Pius X. Quoted in "Mark of the Beast," Harvestime Books, Altamont, TN 37301.*

The papacy has long laid claim to be an "unbroken apostolic succession" going back to Peter, who, they allege, was the "first pope." Nowhere in the New Testament can this claim be found. It is entirely a creation of the papacy. The passage that is used to justify this is found in Matt. \_\_\_\_\_. But the "rock" in the Bible, from the Old Testament to the New Testament applies to Jesus and His Word, never to any mortal as all the disciples and apostles were. (EE Desire of Ages on this)

But even history itself blatantly contradicts this claim. For four decades there were two, even three bitterly feuding different lines who claimed the right to the "Apostolic See":

the French Avignon line, the Italian Roman line and the Pisan. One even accused the other as being the “antipope,” and since they claim to be the vicar of Christ, or even God himself of earth, they do accuse themselves of correctly being the Antichrist!

The so called “Great Schism of Christianity” is a misnomer—evidently intended to deceive for this Christianity is the Roman Catholic Church alone! Note the following:

“(1378-1417). In Roman Catholic history, a period when there were two, and later three, rival popes, *each with their own College of Cardinals*. The schism began soon after the papal residence was returned to Rome from Avignon (see Avignon papacy). **Urban VI** was elected amid local demands for an *Italian* pope, but a group of cardinals with *French* sympathies elected an **antipope, Clement VII**, who took up residence at Avignon. Cardinals on both sides met at Pisa in 1409 and elected a third pope in an effort to end the schism. The rift was not healed until the Council of Constance vacated all three seats and elected **Martin V** as pope in 1417.” Source: Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, art. *Western Schism*.

“The **Great Schism of Western Christianity** or **Papal Schism** (also known as the **Western Schism**) was a split within the Roman Catholic church from 1378 to 1417. By its end, *three men simultaneously claimed to be the true pope*. Driven by politics rather than any real theological disagreement [?], the schism was ended by the Council of Constance (1414-1418). The simultaneous claim to the papal chair of *four* different men hurt the reputation of the office. The Western Schism is occasionally called the Great Schism, though this term is more often applied to the East-West Schism of 1054.” Source: Wikipedia, *Western Schism* (emphasis mine).

### **Origin**

“The schism in the western Church [the Roman Catholic Church, that is] resulted from the return of the papacy under **Gregory XI** in 1376, ending the Avignon Papacy, which had developed a reputation for *corruption* that estranged major parts of Western Christendom. This reputation can be attributed to perceptions of predominant French influence and to the papal curia’s efforts to extend its powers of patronage and increase in revenue.

“After Gregory XI died, the Romans *rioted* to ensure the election of a Roman for pope. The cardinals, fearing the crowds, elected a Neapolitan when no viable Roman candidates presented themselves. **Pope Urban VI**, born Bartolomeo Parignano, the Archbishop of Bari, was elected in 1378. Urban had been a respected administrator in the papal chancery at Avignon, but as pope he proved suspicious, overbearing, and prone to violent outbursts of temper. The cardinals who had elected him soon regretted their decision: the majority removed themselves from Rome to Agnani, where they elected Robert de Geneva as a rival pope on September 20 of the same year [1378]. Robert took the name **Pope Clement VII** and reestablished a papal court in Avignon. The second election threw the church into turmoil. There have been antipopes—rival claimants to the papacy—before, but most of them had been appointed by various rival factions, in this case, a single group of leaders of the Church had created both the pope and the antipope[!]

“The conflicts quickly escalated from a church problem to a diplomatic crisis that divided Europe. Secular leaders had to choose which claimant they would recognize: **Avignon**: France, Aragon, Castille and Leon, Cyprus, Burgundy, Savoy, Naples, and

Scotland recognized the Avignon claimant; Rome: Denmark, England, Flanders, the Holy Roman Empire, Hungary, northern Italy, Ireland, Norway, Poland, and Sweden recognized the Roman claimant.

“In the Iberian Peninsula there were the Fernandine Wars (*Guerras fernandinas*) and the 1383-1385 Crisis in Portugal, during which dynastic opponents supported rival claimants to the papal office.

### ***Consequences***

“Sustained by such national and factional rivalries throughout Catholic Christendom, the schism continued after the deaths of both initial claimants, **Boniface IX**, crowned at Rome in 1393, and **Benedict XIII**, who reigned in Avignon from 1394, maintained their *rival* courts. When Boniface died in 1404, the eight cardinals of the Roman conclave offered to refrain from electing a new pope if Benedict would resign; but when his legates refused on his behalf, the Roman party then proceeded to elect **Pope Innocent VII**.

“Effort were made to end the schism through *force or diplomacy*. The French crown even tried to coerce Benedict IX, whom it nominally supported, into resigning. None of these remedies worked. The suggestion that a church council should resolve the Schism, first made in 1378, was not adopted at first because canon law required that a pope call a council. Eventually theologians like Pierre d’Ailly and Jean Gerson, as well as canon lawyers like Francesco Zabarella, adopted arguments that equity permitted the [Roman] Catholic church to act for its own welfare in *defiance* of the letter of the law.”

### ***Resolution***

“Finally, the *Council of Constance* in 1414, advised by the theologian Jean Gerson, secured the resignation of **John XXIII** and the successor in Rome of **Urban XI**, Pope **Gregory XII** (who had abdicated in 1415, but not before formally empowering the Council of Constance to elect the new pope, thus *ensuring the legitimacy of the Roman line*) and excommunicated the claimant who refused to step down, Avignon Pope Benedict XIII. The Council then elected Pope **Martin V**, essentially ending the schism. Nonetheless, the Kingdom of Aragon did not recognize Martin V and continued to recognize Benedict XIII. A follower of Benedict XIII subsequently elected **Antipope Benedict XIV** (Bernard Garnier) and three followers simultaneously elected **Antipope Clement VIII**, but the Western Schism was by then practically over (Clement VIII resigned in 1429 and apparently recognized Martin V).”

### ***Historiography***

According to J.F. Broderick (1987, “The Sacred College of Cardinals: Size and Geographical Composition (1099-1986)” *Archivum historiae Pontificiae*, 25, p. 14:

“Doubt still shrouds the validity of the **three rival lines of pontiffs during the four decades** subsequent to the still disputed papal election of 1378. This makes suspect the credentials of the cardinals created by the *Roman, Avignon, and Pisan* claimants to the Apostolic See. Unity was finally restored without a definitive solution to the question; for the **Council of Constance** succeeded in terminating the Western Schism, not by declaring which of the 3 claimants was the rightful one, but by eliminating all of them by forcing their abdication or deposition, and then setting up a novel arrangement for choosing a new pope acceptable to all sides. **To this day the**

**Church has never made any official, authoritative pronouncement about the papal lines of succession for this confusing period;** nor has Martin V or any of his successors. Modern scholars are not agreed in their solutions; although they tend to favor the Roman line.” (emphasis mine).

Great effort on the part of those who both fear and hate the great truths of the Advent faith and message, especially towards the testing truth of the Sabbath, and towards Ellen G. White, is continuously being made to undermine her and her writings. But these few official and authoritative references alone regarding who the papacy is and its career eloquently bear out the reliability of her writings. Note:

Writing of the efforts of papacy to destroy Wycliffe, who arose in England in the fourteenth century as the “morning star of the Reformation,” E. G. White says that Gregory XI who decreed the destruction of the Reformer, died before his decree could be carried out. Moreover:

“God’s providence still further overruled events to give opportunity for the growth of the Reformation. The death of Gregory was followed by the election of two rival popes. Two conflicting powers, each professedly *infallible*, now claimed obedience (see Appendix notes for pp. 50 and 86.) Each called the faithful to assist him in making *war* upon the other, enforcing his demands by terrible anathemas against his adversaries, and promises of rewards in heaven to his supporters. This occurrence greatly weakened the power of the papacy. The rival factions had all they could do to attack each other, and Wycliffe for a time had rest. *Anathemas and recriminations were flying from pope to pope, and torrents of blood were poured out to support their conflicting claims. Crimes and scandals flooded the [Roman Catholic] church.* Meanwhile, the Reformer, in quiet retirement of his parish of Lutterworth, was laboring diligently to *point men from the contending popes to Jesus, the Prince of Peace.*

The schism, with all its strife and corruption which it caused, prepared the way for the Reformation by enabling the people to see what the Papacy really was. In a tract which he published, *On the Schism of the Popes*, Wycliffe called upon the people to consider whether these two priests were not speaking the truth in ***condemning each other as the antichrist.*** ‘God,’ said he, ‘would no longer suffer the fiend to reign in only one such priest, but. . . made division among two, so that men, in Christ’s name, may the more easily overcome them both.’- R. Vaughan, *Life and Opinions of John de Wycliffe*, vol. 2, p. 26.”- E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 86, 87, 1911.

### ***What is the true evidence of apostolic succession?***

The papacy and the theologians and fathers of the Roman Catholic church were not the first to claim and promote the idea of “unbroken apostolic succession.” The Pharisees planted the seed. (See *Practical Lessons For the Church Today* by F. C. Gilbert). For the basis of their belief, they claimed Moses and the prophets (Luke 16: 29). They heralded far and wide that they were the only true believers in God; anybody who did not believe with them, and accept their interpretation of Scripture, could not be saved (Acts 15:1). And see what they did to Jesus and His disciples! They claimed to be lineal descendants of Abraham and went to great lengths of genealogy, claiming his position and authority; the popes claim to have the authority and position of Peter, whom they erroneously claim was the first pope.

“The Pharisees had declared themselves the children of Abraham. Jesus told them that this claim could be established only by doing the works of Abraham. The true children of Abraham would live, as he [Abraham] did, a life of obedience to God. They would not try to kill One who was speaking the truth that was given Him from God. In plotting against Christ, the rabbis were not doing the works of Abraham. A mere lineal descent from Abraham was of no value. Without a spiritual connection with him, which would be manifested in possessing the same spirit, and doing the same works, they were not his children

“This principle bears equal weight upon a question that has long agitated the Christian world,--- the question of apostolic succession. Descent from Abraham was proved, not by name and lineage, but by likeness of character. **So the apostolic succession rests not upon the transmission of ecclesiastical authority, but upon spiritual relationship. A life actuated by the apostles’ spirit, the belief and teaching of the truth they taught, this is the true evidence of apostolic succession. This is what constitutes men the successors of the first teachers of the gospel.**”- *Desire of Ages*, pp. 466-7.

“Ambassadors for Christ have a solemn and important work, which rests upon some altogether *too* lightly. While Christ is the minister in the sanctuary above, He is also, through His delegates, the minister of His church on earth. He speaks to the people through chosen men, and carries forward His work through them, as in the days of His humiliation He moved visibly upon the earth. Although centuries have passed, the lapse of time has not changed His parting promise to His disciples: ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’ From Christ’s ascension to the present day, men ordained of God, deriving their authority from Him, have become teachers of the [true] faith. Christ, the True Shepherd, superintends His work through the instrumentality of these under shepherds. Thus the position of those who labor in word and doctrine becomes very important. In Christ’s stead they beseech the people to be reconciled to God.

“The people should not regard their ministers as mere public speakers and orators, but as Christ’s ambassadors, receiving their wisdom and power from the great Head of the church. To slight and disregard the word spoken by Christ’s representative is not only showing disrespect to the man, but also to the Master who has sent him. He is in Christ’s stead; and the voice of the Savior should be heard in His representative.”-*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 393.

“He [God] has ordained that there shall be a succession of men who derive authority from the first teachers of the faith for the continual preaching of Christ and Him crucified. The great Teacher has delegated power to His servants, who have ‘this treasure in earthen vessels.’ Christ will superintend the work of His ambassadors *if* they wait for His instruction and guidance.

“Ministers who are truly Christ’s representatives will be men of prayer. With an earnestness and faith that will not be denied, they will plead with God that they may be strengthened and fortified for duty and for trial, and that their lips may be sanctified by a touch of the living coal from off the altar, to speak the words of God to the people.” – *Ibid*, p. 529.