

The Last Pope?

(<http://www.lamblion.us>)



By [Dr. David R. Reagan](#)

Pope Benedict XVI shocked the world on February 11 when he suddenly announced that he would retire on February 28 due to deteriorating health. There had not been a papal resignation since 1415 when Gregory XII stepped aside as part of a controversial arrangement to end the Great Western Schism among competing papal claimants. Benedict became the first Pope in history to resign due to health reasons.

The Pope's resignation created a sensation among Bible prophecy buffs because of a widespread belief that he would be the next-to-the-last Pope. This belief is grounded in what is called "The Prophecy of the Popes," a document consisting of 112 short, cryptic phrases in Latin, which claims to predict all the Popes that would succeed Pope Celestine II who died in 1144.

A Strange Document of Unknown Origin

The document became public in 1595 when a Catholic priest by the name of Arnold de Wyon published a history of the Benedictine Order. He attributed the prophecies to an Irish priest, Saint Malachy, who served as an Archbishop in the 12th Century.

According to the traditional account, Malachy was summoned to Rome in 1139 by Pope Innocent II, and while he was there, he supposedly received a vision of future Popes. The manuscript was deposited in the Vatican Archives and forgotten about until its rediscovery in 1590, just in time for a papal conclave that was in session at the time.

The "prophecies" list 112 Popes that will serve from the time of Pope Urban VII who died in 1590, the first being Pope Gregory XIV whose papacy lasted for only one year. The last Pope in the list is referred to as "Peter the Roman." And it is stated that he will reign among "many tribulations" leading up to the destruction of Rome.

Problems With the Document

There are a number of problems with these "prophecies," as outlined below.

1) Unknown before their publication in 1595. Saint Bernard of Clairvoux, who was a contemporary of Saint Malachy, never mentions the prophecies in his biography of Malachy, nor are they mentioned in any record prior to 1595.

2) Obtuse wording. The "prophecies" are as obtuse as the so-called prophecies of Nostradamus. They simply list a short phrase for each Pope. Examples are: "pig in a sieve," "from cattle country," "star of the swans," "snaky man," and "woodpecker between food."

For the first 74 Popes in the list leading up to 1590 when the document supposedly was found, the discoverer, Arnold de Wyon, tried to make a match between the identifying phrase and the person who actually became the Pope described by the phrase. Thus, the phrase, "from the guardian goose," supposedly pointed to Pope Alexander III (1159 - 1181) whose family's coat of arms featured a goose. Many of Wyon's explanations are terribly stretched and amount to what might be called shoehorning, but the matches are more tenable than the "prophecies" concerning those who were to serve as Popes after the document was made public in 1595, clearly indicating that the document was actually written around the time it was "found."

The "prophecies" dating after 1590 are very difficult to match up with the Pope who supposedly fulfilled the prophecy. For example, the prophecy "country animal" ended up pointing to Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758). Proponents of the prophecies have been able to link this "prophecy" to the Pope in only one absurd way — by arguing that he was a man of "plodding ox diligence."

3) Questionable counting. From the time of the first Pope on the list to Benedict XVI, there were a total of 100 Popes. The only way to get the list up to 111 is to count the 11 men who served as Anti-Popes but who were never recognized by the Vatican as true Popes.

The Validity of the Document

Most experts who have studied the document carefully have concluded that it was manufactured by Arnold de Wyon as a propaganda piece to ensure that his candidate for the papacy in 1590 would be elected. Thus, the prophecy for Urban VII's successor read, "from the old city." The man Wyon favored was Cardinal Girolani Simoncelli who was from a city whose Latin name meant "old city."

The ploy did not work. A man named Niccolo Sfondrati was elected, and he took the papal name of Gregory XIV. There was nothing in his background that linked him to the "prophecy" that stated he would be "from the old city."

However, proponents of the "prophecies" argue that Gregory XIV's father was a senator from Milan, and that the word, senator, is derived from the Latin word, senex, which means "old man." Alternatively, they argue that Milan is the "old city" referred to. Again, an example of twisting a "prophecy" to mean virtually anything.

The New Pope

Although the newly elected Pope is from Argentina, he is not an Hispanic. He is of Roman descent, having been born of Italian immigrants to Argentina, but his birth name was not Peter, nor did he select that as his papal name. He does not fulfill the "prophecy" about him. Still, he could well prove to be the last Pope because the signs of the times clearly point to the imminent return of Jesus.

I think it is interesting to note that in the weeks following the election of Pope Francis, the greatest rumor-mongering machine in the world, the Internet, has been full of wild speculations to the effect that Pope Francis really is a fulfillment of Malachy's "prophecies."

For example, some are claiming that he really is the Peter spoken of in the Malachy document. The argument goes like this: He named himself after Saint Francis of Assisi, but Saint Francis' real birth name was Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone, and Pietro is the Italian version of Peter. This is the kind of nonsensical interpretations that have historically been applied to the Malachy 'prophecies." Thus, if a Malachy clue for a Pope is "Rose," the true believers will search day and night to find some connection to a rose, even if it ends up to be the fact that the new Pope's great grandmother loved roses!

Tom Horn, the author of the book, *Petrus Romanus*, is currently providing an explanation almost as far fetched. He is arguing that the reference to the name Peter simply "implies this pope will reaffirm the authority of the Roman Pontiff over the Church and will emphasize the supremacy of the Roman Catholic Faith and the Roman Catholic Church above all other religions and denominations, and its authority over all Christians and all peoples of the world." This is a classic spiritualization of a "prophecy," making it mean whatever you want it to mean.

Another rumor that is prominent on the Internet is the assertion that the "prophecies" of Malachy included the statement that the last Pope would be a "black pope." They then point to the fact that Pope Francis is the first Jesuit Pope and the leader of the Jesuits has always been referred to historically as "The Black Pope." Sorry, there is no such statement in the "prophecies" of Malachy.

The only prophecies we need to pay attention to are those contained in God's Word, for He is the only one who truly knows the future.

For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is no one like Me,
Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times things which have not been done,
Saying, "My purpose will be established,
And I will accomplish all My good pleasure"...
Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass.
I have planned it, surely I will do it.
- Isaiah 46:9b-11