

AN ACCURATE HISTORY OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM

FROM ITS BEGINNINGS TO THE PRESENT

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PREFACE:

The Roman Catholic Church makes the claim that it was “founded by Jesus Christ.” By making this assertion they have opened for themselves a door to declare the following: The Roman Catholic Church is the **Oldest Church**, thus it is the **Only True Church**. Then Catholicism says it is the only church with a proper head a direct **Successor of Peter** the first Pope, so the Roman Catholic Church is the only church having the exclusive right to **Interpret Scripture**, the only Church with **All the Means of Salvation**, and the only Church established by Christ for the **Salvation of Souls**. Catholicism maintains that these assertions are true and authentic.

If the boast of the Catholic Church were authentic, then like Paul (speaking as if the Resurrection had never taken place) we would have to say concerning the Gospel, *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”* **1 Cor. 15:19** It would mean for Bible believing Christians that the work of Christ is incomplete without the intervention of the Church who grants eternal life through the Sacraments administered by Priests. However to the glory of God we can proclaim *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth . . . For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”* **Rom. 1:16-17.**

Although the boasts of Rome are spurious and manufactured some historians fail to investigate them thoroughly and have allowed the size and scope of Catholicism to intimidate them into silence. Then, as with most accounts, history is written by the victor. Because of years of misinformation, some Christians feel that our early Church history is the one reported by Rome. They believe the accounts in which she (Rome) is the first and only Church of Christ, and that others like the Baptists and Protestants broke with her over minor points of doctrinal disagreement during the reformation. This thinking lends plausibility to ROMES’ teaching that all Bible-based churches are the children of the Catholic Church, then she is the Mother of all the Faithful who in some way are subject to her leadership.

In this course, we will attempt to correct the spurious accounts you may have read, and give an *“An Accurate History of Roman Catholicism From Its Beginnings to the Present.”* This historical position is a compilation of Scripture and the many authors I have studied, both Christian and non Christian, who have challenged the record proposed by the Vatican. The study is in Three Parts: The Early Church and the beginnings of the Roman Catholicism; The Reformation and Roman Catholicism and The Present Day Ecumenical Roman Catholicism.

“Those who fail to learn from History are destined to repeat its mistakes.” After this study you will understand the darkness Catholic people are in, knowing how the Roman system misrepresents the Gospel. If Catholicism had roots in the truth then I would speak of it as an apostate Church (a true Church gone wrong). But Roman Catholicism has no foundation in Jesus Christ, only a usage of His Precious name, even as many other cults profess Christ. Jesus said, *“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evils fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.* **Matt 7:16-20.** If Catholicism were founded in the Truth then **Rev. 17** would not so clearly describe her role as united with the Antichrist. Let the Lord grant you wisdom and discernment as you study.

PART ONE

Early Church and the Beginnings of Roman Catholicism:

Peter and the Church

The Catholic Church asserts that Jesus personally gave the care of His Church to Peter the Apostle in *Matt 16:18-19* when He said, “*That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*” Peter then took leadership of Christ’s Church after his Ascension and in the year 42 AD went to the city of Rome to begin building the Holy Roman Catholic Church. The legend continues that Peter remained as the visible head of the Church, the Bishop of Rome, the Holy Father, the Pope until his death by crucifixion. Supposedly, Peter did not allow himself the honor of dieing in the same manner as his Saviour; so at his martyrdom he requested to be crucified upside down, tradition says that he was martyred in the city of Rome in the year 68 AD. ¹

You may be willing to accept this scenario of Rome, thinking, “It sounds like there is historical evidence for it,” but in actuality there is not. I used the words legend and tradition earlier because they are precisely the type of words that Catholicism uses in her own description of the account.

The question of Peter beginning the Roman Catholic Church in Rome is not the real issue here. The better question to ask is, “**Was Peter ever in Rome?**” If historical record could show him based in the City of Rome for a period of time then the Roman Catholic Church may have a case for its claims. However if the record were to show that Peter was not based in Rome, then the claims of Romanism would certainly be proven false. We have a record of the first great persecution of Christians in the Scripture, involving Saul (Paul as yet unconverted), which began in Jerusalem and not Rome. The account begins in *Acts 7:59-8:1*. “*And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord; lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.*” It is interesting to note that Saul was saved approximately between the years 34 to 37 AD, ² so we know that this persecution began before those dates. Peter however, was not driven out of Jerusalem to begin the Church of Rome at this time because the Scripture states that the Christians were scattered not the Apostles. God’s word tells us that they were not scattered throughout the Empire but only the surrounding regions of Judea and Samaria.

The next reference we have to Peter is in *Acts 12:1-4*. “*Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of*

¹. History of Roman Catholicism Page #

². The Thompson Chain Reference Bible, General Index Page 187, New Testament History

John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternion of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.” Paul’s salvation is recounted in Chapter Nine of Acts, and this is now Chapter Twelve, so the date is about 40 AD. All the material in this section shows that the apprehension of Peter took place in Judea. The king was Herod the Roman Empires appointed king of the Jews, the feast of unleavened bread was only celebrated by the Jews and certainly not by the Romans. There is further verification for this position in the following verses of **Acts 12:18-19**. *“Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he (Peter) went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.”* Here we clearly see that Peter fled Judea, which is not in Rome but in the land of Israel. The Scripture does not speak of another serious persecution taking place against the Christians in Israel after the very unusual death of Herod in **Acts 12:21-23** *“And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.”* Herod’s death took place in 44 AD.³ Thus Peter was in a prison in Judea about the year 44 AD.

Paul’s testimony tells us the years he traveled to Jerusalem after his Salvation experience. In **Gal 1:15-20** he says, *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. **Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.**”* By cross referencing this section with **Gal 2:1-9**, which would be the occasion of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, and realizing that Herod died in 44, we can determine the years that Peter was still a Pastor in Jerusalem and not in Rome. **Gal 2:1-9** *“Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. 6 But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; **(For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)** And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen (gentiles), and they unto the circumcision (Jews).”*

James, Peter and John seemed to Paul to be the pillars of the Church at Jerusalem, meaning that they were the main Pastors of the Word. They had remained in Jerusalem during

³. The Thompson Chain Reference Bible, General Index Page 187, New Testament History

the persecution and the murder of James. Paul also remarked that Peter was chosen to be the Apostle to the Jews while he (**Paul**) was called to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. There would be no reason for Peter to go to Rome if Christ had chosen him to preach to the Jews, for Rome was the domain of the gentiles. As further proof look at Peter first Epistle, it begins, "*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,*" **1 Pet 1:1**. Both of Peter's Epistles were written to the Jews that were dispersed throughout the Empire, thus he addresses them as strangers and sojourners.

Peter, oddly enough, if he were the leader and head of the Church, was never quoted by others in the Scripture. Yet, Peter quoted Paul and attributed to him the inspiration of God. **2 Pet 3:15-16** "*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*"

As a Pope, Peter would be sending out missionaries, assigning priests and bishops to the tasks, and leading Church councils. But, Scripture never records that Peter performed any of these functions. Peter was sent to help Phillip disciple the new Christians in Samaria in **Acts 8:14** "*Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:*" The leader of the first church council at Jerusalem was James and not Peter according to **Acts 15:13**. "*And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:*" Roman Catholic Doctrine has given the Papacy many titles; consider the following. The documents of Vatican II state in the section **Vatican II, Bishop, par # 2** "The Roman pontiff has by divine right as the successor of Peter to whom Christ entrusted the task of feeding his sheep, supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls. . . . Therefore he has supreme ordinary power over all churches." By this we are told to believe that Peter, as Christ's appointed head, had **SUPREME, FULL and UNIVERSAL POWER** over all things in the Church. Yet the Word of God clearly disputes this notion in **Gal 2:11-12**. "*But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.*" Paul had stated that Peter was to be blamed for the hypocritical actions of the other Jews around him and that Peter did not walk upright nor according to the truth of the Gospel. **Gal 2:14** "*But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all.*"

The attempt to proclaim Peter as the Rock of the Church has been previously dwelt with, so we will not take up any time in this section. Jesus is the head of the Church and will remain so by the pronouncement of God. "*Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.*" **Heb 2:8** Thus, our Biblical information shows that Peter was a poor choice for the first Pope of the Catholic system. Their only proof offered is that of **Matt 16:18**, and surely for a doctrine as important as this, the future and guidance of the "One True Church Of Jesus Christ", there should be verification, examples and other Biblical records to offer as definitive testimony to this belief. The truth is, that it is strictly the interpretation of this verse, taken out of its context by Roman Catholicism, which sets Peter as the head of the Church of Rome.

The logical choice as the first Pope would be the Apostle Paul. Consider the following facts concerning Paul and the City of Rome. Paul can certainly be placed in Italy. **Acts 27:1**

“And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.” Paul is certainly found in the City of Rome where he had his own residence. **Acts 28:16** *“And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.”* Paul upon his arrival in Rome called together the leaders of his day who came at his call. **Acts 28:17** *“And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.”* Paul was the one who declared that Salvation had come to the gentiles who were at Rome. **Acts 28:28-29** *“Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.”* It was Paul who was sought out for council and guidance while he was in Rome preaching the Kingdom of God (using his Keys of the Kingdom). **Acts 28:30-31** *“And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”* **2 Tim 1:16-17**

“The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.” It was Paul who wrote the only Biblical Epistle to the Church at Rome. **Rom 1:1-7** *“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Paul in this letter greeted the Pastor and his wife at the Church of Rome. The people Paul greeted were not Peter and his wife nor was the Church in a Cathedral or Basilica. **Rom 16:3-5** *“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house.”*

Concerning the mystery of salvation, it was Paul who was now revealing it through the teaching of Scripture. **Rom 16:25-27** *“Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.”* At Paul's' first defense before Caesar Peter was nowhere to be found. **2 Tim 4:16-17** *“At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.”* While Paul was preparing to die at Rome, Peter was still not present as a Pope, as authority or a missionary. **2 Tim 4:9-13** *“Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.”*

As you see Paul has much more involvement with the true Church at Rome than does Peter, and would be a much more logical choice to be proclaimed as the first Pope of the Catholic Church. In the next section, however, you will learn why there was no structure as the Roman Catholic Church able to grow as the true Church of Christ in Rome for several centuries after Christ.

Ask yourself the following questions: If Peter were chosen by Christ in *Matt 16:18* to be the head of His Church, why in *Matt 16:23* did Jesus call this same appointed leader **SATAN** just a few verses later? If Peter were the true Pope of Rome the head of the Church, why is Peter so very sparsely mentioned after *Acts 12*? Why is two thirds of the New Testament written by Paul and not Peter? Why does scripture specifically mention the three times Peter was mistaken about the teaching of Christ (*Matt 26:34, John 21:15-24, and Gal 2:14-21*)? There are many other inconsistencies between the Scripture and the teaching of Catholicism on the subject of Peter, but I believe these to have sufficiently made the point that Peter the Apostle of the Scripture was never the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.

Some bible scholars believe that Peter eventually arrived at Rome, and still others feel it was after the death of Paul ⁴. Yet there is evidence to dispute the claim that Peter was in the city of Rome from 42 AD until death in 68 AD the years of Catholicism's claims.

Consider the following time line:

DOING THE MATH: ⁵

Christ's Ascension	33 AD				<i>Acts 1:9</i>
Paul saved	37 AD				<i>Acts 9:18</i>
Paul visits Peter in Jerusalem	40 AD				<i>Gal 1:18</i>
Peter and John sent to Samaria to aid Phillip					<i>Acts 8:14</i>
Peter imprisoned by Herod in Judea	44 AD	Herod dies			<i>Acts 12:23</i>
Paul visits Jerusalem again after 14 yrs	54 AD				<i>Gal 2:1</i>
Paul speaks at the Jerusalem Council	54 AD				<i>Acts 15:2</i>
Peter writes from Babylon not Rome	60 AD				<i>1 Pet 5:13</i> ⁶
Paul Writes to Rome but not Peter	60 AD				<i>Rom 16</i>
Paul imprisoned in Rome and makes his Defense without Peter's presence	68 AD				<i>II Tim 2:11</i>
Peter not arrived in Rome as of the yr	68 AD				<i>The BIBLE</i>

⁴ . Ryrie Study Bible

⁵ . "Doing the Math" compiled by Frank A. Eberhardt of "Gospel Outreach Int. To Roman Catholics", Taylors SC

⁶ . Matthew Henry's Commentary, 1 Peter 5 :13

Worship in the Roman Empire

Let's consider for a moment the conditions of the early church. At that time the Roman Empire ruled the world with an iron fist. God described the Roman Empire to Daniel in these words, *"This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and break them to pieces."* **Dan 2:32-34.** *"And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay."* **Dan 2:40-41.** The Lord described this Empire as being "Strong as Iron" and one that "Breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things." Their brutality is well documented. You need only ask the young child who has been taught ancient history "What did the Roman Empire do to Christians?" and you will be told, "They were thrown to the lions in the Coliseum."

The Roman Empire was **Polytheistic**, meaning they allowed the worship of many gods. You can see this clearly in the following Scripture texts. **Acts 14:12** *"And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker."* **Acts 17:16** *"Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry."* **Acts 17:22-23** *"Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."* **Acts 19:28** *"And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians."* **Acts 28:5-6** *"And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god."* In these few passages you recognize the names of several pagan gods: Jupiter, Mercury, Mars the god of war, Diana the goddess of fertility, and when Paul failed to die from a deadly snake bite they were willing to proclaim him a god also. The gentiles of Bible times were so superstitious that they erected an altar to the UNKNOWN GOD being afraid of offending a god they as yet did not recognize.

The reason for Rome's polytheistic beliefs was a simple one. You were allowed to worship any god you liked as long as you bowed the knee to the Caesar as well. As the Pontiffs Maximus he was proclaimed as the highest ruler, not a mere man but a god. The concept was not new, centuries earlier the Pharaohs declared themselves gods to be worshiped by their people. As the absolute monarch of the then known world, it was a logical step for the Caesars to pronounce themselves to be gods also.

When the Roman Empire conquered Jerusalem the Israelites were not afforded citizenship because they were **Monotheistic**, meaning they believed in one God, and would not bow to Caesar as a god. It was highly unusual to find a Jew who was also allowed to be a Roman citizen. You needed either to be born in a Province of Rome which was outside of Palestine or you could purchase your freedom at great cost. Paul the Apostle was born a citizen, as he states in **Acts 21:39** *"But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city."* He is later questioned about his citizenship in **Acts 22:25-28.** As a Jew he would

have had no rights. *“And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.”*

You need also to realize, that when this new sect called Christianity began to preach within the Roman Empire it was recognized as a Monotheistic Religion. Christians had no nationality or homeland which could be crushed under their iron boot, so Rome retaliated the only way possible, it declared Christianity illegal because they would not accept the Emperor Caesar as god. To protect the cause of Christ from further ridicule in the city of Philippi, Paul declared his Roman citizenship affording them more civil treatment. Look at *Acts 16:37*. *“But Paul said unto them, they have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.”* When unjustly accused, Paul resorted to his rights as a Roman Citizen in *Acts 25:10*. *“Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.”* Paul not Peter preached the Gospel at Rome even as God told him he would in *Acts 23:11*. *“And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.”* The appeal of Paul to Caesar fulfilled the prophecy of the Lord, the Gospel was preached at Rome. But it was also the reason for Paul's death, as a citizen he would be judged equally, yet as a Christian he could only be condemned.

Christians in the Roman Empire

Because of the Roman Empires beliefs in Polytheism (many gods) and Pontiffs Maximus (Caesar as god and king of religion and government), the Christian of the day was an outlaw, fed to lions, dipped in oil impaled upon stakes and used as torches in the hall of the Emperor's . . . Nero and The early churches met in homes and rarely in edifices or temples, except for Jerusalem where the Christian population of between eight and twelve thousand gave them a little more privilege. In the city of Rome, Christians were resigned to the Catacombs for nearly 300 years until the Emperor Constantine declared Christianity as THE STATE RELIGION.

To help you understand the way the early Church began to grow starting in Jerusalem, and just why it was a threat to the Roman Empire consider the following Biblical information. Gathered in the upper room awaiting the Holy Spirit as Our Lord had commanded were a small group of believers made up of men women and children. The Scripture in *Acts 1:14-15* gives us the following number, *“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. . . . (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty).* One hundred twenty people is a good nucleus with which to begin a church anywhere in the world. But we know that the actual number of believers was still much greater than 120. Paul in describing the Gospel makes a point of the number of people to whom Our Lord appeared after His Resurrection. In *1 Cor 15:3-6* Paul says *“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the*

scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.” Now we know that the number of believers in and around Jerusalem was above 500.

We will not speculate at all about the multitudes that followed Christ during His earthly ministry, remembering that there were often over five thousand men alone that heard Him preach that number not accounting for the woman and children who we know followed Him as well. We will also not speculate about the number of the disciples of John who began following Christ at the beginning, nor will we even consider the converts of the seventy disciples or the twelve apostles who went about preaching and bringing others to Christ. There is no way to know just how many converts were made at this time because the Scripture gives us no definitive number.

We do know the numbers of those who believed after Pentecost because it is recorded for us. In **Acts 2:40-41** Luke describes, “*And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*” this is our first definite number of **Three Thousand** souls saved. You must realize that they continued to witness throughout that time so that others were saved in one to one witnessing. It is described this way in **Acts 2:46-47**, “*And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*” This was a time of great preaching and witnessing, insomuch that the conviction of the Lord was evident to all who heard the word. Again we see in **Acts 4:4** that many men, it does not include the number of woman, believed and a specific number is mentioned, “*Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.*”

To this point, using only the numbers mentioned in the Scripture, we have witnessed **Eight Thousand Five Hundred** come to Christ in those few short months after Pentecost. That number, you must remember, is only the men who were mentioned. If you add half again that number to allow for the women and children of the married men the number could swell to about Twelve Thousand Seven Hundred Fifty. Luke explains that the growth of the early Church did not just stop at that point, but says in **Acts 6:1** “*And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied.*” This is why the special circumstance of worshiping in the Temple arose in Jerusalem.

The Christian converts were almost exclusively from a Jewish background and as such had the right to continue to worship in the Temple. The Lord allowed them to be favorably received by the people as **Acts 2:46-47** describes, “*And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people.*”

While the Christians enjoyed a brief time of favor with the people of Jerusalem, the Religious leadership would shortly begin their persecution on the bases of the Resurrection of Christ. Their first targets were those who were vocal in the preaching of the Gospel, the account in **Acts 4:1-3** says, “*And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.*” The Jewish council began with a warning that later

escalated to beatings and then great persecution as Luke describes in Charters five and eight. *Acts 5:27-28* “And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.” *Acts 8:1* “And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.” *Acts 12:1-3* “Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.”

From this time on the Gospel was carried abroad by the Christians who fled Jerusalem. After the conversion of Saul we read, “Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.” *Acts 9:31* And after the death of Herod we begin to see strong Churches outside of Israel being mentioned, as the Church of Antioch in *Acts 13:1* were Paul the Apostle was a teacher. Then with the Missionary journeys of Paul we see churches located in the Mediterranean, in modern Turkey and then in Italy itself with Paul's fourth journey. The Gospel had been so well publicized that the unbelievers had used a tool provided by the Empire to stop its spread, they attacked Christians on their belief that there is only one true God and King. Again we see this thread of monotheism coming through the history of Christians in the Roman Empire. Look at the accusation leveled against Paul in Macedonia in *Acts 17:5-7* “But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: **and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.**”

Early Churches were not in edifices (Churches and Cathedrals) but began in homes and in private places. *Acts 8:3* “As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.” Paul found believers by the sides of rivers, as in *Acts 16:13-14, 40* “And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.” *40* “And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.” The Church at Rome was not founded by Peter, since as we have seen Peter can not be placed in the city of Rome until after the death of Paul some time around **68 Ad.** And we know that Paul did not start the Church at Rome as his life was lived out in a type of house arrest awaiting his appeal to Caesar. But we do have a clue as to who Paul was writing to in his Epistle to the Romans. We know there were Christians at Rome because Paul begins the letter with the address, “To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” *Rom 1:7* Two acquaintances of Paul, Aquila and his wife Priscilla were originally located in Rome before the Jews were expelled. *Acts 18:2* “And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.” This couple

was Jewish Christians who were active about the work of the Lord and had no doubt spread the Gospel of the saving grace of Christ before being forced to leave Rome. While closing his letter to Rome Paul makes a specific greeting to Christian people who were important in the city. Peter was never mentioned although 26 others were.

Paul verifies that the true Church at Rome was not a large temple of worship, nor an accepted denomination but was in the house of his friends. **Rom 16:3-5** *“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house.”* This clearly demonstrates that the claims of the Roman Catholic Church are totally false. Paul refers to them as “my helpers in Christ”, and no doubt they were also missionaries. This man Aquila was married and was the leading a church in his house. Catholicism would have us to believe that Priests, who took a vow of Celibacy (to remain unmarried) like Peter, were the missionaries who began the Church at Rome. Yet the Scripture shows without doubt that Peter himself was married, as in **Mark 1:30** *“But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.”* Peter had a mother in law, whom Jesus raised up from a sick bed, and a wife with whom he often traveled on mission trips, as we see in **1 Cor 9:5** *“Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?”*

Later in the doctrinal make up of Catholicism they attempt to legitimize the Celibacy of priests through the words of Paul's epistle to the Corinthians *“For I would that all men were even as I myself”*. Paul meant that if men would be single they could dedicate all their time to the Lord. Remember the context that Paul is discussing behavior in marriage and the problem of divorce among Christians and putting that in context with the entire quotation of **1 Cor 7:6-7**, we see an entirely different position than that of the Catholic Church. Paul says, *“But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.”* Paul lets us know that this is not the will of the Lord for Christian men to remain unmarried or Celibate. In the book of **1 Tim 3:2-5** he gives us the Lord's position concerning married clergy when he says, *“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)”*

The Christian Church

We must now also consider the true nature of the early Church. They were Local, Autonomous, and completely Independent bodies not answering to a central figure in Rome or anywhere else. Each Church had two officers and two ordinances; the officers being Pastor (scripture at times uses additional terms as bishop, presbyter, elder minister or shepherd) and Deacon. The ordinances were Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Neither of these ordinances were taught as having any saving power or grace. The book of Acts is the Scriptural record of the of the early Church and it's practices, and in every example saving faith in Christ always preceded Baptism. The two were never synonymous nor did Baptism ever precede a person's testimony of salvation in Christ. The exchange that took place between Phillip the Evangelist and the Ethiopian Eunuch is a paramount example of the time and use of the ordinance of Baptism. *"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."* **Acts 8:35-38** This same pattern of preaching Christ and believing on Him as Saviour before Baptism repeated countless times throughout the New Testament.

Paul in discussing a Christians separation from sin refers to Baptism as the point were we were identified with Christ who died for sin (as we should be dead to sin) was buried (as our sin was buried with Christ) and rose again (as we should then live as a new creature separate from sin).

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." **Rom 6:1-6** Thus we see that the early Church did not teach that Baptism saves the soul from sin, but that it is a means of testimony to identify one's self with the finished work of Christ who died once for sin and ever lives to make intercession for us today.

The second ordinance of the Church is the Lord's Supper, and again it was never taught as having any saving grace as the Catholic system insists. Listen to the words of Paul as he describes to the Church at Corinth how to observe the Lord's Supper. *"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."* **1 Cor 11:23-26** Note that Paul while using the same language as our Lord still continues to refer to the elements not as the Lord's body and blood but

as the bread and the cup. The Church was told to do this in remembrance of Christ. The Greek work used is explained in Strong's concordance as:

363 anamimnesko (an-am-im-nace'-ko);
from 303 and 3403; to remind; (**reflexively**) to recollect:
KJV-- call to mind, remember (-ance).

The word used "Remembrance" carries no sense of sacrifice or offering. It is in the **reflexive** case meaning that this word is just the picturing of the event already taken place, thus no changing of bread to the body of Christ could occur. Like the pictures depicting Jesus and the apostles at the last supper the ordinance carries with it no more saving graces than the picture itself which we hang on our walls in remembrance.

I find it interesting that the respected author from the **19th** Century, Matthew Henry in his commentary speaking of the last supper included a mention of the incorrect Romish belief.

"[2.] what they should have with it; This is my body, not outos-- this bread, but touto-- this eating and drinking. Believing carries all the efficacy of Christ's death to our souls. This is my body, spiritually and sacramentally (the Ordinance); this signifies and represents my body. He employs sacramental (Figurative and Spiritual) language, like that, <Exo. 12:11>. It is the Lord's Passover. **Upon a carnal and much-mistaken sense of these words, the church of Rome builds the monstrous doctrine of Transubstantiation, which makes the bread to be changed into the substance of Christ's body, only the accidents of bread remaining; which affronts Christ, destroys the nature of a sacrament (the Ordinance), and gives the lie to our senses.**"⁷

Quoting from the author *Ray W. Johnson*, he insists, "There is no indication whatever in the writings of the first century that the Church at that time considered baptism or the Lord's supper to be anything other than symbolical memorials. They were simply pictures of spiritual truths."⁸

With its' officers, of the Pastor or Bishop as the overseer, and the Deacon, the early Church was completely Autonomous, meaning Self-reliant or Sovereign. Some (like Roman Catholicism) feel that when Our Lord said in **Matt 16:18** "*I will build My Church*" that the Church was meant to have one head to rule an organized unified body or Denomination. In only one way is this true, Jesus is the sole legitimate head over his body as we read in **Eph 1:22-23** it is God who "*hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*" But the warped concept of Rome that all churches must be united under one earthly head is nowhere introduced nor practiced in the in the New Testament.

Please note that the New Testament is a compilation of letters to both individual Churches and people, it is not a general directive to all the Church as a collective body. This is the invention of Catholicism. The "**Nicene Creed**" used by Catholicism includes the words, "*I believe in One holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.*" This is relaying the concept of the total unity of Churches under one ruler. When the Boss (the Pope) speaks he uses an *Encyclical* letter which is to be read in all Church. Similarly when the leader at the headquarters of a Denomination or Convention speaks, that regulation is to be followed by all the Denomination or

⁷ . From Matthew Henry's Commentary, Matthew 26:26-30 PP 13

⁸ . "*It Happened this Way*" Ray W. Johnson , Page 5

the threat of a Pastors dismissal or loss of pension or withdrawal of funds can be used to bring the reluctant Church back in line. The early church owed its existence to Christ alone, and not to any group. Thus threats and loss of funds held no sway in the Churches decisions because they were totally self sufficient, with one rule of Faith (the Scripture), One Head (Christ), an overseer (Pastor) who attended to the teaching of the word and a Deacon who attended to the physical needs of the people. Speaking to the Church at Ephesus Paul explains, *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:” Eph 4:11-15*

Pastors were men who often worked a job to support themselves while also caring for the Church. Paul himself used tent making as his trade to continue to preach the Gospel because only the Church at Philippi had helped him with funds in his Missionary journey *Phil 4:15* *“Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only”*. You can see the apostle exhorting the Pastors of the Churches to be strong in their duties and leadership as he informs them of his soon departing in *Acts 20:28* *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood..”*

The Lord is head over each Local Church and He has in each fellowship an overseer and a variety of gifted people to carry out the work of His Church. “The Great Commission, the making of Disciples, and the Edifying of the Body the Church” are the task of WE Christians. “Go **Ye** therefore, and teach all nations” is Our Lords command of *Matt 28:19-20*. The Church is not to be confined to one land one group or one people, in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, but all are one in Him who is all and in all. *Col 3:11* The only time the Scripture shows us a head over a universal body on earth is when it describes the Antichrist in *Rev 13:8* *“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him whose names are not written in the book of Life of the Lamb.”* Catholicism definitely has designs on this type of total worldwide authority which will only be found in the Antichrist. Pope Boniface VIII on Nov.18, 1302 concluded his Papal Bull with these word’s, “We declare, affirm, define and pronounce it to be altogether necessary for salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff.” This position has continued to be echoed by Roman councils and Pontiffs since that time. Then in 1854 Pope Pius IX declared, “Outside the Apostolic Roman Catholic Church no one can be saved.” This is the ultimate outcome of such a belief, “that all churches must be united in one Denomination with one head.” Once you submit to such a doctrine you must then conclude that Salvation resides only within this one true Church, thus removing Salvation from the person and work of Christ and making the Church itself the guarantor of Eternal Life.

So again, through the examination of God’s Word, we are able to see the truth about the early Church and the falsies which continue to be perpetuated by the Church of Rome.

The Word of God

Knowing now that the early Christians were not allowed the freedom of worship and the use of Church buildings as we are today, the question then remains “**Where did the Roman Catholic Church come from, and how did it begin?**” The answer to these questions will reveal the true core and nature of the Roman Catholic System. The parallels with the ancient Roman Empire are many, and they will be explored here. Their likeness in religious symbolism to Ancient Babylonian worship and customs is staggering. The boldness to call a man the Pope or Pontiff, “Holy Father, and Pontiffs Maximus” (Caesar’s title of the man god the highest leader of government and religion) show a blatant disregard for the teaching of Scripture, the lessons of history and further, their absolute disregard for the truth of God’s Word which they claim to represent.

Many people accept the inaccurate claim that the “Catholic Church gave us the Bible”. They think that believers of the first four centuries did not know what books belonged in the New Testament and so there were many strange doctrines being fostered until the year 325 at the Council of Nice, or until 393 when the Catholic Church lead by a Pope convened the Council of Hippo to determine once and for all time which books belonged in our Bible. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In the first century church, the writings of the Apostles were accepted as Scripture. For example, Peter accepts the Epistles of Paul as Scripture in **2 Pet 3:15-16**, “*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*” The Letter to the Thessalonians shows us how the early Christians receive the writing of the Apostles. **1Thes 2:13** “*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*”

The New Testament Church was hungry for the word of God and would circulate whatever portions, letters and Epistles they had available to them. Remember how Peter wrote to remind Christians of what they were previously taught of the Prophets and commanded by the Apostles themselves? **2 Pet 3:1-2** “*This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:*” How could Peter remind Christians of something they had never heard? The word of God was known to the early Church and they received the inspired writings of the Apostles (which make up the New Testament) as the scripture itself. The Apostle who through inspiration wrote the final words of our Bible, John, testified that nothing else should be included in the canon of Scripture.

Rev 22:18-19 “*For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*” Thus the first century Church was aware that Scripture was not inclusive of extra biblical revelation, traditions or pronouncements from church leadership.

Satan, however, was not content to let the Church thrive unopposed. He had already begun setting his counterfeits in motion while the Apostles were alive. Listen to the warning of Paul to the Thessalonian Church in **II Th 2:1-3**, “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, **nor by letter AS FROM US**, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: . . .” Men were claiming to be Apostles, church leaders and inspired by God, who clearly were not! The Bishop (Pastor) of the Church of Rome was one of these men claiming extraordinary power, as we shall see shortly. The counterfeits continued after the time of the Apostles and gradually gained acceptance, but only as they corrupted or replaced God’s Word. The Apostle John describes the problem with these inspired words from **I Jn 2:18-21** “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.”

The New Testament canon was settled long before the Catholic claim of 325 or 393 AD. Consider the following information concerning our New Testament. The preacher **Irenaeus** (125 to 192), whose writings still exist, quoted 1,800 times from the New Testament⁰ “in such a way as to imply that THEY HAD FOR SOME TIME BEEN CONSIDERED AS OF UNQUESTIONED AUTHORITY.” It is interesting also to note, Irenaeus accepted only the four New Testament gospel accounts not the erroneous gospels of Peter or Thomas or others which were being circulated in his day. Again, the Christian **Clement** of Alexandria (150 to 217) quotes from the four Gospels as well as most of the other books of our N.T. acknowledging them as¹⁰ “Divine Scriptures.” **Tertullian** (150 to 220) quoted 7,200 times from the N.T. accepting them as Scripture. And the Latin Translation of the Bible the “*Itala*” made in the second century¹¹ “contained all the books that now make up the New Testament.”¹² “A list of New Testament Scripture dating to the latter half of the second century was discovered in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, Italy, 1740. This second-century list contained all of the books of the New Testament canon (Hentz, *History of the Lutheran Version*, p. 60).

H.L.Hastings in the 19th century work *Anti-Infidel Library* makes the following interesting comments:

“Doubtless thousands of infidels today believe that the Council of Nice by some vote, or trick, or juggle, settled the canon of the Scriptures, and separated what they called the ‘spurious Gospels’ from the genuine ones. But in fact no such thing was done by the Council of Nice; and in fact no such thing could have been done by any council, with any authority or effect. The

⁰ 9 Miller, *General Biblical Introduction*, p. 140

¹⁰ Hentz, *History of the Lutheran Version*, p. 59

¹¹ Ibid., p. 59

¹² Cloud, *Rome and the Bible*, p. 13

votes of councils could no more settle the canon of the New Testament than the vote of a town council could decide what the laws of a state or nation were.

The early Christians read, and believed, and quoted the same books that we read, and believe, and quote, and in the same way that we believe and quote them; and they did this for generations before councils ever meddled with the subject; and the proofs of this fact are abundant and incontrovertible. ...

The facilities for investigating this question are ample and easily accessible to any intelligent student. The Anti-Nicene Library, published by T. and T. Clark, of Edinburgh, comprises some twenty-four volumes, ... nearly all of the extant writings of some fifteen or twenty of the most eminent Christian authors who lived before the year A.D. 325, when the Council of Nice was convened. ... They quote passage after passage and page after page of the same Scriptures that are quoted today and read in every Christian assembly. They quoted the books which we quote; they quoted them as we quote them; they received them as we receive them, and this long before the Council of Nice or any other council had anything to say about the canon of the Scriptures.

Polycarp, who was martyred A.D. 155 or 156, after having served Christ eighty-six years, and who was, during some thirty years of his long Christian life, contemporary with the Apostle John, whose disciple he was, quotes in his epistle to the Philippians nearly forty passages from our New Testament; and Justin Martin, who wrote about A.D. 140, or some forty years after the decease of the Apostle John, quotes again the very words which we now read in the New Testament. In the writings of Irenaeus, A.D. 178; Clement, A.D. 194; Tertullian, A.D. 200, are to be found 8,723 quotations from the New Testament, including every book which we accept as canonical.

These authors who we have named comprise but a portion of the authors who wrote before the Council of Nice; but they are sufficient to settle forever the question of the authenticity of the New Testament Scripture.”

The Catholic Church Begins

As I have previously stated, the Christian Church was persecuted by the Empire of Rome for 300 years, and yet the Church flourished in the mist of this persecution; God’s Word, instead of being stamped out, was settled and widely used during this period. Despite the Nicomedian edict of 303 A.D. which ¹³ called for the burning of all copies of the Word of God, and again the persecutions under Dioclesian and Maximian (early fourth century) the historian Nolan (1784-1864) writes ¹⁴“the sacred Scriptures were sought with more care and destroyed with more fury than any preceding persecution.”

Satan was confronted with the reality that every time he attempted the destruction of Christians or the Word of God they grew stronger. Realizing he could not effect their destruction his desire was now the control of Gods domain, Christianity. He would accomplish this through the replacement God’s Word with the words of men. False doctrines proliferated, as we have

¹³ Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe*, pp. 47, 73

¹⁴ Nolan, *Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate*, 1815, p. 143

learned Baptism was taught as necessary for Salvation, prayers for the dead and to saints replaced ancient ancestor worship as a Christian practice, and the need of a centralized voice from which God speaks began to develop into Papal authority. Men like **Origen**, **Augustine** and **Jerome** are considered Catholicism's early church fathers; it was these men who helped shape the doctrine and direction of the Catholic Church.

Origen (185-254)¹⁵ “taught baptismal regeneration. Louis Berkhof observes that Origen ‘evidently has no clear conception of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith’ (Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrine*, p.65). ... Origen believed in purgatory and claimed that all men would eventually be reclaimed through the purgation of sin after death. This is a denial of the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. He taught that even the demons and Satan would eventually be restored (Berkhof, p.75). ... He believed the Holy Spirit was the first creature made by the Father through the Son. ... Origen championed the method of Bible interpretation known as **ALLEGORIZING** (emphasis is my own), by which the literal meaning of Scripture is rejected for a ‘deeper meaning’ discovered by the interpreter. ... if the plain sense of Scripture is not the true meaning, then it is impossible to determine exactly what it does mean.” Satan's first champion of his new church had arisen spewing the fallacies of baptismal regeneration, purgatory and exclusive mystical Bible interpretation. All this was accomplished before the year 300 while the True Church was still being persecuted, thus Satan was planting the seeds that would later become Catholicism.

Augustine was Satan's next champion in developing Roman Catholic doctrine. Warfield says of Augustine (354 - 430)¹⁶ “In a true sense” Augustine is “the founder of Roman Catholicism”.¹⁷ “He taught the salvation was through grace alone, but he confused the issue by claiming that the sacraments are actual means of grace, therefore perverting the gospel of the grace of Christ and intermixing works with grace (Berkhof, *History of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 206,207). Schaff says that the center of Augustine's doctrinal system was ‘the free redeeming grace of God in Christ, OPERATING THROUGH THE ACTUAL, HISTORICAL CHURCH’ (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church III*, p. 998). ... He also taught that Mary is sinless, blasphemously claiming for her that which belongs exclusively to the immaculate Lord Jesus Christ. He taught a form of purgatory. He taught that man is regenerated through baptism. He believed in infant baptism, and claimed that non-baptized babies are lost. ‘Originally, only adults were baptized; but at the end of the second century in Africa, and in the third, generally, infant baptism was introduced; and in the fourth century it was theologically maintained by Augustine’ (Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, pp.216-217). ... Thomas Armitage observed that Augustine ‘became the champion of ecclesiasticism, sacerdotalism and sacramentarianism, all distorted into monstrous proportions’ (Armitage, *I*, p. 217)”. Satan now had more pieces to his new church's doctrine, thanks to Augustine. Grace was now confused with sacraments; men must do their part in order to receive the grace of God, and this grace of the sacraments could only be administered through the church, effectively removing Christ from the equation of salvation. Satan now had one equal to Christ in the form of a sinless Mary on which he could build countless

¹⁵ Cloud, *Rome And The Bible*, pp. 21-22

¹⁶ Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, p. 22

¹⁷ Cloud, *Roma And The Bible*, p. 28

legends (traditions), he expanded baptismal regeneration to include infants and reaffirmed purgatory as a means of forgiveness necessary before attaining heaven, all through the false teachings of Augustine. Is it any wonder why Roman Catholicism counts Augustine as one of its “Major Church Doctors”?

Jerome (340-420) was yet another champion of Satan’s effort to control the Church of God through the corruption of doctrine¹⁸. “Jerome followed the false teaching of asceticism, believing the state of celibacy to be spiritually superior to that of marriage, and demanding the church leaders to be unmarried. He believed in the veneration of ‘holy relics’ and the bones of dead Christians (Heron, *The Evolution of Latin Christianity*, 1919, pp. 276,277). He ‘took a leading and influential part in ‘opening the floodgates’ for the invocation of saints,’ teaching, ‘distinctly and emphatically that the saints in heaven hear the prayers of men on earth, intercede on their behalf and send them help from above (Heron, pp 287,288). Jerome taught that Mary was the counterpart of Eve, as Christ was the counterpart of Adam, and that through her obedience Mary became instrumental in helping to redeem the human race (Heron, p. 294). He also taught that Mary was a perpetual virgin (Heron, pp. 295,295). He believed in the blessing of water [Holy Water, explanation is mine] (Heron, p.306). Satan now had in place for his church the doctrines of celibate and superior priests, additional mediators through the saints who can answer from heaven, a sinless virgin who has helped to redeem mankind and an emphasis on relics and holy water which would later be used to cure the sick, bless crops and implements, and save one from hell.

Yes, this was step one in taking control of the Church of the living God, fooling Christians into accepting these false doctrines was essential to Satan’s plan to establish another church, his church. It would produce a docile Christian whose dependence was no longer on a Holy God, but on an infallible church. The focus was being shifted from truth to lies, from God to his representative, from Christ to the Church, from the free grace of salvation to earned graces in order to be saved, from God’s Word to traditions, and from redemption through Christ alone to redemption by the help of the sinless Virgin Mary.

Caesar Benefits Roman Catholicism

With the authority and doctrines of God’s Word now being question by some, it was time to usurp the role of Christ himself. The civil government of Rome became the catalyst in removing Christ as the Head of His Body the Church, and replacing Him with a priesthood ordained by men which would come to be known later as the Papacy.

For 300 years Christian had been imprisoned, tortured and killed for their faith in Christ, but now with the entrance of this benevolent dictator, Constantine, the persecution, and the purifying fire would cease, and Christians were ill prepared for the peace they would experience.

As the story is told, Constantine was set to conquer Rome, when he saw the vision of a flaming cross in the sky, later testimony indicates that the shape of this cross was that of an Egyptian Onk (a pagan symbol predating the birth of Christ), this detail, often conveniently ignored, makes Constantine’s experience sound as if it were an instantaneous conversion to

¹⁸ Cloud, *Rome And The Bible*, p.24

Christ. History shows us that ¹⁹ “before the battle he prayed to the sun-god (NOT the “Son of God”, clarification mine) Mithras. He in fact prayed to that god until the day of his death, on which day, he is alleged to have received ‘baptism’.” With the Empire now his, Constantine inherited ²⁰ “the dual role of priest and King that the pagan emperors in Rome had enjoyed,” the title we call Pontiffs Maximus. Using his government given power over the religious worship of the Roman Empire, Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea to draw together all the religious factions of his new kingdom. “The Roman way is the ‘Pax Romana,’ the enforced peace, visibly uniting all diversity, allowing for no dissentient voices. What was good for the Empire will be good for the church. There are to be no factions. Period! The subsequent meetings of the Council of Nicaea cannot be written off totally because of Constantine’s usurpation. ... The true and the false are here forced into union, and have remained in the harlot religion from that day to this. ... what is a Roman Emperor doing at the head of this Council? And from whose urging is the church made to ‘agree’? March, 321 A.D., Constantine orders the ‘venerable day of the sun’ (we call it Sun-day, too), to be celebrated as a day of rest. The Christians comply since Christ has been raised on that day, and it seems the ‘right thing to do.’ Here, though is one of those weddings of the true and the false.” ²¹

Why did Christians comply with these decrees from this politician? Because, for first time in 300 years there was calm, worship in the city of Rome was no longer confined to the Catacombs or small house meetings where they would not be detected. Also, not to comply with the Pax Romana was to open them again to Roman persecution. As the well known Christian author Halley says ²² “the good Emperor begins to favor Christians in every way. ... he filled chief offices with them, exempted Christian ministers from taxes and military service ... made Christianity the religion of the court. ...” Would you give up such benefits just to be imprisoned again? Neither did they! Remember the true was forced together with the false as a state religion (religion of the court) for the first time in the history of the church, pagan religionists were no longer in charge but were in need of sanctuary and they fled to the newly appointed state religion, filling the pews and bringing with them their false practices. Thus Caesar benefited the founding of the new state religion that would develop into Roman Catholicism.

It is known that Constantine allowed the building of Churches by Christians, and rumored by legend, that Constantine himself ²³ founded “the first Basilica of Saint Peter’s. ... beautiful structures were plundered to build St. Peter’s. ... the great columns that towered in the gloom of the interior were brought from a number of temples: ... it was the outward form of a new way of life. These conservatives (pagan bishop’s once in power, explanation mine) still sought to maintain the old religion but its dynamism had been transferred to the new, and with that dynamism went the wealth that once adorned the temples of the old gods.”

¹⁹ Faulkner, *Scarlet Threads*, 1992, Part 2 Rome, Pagan to Papal p. 29

²⁰ Chamberlin, *The Bad Popes*, 1969, p. 10

²¹ Faulkner, *Scarlet Threads*, p. 30

²² Halley, *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, p. 759

²³ Chamberlin, *The Bad Popes*, p. 6

Romanism (the court religion) now had the opportunity, under Constantine, to acquire the temples, the property, the wealth and the authority that had once belonged to the former approved religion of Rome, the Religious System of Babylon. The acquisition of power was made possible by the way Constantine structured his Empire; the land needed its administrators, its governors and its vicars. As a military man he knew the wisdom of delegating responsibility, and his position of supreme ruler of government and religion granted him authority to appoint both political and religious underlings.

In 328 A.D. Constantine transferred the capital of his government from Rome to his new city of Constantinople. The void of power now created in that decadent city of Rome would soon be filled by the bishop of the church.²⁴ “When the seat of the empire had moved to the East, the bishop of Rome naturally enjoyed rather more freedom than his opposite number, the patriarch of Constantinople.”

Along with the transfer of the capital city to Constantinople, many other governmental changes were set up which impacted the growth of the Church of Rome. Because I can't say it in any clearer manner, read this quote from J.A.Wylie.²⁵

“The fourth century ... Under Constantine the empire was divided into four prefectures, these prefectures into dioceses, and the dioceses into provinces. ... The new arrangements, impressed by human policy upon the Church, became every day more marked, as did likewise the gradation of rank amongst the pastors. Bishop rose above bishop ... The chief city of the province gave the title Metropolitan, and likewise of Primate, to its bishop. ... the first recognition of order occurs in the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381. At that time we find but three of these great dignitaries in existence, - the Bishop of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria; but a fourth was now added ... Constantinople ... (notice that with the division of the Empire into four reigns, it was now necessary to assign each region its own chief Primate, explanation mine).

This GRADATION OF RANK, Necessarily led to a gradation of jurisdiction and power. First came the Bishop, who exercised authority in his parish, and to whom the individual members of his flock were accountable. Next came the Metropolitan, who administered the ecclesiastical affairs of the province, exercised superintendence over all its bishops, convened them in synods, and assisted by them, heard and determined all questions touching religion which arose within the limits of his jurisdiction. He possessed, moreover, the privilege of having his consent asked to the ordination of bishops within the province. Next came the Exarches or Patriarchs, who exercised authority over the metropolitan's of the diocese and held diocese synods, in which all matters pertaining to the welfare of the Church in the dioceses were deliberated upon and adjudicated ... In due time an arch- Patriarch arose. As might have been for seen, the seat of the prince of the patriarchs was Rome. ...

Then in the year 378 came THE LAW OF GRATIAN AND VALENTINIAN II, empowering the metropolitan to judge the inferior clergy, and empowering the Bishop of Rome (Pope Damasus), either in person or by deputy, to judge the metropolitan. An appeal might be carried from the tribunal of the metropolitan to the Roman bishop, but from the judgment of the pontiff there was no appeal; his sentence was final. ... Thus did the Roman bishop acquire

²⁴ Chamberlin, *ibid*, p. 11

²⁵ Wylie, *The Papacy, Chapter II: Rise and Progress of Ecclesiastical Supremacy*, 1888 pp. 17-38

jurisdiction over all the western clergy. When the bishops applied to the pope in doubtful cases, his letters conveying the desired advice were styled Decretal Epistles; and to these decretal's the Roman canonists came afterwards to attach as much importance as to the Holy Scriptures. ...”

As you can see, this transfer of the capital city of necessity caused a transfer of power including the setting up of a **Hierarchical Religious Structure** among the bishops, the bishop of Rome being a primary beneficiary. The power void created by the absence of a Caesar (the highest authority) in Rome was appropriated by the bishop, after all he could claim, Rome is the ancient city, the holy city, the true seat of the Empire from which God should rule His people.

This court religion had now grown from its simple beginnings; from the freeing of Christians, to the building of Cathedrals with parts from pagan temples which would be filled with idolaters now declared Christian, to the establishment of Prelates and a Hierarchy which would rule in the stead of the Political Emperor. The result of this religion of Rome is aptly summed up by the words of Alexander Hislop ²⁶ “In exact proportions as Paganism has disappeared from *without* the church, in the very same proportion it appears *within* it. Pagan dresses for the priest, Pagan festivals for the people, Pagan doctrines and ideas of all sorts, are everywhere in vogue ... Pope Damasus saw that, in a city pre-eminently given to idolatry ... if, bearing the *title*, around which, for so many ages, all the hopes and affections of Paganism had clustered, he should give its votaries reason to believe that he was willing to act up to the original spirit of that title, he might count on popularity, aggrandizement and glory ...”

Damasus did attempt to reestablish Rome to its former greatness through the use of his title, in the year 382 this bishop Damasus in his Roman Synod declared supremacy over all other churches. ²⁷ “The Holy Roman Church takes precedence over the other churches, not on the ground of any synodal decisions, but because it was given the primacy by the words of our Lord, ‘Thou art Peter.’ Peter and Paul dedicated the Roman Church to the Lord Christ and gave it unique precedence over all other cities in the whole world by their presence and by their venerable triumph. The Roman church therefore is the first see of the apostle Peter, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” The Scripture which is meant to apply to the Lord Jesus Christ, is now applied wrongfully instead to an institution, to the church. It would take centuries more before the Roman Church could exercise its claim of authority, but it would be exercised.

Power and False Documents

Constantine is dead, long live the Pope! Up with Papal power! Bishop Damasus would have been executed for his statements at the synod of Rome in 382 if Constantine were still alive, but Damasus was not dealing with the Supreme Pontiff the priest and king. In 378 the Emperor Gratian ²⁸ “Was offered, as all emperors, the office of supreme pontiff, the one who heads the pagan priesthood, offers its sacrifices, and intercedes for the people. But, according to Gibbon, and the witness of all historians, he ‘sternly rejected those profane symbols.’ he was a Christian.”

²⁶ Hislop, *Two Babylons*, p.251

²⁷ Gibbon, *The History of the decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, p. 741 ??? check

²⁸ Fualkner, *Scarlet Threads*, pp. 32,33

Even the Catholic Church sites this era as the first use of the title Pontifex.²⁹ “The office of the Pope is described in the annuario pontificio (official directory of the Holy See) by the following titles: ‘Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Christ, Successor of the Chief of the Apostles, *Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church*, patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Province, Sovereign of the State of Vatican City. ... the term pontifex, used in the classical Latin of the members of the college of high priests, began to be used of the bishops *late in the fort 4th century.*”

²⁹ Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967, p. 572