

The papacy and the uniting of Europe

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1 MAY 2004 marked the accession of ten new member states to the European Union (EU), an event celebrated with fireworks and church bells as midnight struck. This was an historic day for Europe, but even more significant for Bible students who are watching the signs of the times.

Of the ten, three, namely Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, were formerly part of the Soviet Union, which came to an end in 1991. The remaining seven are: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Cyprus and Malta. With the exception of Malta and Cyprus, they are all East European countries. Greece, also in the East, is already a member of the EU.

The image of Daniel 2 coming together

What we saw on 1 May is an amazing change from what existed at the formation of what is now known as the EU, which came into being by the Treaty of Rome in 1957. We are beginning to see the image of Daniel 2 standing on its feet. Although Nebuchadnezzar's dream represented the fate of four successive powers since the time of Nebuchadnezzar, nevertheless Daniel told the king that it represented "what shall be in the latter days" (v. 28). The Chaldean for 'latter' is *'acharith*, and nearly every time the Hebrew equivalent is used elsewhere in Scripture it applies to the time of the end. Therefore at the time of the end we will see, in a figure, the image standing on its feet.

This image represents the kingdoms of men united under one head, namely the latter-day Babylon, which will stand in opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ, the stone "cut out of the mountain without hands" (v. 45), when he returns. But how does it come into being? The answer is in Revelation 16:16: "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon". Who gathered them together? The answer is in Zephaniah:

"Therefore wait ye upon Me, saith the LORD [Yahweh], until the day that I rise up to the prey: for My determination is to *gather the nations*, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them Mine indignation, even all My fierce anger: for all the earth shall be

devoured with the fire of My jealousy" (3:8; see also Joel 3:2; Zech. 14:2).

By what means will Yahweh gather them? The answer is by the froglike spirits:

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to *gather* them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:13,14).

The Greek word for 'gather' is significant. It derives from the word *sun*, which means 'union with or together', 'by association', 'companionship', etc. Is this not what we are seeing in the EU?

The frog spirit is the spirit that derives from the French Revolution, with its cry of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity". The French Revolution has affected the whole world with this spirit. The dragon answers to Eastern Europe, Russia in particular, the beast answers to Western Europe, and the false prophet answers to the papacy. At one time we saw the fulfilment of the frog spirit prophecy in Communism, and it certainly had its place there. But it is more than this. In this article we will consider how the froglike spirit of the papacy over the past forty years has contributed to East and West coming together.¹

The choosing of Pope John XXIII

The year after the Treaty of Rome in 1957, Pope Pius XII died. He was succeeded by John XXIII. In this section we draw heavily on a book written about this pope by Peter Hebblethwaite.²

A conclave of cardinals met on 25 October to choose a new pope. At this conclave the cardinals drew up a 'job description' for the new pope, prepared by Cardinal Bacci, of whom it

1. For the way the Catholic Church became the champion of the working classes prior to this period see Holton, W. G. (1966), *The Dragon and the Lamb*, Crick, Graham Pearce.
2. Hebblethwaite, P. (1984), *John XXIII Pope of the Council*, London, Geoffrey Chapman.

was said: "Whether by luck or inspiration, he was prophetic". Hebblethwaite quotes from this 'job description' as follows:

"We need a pope gifted with great spiritual strength and ardent charity. . . He will need to embrace the Eastern and Western church. He will belong to all peoples, and his heart must beat especially for those oppressed by totalitarian persecution and those in great poverty . . . May the new Vicar of Christ form a bridge between all levels of society, between all nations—even those that reject and persecute the Christian religion . . . He will freely receive and welcome the bishops 'whom the Holy Spirit has chosen to rule over the Church of God' (Acts 20:28)" (p. 281).

On the same page the following further comment was made:

"The most remarkable piece of prophecy concerned the hope that the new pope would 'form a bridge . . . even towards those who reject and persecute the Christian religion'. Pius XII had been content to denounce them . . . If Bacci were heeded, the conclave would elect a different sort of man with a different style".

At the time of the Treaty of Rome, Europe was divided by the Iron Curtain (although in fact the Berlin Wall was not completed until 1961), with, in general terms, Catholicism or Christendom on the western side and Communism on the eastern side. Hence the reference above to "those that reject and persecute the Christian religion". The former pope, Pius XII, was seen as one who denounced Communism. The objective of the conclave now was to woo Communism. The desire of the cardinals was fulfilled in the choice of Cardinal Roncalli to become the new pope, who took the name John XXIII.

A change in approach

One of the new pope's first moves was to call an ecumenical Vatican Council for the universal church. We shall refer to this Vatican Council later. Also, an objective of his was to make changes to the Curia (the bureaucracy that administers the Roman Catholic Church). The man who was very close to him, both before and during his period of office, was the man who became his successor, Cardinal Montini. He wrote that it would be a good thing "if the Roman Curia were to abandon certain honorific or ritualistic or merely juridical ways of behaving,

so as to set an example of Christian brotherhood and evangelical humility" (p. 340).

In 1961 Pope John XXIII sent "a message of peace and goodwill to the Conference of Non-aligned Nations then meeting in Belgrade, Yugoslavia . . . This message evoked interest in Moscow, so much so that on September 21, 1961, *Pravda* published an interview with Khrushchev [the leader of the Soviet Union]", who paid tribute to the pope and his desire for peace. Hebblethwaite goes on to comment: "it was an historic statement: for the first time since the Revolution a Russian leader had brought himself to say something good about the Pope" (pp. 392-3).

On the pope's eightieth birthday Khrushchev was persuaded to send a telegram to the pope. The pope replied as follows: "His Holiness, Pope John XXIII thanks you for your good wishes, and for his part sends to the whole Russian people cordial wishes for the increase of universal peace by means of understanding based on human brotherhood: to this end he prays fervently" (p. 394). The Catholic opponents of the pope said of this exchange of greetings: "If the Pope himself could so cavalierly converse with top Communist leaders, what hope was there of holding the anti-Communist line in Poland, or, more to the point, in Italy?" (p. 395).

The 1962 Vatican Council

The next step was the Vatican Council which began on 11 October 1962. Through the pope's political intrigue with Russia, the Eastern churches from behind the Iron Curtain were re-persecuted. As the Council began, bishops poured into Rome. Hebblethwaite comments: "The next day, October 8, Cardinal Wyszynski arrived with thirteen Polish bishops, among them Karol Wojtyla from Krakow (the present pope as a young man). Nine more were to arrive later. Pope John was delighted to see them. His *Ostpolitik* was beginning to pay off" (pp. 427-8).

Others also arrived, and Hebblethwaite comments: "These were all signs of the improving relations with the Communist bloc". Then we read: "The next day two observers from the Russian Orthodox Church . . . arrived in Rome . . . it was sensational news. It meant that Pope John's olive branch had been picked up. The Council was now ready to begin" (p. 434).

It is interesting to consider some of the objectives of the Council. They concerned (p. 443):

(i) "relationships with the separated brethren"

- (ii) "relations with civil society (peace and war, relations with states, etc.)"
 - (iii) "relations with the world of culture, arts and sciences"
 - (iv) "relations with the world of work, economics, etc."
 - (v) "relations with the Church's enemies, etc."
- We see in items (i) and (v) particularly the objective of improved relations with Communism. Montini was described as "the pilot who would get the big ship out to sea" (p. 444). Item (ii) links with the objective of so-called peace, and links with Daniel 8:25: "by peace shall [he] destroy many".

During the Council the Cuban missile crisis arose (a confrontation between the USA and the Soviet Union over Soviet proposals to station missiles in Cuba). The pope delivered a message, via the Soviet embassy, to Moscow. This obtained a banner headline on the front page of the leading Russian newspaper *Pravda*. "This was unheard of", wrote Hebblethwaite; "Pope John's intervention helped to let him [Khrushchev] off the hook. He could appear as a lover of peace" (p. 445). The immediate crisis was resolved, and Khrushchev wanted further contacts to discuss détente. Khrushchev later made this comment: "What the Pope has done for peace will go down in history" (p. 445). So the frog spirit in the mouth of the apostate system was used to help bring about the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis.

Pope Paul VI

On his death John XXIII was succeeded by Cardinal Montini, who became Pope Paul VI in June 1963. In his period of office he continued to improve relations with Communism, but on a greater scale. The booklet about him by Malachi Martin, entitled *The Final Conclave*, shows the papal mitre and the hammer and sickle on the front cover. Under the heading, "Paul Adopts Policy of Conciliating the Left-Wing and Marxist Movements", we read of a series of moves he made to contact Communist leaders:

"Paul's openness to the Left becomes evident in a series of moves all over the globe. Paul receives President Tito of Yugoslavia on a state visit. The Hungarian minister of Foreign Affairs also pays a visit to Paul . . . Paul also sends Archbishop Agostino Casaroli, an official of the Vatican Secretariat of State, and Father Pedro Arrupe, General of the Jesuits, to Moscow for talks. He arranges for talks

with the Communist Government of Czechoslovakia.

"Paul is criticized for the one-sidedness of his policy. While Marxist governments get concessions from the Pope, those governments do not ease up on their own ferocious anti-Catholic and antireligious attitude".³

It was during the period of this pope that the headline, "West Talks to East", appeared in *The Catholic Herald*, with a picture of Rome on the left and Moscow on the right, and the words: "Gone are the days when the Catholic Church and world Communism were thought to be ranged against each other as two monolithic rivals, ideologically not wholly unlike each other. The spiritual and intellectual initiative of Pope John and of the present pontiff, not to speak of the Council, have opened the door to dialogue with Marxists".⁴

Pope John Paul II

But the most significant changes which led up to the coming together of East and West have taken place in the period of the present pope, significantly a Pole.



Pope John Paul II

Poland was to play a crucial role. Ninety-five per cent of the Polish population were Catholic but at the same time good Communists. Over the years the pope forged links with his native country. On the one hand this was marked by giving support to Lech Walesa, a devout Catholic and leader of the Gdansk Dockyard workers' trade union, Solidarity, and on the other hand by giving the Communist leader General Jaruzelski an audience at the Vatican.

3. Martin, M. (1979), *The Final Conclave*, London, Transworld, p. 55.

4. *Catholic Herald*, 20 May 1966.

Initially Walesa suffered reversals and imprisonment, but on 4 July 1989 a coalition was formed with the Communists, and Lech Walesa sat down side by side with General Jaruzelski in the opening session of Eastern Europe's "first parliament with a genuinely independent opposition".⁵ In August 1989 Walesa became prime minister, and in 1990 president, making a state visit to Britain. He benefited from the papal policy of supporting the working classes. The breakthrough with Khrushchev achieved by John XXIII in 1961 (see above) helped to change the situation in Poland in 1989.

1989, the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution, was the year of revolutions in Eastern Europe. It was partly triggered by Mikhail Gorbachev, the Russian leader, and his policy of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (reconstruction). The outcome was the end of Communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The *Daily Telegraph* reported on this:

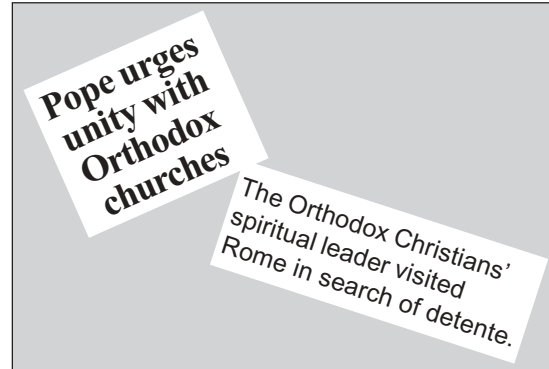
"Now at the joyous onset of the Christmas festival, it is both appropriate and wholly welcome to recognize the major part played by the Christian churches in the changes that have swept Eastern Europe through the year . . . The influence of the present Pope during this extraordinary decade has been considerable, and not only in his native Poland . . . 'How many divisions has the Pope?' Stalin once contemptuously asked. That question now has its answer . . . 1989 has proved an annus mirabilis for the freedom of Europe, and perhaps also for the prospects of peace between East and West".⁶

Gorbachev had an audience with the pope on 1 December 1989. For the first time since 1917 there was diplomatic contact at the highest level between the Vatican and Russia. The present Russian leader, Vladimir Putin, has also visited the pope.

Conclusion

An outcome of the overthrow of Communism has been the re-establishment of the Russian Orthodox Church, marked by the rebuilding of the Cathedral of Christ the King in Moscow, which Stalin had demolished. The current president, Mr Putin, is deeply religious. On visiting the restored ancient monasteries in Russia's north he said: "Our country was called Sacred Rus from time immemorial, and that had its historical frontiers. But above all the name carried an important moral meaning; it stressed the special

role Russia undertook as the custodian of historical Christian values".⁷ Moreover, the pope has made a number of visits to Eastern European countries for talks with leaders of the Greek Orthodox Church with a view to reconciliation.



Typical headlines illustrating moves to unite East and West in Europe

All these amazing events, starting with the breakthrough in Catholic/Soviet relations achieved by John XXIII and Khrushchev, have led to the end of the Iron Curtain, and the uniting of Eastern and Western Europe, which took place on 1 May this year.

We have considered the outworking of the frog spirits of Revelation 16:13,14, "which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world", in relation to papal policy. Have we not seen this going forth in the much-travelled present pope? The Catholic Church claims that its objective is peace, but let us remember the words of Daniel: "And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many . . ." (8:25). But let us also remember the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:3: "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape".

The "when" in the above verse has taken many years to develop, and may not be fully developed until there is a concordat between the papacy and Russia, coinciding with the return of the Master. Then "he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken

5. *Daily Telegraph*, 5 Jul. 1989.

6. *Ibid.*, 23 Dec. 1989.

7. *Strana*, 21 Aug. 2001.

without hand” (Dan. 8:25), even by the stone “cut out of the mountain without hands” (2:45), that is, Christ and the saints. Then sudden destruction shall come upon them.

The world is in darkness. We must be on our guard not to be persuaded by the frog spirits of fraternity and equality to join with this wicked apostate religious system in the world, which will be destroyed at the coming of the Master.⁸ This may speak of peace, but it will stand up against the Master when he comes and will be “broken without hand”. There is exhortation for us brethren and sisters in the words:

“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye

are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness . . . But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:4-9).

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8. The articles by Brother Richard Mellowes under the heading, “[The three frog spirits and humanism](#)”, in the July to September 2003 issues of *The Testimony*, warn us of the dangers that emanate from the frog spirits.

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John Nicholls

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