



Secrets Unsealed Report

Reflections on the Number 666

Part 1

For as long as I can remember, Seventh-day Adventist evangelists have applied the number 666 to one of the Latin titles of the Pope, namely, *Vicarius Filii Dei*. They have claimed that this title (which means “Vicar of the Son of God”) is one of the official titles which have traditionally been used by the popes. Some of our evangelists have also affirmed that the title is (or has been) inscribed on the papal tiara or on his miter.

horizon with defenders of the caliber of Dr. William G. Johnsson, Dr. Beatrice Neall, Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, Dr. Jon Paulien, Dr. Ranko Stefanovic and Dr. Angel M. Rodriguez. These theologians have challenged the traditional view and have proposed a new one. The traditional view is very specific. It applies the name and number of the beast directly to a succession of Roman Catholic popes. The new view has removed this specific meaning from the Roman Catholic papacy and has applied it in general terms to an end-time alienation of man from God.

Have our evangelists been correct in their assessment? Is this really one of the official titles that have been traditionally claimed by the popes? Was this title really on the papal tiara or miter in times past?

Recently several of our ablest scholars have answered “no” to these questions. A new view has appeared on the

Several years ago Dr. Beatrice Neall articulated the new view:

“Six is legitimate when it leads to seven; it represents man on the first evening of his existence entering into the celebration of God’s creative power. The glory of the creature is right if it leads to the glory of God. Six hundred sixty-six, however, represents the refusal of man to proceed to seven, to



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that the United States borrowed its great seal from Rome? For this Secret Unsealed don't miss Pastor Bohr's Studies on Matthew 24.



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give glory to God as Creator and Redeemer. It represents man's fixation with himself, man seeking glory in himself and his own creations. It speaks of the fullness of creation and all creative powers without God—the practice of the absence of God. It demonstrates that unregenerate man is persistently evil.” Beatrice Neall, The Concept of Character in the Apocalypse with Implications for Character Education, pp. 153-155.

This rather philosophical, conjectural, if not speculative definition of the number six has been picked up and simplified by Dr. Angel M. Rodriguez:

“... the Greek phrase translated ‘It is a man's number’ (Revelation 13:18) could be also rendered ‘it is the **number of humanity**.’ In that case, it is not referring to a particular person but to a characteristic of **humanity separated from God**. Since God created humans during the sixth day, it could stand as a **symbol of humanity**, but a **humanity** not yet at rest with God and without the joy of a harmonious relationship with

God during the seventh day. The number reveals the rebellious nature of the enemies of God and His remnant. That seems to be the best available interpretation.” Angel M. Rodriguez, Future Glory, p. 122. Emphasis is mine.

J e s u s undoubtedly claimed to be Vicarius Dei, and rightfully so.

This change has upset some in the church who feel like the traditional view is more than adequate to explain the mystery of the number 666. Many feel that the new view has taken what is definite and clear and has made it indefinite and fuzzy. Others have gone so far as to believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been infiltrated by Jesuits who have the hidden agenda of destroying our distinctive prophetic roots with a view to ultimately destroy the Seventh-day Adventist Church itself.

This later fear has been fed in recent years by Adventist college teachers who have stated that we should build bridges of understanding with Rome rather than criticizing her. The conspiracy flames have been further fanned

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when a medal was given to the pope by the religious liberty department of the General Conference and also when the flag of the Holy See was paraded on stage at the 2005 General Conference session in St. Louis during the March of Nations.

In this article I would like to take a closer look at the number 666 as it relates to the name of the beast. As we begin, there are several **Biblical facts** that will help us understand this enigmatic number and the system to which it applies.

First, a very important fact that has been overlooked more frequently than not is that the name of the beast is a **blasphemous** name. This is stated explicitly in Revelation 13:1: "Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a **blasphemous name**."

Now that we know that the name (whose number is 666) is blasphemous, we must discover the **Biblical definition** of blasphemy. Does the Bible contain a clear definition of what constitutes blasphemy? The answer is unmistakably yes.

The Scriptures clearly define blasphemy as the attempt of man to make himself God and as such to exercise the power and prerogatives of God. When Jesus affirmed: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30) the Jews went ballistic. They picked up stones to execute the death penalty required by the Law (Leviticus 24:16). When Jesus asked them what evil work He had done to merit stoning, they responded: "'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a **Man**, make Yourself **God**.'" (John 10:33) The terminology of the accusation is significant. Notice that Jesus was told that He blasphemed because He, being a **man**, made himself **God**. In fact, Jesus not only claimed **to be God**, He also claimed to work the **works of God!** (John 10: 28, 37, 38)

Interestingly, in the way of thinking of the Jewish leaders Jesus was guilty of blasphemy when He claimed to be the Son of God (Matthew 26:64; 10:36, 37; John 19:7). All the Jews claimed to be sons of God in a general sense but it is clear that Jesus did not claim to be a Son of God in a general sense but in the strictest sense of being

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the **representative** of God on earth! He was the **spokesman for God** on earth—His vicar, if you please! This is the reason why Jesus could say: “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” Jesus undoubtedly claimed to be *Vicarius Dei*, and rightfully so.

Blasphemy is also defined as when a mere man claims to have the power to forgive sins. This means that any man who claims to have the right to exercise the prerogatives of God is guilty of blasphemy. When Jesus told the paralytic of Capernaum: “Your sins are forgiven” the religious leaders murmured saying: “Why does this **Man** speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but **God** alone?” (Mark 2:7). The religious leaders were actually thinking: If this man claims to have the right to forgive sins, then he must claim to be God because only God can forgive sins.

II Thessalonians 2:3, 4 has similar terminology. Here we are told that the **man** of sin sits in the temple of God (the church) proclaiming himself to be **God**. Once again we notice that this power is **human** and yet it seeks to occupy the place of **God**. Later on

in the passage we are told that this power also claims to perform the works that Jesus Himself performed while He was on earth (II Thessalonians 2:9; Acts 2:22). II Thessalonians 2:3, 4 actually paraphrases the language from Daniel 11:36 where we are told that the king of the north “shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall **speak marvelous things** against the God of gods.” It will be noticed that the exaltation of the king of the north to the level of God is linked with the **great words** that He speaks against the God of gods. The use of the word “man” in these verses does not require that we find one particular person as the fulfillment. Adventists have understood the word “man” in this passage to refer, not to an individual, but rather to a succession of persons, namely, the popes of Rome.

In this context it is worthy of note that the little horn of Daniel 7 (which symbolizes the same power as the beast of Revelation 13:1-10 and the man of sin of II Thessalonians 2) has a mouth that speaks “pompous words against the Most High” (Daniel 7:25). These great words are identified as

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blasphemies in Revelation 13:5 where we are told that the beast was given a mouth that speaks “great things and blasphemies.” This little horn/beast not only claims to be God but also claims to have the power to exercise the prerogatives of God even to the point of changing God’s prophetic times and His Law! (Daniel 7:25) Thus, in a very specific sense, the little horn (or the beast) claims the right to occupy the **place of God** and to exercise the **power and prerogatives of God**.

In what sense does this little horn/beast speak blasphemies against God? Daniel 8 provides the indisputable answer. In Daniel 8 (in distinction to Daniel 7) we are **not** told that the little horn speaks blasphemies against the Most High. Rather, we are told that the little horn attempted to **supplant** or **take the place** of the Prince of the host by taking away the daily ministrations from Him (Daniel 8:11). Thus the little horn’s blasphemy consists in the act of trying to supplant or **take the place** of the Prince of the host and to **carry on His work**.

In the light of this overwhelming Biblical evidence, it would seem

that the blasphemous name of the beast must be linked with his attempt to supplant or occupy **the place of God** and to exercise the **power and prerogatives of God**.

There can be no doubt that the power represented by the little horn, the beast and the man of sin is the Roman Catholic Papacy. The little horn (and the beast) does not appear in a vacuum. There is a clear sequence of powers which precede the horn’s arrival on the scene. The kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and divided Rome must rule before the little horn comes on the scene.

Numerous quotations could be provided from Roman Catholic writers to the effect that the pope claims to occupy the place of God on earth. Space limitations will allow for only a few examples.

“. . . the pope *can modify divine law*, since his power is not of man, but of God, and he acts in **the place of God upon earth**, with the fullest power of binding and losing his sheep.@ (Lucius Ferraris, Prompta Bibliotheca, vol. 2, article APapa@, bold is mine)

Pope Nicholas I (who ruled from 858-867 A. D.) once said:

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It is evident that the popes can neither be bound nor unbound by any earthly power, nor even by that of the apostle [Peter], if he should return upon the earth; since Constantine the Great has recognized that the pontiffs **held the place of God upon earth, divinity not being able to be judged by any living man.** We are, then, infallible, and whatever may be our acts, we are not accountable for them but to ourselves.@ (Cormenin, History of the Popes, p. 243, as cited in R. W. Thompson, The Papacy and the Civil Power, p. 248, bold is mine).

Pope Leo XIII in an Encyclical Letter ('On the Chief Duties of Christians as Citizens') dated January 10, 1890 affirmed: "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 and obedience of will to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, **as to God Himself.**" (The Great Encyclical Letters of Leo XIII, p. 193, bold is mine)

Leo XIII in an encyclical letter dated June 20, 1894 stated: AWE hold upon this earth **the place of**

God Almighty.@ (The Great Encyclical Letters of Leo XIII, p. 304, bold is mine)

Repeatedly Roman Catholic sources refer to the popes as vicars of Christ, vice-regents of Christ, representatives of Christ, and, yes, Vicars of the Son of God (proof to be provided later in this article).

Furthermore, the popes have claimed the right to exercise the power and prerogatives that belong only to God. They claim to have the right to forgive sins (cf. Mark 2:7), to set up and remove kings (cf. Daniel 2:21), to be bowed down to (cf. Revelation 19:10), to be called Holy Father (cf. Matthew 23:9), to execute the death penalty upon dissenters (cf. Daniel 7:21), to change the Sabbath (cf. Daniel 2:21; 7:25), to change God's prophetic calendar (cf. Daniel 7:25), to be the supreme judges of heaven, earth and hell whose decision cannot be appealed (cf. John 5:22, 27) and to be infallible expositors in matters of faith and morals (cf. James 1:17).

Second, besides the name of the beast being blasphemous, the name also has a **number** (Revelation 13:17). The critical question at this

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point is this: How do we get a number from a name? The answer lies in the fact that in ancient times numbers were written with the letters of the alphabet. This practice, referred to as *gematria*, was used in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. This means that when the letters of the beast's blasphemous name are given their respective numerical value the total will be 666. The Living Bible captures well the meaning of Revelation 13:18: "Here is a puzzle that calls for careful thought to solve it. Let those who are able, interpret this code: **the numerical values of the letters** in his name add to 666!" The New English Bible renders Revelation 13:18 in similar fashion: "The number represents a man's name, and the **numerical value of its letters** is six hundred and sixty-six." Even the Roman Catholic Douay Version adds a footnote to Revelation 13:18 which states: "The numeral letters of his name shall make up this number."

Recently, Dr. Bacchiocchi has argued that the text of Revelation 13:18 requires a name rather than a title. After all, the text says that 666 is the number of the beast's **name** and not the number of his **title**. Dr. Bacchiocchi therefore states that *Vicarius Filii Dei*, being a title rather than a name, cannot fulfill the specifications of the text (Endtime Issues, Online Newsletter, "The Saga of the Adventist Papal Tiara," part 2). This argument is superficial and can be disposed of quite readily by noting that in Revelation 19:16 Jesus is described as one who has a **name** written on his vesture and on his thigh. But the name is not a personal name but rather a title: "King of kings and Lord of lords." So the word "name" can refer to a title rather than to a proper name.

Pastor Stephen Bohr

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From Our Listeners

Dear Pastor Bohr,

Every message you give gives gladness and encouragement to my heart and I am drawn nearer to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is obvious you have made learning the Bible your life's work. The Lord is obviously close to you. Please keep doing what you do so well, and that is preach the TRUTH about the Bible. I feel you must be among the select chosen to spread the 3 Angels' message to the world and I pray that everyone hears and then acts upon what they hear. I am a 7th-day Adventist, as is my mother and son, but I have not mastered sharing the good news of Christ in an intelligent manner. Any tips? Thank you so much, my brother in Christ. Beth.

Thanks, Pastor Bohr, for your undiluted messages. Whether in the newsletter or in sermons, you tell the politically incorrect truth without compromise. It is so consoling and refreshing to find that the entire church has not gone after the world. Man of God, keep up the sacred work; the Lord will reward you with stars on your crown. Victoria.

Dear Dr Bohr

I love your work and cant get enough of the message it is a credit to the Church what you speak and my God Continue to Bless. Warm Regards, Alan.

Gracias Pastor Bohr por unir vía satélite a mi familia y a mí a través de sus Estudios, gracias por alimentarnos de La Palabra, y por transimitir sus valiosos conocimientos, trataremos de no faltarle ninguna transmisión de los Secretos del Génesis, Dios lo Guarde, saludos desde Monterrey, N.L., Méx. Eleazar

Dear Pastor...

Thank you for your Ministry. I fully enjoyed your sermons at Sedaven Camp meeting the past weekend. Through the knowledge I got by learning from you, I can now hold Bible studies easier. Anton.

Hi pastor

Pure Brilliance is the only way I can describe your sermons. I was at the Sedaven Camp Meeting where you gave a sermon on the Creator's Sabbath Rest and for the first time since I was baptised into the Seventh-day Adventist church, I knew that becoming an Adventist was the greatest blessing God has given me. Thank you Pastor for making me proud to be an Adventist. Charmaine.

Dear Pastor Bohr

I have been following your lectures on the cult of the virgin Mary and the myth of Apostolic succession. I have been enriched spiritually, thank you, may the Lord bless you as you "give the trumpet a certain sound". Greeting from Mwanza, Tanzania, PHILIP.

Our Ministry....

Secrets Unsealed is a non-profit organization which is committed to upholding and proclaiming the unique end-time Present Truth message which God has entrusted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church to proclaim to the world.

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Pastor Stephen P. Bohr

was born in Wisconsin but grew up in Venezuela and Colombia where his parents served as missionaries for over thirty years. He has traveled and preached all over the United States and the world.

In thirty-three years of denominational work Pastor Bohr has served as pastor, university theology teacher, conference youth/Pathfinder director, ministerial secretary, and evangelist.

He has dedicated years to the study of the prophetic message of the Bible and is best known for his groundbreaking video series, *Cracking the Genesis Code*., currently broadcasted on 3 ABN.

Presently he serves as Senior Pastor of the Fresno Central Seventh-day Adventist Church and also as speaker for “*Secrets Unsealed*”.

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