

One More Pope?

BY IRVIN BAXTER JR.

There's no city on earth like Jerusalem. And then, in a very different way, there's no city on earth like Rome.

When entering Rome, there is a certain sense of foreboding. Driving past the Colosseum, images of martyrs being fed to lions haunt the mind. The catacombs tell their own story of Christians hiding underground to escape the pagan, blood-

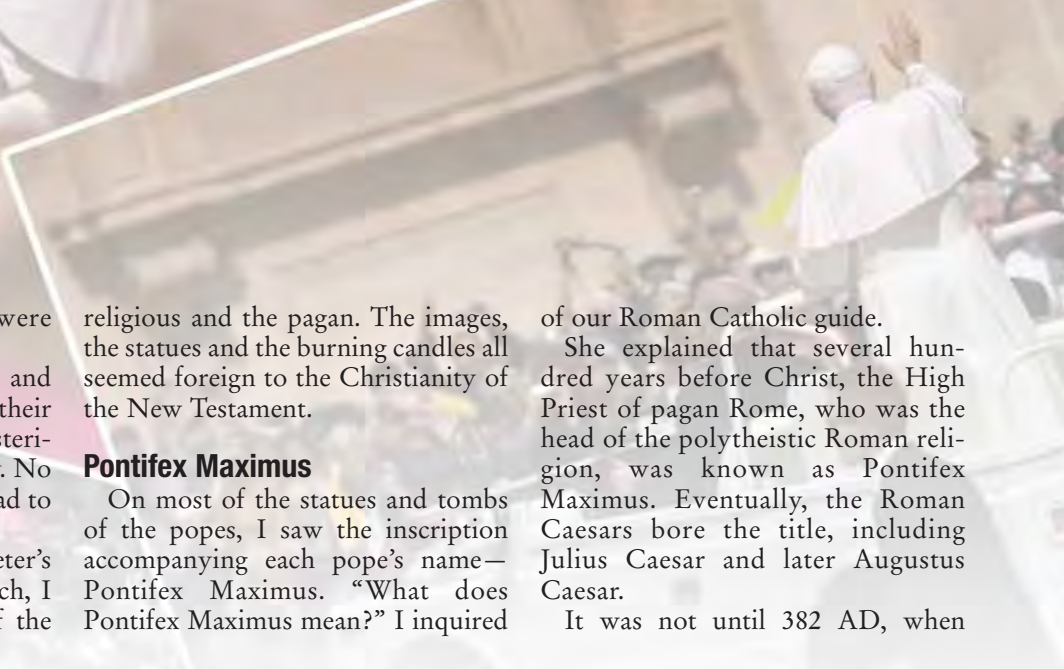
thirsty tyrannical government of Nero.

Then there is the awe!

There is simply no place like St. Peter's Square with its circular colonnade. The Vatican Museum boggles the mind with the incalculable wealth that resides there. For 1,000 years, the treasures from the wars of the Holy Roman Emperors were laid at the feet of the Supreme Pontiff.

When entering the Sistine Chapel, you realize that the most powerful religious figure on earth is chosen there. Pope Pius XII, Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II are names that spring to mind.

For 2,000 years Rome has been the center of world power—first during the Roman Empire and then after Charlemagne and 800 AD, the Holy Roman Empire. Kings were crowned



and deposited here. Popes were enshrined and murdered here.

Kings and presidents, Queens and prime ministers have all made their way to pay homage to that mysterious power residing in the papacy. No wonder they say that all roads lead to Rome.

As we walked through St. Peter's church, the world's largest church, I was struck with the mixture of the

religious and the pagan. The images, the statues and the burning candles all seemed foreign to the Christianity of the New Testament.

Pontifex Maximus

On most of the statues and tombs of the popes, I saw the inscription accompanying each pope's name—Pontifex Maximus. "What does Pontifex Maximus mean?" I inquired

of our Roman Catholic guide.

She explained that several hundred years before Christ, the High Priest of pagan Rome, who was the head of the polytheistic Roman religion, was known as Pontifex Maximus. Eventually, the Roman Caesars bore the title, including Julius Caesar and later Augustus Caesar.

It was not until 382 AD, when



paganism had filtered back into the Christian church, that popes began to claim the name Pontifex Maximus. Since that time, the name Pontifex Maximus or Supreme Pontiff has accompanied the papacy. Strange! Strange indeed!

The papal audience

Pope Benedict XVI had been elected as pope just 22 days before our Israel tour group visited Rome. Since the Bible teaches that the person who is pope at the time of the Antichrist will be the False Prophet, and since we are very close to the time when the Antichrist will appear, we realized that this new pope could be the False Prophet himself. Therefore, we decided to attend the papal audience on Wednesday, May 11, so that we could see the pope for ourselves.

When Benedict XVI came riding into St. Peter's Square in his popemobile, the Catholic faithful from all over the world greeted him with applause and adulation. The atmosphere was very much akin to worship. Some of the devout were seen wiping tears at this face-to-face encounter with the 'Vicar of Christ.' The atmosphere was electric and the

pageantry was moving.

As I watched the pomp and splendor of the proceedings, scriptures about the Vatican came to my mind. "Come hither, I will show unto thee the judgment of the Great Whore that sitteth on many waters...The woman is that great city that reigneth over the kings of the earth...the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman (city) sitteth." (Revelation 17:1, 18:9)

Rome, The City of Seven Hills—I had heard it all of my life. While the 15,000 faithful present worshiped and applauded, God contemplated the impending judgment foretold in scripture. What a paradox!

The last pope?

In the 12th century, an Irish bishop by the name of St. Malachy is said to have fallen into a trance and seen a vision of all the popes to come. According to the vision recorded in 1139 AD, there would be only 112 popes left.

St. Malachy described each of them in a single phrase. It is said that some of these phrases have fit their corresponding popes in an amazing way. The pope just elected is the 111th

from St. Malachy.

The day before the new pope's election, Anvar Alikhan wrote on the Internet website rediff.com: "The next Pope, whose name will be announced shortly, is described in the prophecies as Gloria Olivae, or 'The glory of the olive.' What exactly does this clue mean? We cannot tell as yet. Some believe that it means he will come from the Benedictine order, which is symbolized by the olive. Others argue that the olive signifies Israel. As in the case of many prophets and seers, St. Malachy's clues often become clear to us only after the fact."

Alikhan's article continued, "As the college of cardinals works feverishly to elect the successor to Pope John Paul II over the next few days, they will have to wrestle with various criteria—political, organizational, theological and moral. And to make things more complicated, they may also want to make sure that, in order to forestall any further doomsaying, whoever they choose has absolutely nothing to do with the words, 'The glory of the olive.'"

The day after this article was written, the new pope was elected—



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Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger from Germany. The name he chose for his papacy?...Pope Benedict XVI.

St. Malachy referred to the 112th and last pope as Petrus Romanus, or Peter the Roman. Listen to the words of Malachy: "In extreme persecution, the seat of the Holy Roman Church will be occupied by Peter the Roman, who will lead his sheep through many tribulations, at the end of which the city of seven hills shall be destroyed, and the dreadful Judge shall judge the people."

The Eternal City is not eternal

Besides being known as The City of Seven Hills, Rome has also proudly worn the title of The Eternal City. St. Malachy prophesied that Rome would be destroyed during the reign of the next pope. More importantly, the Bible prophesies the destruction of Rome in the very near future and states that Rome shall be no more.

It can be proven conclusively in scripture that Rome is the Mystery Babylon of the book of Revelation. Her destruction is described repeatedly throughout it.

Revelation 17:5 and 18:21 speak of Rome as Babylon and then prophesies her demise.

"And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON



THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH...And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." **e**

Captions: Page 26, Statue of St. Peter, St. Peter's Square, Vatican City; Page 28, left: John Paul II, Pontifex Maximus; right: Diana of the Ephesians, goddess of fertility. Page 29, left: Pontifex Maximus, meaning Highest Priest or Supreme Pontiff – name of the highest priest in pagan Rome; right: The keys of Peter under the triple crown tiara of the pope. Notice the dragon. These photos are all courtesy of Kenn Thorpe. Photo above: St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican in Rome, Endtime photo.

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- WHETSTONE answers**
1. B., Jesus, Luke 5:31
 2. A., Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiastes 1:2
 3. B., Philip, Acts 21:8-9
 4. C., 300, 1 Kings 11:3
 5. C., The living God, Hebrews 10:31
 6. A., With kindness, Genesis 33:4
 7. B., Hyssop, Exodus 12:22
 8. B., Scourged, Matthew 27:26
 9. A., To float, 2 Kings 6:1-6
 10. C., David, Psalm 27:1
 11. A., Jericho, Mark 10:46-52
 12. C., 12, Joshua 4:1-5
 13. A., The tabernacle, Numbers 9:15-16
 14. C., Galatians, Galatians 4:10-11
 15. B., John, Revelation 1:4
 16. B., Judges, Judges
 17. A., Daniel, Daniel 1:17
 18. C., Jesus, John 11:43
 19. C., Joshua-Hezekiah, Joshua 10:12, 2 Kings 20:11
 20. A., Esther, Esther 4:13-14