

Editorial

The classic historicist interpretation of Dan 11:29-35 applies these verses to the fall of the Roman Empire and the events of European history that followed that momentous process. I support this view, but not thoughtlessly.

It is well known that hordes of barbarians invaded the western Roman Empire in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries A.D. It is perhaps less well known that by the time they did so most of these groups were Christian. This is an important fact. There was not only a military threat to the Empire's physical security but a religious threat to its orthodoxy, since for the most part the invaders were Arian heretics. The perspective that the prophecy offers on the events of this period involves bringing these two lines of evidence together. It is the confluence of religious and political factors that occupies the angel's attention as he explains these things to Daniel.

The heresy of Arius attacks Christ's deity, which is the jugular vein of Christian belief. It is as Philip Schaff says,

All turns at last on the answer to that fundamental question: "What think ye of Christ?" The true solution of this question is the radical refutation of every error. (History of the Christian Church, 1:567)

Out of this turbulent period the church of Rome emerged, not only as a political power in the vacuum created by the Empire's desertion of the West, which is the point usually made, but also as the great champion of Catholic orthodoxy against Arianism.

The church retained its self-awareness of having a true Christology, and yet in other less obvious areas of faith and practice it underwent dramatic changes. When the Reformation finally came there was general agreement that something needed to be done, even if not everyone agreed on what that was.

Many centuries earlier Christ had promised that the gates of Hades would not overcome His church (see Matt 16:18). The promise is true but has been misapplied. It has been used to infer that nothing could ever go wrong in the church. But this is not what Jesus said. He said it would not be overcome. The Christian church after all is not the only body of God's people in history. Similar promises were made to Israel. God sent some very forthright people to bring correction and reproof so that He could keep those promises. With this in mind I submit that the best historical evidence illustrating the truth of Christ's words is the Protestant Reformation.

In a separate paper entitled, "What Does the Hebrew Word *ben* Mean?" I address the issue of just how and why Arius was wrong.

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