

Pontifex Maximus: Pagan High Priest to Roman Catholic Pope

Part 1

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Within a few hundred years of the events which are described for us in the Book of Acts, the situation within the Lord's Church had changed considerably. Despite warnings from the Lord Himself and the Apostles, infiltration by false Jewish brethren had taken its toll and false doctrines abounded, no doubt even more than what had already occurred by the latter half of the First Century. With all of the Apostles now gone from the scene, and thus unable to correct any errors which may have crept into the Church, the doctrinal and spiritual unity that is described for us in the following verses had become heavily polluted by misguided ideas and the doctrines and traditions of men, some of whom were only self-serving wolves within the Lord's Church:

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are . . . That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

John 17:11, 21-23, KJV

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

John 10:16, KJV

"That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Romans 15:6, KJV

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

1 Corinthians 1:10, KJV

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

2 Corinthians 13:11, KJV

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"

Ephesians 4:1-3, KJV

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"

Philippians 1:27, KJV

"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

Philippians 2:2, KJV

It seems to be inevitable that time will change and distort things, so that they are no longer recognizable for what they once were. New nations are born in the heat of passion and the desire for freedom and change, only to be transformed in time to that which they had once despised. Sadly, the Early Church does not appear to have escaped this slow process of corruption. Thus, in just a matter of a few centuries which had passed since the Original Teachings had been imparted by Jesus and the Apostles, the Early Church had become seriously fractured in a doctrinal sense. Some of the Christian bishops believed and taught certain doctrines to their flocks, while other bishops held and taught opposing views. Accusations of heresy were quite common and doctrinal confusion divided the Lord's flocks. If ever there was a time to take heed to the wise counsel of the following verses, it was then:

"Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

Matthew 16:12, KJV

"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:"

Ephesians 4:14-15, KJV

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."

Hebrews 13:9, KJV

"As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do."
1 Timothy 1:3-4, KJV

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;"
1 Timothy 4:1, KJV

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"
2 Timothy 4:3, KJV

To aggravate the situation within the Church even more, many years of an unpredictable tide of persecution by one Roman emperor after another -- from Nero to Diocletian -- had also taken a very heavy toll. The Lord's Church was growing weak, tired and battle-weary. Thanks to the early missionary work of the Apostles and other Christians such as Paul, Barnabas, Mark John, Silas, Timothy, Aquila and Priscilla, and Titus, while the Church had made inroads into Roman society -- even infiltrating Roman high society -- nevertheless, it remained in a very precarious position. At certain points, Christians were even allowed to own property, while at other times they occupied the lowest rung of Roman society and were heavily persecuted, imprisoned and killed. The tide of persecution changed depending on the emperors who were in power.

While some historians and theologians propose that Rome was eventually conquered by Christianity, particularly by the Christians' demonstration of love and sacrificial service, given how the situation eventually turned out, I must wonder if the exact opposite of that may hold true. In other words, is it possible that what really happened is that our faith, at least certain members of our faith, were overcome by all of the worldly enticements of Rome? Personally, I suspect that these extremes between acceptance and persecution made the Church very vulnerable to compromise, and that certain members of the Church did in fact eventually seek compromise during the Fourth Century reign of Emperor Constantine I. Perhaps it was due to pragmatism, or perhaps to greed of one form or another.

It is evident that contrary to the teachings of the Church's founders -- Jesus Christ and His first Apostles -- some of the Christian leaders of that era were no longer willing to suffer persecution for their faith. Whereas Jesus had taught us that as His followers, we are not to become a part of this world, certain Christian leaders of the Fourth Century became comfortable with the world. Whereas Jesus had taught us that His followers would be hated due to our faith in Him, some of the Christian leaders of that period wanted to be accepted by the Roman world. Consider these relevant verses:

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."
Psalms 116:15, KJV

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another."
Matthew 24:9-10, KJV

"But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls."
Luke 21:12-19, KJV

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me."
John 15:18-21, KJV

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."
2 Timothy 3:12, KJV

Even in our modern day, it is recognized that persecution often makes the Lord's Church stronger and more on-fire. At the same time, comfort and complacency can quickly weaken it and diminish its effectiveness. For example, while Christians in China may suffer serious persecution under an oppressive communist government, is it possible that they are actually stronger, more dedicated, and more on-fire than Christians in the affluent, materialistic West who experience very little, if any, persecution whatsoever? So in reality, persecution can affect us in either one of two ways. It can make us even stronger and more dedicated to the Lord, or else it can sift us like wheat and make us fall away. Consider these verses:

"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."
Job 23:10, KJV

"And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury,

and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you."
Ezekiel 22:17-22, KJV

"And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed."
Daniel 11:35, KJV

"Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God:"
Jeremiah 11:4, KJV

"And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God."
Zechariah 13:9, KJV

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."
Luke 22:31-32, KJV

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."
James 1:2-4, KJV

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"
1 Peter 1:7, KJV

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."
1 Peter 4:12-14, KJV

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."
Revelation 2:10, KJV

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that

thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."
Revelation 3:18, KJV

For a deeper look at this topic, please consider reading such articles as "Civil Disobedience and Christian Persecution", as well as "Peter: Faith Tried in the Fire".

So it is my personal belief that some of the bishops of the Fourth Century compromised their faith and moved out of the Circus of Nero and the coliseums where their predecessors had been torn apart by hungry lions, and into the safety of the grandstands. In short, a false form of Christianity began to emerge which became more of a spectator religion than a faith which is actively involved in winning the world for the Lord. This false religion was more interested in acquiring worldly power, wealth and building grand cathedrals, than in catering to the spiritual and physical needs of the poor. It became friends with the Roman world. It was -- and continues to be -- exactly what Jesus and the Apostles said we are not to be, as we can see by the following verses:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also . . . No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."
Matthew 6:19-21, 24, KJV

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."
John 15:19, KJV

"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."
John 17:14-15, KJV

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,"
2 Corinthians 6:17, KJV

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."
Colossians 3:1-2, KJV

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the

love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:"
1 Timothy 6:6-14, KJV

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."
2 Timothy 2:4, KJV

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."
Hebrews 11:13-16, KJV

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."
James 4:4, KJV

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."
1 John 2:15-16, KJV

In light of the previous two groups of Scriptures, there is absolutely no way to justify what the Church became as a result of the political and religious events -- that is, the compromise -- which occurred during the Fourth Century and onward. The false church which arose is so vastly different from the description, requirements and doctrines which have been so plainly laid out for us in the New Testament, that any true, God-fearing, Bible-believing Christian should be able to recognize it for what it really is.

Thus, as I explained a moment ago, this false church chose to become friends with the heathen world as a way to avoid persecution, and to expand its power throughout the Roman Empire. In fact, sadly, as it gradually grew in strength and influence, it eventually transformed itself from being the persecuted Church of earlier centuries, to actually becoming the persecuting church. This historical fact is evidenced by the Inquisitions which occurred throughout much of Europe,

as well as by the misguided and violent "Christian" Crusades, by the Marian Persecutions of the mid-Sixteenth Century, etc. There are claims that many millions of people were tortured and died as a result of the unrelenting wrath of the false church, which apparently believed that it could force people to accept its doctrines through oppression, fear and pain.

As many Bible-believing Christians will know, this is not the way that Christ instructed us to preach the Gospel. It is not the way that His Apostles taught us to win the world for the Lord either. It becomes quite evident through a study of the New Testament that both Christ and the Apostles were against violence, and advocated a spiritual revolution which would win the world through love and sacrificial service, and not through oppression, violence and the edge of the sword, as we can determine by the following sample verses:

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth . . . Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God . . . But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."
Matthew 5:5, 9, 44-45, KJV

"And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus [meaning the Apostle Peter] stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"
Matthew 26:51-53, KJV

"Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"
John 18:10-11, KJV

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."
Romans 12:18, KJV

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)"
2 Corinthians 10:4, KJV

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."
James 4:1-3, KJV

Following are some additional verses from both the Old and the New Testaments which likewise reveal how God will one

day punish violent, wicked men, and those who destroy the Earth with their violence, and bring an end to violence on the Earth once and for all:

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God."
Psalms 20:7, KJV

"But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."
Psalms 37:11, KJV

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."
Isaiah 2:4, KJV

"And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."
Micah 4:3, KJV

"And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth."
Revelation 11:18, KJV

"He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."
Revelation 13:10, KJV

The truth of the matter is that what this false church did is not really that much different from the violent practices of Islamists who also converted people to the false religion of Muhammad by the edge of a sword. If you are interested in learning more about my opinion concerning this topic, please consider reading such articles as "Holy Qur'an And Islam: A Doctrine of Devils?", "God of Peace, God of War", "Killing and the Phinehas Priesthood", "Killing, Murder and Military Duty" and related articles.

As some of you will obviously realize, what I have briefly described for you are actually the formative years of the Roman Catholic Church during the Fourth Century. Contrary to Roman Catholic claims, their church most certainly did not exist prior to that time in history, and its origin cannot be traced to the Apostle Peter. After the lesson that Jesus gave Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane concerning the issue of non-violence, I am convinced that Peter, more than anyone, would know that violence is not the way to win the world for Christ. Furthermore, rather than resorting to violence, we know that not only was Peter persecuted as a result of his faith in Jesus, but he gave his life for the sake of Christ and the Gospel as well, as we can determine by the following verses. I have added a few words in brackets for the sake of

clarification:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee [unto Peter], When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands [signifying crucifixion], and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me."
John 21:18-19, KJV

"Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison."
Acts 5:17-18, KJV

"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. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) And when he had apprehended him [meaning Peter], he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people."
Acts 12:1-4, KJV

Thus, for the Roman Catholic Church -- with its violent and bloody past -- to dare to claim a link to the Apostle Peter, who practiced peace, and who gave his very life due to his love for the Lord and His lost sheep, is utterly ridiculous, preposterous and ludicrous to say the least. Based upon the evidence which I have uncovered, I remain convinced that it was the compromise which was made by various bishops during the reign of Emperor Constantine I, that really resulted in the birth and formation of the Roman Catholic Church. I will be discussing this issue in more detail in part two of this series. This compromise was simply a marriage of convenience between political power and religious power, as has occurred many times throughout world history, and which continues to occur in our own time as well.

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

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Pontifex Maximus: Pagan High Priest to Roman Catholic Pope

Part 2

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The Treachery At Jesus's Trial, King Herod And Pontius Pilate Become Friends, Selfishness And A Dog-Eat-Dog World, Serious Compromise By Fourth Century Bishops, Theories Regarding The Antichrist False Prophet And Babylon The Great, 313 AD Edict Of Milan Results In Christianity Becoming Legalized Religion, Pax Romana And A Thousand Gods, Pre-70 AD Israel Status Quo, Constantine's Alleged Conversion To Christianity, Hodgepodge Of Religions, Constantine's Paganism And Sun God Worship, A Double-Minded Man Or A Shrewd Politician, Mystery Handshakes, Constantine's Accomplishments: Church Of The Holy Sepulchre, Old Saint Peter's Basilica, First Council of Nicaea, Nicene Creed Promotes Holy Trinity Doctrine, The Tenets Of Arianism, Arianism Is Declared A Heresy, Divergence Of Doctrinal Paths, Nicene Christianity And Trinitarianism Is Promoted Throughout Roman Empire, Foreshadows Of Roman Catholic Church, Widening Schism Between Christianity And Judaism, Edict Of Thessalonica Makes Christianity A State-Imposed And Only Legal Religion In Roman Empire, Faith Is A Matter of Personal Conscience, First Amendment To U.S. Constitution, God Endowed Us With Free Will And Personal Choice, Salvation Under Pressure Or From One's Heart, Persecution By Roman Catholic Church And Trinitarians, Athanasius' Doctrinal Battles Against Constantine And Arians, The Mysteries Of Mithras And Other Non-Christian Religions Are Oppressed By Nicene Christians And Eventually Disappear, Text Of Edict Of Thessalonica, Roman Catholic Church Is Formally Established And Authorized By Edict Of Thessalonica In 380 AD

I am also reminded of the religious and political treachery which occurred during the time of Jesus' mock trial. As you may recall, King Herod and Pontius Pilate -- who was Rome's procurator in Judea and Samaria at that time -- did not like each other. However, Luke informs us that as a result of the Lord's trial, they became friends, as we see by these verses:

"And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves."
Luke 23:1-12, KJV

As I noted in part one, forging both political and religious

alliances is something which has been practiced by the rulers of this world for millennia, and it continues to occur in our own time as well. Leaders -- and even common people -- won't hesitate to use and abuse each other, if it results in some form of personal gain; whether it is political gain, monetary gain, strategic gain, corporate gain, material gain, or any kind of advantage. We live in a dog-eat-dog world which is not ruled by the love of Jesus Christ. If one is not willing to play by their rules, he will simply remain on the lowest rungs of the societal ladder. Is it any wonder that on one particular occasion Jesus said the following:

"For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always."
John 12:8, KJV

However, there were certain bishops during the Fourth Century who apparently were willing to play by the rules of the world. They were willing to sacrifice the purity of our faith, if it would result in their personal advancement within the world of pagan Rome. They were willing to make certain compromises, even if it meant deviating from the original blueprint of the First Century Church. These bishops and Church leaders were even willing to take pagan beliefs and traditions, and pagan gods and goddesses, and "Christianize" and transform them, so that they would still be recognizable to the heathen. They would still practice their Christian faith, but they would do it the Roman way; and they have been doing it that way ever since. What a tragedy!

Today, many Christians continue to recognize this church -- which eventually split into the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church during the mid-Eleventh Century -- as a false church. Some of them embrace the view that she may represent Babylon the Great, which we find described in considerable detail in the pages of the Book of Revelation. Other people theorize that the Antichrist or False Prophet may be represented by a pope. Whatever the case may be -- I do not hold a firm opinion regarding these issues at this current time -- through this compromise with the Roman world of that period, the so-called "Holy Mother Church" began to gain control over the minds and spirits of the masses of the Roman Empire.

Exactly how did this marriage between the politics of Rome and the faith of the Church Fathers come about? As you will learn momentarily, a central theme in the story regarding the compromise of our Christian faith, and how the false church was transformed into one of the most powerful religions of our modern day, involves the well-known Latin title "Pontifex Maximus".

As I explain in articles such as "Revelation's Babylon the Great," "Mary Worship, Christianity and Roman Catholicism", "The Children of God and Politics", "Lies and Deceptions of the Roman Catholic Church", and "Roman Catholicism, Water Baptism and the Trinity", in 313 AD, co-emperors Constantine and Licinius published the Edict of Milan. This declaration made Christianity a "religio licita" -- or "legal religion" -- throughout the Roman Empire. The Edict of Milan offered protection against religious persecution for all persons and not just for Christians only. Everyone was free to worship

whichever gods they desired.

You see, the Roman people already worshipped so many gods and goddesses that Rome really didn't care, just as long as peace reigned throughout the empire. "Pax Romana" was what mattered most, and if letting the people worship a thousand different gods achieved that purpose, then so be it. The same applied to pre-70 AD Israel. Rome had no problem with permitting the Jewish religious leaders to run their own affairs. They had their Roman-controlled puppets such as the Herod dynasty, and the Jewish Sanhedrin was comfortable with their relationship with Rome as well. Everyone wanted to keep the status quo and maintain the peace. However, God had other plans. First Jesus and His band of followers stirred up the pot, and then the Zealots and the Sicarii only made the situation worse, which ultimately resulted in the First Jewish-Roman War of 66 AD.

Returning to Constantine and the Edict of Milan, exactly when the emperor converted to the Christian faith is a source of debate amongst historians and theologians. Some suggest that Constantine's conversion occurred during his youth as a result of his mother Helena. Others posit that the emperor had a more gradual conversion during the course of his entire life, while still others suggest that Constantine was not actually water baptized until he lay on his deathbed in Nicomedia in 337 AD at the age of sixty-five. He died shortly thereafter. Please note that I mention water baptism as a matter of historical record and not because I personally believe that it is really a requirement in order to obtain Salvation. Please refer to my article "Roman Catholicism, Water Baptism And The Trinity" for additional information.

During his lifetime, Constantine supported various Christian causes, and he likewise promoted loyal Christian subjects to high office. However, it also becomes evident from studying this man, that if anything, he was really what amounts to a One World Religionist. In other words, as I stated earlier, while the Roman people had their own ancient religion which included a pantheon of gods and goddesses, as well as the Vestal Virgins, the Sibyls, the Mysteries of Mithras, etc., when it came to the Roman Empire as a whole, due to its great size and the area of land which it controlled, it was really a hodgepodge of different religions over which the emperors had to preside. So while it was a Roman world, it was a Roman world that was full of many different and strange religions. However, as you will learn shortly, by the end of the Fourth Century, the situation changed dramatically.

While Constantine was obviously sympathetic to the Christian faith due to his mother Helena, it should also be mentioned that in 315 AD, following his victory at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 AD, he built a triumphal arch which is known as the Arch of Constantine. In examining the arch, it becomes evident that at the age of forty-three, the emperor was still beholden to the pagan gods of Rome. While the arch displays no Christian symbolism whatsoever, it is decorated with images of the Roman gods and goddesses Victoria, Apollo, Diana and Hercules. This would have been a few years after the Edict of Milan had been decreed, when Christianity was declared a legal religion.

Among other evidence which suggests that Constantine may not

have been a bona fide Christian until later in life -- if he ever truly was one at all -- is the fact that in 321 AD, at the age of forty-nine, he decreed that both Christians and non-Christians should stand united in observing the venerable day of the Sun. When at the age of fifty-eight he dedicated Constantinople -- the new capital of the eastern half of the Roman Empire, which was formerly called Byzantium, and which today is called Istanbul -- in 330 AD, he wore the diadem of the Greek god of light, the Olympian Apollo. At times, Apollo has been identified with the Greek Sun god, Helios. This god finds its Roman equivalent in the Sun god, Sol.

That Constantine continued to honor the Sun god at this late stage of his life is further evidenced by the fact that in the Forum of Constantine in Constantinople, there was a high column on top of which was situated a statue of Constantine. However, the emperor was made to appear as the Sun god Helios, and included a halo of seven rays, similar to the sun-rayed diadem of Apollo. Furthermore, Constantine is looking toward the rising Sun.

Because of the aforementioned points -- and there are others which I have not mentioned -- personally, I tend to question the Christian image which certain theologians and historians have given to this emperor. It seems to me that Constantine had one foot firmly placed in the paganism of Rome, while his other foot was set in the world of Christianity, as if he was not able to make up his mind regarding his personal beliefs. I am reminded of the following verses:

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."
James 1:8, KJV

"Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."
1 Corinthians 10:21, KJV

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
Joshua 24:15, KJV

"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word."
1 Kings 18:21, KJV

Thus, my inclination is to believe that Constantine may have simply been a very shrewd leader -- as well as a One World Religionist -- who was smart enough to realize that in order to maintain peace throughout the Roman Empire, he had to give a nod to all of the religions and appear to support them all in a type of hybrid religion which embraced all faiths. Was his approach really much different from what a lot of modern politicians do today? How many political candidates court the naive Christians in America, only to reveal their true colors once they have been elected to office? Furthermore, the cozy marriage of convenience which occurred between the Christian

bishops and the politicians of Rome is similar to the bond that exists today between the Republican party in the United States and the Christian Right.

In the Mysteries of Mithras religion -- which was practiced in underground caves that were referred to as "Mithraeum" -- practitioners had a special handshake which was made after initiates -- who were called "syndexioi" -- completed the seven grades of initiation, and were admitted to the sect. It would seem that these wayward Fourth Century bishops also engaged in a special handshake with the politicians of Rome, beginning with Emperor Constantine I.

Within Christian circles, Constantine is known for the fact that he was responsible for the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City of Jerusalem, which some Christians believe to be the place where Jesus was crucified, buried and then rose from the dead. In order to construct the church, Constantine ordered the demolition of the temple of the Greek goddess Aphrodite, or her Roman equivalent, Venus. Constantine was also responsible for the construction of Old Saint Peter's Basilica; that is the original basilica which once stood on the site that had formerly been occupied by the Circus of Nero, where many Christians had been martyred. Old Saint Peter's Basilica was not completed until more than two decades after Constantine's demise.

Constantine is also believed to have been the very first Roman emperor to have direct and strong influence over the fledgling Roman Catholic Church. If you are wondering why I specifically refer to it as the Roman Catholic Church, this point will be made clear in a moment.

Also notable amongst Constantine's actions is the fact that in 325 AD he convened the First Council of Nicaea. A number of theologians view this as the first Ecumenical Council. One important result of the Council of Nicaea was the declaration of the Nicene Creed, which strongly promotes the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. You will find my personal views concerning the Holy Trinity doctrine discussed in considerable detail in such articles as "Roman Catholicism, Water Baptism and the Trinity". A key motivation behind the Fourth Century Church Fathers' promotion of the Nicene Creed and the Holy Trinity doctrine, was their desire to delegitimize Arianism, which they viewed as a heresy.

For those of you who may not be familiar with the doctrine, Arianism receives its name from a priest from Alexandria, Egypt by the name of Arius. Like other Christians before him, Arius maintained that similar to the other sons of God who are mentioned in the Book of Job, Jesus was a created being. As such, He could not be coeternal with God the Father, or consubstantial with the Father. This latter term means to be of the same substance as the Father. Furthermore, being as He is viewed as a being who was created by the Father, Arianism holds that Jesus Christ is not as great as God the Father, and is in fact subordinate to God the Father. One of the key verses which is used to support this doctrine is this one:

"Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than

I."

John 14:28, KJV

For those of you who may be interested in this subject, I discuss my personal views regarding Arianism in the article entitled "Jesus: The Beginning of the Creation of God". At any rate, the reason why Constantine convened the 325 AD Council of Nicaea was because he wanted to promote a common orthodoxy amongst the Christians of the empire, and at that time, the empire was clearly divided between the Arians in the eastern leg of the empire, and the Trinitarians in the western leg of the empire. Despite his personal doubts, the emperor sided with the Trinitarians, and Arius was branded a heretic, and Arianism a heresy.

The 325 AD Council of Nicaea -- and the Nicene Creed which resulted from it -- was an important moment in the history of our Christian faith; the reason being that it marked a clear divergence in doctrinal paths, just as the Sadducees and the Pharisees were divided by doctrine centuries earlier. In this case, because of the tepid support they received from Emperor Constantine, the Trinitarians gained the upper hand, and from that point forward, a very specific kind of Christianity was promoted throughout the Roman Empire. It has been variously referred to as "Nicene Christianity", "Nicene Trinitarianism" and "Catholic Christianity".

As you may know, the word "catholic" means "universal". Thus, the term "Catholic Christianity" implied that from that point forward, Nicene Christianity, or Nicene Trinitarianism, would be promoted throughout the Roman Empire, as opposed to Arian Christianity or any other kind of Christianity. However, as you will come to understand momentarily, the Edict of Milan, the Council of Nicaea and the adoption of the Nicene Creed during that council, were simply the first steps which would lead to -- and which also foreshadowed -- the full revelation and implementation of what today we call the Roman Catholic Church, during the late Fourth Century.

Another significant development which resulted from the 325 Council of Nicaea is that it widened the schism between the Christian faith and its Judaic roots. This was accomplished by prohibiting the Lord's Supper from being celebrated on the day before the Jewish Passover, or 14 Nisan. Furthermore, the Council of Nicaea declared that from that point in time and forward, the Roman solar calendar -- or Julian Calendar -- was to be given precedence over the Hebrew Calendar, which is a lunar-based calendar. That schism continued to grow in the many centuries which followed, and it has only been in recent decades that the Roman Catholic Church has made efforts to mend the breach with the Jews to some degree.

While the Edict of Milan brought closure to the many years of heavy persecution against Christians, and also restored some of their rights -- such as the ability to own property -- and while the First Council of Nicaea handed the Nicene Christians -- the Trinitarians -- a government-supported victory over the Arian Christians, the compromise between Roman political power and Christian religious power was not fully solidified until not quite seventy years later in 380 AD, when Emperor Theodosius and his co-emperors Gratian and Valentinian II -- who were half-brothers -- published the

Edict of Thessalonica.

Exactly what was the Edict of Thessalonica? This Roman edict formally declared that from henceforth, the Christian faith was to be the only state-recognized and legitimate religion in the empire. Just over a year later, Emperor Theodosius I also convened the First Council of Constantinople, which is recognized by Roman Catholics and other Trinitarians as the Second Ecumenical Council. This council was highlighted by the fact that it confirmed the Nicene Creed of 325 AD, and also further dealt with the issue of Arianism. Stated more directly, with the Edict of Thessalonica, Christianity became a state-imposed religion, and any other religion -- including Arianism -- would simply be dealt with. But exactly what kind of Christianity was being pushed on the people of the Roman Empire?

While Roman Catholics and other Christians of the Trinitarian persuasion no doubt view the 380 AD Edict of Thessalonica as a very positive development because it seems to signify the victory of Christianity over the entire pagan Roman Empire, I have a number of problems with it. My first issue should be rather obvious to you. That is the fact that faith and belief are matters of personal conscience, and cannot be dictated or mandated by any government, past or present. Even the authors of the U.S. Constitution recognized this universal truth when they wrote the First Amendment to the Constitution. It begins with the famous phrase "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

If God Himself provides humanity with free will and personal choice so that we can decide for ourselves whether or not we want to believe in Him and in the Sacrifice of His Son, what right does any man or human government have to take away this right, by preferring one particular religion, and by forcing that particular religion upon people without their consent or approval?

While I strongly believe in my Christian faith, and while I fervently desire that all men embrace Jesus Christ, I also realize that any such decision must be the direct result of God's Spirit working in a person's heart; because if it is a coerced decision that is made under pressure of any kind, it may very well be an insincere, superficial decision that will not endure for very long. Salvation under pressure just does not work, and I seriously question if persons who are saved in this fashion are really saved at all. If a person does not come to Jesus Christ because they honestly recognize their sinful condition in their heart, and their need for a Savior, then any kind of a conversion or Salvation prayer is utterly useless, in my view.

As we saw in part one, once the nascent Roman Catholic Church acquired sufficient power and influence, it actually began to persecute, torture and kill anyone who rejected its misguided doctrines such as Trinitarianism. The relentless wrath of the so-called "Holy Mother Church" is clearly evidenced by such tragic historical events as the Inquisitions, the "Christian" Crusades, the Marian Persecutions, etc. However, it needs to be understood that such ungodly behavior by this false church did not begin with the Crusades. It actually began hundreds

of years earlier.

Following the First Council of Nicaea when the Trinitarians gained advantage over the Arians due to the misguided help of Emperor Constantine I, they too began to use their new-found power and influence to persecute the Arian Christians. It was basically a doctrinal religious war between the eastern and western legs of the empire. With the declaration of the Edict of Thessalonica, which was followed by the First Council of Constantinople, the Trinitarians, or Nicene Christians if you prefer, acquired even more influence and power which they did not hesitate to use. Just as in later centuries the "Mother Church" would rely upon persecution, fear and pain to defeat and oppress her enemies, the Trinitarians of the 4th Century did the very same thing.

One individual who played a very influential role during the proceedings of the First Council of Nicaea was a deacon by the name of Athanasius. While at the time he was the personal secretary to Alexander, who served as the nineteenth Bishop of Alexandria, within a few years time, he would be promoted to the role of archbishop of Alexandria; that is, the 20th bishop of Alexandria. Athanasius devoted almost fifty years of his life to defeating Arianism, and is regarded as the primary defender of Trinitarianism. He fought against Arius, Emperor Constantine I, Constantine's son Constantius II, as well as against Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia and other very powerful Arians. Athanasius is respected as one of the four "Great Doctors of the Church" in the Roman Catholic Church, and also as one of the "Great Doctors of the Church" in the Eastern Orthodox Church as well.

In a word, two very powerful and influential doctrinal forces came to the fore in Alexandria. On the one hand was Arius who dared to question the precise status of Jesus Christ, and on the other was Athanasius, who was largely responsible for the propagation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. It required the power of several different emperors to finally settle the doctrinal dispute and hand a victory to the Trinitarians. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that the dispute was not really settled; the Arian Christians were simply branded heretics and suppressed. For his part, Emperor Constantine I later realized that he had made a terrible mistake by siding with the Trinitarians. In fact, according to tradition, as Constantine lay on his deathbed in 337 AD, he was baptized by an Arian bishop -- Eusebius of Nicomedia -- and not by a Trinitarian bishop.

Earlier I mentioned the secret religion that was known as the Mysteries of Mithras. While there is some debate concerning where this particular religion originated -- some say that it was an offshoot of Zoroastrianism in Persia, while others say that it was a home-grown religion of Rome itself which was primarily embraced by the Roman military -- it is interesting to note that while it flourished throughout the Roman Empire for about four centuries, by the end of the Fourth Century, it had for the most part disappeared. To some historians, its fate remains a mystery. However, the answer seems obvious to me.

Other religions, including Rome's own ancient pagan religion, were also looked down upon and suppressed, as a direct result

of the extensive power that was acquired by the Trinitarians during the Fourth Century. The Nicene Christians -- that is, the Trinitarians -- were by no means passive Christians. They were very militant Christians, and they continued to be very militant Christians for many centuries to come, as we have already seen.

A moment ago I asked exactly what kind of Christianity was declared and imposed upon the people of the Roman Empire by the Edict of Thessalonica in 380 AD. The answer, as some of you will already realize, is that Nicene Christianity -- or Trinitarianism -- became the only legally-recognized faith in the empire. Every other religion -- including Rome's ancient religion, Arian Christianity, Mithraism, etc., were outlawed. But exactly what was this Nicene Christianity? While you may already understand that it centered around acceptance of the Holy Trinity doctrine, the answer becomes even more apparent when we examine the actual text of the Edict of Thessalonica which states the following. I have included both the original Latin, as well as its English translation:

----- Begin Quote -----

Latin:

IMPPP. GR(ATI)IANUS, VAL(ENTINI)ANUS ET THE(O)D(OSIUS) AAA.
EDICTUM AD POPULUM VRB(IS) CONSTANTINOP(OLITANAE).

Cunctos populos, quos clementiae nostrae regit
temperamentum, in tali volumus religione versari, quam
divinum Petrum apostolum tradidisse Romanis religio usque ad
nunc ab ipso insinuata declarat quamque pontificem Damasum
sequi claret et Petrum Aleksandriae episcopum virum
apostolicae sanctitatis, hoc est, ut secundum apostolicam
disciplinam evangelicamque doctrinam patris et filii et
spiritus sancti unam deitatem sub pari maiestate et sub pia
trinitate credamus. Hanc legem sequentes Christianorum
catholicorum nomen iubemus amplecti, reliquos vero dementes
vesanosque iudicantes haeretici dogmatis infamiam sustinere
'nec conciliabula eorum ecclesiarum nomen accipere', divina
primum vindicta, post etiam motus nostri, quem ex caelesti
arbitro sumpserimus, ultione plectendos.

DAT. III Kal. Mar. THESSAL(ONICAE) GR(ATI)ANO A. V ET
THEOD(OSIO) A. I CONSS.

English:

EMPERORS GRATIAN, VALENTINIAN AND THEODOSIUS AUGUSTI. EDICT
TO THE PEOPLE OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

It is our desire that all the various nations which are
subject to our Clemency and Moderation, should continue to
profess that religion which was delivered to the Romans by
the divine Apostle Peter, as it has been preserved by
faithful tradition, and which is now professed by the
Pontiff Damasus and by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of
apostolic holiness. According to the apostolic teaching and
the doctrine of the Gospel, let us believe in the one deity
of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in equal majesty
and in a holy Trinity. We authorize the followers of this
law to assume the title of Catholic Christians; but as for

the others, since, in our judgment they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to give to their conventicles the name of churches. They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of the divine condemnation and in the second the punishment of our authority which in accordance with the will of Heaven we shall decide to inflict.

GIVEN IN THESSALONICA ON THE THIRD DAY FROM THE CALENDERS OF MARCH, DURING THE FIFTH CONSULATE OF GRATIAN AUGUSTUS AND FIRST OF THEODOSIUS AUGUSTUS

----- End Quote -----

As you can very plainly see for yourself by the above text, in addition to confirming the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which had first been widely promoted during the First Council of Nicaea fifty-five years earlier, the edict also declared that the followers of the Nicene Creed should be referred to as "Catholic Christians". In other words, what the Edict of Thessalonica really did was to formally establish the Roman Catholic Church in the year 380 AD. The three aforementioned emperors -- that is, Theodosius I, Gratian and Valentinian II -- legally recognized and authorized the Trinitarians to take the name "Catholic Christians". It was now the law that only Trinitarians could use this title of "Catholic Christians". No other kind of Christian could use it, and much less those people who embraced other pagan religions. The RCC was born! Roman Catholicism was a state-imposed religion. It was not a religion which could be chosen by Roman citizens through free will and personal choice, because there were no other choices.

Please go to part three for the conclusion of this series.

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Pontifex Maximus: Pagan High Priest to Roman Catholic Pope

Part 3

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Origin Of The Christian Faith, Disciples Were First Called Christians In Antioch, Bible Is The Constitution Of God's Kingdom And Carries Legal Weight, God Gave Us The Name Of Christians During First Century, No Need For A New Name In 380 AD, Trinitarians Define Their Own Kind Of Christianity, False Worldly Militant Religion Based Upon Persecution Fear Intimidation And Pain, Convert Or Else, Warning To Arians Mithraists And Other Non-Catholic Heretics, A God To Fear And Nuns With Paddles, Sad Refrains Of "The One True Faith",

False Doctrine Of Apostolic Succession, Our Authority Comes From God Alone, Roman Catholic Traditions Regarding Peter Being First Bishop Of Rome, Silly Apocryphal Acts Of Peter, Peter's Crucifixion, Peter's Warning Regarding Filthy Lucre And Being Lords Over God's Flocks, Claudius Kicks Jews Out Of Rome, Every Nation And Government Has A Leader, One Of The Emperor's Titles Was Pontifex Maximus Or The Greatest Pontiff, College Of Pontiffs Was Priesthood Of Rome's Pagan Religion, Pontifex Maximus Absorbed Into Office Of Emperor, Caesaropapism And Emperor's Control Over Popes, The Pontifex Maximus Title Is Dropped By Christian Emperors, Pontifex Is Transferred To Bishop's Office, Catholic Popes Begin Using The Pontifex Maximus Title, Creation Of College Of Cardinals, From Pagan Titles And Functions To Roman Catholic Titles And Functions, Centuries Of Christianizing Pagan Beliefs And Practices By The RCC, Verses Regarding God's True Church And The Kingdom Within, Closing Remarks, More Reading Sources

Now, let me ask you a simple question. If I were to ask you where your Christian faith originated, and how you received the name of "Christian", how would you respond? If you are even the least bit knowledgeable of your faith, you would no doubt mention the Bible; and more specifically, the Gospels which provide us with an account of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. If you really know your Bible, you might even point me to the following verse that is found in the eleventh chapter of the Book of Acts:

"And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."
Acts 11:26, KJV

The previous verse clearly informs us that our predecessors were first given the name of "Christians" in Antioch during the First Century. Given what we know about the Books of the New Testament, we can conclude that Luke must have written the above verse sometime during the first half of the First Century, as he travelled about with the Apostle Paul during the early years of his ministry. Just as in 380 AD the Edict of Thessalonica was recognized and accepted by the people of the Roman Empire as a legal, enforceable document, in similar fashion, we Christians recognize the Bible as a trustworthy, legal and Divinely Inspired set of Books which was given to us by our Creator by way of dozens of different writers over a period which spanned many centuries.

As I have often said, the Bible is the Constitution of our Kingdom. In other words, we respect the Bible, just as the Romans respected the edicts of their emperors. The Bible carries legal weight for us, just as the emperors' edicts carried legal weight for Roman citizens.

So the question is this: If God, through His inspired Word, saw fit to give us the name of "Christians" during the first half of the First Century, why was there any need for a human government to come along almost three hundred and fifty years later, and assign us the new name of "Catholic Christians"? Is there something wrong with the original name that is found

in Acts chapter eleven? I think not! It perfectly defines us as the followers of Jesus Christ. In my view, to add anything to it is to make us followers of something else; that is, it makes us the followers of the doctrines of men.

In other words, there was no need -- at least not in the eyes of Bible-believing Christians -- to invent a new name for our faith. The only reason why the need even arose in 380 AD is because the Trinitarians wanted to define their own kind of Christianity -- Nicene Christianity or Catholic Christianity -- which would be based on the doctrines which they deemed acceptable, and which the emperors authorized them to promote throughout the empire, thus making their beliefs universal, or catholic.

In my opinion, those wayward bishops and Church Fathers were really breaking away and deviating from the original faith, and the peaceful faith, which had been practiced and handed down by the Original Apostles and their immediate successors, and creating a very different kind of Christianity; that is, a very militant Christianity, which we know today as Roman Catholicism. As I stated earlier in this series, their kind of Christianity was more interested in power, wealth, comfort and empire-building. Their kind of religion wanted to force itself upon people by law through the Edict of Thessalonica. It did not rely on the conviction of God's Spirit working in a person's heart; it relied upon persecution, intimidation, fear, pain and the legal weight of Roman law.

As we saw in part two, just as in later centuries the Roman Catholic Church relied upon persecution, torture and murder to silence anyone who did not embrace its doctrines, the Edict of Thessalonica likewise announced that any person who rejected the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the "Catholic Christian" faith, would be branded a heretic, and would also be subject to punishment by the Roman authorities. In other words, the clear message to all Roman citizens was "Convert or else!". Is that what Jesus and His Apostles taught us to say and do? Let me share parts of the Edict of Thessalonica with you again:

----- Begin Quote -----

"but as for the others . . . we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to give to their conventicles the name of churches . . . and in the second the punishment of our authority which in accordance with the will of Heaven we shall decide to inflict."

----- End Quote -----

Please notice carefully that this edict also plainly states "and shall not presume to give to their conventicles the name of churches". Exactly what is a conventicle? According to my computer's built-in dictionary, a conventicle refers to any "secret or unlawful religious meeting, typically of people with nonconformist views". In other words, this part of the edict appears to be directed at any Christian -- such as the Arians, who were indeed nonconformists -- who dared to engage in secret worship outside of the Roman Catholic religion which was authorized by this edict. Not only were

such persons deemed heretics, but they were warned to not even refer to their gatherings as churches. Again we see that the clear message that is being conveyed by this edict is "The only true church is the Roman Catholic Church!"

It is possible that this section of the edict may have also been a warning to the adherents of the Mysteries of Mithras religion as well, being as they also gathered secretly in their underground "Mithraeum". While it is indeed true that they seem to have disappeared within a few decades of this edict being published, to my knowledge, they did not refer to their gatherings as churches. Thus, I am more inclined to believe that the warning was directed to the Arians, as well as to other Christians who refused to conform to the new state religion of Roman Catholicism.

It should be clear to you by now that this false church and false religion did not derive its power from God; and it was not founded on love for Jesus Christ or love for lost souls. Its power was derived solely from the secular power of the emperors who supported it; and it relied upon intimidation and fear to enforce its dictates. It was not, and is not, the Church that was founded by Jesus Christ and His Apostles. As I have been working on this series, I have been thinking back to my own childhood when I was raised as a Roman Catholic. As hard as I try now, I can't bring up any memories where I saw God as someone who loved me. All that has stuck with me from those earlier years is an image of nuns with paddles, and a God who I was supposed to fear. What about you?

Just as the misguided, unbelieving Jews cried out centuries earlier when they delivered Jesus to be crucified "We have no king but Caesar!", these misguided bishops and Church Fathers -- the Nicene Christians and Trinitarians of the late Fourth Century -- were also saying "We have no religion but Roman Catholicism!" They were -- and continue to remain -- fanatics and militants. In the more than sixteen hundred years which have transpired since the Edict of Thessalonica was declared, their battle cry has not changed in the least. I can testify to the fact that in their blindness, they still continue to haughtily insist that Roman Catholicism is -- in their words -- "the one true faith". I have personally had confrontations with Roman Catholic militants over this sad refrain on a few occasions during my lifetime.

If, as the Roman Catholic Church claims through their false doctrine known as Apostolic Succession, they can trace the origin of their church back to the Apostle Peter, why did it become necessary for them to suddenly become recognized and legally authorized by the Roman emperors in 380 AD? Did the supposed apostolic link to Peter somehow become broken and they had to fix it, or did it never really exist in the first place? I know what I believe.

It is my personal belief that the authority for our faith comes from God alone, and not from any man or government. We do not need man's approval in order to refer to ourselves as Christians. Neither do we require man's approval in order to preach the Gospel. This is a right and a responsibility which has been given to us by God Himself, through His Word. As the Apostle Peter and the other Apostles boldly stated almost two thousand years ago:

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."
Acts 5:29, KJV

As I explain in other articles, there is absolutely no proof to be found anywhere in the Scriptures which indicates that Peter ever went to Rome, or that he became the first Bishop of Rome. Such imaginative stories are based solely on Roman Catholic tradition, as well as on questionable apocryphal works such as the "Acts of Peter". I own and have read this work; and quite frankly, I find it to be very ridiculous, not to mention unscriptural. Do you believe that Peter met Jesus on the road outside of Rome, and that Jesus told Peter that He was going to Rome in order to be crucified a second time? Well, believe it or not, but that is precisely what the "Acts of Peter" claims. Following is chapter thirty-five of the "Acts of Peter" in its entirety:

----- Begin Quote -----

"And as they considered these things, Xanthippe took knowledge of the counsel of her husband with Agrippa, and sent and showed Peter, that he might depart from Rome. And the rest of the brethren, together with Marcellus, besought him to depart. But Peter said unto them: Shall we be runaways, brethren? and they said to him: Nay, but that thou mayest yet be able to serve the Lord. And he obeyed the brethren's voice and went forth alone, saying: Let none of you come forth with me, but I will go forth alone, having changed the fashion of mine apparel. And as he went forth of the city, he saw the Lord entering into Rome. And when he saw him, he said: Lord, whither goest thou thus (or here)? And the Lord said unto him: I go into Rome to be crucified. And Peter said unto him: Lord, art thou (being) crucified again? He said unto him: Yea, Peter, I am (being) crucified again. And Peter came to himself: and having beheld the Lord ascending up into heaven, he returned to Rome, rejoicing, and glorifying the Lord, for that he said: I am being crucified: the which was about to befall Peter.

----- End Quote -----

It may surprise you to learn that this tome is used by some people as evidence to prove that Peter went to Rome, where he became the first Bishop of Rome, and was then crucified in Rome. With crazy stories such as the above, would you put your faith in anything that this book has to say? I rest my case.

As we learned in part one, Jesus prophesied in the Gospel of John that Peter would be crucified in his old age. While we can assume that he was crucified by the Romans -- being as crucifixion was one of their methods of implementing capital punishment -- the Bible does not inform us exactly where his martyrdom occurred. As a poor, unlearned fisherman, and as one who preached against filthy lucre -- signifying personal gain -- and who also warned the Disciples against becoming lords over God's heritage -- meaning the Lord's flocks -- I honestly and seriously doubt that Peter -- or any of the Apostles for that matter -- would have ever allowed himself to be fitted into such lavish attire as the first Bishop of

Rome, as the Roman Catholics like to portray him. Consider these verses:

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:"
1 Peter 5:1-6, KJV

Now please tell me; after reading the previous verses, are you given the impression that the Apostle Peter would be in any way inclined to go to Rome, and to become involved in all of the luxurious pomp and ceremony that is associated with the popes of the Roman Catholic Church? Even if the office of the bishop was much more subdued two thousand years ago -- as I believe it was -- it still does not make any sense. Let's not forget that at the time that Peter would have supposedly been the first Bishop of Rome, the city -- under Nero -- was an extremely dangerous place to be. Rome didn't like the Jews or the Christians. You may recall that under Claudius -- who preceded Nero -- the Jews were in fact kicked out of Rome, as we can see by this verse that is found in the Book of Acts:

"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."
Acts 18:2, KJV

Now we come to the crux of the matter, and what will be the grand finale of this series. Just as the Kingdom of Heaven is ruled by God the Father; just as the New Testament Church is headed by Jesus Christ; and just as every government in this world likewise has someone at the helm -- a president, prime minister, king or queen -- so too, the false church that was revealed in 380 AD likewise needed to have its own leader as well. The question is, exactly how did this false church obtain its head, and what was he called?

One of Emperor Constantine I's titles was "Pontifex Maximus". He was not the first Roman emperor to carry this honorific title and neither would he be the last. However, what is of interest to us is how the meaning of this title changed, and how it was eventually transferred from the pagan emperors of Rome, to the Roman Catholic pope. Historically-speaking, the term Pontifex Maximus -- or "greatest pontiff" -- originally had absolutely nothing to do with Roman Catholicism, or with any form of our Christian faith.

The College of Pontiffs -- or Collegium Pontificum -- was the most important priesthood of ancient Rome, which was founded during the Regal period; that is, when the Roman kings ruled, prior to the arrival of the Roman Republic and then the Roman

Empire. The College of Pontiffs wasn't a Christian priesthood whatsoever. Its priests served as advisers to the king; that is, the "rex". The most important position in the priesthood was the high priest who was called the Pontifex Maximus. While this position remained purely religious in nature during the early years of the Roman Republic, by the time of Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus, it had become completely politicized, and was in fact absorbed into the office of the emperor.

In short, the emperor was regarded as both the political and the religious leader of the empire. He was both emperor and Pontifex Maximus at the same time. He was also viewed as the father, or pope -- from the Greek "pappas" -- of the empire as well. This union of political and religious authority in one person has been referred to as "Caesaropapism". It meant that the emperor likewise had authority over the Church, and Constantine I possessed this power as well. It is for this reason that he was able to organize the Council of Nicaea, and also make decisions concerning ecclesiastical disputes, as were other emperors. In fact, once the emperors acquired this power, the popes could not be elected and serve without the approval of the emperor. Emperors retained this authority until the Eleventh Century.

All of the Roman emperors -- Constantine included -- continued to use the title of Pontifex Maximus up until the latter half of the Fourth Century when Emperor Gratian -- a Christian -- with the encouragement of his chief advisor, Ambrose, who was the Bishop of Milan, renounced both the office and the title of Pontifex Maximus, due to its association with the ancestral pagan religion of Rome. To reiterate, Pontifex Maximus was the title of the high priest of the College of Pontiffs, which was the most important priesthood of ancient, pagan Rome. It had absolutely nothing to do with Christianity. It was heathen in nature. The College of Pontiffs was a pagan body. That is why the Christian emperors chose to stop using it.

But then something rather unusual happened. Despite its clear pagan origin, and the fact that some Christian emperors had stopped using the title for that very reason, the office of the bishop was soon referred to as "pontifex", and the chief Bishop of Rome eventually became the new "Pontifex Maximus". According to some sources, Pope Leo I was the first to assume the title of Pontifex Maximus, while other sources claim that Gregory I was the first pope to use the title. Whatever the case may be, from those early centuries until now, the title of the high priest of the ancient pagan religion of Rome has been used as one of the various titles of the Roman Catholic pope. While this title is not included in the pope's official titles, it does appear on buildings, monuments and coins of popes of both Renaissance and modern times.

On a related note, let us now briefly discuss the College of Cardinals who, among their other duties, are responsible for selecting the next pope. As I partially explained a moment ago, up until the Eleventh Century, the emperor possessed the power to appoint the pope. However, one of the lifelong projects of Pope Gregory VII -- 1073-1085 -- was to initiate reforms within the Roman Catholic Church. Gregory's reforms included transferring some power from the emperor -- who at that time held the title of Holy Roman Emperor -- back to the church. In particular, one of his objectives was to give

the church the authority to choose its own pope, instead of allowing the emperor to do it.

As the Bishop of Rome, the pope was assisted and advised by his cardinals. Originally, cardinals were only the clergy who lived in the city of Rome itself. It was not until later that the office was expanded to include all cardinals around the world. At any rate, during the Eleventh Century, and just three years after a very young Henry IV was crowned as King of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor in 1056, some of the reform minded clergy declared that selecting the pope should be the responsibility of the church alone. Thus was created the College of Cardinals, which began to meet as a college at the beginning of the Twelfth Century, and actually began to elect the new pope in the latter half of that same century.

So how does the College of Cardinals relate to our story as a whole? Quite simply, just as the Roman Catholic pope bears the same title -- Pontifex Maximus -- and is a parallel to the ancient high priest of pagan Rome, so too, the College of Cardinals is a parallel to the College of Pontiffs, which was the most important priesthood of pagan Rome, over whom the Pontifex Maximus presided. So once again we can see that what was once pagan in nature, has become "Christian" within the Roman Catholic Church.

As I explain more at length in other articles, this practice of "Christianizing" pagan ideas, beliefs, practices and gods and goddesses is something which the Roman Catholic Church has consistently engaged in for many centuries. We even see it happening today with the ecumenical movement, which is in fact dominated by the Roman Catholic Church.

While the information I have shared with you may seem sad, I hope that you have been led by God's Spirit in your personal understanding as you have read it. I hope that you have been able to recognize that this series is really the story of two distinct churches, one true, and the other false. While this series has highlighted the failures of the false church, and how it has succumbed to the evil ways and enticements of the false god of this world, please know that God's True Church has never ceased to exist, and continues to exist to this very day. You will not find it in the rich trappings of Rome, or in any other religion, Christian or otherwise. You will only find it exactly where Jesus and His Apostles told us to look for it; that is, in the hearts of men. Consider these verses:

"And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."
Luke 17:20-21, KJV

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had

said."
John 2:19-22, KJV

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."
John 4:21-24, KJV

"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."
1 Corinthians 10:4, KJV

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"
1 Peter 2:5-9, KJV

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."
1 Corinthians 6:19-20, KJV

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."
2 Corinthians 6:16-18, KJV

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."
2 Corinthians 5:1, KJV

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."
Revelation 3:12, KJV

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

Revelation 21:22, KJV

In stark contrast to the previous verses which describe the True Temple and Church of God, consider the following verses which reveal God's displeasure with -- and lack of desire for -- physical buildings:

"Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?"

Isaiah 66:1, KJV

"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

Jeremiah 5:31, KJV

"Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these."

Jeremiah 7:4, KJV

"For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof."

Hosea 8:14, KJV

"Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?"

Acts 7:48-49, KJV

"And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?"

2 Samuel 7:4-7, KJV

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?"

1 Kings 8:27, KJV

With these verses I will bring this series to a close. I hope that you have found it informative, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life.

If you have enjoyed reading this series, please consider sharing its URL with your online friends. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would also very much appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so

much, and may God bless you abundantly! For additional info, you may want to refer to the list of resources below which were also mentioned in this series, or which are related to the topics which were discussed in this series. All of them are likewise located on the Endtime Prophecy Net web server:

Civil Disobedience and Christian Persecution
Free Will and Personal Choice
Gargoyles: Satan Loves Church Buildings
God of Peace, God of War
Holy Qur'an And Islam: A Doctrine of Devils?
Killing and the Phinehas Priesthood
Killing, Murder and Military Duty
Lies and Deceptions of the Roman Catholic Church
Mary Worship, Christianity and Roman Catholicism
Peter: Faith Tried in the Fire
Revelation's Babylon the Great
Roman Catholicism, Water Baptism and the Trinity
The Children of God and Politics

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