

Apostolic Succession Is a Complete Fabrication

Introduction

The below information originates from www.biblestudy.net, and can be found under the heading: Bible Study Resources — 301 Roman Catholicism, which is presented in a twelve part series. For easy of reading, The Final Word Internet Ministry has correlated the twelve individual documents into one composite Word document.

PART ONE:

The Roman Catholic Church boasts itself to be the true church of Jesus Christ and the sole possessor of authentic Christian teaching. It distinguishes itself from and discriminates against all non-Roman-Catholic forms of Christianity on these grounds.

"Roman Catholicism - Christian church characterized by its uniform, highly developed doctrinal and organizational structure that **traces its history to the Apostles of Jesus Christ in the 1st century AD**. Along with Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism, it is one of the three major branches of Christianity." - Britannica.com

"Roman Catholicism - From the time of the earliest heresies the church has thought of itself as the one and only worshipping community that traced itself back to the group established by Jesus Christ." - Britannica.com

"Roman Catholicism - The claim of the Roman Catholic Church to be the one legitimate continuation of the community established by Jesus Christ is based on apostolic succession." - Britannica.com

Because the RCC (Roman Catholic Church) has been and is such a significant contributor to modern theology, both Catholic and Protestant, this claim deserves investigation by any Christian who genuinely seeks to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and His teaching.

In order to substantiate these claims the RCC must demonstrate that its essential characteristics, in doctrine, in structure, and in practice were evident in the first century Church, the era in which the Apostles lived and taught. The history of this period of the Church is largely restricted to the New Testament record and a few epistles, which date to this time. To be clear, it is not sufficient for the RCC to merely demonstrate the existence of Roman Catholic traits in the church of later antiquity (the 3rd and 4th centuries). It is not sufficient for the RCC to demonstrate that Roman Catholic scholars and clergy after the 3rd and 4th centuries claimed that the RCC is the true church of Jesus Christ and the sole possessor of authentic Christian teaching.

The prevalence of Roman Catholicism in the church of the 3rd and 4th centuries does nothing to substantiate the claim that the RCC is the authentic, original, and true church of Jesus Christ and the sole possessor of authentic Christian teaching. Likewise, the beliefs of 3rd and 4th century Roman Catholic scholars and clergy that the RCC was the authentic, original, and true church of Jesus Christ and the sole possessor of authentic Christian teaching does nothing prove that RCC is, in fact, such a thing. It only proves that Roman Catholic scholars believed that it was.

In reality, evidence of Roman Catholicism in the 3rd and 4th centuries only establishes that the RCC was a phenomenon or development of that period. It cannot attest to the presence of Roman Catholicism in the earliest Church or that Roman Catholicism was proclaimed by Jesus Christ and His Apostles.

So, the principle question regarding the claims of the RCC is whether or not Roman Catholicism is a product of the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles contained in the New Testament record or is more accurately understood as a later phenomenon or development. More specifically, with regard to this second option, is Roman Catholicism a product of the 3rd and 4th century merging of Roman imperialism and Neoplatonic paganism with Christianity?

These questions can be answered by examining several fundamental characteristics of Roman Catholicism and determining whether they are derived from the teaching of Jesus Christ contained in the New Testament or of Roman imperialism and Neoplatonic paganism. As we examine the teachings of the RCC we will conclusively demonstrate that while it is extremely difficult, if not completely impossible, to derive Roman Catholicism from the New Testament record of the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles, there is more than ample evidence that Roman Catholicism is a syncretistic blend of Christianity, Roman imperialism, and Neoplatonic paganism.

Scripture and Tradition

As we begin our investigation it is first necessary to discuss the New Testament scripture and the Sacred Tradition of the RCC. Roman Catholicism recognizes two forms of authoritative Christian writing or Apostolic teaching: 1) Sacred Scripture and 2) Sacred Tradition.

"In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them 'their own position of teaching authority.'"³⁵ **Indeed, the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time.**³⁶ **This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called Tradition, since it is**

distinct from **Sacred Scripture**, though closely connected to it. **Through Tradition, "the Church, in her doctrine, life, and worship** perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she [the Church] herself is, **all that she believes.**"³⁷" - The Catholic Catechism, Part 1, Section 1, Chapter 2, Article 2, Roman Numeral I, verses 35-37

"**Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture**, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. **For both of them, flowing out of the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one** thing and move towards the same goal."⁴⁰ Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own "always, to the close of the age."⁴¹" - The Catholic Catechism, Part 1, Section 1, Chapter 2, Article 2, Roman Numeral II, verses 40 and 41

"**Roman Catholicism** - But against the Protestant slogan of sola Scriptura ("Scripture alone"), itself subject to misinterpretation, **the Roman Catholic Church advanced the argument that the church existed before the New Testament. In fact, the church both produced and authenticated the New Testament as the word of God. For this belief, at least, tradition is the exclusive source; and this furnished a warrant for the Catholic affirmation of the body of truth that is transmitted to the church through the college of bishops and preserved by oral tradition (meaning that it was not written in the Scriptures). The Roman Church therefore affirmed its right to find out what it believed by consulting its own beliefs as well as the Scriptures. The Council of Trent affirmed that the deposit of faith was preserved in the Scriptures and in unwritten (not in the Bible) traditions and that the Catholic Church accepts these two with equal reverence.** The council studiously avoided the statement that they meant these "two" as two sources of the deposit, but **most Catholic theologians after the council understood the statement as meaning two sources.** Protestants thought it meant the Roman Catholic Church had written a second Bible." - Britannica.com

For, Roman Catholics both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition are written forms of Apostolic teaching, are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and are equally authoritative for understanding Christian belief and practice. With all of this in common why are these two authoritative sources yet distinguished from one another?

At least one reason for the continuing distinction between the two is their relative proximity to Jesus Christ and His Apostles. The New Testament was written by the Apostles of Jesus as well as other first century, first generation Christians.

Tradition, on the other hand, is the continued recording of ongoing Apostolic teaching by second, third, and later generation Christian scholars, clergy, and leadership as they expounded on the teachings of Jesus Christ. As such, Tradition starts small with only a few existing first century works. In the second century it gains momentum with a few more significant writings such as Irenaeus and Justin Martyr. By the third and fourth centuries the writing of Sacred Tradition was flourishing through the efforts of men like Origen and Augustine. Since then it has continued to be added to by popes, bishops, and many prominent theologians.

What is important to state as we begin our investigation of Roman Catholic claims is that this discussion will not, at least at first, be predicated upon a denial of Sacred Tradition. While we do reject the Roman Catholic view that Tradition contains Apostolic teaching, is inspired, and is authoritative, our refutation of the claims of the RCC will not be based upon this conclusion. Instead, what we will be doing is examining the record of Church teaching from the New Testament and the early 1st and 2nd century writings of "Sacred Tradition" to see if they reveal a Roman Catholic Church or are conflicting with Roman Catholicism.

If we find evidence of Roman Catholicism within the 1st and 2nd century Church writings we may conclude that the RCC is, in fact, the true church of Jesus Christ and the sole possessor of authentic Christian teaching. However, if sufficient evidence of Roman Catholicism cannot be found in these early 1st and 2nd century writings, but does not emerge until the 3rd or 4th centuries, then we will conclude that the RCC is merely a later phenomenon and seek to find those sources, which contributed to its development.

We will show four things over the course of this examination. **First** we will show that the writings of the 1st and 2nd century Church do not support the claims of the RCC, regardless of whether or not they are considered authoritative. **Second**, by extension, the claims and teachings of the RCC can only be found in "Sacred Tradition" as we approach the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. **Third**, those writings of "Sacred Tradition," which do contain distinctly Roman Catholic characteristics or claims constitute a clear contradiction within Roman Catholicism by contradicting the Sacred Scripture, which the RCC itself upholds to be the inspired, authoritative, and inerrant Word of God. **And fourth**, Roman Catholicism is only accurately understood as a syncretistic blending of Christianity into Roman imperialism and Neoplatonic paganism.

(For more on the idea of ongoing Apostolic teaching and the development of Christian doctrine please see our article entitled "The Foundation of Our Theology" in either the Our Approach or In-Depth Studies sections of our website.)

A Disclaimer about the Protestant Reformation

As a disclaimer, it is not our intention to validate the claims of Protestantism and the Reformation. While this task may inadvertently be accomplished to some degree due to the nature of our study, we do not consider ourselves to be Reformers or Protestants. To be sure, we are grateful to Reformation scholars who did so much to pull the Church away from the deviant developments of Roman Catholicism and allow a return to authentic Christian teaching.

There is no greater accomplishment of the Reformation than their affirmation of the sole authority of the Scriptures for forming sound Christian doctrine (in addition to the essential doctrine of sola fide, salvation by faith alone).

As a movement, however, the objections and objectives of the Reformation do miss the mark. In seeking simply to REFORM only some of the more egregious Roman Catholic tangents, Reformation leaders wholly adopted large doctrinal and philosophical elements of Roman Catholicism. In doing so they incorporated no small number of unsound theological traditions, beliefs, and practices, which continue to be proliferated in modern Christianity today, in both Roman Catholic and Protestant circles alike. **Chief among these are 1) the notion that orthodoxy is developed through a gradual process of doctrinal crises rather than being intact and understood from the onset of Christianity, 2) the acceptability of Christianizing pagan religious ideologies and customs, and 3) the subjective spiritualization (allegorizing) of Christian teaching contained in God's Word.**

Instead of a Reformation, what was needed then and is still needed today is a restoration. Instead of merely reforming some undesirable developments what we need is a restoration of original, authentic, and true Christian teaching, not just in part, but in whole. We need to not simply reform bad theological constructs into better ones, but completely abandon all beliefs and practices, which not being founded in the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles were developed by other men, however well-intentioned, in the 1,900 years plus since.

While the Protestant Reformation is the chief historical movement, which has provided for Christians in the west to break free of Roman Catholicism, we do not consider ourselves to be Protestants or Reformers. **We appreciate the contributions of Reformation scholars, but our interest is not in validating or affirming 16th century Reformation theology, but returning to the 1st century Christian teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. It is this goal, which forms the basis for this examination of Roman Catholicism and its claims to possess that teaching.**

Apostolic Succession and Roman Papal Authority - the Superiority of Peter

Analysis of Scriptural Evidence

One of the chief defining characteristics of Roman Catholicism is its claim that the pope is the successor of the Apostle Peter, who was appointed by Jesus as the leader of the Apostles and of the Church. The RCC claims that this position bestows upon the pope doctrinal authority over the Church and interpretational authority over the Scriptures. This power ultimately rests in the pope alone, but is supported and to a lesser extent shared by the bishops of the RCC. In other words, through the pope, the RCC claims the sole authority to pronounce what the true teachings of Jesus Christ are.

The following series of quotes will affirm this decisively.

"Roman Catholicism - The multiplicity and variety of papal titles themselves indicate the complexity of the papal office. In the Annuario Pontificio, the official Vatican directory, the pope is described as bishop of Rome, vicar of Jesus Christ, successor of the prince of the Apostles, pontifex maximus ("supreme pontiff") of the universal church, patriarch of the West, primate of Italy, archbishop and metropolitan of the Roman province, sovereign of the state of Vatican City, and servant of the servants of God. In his more circumscribed capacities as bishop of Rome, metropolitan of the Roman province, primate of Italy, and patriarch of the West, the pope is the bearer of responsibilities and the wielder of powers that have their counterparts in the other episcopal, metropolitan, primatial, and patriarchal jurisdictions of the Roman Catholic Church. What differentiates his particular jurisdiction from these others and renders his office unique is the Roman Catholic teaching that the bishop of Rome is at the same time successor to St. Peter, prince of the Apostles. As the bearer of the Petrine office, he is raised to a position of lonely eminence as chief bishop or primate of the universal church." - Britannica.com

"Roman Catholicism - Basic to the claim of primacy is the Petrine theory, according to which Christ, during his lifetime, promised the primacy to Peter alone, and, after his Resurrection, actually conferred that role upon him. Thus John 1:42 and, especially, Matthew 16:18 f.: "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Also John 21:15 f.: "Feed my lambs . . . Tend my sheep." Vatican I, in defining the Petrine primacy, cited these three texts, interpreting them to signify that Christ himself directly established St. Peter as prince of the Apostles and visible head of the Church Militant, bestowing on him a primacy not merely of honour but of true jurisdiction. In defining also that the Petrine primacy was, by Christ's establishment, to pass in perpetuity to his successors and that the bishops of Rome were these successors, Vatican I cited no further scriptural texts. In defining further, however, that the Roman pontiffs, as successors in the Petrine primacy, possess the authority to issue infallible pronouncements in matters of faith or morals, the council cited both Matthew 16:18 f. and Christ's promise to Peter at the Last Supper: "But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:32)." - Britannica.com

"Roman Catholicism - The Roman Catholic Church claims for itself a teaching authority that is unparalleled in the Christian community...To teach with authority means that the teacher is able to impose his doctrine upon the listener under a religious and moral obligation. This moral obligation does not flow from the nature of teaching, which of itself imposes no obligation upon the learner; the learner is morally obliged only to assent to manifest truth.

Instead it flows from the understanding that the Roman Church derives its teaching authority from the commission given by Jesus to the Apostles as contained in the New Testament ("He who hears you hears me"). But whereas the response of the hearers of the Apostles was faith, the response of the Roman Catholic is expected to go beyond faith. The Apostles were presumed to speak to those who did not yet believe, whereas the Roman Catholic Church imposes its teaching authority only upon its members. The definition of the teaching authority must show that these modifications do not exceed the limits of legitimate doctrinal development." - Britannica.com

"Roman Catholicism - The teaching authority is not vested in the whole church but in certain well-defined organs. These organs are the **hierarchy-the pope and the bishops.** The Roman Catholic Church traditionally has divided the church into "the teaching church" and "the listening church." Clergy below the hierarchical level are included in "the listening church," even though they are the assistants of the bishops in the teaching office. **The hierarchy alone teaches what the Roman Catholic Church calls "authentic" doctrine.**" - Britannica.com

"Roman Catholicism - The Roman pontiff is vested with the entire teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church; this was solemnly declared in the first Vatican Council. This means that he is the only spokesman for the entire Roman Church; **the papacy carries in itself the power to act as supreme pastor.** It is expected that he will assure himself that he expresses the existing consensus of the church, but in fact **the documents of the first Vatican Council are open to the understanding that the pope may form the consensus by his utterance.**" - Britannica.com

"Roman Catholicism - What is taught by all the bishops is authentic doctrine; it is understood that they teach in communion with the Roman pontiff, and a conflict of doctrine on this level is simply not regarded as a possibility. This consensus of the bishops is known as "the ordinary teaching." "The extraordinary teaching" signifies the solemn declaration of an ecumenical council, which is the assembly of the bishops, or the most solemn type of papal declaration, known as a definition of **doctrine ex cathedra ("from the throne"), a term that signifies that the declaration exhibits the marks of the teaching of the supreme pastor addressed to the universal church.**" - Britannica.com

"Roman Catholicism - The first Vatican Council declared that the pope, when he teaches solemnly and in the area of faith and morals as the supreme universal pastor, teaches infallibly with that infallibility that the church has. The infallibility of the church has never been defined, **and its extent is understood by theologians in the sense of pontifical infallibility as limited to faith and morals.**" - Britannica.com

"Roman Catholicism - The object of authentic teaching is defined as "faith and morals." Faith means revealed truth. Morals theoretically means revealed moral principles, but it has long been understood as moral judgment in any area of human conduct." - Britannica.com

"Roman Catholicism - Dogma is the name given to a proposition that is proclaimed with all possible solemnity either by the Roman pontiff or by an ecumenical council. A dogma is a revealed truth that the Roman Catholic Church solemnly declares to be true and to be revealed; it is most properly the object of faith." - Britannica.com

"Pope - Doctrinally, in Catholic churches, the pope is regarded as the successor of St. Peter, who was head of the Apostles. The pope, as bishop of Rome, thus is seen to have full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal church in matters of faith and morals, as well as in church discipline and government." - Britannica.com
"Pope - The teaching of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) on the role of bishops counterbalanced the emphasis on papal prerogatives while maintaining the view that the authority of the bishops as a body cannot be separated from that of the pope as its head." - Britannica.com

"Peter the Apostle, Saint - died c. AD 64, Rome original name Simeon, or Simon disciple of Jesus Christ, recognized in the early Christian church as the leader of the disciples and **by the Roman Catholic church as the first of its unbroken succession of popes.**" - Britannica.com

"Papacy - office of the pope, head of the Roman Catholic Church. He is pope by reason of being bishop of Rome and thus, according to Roman Catholic belief, successor in the see of Rome (the Holy See) to its first bishop, St. Peter. The pope therefore claims to be the shepherd of all Christians and representative (vicar or vicegerent) of Christ. The claim of Petrine supremacy and (by virtue of Peter's connection to Rome) Roman supremacy, is based on Matthew 16:18-19. Papal supremacy is not acknowledged outside the Roman Catholic Church. **That church further holds that God will not permit the pope to make an error in a solemn official declaration concerning a matter of faith or morality (see infallibility).**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Infallibility - Roman Catholics hold that the infallibility of the church is vested in the pope, when he speaks ex cathedra (i.e., from the chair of Peter, as the visible head of the church) on matters of faith and morals. Definitive pronouncements resulting from an ecumenical council, when ratified by the pope, are also held to be infallible. The pope speaks ex cathedra only rarely and after long deliberation. **The dogma of papal infallibility was enunciated by the First Vatican Council (1870).**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"The Church - It has been seen that Christ not only established the episcopate in the persons of the Twelve but,

further, created in **St. Peter the office of supreme pastor of the Church**. Early Christian history tells us that before his death, he fixed his residence **at Rome, and ruled the Church there as its bishop**." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The Pope - The title pope, once used with far greater latitude (see below, section V), is at present **employed solely to denote the Bishop of Rome, who, in virtue of his position as successor of St. Peter, is the chief pastor of the whole Church, the Vicar of Christ upon earth**." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The Pope - We have shown in the last section that **Christ conferred upon St. Peter the office of chief pastor, and that the permanence of that office is essential to the very being of the Church**. It must now be established that it belongs of right to the Roman See. The proof will fall into two parts: (a) that **St. Peter was Bishop of Rome**, and (b) that **those who succeed him in that see succeed him also in the supreme headship**." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The Pope - History bears complete testimony that **from the very earliest times the Roman See has ever claimed the supreme headship, and that that headship has been freely acknowledged by the universal Church**." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ." 47 This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to **the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome**." - The Catholic Catechism, Part 1, Section 1, Article 2, Roman Numeral III, Verses 47 and 48

Britannica.com, the Columbia Encyclopedia, the Catholic Encyclopedia, and the Catholic Catechism all repeatedly inform us in clear terms that Roman Catholicism claims the following facts:

1. Jesus appointed the Apostle Peter to a position of sovereignty over the other Apostles and over the Church.
2. Jesus conferred upon Peter the authority to determine what Church doctrine is.
3. Peter was bishop of Rome.
4. Peter recognized that he was to pass this unique office and authority on to successive bishops of Rome, who would also hold this same authority over the Church and over Church doctrine, and so he did.

The Catholic Encyclopedia expresses the crucial importance of this doctrine in the following quote.

"The Pope - The position of St. Peter after the Ascension, as shown in the Acts of the Apostles, realizes to the full the great commission bestowed upon him. He is from the first the chief of the Apostolic band -- not primus inter pares, but the undisputed head of the Church (see CHURCH, THE, III). **If then Christ, as we have seen, established His Church as a society subordinated to a single supreme head, it follows from the very nature of the case that this office is perpetual**, and cannot have been a mere transitory feature of ecclesiastical life. **For the Church must endure to the end the very same organization which Christ established**. But in an organized society it is precisely the constitution which is the essential feature. A change in constitution transforms it into a society of a different kind. **If then the Church should adopt a constitution other than Christ gave it, it would no longer be His handiwork. It would no longer be the Divine kingdom established by Him. As a society it would have passed through essential modifications, and thereby would have become a human, not a Divine institution. None who believe that Christ came on earth to found a Church, an organized society destined to endure for ever, can admit the possibility of a change in the organization given to it by its Founder. The same conclusion also follows from a consideration of the end which, by Christ's declaration, the supremacy of Peter was intended to effect**. He was to give the Church strength to resist her foes, so that the gates of hell should not prevail against her. The contest with the powers of evil does not belong to the Apostolic age alone. It is a permanent feature of the Church's life. **Hence, throughout the centuries the office of Peter must be realized in the Church**, in order that she may prevail in her age-long struggle. **Thus an analysis of Christ's words shows us that the perpetuity of the office of supreme head is to be reckoned among the truths revealed in Scripture. His promise to Peter conveyed not merely a personal prerogative, but established a permanent office in the Church. And in this sense, as will appear in the next section, His words were understood by Latin and Greek Fathers alike**." - Catholic Encyclopedia

The Catholic Encyclopedia speaks correctly in identifying the critical significance of this subject for the Church. Several statements deserve to be highlighted and kept in mind as we continue our study. For, the record the Catholic Encyclopedia asserts that:

1. "The Church must endure to the end the very same organization which Christ established."
2. "If then the Church should adopt a constitution other than Christ gave it, it would no longer be His handiwork. It would no longer be the Divine kingdom established by Him. As a society it would have passed through essential modifications, and thereby would have become a human, not a Divine institution."
3. "None who believe that Christ came on earth to found a Church, an organized society destined to endure for ever, can admit the possibility of a change in the organization given to it by its Founder."

From these quotes we understand that according to the Catholic Encyclopedia any organization which deviates, changes

from, or adopts an organization of the Church different from that which was originally intended by Jesus Christ is illegitimate. These are pretty strong terms. We do not however object to the Catholic Encyclopedia in this matter, but instead voice our wholehearted agreement. If then, our study reveals that the Roman Catholic church has adopted an organization for the Church which is different from that taught by Jesus Christ and His Apostles and exhibited in the earliest Church, then according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, Roman Catholicism is an illegitimate body, which is not the handiwork of Christ, but is merely a human, rather than divinely mandated institution.

So, if Roman Catholicism is the true Church of Jesus Christ and possesses the true teachings of Jesus Christ then we should be able to verify these claims in the New Testament record and in the writings of early the Church. We will start first with the scripture and then proceed to investigate other early Church writings.

PART TWO:

Scripturally speaking, the RCC relies upon just two New Testament passages, which it claims establish the first two items from our list above.

1. Jesus appointed the Apostle Peter to a position of sovereignty over the other Apostles and over the Church.
2. Jesus conferred upon Peter the authority to determine what Church doctrine is.

The following excerpts indicate which scripture texts the RCC appeals to in support of these notions.

"The Pope - The proof that Christ constituted St. Peter head of His Church is found in the two famous Petrine texts, Matthew 16:17-19, and John 21:15-17." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Roman Catholicism - Of the Petrine texts, Matthew 16:18 f. is clearly central and has the distinction of being the first scriptural text invoked to support the primatial claims of the Roman bishops." - Britannica.com

Since Matthew 16 is the central Scriptural passage used by Roman Catholics to establish Peter's papal authority we will address it second. First, we will cover John 21.

John 21:14 This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead. 15 So when they had dined, **Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 18** Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. 19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Below is the Catholic Encyclopedia's interpretation of John 21 and its bearing on Peter's papal authority.

"The Pope - The promise made by Christ in Matthew 16:16-19, received its fulfilment after the Resurrection in the scene described in John 21. Here the Lord, when about to leave the earth, places the whole flock -- the sheep and the lambs alike -- in the charge of the Apostle." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The Pope - The scene stands in striking parallelism with that of Matthew 16. As there the reward was given to Peter after a profession of faith which singled him out from the other eleven, so here Christ demands a similar protestation, but this time of a yet higher virtue: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these"? Here, too, as there, He bestows on the Apostle an office which in its highest sense is proper to Himself alone. There Christ had promised to make Peter the foundation-stone of the house of God: here He makes him the shepherd of God's flock to take the place of Himself, the Good Shepherd." - Catholic Encyclopedia

Returning to the passage in question it is difficult to see how John 21:15-17 establishes Peter as the chief Apostle or grants him papal authority over either the Church or in determining doctrine. The content of the passage merely includes Jesus asking Peter three times if he loved Him and after each affirmative response from Peter, Jesus tells him to feed His sheep. It does not follow from this passage that Jesus is bestowing any sort of special office or authority on Peter whatsoever.

In fact, the only way to reach that conclusion is to first assume the Roman Catholic position that Jesus did confer such a status to Peter and then to interpret this passage in light of that presumption. Of course, this is poor hermeneutic practice via unsound exegesis and complete circular reasoning. The only thing that this passage indicates is Jesus restoration of Peter's confidence after his tragic denial just prior to the crucifixion, which also occurred in three repeated statements.

For, these reasons and because the Catholic Encyclopedia itself places a priority on Matthew 16 for their papal doctrine,

we now turn to that passage.

Matthew 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, **Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?** **14 And they said,** Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. **15 He saith unto them,** But **whom say ye that I am?** **16 And Simon Peter answered and said,** Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. **17 And Jesus answered and said unto him,** **Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.** **18 And I say also unto thee,** That thou art Peter (4074), and upon this rock (4073) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. **19 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.** **20** Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

Here again is the Roman Catholic interpretation of Matthew 16:17-19 and why these verses unequivocally establish Peter's supremacy and authority over the Church and the determination of Christian teaching.

"The Pope - In Matthew 16:17-19, the office is solemnly promised to the Apostle. In response to his profession of faith in the Divine Nature of his Master, Christ thus addresses him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The Pope - The prerogatives here promised are manifestly personal to Peter. His profession of faith was not made as has been sometimes asserted, in the name of the other Apostles. This is evident from the words of Christ. He pronounces on the Apostle, distinguishing him by his name Simon son of John, a peculiar and personal blessing, declaring that his knowledge regarding the Divine Sonship sprang from a special revelation granted to him by the Father (cf. Matthew 11:27)." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The Pope - He further proceeds to recompense this confession of His Divinity by bestowing upon him a reward proper to himself: 'Thou art Peter [Cepha, transliterated also Kipha] and upon this rock [Cepha] I will build my Church.' The word for Peter and for rock in the original Aramaic is one and the same; this renders it evident that the various attempts to explain the term 'rock' as having reference not to Peter himself but to something else are misinterpretations. It is Peter who is the rock of the Church." - Catholic Encyclopedia

As we start our analysis of this lonely New Testament passage we must remember that the principle question is whether or not we can derive the Roman Catholic doctrine regarding Peter's papal authority from this passage without first presuming the Roman Catholic position. **We do not seek to understand whether or not Roman Catholics believe that Peter was the first pope. We already know the answer to that. What we want to know is if Jesus did, in fact, bestow this office and its authority upon Peter.**

And the entire interpretation of this passage depends upon answering one question: was Peter the rock upon which Jesus would build the Church? As we know, the RCC argues that this passage unequivocally indicates that Peter was granted papal authority because Jesus said that he (Peter) was the rock upon which the Church will be built. If, however, this single passage does not indicate that Peter is the rock upon which the Church will be built then it seems that this crucial Roman Catholic doctrine did not originate from the teaching of Jesus' Christ.

There are several ways in which one might go about arguing against the Roman Catholic interpretation of this passage. However, in our study we will employ only two.

First, even if Jesus is indicating that Peter is the rock upon which the Church will be built as Roman Catholics argue, does it follow that Peter was granted the authority to infallibly declare what is and what is not authentic Christian teaching as the RCC claims? Hardly, though Jesus would be giving Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven we must ask which comes first the chicken or the egg? More specifically, is sound doctrine established by Peter's papal authority or is Peter made the supreme authority because he first exhibits sound doctrine?

The RCC asserts the first option by claiming the sole right to pronounce true doctrine simply by virtue of the papal authority of Peter. Therefore, for Roman Catholics, what is and is not sound doctrine is a product of papal authority. **In other words, authority produces doctrine.**

"Roman Catholicism - The Roman pontiff is vested with the entire teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church; this was solemnly declared in the first Vatican Council. This means that he is the only spokesman for the entire Roman Church; the papacy carries in itself the power to act as supreme pastor. It is expected that he will assure himself that he expresses the existing consensus of the church, but in fact the documents of the first Vatican Council are open to the understanding that the pope may form the consensus by his utterance." - Britannica.com

"Roman Catholicism - The first Vatican Council declared that the pope, when he teaches solemnly and in the area of faith and morals as the supreme universal pastor, teaches infallibly with that infallibility that the church has. The infallibility of the church has never been defined, and its extent is understood by theologians in the sense of pontifical infallibility as limited to faith and morals." - Britannica.com

"Roman Catholicism - Dogma is the name given to a proposition that is proclaimed with all possible solemnity either by the Roman pontiff or by an ecumenical council. A dogma is a revealed truth that the Roman Catholic Church solemnly declares to be true and to be revealed; it is most properly the object of faith." - Britannica.com

"Papacy - That church further holds that God will not permit the pope to make an error in a solemn official declaration concerning a matter of faith or morality (see infallibility)." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Infallibility - Roman Catholics hold that the infallibility of the church is vested in the pope, when he speaks *ex cathedra* (i.e., from the chair of Peter, as the visible head of the church) on matters of faith and morals. Definitive pronouncements resulting from an ecumenical council, when ratified by the pope, are also held to be infallible. The pope speaks *ex cathedra* only rarely and after long deliberation. **The dogma of papal infallibility was enunciated by the First Vatican Council (1870).**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

Contrary to the teachings of the RCC, Matthew 16:15-17 indicates just the opposite. Jesus' statements in Matthew 16:15-17 clearly establish that any authority granted to Peter was given on the grounds that He first exhibited a sound understanding of God's revelation. As such, the idea that true teaching is a product of authority is not only NOT found in Matthew 16, but is contradicted by the process demonstrated in Matthew 16, wherein Peter is granted any supposed authority because he FIRST exhibits sound doctrine.

Even if we assume a Roman Catholic understanding that Matthew 16 conveys authority upon Peter, we must recognize three things. First, when Jesus first asks the question, Peter is NOT in a position of authority. Second and therefore, Peter's statement that Jesus is the Christ is not sound simply because it is made by a person in authority. Third, Peter is only granted authority after he first exhibits a sound understanding of God's revelation. The clear cause of Jesus granting any authority to Peter is that Peter first exhibited a correct understanding of God's revelation.

As such the events of Matthew 16:15-17 cannot be used to support the idea that persons in authority can infallibly declare revelations of God's truth as the RCC claims. Based upon Matthew 16:15-17 it stands to reason that if authority is given when sound doctrine is exhibited then authority can be lost if sound doctrine is deviated from. Or more succinctly, just as is the case in Matthew 16, having authority is entirely dependent upon the expression of sound doctrine.

Of course, this undermines the RCC's doctrine of papal authority in matters of faith and dogma, in which they claim that the pope has the authority to declare revelations of true Church teaching. However, according to Matthew 16:15-17 we can determine whether someone has God-given authority by determining whether or not they exhibit a sound understanding of PREVIOUSLY revealed teachings. We will comment further on how and why Peter's declaration in Matthew 16 is merely a restatement of previously revealed teachings as we continue forward to our next segment.

Moving on, we will now discuss whether or not Jesus' teaching in Matthew 16 does grant papal authority to Peter by declaring him to be the rock upon which the Church would be built and then giving him the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

There are two critical questions to this part of our investigation. First, is Peter the rock upon which the Church will be built? Second, does Jesus' giving the keys of the kingdom of heaven, as recorded in Matthew 16 indicate that Peter alone held authority over the Church?

The reason that Roman Catholics believe that Peter is the rock upon which the Church will be built stems from the similarity of the Greek words used in the New Testament for Peter and rock that appear in these verses. Below are the definitions for these two words and how they appear in Matthew 16:15-17.

4074 **Petros**{pet'-ros}

TDNT - 6:100,835 apparently a primary word

n pr m

Peter = "a rock or a stone"

1) one of the twelve disciples of Jesus

Authorized Version (KJV) Translation Count - **Total: 162**

AV - Peter 161, stone 1; 162

4073 **petra** {pet'-ra}

TDNT - 6:95,834 from the same as **4074**

n f

1) a rock, cliff or ledge

a) a projecting rock, crag, rocky ground

b) a rock, a large stone

c) metaph. a man like a rock, by reason of his firmness and strength of soul Authorized Version (KJV) Translation Count -

Total: 16 AV - rock 16; 16

Matthew 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 **And Simon Peter (4074)** answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, **Simon Barjona**: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 **And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (4074), and upon this rock (4073) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.** 19 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. 20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

From the definitions we can see that these two Greek words are very closely related. But we can determine how the Apostles understood Jesus' remarks here in Matthew 16:15-17, by how they used these two words in the rest of the New Testament writing. We will have many examples that will give us a clear picture.

The first thing to note about Jesus giving the name Peter (Petros) to Simon is that it was not a result of Peter's proclamation about Jesus being the Christ here in Matthew 16:16. Rather John informs us that Jesus called Simon by the name Peter when He was first introduced to him by his brother Andrew. This event is recorded in the beginning of John's gospel.

John 1:40 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was **Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.** 41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and **saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.** 42 And he brought him to Jesus. **And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas (2786), which is by interpretation, A stone (4074).**

Notice from John's account of Peter meeting Jesus for the first time that it is here that Jesus first calls him Peter (Petros, Strong's No. 4074). This means that Jesus did not call Simon by the name Peter because of his confession that Jesus was the Christ. Likewise, since Simon does not receive the name Peter as a result of his declaration about Jesus, we must also understand that calling Simon by the name Peter as recounted here in John 1 had nothing to do with granting Simon authority or making him the foundation of the Church.

Also, we must note what Peter is told by Andrew, his brother, when Andrew first informs Peter about Jesus. What does Andrew tell Peter before he brings him to meet Jesus? In verse 41 we see that Andrew tells Peter that Jesus is the Christ.

There are two important things that we must note from this account. First, what this tells us is that while Matthew 16:17 clearly indicates that God is ultimately responsible for Peter's understanding that Jesus was the Christ, Peter's confession that this was the case was not a novel understanding that Peter was the first to proclaim. In fact, the first thing Peter heard about Jesus was Andrew's confession that Jesus was the Christ. So, while Peter clearly understood and confessed that Jesus was the Christ, this idea did not originate with him, but was known and spoken by other Apostles before him.

In fact, this very truth was spoken to Peter by Andrew in John 1 before Peter was even Jesus' disciple. Likewise, Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. In John 1:29-36, John the Baptist begins proclaiming that Jesus is the Son of God four verses before Andrew tells Peter that Jesus is the Christ and calls Peter to come to Jesus.

John 1:29 The next day **John seeth Jesus coming unto him,** and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. 30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. 31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. 32 **And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.** 33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. 34 **And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.** 35 **Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;** 36 **And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!...** 40 **One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.** 41 **He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.** 42 And he brought him to Jesus. **And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.**

So, in declaring Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God in Matthew 16, Peter is simply affirming his belief in a revelation previously declared through John the Baptist and John's disciple Andrew, Peter's brother, who in calling Peter recounted these previously declared truths to Peter.

Additionally, the inclusion of John 1 into our evaluation of Matthew 16 indicates that beginning with John the Baptist's declarations that Jesus was the Son of God, who is also the Christ, Jesus began to build his Church by gathering unto himself those who believed this declaration, starting with the Apostles themselves, who were the first to be gathered, some of who, like Andrew, were John's disciples first. In other words, it was the revelation that Jesus was the Son of God, the Christ, which was first declared by John the Baptist that became the foundation of the Church that Jesus was building.

Second, we see that Jesus calling Simon by the name Peter (Petros, Strong's No. 4074) is not in any way related to Peter's confession that Jesus was the Christ. And it is certainly not prompted by the idea that Peter was the first to understand that Jesus was the Christ.

This truth was certainly revealed by God, but it was revealed by God first through John the Baptist, who proclaimed it (John 1:29-36), and then it was proclaimed by God himself to the entire public during Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:17, Matthew 1:1, and Luke 3:22. And the fact that Peter was not the first to receive this revelation entirely demolishes the RCC position regarding papal authority. Because, rather than God decreeing sound doctrine through Peter, Matthew 16 simply records God approving of Peter because he correctly and confidently upheld and repeated revelation that God previously revealed through others. If the authority of the RCC pope was similarly restricted, the pope would be required to submit to and express a correct understanding or previous revelations, just as Peter does here in Matthew 16, rather than invested with the power to proclaim doctrine on his own.

Therefore, we can see that the Catholic Encyclopedia's interpretation of Matthew 16:15-17 is entirely incorrect. Here again for reference the Catholic Encyclopedia's interpretation of the events of Matthew 16:15-17. Notice they are specifically arguing that Peter's confession is a special revelation that he received from God and that it is Peter's unique understanding that prompts Jesus' to make him the rock upon, which the Church will be built.

"The Pope - In Matthew 16:17-19, the office is solemnly promised to the Apostle. **In response to his profession of faith in the Divine Nature of his Master**, Christ thus addresses him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The Pope - The prerogatives here promised are manifestly personal to Peter. His profession of faith was not made as has been sometimes asserted, in the name of the other Apostles. This is evident from the words of Christ. **He pronounces on the Apostle, distinguishing him by his name Simon son of John, a peculiar and personal blessing, declaring that his knowledge regarding the Divine Sonship sprang from a special revelation granted to him by the Father (cf. Matthew 11:27).**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The Pope - He further proceeds to recompense this confession of His Divinity by bestowing upon him a reward proper to himself: 'Thou art Peter [Cepha, transliterated also Kipha] and upon this rock [Cepha] I will build my Church.'" - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The Pope - It is Peter who is the rock of the Church." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The Pope - ...Christ had promised to make Peter the foundation-stone of the house of God." - Catholic Encyclopedia

At worst we see that the Catholic Encyclopedia is completely mistaken in their interpretation of Matthew 16:15-17, wherein they claim that Peter has some special revelation that the other Apostles did not have and that this special revelation prompts Jesus to make Peter the rock upon, which the Church was to be built. At best, however, it is unclear whether or not Peter was the first or only Apostle to understand who Jesus was and just as unclear whether or not Peter's understanding of who Jesus was had anything to do with Jesus calling him by the name Peter (Petros, Strong's No. 4074).

It is difficult to understand how Roman Catholicism can justify their critically essential and highly developed doctrine on the papal authority vested in Peter from a single New Testament passage, in which the conclusions that they draw are in no way clearly indicated by the text. But, we move on to our next question. Did the Apostles, including Peter, understand that Peter was the rock upon, which the Church was to be built?

By performing a word survey on the New Testament usage of the two Greek words that are employed here in Matthew 16:15-17 we can learn how the Apostles understood Jesus' remarks. Remember that the word for Peter is "Petros" (Strong's No. 4074) and the word for rock is "petra" (Strong's No. 4073).

The Greek word "petra" and the concept of the foundation of the Church is first discussed by Jesus in a parable recorded in Matthew 7 and Luke 6.

Matthew 7:24 Therefore **whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock (4073):** 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; **and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock (4073).** 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. 28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: 29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Luke 6:47 **Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:** 48 **He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock (4073):** and when the

flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: **for it was founded upon a rock (4073)**. 49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

Notice that both of these passages make Jesus' teaching the rock that the house will be built or founded on. This parallels Jesus comment's in Matthew 16:15-17, where Jesus' states that He will build His Church upon the rock. Again, the chief question is whether or not the rock upon which the Church will be built is Peter or something else.

Jesus' parable, recorded in Matthew 7 and Luke 6, clearly indicate that the rock (Strong's No. 4073) is Jesus' teachings, not Peter. And we must of course recognize that Jesus' gave this parable before the events of Matthew 16:15-17 took place and before Jesus' made His statements recorded there. So, given that Jesus first called Simon by the name Peter in John 1:40 and that Jesus had taught the disciples that the rock upon which the house would be built was His own teaching in Matthew 7 and Luke 6, would the Apostles have understood Jesus' words in Matthew 16:15-17 to indicate that Peter was the rock upon which the Church would be built or would they have understood that the teaching that Jesus was the Christ was the foundation rock upon which the Church would be built?

Again, at best for Roman Catholics it is unclear, which is the case. At worst it is clear that the Apostles understood that it was the teaching that Jesus' was the Christ, confessed by Peter, that Jesus' was saying would be the rock upon, which the Church would be built. But, we don't have to end this discussion here. There is additional evidence in both the Old and New Testaments, which helps to clearly establish that it was Jesus and His teaching that are the foundation rock upon, which the Church will be built.

The simple truth is that Jesus only spoke what he heard the Father speak (John 8:28, 12:49-50, 14:10). So, Jesus' teaching was the teaching of the Father. Likewise, John the Baptist first heard that Jesus was the Son of God from the Father. So, when saying that his words would be the rock foundation in Matthew 7 and Luke 6, Jesus is stating that the foundation of his Church is the teaching of God the Father, which Jesus' himself taught and which also revealed to John the Baptist that Jesus was the Son of God, the Christ in John 1:29-36. And thus, from the very beginning, even as seen in Andrew's calling of Peter in John 1:40-42, Jesus was building his Church by gathering unto himself those that heard and believed and kept the teaching of God. The Rock, therefore, is Jesus and his teachings, which are the perfect expression of the truth of God (John 1:14, 17).

For instance, while we never see Peter referred to anywhere in the New Testament as the rock (Strong's No. 4073), and especially not in any clear terms, we do see Jesus identified as the rock (Strong's No. 4073) throughout the New Testament.

1 Corinthians 10:4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: **for they drank of that spiritual Rock (4073) that followed them: and that Rock (4073) was Christ.**

Here in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul clearly and unequivocally declares the Apostolic understanding that Jesus, NOT Peter, was the rock (Strong's No. 4073). Paul's teaching that Jesus was the rock (Strong's No. 4073) also appears in Romans 9, where we see the origin of this teaching.

Romans 9:33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone **and rock (4073) of offence:** and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Here in Romans 9, Paul speaks of Jesus as the rock (Strong's No. 4073) of offense. But Paul is not the originator of this understanding. In fact, he is quoting from an established Old Testament prophecy.

Psalms 118:22 The stone (68) which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

Psalms 118 speaks of this stone, of Jesus, who was rejected by the builders and yet was made the cornerstone of the foundation. Several New Testament passages beginning in the Gospels clearly record that Jesus was this stone.

Luke 20:17 And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone (3037) which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?

Matthew 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone (3037) which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Mark 12:10 And have ye not read this scripture; The stone (3037) which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

Acts 4:11 This is the stone (3037) which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

The final quote in this series, from Acts 4:11, is a statement made by Peter himself when he and John are brought before the high priest. But this is not the only place in the New Testament where Peter affirms that Jesus is the foundation stone

of God's Church. In his first epistle, Peter also speaks on this topic.

1 Peter 2:4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone (3037), disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5 Ye also, as lively stones (3037), are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 6 **Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone (3037), elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.** 7 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,** 8 **And a stone (3037) of stumbling, and a rock (4073) of offence, even to them which stumble at the word (3056),** being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Notice that in verse 8, Peter states that the rock (Strong's No. 4073) of offense, which we saw Paul use in Romans 9:33, which is the stone of stumbling is the word. The Greek word, which is translated as "word" here in 1 Peter 2:8 is "logos" (Strong's No. 3056). This word is the same word that John uses in the opening of his gospel to refer to Jesus.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the **Word (3056), and the Word (3056) was with God, and the Word (3056) was God...** 14 **And the Word (3056) was made flesh,** and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

So, the Greek word "logos" (Strong's No. 3056) as used in Peter's epistle at least refers to the teachings of Jesus and at most refers to Jesus' himself. And this is consistent with what we have seen in Matthew, Mark, Luke, Paul's letters, and now Peter as well. In all cases each of these people indicates that Jesus and His teachings are the rock upon which the Church will be built. The following verses also confirm that this conclusion was shared by the Apostles and was that held in the earliest era of the Church.

And Peter's reference to Jesus as "a stumbling stone, and a rock of offence," which is also referred to by Paul in Romans 9:33, is a reference back to Isaiah 8, which establishes this prophetic title for Jesus as the "rock."

Isaiah 8:14 **And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence** to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul writes to the Church as babes in Christ, who he has fed with milk and not meat. He chastises them for having divisions among them, which is one of the reasons he calls them babes in Christ. In verse 11, Paul again clearly identifies Jesus Christ, NOT Peter, as the foundation that the Church is built upon.

1 Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as **unto babes in Christ.** **2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat:** for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. 3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, **and divisions,** are ye not carnal, and walk as men? 4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? 5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. 8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. 9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. 10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 11 **For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.** 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. 16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

It is also interesting to note that the divisions, which Paul mentions in chapter 3 of this letter, are also referred to by Paul in chapter 1 of the same letter, where he identifies those who claimed to be followers of Peter (Cephas). Again, Paul is not praising them, but rebuking them for this division. Would his criticisms not also apply to the RCC?

1 Corinthians 1:10 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. 11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. 12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, **I am of Paul;** and I of Apollos; **and I of Cephas (2768);** and I of Christ. 13 **Is Christ divided?** was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

Likewise, in Hebrews 5-6, Paul also speaking of those who he identifies as babes in Christ again mentions the foundation of the Church. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul identified the foundation with Jesus Christ. Here in Hebrews 5-6, Paul provides examples of Jesus' teaching, which the Apostles taught to the churches, identifying these teachings as the foundations.

Hebrews 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become **such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.** **13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.** **14 But strong meat** belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. **6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation** of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, **2** Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. **3** And this will we do, if God permit.

But there are additional reasons that would prevent us from concluding that Peter was the foundation rock of the Church. Besides, the clear identification of Jesus and His teachings as the rock of foundation, and the total lack of New Testament indication that Peter himself is this rock, we have much evidence that all of the Apostles, as they worked to spread the teachings of Christ were the foundation.

In Ephesians 2:20, Paul identifies the foundation as the apostles and prophets, while maintain that Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone of the foundation.

Ephesians 2:20 And are **built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;** **21** In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: **22** In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Revelation 21 presents a similar concept wherein the foundations of the New Jerusalem are named after all twelve of Jesus' Apostles, NOT just Peter.

Revelation 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

So, far from having a distinct place as the rock upon which the Church will be built, as Roman Catholics believe, we see that the New Testament record does NOT support this interpretation. At best, the RCC has overreached and taken a bold, excessive, and overdeveloped position, on a topic that the New Testament is not clear on. At worst, the New Testament is decisively clear that Peter is not the rock upon which the Church will be built, and thus the Roman Catholic position is found to be in error. We believe that the evidence we have seen so far strongly indicates the second option. But, in either case it is difficult to see how Roman Catholics can justify their papal doctrines with any confidence.

PART THREE:

Besides the passages, which we have already examined, the New Testament provides additional proof that Peter did not enjoy a place of primacy over the other Apostles. In Matthew 18, after the infamous Matthew 16:15-17 passage, we see that Jesus is asked directly as to who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Instead of affirming Peter's position of primacy, Jesus instead commands us to be as little children.

Matthew 18:1 **At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?** **2** And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, **3** And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. **4** Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. **5** And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. **6** But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

If just previously Jesus had indicated in Matthew 16 that Peter was to be the head of the Church it is interesting to note that Matthew 18:1 may at least indicate that the Apostles were not clear on Jesus' instructions from that chapter. However, we must also note that Jesus bypasses the opportunity to clarify Peter's authority in the kingdom of heaven. The fact that He does not reiterate Peter's position of authority in response to this question in Matthew 18 more than begs the question as to whether or not He ever did grant Peter such a position as the RCC claims.

As similar question arises in Mark 10, where James and John approach Jesus about being placed in a position of authority just subordinate to Jesus' in the kingdom of God.

Mark 10:35 **And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying,** Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. **36** And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? **37** They said unto him, **Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.** **38** But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? **39** And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: **40** **But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.** **41** **And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.**

Again, two things are demonstrated by this passage. First, apparently the disciples did not understand Peter's primacy in the Church. Second, in responding to James and John Jesus does not resist their request by speaking of Peter's

supremacy. Additionally, in verse 40 Jesus affirms that there are two positions of authority under His own in the kingdom of heaven, and not the singular spot that the RCC reserves for Peter.

Also, we saw earlier that one of the central points to the RCC's interpretation of Matthew 16:15-17 comes by way of Jesus giving the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter in verse 19.

Matthew 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? **14** And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. **15** He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? **16** And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. **17** And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. **18** And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (4074), and upon this rock (4073) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. **19 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.** **20** Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

The RCC claims that Jesus gave these keys only to Peter and that this verse indicates Peter's authority and place of sovereignty over the Church.

"The Pope - In the following verse (Matthew 16:19) He promises to bestow on Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The Pope - In all countries the key is the symbol of authority. Thus, Christ's words are a promise that He will confer on Peter supreme power to govern the Church. Peter is to be His vicegerent, to rule in His place. Further the character and extent of the power thus bestowed are indicated. It is a power to 'bind' and to 'loose' -- words which, as is shown below, denote the grant of legislative and judicial authority. And this power is granted in its fullest measure. Whatever Peter binds or looses on earth, his act will receive the Divine ratification." - Catholic Encyclopedia

Contrary to the Roman Catholic understanding the New Testament does not support the idea the Peter alone received authority from Christ over the Church, but instead grants this authority more broadly at least to all of the Apostles and perhaps even further to all of His disciples.

This power of binding and loosing, which the RCC identifies as denoting "the grant of legislative and judicial authority" "granted in its fullest measure" an act which when employed "will receive the Divine ratification" is elsewhere given by Jesus to all of His Apostles and NOT just Peter.

Matthew 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, **tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church,** let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. **18** Verily I say unto you, **Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.** **19** Again I say unto you, **That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.** **20** For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Notice first, that Jesus places judicial power in the Church and in the agreement of at least two of them and NOT solely in Peter. This is significant since Matthew 18 follows Matthew 16. If in Matthew 16 Jesus had placed sole authority for legislative and judicial authority in its fullest measure with divine ratification in the hands of Peter only, then Matthew 18 is confusing to say the least and contradictory at the worst. Instead, what is apparent is that Jesus is bestowing this authority of binding and loosing upon all of His Apostles at least and perhaps to a greater extent to all of the Church.

Furthermore, Jesus' statement to Peter in Matthew 16:19 is predictive. It is rendered in the future tense indicating that at some future point, rather than the present moment, Jesus was going to bestow upon Peter the keys and that authority. Since Matthew 16:19 is predictive of a future event, we can see that Matthew 18, which is inclusive of all the apostles not just Peter, is the fulfillment of the predictive promise in Matthew 16:19. Or, in other words, Jesus promise to give Peter the keys and authority in Matthew 16:19 is fulfilled when he grants this authority to all of the Apostles together in Matthew 18:15-20. Thus, the position of the RCC is again proved to not be rooted or founded upon the teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded and proclaimed by the Apostles from the earliest times.

Likewise, there are several more instances where Jesus' clearly grants authority to all of the Apostles at least, and NOT just to Peter. In Matthew 19, Jesus tells Peter that he and the other eleven Apostles will sit on twelve thrones judging the tribes of Israel.

Matthew 19:27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? **28** And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That **ye which have followed me,** in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, **ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.** **29** And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; **30** That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, **and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

Jesus' comments here again place Peter in a position of equality with the other disciples and NOT in a place of prominence over them. In verse 29, Jesus says clearly appoints all of them over the Kingdom of God, just as God had appointed Him. Again Peter is placed among the other disciples and not above them when authority in the kingdom of God is discussed.

And finally, just before He ascends into heaven Jesus also speaks of the authority that He has over heaven and earth.

Matthew 28:16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. **17** And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. **18** And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, **All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.** **19** Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: **20** Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Contrary to the Roman Catholic interpretation of John 21, wherein they claim that Jesus affirms Peter's primacy over the other disciples just before the ascension, Matthew 28 informs us that Jesus' instead commissioned all of the Apostles to proclaim His teachings in the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Again, it is significant that Peter is not singled out, but that all of the Apostles are given the same treatment by Jesus.

And not only do we see an absence of special treatment given to Peter in the New Testament as well as where Peter is merely treated with equal status to the other Apostles, but there are several passages in the New Testament which display Peter submitting to other Apostles.

In Acts 15, we see that a council is brought together at Jerusalem to decide on how much of the Mosaic Law Gentile converts were to adhere to.

Acts 15:1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. **2** When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. **3** And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. **4** And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. **5** But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. **6** And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. **7** And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. **8** And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; **9** And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. **10** Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? **11** But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. **12** Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. **13** And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: **14** Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. **15** And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, **16** After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: **17** That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. **18** Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. **19** Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: **20** But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. **21** For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. **22** Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: **23** And they wrote letters by them after this manner; **The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles** in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: **24** Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: **25** It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, **26** Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **27** We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. **28** For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; **29** That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. **30** So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: **31** Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

There are several things to note about this council. First, Peter did not call for the council. Second, Peter is in attendance at the council. Third, Peter does speak at the council. Fourth, while Peter is present and does speak, it is not Peter who decides the matter. In fact, the record of Acts 15 is that all of the Apostles and elders came together to decide the matter.

Additionally, James is shown to carry a great deal of the weight in the proceedings. After all it is after James gives his thoughts that the council makes a decision. And the council's decision follows James' recommendation completely.

In fact, Acts 15 records that after Peter, Paul, and the others spoke James stood up, addressed the council, proclaimed his judgment on the matter and then immediately afterwards the council takes action in complete accord with James' decision. It seems that if anyone is playing a papal role here it is James and not Peter. However, we need not go that far. All we need to note is that Acts 15 undermines the Roman Catholic claim of Peter's priority within the Church. At the best Peter is one of several people who have authority to decide important matters of faith. At the worst, Peter is subordinate to James.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul also presents Peter in a manner contradictory of Roman Catholic papal doctrines. In the beginning of the second chapter of this book, Paul does NOT ascribe to Peter a place of eminence within the Church, but instead mentions him alongside James and John as the pillars of the Church, even listing him second in the order after James.

Galatians 2:9 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, and they unto the circumcision.

Later in this same chapter, Paul describes an encounter in which Peter is clearly not treated with the papal authority that Roman Catholics insist he was granted.

Galatians 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 12 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. 13** And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. **14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?**

In this passage Paul describes that while Peter was visiting Antioch he was eating with the Gentile believers in accordance with the truth of the Gospel. However, after men arrived from James, Peter withdrew himself from the Gentile believers in order to please those who came from James. Paul's response is to rebuke Peter to his face before those gathered.

So, we see Peter acquiescing to those who came from James out of fear. And we see Paul rebuking Peter's hypocrisy and poor judgment. Clearly, Peter is not acting like or being treated like THE unequivocal supreme and authoritative leader of the Church, but simply one man among others in the Church leadership with no more God-given authority or wisdom than the other Apostles, including Paul.

We might also do well to consider that while the Roman Catholic pope presides over an almost exclusively Gentile body of believers, the New Testament records that Peter was called by God, not to the Gentiles, but especially to the Jews. In fact, Galatians 2:7-9 repeats this point at least three times.

Galatians 2:7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; 8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) 9 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, and they unto the circumcision.**

This passage informs us that the early Church leaders including James, Peter, and John all understood that God had given Paul a special ministry and calling to the Gentile believers, which they contrasted with their calling to the Jews. And yet the Roman Catholic popes, which view themselves as the successors of Peter, minister almost exclusively to Gentiles. In this respect the RCC seems to follow in the footsteps of Paul more than Peter. The relationship of Paul to the Church of Rome will be discussed further a little later on in this study.

While we are speaking of special appointments being given by God over the Church we do well to compare the lack of apparent clarity in Matthew 16:15-19, which Roman Catholics claim contains Peter's appointment with Jesus' calling of Paul in Acts 9.

Acts 9:1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, **2** And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. **3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4** And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, **Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5** And he said, **Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 6** And he trembling and astonished said, **Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be**

told thee what thou must do. 7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. 8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. 10 **And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.** 11 **And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,** 12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. 13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15 **But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:** 16 **For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.** 17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. 19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. 20 **And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.**

Notice the abundant clarity with which the New Testament describes Jesus' appointing Paul to the minister to the Gentiles (and the Jews, verse 15). Unlike, Peter's supposed appointment in Matthew 16:15-17, Paul's appoint is unmistakable leaving no doubt that God had called Paul unto this important task.

Also, we should note that though we have a great deal of Church writings from the first century, which provide to us insight of Apostolic teaching from the earliest times, we have very little writing from Peter. The bulk of the first century writing comes from the Scripture and Peter's only contribution is two small epistles. Several other authors contributed more than Peter including Paul, John, Luke, and Matthew. This disproportion indicates that God used Peter much less than these other early Church leaders in order to record Christian doctrine in writing. One would expect much more of a contribution from Peter if indeed he did occupy the position of the first pope as the RCC claims.

Likewise, we should also mention 2 Timothy 2, which some Roman Catholics have offered as evidence of papal succession.

2 Timothy 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Clearly, in this passage Paul is commissioning Timothy to pass the doctrine that Paul and other Church leaders had taught to other faithful men, who would in turn teach it to others. This then is evidence that the early Church understood the need for a succession of Church leaders who would faithfully pass on the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is not however evidence of papal succession. There are several reasons for this.

First of all the idea of a singular, authoritative Church leader is nowhere to be found in Paul's comments here. Second, the Apostle Peter, whom Roman Catholics claim was the first pope is also not mentioned in this passage. If papal succession is in view here then it is Paul and NOT Peter who is seen as passing on the mantle of authority to his disciple, Timothy. On the contrary, the idea of Peter passing on the mantle of his authority is nowhere found in Scripture.

Consider that the first chapter of his second epistle Peter expresses that he knew that his death was near.

2 Peter 1:12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. 13 **Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;** 14 Knowing that **shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.** 15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able **after my decease** to have these things always in remembrance.

Though Peter writes this epistle just before his death, knowing that he would soon pass he does not take the opportunity to inform his audience that his papal authority would pass to some other man and to name that man so that the Church would know who to follow as their new pope. If Peter was the pope, as Roman Catholics contend, and knew he was about to die, as 2 Peter 1 demonstrates, why does Peter not mention or introduce his papal successor. Such an introduction would have been of the utmost importance, and yet Peter mentions no such thing. The lack of attention paid to this topic by Peter in this epistle at the end of his life begs the question as to whether or not Peter did, in fact, occupy any papal office, as the RCC contends.

And finally, we must note that the New Testament record displays both Paul and Peter as living, ministering, and writing from the city of Rome. For one, we know that Paul wrote an epistle to the Christians there, in which no mention is made of Peter as either dwelling in that city or operating in a supreme office of Church authority from there. Also, Peter, in his first epistle, indicates that he is writing from Rome through use of the metaphorical reference to Rome as Babylon. Likewise, the book of Acts reports that Paul ultimately arrived in Rome.

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.

However, we must also note that while Peter's presence in Rome must be acknowledged, it is Paul who is called by God to proclaim the gospel in Rome. We have no evidence of any similar appointment bid by the Lord to Peter.

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.

By this we see that although both Paul and Peter lived and taught in Rome no place of primacy is given to Peter's position in that city by the Scripture.

It is not necessary to go any further with our Scriptural investigation. From all of these passages we can clearly see that the position of the RCC is anything but explicitly given in the earliest teachings of Jesus Christ and His disciples. Instead, the Roman Catholic doctrine of the papal authority of Peter is sketchy at best from a Scriptural point of view and requires additional, non-Biblical support if it is to be substantiated as truly Christian teaching. We will now take a look at the writings of the 1st and 2nd century Church to see if they bear out the Roman Catholic position. For now, we must note that the Biblical record, which represents almost all of the 1st century Church writing (including Tradition) does not provide support for Roman Catholic doctrine, and in all reasonableness actually contradicts and prohibits the view of the RCC regarding Peter and papal authority.

Analysis of Evidence from the Writings of Sacred Tradition

Now, that we have examined the New Testament record and found little support for the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal authority we will turn our examination of the non-canonical Church writings of the 1st and 2nd century to see if they provide evidence in support of this doctrine. As we do we take note that our study of the New Testament has for the most part covered the 1st century Church record of the teachings of Christ. Though there are a few non-canonical documents of the 1st century, which the RCC considers to be a part of Tradition, these documents are insignificant in size by comparison to the size of the New Testament and its importance as the record of the earliest Christian teachings.

Nevertheless, we will examine these 1st century documents along with those of the 2nd century to see if the RCC's papal doctrine can be supported by them. Since, our examination of the Scriptural evidence was questionable at best regarding this Roman Catholic teaching and prohibitive at worst, it becomes absolutely crucial that these 1st and 2nd century Church writings clearly articulate the RCC's doctrine of the papacy. If they do not then it will be extremely difficult to justify the Roman Catholic claim that this teaching originated with Jesus Christ and His Apostles and we will have to search for other factors, which contributed to the development of this doctrine.

Keep in mind as we continue the substance and significance of the Roman Catholic position. The RCC claims to be the true church of Jesus Christ and the sole possessor of authentic Christian teaching. One of the fundamental and essential teachings of the RCC is that the Apostle Peter was placed by Jesus in a position of sole authority as the first pope.

Here again is the Catholic Encyclopedia quote expressing the crucial importance of this doctrine.

"The Pope - The position of St. Peter after the Ascension, as shown in the Acts of the Apostles, realizes to the full the great commission bestowed upon him. He is from the first the chief of the Apostolic band -- not primus inter pares, but the undisputed head of the Church (see CHURCH, THE, III). **If then Christ, as we have seen, established His Church as a society subordinated to a single supreme head, it follows from the very nature of the case that this office is perpetual,** and cannot have been a mere transitory feature of ecclesiastical life. **For the Church must endure to the end the very same organization which Christ established.** But in an organized society it is precisely the constitution which is the essential feature. A change in constitution transforms it into a society of a different kind. **If then the Church should adopt a constitution other than Christ gave it, it would no longer be His handiwork. It would no longer be the Divine kingdom established by Him. As a society it would have passed through essential modifications, and thereby would have become a human, not a Divine institution. None who believe that Christ came on earth to found a Church, an organized society destined to endure for ever, can admit the possibility of a change in the organization given to it by its Founder. The same conclusion also follows from a consideration of the end which, by Christ's declaration, the supremacy of Peter was intended to effect.** He was to give the Church strength to resist her foes, so that the gates of hell should not prevail against her. The contest with the powers of evil does not belong to the Apostolic age alone. It is a permanent feature of the Church's life. **Hence, throughout the centuries the office of Peter must be realized in the Church,** in order that she may prevail in her age-long struggle. **Thus an analysis of Christ's words shows us that the perpetuity of the office of supreme head is to be reckoned among the truths revealed in Scripture. His promise to Peter conveyed not merely a personal prerogative, but established a permanent office in the Church.** And in this sense, as will appear in the next section, **His words were understood by Latin and Greek Fathers alike.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

PART FOUR:

As we proceed with our investigation of the early Church writing (Sacred Tradition) of the 1st and 2nd centuries, we will complete our examination of the legitimacy of the RCC on these very grounds, which the Catholic Encyclopedia provided in the above quote.

Before we get to the writings themselves we should note some historical commentary on the availability of early evidence for the Roman Catholic doctrine of (Papal or) Apostolic Succession.

"Apostolic Succession - The origins of the doctrine are obscure, and the New Testament records are variously interpreted." - Britannica.com

"Christianity - For the first three centuries of Christianity, history is dependent on apologetic and religious writings; there are no chronicles (see patristic literature). **Historians differ greatly on how far back the 4th-century picture of the church (which is quite clear) can be projected,** especially respecting organization by bishops (each bishop a monarch in the church of his city), celebration of a liturgy entailing a sacrament and a sacrifice, **and claims by the bishop of Rome to be head of all the churches (see papacy).**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Papacy - There is no unequivocal evidence about the status of the pope in the earliest days of the church." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

Additionally, we must recognize that Roman Catholic scholars are fond of referring to the early bishops of Rome by the title pope. However, in all fairness, to avoid being called for dishonest scholarship, Roman Catholic authors should make their readers aware that the title pope was not used in the early Church as it is employed by today's Roman Catholics.

"Pope - The teaching of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) on the role of bishops the office and jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome, or the pope (Latin: papa, from the Greek pappas, "father"), who presides over the central government of the Roman Catholic church, the largest of the three major branches of Christianity. **The term pope was originally applied to all the bishops in the West and also used to describe the patriarch of Alexandria, who still retains the title. In 1073, however, Gregory VII restricted its use to the bishop of Rome.** According to the Annuario Pontificio, the papal annual, there have been more than 260 popes since St. Peter, traditionally considered the first pope. Among these, 78 have been proclaimed saints, as have some **antipopes (rival claimants to the papal throne who were appointed or elected in opposition to the legitimate pope).**" - Britannica.com

"The Pope - The title pope, once used with far greater latitude (see below, section V), is at present **employed solely to denote the Bishop of Rome, who, in virtue of his position as successor of St. Peter, is the chief pastor of the whole Church, the Vicar of Christ upon earth.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

When they do not make this clear, Roman Catholic authors run the risk of implying to the reader by default that the early Church recognized the office that Roman Catholics associate with the term pope. When Roman Catholics employ this tactic without making this distinction they are transposing their conclusion upon history and taking advantage of those who may not realize that such revisionism is occurring. We commend the Catholic Encyclopedia for mentioning this fact in their article on the Pope.

It would be our preference to simply survey the writings of the first two centuries and let them speak for themselves. However, we will instead, first address the claims made by the Catholic Encyclopedia as it argues for the historicity (historical actuality) of their papal doctrine from the earliest times, specifically the first three centuries A.D.

Consider the following quote from the Catholic Encyclopedia.

"The Pope - History bears complete testimony that from the very earliest times the Roman See has ever claimed the supreme headship, and that that headship has been freely acknowledged by the universal Church. We shall here confine ourselves to the consideration of the evidence afforded by the first three centuries." - Catholic Encyclopedia

The quote above plainly states that evidence for RCC papal doctrine is "afforded by the first three centuries" and comes "from the very earliest times." But despite this claim, as the following quote will demonstrate, the Catholic Encyclopedia does not begin in the earliest period, with the 1st century writings, or even with 2nd century writings, but instead, begins with third century works. Their reason for this is due to the fact that it is only in the third century that Sacred Tradition exhibits frequent references to this crucial doctrine.

"The Pope - It is no longer denied by any writer of weight that St. Peter visited Rome and suffered martyrdom there (Harnack, "Chronol.", I, 244, n. 2). Some, however, of those who admit that he taught and suffered in Rome, deny that he was ever bishop of the city e.g. Lightfoot, "Clement of Rome", II, 501; Harnack, op. cit., I, 703. It is not, however, difficult to show that the fact of his bishopric is so well attested as to be historically certain. **In considering this point, it will be well to begin with the third century, when references to it become frequent, and work backwards from this point.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

However, it seems that if one claims, as Roman Catholics do, that the doctrine of papal authority originated from the onset of Christianity that it would be more natural to begin at the onset and work forward as time progresses. Only in this way do you show that the doctrine was present at the beginning and was not merely a later development.

In order to demonstrate that a teaching is inherent to Christianity it is critical to establish the presence of that teaching at the onset of Christianity. Since, the RCC claims that the papal doctrine is inherent to Christianity they should have no trouble showing its presence in the first two centuries of Church history. So, why do they start later instead?

The Catholic Encyclopedia's decision to start at a later period of history when references become frequent itself attests to the lack of evidence from the 1st and 2nd centuries. Consider this question, as long as we aren't starting at the beginning why should we start with the 3rd century? Why not start with the 4th century? Why not start with the papal decrees of later times, which solidified this teaching in formal language in the Roman Catholic Catechism? The Catholic Encyclopedia provides the answer to these questions by affirming the difficulty of finding unequivocal evidence of the doctrine of papal succession in the earliest period of Church history.

"The Pope - The limits of the present article prevent us from carrying the historical argument **further than the year 300**. Nor is it in fact necessary to do so. From the beginning of the fourth century the supremacy of Rome is writ large upon the page of history. **It is only in regard to the first age of the Church that any question can arise.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

The clear advantage of starting at the 3rd century and working back towards earlier periods is that the Catholic Encyclopedia can establish their doctrine when it is readily evident in later times and then use this documentation to color the information that we have from the earliest period where evidence is insufficient on its own to validate this teaching. To start later than the 3rd century would be too obvious because 4th or 10th century documents for example would not be useful in demonstrating that the RCC's doctrine of papal authority originated in Jesus' own teachings in the early 1st century A.D.

Therefore, the Catholic Encyclopedia must recognize that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to sufficiently and reasonably demonstrate the legitimacy of their papal doctrines based purely on 1st and 2nd century Christian writings. Their solution to this dilemma is simple: start with the third century, where the Roman Catholic position becomes more arguable. In employing this approach the Catholic Encyclopedia essentially makes a very bizarre argument: "In order to prove once and for all that the 1st century Church held to the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal authority we now turn to these third century documents..."

So, even though some of the proof that the Catholic Encyclopedia offers from the 3rd century does manage to support the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal succession this does not demonstrate that the doctrine originated with Jesus Christ. At best it only demonstrates that this Roman Catholic belief was present in the 3rd century Church. As such it remains unknown then whether the 3rd century Church was affirming existing doctrine, developing new doctrine, or borrowing doctrine from some other non-Christian source. The critical question remains as to whether or not evidence in support of this doctrine can be found in the earliest Christian period - the first two centuries A.D., which we will examine after taking the time to call into question a few of the 3rd century evidences offered by the Catholic Encyclopedia.

The Catholic Encyclopedia makes two claims in their attempt to establish the legitimacy of their papal teaching. The first claim is that Peter was the first bishop of Rome. The second claim is that the bishopric of Rome, which Peter occupied, enjoyed supreme authority over the Church. This is referred to as the doctrine of Roman primacy.

"The Pope - It is no longer denied by any writer of weight that St. Peter visited Rome and suffered martyrdom there (Harnack, "Chronol.", I, 244, n. 2). **Some, however, of those who admit that he taught and suffered in Rome, deny that he was ever bishop of the city** e.g. Lightfoot, "Clement of Rome", II, 501; Harnack, op. cit., I, 703. **It is not, however, difficult to show that the fact of his bishopric is so well attested as to be historically certain. In considering this point, it will be well to begin with the third century, when references to it become frequent, and work backwards from this point.**

"The Pope - **History bears complete testimony that from the very earliest times the Roman See has ever claimed the supreme headship, and that that headship has been freely acknowledged by the universal Church.** We shall here confine ourselves to the consideration of **the evidence afforded by the first three centuries.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

It must be noted that the first claim, that Peter was the first bishop of Rome, is not sufficient by itself to establish the legitimacy of Roman Catholic papal teaching. Instead, it must be demonstrated that Peter was not only the bishop of Rome, but that he was the supreme authority over the Church and exercised sovereignty over all the other bishops.

The fact, that Peter was bishop of Rome, need not be disputed by non-Catholics, for in and of itself, this detail does not support the legitimacy of Roman Catholic papal doctrines any more than the Apostle John's being bishop of Ephesus would indicate that John was the supreme authority over the Church. Therefore, even an unlimited amount of proofs from 1st and 2nd century authors declaring Peter to be the first bishop of Rome would not mean that Peter was the supreme

authority in the Church any more than a picture of my license plate proves that I own a red 1965 Ford Mustang convertible.

Only by proving both claims can Roman Catholics hope to substantiate their papal doctrines. But, we will see that the evidence that they offer fails to conclusively support either claim.

The first evidence that the Catholic Encyclopedia appeals to as support for its second claim, that the bishop of Rome wielded authority over the other bishops, comes by way of an incidents involving bishop Cyprian of Carthage and bishop Stephen of Rome.

"The Pope - In considering this point, it will be well to begin with the third century, when references to it become frequent, and work backwards from this point. **In the middle of the third century St. Cyprian expressly terms the Roman See the Chair of St. Peter, saying that Cornelius has succeeded to 'the place of Fabian which is the place of Peter'** (Ep 55:8; cf. 59:14). **Firmilian of Caesarea notices that Stephen claimed to decide the controversy regarding rebaptism on the ground that he held the succession from Peter** (Cyprian, Ep. 75:17). He does not deny the claim: yet certainly, had he been able, he would have done so. **Thus in 250 the Roman episcopate of Peter was admitted by those best able to know the truth, not merely at Rome but in the churches of Africa and of Asia Minor.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

Of course, keep in mind from earlier, that the term "pope" was not used exclusively of the Bishop of Rome until the eleventh century AD as stated in both the Britannica.com as well the Catholic Encyclopedia. In this page of history bishop Cyprian of Carthage challenged the authority of bishop Stephen of Rome, whom Roman Catholics call Pope Stephen. A little historical background is in order before we proceed. Cyprian became the bishop of Carthage in 248 A.D.

"Cyprian, Saint - born AD 200, Carthage died September 14, 258, Carthage; Western and Eastern feast day September 16; Anglican feast day September 26 Latin in full Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus **early Christian theologian and bishop of Carthage** who led the Christians of North Africa during a period of persecution from Rome. Upon his execution he became the first bishop-martyr of Africa." -Britannica.com

"Cyprian, Saint - Cyprian was born of wealthy pagan parents and was educated in law. **He practiced as a lawyer in Carthage before he was converted to Christianity about 246.** In baptism he found complete release from the sinful and useless life he believed he had led hitherto. **Within two years he was elected bishop of Carthage** and a few months later, early in 250, was confronted by the Decian persecution. He went into hiding. Bereft of his leadership, thousands of Christians apostatized (rejected their faith) or obtained libelli (certificates), by which they declared that they had sacrificed to the pagan gods." -Britannica.com

The Catholic Encyclopedia reports the details of the incident between Cyprian and Stephen in the following quote.

"The Pope - The views of St. Cyprian (d. 258) in regard to papal authority have given rise to much discussion. **He undoubtedly entertained exaggerated views as to the independence of individual bishops, which eventually led him into serious conflict with Rome.** Yet on the fundamental principle his position is clear. He attributed an effective primacy to the pope as the successor of Peter. He makes communion with the See of Rome essential to Catholic communion, speaking of it as "the principal Church whence episcopal unity had its rise" (ad Petri cathedram et ad ecclesiam principalem unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est). The force of this expression becomes clear when viewed in the light of his doctrine as to the unity of the Church. **This was he teaches, established by Christ when He founded His Church upon Peter. By this act the unity of the Apostolic college was ensured through the unity of the foundation.** The bishops through all time form a similar college, and are bound in a like indivisible unity. Of this unity the Chair of Peter is the source. It fulfils the very office as principle of union which Peter fulfilled in his lifetime. Hence to communicate with an antipope such as Novatian would be schism (Ep. 68:1). **He holds, also, that the pope has authority to depose an heretical bishop.** When Marcian of Arles fell into heresy, Cyprian, at the request of the bishops of the province, **wrote to urge Pope Stephen 'to send letters by which, Marcian having been excommunicated, another may be substituted in his place'** (Ep. 68:3). **It is manifest that one who regarded the Roman See in this light believed that the pope possessed a real and effective Primacy.** At the same time it is not to be denied that **his views as to the right of the pope to interfere in the government of a diocese already subject to a legitimate and orthodox bishop were inadequate. In the rebaptism controversy his language in regard to St. Stephen was bitter and intemperate. His error on this point does not, however, detract from the fact that he admitted a primacy,** not merely of honour but of jurisdiction. Nor should his mistake occasion too much surprise. It is as true in the Church as in merely human institutions that the full implications of a general principle are only realized gradually. **The claim to apply it in a particular case is often contested at first, though later ages may wonder that such opposition was possible.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

It must be noted that while the Catholic Encyclopedia offers these incidents involving Cyprian as proof of their claim that Rome enjoyed a place of authority over the other bishoprics, this article makes several acknowledgments that Cyprian's views of papal authority are not consistent with this claim of the RCC.

First, it is noted that Cyprian "undoubtedly entertained exaggerated views as to the independence of individual bishops, which eventually led him into serious conflict with Rome." The cause behind this conflict with Rome is described by Britannica.com.

"Cyprian, Saint - Cyprian returned to Carthage (early 251) and at a council of bishops in May 251 was able to regain his authority. The decision of the council was that, though no one should be totally excluded from penance, those who truly had sacrificed (the sacrificati) should be readmitted only on their deathbeds, and those who had merely accepted certificates (the libellatici) were to be readmitted after varying periods of penance. **Three important principles of church discipline were thus established.** First, the right and power to remit deadly sins, even that of apostasy, lay in the hands of the church; **second, the final authority in disciplinary matters rested with the bishops in council as repositories of the Holy Spirit;** and, third, unworthy members among the laity must be accepted in the New Israel of Christianity just as in the Old Israel of Judaism." -Britannica.com

It is the second principle decided on by this council of bishops would be central to the dispute, which would develop between Cyprian and Stephen, the bishop of Rome.

"Cyprian, Saint - In the summer of 254 his position was tested again by a dispute with Stephen, bishop of Rome (254-257). Until then relations between the churches of Carthage and Rome had been cordial." -Britannica.com

Though Cyprian did affirm the centrality of the Roman bishopric as the Catholic Encyclopedia claims, he denied the authority of the Roman bishop over matters of faith outside the Roman diocese by his actions. In 254 A.D. two Spanish congregations appeal to Cyprian against a decision made by Stephen. In response to this appeal Cyprian does not affirm papal authority, but instead convenes a council to consider the matter.

"Cyprian, Saint - Though Cyprian may have written two drafts of an important passage concerning the primacy of the chair of Peter, he implied no acceptance of Roman jurisdictional prerogatives. When in 254 two Spanish congregations (Mérida and León) appealed to him against a decision by Stephen to restore bishops who had lapsed during the persecution, **he summoned a council to consider the case. The council decided** that the congregations not only had a right but a duty to separate themselves from a cleric who had committed a deadly sin such as apostasy. Cyprian wrote (Letter 67) that the Holy Spirit was no longer in such a priest and that his sacraments would lead to perdition and not salvation. The church as the "pure Bride of Christ" might be obliged to absorb a sinful laity, but a sinful priest making offerings on behalf of the people was unthinkable." -Britannica.com

Two things are worth noting from this historical account. The most obvious is Cyprian's denial that the bishop of Rome had authority on such matters. This disregard or disagreement with Rome over the bishop of Rome's authority is further strengthened by the fact that the two Spanish congregations themselves thought it appropriate to appeal to the bishop of Carthage (Cyprian) against a decree of the bishop of Rome. These facts, beg the question. If Stephen, as the bishop of Rome, wielded a supreme authority that was handed down to the Church from its onset by the Apostles, how is it that a council of bishops, Cyprian the bishop of Carthage, and two Spanish congregations not only failed to acknowledge this supreme authority, but acted in opposition to it?

These actions lead the Catholic Encyclopedia to conclude regarding Cyprian, that "it is not to be denied that his views as to the right of the pope to interfere in the government of a diocese already subject to a legitimate and orthodox bishop were inadequate." In saying so, the Catholic Encyclopedia undermines their own argument by acknowledging that Cyprian does not agree that the bishop of Rome exercised supreme authority over the Church.

The Catholic Encyclopedia also acknowledges that during "the rebaptism controversy his language in regard to St. Stephen was bitter and intemperate." This again undermines the RCC's claim that the bishop of Rome was acknowledged to have supreme authority by the other bishops.

Again, Britannica.com informs us of these events.

"Cyprian, Saint - Within months there was an even more serious dispute with Rome. For a few years the supporters of **Novatian had been active in Africa,** asserting against Cyprian that no forgiveness for lapsed Christians was possible. With the recovery of Cyprian's prestige, however, their threat began to fade. **Many of those whom they had baptized clamoured to be admitted to the church. Was their baptism valid or not? In Rome, Stephen, confronted by the same problem, decided that all baptism in the name of the Trinity was valid. The Africans at first were of two minds. Cyprian held three councils between the autumn of 255 and September 256. The last, at which 87 bishops were present, decided unanimously that there could be no baptism outside the church,** just as there could not be faith, hope, or salvation for those outside it. A minister could not dispense what he himself did not possess, namely, the Holy Spirit. **Those who had received baptism from Novatianists must be baptized anew. Behind this clash over rites lay the more fundamental question concerning the nature of the church. Though Rome emphasized the church's universal and inevitably mixed character on earth, the North Africans stressed its integrity under all circumstances.** Baptism entailed total renunciation of the world and the reception of the Spirit." -Britannica.com

These disagreements between Carthage and Rome were quite serious as anyone can see. A total split between the two was not avoided on the basis of Roman authority, but by Stephen's death in 257 A.D.

"Cyprian, Saint - A complete breach between Rome and Carthage was averted by Stephen's death on Aug. 2, 257, and his successor, Sixtus II, was more conciliatory." -Britannica.com

We ask, are Cyprian's actions those of a man who attests to the Roman Catholic claim that the bishop of Rome held superior authority? If not, then how is it possible that the bishop of Carthage failed to understand this important Church doctrine? That is, unless no such doctrine existed in the early Church.

The Catholic Encyclopedia continues by insisting that Cyprian's "error on this point does not, however, detract from the fact that he admitted a primacy, not merely of honour but of jurisdiction." But how can this be their conclusion? How can the Catholic Encyclopedia offer these events as proof for the doctrine of the superiority of the Roman bishopric? Certainly Cyprian's belief that the bishop of Rome had no authority in the diocese of another orthodox bishop, his disrespectful words, and the actions he took to deny any supposed authority of the Roman bishop all strongly undermine the claim of the RCC that the early Church all understood the supremacy of the bishop of Rome, the bishopric of Peter.

In light of all of this the Catholic Encyclopedia attempts to redirect the evidence in their favor by saying that Cyprian's disagreements with Rome should not "occasion too much surprise" because, in their words, "it is as true in the Church as in merely human institutions that the full implications of a general principle are only realized gradually." Thus, instead of supporting their view, the Catholic Encyclopedia ends by having to defend their position against the very evidence that they themselves offered in the first place. Against the obvious implications of Cyprian's actions, they nevertheless conclude their defense by saying that the application of papal doctrine is "often contested at first, though later ages may wonder that such opposition was possible."

These remarks are nothing less than an admission of the inadequacy of this line of evidence in supporting their claim of the superiority of the bishopric of Rome. In effect their argument is that though Cyprian didn't understand it the bishop of Rome was superior in authority to all other bishops.

So, despite the fact that the case of Cyprian provides as much evidence against the supremacy of the bishop of Rome as it could in favor of it, the Catholic Encyclopedia chooses to offer it anyway in support of their claims. And when they realize that the reader may be having trouble understanding how such historical facts help their cause, they bolster their claim with circular reasoning. They conclude that the papal authority is true despite the case of Cyprian and that Cyprian was in error regarding these matters, which is understandable since they claim that true doctrine is often "contested at first."

And moreover, in their defense against Cyprian's actions, the Catholic Encyclopedia fully admits that the doctrine of the papal authority was not fully understood by the Church in or before Cyprian's day. But instead, as the Catholic Encyclopedia itself declares this essential doctrine of papal authority was "only realized gradually," which in the context of their article implies this doctrine wasn't realized until AFTER Cyprian's time.

"The Pope - In the rebaptism controversy his language in regard to St. Stephen was bitter and intemperate. His error on this point does not, however, detract from the fact that he admitted a primacy, not merely of honour but of jurisdiction. Nor should his mistake occasion too much surprise. It is as true in the Church as in merely human institutions that the full implications of a general principle are only realized gradually. The claim to apply it in a particular case is often contested at first, though later ages may wonder that such opposition was possible." - Catholic Encyclopedia

Britannica.com sums up the views of Cyprian regarding papal authority confirming the conclusions implied by the history of these events in a more reasonable manner.

"Cyprian, Saint - Unity was expressed through the consensus of bishops, all equally possessing the Holy Spirit and sovereign in their own sees. There was no 'bishop of bishops.' The church consisted of the people united to their bishop. Schism and rebellion against the priesthood were viewed as the worst of sins. These views-associated with an uncompromising insistence on the integrity and exclusive character of the church, which are believed to have been derived from the North African theologian Tertullian -received divine sanction for most North African Christians through his martyrdom." -Britannica.com

From all of this it is hard to see how the Catholic Encyclopedia can use Cyprian as support for the idea that the supremacy of Rome was established in the Church even during the 3rd century. In fact, if Cyprian has anything to show it is that the Roman Catholic doctrine of Roman primacy, which becomes so apparent in the 4th century was not even that well established yet, during the close of the 3rd century. This being the case, we must wonder why the Catholic Encyclopedia would bother to offer this kind of evidence? Perhaps more sufficient proof is not available? But with this kind of 3rd century proof at least we can understand why they would be reluctant to begin with 1st or 2nd century documents.

PART FIVE:

Moving on, the second piece of evidence offered by the Catholic Encyclopedia involves Tertullian's contentions with Callistus, another bishop of Rome. This argument is chiefly concerned with establishing that Peter was the bishop of Rome.

"The Pope - In the first quarter of the century (about 220) Tertullian (De Pud. 21) mentions Callistus's claim that Peter's power to forgive sins had descended in a special manner to him. Had the Roman Church been merely founded by Peter and not reckoned him as its first bishop, there could have been no ground for such a contention." - Catholic Encyclopedia

The Catholic Encyclopedia here argues on the basis that Callistus makes a claim that could not have been made if Peter were not, in fact, the first bishop of Rome. This is another highly dubious argument.

Even if this incident provides evidence that Peter was the first bishop of Rome it does not therefore follow that this bishopric had all of the powers that the RCC attributes to it. Additionally, are we to be persuaded of the legitimacy of Roman Catholic teaching because a 3rd century bishop of Rome claimed that Peter was the bishop of Rome?

Again, it is not disputed that the 3rd century bishops of Rome claimed that they sat in the seat of Peter or that they for this reason believed that they inherited supreme authority over the Church. What is disputed is whether or not this claim is legitimately rooted in the original teachings of Jesus Christ or is simply a 3rd century Church development. This dispute is not addressed by this line of evidence, which so far has only shown that a 3rd century bishop of Rome thought himself the successor of Peter and thought this bestowed on him some special privileges.

The Catholic Encyclopedia bolsters their argument by pointing out that Tertullian does not challenge Callistus' claim that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome. Because it would have been useful for Tertullian to refute Callistus' claim by denying that Peter was ever the bishop of Rome, Roman Catholic scholars conclude that Tertullian attests to Peter being bishop of Rome, simply by not challenging it.

"The Pope - Tertullian, like Firmilian, had every motive to deny the claim. Moreover, he had himself resided at Rome, and would have been well aware if the idea of a Roman episcopate of Peter had been, as is contended by its opponents, a novelty dating from the first years of the third century, supplanting the older tradition according to which Peter and Paul were co-founders, and Linus first bishop." - Catholic Encyclopedia

However, it is hard to see how Tertullian's silence equates to Roman Catholic substantiation. It simply does not follow that the absence of a challenge from a dissenting party unequivocally equals the historical establishment of an opposition's claims. Moreover, it also does not follow that because a 3rd century dissenter does not oppose papal claims that therefore papal authority must have been taught and understood by the 1st century Church.

It is entirely possible that Tertullian may well have understood that Peter was the first bishop of Rome and therefore refrained from arguing this particular point all the while disputing (as we are free to do today) that the Roman bishop position carried with it any inherent supremacy. In fact, the next quote from the Catholic Encyclopedia shows that while Tertullian through silence may have perhaps acknowledged Peter's bishopric over Rome, he did not in any way agree that this granted the bishops of Rome supreme authority as the RCC claims.

"The Pope - Tertullian's bitter polemic, "De Pudicitia" (about 220), was called forth by an exercise of papal prerogative. Pope Callistus had decided that the rigid discipline which had hitherto prevailed in many Churches must be in large measure relaxed. Tertullian, now lapsed into heresy, fiercely attacks "the peremptory edict", which "the supreme pontiff, the bishop of bishops", has sent forth. The words are intended as sarcasm: but none the less they indicate clearly the position of authority claimed by Rome. And the opposition comes, not from a Catholic bishop, but from a Montanist heretic." - Catholic Encyclopedia

So, we see that while Tertullian is silent on the matter of Peter's being bishop of Rome, he does feel the need to comment on the bishop of Rome's claim of supremacy and primacy over the other bishops. And unfortunately for Roman Catholics it simply does not follow that because a 3rd century heretic sarcastically disputes the authority of the bishop of Rome, that therefore the bishop of Rome actually did have supreme authority. In all fairness, Tertullian's comments on these matters can only attest to his awareness and disagreement with the claim of the Roman bishops to supreme authority over the Church. They cannot be used as proof that those bishops were legitimately given that authority by God.

And again, it should be stressed that the only thing 3rd century writers can conclusively attest to is the beliefs of the 3rd century Church. The comments of Tertullian and Callistus only really inform us of the beliefs of the 3rd century Church. If we want to understand the beliefs and teachings of the 1st century Church we will have to examine writings from that period. Or more to the point, if we want to determine if the doctrine of the papacy originates from Jesus and his apostles in the first century, we are going to have to establish that idea from writings earlier than the third century. This we have done, in part, through our investigation of the New Testament Scriptures. This task will be completed as we later cover the non-canonical writings of the 1st and 2nd century. For now we will continue with the two more pieces of evidence offered by the Catholic Encyclopedia in favor of the legitimacy of their papal doctrines.

"The Pope - About the same period, Hippolytus (for Lightfoot is surely right in holding him to be the author of the first part of the "Liberian Catalogue" -- "Clement of Rome", 1:259) **reckons Peter in the list of Roman bishops.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The Pope - We have moreover a poem, "Adversus Marcionem", written apparently at the same period, in which Peter is said to have passed on to Linus "the chair on which he himself had sat" (P.L., II 1077). **These witnesses bring us to the beginning of the third century.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

As we said earlier in this study, Peter's being bishop of Rome does not demonstrate that he was also the supreme head of the Church. In order for Roman Catholics to prove that their doctrine of papal authority is legitimately derived from the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles, they must also show the bishop of Rome was understood to hold a position of supreme authority over the Church. These two references do not speak to the matter of the supremacy of the Roman bishop, but merely to Peter's holding the office of Roman bishop, and so they lend no weight to the Roman Catholic claim of papal authority.

What we really need is 1st and 2nd century Christians saying that Peter (and/or the bishopric of Rome) was the supreme authority in the Church, not just that Peter was bishop of Rome. What we have seen so far is 3rd century evidence, which is inadequate for establishing that claim. Therefore, we now continue with the 2nd century evidence that is offered in support of the papal doctrines of the RCC.

Earlier in this section of our study we noted that in seeking to demonstrate that the doctrine of papal authority originated with Jesus Christ and His Apostles, the Catholic Encyclopedia took an odd approach and instead of starting in the 1st century as one might expect, they began with the 3rd century documents because, according to them, that is when references to this doctrine become frequent. The obvious implication of this statement is that, before the 3rd century, references to the RCC's doctrine of papal authority are hard to come by. This, of course, fits with the observations made by Britannica.com and the Columbia Encyclopedia, which both concluded that evidence for the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal authority from the first three centuries is inconclusive.

"Apostolic Succession - The origins of the doctrine are obscure, and the New Testament records are variously interpreted." - Britannica.com

"Christianity - For the first three centuries of Christianity, history is dependent on apologetic and religious writings; there are no chronicles (see patristic literature). **Historians differ greatly on how far back the 4th-century picture of the church (which is quite clear) can be projected,** especially respecting organization by bishops (each bishop a monarch in the church of his city), celebration of a liturgy entailing a sacrament and a sacrifice, **and claims by the bishop of Rome to be head of all the churches (see papacy).**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Papacy - There is no unequivocal evidence about the status of the pope in the earliest days of the church." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

Having demonstrated that the Catholic Encyclopedia's evidence from the 3rd century is inconclusive at best, despite their claim that this time period contained frequent support for their papal doctrine, we find the following statement is made by the Catholic Encyclopedia regarding 2nd century evidence.

"The Pope - In the second century we cannot look for much evidence. With the exception of Ignatius, Polycarp, and Clement of Alexandria, all the writers whose works we possess are apologists against either Jews or pagans. In works of such a character there was **no reason to refer to such a matter as Peter's Roman episcopate.** Irenaeus, however, supplies us with a cogent argument." - Catholic Encyclopedia

This admission that the 2nd century does not bear much evidence supporting their teaching is not unexpected; however, given their previous acknowledgment that evidence for this doctrine is less than frequent before the 3rd century. If then, the 3rd century evidence, which we were led to believe would readily support the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal authority was less than sufficient, we might suspect that 2nd and 1st century evidence will be all the more ineffective for establishing Roman Catholic claims.

Since the Catholic Encyclopedia has chosen to proceed backwards from the third century our examination will resume with 2nd century Christian writings of Irenaeus. Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of John and bishop of Ephesus, was himself the bishop of Lyons. He lived and wrote defending Christian doctrines between 120-202 A.D.

"Irenaeus, Saint - c.125-c.202, Greek theologian, **bishop of Lyons,** and Father of the Church. Born in Asia Minor, **he was a disciple of St. Polycarp.**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

The Catholic Encyclopedia points to Irenaeus in support of both of its previously identified claims. First, the Catholic Encyclopedia appeals to Irenaeus as supporting that Peter was bishop of Rome. However, as we have repeatedly pointed out before, this fact does nothing to indicate papal authority.

A second claim must be demonstrated that Peter's and his successors, as the bishops of Rome, occupied a position of supreme authority in the Church over the other bishops in affairs of faith and morals (doctrine and practice).

Here then is the first argument offered by the Catholic Encyclopedia to support their claim that Peter was the first bishop of Rome.

"The Pope - In the second century we cannot look for much evidence. With the exception of Ignatius, Polycarp, and Clement of Alexandria, all the writers whose works we possess are apologists against either Jews or pagans. In works of such a character there was no reason to refer to such a matter as Peter's Roman episcopate. **Irenaeus, however, supplies us with a cogent argument.** In two passages (Adv. haer. 1:27:1, and 3:4:3) **he speaks of Hyginus as ninth Bishop of Rome, thus employing an enumeration which involves the inclusion of Peter as first bishop** (Lightfoot was undoubtedly wrong in supposing that there was any doubt as to the correctness of the reading in the first of these passages. **In 3:4:3, the Latin version, it is true, gives 'octavus'; but the Greek text as cited by Eusebius reads enatos. Irenaeus we know visited Rome in 177.** At this date, scarcely more than a century after the death of St. Peter, he may well have come in contact with men whose fathers had themselves spoken to the Apostle. The tradition thus supported must be regarded as beyond all legitimate doubt." - Catholic Encyclopedia

By pointing out that Irenaeus numbers Hyginus as a bishop of Rome, the Catholic Encyclopedia argues that Irenaeus therefore is indicating that Peter was the first bishop of Rome. However, it must be noted that Irenaeus himself does nowhere number Peter as the first bishop in this succession of bishops of Rome. So, while it stands to reason that there must have been someone whom Irenaeus was reckoning as the first bishop of Rome, it can only be assumed that this person is Peter. The Catholic Encyclopedia does assume this to be the case and then offers their presumption as a conclusive argument. However, this is merely circular reasoning and so cannot be accepted as a sound argument for the claim that Peter was the first bishop of Rome.

Again, we are completely comfortable with accepting Peter as a bishop of Rome, even the first bishop of Rome, however, we must point out that the Catholic Encyclopedia cannot simply assume this to be the case and then offer that assumption as historical evidence in support of their conclusion.

In fact, while the Catholic Encyclopedia confidently bestows this position upon Peter alone, Irenaeus repeatedly identifies both Peter and Paul as founding the Church at Rome and together appointing Linus to succeed them as bishop of Rome, a point that the Catholic Encyclopedia understandably leaves out.

"Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews(3) in their own dialect, **while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church.** After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia." - Irenaeus, CHAP. I.--THE APOSTLES DID NOT COMMENCE TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, OR TO PLACE ANYTHING ON RECORD, UNTIL THEY WERE ENDOWED WITH THE GIFTS AND POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. THEY PREACHED ONE GOD ALONE, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.

"Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; [we do this, I say,] by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, **and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul;** as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its pre- eminent authority,(3) that is, the faithful every-416 where, inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere." - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

"3. **The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate.**" - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

Below is the Catholic Encyclopedia's interpretation of the above quoted remarks of Irenaeus.

"The Pope - Nor is there the slightest ground for the assertion that the language of Irenaeus, 3:3:3, implies that Peter and Paul enjoyed a divided episcopate at Rome -- an arrangement utterly unknown to the Church at any period. He does, it is true, speak of the two Apostles as together handing on the episcopate to Linus. But this expression is explained by the purpose of his argument, which is to vindicate against the Gnostics the validity of the doctrine taught in the Roman Church. Hence he is naturally led to lay stress on the fact that that Church inherited the teaching of both the great Apostles. Epiphanius ("Haer." 27:6) would indeed seem to suggest the divided episcopate; but he has apparently merely misunderstood the words of Irenaeus." - Catholic Encyclopedia

When reading Irenaeus, the Catholic Encyclopedia simply assumes that Peter is the first Bishop, although Irenaeus does not specifically say so. And when confronted with the fact the Irenaeus repeatedly lists Peter and Paul side by side as the founders of the Roman church who together handed the bishopric to Linus, the Catholic Encyclopedia again simply makes another assumption to provide an alternate motive for Irenaeus' listing of Paul side by side with Peter. While these assumptions might be convenient maneuvers necessary to save the RCC's doctrine from deconstruction at the hands of Irenaeus, such assumptions do nothing to provide support or proof for the RCC's claims. Truly, one can "prove" almost anything by stringing together assumptions.

Again, we note that the Catholic Encyclopedia is content to merely make conclusions about Irenaeus' writing for their reader, but avoids actually quoting him in order to demonstrate the validity of their interpretations. Having read the actual text of Irenaeus remarks, we understand why the Catholic Encyclopedia omitted his commentary in favor of simply voicing their conclusions on the matter. The reason is quite simple. If the readers are given the opportunity to read Irenaeus' words themselves they will no doubt clearly see that the arguments offered by the Catholic Encyclopedia on these matters are misleading at best and dishonest scholarship at worst. Having taken note of this we move on to the actual argument offered by the Catholic Encyclopedia in order to explain Irenaeus' statements.

The Catholic Encyclopedia argues that the reason that Irenaeus attributes the Roman Church to both Peter and Paul is because Irenaeus intends to "to lay stress on the fact that that Church inherited the teaching of both the great Apostles." One must ask, if Irenaeus understood Peter to hold the place of supreme authority over the Church and its doctrines, why would he feel led to stress Paul's contributions to the teachings held by the Roman Church? If Peter was the pope, by commission from Jesus Christ, and held all of the supreme authority that Roman Catholics ascribe to that position, what difference would it make that Paul contributed to the teachings of the Church at Rome? What benefit or weight could Paul possibly add to Irenaeus' argument if Peter were invested with all the supreme authority of the RCC pope?

Indeed, the very fact that Irenaeus felt it helpful "to lay stress on the fact that that Church inherited the teaching of both the great Apostles" at least undermines the Roman Catholic claim that Peter held superiority in the Church. If Peter had, there would have been no need for Irenaeus to stress Paul's contributions in order to add weight to the authenticity of the teachings of the Roman Church. For if Peter had supreme authority as the pope, then Peter himself would have been sufficient weight without Paul. Appealing to Paul in any way only undermines the exclusive sufficiency of Peter as the RCC pope.

So, the Roman Catholic view can in no way claim support for their position that Peter occupied a position of supreme authority from Irenaeus, whom they admit felt the need to stress Paul's involvement alongside Peter in forming the doctrines of the Roman Church. Furthermore, the arguments of the Catholic Encyclopedia do not explain the first quote from Irenaeus, which has nothing to do with establishing the authenticity or orthodoxy of the teachings exhibited in the Roman Church.

"Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews(3) in their own dialect, **while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church.**" - Irenaeus, CHAP. I.--THE APOSTLES DID NOT COMMENCE TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, OR TO PLACE ANYTHING ON RECORD, UNTIL THEY WERE ENDOWED WITH THE GIFTS AND POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. THEY PREACHED ONE GOD ALONE, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.

Regardless of his defense against Gnostic heresies, Irenaeus clearly held that Peter and Paul together provided the foundation of the Roman church, which effectively strips Peter from any hint of exclusive authority as the foundation stone of the Roman church.

Nor, can Roman Catholic explain Irenaeus' other statement when listing the bishops of Rome.

"**3. The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate.**" - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

The Catholic Encyclopedia acknowledges this quote, but does not provide an adequate explanation for why Irenaeus would have recorded that Peter and Paul together appointed Linus to be the bishop of Rome.

"**The Pope - He does, it is true, speak of the two Apostles as together handing on the episcopate to Linus.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

Again, we must note that the Catholic Encyclopedia does not allow their readers to read the text for themselves as we have done here, but instead only provides their own conclusions. One can understand why they do this in light of Irenaeus' words. For, if Peter was indeed the one and only first bishop of Rome, as Roman Catholics claim, then Irenaeus' words cannot simply be explained as an additional support for the orthodoxy of the Roman Church's doctrine. For if Peter was truly the one and only first bishop of Rome, then for Irenaeus to describe both Peter and Paul appointing Linus to be bishop of Rome would be either a serious historical inaccuracy or a very misleading argument. By contrast it is much simpler and more natural to understand Irenaeus' words as they plainly indicate - the Roman Church was

founded by Peter and Paul who together appointed Linus. Thus, when interpreted reasonably and without a Roman Catholic bias, Irenaeus does not provide any support for even the initial claim that Peter alone was the first bishop of Rome.

Although there seems no objective reason to deny a dual-episcopate shared by both Peter and Paul, we need not speculate that both men were counted as bishops of Rome. Irenaeus nowhere states that Peter was a bishop. Only the Roman Catholic position requires a categorical identification of Peter as a bishop. It is possible that because both men were apostles that neither would have been identified by the lesser designation or title of bishop. Though they indeed did found and oversee the Church at Rome, as apostles their role in the Church is more universal and would not fit as well with the title bishop, which denoted a local Church leader.

It may, in fact, be the case that while Peter and Paul both lived, there was no bishop of Rome. No need would have existed for one since these two men would have fulfilled all the duties and met all of the needs that a bishop is meant to fill. This may explain the discrepancy noted by the Catholic Encyclopedia regarding exactly which place Hyginus occupied as bishop of Rome - eighth or ninth.

If neither Peter or Paul is identified as bishop of Rome, then Linus would be counted as the first bishop of Rome. In this scheme, Hyginus would be the eighth bishop of Rome.

"3. The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate. Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy. To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric...To this Clement there succeeded Evaristus. Alexander followed Evaristus; then, sixth from the apostles, Sixtus was appointed; after him, Telephorus, who was gloriously martyred; then Hyginus; after him, Pius; then after him, Anicetus. Sorer having succeeded Anicetus, Eleutherius does now, in the twelfth place from the apostles, hold the inheritance of the episcopate. In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us. And this is most abundant proof that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles until now, and handed down in truth." - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

Notice how Irenaeus uses the designation "from the apostles" in order to number the bishops of Rome. This phrase, used four times by Irenaeus, again indicates that he understood both Peter and Paul to rule the Church of Rome before Linus. Likewise, we see Irenaeus numbers the succession of Roman bishops in this order according to their distance from the apostles Peter and Paul: **1) Linus, 2) Anacletus, 3) Clement, 4) Evaristus, 5) Alexander, 6) Sixtus, 7) Telephorus, then 8) Hyginus, 9) Pius, 10) Anicetus, 11) Sorer, 12) Eleutherius.**

That this is the case is proven by Irenaeus reference to Clement being "in the third place from the apostles." Clement is said to follow Linus and Anacletus as the bishop of Rome. If, therefore, Clement is the third, Linus would be the first bishop, and Anacletus, the second bishop. Similarly, Sixtus is the "sixth from the apostles." He is preceded in descending order by five bishops of Rome: **5) Alexander, 4) Evaristus, 3) Clement, 2) Anacletus, and 1) Linus.** And again, Eleutherius, Irenaeus' contemporary is noted as being "in the twelfth place from the apostles." Eleutherius is preceded in descending order by eleven bishops of Rome: **11) Sorer, 10) Anicetus, 9) Pius, 8) Hyginus, 7) Telephorus, 6) Sixtus, 5) Alexander, 4) Evaristus, 3) Clement, 2) Anacletus, and 1) Linus.** Irenaeus numbers these men as bishops of Rome, but applies no number to either Apostle, but instead making Linus the first bishop of Rome. No place is left by Irenaeus for Peter as the first bishop.

Alternatively, if one were inclined to count Linus as the second bishop of Rome following a period in which the position was first fulfilled by an Apostle or both Apostles, then Hyginus could, in fact, be reckoned as the ninth bishop of Rome.

Having undermined the Roman Catholic argument that Irenaeus attests to Peter being the sole bishop of Rome there is little need to continue with their second claim that the Roman bishopric occupied a position supreme authority over the Church except to demonstrate the total deficiency of the RCC's position. This we will do momentarily. However, since Irenaeus' words indicate that Peter and Paul shared in the founding and administration of the Church at Rome, any supremacy attributed to that Church by Irenaeus cannot be taken to indicate Peter's papal authority. Since Irenaeus equally credits Paul in these matters an indication of Roman primacy by Irenaeus would equally apply to Paul and Peter and not solely to Peter as the RCC contends and, which would need to be the case in order to validate RCC's teaching.

Nevertheless, here is the argument offered by the Catholic Encyclopedia that Irenaeus' supports their teaching of Roman primacy.

"The Pope - The same century gives us the witness of St. Irenaeus -- a man who stands in the closest connexion with the age of the Apostles, since he was a disciple of St. Polycarp, who had been appointed. Bishop of Smyrna by St. John. In his work 'Adversus Haereses' (3:3:2) he brings against the Gnostic sects of his day **the argument that their doctrines have no support in the Apostolic tradition faithfully preserved by the Churches, which could trace the succession of their bishops back to the Twelve. He writes: 'Because it would be too long in such a volume as**

this to enumerate the successions of all the churches, we point to the tradition of that very great and very ancient and universally known Church, which was founded and established at Rome, by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul: we point I say, to the tradition which this Church has from the Apostles, and to her faith proclaimed to men which comes down to our time through the succession of her bishops, and so we put to shame . . . all who assemble in unauthorized meetings. For with this Church, because of its superior authority, every Church must agree -- that is the faithful everywhere -- in communion with which Church the tradition of the Apostles has been always preserved by those who are everywhere [Ad hanc enim ecclesiam propter potentioris principalitatem necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam, hoc est eos qui sunt undique fideles, in qua semper ab his qui sunt undique, conservata est ea quâ est ab apostolis traditio]'. He then proceeds to enumerate the Roman succession from Linus to Eleutherius, the twelfth after the Apostles, who then occupied the see." - Catholic Encyclopedia

First, notice that the reason Irenaeus is appealing to Rome is on the basis that it preserves the teaching of the apostles in contrast to the Gnostics who deviate from apostolic teaching. This is the main theme of Irenaeus' argument here. This perfectly confirms our analysis of Matthew 16, in which any commendation to Peter is dependent upon his own faithfulness of the previous revelations given through both John the Baptist and Andrew in John 1:29-42. Both Irenaeus and Matthew 16 strongly indicate that preservation of previous divine teaching was the basis of divine approval and authority, not any supposed Roman papal authority.

PART SIX:

It has been argued by Roman Catholics that Irenaeus' appeal to the Roman Church constitutes evidence of the primacy of this Church's bishop. However, that this is not Irenaeus' intention is made clear by the context of his entire argument.

As the Catholic Encyclopedia correctly observes Irenaeus' comments on this matter come as a part of an argument he makes against Gnostic heretics. Here, Irenaeus' intention is to show Gnostic doctrine to be in error and fraudulent because the teachings of the Church can be traced directly back to the Apostles, while that of the Gnostics could not. In doing so, Irenaeus inherently affirms that the beliefs and teaching of any group can be affirmed or rejected by direct comparison to the apostles themselves. For, what good is it to trace one's doctrines back to the apostles while simultaneously contradicting or ignoring the very things taught by the apostles? Rather, since what is significant is whether the teaching of any group did originate with the apostles, it is important that such teaching remain in perfect, uncorrupted agreement with the teachings of the apostles. And to the extent that the RCC itself deviates from the things taught by the apostles, it too would be disproved.

Here is the whole of Irenaeus' comments on this matter. We apologize for the length of the quote, but it is necessary so readers can clearly see for themselves that Irenaeus is in no way arguing for supremacy of authority of the Roman bishops.

"1. It is within the power of all, therefore, in every Church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world; and we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the apostles instituted bishops in the Churches, and [to demonstrate] the succession of these men to our own times; those who neither taught nor knew of anything like what these [heretics] rave about. For if the apostles had known hidden mysteries, which they were in the habit of imparting to "the perfect" apart and privily from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the Churches themselves. For they were desirous that these men should be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors, delivering up their own place of government to these men; which men, if they discharged their functions honestly, would be a great boon [to the Church], but if they should fall away, the direst calamity. 2. Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; [we do this, I say,] by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its pre- eminent authority,(3) that is, the faithful every-416 where, inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere. 3. The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate. Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy. To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric. This man, as he had seen the blessed apostles, and had been conversant with them, might be said to have the preaching of the apostles still echoing [in his ears], and their traditions before his eyes. Nor was he alone [in this], for there were many still remaining who had received instructions from the apostles. In the time of this Clement, no small dissension having occurred among the brethren at Corinth, the Church in Rome despatched a most powerful letter to the Corinthians, exhorting them to peace, renewing their faith, and declaring the tradition which it had lately received from the apostles, proclaiming the one God, omnipotent, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Creator of man, who brought on the deluge, and called Abraham, who led the people from the land of Egypt, spake with Moses, set forth the law, sent the prophets, and who has prepared fire for the devil and his angels. From this document, whosoever chooses to do so, may learn that He, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, was preached by the Churches, and may also understand the apostolical tradition of the Church, since

this Epistle is of older date than these men who are now propagating falsehood, and who conjure into existence another god beyond the Creator and the Maker of all existing things. To this Clement there succeeded Evaristus. Alexander followed Evaristus; then, sixth from the apostles, Sixtus was appointed; after him, Telephorus, who was gloriously martyred; then Hyginus; after him, Pius; then after him, Anicetus. Sorer having succeeded Anicetus, Eleutherius does now, in the twelfth place from the apostles, hold the inheritance of the episcopate. In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us. And this is most abundant proof that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles until now, and handed down in truth. 4. But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried [on earth] a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom,(1) departed this life, **having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time,**--a man who was of much greater weight, and a more steadfast witness of truth, than Valentinus, and Marcion, and the rest of the heretics. **He it was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus caused many to turn away from the aforesaid heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles,--that, namely, which is handed down by the Church.**(2) There are also those who heard from him that John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, "Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within." And Polycarp himself replied to Marcion, who met him on one occasion, and said, "Dost thou know me?" "I do know thee, the first-born of Satan." Such was the horror which the apostles and their disciples had against holding even verbal communication with any corrupters of the truth; as Paul also says, "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."(3) **There is also a very powerful(4) Epistle of Polycarp written to the Philippians, from which those who choose to do so, and are anxious about their salvation, can learn the character of his faith, and the preaching of the truth. Then, again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles.**" - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

We begin our analysis of Irenaeus' argument by noting that he starts out with an appeal to the power inherent to every individual Church to contemplate the traditions of the Apostles, which were manifested throughout the whole world. Because of this, he notes, that they were all in a position to reckon those who were appointed by the Apostles to be the bishops of the Churches, not only in Rome, but throughout the world.

"1. It is within the power of all, therefore, in every Church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world; and we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the apostles instituted bishops in the Churches, and [to demonstrate] the succession of these men to our own times;" - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

By these words, Irenaeus indicates that the Roman Church was not alone and that his appeal to the succession of Apostolic teaching was universal rather than localized and limited to the Church at Rome.

Irenaeus continues by speaking further of the appointment of these bishops who succeeded the Apostles.

"For they were desirous that these men should be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors, delivering up their own place of government to these men; which men, if they discharged their functions honestly, would be a great boon [to the Church], but if they should fall away, the direst calamity." - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

Notice that Irenaeus is here describing his understanding of Apostolic Succession and notice also that it does not include the Roman Catholic notion of a supreme papal succession from Peter to the bishops of Rome. If Irenaeus understood such a convention as Roman Catholics argue that he did, why is any mention of it conspicuously absent from his discussion of Apostolic Succession? Rather than affirming the papal succession of the RCC, Irenaeus denies its existence by instead identifying Apostolic Succession, not solely with a supreme bishop of Rome from Peter, but of the bishops in all the Churches from all of the Apostles.

Also, note that Irenaeus makes the governance appointed by the Apostles to their successors conditional upon their remaining perfect and blameless in regard to the Apostolic Traditions that they passed on to them. Irenaeus also makes it possible for the apostles' successors to fall away by deviating from the apostles' own teaching. Apostolic authority in Irenaeus' mind did not include a blind and unconditional appointment to power as the Roman Catholic Church asserts.

Though Irenaeus opens by clearly expressing his view that ultimately it was the Apostolic Traditions held by all of the Churches, which demonstrated the fraudulent nature of Gnostic teaching, he admits that to document all of these

successions of bishops would take too much time. His solution is to limit his discussion only to the bishops of the Church at Rome.

"2. Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; [we do this, I say,] by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops." - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

So, Irenaeus is not arguing against the Gnostics by appealing to the supreme and singular authority held by the Roman Church as the successors of Peter. Instead, he appeals to the legitimacy of the Roman Church, not because it is the heir of Peter's papal authority, but because it is substantiated by both Peter and Paul as its founders and because Irenaeus does not have the time to write down the arguments for the reliability of all the Churches.

Before preceding to list the succession of Roman bishops, which we have discussed above, Irenaeus makes the following comment about the Roman Church.

"For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its pre- eminent authority,(3) that is, the faithful every-416 where, inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere." - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

This remark, taken out of context, has been used by Roman Catholics as evidence of a 2nd century witness to papal authority and Roman primacy. However, by placing this comment in its context we see that Irenaeus is doing no such thing.

It is true that the Church of Rome must have been held as having a high degree of reliability with regard to its doctrine. But Irenaeus credits the reason for this to the fact that the Roman church had been founded by Peter and Paul, not merely because it was the heir to Roman primacy as Roman Catholics contend. Notice, the second part of Irenaeus' comment here. After speaking of the pre-eminent authority of the Roman Church, he clearly articulates that it is not Roman Catholic primacy that he has in mind. Instead of letting his comment simply be that every Church should agree with the Church at Rome because of its authority, he clarifies by referring back to his opening remarks. In context Irenaeus is saying: "...every Church should agree with this [Roman] Church, on account of its pre- eminent authority...inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those who exist everywhere."

So, Irenaeus' reason that every Church should agree with the authority of Roman is that the Apostolic Tradition has been preserved everywhere in every Church, just as he stated at the beginning of his arguments. Thus, because all churches founded by the apostles should have the doctrine of the apostles, it is necessary only to trace the doctrine in one particular church. Because they are founded with the same teaching, all other churches of apostolic origin would necessarily have the same doctrine. Therefore, it is not necessary for Irenaeus to take time to trace the apostolic succession in every church, only one. And for this purpose, he chooses Rome because both Peter and Paul were there. In saying this Irenaeus again does not exhibit any support for the Roman Catholic claim of Roman primacy and supreme authority over doctrine, but instead, denies it by distributing the authority to the universal Church, rather to the local Church at Rome, using Rome only as an example of what was widely held in apostolic churches "everywhere."

Irenaeus' closing remarks unequivocally demonstrate the continuity of his arguments as an appeal to the Apostolic Tradition preserved in all of the Churches and not just the Church at Rome while using Rome as one example. Just after concluding his list of the bishops of Rome, he goes on to make the following remarks in finishing his argument.

"4. But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried [on earth] a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom,(1) departed this life, having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time,--a man who was of much greater weight, and a more steadfast witness of truth, than Valentinus, and Marcion, and the rest of the heretics. He it was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus caused many to turn away from the aforesaid heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles,--that, namely, which is handed down by the Church.(2)...There is also a very powerful(4) Epistle of Polycarp written to the Philippians, from which those who choose to do so, and are anxious about their salvation, can learn the character of his faith, and the preaching of the truth." - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

So, besides including Paul along with Peter as the founder and father of the Church at Rome and besides making a general appeal to Apostolic Traditions preserved in all of the Churches, Irenaeus concludes by making a specific appeal to the Apostolic Tradition preserved by Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, as handed down from John the Apostle. Besides his mention of Clement's letter to the Corinthians as he discussed the reliability of the Roman Church's teaching, he here mentions Polycarp's letter to the Philippians as an exhibition of the reliability of the Apostolic Tradition Polycarp received from John.

And finally, Irenaeus concludes with an appeal to the Apostolic Tradition preserved in Ephesus from both John and Paul.

"Then, again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles. - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

So, by pointing to Paul, John, Peter, Polycarp, and Clement and the Churches of Smyrna, Ephesus, and Rome we see that Irenaeus' argument against the Gnostics is based on his appeal to the Apostolic authority possessed and exhibited in all of the Churches. It is not an appeal to the primacy or supreme authority of the Roman Church as Roman Catholics claim. His emphasis on the Roman Church is simply a matter of convenience. Because he doesn't have to present the Apostolic succession of all churches, he chooses instead to mention only a few whose doctrine is reliable and whose succession can quickly be traced and recognized. Rome is merely one example among a group of sufficient churches used for the sake of conserving space, but any of the others would have worked equally well according to Irenaeus.

There are a few other quotes from Irenaeus that touch on this issue of papal superiority and Peter as the head of the apostles. We will cover these momentarily and explain their relevance. But before we do we should also make note of another odd argument that is expressed in the above quote from the Catholic Encyclopedia involving the reasons they offer for why, as they conclude, the second century does not provide much evidence.

"The Pope - In the second century we cannot look for much evidence. With the exception of Ignatius, Polycarp, and Clement of Alexandria, **all the writers whose works we possess are apologists against either Jews or pagans.** In works of such a character there was **no reason to refer to such a matter as Peter's Roman episcopate.** Irenaeus, however, supplies us with a cogent argument." - Catholic Encyclopedia

According to this quote from the Catholic Encyclopedia, which we saw earlier, the reason that the second century does not provide much evidence to support papal authority is chiefly because "all the writers whose works we possess are apologists against either Jews or pagans" and because "in works of such a character there was no reason to refer to such a matter as Peter's Roman episcopate."

But, why, we must ask does would apologetic works made toward Jewish or pagan objections have "no reason to refer to...Peter's Roman episcopate?" Consider this question in light of the primary and first proof that they offer from this period.

Immediately after claiming that 2nd century apologists would have "no reason to refer to...Peter's Roman episcopate" as an explanation for the absence of support from this period, the Catholic Encyclopedia then offers as its main evidence from this time the arguments of the apologist Irenaeus.

While we disagree with the Catholic Encyclopedia that Irenaeus in any way adds support to their views, their appeal to him constitutes a notable contradiction. On the one hand they claim that 2nd century apologists had no reason to refer to Peter's papal authority. Then they immediately turn around and argue for support of "the primacy of Peter's Roman episcopate" from a prominent 2nd century apologist. If nothing else then, by appealing to an apologist after just stating that apologists have no reason to refer to this topic, the Catholic Encyclopedia has undermined their own explanation for why the 2nd century provides no evidence to support Peter's Roman authority.

By offering Irenaeus' apology to Gnosticism as proof of both Peter's Roman episcopate and Roman primacy the Catholic Encyclopedia has, in fact, argued how useful it would have been for 2nd century apologist to refer to papal authority to refute heretics just as they claim that Irenaeus did. In doing so they force us to revisit the question. If 2nd century apologists, such as Irenaeus, did find it useful to appeal to Roman primacy and Peter's Roman episcopate then why doesn't the 2nd century provide much support in favor of this Roman Catholic doctrine? Given the usefulness that an appeal to Roman authority would have been to 2nd century apologists, like Irenaeus, the fact that 2nd century apologists do not appeal to this doctrine, as the Catholic Encyclopedia admits, strongly implies that no such doctrine was known to them otherwise we might have expected them to employ it in their argumentation, just as the Catholic Encyclopedia erroneously suggests Irenaeus is doing. Since, they did not we must assume that papal authority was unavailable to them. Or in other words, they could not and did not appeal to this doctrine because no such doctrine existed in the 2nd century Church.

As we leave Irenaeus' writings we will mention briefly a few other comments he makes that have some bearing on the question of Peter's supposed supremacy and authority.

In the section quoted below Irenaeus is refuting the suggestion, made by some heretics, that Paul was the only apostle who had a complete knowledge of the truth. He argues that Peter must also have had complete knowledge. By quoting Matthew 16:17, Irenaeus establishes that God also revealed truth to Peter.

"2. And again, the Lord replied to Philip, who wished to behold the Father, 'Have I been so long a time with you, and yet thou hast not known Me, Philip? He that sees Me, sees also the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? For I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; and henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.' (3) To these men, therefore, did the Lord bear witness, that in Himself they had both known and seen the Father (and the Father is truth). To allege, then, that these men did not know the truth, is to act the part of false witnesses, and of those who have been alienated from the doctrine of Christ. For why did the Lord send the twelve apostles to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,(4) if these men did not know the truth? How also did the seventy preach, unless they had themselves previously known the truth of what was preached? Or how could **Peter have been in ignorance, to whom the Lord gave testimony, that flesh and blood had not revealed to him, but the Father, who is in heaven?**(5) **Just, then, as 'Paul [was] an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father,'**(6) **[so with the rest;] (7) the Son indeed leading them to the Father, but the Father revealing to them the Son.**" - Irenaeus, CHAP. XIII--REFUTATION OF THE OPINION, THAT PAUL WAS THE ONLY APOSTLE WHO HAD KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH.

Noting that the purpose of Irenaeus argument is to show that other Apostles, besides Paul, understood the teachings of Jesus Christ, we see that Irenaeus seeks to make Peter equal with Paul. By referring the reader to Matthew 16:17, Irenaeus establishes that Peter received divine revelation from God the Father. His point is to compare Peter's experience with Paul's, wherein Paul was called by divine command and personally addressed by Jesus Christ while on the road to Damascus (Acts 9, Galatians 1:1). The result is that Irenaeus argues to establish Peter as equal with Paul and at no time discusses Peter's superior authority or papal commission, even when mentioning Matthew 16:17. Or to put it another way, Irenaeus is interpreting Peter receiving revelation in Matthew 16:17 in light of Paul receiving revelation and as being of the same caliber as the revelation received by Paul, making the two men equal as vessels of revelation. Thus, Irenaeus makes Peter's receiving revelation in Matthew 16:17 of no special status above the way that other apostles, such as Paul, received revelation.

If Irenaeus wished to refute those who demoted Peter improperly he surely would have invoked Peter's papal authority on this matter. That he does not strongly implies that no such papal authority was known by Irenaeus. Likewise, Irenaeus' mention of Matthew 16:17 in order to speak of Peter's legitimacy in the teachings of Christ also occurs without any indication of the Roman Catholic interpretation that in this passage Jesus placed Peter in a position of authority over the whole Church and as the head of the Apostles. Again, Irenaeus' failure to mention this critical Roman Catholic interpretation while discussing this very passage and Peter's validity as an Apostle of Christ plainly implies that either the Roman Catholic interpretation was not known to Irenaeus or, even if it was known to him, he did not subscribe to it.

In fact, Irenaeus refers to Jesus' remarks to Peter in Matthew 16:17 at least two other times in his writings. In neither case does Irenaeus indicate anything resembling papal authority.

"4. The Lord Himself, too, makes it evident who it was that suffered; for when He asked the disciples, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?'(16) and when Peter had replied, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;' and when he had been commended by Him [in these words], 'That flesh and blood had not revealed it to him, but the Father who is in heaven,' He made it clear that He, the Son of man, is Christ the Son of the living God. 'For from that time forth,' it is said, 'He began to show to His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, 447 and suffer many things of the priests, and be rejected, and crucified, and rise again the third day.'(1) He who was acknowledged by Peter as Christ, who pronounced him blessed because the Father had revealed the Son of the living God to him, said that He must Himself suffer many things, and be crucified; and then He rebuked Peter, who imagined that He was the Christ as the generality of men supposed(2) [that the Christ should be], and was averse to the idea of His suffering, [and] said to the disciples, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose it for My sake shall save it.'(3) For these things Christ spoke openly, He being Himself the Saviour of those who should be delivered over to death for their confession of Him, and lose their lives." - Irenaeus, CHAP. XVIII.--CONTINUATION OF THE FOREGOING ARGUMENT. PROOFS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ST. PAUL, AND FROM THE WORDS OF OUR LORD, THAT CHRIST AND JESUS CANNOT BE CONSIDERED AS DISTINCT BEINGS; NEITHER CAN IT BE ALLEGED THAT THE SON OF GOD BECAME MAN MERELY IN APPEARANCE, BUT THAT HE DID SO TRULY AND ACTUALLY.

"8. Wherefore also Moses giving a type, cast his rod upon the earth,(6) in order that it, by becoming flesh, might expose and swallow up all the opposition of the Egyptians, which was lifting itself up against the pre-arranged plan of God;(7) that the Egyptians themselves might testify that it is the finger of God which works salvation for the people, and not the son of Joseph. For if He were the son of Joseph, how could He be greater than Solomon, of greater than Jonah,(8) or greater than David,(9) when He was generated from the same seed, and was a descendant of these men? And how was it that He also pronounced Peter blessed, because he acknowledged Him to be the Son of the living God?(10)" - Irenaeus, CHAP. XXI.--A VINDICATION OF THE PROPHECY IN ISAIAH (VII. 14) AGAINST THE MISINTERPRETATIONS OF THEODOTION, AQUILA, THE EBIONITES, AND THE JEWS. AUTHORITY OF THE SEPTUAGINT VERSION. ARGUMENTS IN PROOF THAT CHRIST WAS BORN OF A VIRGIN.

So, its not that early Church writers did not discuss Matthew 16:15-19 or that need did not arise to assert Peter's place as

a legitimate Apostle of Christ. And yet, when discussing these matters, the Roman Catholic idea of papal authority being held by Peter is never mentioned. Though Irenaeus does note that Peter was blessed, it does not in any way follow that "blessed" means "given papal authority over the Church." The only way to interpret Irenaeus' comments on these matters in favor of the Roman Catholic position is to employ circular reasoning and biased presumptions. Since, such methods are inappropriate for those who wish to honestly understand history and Church doctrine, we must conclude that Irenaeus' failure to mention papal authority is a strong indication that it did not exist or that he did not accept this doctrine. We will have to revisit this issue as we examine other 1st and 2nd century documents and also find them to be devoid of statements supporting this foundational Roman Catholic teaching.

We should also note that while Irenaeus at no time speaks of Peter as being in a place of superiority over the Church or the other Apostles, he does repeatedly place Peter side by side with Paul as an Apostle in terms of both rank and soundness of doctrine.

"6. Some of his disciples, too, addicting themselves(2) to the same practices, have deceived many silly women, and defiled them. **They proclaim themselves as being 'perfect,' so that no one can be compared to them with respect to the immensity of their knowledge, nor even were you to mention Paul or Peter, or any other of the apostles.**" - Irenaeus, CHAP. XIII.--THE DECEITFUL ARTS AND NEFARIOUS PRACTICES OF MARCUS.

"2. The soul, therefore, which is like that of Christ can despise those rulers who were the creators of the world, and, in like manner, receives power for accomplishing the same results. This idea has raised them to such a pitch of pride, that some of them declare themselves similar to Jesus; **while others, still more mighty, maintain that they are superior to his disciples, such as Peter and Paul, and the rest of the apostles, whom they consider to be in no respect inferior to Jesus.** For their souls, descending from the same sphere as his, and therefore despising in like manner the creators of the world, are deemed worthy of the same power, and again depart to the same place. But if any one shall have despised the things in this world more than he did, he thus proves himself superior to him." - Irenaeus, CHAP. XXV.--DOCTRINES OF CARPOCRATES.

Additionally, while Irenaeus does not identify Peter with the foundation rock of the Church spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 16:15-19, he does refer to Jesus' teachings in this manner.

"1. WE have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those **through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith.(2)**" - Irenaeus, CHAP. I.--THE APOSTLES DID NOT COMMENCE TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, OR TO PLACE ANYTHING ON RECORD, UNTIL THEY WERE ENDOWED WITH THE GIFTS AND POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. THEY PREACHED ONE GOD ALONE, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.

With this last quote, we end our examination of Irenaeus having shown that he in no way can be said to demonstrate support for the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal authority. On the other hand, his statements when taken in context of his arguments reveal that he either was unaware of any such teaching or did not accept it as orthodox. Moreover, several arguments of his have been shown to even contradict the position of the RCC where, instead of appealing to papal authority or Roman primacy, Irenaeus attests to and appeals to the fact that Apostolic Tradition had been preserved in the universal Church and that Apostolic Succession was available in all of the Churches, of which Rome was merely one example.

After a fruitless appeal to Irenaeus, the Catholic Encyclopedia next turns to the writings of Clement for support of their papal doctrines. Thus, by appealing to Clement the Catholic Encyclopedia proceeds to offer what they claim is 1st century evidence of papal authority in the Church. This means that their sole claim of evidence from the 2nd century involved the writings of Irenaeus, which we have shown do not lend credibility to the Roman Catholic position.

Therefore, we arrive at the 1st century, non-canonical (not part of the Bible) writings of the early Church. We have now, in reverse order, examined the supposed 3rd and 2nd century evidence offered by the RCC in support of its papal doctrines and found it lacking. Likewise, we examined the New Testament, which comprises not only the majority of 1st century Church writings, but the authoritative writings of Church doctrine, and found that it too did not provide support for the Roman Catholic teaching on papal authority.

PART SEVEN:

We are now entering into a very specific part of our survey. With the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians we begin a very small number of works, which themselves will only make a few remarks that may be relevant to our study of the origin of this Roman Catholic doctrine. Having then already looked at the 1st century Scriptural evidence as well as the evidence from the 3rd and 2nd century Traditional (non-Biblical early Church) writings and found them to be without validation for the views of the RCC, it would take a pretty explicit statement in order to now substantiate this doctrine on such a small portion of the available documentation. This is especially true since a very large portion of the potential evidence has already been shown to be at least indifferent to the subject. More likely, for those who are willing to make a reasonable assessment, it has been prohibitive of Roman Catholic teaching.

So, we turn now to Clement, who was, according to Irenaeus, a bishop of Rome. Clement wrote an epistle known as the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, which will be the subject of the Roman Catholic appeal. This epistle was written before the year 100 A.D. (Remember, of course, that the term "pope" was not used as an exclusive reference to the bishop of Rome until the eleventh century.)

"Clement I, Saint - or Clement of Rome, d. A.D. 97?, pope (A.D. 88?-A.D. 97?), martyr; successor of St. Cletus. He may have known the apostles Peter and Paul and was a highly esteemed figure in the church." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"The Pope - The first witness is St. Clement, a disciple of the Apostles, who, after Linus and Anacletus, succeeded St. Peter as the fourth in the list of popes. In his 'Epistle to the Corinthians', written in 95 or 96..." - Catholic Encyclopedia

Here, then, is the argument offered by the Catholic Encyclopedia based upon Clement's letter to the Corinthians.

"The Pope - The first witness is St. Clement, a disciple of the Apostles, who, after Linus and Anacletus, succeeded St. Peter as the fourth in the list of popes. In his "Epistle to the Corinthians", written in 95 or 96, he bids them receive back the bishops whom a turbulent faction among them had expelled. 'If any man', he says, 'should be disobedient unto the words spoken by God through us, let them understand that they will entangle themselves in no slight transgression and danger' (Ep. 59). Moreover, he bids them 'render obedience unto the things written by us through the Holy Spirit'. The tone of authority which inspires the latter appears so clearly that Lightfoot did not hesitate to speak of it as 'the first step towards papal domination (Clement 1:70).' Thus, at the very commencement of church history, before the last survivor of the Apostles had passed away, we find a Bishop of Rome, himself a disciple of St. Peter, intervening in the affairs of another Church and claiming to settle the matter by a decision spoken under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Such a fact admits of one explanation alone. It is that in the days when the Apostolic teaching was yet fresh in men's minds the universal Church recognized in the Bishop of Rome the office of supreme head." - Catholic Encyclopedia

Several conclusions drawn by the Catholic Encyclopedia must be challenged.

First, the Catholic Encyclopedia claims Clement to be the first witness to supremacy of the Roman bishopric from the earliest times. This is an astonishing acknowledgement especially since Clement's letter was only written in 95 or 96 A.D.

"The Pope - History bears complete testimony that from the very earliest times the Roman See has ever claimed the supreme headship, and that that headship has been freely acknowledged by the universal Church. We shall here confine ourselves to the consideration of the evidence afforded by the first three centuries." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The Pope - The first witness is St. Clement, a disciple of the Apostles, who, after Linus and Anacletus, succeeded St. Peter as the fourth in the list of popes. In his "Epistle to the Corinthians", written in 95 or 96." - Catholic Encyclopedia

If then this later 1st century document is the first witness to the doctrine of Roman papal supremacy a question must be asked as to whether or not this is sufficient to demonstrate the origin of this Roman Catholic teaching with Jesus Christ over six decades earlier at about 30 A.D. Is a single document written over 60 years after the fact, by a second-hand witness asserting that he alone holds supreme authority in the Church enough to sufficiently establish that the doctrine he is asserting originated with Jesus Christ? (Of course, as we will see, Clement is not really making such a claim.)

Having demonstrated that the New Testament cannot be appealed to as providing support for papal supremacy, we would argue that even if Clement's letter is shown to indicate papal authority it would not be sufficient to demonstrate therefore, that this was the teaching of Jesus Christ or his apostles. It would remain entirely possible that this doctrine was elaborated or exaggerated by some later bishop of Rome such as Linus, Anacletus, or Clement himself in order to strengthen their power, perhaps even for virtuous reasons like preserving sound doctrine. So, even a firm statement of support for papal supremacy from Clement may not rise to the level of sufficiency for substantiating the claim of the RCC that this doctrine originated with the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Second, it must also be noted that while Clement certainly did succeed Linus and Anacletus as bishop of Rome, the evidence that the Catholic Encyclopedia has offered so far does not support that Peter was the first bishop of Rome. And though this conclusion has not been established from the evidence they have offered, the Catholic Encyclopedia is, nevertheless, more than willing to simply assume it to be true.

However, what we have seen is that while the Catholic Encyclopedia insists upon referring to Clement as the fourth bishop of Rome, Irenaeus simply calls him the third from the apostles. By this and other statements from Irenaeus we learned that either Peter and Paul shared the Roman bishopric or, more likely, that neither was denoted with the title of bishop since both held Apostolic title instead, which superseded the lesser title of bishop and, therefore, made the title of "bishop" unnecessary and perhaps inaccurate.

"2. Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; **[we do this, I say,] by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul;** as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops." - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

"3. **The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate.** Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy. **To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric.**" - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

"Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews(3) in their own dialect, **while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church.**" - Irenaeus, CHAP. I.--THE APOSTLES DID NOT COMMENCE TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, OR TO PLACE ANYTHING ON RECORD, UNTIL THEY WERE ENDOWED WITH THE GIFTS AND POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. THEY PREACHED ONE GOD ALONE, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.

Third, while the Catholic Encyclopedia is quick to assert that Clement was "himself a disciple of Peter" the New Testament bears witness that Clement, like Linus, was a companion of Paul and NOT Peter. Below is Paul's letter to the Philippians indicating that Clement was one of his fellow workers followed by a quote from the Columbia Encyclopedia affirming this fact.

Philippians 4:3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, **with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers,** whose names are in the book of life.

"**Clement, in the Bible - in Philippians, one of Paul's coworkers. He is traditionally identified with St. Clement of Rome, the likely author of a letter written from there to the Corinthian church in c. A.D. 96.**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

And again, as we have already seen earlier Irenaeus connects Linus and Clement to Paul and Peter rather than to just Peter as the Catholic Encyclopedia asserts.

"3. **The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate.** Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy. To him succeeded Anacletus; and **after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric. This man, as he had seen the blessed apostles,** and had been conversant with them, might be said to have the preaching of **the apostles** still echoing [in his ears], and their traditions before his eyes. Nor was he alone [in this], for there were many still remaining who had received instructions from the apostles." - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

Given these facts, we must ask why the Catholic Encyclopedia feels comfortable insisting that Clement was "himself a disciple of Peter." Indeed, it is accurate to say that Clement was a disciple of Peter. But it is inappropriate and misleading to refer to Clement as a disciple of Peter alone given that he was also a disciple of Paul, perhaps even more so since Clement was a companion of Paul's during his ministry. No such connection is attested to historically between Clement and Peter. By omitting Clement's relationship to Paul when discussing Clement as a disciple of Peter, the Catholic Encyclopedia gives the mistaken impression that Clement was solely Peter's disciple just as one would expect if Clement later succeeded Peter as pope.

The fact that Clement was either the disciple of both Paul and Peter and perhaps to a greater extent the disciple of Paul detracts from the Catholic Encyclopedia's argument as does their failure to mention this detail. Moreover, given that Irenaeus attests to Linus receiving the bishopric from both Peter and Paul (as we have seen), the fact that Clement was also strongly tied to Paul and not just Peter, further indicates that Paul and Peter together were the predecessors and mentors of the bishops of the Roman church including both Linus and Clement.

Fourth, we must note the meagerness of the quotation, by which the Catholic Encyclopedia expects to prove its doctrine. In arguing that Clement's First Epistle to the Corinthians provides "the first witness" of Roman papal supremacy, the Catholic Encyclopedia, again, is content to offer only two short quotes from the letter itself. Below are the sole quotes offered by the Catholic Encyclopedia, which they feel are sufficient to demonstrate that Clement is providing support for their doctrine.

"If any man should be disobedient unto the words spoken by God through us, let them understand that they will entangle themselves in no slight transgression and danger." "...render obedience unto the things written by us through the Holy Spirit."

And what do we see in these quotes that would lead us to the conclusion that Clement is at all indicating Roman papal authority? Does he remind the Corinthians of the primacy of Peter? No. Does he remind the Corinthians that Peter was the first bishop of Rome? No. Does he remind the Corinthians of his authority as the Roman bishop? No.

By what means then does the Catholic Encyclopedia intend to convince us that Clement is by these words supporting Roman papal authority? Well, Clement does speak from a position of authority in telling the Corinthians to be obedient to the words spoken by God "through us." Likewise, he also, tells them to be obedient to the things written "by us" through the Holy Spirit.

While such phrases do certainly indicate that Clement had some authority as a bishop in a church, which just so happened to be at Rome, they do not indicate that Clement had more or less authority than any other bishop in any other church. Given the fact that all bishops exercised authority, showing that Clement was aware of his authority as a bishop is in no way equivalent to proving that Clement thought he had supreme authority above and beyond all other bishops. We have already seen from the example of Cyprian, who was the bishop of Carthage, that church congregations in one area would often appeal to the bishop of another area for instruction and decision in times of trouble.

"Cyprian, Saint - When in 254 two Spanish congregations (Mérida and León) appealed to him against a decision by Stephen to restore bishops who had lapsed during the persecution, he summoned a council to consider the case. The council decided that the congregations not only had a right but a duty to separate themselves from a cleric who had committed a deadly sin such as apostasy. Cyprian wrote (Letter 67) that the Holy Spirit was no longer in such a priest and that his sacraments would lead to perdition and not salvation." -Britannica.com

There is nothing in Clement's comments here that would indicate that something above and beyond what happened with Cyprian is taking place in Clement's letter to the Corinthians.

Furthermore, why does Clement speak using the plural pronoun us? If he was the pope, having all of the authority that Roman Catholics ascribe to that position, wouldn't Clement simply refer to himself as having this authority. Instead, he uses the pronoun "us" indicating that the authority he is referring to is shared by more than one person rather than in the singular person of the pope. So, how then do Roman Catholics use Clement's statements to support their papal doctrines?

Only by interpreting Clement's words in accordance with their own preconceived conclusions can Roman Catholics offer Clement's remarks as support for their doctrine. Only by assuming that by "through us" and "by us" Clement is referring to the Roman popes starting with Peter, then Linus, then Anacletus, and then himself would it be the case that Clement is advocating Roman papal authority. But Clement's remarks on their own do not even vaguely require this interpretation.

Nowhere in his letter does Clement indicate that the succession of Roman bishops is what he has in mind as he repeatedly refers to "us." Therefore in order to understand Clement as supporting the Roman Catholic position of Roman papal authority we first must assume the Roman Catholic understanding that the papal office did exist and was being exercised by Clement. This is circular reasoning pure and simple.

The critical question is whether the rest of Clement's letter indicates a special treatment of Peter and the Roman bishops or, instead, equates Peter and the Roman bishops with other Apostles and bishops.

In regard to this, we can see that Clement's letter does not indicate a special position of Peter, but instead mentions him alongside of Paul as pillars of the Church.

"But not to dwell upon ancient examples, let us come to the most recent spiritual heroes.(11) Let us take the noble examples furnished in our own generation. Through envy and jealousy, **the greatest and most righteous pillars[of the Church](3) have been persecuted and put to death.(12) Let us set before our eyes the illustrious(13) apostles. Peter, through unrighteous envy**, endured not one or two, but numerous labours and when he had at length suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him. **Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance**, after being seven times thrown into captivity,(14) compelled(15) to flee, and stoned. After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west,(16) and suffered martyrdom under the prefects.(17) Thus was he removed from the world, and went into the holy place, having proved himself a striking example of patience." - Clement, First Epistle to the Corinthians, CHAP. V.--NO LESS EVILS HAVE ARISEN FROM THE SAME SOURCE IN THE MOST RECENT TIMES. THE MARTYRDOM OF PETER AND PAUL.

In this quote we see that not only does Clement place Peter and Paul on the same level as pillars of the Church, but that Clement identifies Peter as a pillar of the Church alongside Paul, rather than as the singular rock upon which the Church was to be built as Roman Catholics contend. So, Clement's reference to Peter here shows no sign of Roman Catholicism

or of the RCC's doctrine of primacy for the bishop of Rome.

This next quote from Clement's letter speaks even more directly to the hierarchy of Apostles and bishops.

"The apostles have preached the Gospel to us from(4) the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ [has done so from(4) God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments,(5) then, were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God. Having therefore received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established(6) in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. And thus preaching through countries and cities, **they appointed** the first-fruits [of their labours], having first proved them by the Spirit,(7) **to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe.** Nor was this any new thing, since indeed many ages before it was written concerning bishops and deacons. For thus saith the Scripture(8) a certain place, "I will appoint their bishops s in righteousness, and their deacons(9) in faith."(10) - Clement, First Epistle to the Corinthians, CHAP. XLII.--THE ORDER OF MINISTERS IN THE CHURCH.

When presenting the order of ministers in the Church, Clement does not identify Peter or the Roman bishops as being in a place of pre-eminent authority as one would expect if the papal doctrines of the RCC are indeed valid. Instead of singling out Peter and the Roman bishops, and thereby giving a nod to Roman primacy, Clement only broadly mentions the Apostles together as a group as well as those they appointed as bishops and deacons. We must note that Clement is here discussing how the apostles appointed bishops to succeed them. Yet, there is no indication whatsoever of any papal office or supremacy of Peter or the bishopric of Rome as the RCC believes and teaches. This is strong evidence corroborating the conclusion that no such office was ever taught or exercised in the early Church and certainly that such an office is not indicated or supported by Clement.

Next Clement mentions the church at Rome, which he wrote from and was bishop over.

"THE Church of God which sojourns at Rome, to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth, to them that are called and sanctified by the will of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from Almighty God through Jesus Christ, be multiplied. Owing, dear brethren, to the sudden and successive calamitous events which have happened to ourselves, **we feel** that we have been somewhat tardy in turning our attention to the points respecting which you **consulted us.**" - Clement, First Epistle to the Corinthians, CHAP. I.--THE SALUTATION. PRAISE OF THE CORINTHIANS BEFORE THE BREAKING FORTH OF SCHISM AMONG THEM.

Though we see that Clement indicates that the church of Corinth consulted the church of Rome on some matter, we see that Clement notes that this request was directed not to him singularly as the head of the Church and bishop of Rome, but was directed to what Clement again refers to with the plural pronouns "we" and "us." This is similar to his comments, which we discussed earlier, in which Clement also used the plural pronouns to refer to those whose words the Corinthians should obey.

"If any man should be **disobedient unto the words spoken by God through us,** let them understand that they will entangle themselves in no slight transgression and danger."

"...render obedience unto the things written by us through the Holy Spirit."

By reading these comments together as the Corinthians would have when they read the letter rather than by isolating some of them from the rest of the letter as the Catholic Encyclopdia does, Clement's intentions become clear. As the bishop of the Roman Church, Clement was writing the Corinthian Church concerning a matter that the Church at Corinth had consulted them (the entire Roman Church) about. In addressing the matter Clement tells the Corinthians to obey "the things written by us." The "us" to whom Clement is referring is the same "us" to whom the Corinthians had addressed their consultation. It is the elders of the Roman Church along with Clement for whom Clement is speaking as the head of their local body, the bishop of Rome, not the head of the universal church, the bishop of bishops. And again, this is very similar to the situation in which two Spanish congregations wrote seeking instruction and decision from Cyprian the bishop of Carthage, which even Roman Catholics will agree did not indicate that the Bishop of Carthage had supreme authority over the Church.

Therefore, it is apparent from Clement's statements that he does not have in mind some past succession of Roman bishops, who preceded him in times past and were now dead. Instead, he has in mind the elders of the Roman Church, who together with Clement as their head, ruled over that local Church. Again, there is nothing explicit or implied by Clement, which requires the conclusion arrived at by the RCC. Only if one first assumes the Roman Catholic position to be accurate can one override the plain intentions of Clement's letter, which by themselves provide no indication of Roman primacy.

In the next statement from his letter we see that Clement rebukes the Corinthians in the same way that Paul did for their tendency to esteem one Apostle above another. This error of the Corinthian church seems to be repeated by the Roman Catholics, who likewise esteem Peter above the other Apostles and early Church leaders. Clement, whom the RCC claims succeeded Peter as pope and who has nowhere even come close to affirming Roman Catholic dogma on these

matters here he rebukes the Corinthians for just such behavior as is now exhibited in the RCC's papal doctrines.

"Take up the epistle of the blessed **Apostle Paul**. What did he write to you at the time when the Gospel first began to be preached?(2) Truly, **under the inspiration(3) of the Spirit, he wrote to you concerning himself, and Cephas, and Apollos,(4)** because even then **parties(5) had been formed among you**. But that **inclination for one above another** entailed less guilt upon you, inasmuch as **your partialities were then shown towards apostles**, already of high reputation, and towards a man whom they had approved. But now reflect who those are that have perverted you, and lessened the renown of your far-famed brotherly love. It is disgraceful, beloved, yea, highly disgraceful, and unworthy of your Christian profession,(6) that such a thing should be heard of as that the most steadfast and ancient Church of the Corinthians should, on account of one or two persons, engage in sedition against its presbyters. And this rumour has reached not only us, but those also who are unconnected(7) with us; so that, through your infatuation, the name of the Lord is blasphemed, while danger is also brought upon yourselves." - Clement, First Epistle to the Corinthians, CHAP. XLVII.--YOUR RECENT DISCORD IS WORSE THAN THE FORMER WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THE TIMES OF PAUL.

And finally, we should remember that Irenaeus mentions this letter of Clement to the Corinthians in his own writing. Irenaeus places no special emphasis on Clement's letter as an exercise of papal authority or Roman supremacy, but instead follows it by mentioning a similar letter, issued by Polycarp the bishop of Smyrna to the Philippians. He offers both letters side by side as evidence of the succession of Apostolic teaching in the universal Church without bestowing some hierarchical authority to Clement as the bishop of Rome. Note that Irenaeus reckons Clement's epistle to the Corinthians as being a work of the Church at Rome and not just of Clement. This supports our interpretation of Clement's use of plural pronouns throughout the letter as a reference to the entire Roman Church including its elders and himself rather than as a reference to the succession of Roman bishops.

"In the time of this Clement, no small dissension having occurred among the brethren at Corinth, the Church in Rome despatched a most powerful letter to the Corinthians, exhorting them to peace, renewing their faith, and **declaring the tradition which it had lately received from the apostles.**" - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

"But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried [on earth] a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom,(1) departed this life, **having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true**. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time...**There is also a very powerful(4) Epistle of Polycarp written to the Philippians, from which those who choose to do so, and are anxious about their salvation, can learn the character of his faith, and the preaching of the truth.**" - Irenaeus, CHAP. III.--A REFUTATION OF THE HERETICS, FROM THE FACT THAT, IN THE VARIOUS CHURCHES, A PERPETUAL SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS WAS KEPT UP.

Clement's epistle to the Corinthians provides no objective evidence in support of the papal doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. Instead of supporting some special prominence to the bishops of Rome or to Peter, Clement's letter, instead, only provides evidence that Peter and the bishops of Rome and their writings carried the same authority as those of the Apostles Paul and John and as the other bishops, like Polycarp of Smyrna.

At the beginning of their argument the Catholic Encyclopedia informed their reader that they would begin proving the historical authenticity of the papal doctrines beginning in the 3rd century A.D. and then working their way back to the earlier periods of Christian history. However, after moving from the 2nd century apologist Irenaeus to the 1st century epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, which the Catholic Encyclopedia refers to as the first witness of Roman papal supremacy, the Catholic Encyclopedia again reverses order with two final appeals. The first of these final appeals is to an early 2nd century letter to Rome of Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch in 107 A.D. A second appeal is then made to events involving bishop Victor of Rome in the late 2nd century at around 189-198 A.D.

It is hard to understand these reversals in the course of a historical investigation. Since the Catholic Encyclopedia identifies Clement as the first witness to their doctrine of papal authority, why not start with him and work forward as they do after covering Clement's writing? What they do instead is to start with 3rd century writers, mention a single 2nd century writer (Irenaeus), then proceed to the sole 1st century witness (Clement), and then follow with two more 2nd century evidences (from Ignatius and Victor).

This is a very strange approach and so we again point out its oddity. The most readily identifiable reason for why a scholarly organization like the Catholic Encyclopedia would employ such an unnatural methodology is that the RCC is aware of the inadequacy of their argument. Thus, they approach the topic in this manner in hopes of confusing the readers with this questionable presentation and perhaps manage to use information from later periods in order to color the earlier-dating evidence, which on its own would not seem to support their teaching. Given that the principal dispute is whether or not the doctrine of papal supremacy originated in the earliest period of Church history this circuitous approach to a historical investigation is highly suspicious and at least implies that some less than honest scholarship is attempting to take advantage of the ignorance and biases of their audience.

Nevertheless, we will proceed with an examination of the writings of Ignatius. Ignatius was a disciple of John the Apostle who lived and wrote between 30 and 107 A.D.

"Ignatius of Antioch, Saint - d. c.107, bishop of Antioch and Christian martyr, called Theophorus [Gr.,= God-bearer]. He was probably **a convert and a disciple of St. John the Evangelist**. On his way to Rome to be martyred by the wild beasts of the amphitheater, **he wrote the important letters to the churches in Rome and in Asia Minor, and to St. Polycarp. The seven epistles are an invaluable testimony to the beliefs and internal organization of the early Christians.**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

In reference to a letter of Ignatius to the Church of Rome, the Catholic Encyclopedia makes the following claim.

"The Pope - A few years later (about 107) St. Ignatius of Antioch, in the opening of his letter to the Roman Church, refers to its presiding over all other Churches. He addresses it as **'presiding over the brotherhood of love** [prokathemene tes agapes]' The expression, as Funk rightly notes, is grammatically incompatible with the translation advocated by some non-Catholic writers, 'pre-eminent in works of love.'" - Catholic Encyclopedia

Again, it is interesting to note that at this late stage of the investigation the Catholic Encyclopedia maintains its preference to state their own conclusions rather than to quote the actual statements of the authors in context, which they claim support those conclusions. Anyone who has spent any time reading the Catholic Encyclopedia online will realize that this lack of quotations is not a result of attempting to keep their articles brief. Many articles, while excessively long on words, are decisively short on quotes from original sources, that is when the original sources are ancient historians. Quotes from modern scholars often abound.

First, let's get the obvious stuff out of the way. If the bishop of Rome is supreme, why is the bishop of Antioch writing to instruct and administrate oversight to the church of Rome? This indicates what we've seen already in the case of Cyprian: that bishops of different regions at times would lend a hand to the oversight of churches in other areas. In the case of Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage gave oversight and instruction for churches in Spain during a time of need. Here with Ignatius, we see the bishop of Antioch giving oversight to the church of Rome. And in the case of Clement, we saw the bishop of Rome giving oversight to the church of Corinth.

The obvious fact that Ignatius even writes an instructive pastoral letter to Christians under the bishop of Rome does two important things. Ignatius' letter further corroborates this pattern of shared authority by bishops to help oversee areas in need. And Ignatius' letter demonstrates that the church of Rome was not under a supreme bishop because if it were, then it would not be in need of pastoral instruction from a bishop of a lesser authority, such as Antioch.

Momentarily we will look at several other writings from Ignatius by which we will demonstrate that he offers no support for Roman or papal primacy. However, because we have established a pattern, whereby the quotes of the Catholic Encyclopedia, when placed in context, do not support their claims, we will now do for ourselves what the Catholic Encyclopedia would not do for us. Let's take a look at Ignatius' words directly and see for ourselves if he's saying what the Catholic Encyclopedia would have us believe.

"Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, **to the Church which has obtained mercy**, through the majesty of the Most High Father, and Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son; **the Church which is beloved and enlightened** by the will of Him that willeth all things which are according to the love of Jesus Christ our God, **which also presides in the place of the report of the Romans**, worthy of God, worthy of honour, worthy of the highest happiness, worthy of praise, worthy of obtaining her every desire, worthy of being deemed holy,(2) **and which presides over love, is named from Christ**, and from the Father, which I also salute in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father: to those who are united, both according to the flesh and spirit, to every one of His commandments; who are filled inseparably with the grace of God, and are purified from every strange taint, [I wish] abundance of happiness unblameably, in Jesus Christ our God. - The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans

Now, admittedly, Ignatius is writing a very long introductory sentence with a great deal of modifying phrases. So, let's break down what he is saying. Of course, Ignatius is writing this epistle to the church of Rome. He begins with the phrase "to the Church which has obtained mercy." We ask the question, "is the Roman church the only church which has obtained mercy?" By stating that the Roman church to whom he is writing had obtained mercy, did Ignatius intend to convey that it was unique in this regard? Did Ignatius intend to exclude the other churches as not having obtained mercy? Of course not. The Roman church is only one of many local churches who had obtained mercy.

Ignatius continues by calling the Roman church, "the Church which is beloved and enlightened by the will of Him that willeth all things." Here again, we must ask if Ignatius meant hold out the church of Rome as unique in this regard to the exclusion of all the other churches so that only the church of Rome was beloved by God? Again, the answer is of course not. Ignatius is neither excluding other churches from this trait nor making the Roman church unique in this regard.

Since the previous traits that Ignatius ascribes to the Roman church are not unique to Rome and excluding of the other churches, why would we think that Ignatius' description of Rome as "presiding over love" or even "presiding over the brotherhood of love" is meant to be unique of Rome to the exclusion of the other churches? We shouldn't.

Furthermore, we would also note that Ignatius specifies that it is "the Church" which presides and not the bishop. This further explains Clement's use of the plural pronouns "us" and "we" when writing from Rome.

"THE Church of God which sojourns at Rome, to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth, to them that are called and sanctified by the will of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from Almighty God through Jesus Christ, be multiplied. Owing, dear brethren, to the sudden and successive calamitous events which have happened to ourselves, we feel that we have been somewhat tardy in turning our attention to the points respecting which you consulted us." - Clement, First Epistle to the Corinthians, CHAP. I.--THE SALUTATION. PRAISE OF THE CORINTHIANS BEFORE THE BREAKING FORTH OF SCHISM AMONG THEM.

Both Clement and Ignatius were referring to the collective authority invested in EACH local church including its elders rather than singularly in a unique successor of Peter in Rome.

Lastly, we should note that Ignatius specifies the particular place that is presided over. In his remarks here, Ignatius does not say that the presiding extends over the whole world. Instead, he writes plainly that the presiding is "in the place of the report of the Romans worthy of God." Ignatius' use of the word "also" is meant as "in addition" to the other 2 "which's." If we look at Ignatius' words in context he describes the church in Rome as the church "which has obtained mercy," "which is beloved," and "which also presides in Rome." In short, Ignatius is simply affirming that the Roman church has authority and presides over the Christians in the region of Rome. But, of course, this is no different than any other church, since the church of Corinth would preside over the region of Corinth and the church of Antioch, which Ignatius is bishop over, would preside over the region of Antioch.

Second, the idea of Rome presiding over the Church in no way indicates that it held a position of supreme authority over the Church. Consider that at the Council of Nicaea it was the Roman Emperor Constantine who presided over the affairs of the meeting. The bishop of Rome was not even present and is merely said to have sent to representatives in his place.

"Nicaea, Council of - (325), the first ecumenical council of the Christian church, meeting in ancient Nicaea (now Iznik, Tur.). It was called by the emperor Constantine I, an unbaptized catechumen, or neophyte, who presided over the opening session and took part in the discussions. He hoped a general council of the church would solve the problem created in the Eastern church by Arianism, a heresy first proposed by Arius of Alexandria that affirmed that Christ is not divine but a created being. **Pope Sylvester I did not attend the council but was represented by legates."** - Britannica.com

"Constantine I, Roman emperor - In 314 he convened a synod at Arles to regulate the Church in the West, and **in 325 he convened and presided over a council at Nicaea to deal with the troubles over Arianism** (see Nicaea, First Council of). Thus Constantine evolved the idea of the ecumenical council." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Nicaea, First Council of - 325, 1st ecumenical council, convened by Roman Emperor Constantine the Great to solve the problems raised by Arianism." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"First Council of Nicaea - The business of the Council having been finished Constantine celebrated the twentieth anniversary of his accession to the empire, and invited the bishops to a splendid repast, at the end of which each of them received rich presents. Several days later the emperor commanded that a final session should be held, at which he assisted in order to exhort the bishops to work for the maintenance of peace; he commended himself to their prayers, and authorized the fathers to return to their dioceses. The greater number hastened to take advantage of this and to bring the resolutions of the council to the knowledge of their provinces." - Catholic Encyclopedia

Does the fact that Constantine presided over this all-important early Church council mean that Constantine held authority over the Church and its doctrines? This may perhaps be the case, however, Roman Catholics must deny that Constantine's presiding over the council at all indicates that he held supreme authority over the Church and its doctrinal decisions. For if "presiding" indicates that one holds supreme authority then it was Constantine, and not the bishop of Rome, who held power over the Church and its doctrine in the early third century and thus, the Roman Catholic idea of papal authority is further shown to be undermined by the authority exercised by Constantine.

So, Ignatius' statement in his letter to Rome, in no way can be taken as evidence of papal supremacy as the Catholic Encyclopedia claims. Yet in his other letters, Ignatius makes several comments, which relate to the topic under discussion, which deserve quotation. Early on in his letter to the Ephesians, Ignatius indicates that both Peter and Paul laid the foundations for the Church.

"This was first fulfilled in Syria; for "the disciples were called Christians at Antioch,"[9] when Paul and Peter were laying the foundations of the Church." - The Epistle of Ignatius, CHAP. X.--BEWARE OF JUDAIZING.

By placing Paul first and by not mentioning Peter alone in this task, Ignatius, from the onset of his letter exhibits an understanding of these Apostles, which contradicts that asserted by the RCC, which holds that Peter alone is the foundation stone of the Church. Throughout this work, Ignatius continues to mention Peter side by side with Paul, whom he repeatedly places first, as acting to build and lead the Church.

Each time the idea of a pre-immanent position of Peter is conspicuously missing from the text.

"...though I am acquainted with these things, yet am I not therefore by any means perfect; **nor am I such a disciple as Paul or Peter.**" - The Epistle of Ignatius, CHAP. V.--I WILL NOT TEACH YOU PROFOUND DOCTRINES.

"I do not, **as Peter and Paul, issue commandments unto you. They were apostles.**" - The Epistle of Ignatius, CHAP. IV.--ALLOW ME TO FALL A PREY TO THE WILD BEASTS.

"**I do not, like Peter and Paul, issue orders unto you. They are(6) apostles,** but I am one condemned; they indeed are free, but I am a slave, even until now. But if I suffer, I shall be the freed-man of Jesus Christ, and I shall rise in Him from the dead, free. And now being in bonds, I learn to desire nothing." - The Epistle of Ignatius, CHAP. IV.

"**Ye have been the disciples of Paul and Peter;** do not lose what was committed to your trust. Keep in remembrance Euodias,(10) your deservedly-blessed pastor, **into whose hands the government over you was first entrusted by the apostles.** Let us not bring disgrace upon our Father. Let us prove ourselves His true-born children, and not bastards. Ye know after what manner I have acted among you. The things which, when present, I spoke to you, these same, when absent, I now write to you. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema."(11) - The Epistle of Ignatius, CHAP. VII.--EXHORTATION TO CONSISTENCY OF CONDUCT.

Later on in his epistle, Ignatius, even mentions Paul along with Peter in the context of the succession of the bishops of Rome. Again, we must note that no place of supremacy is attributed to Peter. And while the successors of the Roman bishopric are presented, Ignatius does not denote them as successor of Peter, but rather mentions first Paul and then Peter along with him. It is hard to accommodate the Roman Catholic papal doctrine with these statements of Ignatius.

"Now it occurs to me to mention, that **the report is true which I heard of thee whilst thou wast at Rome with the blessed father(8) Linus, whom the deservedly-blessed Clement, a hearer of Peter and Paul, has now succeeded.**" - The Epistle of Ignatius, CHAP. IV.--COMMENDATION AND EXHORTATION.

Now, when the Catholic Encyclopedia came across this repeated joint affirmation of Paul and Peter side by side in the writings of Irenaeus, they attempted to sidestep the problem by suggesting that Paul was mentioned only because Irenaeus was specifically refuting the Gnostics. However, Ignatius is not writing against Gnostics and he makes the very same side-by-side, joint mention of Peter and Paul as the foundations of the Roman church and as together handing on its governance to a successor, which we also saw in Irenaeus' writings. Thus, while Ignatius does not help the Roman Catholic claim that Peter held a position of supreme authority, he does provide corroboration for Irenaeus' comments, which we viewed earlier that both Peter and Paul founded and ruled the Church at Rome as well as together appointed Linus to succeed them as bishop. Ignatius' mention of Peter and Paul side by side jointly founding the Roman church and joint passing on its governance severely undermines the RCC papal doctrine, just as was the case when Irenaeus made the very same statements in his writings later on.

Elsewhere Ignatius speaks of the office and authority of the bishop in several passages.

"And **do ye also reverence your bishop as Christ Himself, according as the blessed apostles have enjoined you.** He that is within the altar is pure, wherefore also he is **obedient to the bishop and presbyters: but he that is without is one that does anything apart from the bishop, the presbyters, and the deacons.** Such a person is defiled in his conscience, and is worse than an infidel. For **what is the bishop but one who beyond all others possesses all power and authority,** so far as it is possible for a man to possess it, who according to his ability has been made an imitator of the Christ Of God?(6) And what is **the presbytery but a sacred assembly, the counsellors and assessors of the bishop?**" - The Epistle of Ignatius, CHAP. VII.--THE SAME CONTINUED.

"Take ye heed, then, **to have but one Eucharist.** For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and **one cup to [show forth(1)] the unity of His blood; one altar; as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow-servants:** that so, whatsoever ye do, ye may do it according to [the will of] God. I have confidence of you in the Lord, that ye will be of no other mind. Wherefore I write boldly to your love, which is worthy of God, and exhort you to have but one faith, and one [kind of] preaching, **and one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ; and His blood which was shed for us is one; one loaf also is broken to all [the communicants], and one cup is distributed among them all: there is but one altar for the whole Church, and one bishop, with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow-servants.** Since, also, there is but one unbegotten Being, God, even the Father; and one only-begotten Son, God, the Word and man; and one Comforter, the Spirit of truth; and also one preaching, and one faith, and one baptism;(2) and **one Church which the holy apostles established** from one end of the earth to the other by the blood of Christ, and by their own sweat and toil; it behoves you also, therefore, as "a peculiar people, and a holy nation,"(3) to perform all things with harmony in Christ." - The Epistle of Ignatius, CHAP. IV.--HAVE BUT ONE EUCHARIST, ETC.

"Let governors be obedient to Caesar; soldiers to those that command them; deacons to the presbyters, as 82 to high-priests; **the presbyters, and deacons, and the rest of the clergy, together with all the people, and the soldiers, and the governors, and Caesar [himself], to the bishop; the bishop to Christ,** even as Christ to the Father. And thus unity is preserved throughout." - The Epistle of Ignatius, CHAP. IV.--HAVE BUT ONE EUCHARIST, ETC.

However, though Roman Catholics may be quick to interpret these statements as support for the supremacy of the bishop of Rome, it is clear from reading Ignatius' letter in its entirety that to do so would be to take these remarks out of context. Like Clement, Irenaeus, and Cyprian, Ignatius holds that the authority of the bishop was not limited to the bishop of Rome, but was held by each bishop in his own diocese. And we have already seen from Ignatius' opening remarks that he specifically states that the Roman church presided in the region of Rome, which also indicates this same universal pattern that each local bishop along with the local elders held authority over their own local region.

The following quote clearly establishes that this is the case as Ignatius nowhere mentions the bishop of Rome in this letter, but in closing mentions two bishops, Polycarp and Vitalius. This follows Irenaeus's remarks wherein Polycarp is also appealed to along with the Roman bishops as evidence for authenticity of the Apostolic Tradition of the Churches against the heretical doctrines of the Gnostics.

"Let your prayers be extended to the Church of Antioch, whence also I as a prisoner am being led to Rome. **I salute the holy bishop Polycarp; I salute the holy bishop Vitalius, and the sacred presbytery, and my fellow-servants the deacons;** in whose stead may my soul be found. Once more **I bid farewell to the bishop, and to the presbyters in the Lord.**" - The Epistle of Ignatius, CHAP. XIV.--FAREWELLS AND CAUTIONS.

But, we should also note that in mentioning those who succeeded the apostles as the bishops of Rome, Ignatius (see quotes below) places the first among them, Linus, not as a successor or disciple of Peter, as Roman Catholic teaching would demand, but of Paul. To be sure, Ignatius denotes that Anencletus, whom Roman Catholics regard as the second pope, is the successor to Peter. And he also elsewhere affirms that Clement succeeded Linus as bishop of Rome.

Therefore, in placing Linus under Paul (see quotes below) when speaking of the succession of bishops of Rome after the Apostles, Ignatius further undermines the papal doctrine of the RCC. Below is a quote from the Catholic Encyclopedia establishing their understanding of the succession of the bishops of Rome (popes) followed by Ignatius' comments, which contradict the Roman Catholic teaching that Linus succeeded Peter as bishop of Rome.

"**The Church** - It has been seen that Christ not only established the episcopate in the persons of the Twelve but, further, created in St. Peter the office of supreme pastor of the Church. Early Christian history tells us that before his death, he fixed his residence at Rome, and ruled the Church there as its bishop... **The list of his successors in the see is known, from Linus, Anacletus, and Clement, who were the first to follow him, down to the reigning pontiff. The Church has ever seen in the occupant of the See of Rome the successor of Peter in the supreme pastorate.** (See POPE.)." - Catholic Encyclopedias

"And what are the deacons but imitators of the angelic powers,(7) fulfilling a pure and blameless ministry unto him, as the holy Stephen did to the blessed James, **Timothy and Linus to Paul, Anencletus and Clement to Peter?** He, therefore, that will not yield obedience to such, must needs be one utterly without God, an impious man who despises Christ, and depreciates His appointments." - The Epistle of Ignatius, CHAP. VII.--THE SAME CONTINUED.

"Now it occurs to me to mention, that the report is true which I heard of thee whilst thou wast **at Rome with the blessed father(8) Linus, whom the deservedly-blessed Clement, a hearer of Peter and Paul, has now succeeded.**" - The Epistle of Ignatius, CHAP. IV.--COMMENDATION AND EXHORTATION.

Ignatius' association of Linus, whom Roman Catholics regard as the second pope with Paul rather than Peter is affirmed by the New Testament, where in his second epistle to Timothy we see Paul mention Linus as one of those with him who sent greetings to Timothy.

2 Timothy 4:21 Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, **and Linus**, and Claudia, and all the brethren.

PART EIGHT:

Lastly, we arrive at the final Roman Catholic appeal, which involves bishop Victor of Rome. Below is the Catholic Encyclopedia's arguments on the significance of this matter to Roman papal authority.

"**The Pope - During the pontificate of St. Victor (189-98) we have the most explicit assertion of the supremacy of the Roman See in regard to other Churches.** A difference of practice between the Churches of Asia Minor and the rest of the Christian world in regard to the day of the Paschal festival led the pope to take action. There is some ground for supposing that the Montanist heretics maintained the Asiatic (or Quartodeciman) practice to be the true one: in this case it would be undesirable that any body of Catholic Christians should appear to support them. But, under any circumstances, such a diversity in the ecclesiastical life of different countries may well have constituted a regrettable feature in the Church, whose very purpose it was to bear witness by her unity to the oneness of God (John 17:21). **Victor bade the Asiatic Churches conform to the custom of the remainder of the Church, but was met with determined resistance by Polycrates of Ephesus, who claimed that their custom derived from St. John himself. Victor replied by an excommunication. St. Irenaeus, however, intervened,** exhorting Victor not to cut off whole Churches on account of a point which was not a matter of faith. **He assumes that the pope can exercise the power, but urges him not to do so. Similarly the resistance of the Asiatic bishops involved no denial of the supremacy of Rome. It indicates solely**

that the bishops believed St. Victor to be abusing his power in bidding them renounce a custom for which they had Apostolic authority. It was indeed inevitable that, as the Church spread and developed, new problems should present themselves, and that **questions should arise as to whether the supreme authority could be legitimately exercised in this or that case. St. Victor, seeing that more harm than good would come from insistence, withdrew the imposed penalty.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

First, note that the word "pontificate" is derived from the word "pontifex," which was the word for the ancient priests of the Roman paganism. This word was not applied to the bishops of Rome until sometime after the Roman Empire melded with Christianity under Constantine during the early 4th century A.D.

"Pontifex - The immense authority of the collegium centred in the pontifex maximus, the other pontifexes forming his consilium, or advising body. His functions were partly sacrificial or ritualistic, but the real power lay in the administration of the jus divinum." - Britannica.com

"Pontifex - The title pontifex was used of Roman Catholic bishops and pontifex maximus of the pope by the end of the 4th century. In modern usage, both terms generally refer to the pope." - Britannica.com

"pontifex maximus - highest priest of Roman religion and official head of the college of pontifexes. As the chief administrator of religious affairs he regulated the conduct of religious ceremonies, consecrated temples and other holy places, and controlled the calendar. During the time of the empire, and until Christianity became firmly established, the emperor was designated pontifex maximus. After the supremacy of Christianity, the popes assumed the title." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

By referring to Victor's time as the bishop of Rome with a term that we in modern times associate with the office of the pope (pontificate) the Catholic Encyclopedia irresponsibly implies that at the time of his being bishop, Victor was understood to be the pontiff, or pope. Because these terms only came into use a century or more later, it is inappropriate for the Catholic Encyclopedia to apply them in this way without informing the reader of these details. Thus, by using the word "pontificate" to indicate the papal office the Catholic Encyclopedia assumes the very thing that they are attempting to demonstrate - that such a papal office existence in the 2nd century Church.

Also, note that the Catholic Encyclopedia unequivocally states that in their estimation this incident with bishop Victor exhibits "the most explicit assertion of the supremacy of the Roman See in regard to the other Churches." This means that what we are about to read is, in their own words, the best proof that they have available. Admittedly, the standard isn't that high given the low quality of the previous evidence.

Nevertheless, why does the Catholic Encyclopedia believe that Victor provides such an explicit assertion of Roman primacy? Two reasons are provided.

First, the Catholic Encyclopedia states that "Victor bade the Asiatic Churches conform to the custom of the remainder of the Church." But it is difficult to see how this fact favors papal supremacy. If papal authority was understood at this point in the Church, as the RCC claims, then we would expect Victor to demand that the Asiatic Churches conform to his authority as pope. Instead, what we find is that Victor appeals, not to papal authority, but to the custom of the universal Church. By appealing on the authority of the custom of the Churches, Victor does not exhibit an "explicit assertion of the supremacy of the Roman See" at all, but rather exhibits an assertion of the authority of that which is held by the universal Church.

Likewise, the Catholic Encyclopedia affirms that Victor's demand, whatever its authoritative basis, was resisted by Polycrates, the bishop of Ephesus as well as the Churches of Asia Minor. Again, all this demonstrates is that papal authority was not recognized in the Church at that time.

Second, the Catholic Encyclopedia attempts to convince us that Victor exercised Roman papal supremacy, by excommunicating Polycrates. In support of this they claim that Irenaeus, in writing to ask Victor to reconsider does not deny that Victor had this power to excommunicate Polycrates. But, how, one must ask does an acknowledgement that one bishop could excommunicate another bishop amount to Roman primacy?

In 323, bishop Alexander of Alexandria, excommunicated Arius, the author of the Arian heresy.

"Eusebius Of Nicomedia - When Arius was condemned in a synod at Alexandria (September 323), Eusebius sheltered him and sponsored a synod (October 323) at Bithynia, which nullified Arius' excommunication." - Britannica.com

"Arius - c.256-336, Libyan theologian, founder of the Arian heresy. A parish priest in Alexandria, he advanced the doctrine famous as Arianism and was excommunicated locally (321)." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, excommunicated Arius about the year 320." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - He now summoned a larger council, from around the world of which his victorious arms had made him master. It met at Nicæa in 325. The bishops were nearly all Easterns; but a Western bishop, Hosius of Cordova, who was in the emperor's confidence, took a leading part, and the pope was represented. Constantine ostentatiously declared at the council went no further than the guardianship of the bishops, but Eusebius of Cæsarea makes it clear that he spoke on the theological question. The bishop of Nicomedia and his friends put forward an Arian confession of faith, but it had only about seventeen supporters from among three hundred members of the council, and it was hooted by the majority. **The formula which was eventually adopted was resisted for some time by the Arian contingent, but eventually all the bishops signed, with the exception of the two Egyptians who had been excommunicated by Alexander.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - The see of Alexandria had remained vacant during the absence of Athanasius. Eusebius now claimed to put the Synod of Tyre in force, and **a rival bishop was set up in the person of Pistus, one of the Arian priests whom Alexander had long ago excommunicated.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

Likewise, Ambrose, bishop of Milan excommunicated Theodosius I in 390 A.D.

"Ambrose, Saint - 340?-397, bishop of Milan, Doctor of the Church, b. Trier, of Christian parents. Educated at Rome, he became (c.372) governor of Liguria and Aemilia-with the capital at Milan. He was highly regarded as governor and popular pressure resulted in his appointment (374) as bishop, although he was reluctant and lacked religious training...He excommunicated Theodosius I for the massacre at Salonica (390) and imposed a heavy public penance on him before reinstating him." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

It is apparent from these accounts that bishops had the power of excommunication in the early Church. This being the case Irenaeus' acknowledgement that Victor could excommunicate Polycrates does not demonstrate papal authority, it only demonstrates that bishops had the right of excommunication.

And again, we see that the Catholic Encyclopedia acknowledges that the Asiatic bishops resisted Victor's demands. Though the Catholic Encyclopedia contends that this does not deny the supremacy of Rome, it is hard to see how it would in any way affirm it.

With all of this in mind, it must be concluded that these incidents involving bishop Victor of Rome do NOT in any way provide evidence that papal authority or Roman primacy was recognized or known to the early Church much less exhibit "explicit assertion of the supremacy of the Roman See in regard to the other Churches" as the Catholic Encyclopedia claims. All these events can demonstrate is a lack of recognition of papal authority in the early Church. And if this is "the most explicit assertion" of this doctrine in the early Church, then the teaching of papal supremacy is, indeed in deep trouble. Of course, we have already evaluated the rest of the evidence in the previous pages of this study and so we can confidently say that none of the evidence substantiates the claims of the RCC on these matters.

With this we conclude our section on the writings of Ignatius and Victor having again demonstrated that 2nd century Church writers do not provide support for the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal authority or succession.

At this point in our study we have finished examining the arguments put forth by the Catholic Encyclopedia, by which they intended to demonstrate the Scriptural and Traditional evidence for their doctrines of papal authority and Roman primacy. In each case we have gone beyond the minimal information provided by the Catholic Encyclopedia (when any was provided at all) and have shown in the context of these early Church documents (whether Scriptural or non-canonical) that no solid, objective, reasonable, explicit support for these Roman Catholic teaching can be found in the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd, centuries A.D.

However, even though we have finished with the few appeals made by Roman Catholics, we can still look at a few other historic details, which also contribute to our conclusion that the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal authority and Roman primacy did not originate with Jesus Christ or His Apostles, but at the earliest, was a late 3rd century development. First, we will look at a comment made by another 1st century Church writer and disciple of John the Apostle, the aforementioned Polycarp.

Polycarp, the disciple of the Apostle John, lived between approximately 70 and 156 A.D. He was a friend of Ignatius and, as Ignatius mentioned, was the bishop of Smyrna.

"Polycarp, Saint - c.A.D. 70-A.D. 156?, Greek bishop of Smyrna, Father of the Church. He was a disciple of St. John, who appointed him bishop. Thus he linked the apostles and such 2d-century Christian expositors as St. Irenaeus. St. Polycarp was a close friend of St. Ignatius of Antioch. As a very old man, Polycarp went to Rome to discuss the problem of dating Easter. He died a martyr in Smyrna. **His one surviving work, the Epistle to the Philippians,** has been the subject of controversy. Some scholars have maintained that the letter is really two-one written c.115, enclosing St. Ignatius' epistles, and the other written c.135 to warn the Philippians against the teachings of Marcion. **He was in his time the mainstay of Christianity in Asia Minor.** Feast: Jan. 26." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

In his writings Polycarp does not offer much information on any supposed papal office or authority. All that can be said from Polycarp is that he commands the Church to be obedient to the word of righteousness rather than to any supreme bishop of Rome.

"I exhort you all, therefore, **to yield obedience to the word of righteousness**, and to exercise all patience, such as ye have seen [set] before your eyes, not only in the case of the blessed Ignatius, and Zosimus, and Rufus, but also in others among yourselves, and in Paul himself, and the rest of the apostles." - Polycarp, CHAP. IX.--PATIENCE INCULCATED.

Polycarp's silence on Roman supremacy while mentioning obedience to the doctrines of Christ does not, in and of itself, contradict the Roman Catholic teaching with absolute certainty. However, when viewed in the context of the other early Church authors that we have looked at so far, including Ignatius, Clement, and Irenaeus we can see a consensus emerging, which does as a whole deny that this Roman Catholic teaching was known or accepted at any time prior to the late 3rd century.

Likewise, the epistle of Barnabas was written at about 100 A.D. Though the work is considered orthodox, it is not known whether or not this work was written by the Apostle Barnabas spoken of in the New Testament.

"Barnabas, Saint - Christian apostle. He was a Cypriot and **a relative of St. Mark**; his forename was Joseph. Several passages in the New Testament relate that Barnabas was a teacher and prophet in the church at Antioch and the companion of St. Paul on his first missionary journey. He is said to have been martyred in Cyprus. **One of the oldest noncanonical Christian writings (about 2d cent. A.D.) is a letter attributed to Barnabas.** Feast: June 11." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

The epistle of Barnabas comments briefly on Jesus giving authority to the apostles. In the commentary of this letter it is clearly indicated that Jesus granted authority to all twelve of the Apostles. NO mention is made of a singular primary position existing among them or of such a position being filled by Peter. Instead, all of the apostles are said to have been given same level of authority by Jesus.

"To these **He gave authority to preach the Gospel, being twelve in number**, corresponding to the twelve tribes(7) of Israel." - The Epistle of Barnabas, 100 A.D., CHAP. VIII.--THE RED HEIFER A TYPE OF CHRIST.

In concert with the similar remarks made by these other early witnesses of Christian doctrine, we see that the Epistle of Barnabas does nothing to support the Roman Catholic doctrine of the papal authority of Peter and only provides information, which contradicts this claim of the RCC by asserting shared and equal authority among all 12 apostles.

Other early church writers whose works are included in the Sacred Tradition of the RCC include Papias and Justin Martyr. Papias, another disciple of John the Apostle and bishop of Hierapolis lived between 60-130 A.D.

"Papias - fl. A.D. 130, early Christian theologian said to have been **bishop of Hieropolis and a friend of St. Polycarp.** Papias' five-volume work, Oracles; or, Explanations of the Sayings of the Lord, survives only in fragments quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea and St. Irenaeus. These are valuable sources for the history of the church." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

Justin Martyr, who wrote two important works, Apology and Dialogue, lived between 100-165 A.D.

"Justin Martyr, Saint - c.A.D. 100-c.A.D. 165, Christian apologist, called also Justin the Philosopher. Born in Samaria of pagan parents, he studied philosophy, and **after his conversion in Ephesus to Christianity at about the age of 38**, he went from place to place trying to convert men of learning by philosophical argument. He opened a school of Christian philosophy at Rome, where he and some disciples were finally martyred under Marcus Aurelius. **Of his writings (in Greek), only two undisputed works remain, the Apology (with an appendix called the Second Apology) and the Dialogue. The Apology is a learned defense of Christians against charges of atheism and sedition in the Roman state; it contains an exposition of Christian ethics and invaluable records of the customs and practices of 2d-century Christianity.** The Dialogue sets forth in the form of an argument with Trypho (or Tryphon) the Jew a philosophic defense of Christian beliefs, particularly with reference to Jewish writings; it has references to the Gospels that have been of much interest to students of the Bible. Feast: Apr. 14." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

Though these authors are considered significant contributors to our understanding of 1st and 2nd century Christianity, a search of their works finds no mention of Peter, Paul, Rome, or bishop. The absence of any mention by these authors of such an important Church doctrine as papal supremacy in conjunction with the comments we have studied from the other writers of this time seriously undermines that any such doctrine ever did exist in the early Church and is impossible to explain without forfeiting the teaching of the RCC.

This conclusion that the Church of the first three centuries did not hold to a Roman Catholic understanding of Peter as the authoritative rock upon which the Church is built, is shared by Britannica.com.

"Roman Catholicism - Of the Petrine texts, Matthew 16:18 f. is clearly central and has the distinction of being the first

scriptural text invoked to support the primatial claims of the Roman bishops. **Before the mid-3rd century, however, and even after that date, some Western, as well as Eastern, patristic exegetes (early Church Fathers who in their interpretation of the Bible used critical techniques) understood that by the "rock" Christ meant to refer not to Peter but to himself or to the faith that Peter professed.**" - Britannica.com

Analysis of Evidence from the Historical Record

One final piece of historical evidence that should be considered when investigating the supposed authority of the Roman bishopric is the schism that occurred between Rome and the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

While we have seen that papal authority of Rome is anything but established or recognized as Church doctrine in the first three centuries of Church history, something begins to happen at the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th century A.D. - the doctrine of Roman primacy begins to be asserted.

"Christianity - Historians differ greatly on how far back the 4th-century picture of the church (which is quite clear) can be projected, especially respecting organization by bishops (each bishop a monarch in the church of his city), celebration of a liturgy entailing a sacrament and a sacrifice, and claims by the bishop of Rome to be head of all the churches (see papacy)." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"The Pope - It is no longer denied by any writer of weight that St. Peter visited Rome and suffered martyrdom there (Harnack, "Chronol.", I, 244, n. 2). Some, however, of those who admit that he taught and suffered in Rome, deny that he was ever bishop of the city...**In considering this point, it will be well to begin with the third century, when references to it become frequent, and work backwards from this point.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The Pope - The limits of the present article prevent us from carrying the historical argument further than the year 300. Nor is it in fact necessary to do so. **From the beginning of the fourth century the supremacy of Rome is writ large upon the page of history. It is only in regard to the first age of the Church that any question can arise.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

As the assertions of Roman papal authority at last become frequent and explicit in historical writing a struggle emerged between the bishops of Rome and their counterparts elsewhere especially in the eastern part of the empire. As the Roman bishops attempted to assert themselves as the supreme authority over the Church they were resisted in both the east and in Northern Africa as the bishops of the other Churches did not recognize this newly emerging doctrine.

Earlier we saw this trend was already occurring in the late 3rd century, where Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, denied the jurisdictional authority and supremacy of bishop Stephen of Rome in the mid 200's A.D.

"Cyprian, Saint - Cyprian returned to Carthage (early 251) and at a council of bishops in May 251 was able to regain his authority. The decision of the council was that, though no one should be totally excluded from penance, those who truly had sacrificed (the sacrificati) should be readmitted only on their deathbeds, and those who had merely accepted certificates (the libellatici) were to be readmitted after varying periods of penance. **Three important principles of church discipline were thus established.** First, the right and power to remit deadly sins, even that of apostasy, lay in the hands of the church; **second, the final authority in disciplinary matters rested with the bishops in council as repositories of the Holy Spirit;** and, third, unworthy members among the laity must be accepted in the New Israel of Christianity just as in the Old Israel of Judaism." -Britannica.com

"Cyprian, Saint - Though Cyprian may have written two drafts of an important passage concerning the primacy of the chair of Peter, he implied no acceptance of Roman jurisdictional prerogatives. When in 254 two Spanish congregations (Mérida and León) appealed to him against a decision by Stephen to restore bishops who had lapsed during the persecution, he summoned a council to consider the case. The council decided that the congregations not only had a right but a duty to separate themselves from a cleric who had committed a deadly sin such as apostasy. Cyprian wrote (Letter 67) that the Holy Spirit was no longer in such a priest and that his sacraments would lead to perdition and not salvation. The church as the "pure Bride of Christ" might be obliged to absorb a sinful laity, but a sinful priest making offerings on behalf of the people was unthinkable." -Britannica.com

"Cyprian, Saint - Unity was expressed through the consensus of bishops, all equally possessing the Holy Spirit and sovereign in their own sees. There was no 'bishop of bishops.' The church consisted of the people united to their bishop. Schism and rebellion against the priesthood were viewed as the worst of sins. These views-associated with an uncompromising insistence on the integrity and exclusive character of the church, which are believed to have been derived from the North African theologian Tertullian -received divine sanction for most North African Christians through his martyrdom." -Britannica.com

But, Cyprian's rejection of Roman primacy was not alone. The Eastern Churches, too, did not recognize this novel doctrine as a legitimate teaching of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Their rejection would later lead to outright schism between the bishops of Rome and the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

In modern times, we in the west use the name Greek or Eastern Orthodox Church instead of the official title for this branch of the Church, which is the Orthodox Catholic Church. The term Eastern or Greek Orthodox Church is used in the

west to distinguish between this organization of Christianity and Roman Catholicism. In effect, these two organizations could be called Greek Catholicism and Roman Catholicism or Eastern and Western Orthodox Churches.

The development of the schism between the Eastern Catholicism (the Greek Orthodox Church) and Roman Catholicism is chronicled in the Britannica.com quote below.

"Eastern Orthodox - The schism between the churches of the East and the West (1054) was the culmination of a gradual process of estrangement that began in the first centuries of the Christian Era and continued through the Middle Ages. Linguistic and cultural differences, as well as political events, contributed to the estrangement. From the 4th to the 11th century, Constantinople, the centre of Eastern Christianity, was also the capital of the Eastern Roman, or Byzantine, Empire, while Rome, after the barbarian invasions, fell under the influence of the Holy Roman Empire of the West, a political rival. In the West theology remained under the influence of St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), while in the East doctrinal thought was shaped by the Greek Fathers. Theological differences could have been settled if the two areas had not simultaneously developed different concepts of church authority. The growth of Roman primacy, based on the concept of the apostolic origin of the Church of Rome, was incompatible with the Eastern idea that the importance of certain local churches-Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and later, Constantinople-could be determined only by their numerical and political significance. For the East, the highest authority in settling doctrinal disputes was the ecumenical council." - Britannica.com

"Greek Church - The relations that grew up between Rome and the Greek Churches during the long period from the death of Constantine the Great to the end of the Iconoclast persecutions (337-843) were far from cordial. In principle East and West were united; in fact they were separated during most of that time. During those 506 years the Greek Church was in open schism with Rome during seven periods aggregating at least 248 years." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

The defining difference between the Eastern Catholicism and Roman Catholicism then, is that the Eastern Catholic Church does not recognize the proclaimed supremacy of the bishop of Rome. While Roman Catholicism is alone in teaching that the bishop of Rome holds supreme authority in the Church, the Eastern Catholic Churches hold that supreme authority resides in and is distributed among all of the local Churches.

"Eastern Orthodox - The Orthodox Church is a fellowship of "autocephalous" churches (governed by their own head bishops), with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople holding titular or honorary primacy. The number of autocephalous churches has varied in history. Today there are many: the Church of Constantinople (Istanbul), the Church of Alexandria (Egypt), the Church of Antioch (with headquarters in Damascus, Syria), and the churches of Jerusalem, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Albania, Poland, the Czech and Slovak republics, and America" - Britannica.com

"Autocephalous Churches - in the modern usage of Eastern Orthodox canon law, church that enjoys total canonical and administrative independence and elects its own primates and bishops. The term autocephalous was used in medieval Byzantine law in its literal sense of 'self-headed' (Greek: autokephalos), or independent, and was applied in church law to individual dioceses that did not depend upon the authority of a provincial metropolitan. Today the Orthodox archbishopric of Mount Sinai, with the historic monastery of St. Catherine, still enjoys this privilege." - Britannica.com

"Eastern Orthodox - The bishop is primarily the guardian of the faith and, as such, the centre of the sacramental life of the community. The Orthodox Church maintains the doctrine of apostolic succession -i.e., the idea that the ministry of the bishop must be in direct continuity with that of the Apostles of Jesus. Orthodox tradition-as expressed especially in its medieval opposition to the Roman papacy-distinguishes the office of the "Apostle" from that of the bishop, however, in that the first is viewed as a universal witness to the historic Jesus and his Resurrection, while the latter is understood in terms of the pastoral and sacramental responsibility for a local community, or church. The continuity between the two is, therefore, a continuity in faith rather than in function." - Britannica.com

"Orthodox Eastern Church - community of Christian churches whose chief strength is in the Middle East and E Europe. Their members number over 250 million worldwide. The Orthodox agree doctrinally in accepting as ecumenical the first seven councils (see council, ecumenical) and in rejecting the jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome (the pope). This repudiation of the papal claims is the principal point dividing the Orthodox from Roman Catholics." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Greek Church - The term Orthodox Greek Church, or even simply the Orthodox Church, designates, without distinction of speech, or race, or nationality, all the existing Churches of the Byzantine Rite, separated from Rome. They claim to be a unit and to have the same body of doctrine, which they say was that of the primitive Church. As a matter of fact, the orthodoxy of these Churches is what we call heterodoxy, since it rejects the Papal Infallibility, and the Papal Supremacy, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, that of Purgatory, etc. However, by a polite fiction, educated Catholics give them the name of Orthodox which they have usurped. The term Schismatic Greek Church is synonymous with the above; nearly everybody uses it, but it is at times inexpedient to do so, if one would avoid wounding the feelings of those whose conversion is aimed at." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

Without needing to go into further detail we can confidently identify a historical trend that identifiably appear until after the year 300 A.D. The idea of Roman primacy, which has no reasonable representation prior to the 4th century, did during the 4th century begin to be asserted by the Roman bishops. (We will examine more what contributed to the rise of this doctrine at this point in history later on in our study.)

Since this doctrine had not been known or accepted prior to this time the bishops of other regions reacted with objections to it. This historic rejection of Roman papal supremacy is chiefly exemplified through bishop Cyprian of Carthage and the Eastern Orthodox Churches. What we see recorded in history then is not surprising, but is completely consistent with our conclusions so far.

If the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal authority had been present in the Church since its inception we would expect two things. We would expect to see that doctrine explicitly and consistently reflected in at least some of the writings of the first three centuries of the Church. And we would also expect to see a uniform acceptance and adherence to this doctrine whenever it was exercised as Church history continued.

We instead find the opposite. The first three centuries of Christian writing contain absolutely no statements confirming the presence of this doctrine in the Church, but instead undermine even the consideration of Roman papal supremacy. Then in the early 4th century just as this doctrine begins to be stated with frequency and in clear terms, we find a large scale, widespread reaction against its claims within the Church worldwide. Additionally, while literature beginning in the 4th century attests to the emergence and acceptance of papal authority and Roman primacy at that time, official expression of this doctrine occurs in the centuries afterward. Official Roman Catholic certification of papal authority and Roman primacy as it is understood today in all of its elaborate complexity comes from the following sources, all of which occurred many, long centuries after Jesus Christ and His Apostles lived and taught the original doctrines of Christianity.

For example, as we have already seen, the term pope was widely applied until the 9th or 10th centuries, after which it was reserved exclusively for the bishop of Rome.

"Pope - (Latin papa, from Greek pappas, "father"), an ecclesiastical title expressing affectionate respect, formerly given, especially from the 3rd to the 5th century, to any bishop and sometimes to simple priests. The title is still used in the East for the Orthodox patriarch of Alexandria and for Orthodox priests, but, **since about the 9th century, it has been reserved in the West exclusively for the bishop of Rome.** (See also papacy. The article contains a list of popes and antipopes.)" - Britannica.com

"Pope - The teaching of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) on the role of bishops the office and jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome, or the pope (Latin: papa, from the Greek pappas, "father"), who presides over the central government of the Roman Catholic church, the largest of the three major branches of Christianity. The term pope was originally applied to all the bishops in the West and also used to describe the patriarch of Alexandria, who still retains the title. In 1073, however, Gregory VII restricted its use to the bishop of Rome. According to the Annuario Pontificio, the papal annual, there have been more than 260 popes since St. Peter , traditionally considered the first pope." - Britannica.com

"Roman Catholicism - The word papacy (Latin papatia, derived from papa, "pope"; i.e., father) **is of medieval origin.** In its primary usage it denotes the office of the pope (of Rome) and, hence, the system of ecclesiastical and temporal government over which he directly presides." - Britannica.com

The infallibility of the pope was officially declared in the First Vatican Council in 1870.

"Infallibility - Roman Catholics hold that the infallibility of the church is vested in the pope, when he speaks ex cathedra (i.e., from the chair of Peter, as the visible head of the church) on matters of faith and morals. Definitive pronouncements resulting from an ecumenical council, when ratified by the pope, are also held to be infallible. The pope speaks ex cathedra only rarely and after long deliberation. **The dogma of papal infallibility was enunciated by the First Vatican Council (1870).**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

And most importantly, the Roman Catholic doctrine of the papal authority of Peter and the Roman bishops owes its acceptance primarily to three Roman Catholic popes of the 4th and 5th centuries.

"Roman Catholicism - Nevertheless, in the late 4th and 5th centuries there was an increasing tendency on the part of the Roman bishops to justify scripturally and to formulate in theoretical terms the ill-defined preeminence in the universal church that had long been attached to the Roman Church and to its bishop. Thus, Damasus I, despite the existence of other churches of apostolic foundation, began to call the Roman Church 'the apostolic see.' About the same time the categories of the Roman law were borrowed to explicate and formulate the prerogatives of the Roman bishop. The process of theoretical elaboration reached a culmination in the views of Leo I and Gelasius I, the former understanding himself not simply as Peter's successor but also as his representative, or vicar. He was Peter's "unworthy heir," possessing by analogy with the Roman law of inheritance the full powers Peter himself had wielded, which he interpreted as monarchical, since Peter had been endowed with the principatus over the church." - Britannica.com

"Damasus I, Saint - born c. 304 , Rome died Dec. 11, 384 , Rome; feast day December 11 **pope from Oct. 1, 366, to Dec. 11, 384. During his rule the primacy of the Roman see was asserted.**" - Britannica.com

"Leo I, Saint - born 4th century , Tuscany? died November 10, 461, Rome; Western feast day November 10 ([formerly April 11]), Eastern feast day February 18 **byname Leo The Great pope from 440 to 461, master exponent of papal supremacy. His pontificate**-which saw the disintegration of the Roman Empire in the West and the formation in the East of theological differences that were to split Christendom-**was devoted to safeguarding orthodoxy and to securing the unity of the Western church under papal supremacy.**" - Britannica.com

"Gelasius I, Saint - born , probably Africa died Nov. 19, 496 , Rome; feast day November 21 **pope from 492 to 496.**" - Britannica.com

All of the above historical facts overwhelmingly point to one, undeniable conclusion:

The foundational and defining claim of the Roman Catholic Church to possess supreme authority over the Church in matters of faith and doctrine as ascribed to the office of the pope as the successor of Peter, the first bishop of Rome **DID NOT ORIGINATE** with the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Now we will consider some of the historical reasons for why this RCC's doctrine became prominently asserted at this particular point in time, the middle of the fourth century AD.

PART NINE:

The Pontifex Maximus

Having determined then that the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal authority and Roman primacy did not originate with Jesus Christ we must turn to our secondary question: where, then, did the RCC get this teaching?

Unlike the search for Scriptural origins for the doctrine of papal authority and Roman primacy the search for non-Biblical origins of this teaching are readily available from the imperial court of the Roman Empire. Both the title and structure of the Roman Catholic Church are directly derived from the title and structure of the Roman imperial cult.

One of the names that is often used to refer to the Roman Catholic pope is the title Pontiff.

"Pope - The Annuario Pontificio (official directory of the Holy See) describes the office of the pope by the following titles: Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, **Supreme Pontiff** of the Western Church, Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Province of Rome, Sovereign of the State of Vatican City. **The title pope or papa (abbreviated PP.) is officially used only as a less solemn style.**" - Britannica.com

"Roman Catholicism - The multiplicity and variety of papal titles themselves indicate the complexity of the papal office. **In the Annuario Pontificio, the official Vatican directory, the pope is described as** bishop of Rome, vicar of Jesus Christ, successor of the prince of the Apostles, **pontifex maximus ('supreme pontiff')** of the universal church, patriarch of the West, primate of Italy, archbishop and metropolitan of the Roman province, sovereign of the state of Vatican City, and servant of the servants of God." - Britannica.com

"Pontifex - The title pontifex was used of Roman Catholic bishops and pontifex maximus of the pope by the end of the 4th century. In modern usage, both terms generally refer to the pope." - Britannica.com

Though the common term "pope" is used as a less official reference, the term Supreme Pontiff is an official designation. This term is used in various forms to refer to the pope as well as things related to this office including: the Pontifex Maximus, pontificate, pontifical, Annurio Pontificio (the official Vatican directory), etc. And while the term pope was not used to refer to the bishop of Rome until the 10th century, the term pontifex maximus is a title of much earlier origination.

The title and concept for the Roman papal office comes directly from the pontifex maximus, originally employed to refer to the high priest of the Roman paganism. Likewise, the Roman Catholic college of bishops, which rule together with the pope, but in subordination to him, and from which the popes are elected, is also directly taken from Roman paganism.

"Pontifex - (Latin: "bridge builder"), plural **Pontifices, member of a council of priests in ancient Rome. The college, or collegium, of the pontifices was the most important Roman priesthood, being especially charged with the administration of the jus divinum (i.e., that part of the civil law that regulated the relations of the community with the deities recognized by the state), together with a general superintendence of the worship of gens and family.**" - Britannica.com

"Pontifex - The college existed under the monarchy, when its members were probably three in number; they may be considered as having been legal advisers of the rex in all matters of religion. **Under the republic they emerge into prominence under a pontifex maximus, or supreme priest, who took over the king's duties as chief administrator of religious law.** During the republican period the number of pontifices increased until by the time of Julius Caesar there were 16. Included in the collegium were also the rex sacrorum, the flamines, three assistant pontifices (minores), and the

Vestal Virgins, who were **all chosen by the pontifex maximus**. Vacancies in the body of pontifices were originally filled by co-optation; **but from the second Punic War onward the pontifex maximus was chosen by a peculiar form of popular election**, and in the last age of the republic this was true for all the members. **They all held office for life.**" - Britannica.com

"Pontifex - The immense authority of the collegium centred in the pontifex maximus, the other pontifices forming his consilium, or advising body. His functions were partly sacrificial or ritualistic, but the real power lay in the administration of the jus divinum." - Britannica.com

"Pontifex - It is obvious that a priesthood with such functions and holding office for life must have been a great power in the state, and for the first three centuries of the republic it is probable that the pontifex maximus was in fact its most powerful member. The office might be combined with a magistracy, and, though its powers were declaratory rather than executive, it may be described as quasi-magisterial. Under the later republic it was coveted chiefly for the great dignity of the position; **Julius Caesar held it for the last 20 years of his life, and Augustus took it after the death of Lepidus in 12 BC, after which it became inseparable from the office of the reigning emperor.**" - Britannica.com

"pontifex maximus - highest priest of Roman religion and official head of the college of pontifices. As the chief administrator of religious affairs he regulated the conduct of religious ceremonies, consecrated temples and other holy places, and controlled the calendar. During the time of the empire, and until Christianity became firmly established, the emperor was designated pontifex maximus. After the supremacy of Christianity, the popes assumed the title." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

Additionally, the idea of the pope as the vicar of Christ is modeled after Roman imperial paganism and pontifex maximus. Roman Catholicism employs the term vicar of Christ to the pope. One of the meanings of the word vicar is given below.

"vicar - 1 : one serving as a substitute or agent; specifically : an administrative deputy" - Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary

Therefore, in Roman Catholic theology the pope is the representative of Jesus Christ who physically rules over the earth in the place and authority of the Lord. This idea is directly taken from the Roman imperial view of the emperor, who, like the Roman Catholic pope, was the pontifex maximus.

This office of pontifex maximus was held by emperor Constantine.

"Constantine the Great - For a time it seemed as if merely tolerance and equality were to prevail. Constantine showed equal favour to both religions. As pontifex maximus he watched over the heathen worship and protected its rights." - Catholic Encyclopedia

It was Constantine's close associate, court theologian, and biographer, Eusebius of Caesarea, who is responsible for developing the organizational structure of the RCC as well as the Roman Catholic understanding for how the Church should relate to the state.

"Christianity - Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-c. 340) was the court theologian of Emperor Constantine the Great, who formed the Orthodox understanding of the mutual relationship of church and state. He saw the empire and the imperial church as sharing a close bond with one another; **in the centre of the Christian empire stood the figure of the Christian emperor** rather than that of the spiritual head of the church." - Britannica.com

"Christianity - Eusebius made this idea the basis of his political theology, in which the Christian emperor appears as God's representative on Earth in whom God himself 'lets shine forth the image of his absolute power.'" - Britannica.com

Eusebius, modeled the Roman Catholic pontifex maximus, or pope, directly after the Roman imperial pontifex maximus, who was the vicar of Sol Invictus.

"Christianity - Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-c. 340) was the court theologian of Emperor Constantine the Great, who formed the Orthodox understanding of the mutual relationship of church and state... Eusebius made this idea the basis of his political theology, in which the Christian emperor appears as God's representative on Earth in whom God himself 'lets shine forth the image of his absolute power.' This religious interpretation of the Christian emperor reinterpreted in the Christian sense the ancient Roman institution of the god-emperor. **Some of Eusebius' remarks echo the cult of the Unconquered Sun, the Sol Invictus, who was represented by the emperor according to pagan understanding. The emperor-in this respect he also resembled the pagan god-emperor who played the role of the pontifex maximus (high priest) in the state cult-took the central position within the church as well...The Christian emperor entered not only the political but also the sacred succession of the Roman god-emperor. Next to such a figure, an independent leadership of the church could hardly develop."** - Britannica.com

We will take a look at Eusebius of Caesarea, a little more later on in our study since he plays an important role in forming the theology of 4th century Christianity. For now we must simply recognize that one of his most significant contributions was to transform the office of the pagan high priest, or pontifex maximus, into the office of the pope. (Of course, the term "pope" was not used exclusively of the Bishop of Rome until the eleventh century. However, the Catholic Encyclopedia itself states that, "From the beginning of the fourth century the supremacy of Rome is writ large upon the page of history." Thus, it is the Bishop of Rome - later called the pope - who is the reinvented pontifex maximus.) The parallels between the pontifex maximus and the pope are too overwhelming to be overlooked. It is clear from this examination that the Roman Catholic papacy is directly derived from and corresponding to ancient Roman imperial paganism in title, in authority, in structure, and in function.

This is syncretism, pure and simple. Syncretism is the incorporation of religious elements from separate religious systems into a single theological construct. To be clear, this most-unparalleled occurrence of syncretism demonstrates the exact opposite of the RCC's claim to be the true Church of Jesus Christ and the sole possessor of authentic Christian teaching. Instead of being the true, unadulterated Church of Jesus Christ and sole possessor of His teachings, the RCC is a highly developed blend of Christianity and Roman imperial paganism.

So, while the idea of the pope is not to be found in the New Testament scripture or other early Christian writing, it is quite completely found in the high council of Roman paganism. All of the elements of the Roman Catholic papacy can be traced directly to the Roman pagan priests or pontifices and the high priest, the pontifex maximus. The pontifex maximus was elected from the body of pontifices. He ruled for life. And he along with the college of pontifices held the authority over the administration of all religious affairs of the empire.

Each of these characteristics is ultimately expressed in the Roman Catholic pope and college of bishops. The pope is elected from the body or college of bishops. He holds his office for life. And the pope, together with the bishops under his supremacy, are vested with the authority to administer all religious matters of faith and morality.

Conclusions about the Roman Catholicism and The Doctrine of Roman Papal Supremacy

Having arrived at the conclusion that the Roman Catholic Church is defined by and founded upon a doctrine that originates NOT with the teaching of Jesus Christ and His Apostles, but with Roman imperial paganism and a blend of Christian theology, we must remember the high level of significance that the Catholic Encyclopedia places upon this doctrine.

"The Pope - The position of St. Peter after the Ascension, as shown in the Acts of the Apostles, realizes to the full the great commission bestowed upon him. **He is from the first the chief of the Apostolic band** -- not primus inter pares, but **the undisputed head of the Church** (see CHURCH, THE, III). **If then Christ, as we have seen, established His Church as a society subordinated to a single supreme head, it follows from the very nature of the case that this office is perpetual**, and cannot have been a mere transitory feature of ecclesiastical life. **For the Church must endure to the end the very same organization which Christ established.** But in an organized society it is precisely the constitution which is the essential feature. **A change in constitution transforms it into a society of a different kind. If then the Church should adopt a constitution other than Christ gave it, it would no longer be His handiwork. It would no longer be the Divine kingdom established by Him. As a society it would have passed through essential modifications, and thereby would have become a human, not a Divine institution. None who believe that Christ came on earth to found a Church, an organized society destined to endure for ever, can admit the possibility of a change in the organization given to it by its Founder. The same conclusion also follows from a consideration of the end which, by Christ's declaration, the supremacy of Peter was intended to effect.** He was to give the Church strength to resist her foes, so that the gates of hell should not prevail against her. The contest with the powers of evil does not belong to the Apostolic age alone. It is a permanent feature of the Church's life. **Hence, throughout the centuries the office of Peter must be realized in the Church**, in order that she may prevail in her age-long struggle. **Thus an analysis of Christ's words shows us that the perpetuity of the office of supreme head is to be reckoned among the truths revealed in Scripture. His promise to Peter conveyed not merely a personal prerogative, but established a permanent office in the Church.** And in this sense, as will appear in the next section, His words were understood by Latin and Greek Fathers alike." - Catholic Encyclopedia

In summary, the Catholic Encyclopedia states that the Church ceases to be a Divine institution and instead becomes a human institution if and when it's organization changes away from the organization given to it by its Founder. Based upon this statement and the historical considerations, which we have examined in great detail in our study we must conclude that the Roman Catholic Church has adopted a constitution other than that, which Christ gave to the Church and is therefore not the handiwork of Christ, but is merely a human, rather than divinely mandated institution. Since, according to the Catholic Encyclopedia organizations must endure perpetually under the organization given to them by their founder without admitting the possibility of change in that organization the RCC must be understood to be an organization, which was formed by the abandonment of God's foundational and organizational constitution and the subsequent replacement of that constitution with structures borrowed directly from Roman imperial paganism.

Since the Roman Catholic Church exhibits such a significant change in the organization of the Church from that, which was instituted by Christ, by inventing a position of supreme authority in the Apostle Peter and the bishops of Rome, which was not instituted by Jesus Christ himself but perfectly mimics the Roman imperial paganism, we therefore conclude that

the RCC cannot be the true Church of Jesus Christ, as it claims. Instead the RCC must be seen as a pretender to the throne, which must be abandoned by all those who wish to remain faithful to the original teachings of Jesus Christ, who made the authority of the Church inherently dependent upon adherence to His own teachings, which were taught to the Church by His Apostles.

Roman Catholicism - Christian, Neoplatonic Paganism

We have already shown that the Roman Catholic Church, in its essential organization and fundamental teaching cannot be said to be the true Church of Jesus Christ or even to possess authentic Christian teaching. On these grounds we have instead shown that the RCC is rather a product of syncretistic blending of Christianity and Roman imperial paganism. However, we have so far limited this study to the single area of the RCC's teaching on the authority and organization of the Church, which is of course one of the defining characteristics of the RCC. Along the way we have also demonstrated that the RCC contradicts and denies the teaching of the early Church contained in both the New Testament scriptures as well as in many 1st and 2nd century Christian writings, both of which the RCC claims are the inspired, inerrant Word of God. Thus by claiming both to be inspired and then contradicting each, the RCC exhibits an inherently self-contradictory theology, thus disqualifying itself as a God-given, authoritative source for Christian teaching.

This being said, however, no study of the Roman Catholic Church would be complete without also spending at least a little time on the Neoplatonic and Gnostic beliefs, which also have had a significant impact on the theology of the RCC. The Neoplatonic nature of Roman Catholic theology can be traced through two main sources: Augustine of Hippo and Eusebius of Caesarea.

(Because, in this section we will be drawing strong connections between influential Roman Catholic writers and Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, we recommend that readers not familiar with these belief systems first read our articles entitled "Why Christianity" in the In-Depth studies section of our website, especially the section on Mysticism, Gnosticism and Neoplatonism. Our overlapping application of these terms, which is due to the common elements they hold, is more adequately explained in that series of articles.)

Augustine's Neoplatonic Influence on Roman Catholic Theology

The first and foremost scholar of Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity is Augustine. This fact is almost universally acknowledged. However, what is so interesting about Augustine as an influence on modern Christian theology, is the overwhelming influence Neoplatonic paganism had on his theology. To trace the Neoplatonic influence of Augustine, one could simply start with Augustine himself, for ample evidence abounds on this matter, which we will cover momentarily. However, before we get to Augustine's theology it is first important to take a look at the work of those writers who influenced him. The chief of these men is Ambrose, bishop of Milan, but the line of thinking actually starts much earlier in Alexandria Egypt with Origen.

Origen lived and wrote between 185 and 254 A.D.

"Origen - born c. 185, probably Alexandria, Egypt died c. 254, Tyre, Phoenicia [now S ur, Lebanon] Latin in full Oregenes Adamantius the most important theologian and biblical scholar of the early Greek church. His greatest work is the Hexapla, which is a synopsis of six versions of the Old Testament." - Britannica.com

The most important thing to remember about Origen is his heavy dependence upon Neoplatonic and Gnostic thought from his youth through his adult life as a Christian theologian.

"Origen - Origen was born of pagan parents, according to the Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry, but of Christian parents, according to the ecclesiastical historian Eusebius of Caesarea, whose account is probably more accurate. Eusebius stated that Origen's father, Leonides, was martyred in the persecution of 202, so that Origen had to provide for his mother and six younger brothers." - Britannica.com

"Origen - According to Porphyry, Origen attended lectures given by Ammonius Saccas, the founder of Neoplatonism. A letter of Origen mentions his 'teacher of philosophy,' at whose lectures he met Heraclas, who was to become his junior colleague, then his rival, and who was to end **as bishop of Alexandria refusing to hold communion with him.** Origen invited Heraclas to assist him with the elementary teaching at the Catechetical school, leaving himself free for advanced teaching and study. During this period (from c. 212), Origen learned Hebrew and began to compile his Hexapla." - Britannica.com

It is to Origen that the Church, at least in part, owes thanks for the division of essential and non-essential Christian teaching. Teaching designated as "non-essential" is often treated as unnecessary for disciples of Christ to understand, to believe, or to have in common.

"Origen - Prior to 231 Origen wrote De principiis, an ordered statement of Christian doctrine on an ambitious scale, based on the presupposition that every Christian is committed to the rule of faith laid down by the Apostles (the Creator as God of both Old and New Testaments, the incarnation of the preexistent Lord, the Holy Spirit as one of the divine triad, the freedom of rational souls, discarnate spirits, the noneternity of the world, judgment to come) **but that outside this restriction the educated believer is free to speculate.**" - Britannica.com

Apparently, Origen put his assessment that Christian teaching was open to speculation to great use in developing his form of Christian theology.

"Origen - Origen was writing long before the conciliar definitions of Chalcedon (451) concerning the Trinity and the Person of Christ and at a period when a far larger area of doctrine could be regarded as open for discussion and argument than was the case by 400. De principiis diverged in its speculations from later standards of orthodoxy." - Britannica.com

Origen's Neoplatonic influence can be seen throughout his works, including *Contra Celsum*, in which Origen agrees with the Platonic presuppositions of his opponent, pagan philosopher, Celsus.

"Origen - Origen's great vindication of Christianity against pagan attack, *Contra Celsum*, written (probably in 248) at Ambrose's request, survives in its entirety in one Vatican manuscript, with fragments in the *Philocalia* and on papyrus. Paragraph by paragraph it answers the *Alethes logos* ("The True Doctrine" or "Discourse") of the 2nd-century anti-Christian philosopher Celsus and is therefore a principal source for the pagan intelligentsia's view of 2nd-century Christianity as well as a classic formulation of early Christian reply. **Both protagonists agree in their basic Platonic presuppositions**, but beside this agreement, serious differences are argued. Celsus' brusque dismissal of Christianity as a crude and bucolic onslaught on the religious traditions and intellectual values of classical culture provoked Origen to a sustained rejoinder in which he claimed that a philosophic mind has a right to think within a Christian framework and that the Christian faith is neither a prejudice of the unreasoning masses nor a crutch for social outcasts or nonconformists." - Britannica.com

Likewise, Origen's theology affirms notions of Gnostic transcendence of the soul through a hierarchy of levels of existence.

"Origen - Origen's experience as a teacher is reflected in his continual emphasis upon a scale of spiritual apprehension. Christianity to him was a ladder of divine ascent, and the beginner must learn to mount it with the saints in a never-ceasing advance." - Britannica.com

"Origen and Origenism - (2) Original Equality of the Created Spirits. 'In the beginning all intellectual natures were created equal and alike, as God had no motive for creating them otherwise' (*De princip.*, II, ix, 6). Their present differences arise solely from their different use of the gift of free will. The spirits created good and happy grew tired of their happiness (*op. cit.*, I, iii, 8), and, though carelessness, **fell, some more some less (I, vi, 2). Hence the hierarchy of the angels; hence also the four categories of created intellects: angels, stars (supposing, as is probable, that they are animated, 'De princip., I, vii, 3), men, and demons.** But their roles may be one day changed; for what free will has done, free will can undo, and the Trinity alone is essentially immutable in good." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

Additionally, Origen borrows from the Neoplatonic views of the inferiority and unspiritual nature of the material world and the cyclical nature of the universe.

"Origen - The material world was created by God as a means of discipline (and its natural catastrophes such as earthquakes and plagues remind man **that this world is not his ultimate destiny**). **Origen speculated that souls fell varying distances, some to be angels, some descending into human bodies, and the most wicked becoming devils.** (Origen believed in the preexistence of souls, but not in transmigration nor in the incorporation of rational souls in animal bodies.) **Redemption is a grand education by providence, restoring all souls to their original blessedness, for none, not even Satan, is so depraved and has so lost rationality and freedom as to be beyond redemption.** God never coerces, though with reformative intention he may punish. His punishments are remedial; even if simple believers may need to think of them as retributive, this is pedagogic accommodation to inferior capacity, not the truth." - Britannica.com

(Note: Some readers may not understand the problem of Origen's belief that the material world is not man's ultimate destiny. To better understand the problematic nature of this belief, please read Tim Warner's articles entitled "The Kingdom According to Jesus" and "Origins of the Heavenly Destiny Concept".)

"Origen - Thus, redemption restores fallen souls from matter to spirit, from image to reality, a principle directly exemplified both in the sacraments and in the inspired biblical writings, in which the inward spirit is veiled under the letter of law, history, myth, and parable. **The commentator's task is to penetrate the allegory, to perceive within the material body of Scripture its soul and spirit, to discover its existential reference for the individual Christian. Correct exegesis (critical interpretation) is the gift of grace to those spiritually worthy.**" - Britannica.com

"Origen and Origenism - (1) Eternity of Creation Whatever exists outside of God was created by Him: the Alexandrian catechist always defended this thesis most energetically against the pagan philosophers who admitted an uncreated matter ("*De princip.*", II, i, 5; "*In Genes.*", I, 12, in Migne, XII, 48-9). But he believes that God created from eternity, for "it is absurd", he says, "to imagine the nature of God inactive, or His goodness inefficacious, or His dominion without subjects" (*De princip.*, III, v, 3). **Consequently he is forced to admit a double infinite series of worlds before and after the present world.**" - the Catholic Encyclopedia

But Origen's most costly and obvious adoption of Gnosticism and Neoplatonic ideas is his assessment that Jesus Christ and the Logos were distinct beings who were joined together rather than the orthodox view that Jesus Christ and the Logos (or Word of God) are one and the same single being. (As we will see later this view may have contributed to the development of the Arian heresy since Arius, the founder of that heresy, was influenced by Origen and both men lived and worked in the church at Alexandria, Egypt.)

"Origen - The climax of redemption is the incarnation of the preexistent Son. One soul had not fallen but had remained in adoring union with the Father. Uniting himself with this soul, the divine Logos, who is the second hypostasis (Person) of the triad of Father, Son, and Spirit (subordinate to the Father but on the divine side of the gulf between infinite Creator and finite creation), became incarnate in a body derived from the Virgin Mary. So intense was the union between Christ's soul and the Logos that it is like the union of body and soul, of white-hot iron and fire. Like all souls Christ's had free will, but the intensity of union destroyed all inclination for change, and the Logos united to himself not only soul but also body, as was apparent when Jesus was transfigured. Origen, influenced by a semi-Gnostic writing, the Acts of John, thought that Jesus' body appeared differently to different observers according to their spiritual capacities. Some saw nothing remarkable in him, others recognized in him their Lord and God. In his commentary on St. John, Origen collected titles of Christ, such as Lamb, Redeemer, Wisdom, Truth, Light, Life. Though the Father is One, the Son is many and has many grades, like rungs in a ladder of mystical ascent, steps up to the Holy of Holies, the beatific vision." - Britannica.com

These criticisms of Origen's unorthodox incorporation of Neoplatonic, Gnostic, and Mystical ideas into Christian theology is well documented. Notice that Origen also champions an allegorical interpretative method for the scriptures. This method is adopted by those who came after him and studied his works with affection, including both Ambrose and Augustine.

"Origen - Thus, redemption restores fallen souls from matter to spirit, from image to reality, a principle directly exemplified both in the sacraments and in the inspired biblical writings, in which the inward spirit is veiled under the letter of law, history, myth, and parable. The commentator's task is to penetrate the allegory, to perceive within the material body of Scripture its soul and spirit, to discover its existential reference for the individual Christian. Correct exegesis (critical interpretation) is the gift of grace to those spiritually worthy." - Britannica.com

"Origen - In his lifetime he was often attacked, suspected of adulterating the Gospel with pagan philosophy." - Britannica.com

"Origen - The chief accusations against Origen's teaching are the following: making the Son inferior to the Father and thus being a precursor of Arianism, a 4th-century heresy that denied that the Father and the Son were of the same substance; spiritualizing away the resurrection of the body; denying hell, a morally enervating universalism; speculating about preexistent souls and world cycles; and dissolving redemptive history into timeless myth by using allegorical interpretation. None of these charges is altogether groundless." - Britannica.com

"Origen - Origen attempted to synthesize the fundamental principles of Greek philosophy, particularly those of Neoplatonism and Stoicism, with the Christianity of creed and Scripture so as to prove the Christian view of the universe to be compatible with Greek thought. Before St. Augustine, Origen was the most influential theologian in the church. His threefold plan of interpreting Scripture (literal, ethical, and allegorical) influenced subsequent exegetical works. In spite of Origen's fame as an apologist for Christianity, there was question as to his orthodoxy. His somewhat recondite blending of pagan philosophy with Christian theology led to his condemnation by Justinian in the Monophysite controversy. There is good reason to believe that he was often the victim of misquotation and unfair interpretation." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001

"Origen and Origenism - II. ORIGENISM By this term is understood not so much Origen's theology and the body of his teachings, as a certain number of doctrines, rightly or wrongly attributed to him, and which by their novelty or their danger called forth at an early period a refutation from orthodox writers. **They are chiefly: Allegorism in the interpretation of Scripture,** Subordination of the Divine Persons, The theory of successive trials and a final restoration. Before examining how far Origen is responsible for these theories, a word must be said of the directive principle of his theology." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Origen and Origenism - According to Origen, Scripture is inspired because it is the word and work of God... Since Scripture is from God, it ought to have the distinctive characteristics of the Divine works: truth, unity, and fullness. The word of God cannot possibly be untrue; hence no errors or contradictions can be admitted in Scripture (In Joan., X, iii). The author of the Scriptures being one, the Bible is less a collection of books than one and the same book (Philoc., V, iv-vii), a perfect harmonious instrument (Philoc., VI, i-ii). But the most Divine note of Scripture is its fullness: 'There is not in the Holy Books the smallest passage (cheraia) but reflects the wisdom of God' (Philoc., I, xxviii, cf. X, i). **True there are imperfections in the Bible: antilogies, repetitions, want of continuity; but these imperfections become perfections by leading us to the allegory and the spiritual meaning** (Philoc., X, i-ii)." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Origen and Origenism - At one time Origen, starting from the Platonic trichotomy, distinguishes the body, the soul, and the spirit of Holy Scripture; at another, following a more rational terminology, he distinguishes only between the letter and the spirit." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Origen and Origenism - Though he warns us that these passages are the exceptions, **it must be confessed that he allows too many cases in which the Scripture is not to be understood according to the letter**; but, remembering his terminology, his principle is unimpeachable. **The two great rules of interpretation laid down by the Alexandria catechist**, taken by themselves and independently of erroneous applications, are proof against criticism. **They may be formulated thus: Scripture must be interpreted in a manner worthy of God, the author of Scripture. The corporal sense or the letter of Scripture must not be adopted, when it would entail anything impossible, absurd, or unworthy of God. The abuse arises from the application of these rules. Origen has recourse too easily to allegorism to explain purely apparent antilogies or antinomies. He considers that certain narratives or ordinances of the Bible would be unworthy of God if they had to be taken according to the letter, or if they were to be taken solely according to the letter. He justifies the allegorism by the fact that otherwise certain accounts or certain precepts now abrogated would be useless and profitless for the reader:** a fact which appears to him contrary to the providence of the Divine inspirer and the dignity of Holy Writ. **It will thus be seen that though the criticisms directed against his allegorical method** by St. Epiphanius and St. Methodius **were not groundless**, yet many of the complaints arise from a misunderstanding." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

Since Origen is so readily identifiable with heretical ideas and pagan syncretistic tendencies, Origen's influence on the Church comes mostly through others, like Ambrose, who were influenced by Origen before his work came into dispute. And like Origen himself, these men had no problem incorporating large aspects of Neoplatonic paganism into Christianity.

PART TEN:

Ambrose was born in 339 A.D. and died in 397 A.D. In between, he was the bishop of Milan and the mentor of Augustine of Hippo.

"Ambrose, Saint - born AD 339, Augusta Treverorum, Belgica, Gaul died 397, Milan; feast day December 7 Latin Ambrosius bishop of Milan, biblical critic, and initiator of ideas that provided a model for medieval conceptions of church-state relations. His literary works have been acclaimed as masterpieces of Latin eloquence, and his musical accomplishments are remembered in his hymns. **Ambrose is also remembered as the teacher who converted and baptized St. Augustine of Hippo**, the great Christian theologian, and as a model bishop who viewed the church as rising above the ruins of the Roman Empire." -Britannica.com

Ambrose' influence on Church thinking is profound. Though dwarfed by that of his pupil, it must be remembered that it was Ambrose who influenced Augustine. Therefore, Ambrose influence upon the Church is in no small measure through Augustine's work.

"St. Ambrose - Bishop of Milan from 374 to 397; born probably 340, at Trier, Arles, or Lyons; died 4 April, 397. **He was one of the most illustrious Fathers and Doctors of the Church**, and fitly chosen, together with St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Athanasius, to uphold the venerable Chair of the Prince of the Apostles in the tribune of St. Peter's at Rome." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"St. Ambrose - The special character and value of the writings of St. Ambrose are at once tangible in the title of Doctor of the Church, which from time immemorial he has shared in the West with St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory. **He is an official witness to the teaching of the Catholic Church in his own time and in the preceding centuries. As such his writings have been constantly invoked by popes, councils and theologians; even in his own day it was felt that few could voice so clearly the true sense of the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church** (St. Augustine, De doctrinâ christ.,IV,46,48,50). Ambrose is pre-eminently the ecclesiastical teacher, setting forth in a sound and edifying way, and with conscientious regularity, the deposit of faith as made known to him. He is not the philosophic scholar meditating in silence and retirement on the truths of the Christian Faith, but the strenuous administrator, bishop, and statesman, whose writings are only the mature expression of his official life and labours. Most of his writings are really homilies, **spoken commentaries on the Old and New Testaments, taken down by his hearers, and afterwards reduced to their present form, though very few of these discourses have reached us exactly as they fell from the lips of the great bishop.**" - the Catholic Encyclopedia

One of Ambrose' chief contributions to Augustine was his own affinity for Neoplatonic thought, in part seen in his partiality for Origen's writings, which Ambrose used to supplement his lack of theological training.

"St. Ambrose - In order to supply **the lack of an early theological training, he devoted himself assiduously to the study of Scripture and the Fathers, with a marked preference for Origen** and St. Basil, traces of **whose influence are repeatedly met with in his works.** With a genius truly Roman, he, **like Cicero, Virgil, and other classical authors, contented himself with thoroughly digesting and casting into a Latin mould the best fruits of Greek thought.**" - the Catholic Encyclopedia

And like Origen, we see that Ambrose had a preference for an allegorical and mystical interpretation of the scripture.

"St. Ambrose - **He delights in the allegorico-mystical interpretation of Scripture, i.e. while admitting the natural or literal sense he seeks everywhere a deeper mystic meaning** that he converts into practical instruction for Christian life. In this, says St. Jerome (Ep.xli) **'he was disciple of Origen**, but after the modifications in that master's manner due

to St. Hippolytus of Rome and St. Basil the Great." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

The presence of Neoplatonic thought and allegorical scripture interpretation embraced by Origen and Ambrose finds its greatest expression in Augustine. As important as both of these men were to later Christian theology the contributions of both are dwarfed by those of their successor. Indeed, Augustine enjoys an unparalleled appreciation from Roman Catholics and Protestants alike for shaping post-4th century Christian theology. Yet, though he is acknowledged by Protestant scholars, his chief contributions are undeniably Roman Catholic, a fact, which the RCC is proud to affirm.

"Augustine - born Nov. 13, 354, Tagaste, Numidia [now Souk Ahras, Algeria] died Aug. 28, 430, Hippo Regius [now Annaba, Algeria] also called Saint Augustine of Hippo, original Latin name Aurelius Augustinus feast day August 28, bishop of Hippo from 396 to 430, one of the Latin Fathers of the Church, one of the Doctors of the Church, and perhaps the most significant Christian thinker after St. Paul. Augustine's adaptation of classical thought to Christian teaching created a theological system of great power and lasting influence. His numerous written works, the most important of which are Confessions and City of God, shaped the practice of biblical exegesis and helped lay the foundation for much of medieval and modern Christian thought." -Britannica.com

"Augustine - His distinctive theological style shaped Latin Christianity in a way surpassed only by scripture itself. His work continues to hold contemporary relevance, in part because of his membership in a religious group that was dominant in the West in his time and remains so today." -Britannica.com

"Augustine, Saint - St. Augustine's influence on Christianity is thought by many to be second only to that of St. Paul, and theologians, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, look upon him as one of the founders of Western theology. His Confessions is considered a classic of Christian autobiography. **This work (c.400), the prime source for St. Augustine's life,** is a beautifully written apology for the Christian convert. Next to it his best-known work is **the City of God (after 412)**-a mammoth defense of Christianity against its pagan critics, and famous especially for the uniquely Christian view of history elaborated in its pages." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo - St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) is "a philosophical and theological genius of the first order, dominating, like a pyramid, antiquity and the succeeding ages. Compared with the great philosophers of past centuries and modern times, he is the equal of them all; among theologians he is undeniably the first, and such has been his influence that **none of the Fathers, Scholastics, or Reformers has surpassed it."** - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo - If Augustine occupies a place apart in the history of humanity, it is as a thinker, his influence being felt even outside the realm of theology, and **playing a most potent part in the orientation of Western thought. It is now universally conceded that, in the intellectual field, this influence is unrivalled** even by that of Thomas Aquinas, and **Augustine's teaching marks a distinct epoch in the history of Christian thought.** The better to emphasize this important fact we shall try to determine: (1) the rank and degree of influence that must be ascribed to Augustine; (2) the nature, or the elements, of his doctrinal influence; (3) the general qualities of his doctrine; and (4) the character of his genius." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo - It is first of all a remarkable fact that the great critics, Protestant as well as Catholic, are almost unanimous in placing St. Augustine in the foremost rank of Doctors and proclaiming him to be the greatest of the Fathers. Such, indeed, was also the opinion of his contemporaries, judging from their expressions of enthusiasm gathered by the Bollandists. **The popes attributed such exceptional authority to the Doctor of Hippo** that, even of late years, it has given rise to lively theological controversies. Peter the Venerable accurately summarized **the general sentiment of the Middle Ages when he ranked Augustine immediately after the Apostles; and in modern times Bossuet, whose genius was most like that of Augustine, assigns him the first place among the Doctors, nor does he simply call him 'the incomparable Augustine,' but 'the Eagle of Doctors,' 'the Doctor of Doctors.'** If the Jansenistic abuse of his works and perhaps the exaggerations of certain Catholics, as well as the attack of Richard Simon, seem to have alarmed some minds, the general opinion has not varied. In the nineteenth century Stöckl **expressed the thought of all when he said, 'Augustine has justly been called the greatest Doctor of the Catholic world.'**" - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo - Luther and Calvin were content to treat Augustine with a little less irreverence than they did the other Fathers, but their descendants do him full justice, although recognizing him as the Father of Roman Catholicism." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo - In his "History of the Church" Dr. Kurtz calls Augustine 'the greatest, the most powerful of all the Fathers, him from whom proceeds all the doctrinal and ecclesiastical development of the West, and to whom each recurring crisis, each new orientation of thought brings it back.'" - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo - The English Miter, W. Cunningham, is no less appreciative of the extent and perpetuity of this extraordinary influence: "The whole life of the medieval Church was framed on lines which he has suggested: its religious orders claimed him as their patron; its mystics found a sympathetic tone in his teaching; its

polity was to some extent the actualization of his picture of the Christian Church; it was in its various parts a carrying out of ideas which he cherished and diffused. Nor does his influence end with the decline of medievalism: we shall see presently how closely his language was akin to that of Descartes, who gave the first impulse to and defined the special character of modern philosophy." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo - But Adolf Harnack is the one who has oftenest emphasized the unique rôle of the Doctor of Hippo. He has studied Augustine's place in the history of the world as reformer of Christian piety and his influence as Doctor of the Church. In his study of the "Confessions" he comes back to it: **'No man since Paul is comparable to him'** -- with the exception of Luther, he adds. - **'Even today we live by Augustine, by his thought and his spirit;** it is said that we are the sons of **the Renaissance and the Reformation, but both one and the other depend upon him.**" - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo - Augustine stands forth, too, as the great inspirer of religious thought in subsequent ages. A whole volume would not be sufficient to contain the full account of his influence on posterity; here we shall merely call attention to its principal manifestations. It is, in the first place, a fact of paramount importance that, with St. Augustine, the centre of dogmatic and theological development changed from East to West. Hence, from this view-point again, he makes an epoch in the history of dogma. The critics maintain that up to his time the most powerful influence was exerted by the Greek Church, the East having been the classic land of theology, the great workshop for the elaboration of dogma. From the time of Augustine, the predominating influence seems to emanate from the West, and the practical, realistic spirit of the Latin race supplants the speculative and idealistic spirit of Greece and the East. Another fact, no less salient, is that it was the Doctor of Hippo who, in the bosom of the Church, inspired the two seemingly antagonistic movements, Scholasticism and Mysticism. From Gregory the Great to the Fathers of Trent, Augustine's theological authority, indisputably the highest, dominates all thinkers and is appealed to alike by the Scholastics Anselm, Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas, and by Bernard, Hugh of St. Victor, and Tauler, exponents of Mysticism, all of whom were nourished upon his writings and penetrated with his spirit." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo - Lastly, Augustine's doctrine bears an eminently Catholic stamp and is radically opposed to Protestantism. It is important to establish this fact, principally because of the change in the attitude of Protestant critics towards St. Augustine. Indeed, nothing is more deserving of attention than this development so highly creditable to the impartiality of modern writers. The thesis of the Protestants of olden times is well known. Attempts to monopolize Augustine and to make him an ante-Reformation reformer, were certainly not wanting. Of course Luther had to admit that he did not find in Augustine justification by faith alone, that generating principle of all Protestantism." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo - In the last thirty or forty years all has been changed, and the best Protestant critics now vie with one another in proclaiming the essentially Catholic character of Augustinian doctrine. In fact they go to extremes when they claim him to be the founder of Catholicism. It is thus that H. Reuter concludes his very important studies on the Doctor of Hippo: **'I consider Augustine the founder of Roman Catholicism in the West'**.... This is no new discovery, as Kattenbusch seems to believe, but a truth long since recognized by Neander, Julius Köstlin, Dorner, Schmidt,...etc..." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo - No one, however, has put this idea in a stronger light than Harnack. Quite recently, in his 14th lesson on 'The Essence of Christianity,' he characterized the Roman Church by three elements, the third of which is Augustinism, the thought and the piety of St. Augustine. 'In fact Augustine has exerted over the whole inner life of the Church, religious life and religious thought, an absolutely decisive influence.' And again he says, 'In the fifth century, at the hour when the Church inherited the Roman Empire, she had within her a man of extraordinarily deep and powerful genius: from him she took her ideas, and to this present hour she has been unable to break away from them.' In his 'History of Dogma' (English tr., V, 234, 235) the same critic dwells at length upon the features of what he calls the 'popular Catholicism' to which Augustine belongs. These features are (a) the Church as a hierarchical institution with doctrinal authority; (b) eternal life by merits, and disregard of the Protestant thesis of 'salvation by faith' -- that is, salvation by that firm confidence in God which the certainty of pardon produces (c) the forgiveness of sins -- in the Church and the Church; (d) the distinction between commands and counsel -- between grievous sine and venial sins -- the scale of wicked men and good men -- the various degrees of happiness in heaven according to one's deserts; (e) Augustine is accused of "outdoing the superstitious ideas" of this popular Catholicism -- the infinite value of Christ's satisfaction, salvation considered as enjoyment of God in heaven -- the mysterious efficacy of the sacraments (ex opere operato) -- Mary's virginity even in childbirth -- the idea of her purity and her conception, unique in their kind." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

In 387 A.D., Augustine was baptized by Ambrose as a Christian. We might also say he was baptized into Neoplatonism by Ambrose as well.

"Augustine - But when Augustine accepted baptism at the hands of Ambrose in 387, thereby joining the religion of his mother to the cultural practices of his father, he managed to make it a Christianity of his own. To some extent influenced by Ambrose (but few others influenced by Ambrose went in the same direction), Augustine made his Christianity into a rival to and replacement for the austerity of ancient philosophers. Reading Platonic texts and

correctly understanding some of their doctrine, Augustine decided for himself that Christianity was possible only if he went further than any churchman said he was required to go-he chose to remain celibate even though he was a layman and under no requirement to do so. His life with a succession of lovers ended, Augustine accepted sexual abstinence as the price of religion. After a long winter in retirement from the temptations of the city, he presented himself to Ambrose for baptism, then slipped away from Milan to pursue a singularly private life for the next four years." - Britannica.com

The following quotes all attest to Augustine's pervasive Neoplatonic influence. We apologize for the length of these quotes, but given his significance to the formation of Roman Catholic theology (and consequently some of modern Protestant theology as well), we thought it best to overwhelm the reader with evidence of his embrace of pagan mystical thought.

"Augustine - Intellectually, Augustine represents the most influential adaptation of the ancient Platonic tradition with Christian ideas that ever occurred in the Latin Christian world. Augustine received the Platonic past in a far more limited and diluted way than did many of his Greek-speaking contemporaries, but his writings were so widely read and imitated throughout Latin Christendom **that his particular synthesis of Christian, Roman, and Platonic traditions defined the terms for much later tradition and debate. Both modern Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity owe much to Augustine,** though in some ways each community has at times been embarrassed to own up to that allegiance in the face of **irreconcilable elements in his thought. For example, Augustine has been cited as both a champion of human freedom and an articulate defender of divine predestination,** and his views on sexuality were humane in intent but have often been received as oppressive in effect." -Britannica.com

"Augustine - Between those two points the narrative of sin and redemption holds most readers' attention. Those who seek to find in it the memoirs of a great sinner are invariably disappointed, indeed often puzzled at the minutiae of failure that preoccupy the author. Of greater significance is the account of redemption. **Augustine is especially influenced by the powerful intellectual preaching of the suave and diplomatic Bishop Ambrose, who reconciles for him the attractions of the intellectual and social culture of antiquity, in which Augustine was brought up and of which he was a master, and the spiritual teachings of Christianity.** The link between the two was **Ambrose's exposition, and Augustine's reception, of a selection of the doctrines of Plato, as mediated in late antiquity by the school of Neoplatonism.** Augustine heard Ambrose and read, in Latin translation, some of the exceedingly difficult works of Plotinus and Porphyry; **he acquired from them an intellectual vision of the fall and rise of the soul of man, a vision he found confirmed in the reading of the Bible proposed by Ambrose.**" -Britannica.com

"Augustine, Saint- His years at Milan were the critical period of his life. Already **distrustful of Manichaeism, he came to renounce it after a deep study of Neoplatonism and skepticism.** Augustine, troubled in spirit, was greatly **drawn by the eloquent fervor of St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan. After two years of great doubt and mental disquietude, Augustine suddenly decided to embrace Christianity.** He was baptized on Easter in 387. Soon afterward he returned to Tagaste, where **he lived a monastic life with a group of friends. In 391, while he was visiting in Hippo, he was chosen against his will to be a Christian priest there. For the rest of his life he remained in Hippo, where he became auxiliary bishop in 395 and bishop soon after. He died in the course of the siege of Hippo by the Vandals. Feast: Aug. 28.**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Life of St. Augustine of Hippo - Having visited Bishop Ambrose, the fascination of that saint's kindness induced him to become a regular attendant at his preachings. However, **before embracing the Faith, Augustine underwent a three years' struggle during which his mind passed through several distinct phases. At first he turned towards the philosophy of the Academics, with its pessimistic scepticism; then neo-Platonic philosophy inspired him with genuine enthusiasm. At Milan he had scarcely read certain works of Plato and, more especially, of Plotinus, before the hope of finding the truth dawned upon him.** Once more he began to dream that he and his friends might lead a life dedicated to the search for it, a life purged of all vulgar aspirations after honours, wealth, or pleasure, and with celibacy for its rule (Confessions, VI). But it was only a dream; his passions still enslaved him." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Life of St. Augustine of Hippo - Augustine gradually became acquainted with Christian doctrine, and in his mind the fusion of Platonic philosophy with revealed dogmas was taking place." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Life of St. Augustine of Hippo - It is now easy to appreciate at its true value the influence of neo-Platonism upon the mind of the great African Doctor. It would be impossible for anyone who has read the works of St. Augustine to deny the existence of this influence. However, it would be a great exaggeration of this influence to pretend that it at any time sacrificed the Gospel to Plato. **The same learned critic thus wisely concludes his study: "So long, therefore, as his philosophy agrees with his religious doctrines, St. Augustine is frankly neo-Platonist;** as soon as a contradiction arises, he never hesitates to subordinate his philosophy to religion, reason to faith. He was, first of all, a Christian; the philosophical questions that occupied his mind constantly found themselves more and more relegated to the background" (op. cit., 155). But **the method was a dangerous one; in thus seeking harmony between the two doctrines he thought too easily to find Christianity in Plato, or Platonism in the Gospel. More than once, in his "Retractations" and elsewhere, he acknowledges that he has not always shunned this danger. Thus he had imagined that in Platonism he discovered the entire doctrine of the Word and the whole prologue of St. John.** He likewise disavowed a good number of neo-Platonic theories which had at first misled him - the cosmological thesis of the

universal soul, which makes the world one immense animal - the Platonic doubts upon that grave question: Is there a single soul for all or a distinct soul for each? But on the other hand, **he had always reproached the Platonists**, as Schaff very properly remarks (Saint Augustine, New York, 1886, p. 51), **with being ignorant of, or rejecting, the fundamental points of Christianity: "first, the great mystery, the Word made flesh; and then love, resting on the basis of humility."** They also ignore grace, he says, giving sublime precepts of morality without any help towards realizing them." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Works of St. Augustine of Hippo - Philosophy These writings, for the most part composed in the villa of Cassisiacum, **from his conversion to his baptism (388-387), continue the autobiography of the saint by initiating us into the researches and Platonic hesitations of his mind.** There is less freedom in them than in the Confessions. They are literary essays, writings whose simplicity is the acme of art and elegance. Nowhere is the style of Augustine so chastened, nowhere is his language so pure. **Their dialogue form shows that they were inspired by Plato and Cicero.** The chief ones are: Contra Academicos (the most important of all); De Beatâ Vitâ; De Ordine; the two books of Soliloquies, which must be distinguished from the "Soliloquies" and "Meditations" which are certainly not authentic; De Immortalitate animæ; De Magistro (a dialogue between Augustine and his son Adeodatus); and six curious books (the sixth especially) on Music." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo - (2) Nature and different aspects of his doctrinal influence This influence is so varied and so complex that it is difficult to consider under all its different aspects. First of all, in his writings the great bishop collects and condenses the intellectual treasures of the old world and transmits them to the new. Harnack goes so far as to say: "It would seem that the miserable existence of the Roman empire in the West was prolonged until then, only to permit Augustine's influence to be exercised on universal history." It was in order to fulfil this enormous task that Providence brought him into contact with the three worlds whose thought he was to transmit: with the Roman and Latin world in the midst of which he lived, with the Oriental world **partially revealed to him through the study of Manichæism, and with the Greek world shown to him by the Platonists.** In philosophy he was initiated into the whole content and all the subtleties of the various schools, without, however, giving his allegiance to any one of them. In theology it was he who acquainted the Latin Church with the great dogmatic work accomplished in the East during the fourth century and at the beginning of the fifth; he popularized the results of it by giving them the more exact and precise form of the Latin genius." - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo - Augustine stands forth, too, as the great inspirer of religious thought in subsequent ages. A whole volume would not be sufficient to contain the full account of his influence on posterity; here we shall merely call attention to its principal manifestations. **It is, in the first place, a fact of paramount importance that, with St. Augustine, the centre of dogmatic and theological development changed from East to West.** Hence, from this view-point again, **he makes an epoch in the history of dogma.** The critics maintain that up to his time the most powerful influence was exerted by the Greek Church, the East having been the classic land of theology, the great workshop for the elaboration of dogma. **From the time of Augustine, the predominating influence seems to emanate from the West,** and the practical, realistic spirit of the Latin race supplants the speculative and idealistic spirit of Greece and the East. Another fact, no less salient, is that it was the Doctor of Hippo who, in the bosom of the Church, **inspired the two seemingly antagonistic movements, Scholasticism and Mysticism.** From Gregory the Great to the Fathers of Trent, **Augustine's theological authority, indisputably the highest, dominates all thinkers and is appealed to** alike by the Scholastics Anselm, Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas, and by Bernard, Hugh of St. Victor, and Tauler, **exponents of Mysticism, all of whom were nourished upon his writings and penetrated with his spirit."** - the Catholic Encyclopedia

"Teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo - Augustine seeks the living truth, and even when he is combating certain Platonic ideas he is of the family of Plato, not of Aristotle. He belongs indisputably to all ages because he is in touch with all souls, but he is preeminently modern because his doctrine is not the cold light of the School; he is living and penetrated with personal sentiment. **Religion is not a simple theory, Christianity is not a series of dogmas; It is also a life, as they say nowadays, or, more accurately, a source of life.** However, let us not be deceived. **Augustine is not a sentimentalist, a pure mystic,** and heart alone does not account for his power. If in him the hard, cold intellectuality of the metaphysician gives place to an impassioned vision of truth, that truth is the basis of it all. **He never knew the vaporous mysticism of our day,** that allows itself to be lulled by a vague, aimless sentimentalism. His emotion is deep, true, engrossing, precisely because it is born of a strong, secure, accurate dogmatism that wishes to know what it loves and why it loves. Christianity is life, but life in **the eternal, unchangeable truth."** - the Catholic Encyclopedia

Like Origen and Ambrose before him, Augustine not only blended Christianity and Neoplatonic paganism, but he also set the bar for mystical and allegorical interpretation of the scriptures, firmly removing the Church from the grammatical-historical method employed by the Apostles and their disciples through the first two centuries of Church history.

"Works of St. Augustine of Hippo - The most remarkable of his Biblical works illustrate either a theory of exegesis (one generally approved) **which delights in finding mystical or allegorical interpretations,** or the style of preaching which is founded on that view. His strictly exegetical work is far from equalling in scientific value that of St. Jerome. **His knowledge of the Biblical languages was insufficient: he read Greek with difficulty;** as for Hebrew, all that we can gather from the studies of Schanz and Rottmanner is that he was familiar with Punic, a language allied to

Hebrew. Moreover, **the two grand qualities of his genius -- ardent feeling and prodigious subtlety -- carried him sway into interpretations that were violent or more ingenious than solid.**" - the Catholic Encyclopedia

It is Augustine's allegorical approach to the interpretation of scripture that is in no small part responsible for the deviation of Roman Catholic teachings from those expressed in the New Testament and in the orthodox Church writings of the first three centuries. Chief among these is Roman Catholic eschatology, which embodies the Amillennialist position. Whereas the early Church understood that Jesus would return to physically rule the earth from Jerusalem for 1,000 years, the 4th century Romanization of the Church discarded this Apostolic Tradition and instead spiritualizes the meaning of the scripture to arrive at the idea that Jesus rules from heaven through the Roman bishop on earth for some ambiguous or long period of time.

(For more on the subject of the eschatology of the early Church and Amillennialism please visit "answersinrevelation.org" or the Chiliasm/Progressive Dispensation articles in the Doctrinal Studies section of the PFRS website.

In conclusion, our examination of Origen, Ambrose, and Augustine has provided further evidence that Roman Catholic deviations from the Apostolic Traditions of early Christianity is not limited to mere organizational departures and Roman imperial paganism, but also includes Neoplatonic thought and a turning toward allegorical and mystical methods for interpreting the scripture. Additional evidence for this conclusion comes by way of Eusebius of Caesarea.

PART ELEVEN:

Eusebius's Gnostic Influence on Roman Catholic Theology

Eusebius of Caesarea, who lived in the early 4th century, is recognized as one of the more influential writers of the Christianity.

"Eusebius Of Caesarea - flourished 4th century, Caesarea Palestinae, Palestine also called Eusebius Pamphili bishop, exegete, polemicist, and historian whose account of the first centuries of Christianity, in his Ecclesiastical History, is a landmark in Christian historiography." - Britannica.com

"Eusebius Of Caesarea - The work of the scholars of the Christian school at Caesarea extended into all fields of Christian writing. Eusebius himself wrote voluminously as apologist, chronographer, historian, exegete..." - Britannica.com

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - Eusebius Pamphili, Bishop of Cæsarea in Palestine, the 'Father of Church History.'" - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - (5) The Church History. It would be difficult to overestimate the obligation which posterity is under to Eusebius for this monumental work. Living during the period of transition, when the old order was changing and all connected with it was passing into oblivion, he came forward at the critical moment with his immense stores of learning and preserved priceless treasures of Christian antiquity. This is the great merit of the Church History." - Catholic Encyclopedia

Similarly, as we discussed somewhat earlier, Eusebius must be credited with the formation of the 4th century (or Roman Catholic) understanding of the papacy, the Church, and the relationship of the Church and the State.

"Christianity - Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-c. 340) was the court theologian of Emperor Constantine the Great, who formed the Orthodox understanding of the mutual relationship of church and state. He saw the empire and the imperial church as sharing a close bond with one another; in the centre of the Christian empire stood the figure of the Christian emperor rather than that of the spiritual head of the church." - Britannica.com

"Christianity - Eusebius made this idea the basis of his political theology, in which the Christian emperor appears as God's representative on Earth in whom God himself 'lets shine forth the image of his absolute power.'" - Britannica.com

"Christianity - This religious interpretation of the Christian emperor reinterpreted in the Christian sense the ancient Roman institution of the god-emperor. Some of Eusebius' remarks echo the cult of the Unconquered Sun, the Sol Invictus, who was represented by the emperor according to pagan understanding. The emperor-in this respect he also resembled the pagan god-emperor who played the role of the pontifex maximus (high priest) in the state cult-took the central position within the church as well... The Christian emperor entered not only the political but also the sacred succession of the Roman god-emperor. Next to such a figure, an independent leadership of the church could hardly develop." - Britannica.com

Other than his historical works, Eusebius dedicated himself to copying books including the scripture and the writings of Origen, of whom he was quite fond (**just like Ambrose and Augustine**). He even co-authored an apology of Origen's theology with his mentor, Pamphilus.

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - Too humble to write anything himself, he spent his time in preparing accurate copies of the Scriptures and other books, especially those of Origen...It must be remembered that Origen's own copy of the Hexapla was in the library of Pamphilus. It had probably been deposited there by Origen himself." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - Towards the end of 307 **Pamphilus** was arrested, horribly tortured, and consigned to prison. Besides continuing his work of editing the Septuagint, **he wrote, in collaboration with Eusebius, a Defence of Origen** which was sent to the confessors in the mines - a wonderful gift from a man whose sides had been curried with iron combs, to men with their right eyes burned out and the sinews of their left legs cauterized." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - (34) **The Apology for Origen**. This work has already been mentioned in connection with Pamphilus. It consisted of six books, the last of which was added by Eusebius. Only the first book is extant, in a translation by Rufinus." - Catholic Encyclopedia

In 313 A.D., Eusebius was made bishop of Caesarea. Shortly, thereafter, the Arian controversy erupted onto the scene of Church history. Arius, the founder of the heresy, found sanctuary, sympathy, and support in Caesarea from Eusebius, after being excommunicated from Alexandria.

"Eusebius Of Caesarea - **Eusebius became bishop of Caesarea (in Palestine) about 313. When about 318 the theological views of Arius, a priest of Alexandria, became the subject of controversy because he taught the subordination of the Son to the Father, Eusebius was soon involved. Expelled from Alexandria for heresy, Arius sought and found sympathy at Caesarea, and, in fact, he proclaimed Eusebius as a leading supporter.**" - Britannica.com

"Eusebius of Caesarea - or Eusebius Pamphili, c.263-339?, Greek apologist and church historian, b. Palestine. **He was bishop of Caesarea, Palestine (314?-339). In the controversy over Arianism, Eusebius favored the semi-Arian views of Eusebius of Nicomedia, and he once gave refuge to Arius.**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - **The Arians soon found that for all practical purposes Eusebius was on their side.** He wrote to Alexander charging him with misrepresenting the teaching of the Arians and so giving them cause "to attack and misrepresent whatever they please" (see below). **A portion of this letter has been preserved in the Acts of the second Council of Nicæa, where it was cited to prove that Eusebius was a heretic. He also took part in a synod of Syrian bishops who decided that Arius should be restored to his former position...**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - **A portion of this letter was read at the Second Council of Nicæa, and against it were set portions from the letters to Alexander and Euphrasion to prove that Eusebius 'was delivered up to a reprobate sense, and of one mind and opinion with those who followed the Arian superstition'** (Labbe, "Conc.", VIII, 1143-1147; Mansi, "Conc.", XIII, 313-317)." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - **At the request of Arius, Eusebius of Cæsarea** and others met together in Palestine, and **authorized him to return to the Church which he had governed in Alexandria.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

Arius' acceptance in Caesarea is not at all surprising given Eusebius' (of Caesarea) affinity for Origen, who, like Arius, had been excommunicated from Alexandria for heresy and was promptly given asylum in Caesarea.

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - **Arius, like Origen before him, found an asylum at Cæsarea.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

Eusebius' close relationship with emperor Constantine is also generally acknowledged.

"Christianity - **Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-c. 340) was the court theologian of Emperor Constantine the Great...**" - Britannica.com

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - Concerning Eusebius's parentage we know absolutely nothing; but the fact that **he escaped with a short term of imprisonment** during the terrible Diocletian persecution, when **his master Pamphilus and others of his companions suffered martyrdom**, suggests that **he belonged to a family of some influence and importance. His relations, later on, with the Emperor Constantine point to the same conclusion.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - **At the opening of the Council of Nicæa Eusebius occupied the first seat on the right of the emperor, and delivered the inaugural address which was 'couched in a strain of thanksgiving to Almighty God on his, the emperor's behalf'** (Vit. Const., III, 11; Soz., H. E., I, 19). **He evidently enjoyed great prestige...**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

In fact, it is Eusebius of Caesarea, who wrote the biography of Constantine's life.

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - (6) **The Life of Constantine, in four books.** This work has been most unjustly blamed, from the time of Socrates downwards, because it is a panegyric rather than a history. If ever there was a man under an obligation to respect the maxim, De mortuis nil nisi bonum, this man was **Eusebius, writing the Life of Constantine within three years after his death (337). This Life is especially valuable because of the account it gives of the Council of Nicæa and the earlier phases of the Arian controversy. It is well to remember that one of our chief**

sources of information for the history of that council is a book written to magnify Constantine." - Catholic Encyclopedia

After being accused of heresy himself and excommunicated for it, Eusebius was reinstated under emperor Constantine's approval at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.

"Eusebius Of Caesarea - Eusebius did not fully support either Arius or Alexander, bishop of Alexandria from 313 to 328, whose views appeared to tend toward Sabellianism (a heresy that taught that God was manifested in progressive modes). Eusebius wrote to Alexander, claiming that Arius had been misrepresented, and he also urged Arius to return to communion with his bishop. But events were moving fast, and at a strongly anti-Arian synod at Antioch, **about January 325, Eusebius and two of his allies, Theodotus of Laodicea and Narcissus of Neronias in Cilicia, were provisionally excommunicated for Arian views. When the Council of Nicaea, called by the Roman emperor Constantine I, met later in the year, Eusebius had to explain himself and was exonerated with the explicit approval of the emperor.**" - Britannica.com

The Council of Nicaea had been called by Constantine in the interest of maintaining unity in the Church and the empire. Exactly which (the Church or the empire) was his priority is debated by historians. The council was specifically called to address the spread of Arianism. (We will take a look at Constantine's contributions to Roman Catholic syncretism a little later on.)

"Nicaea, Council of - (325), the first ecumenical council of the Christian church, meeting in ancient Nicaea (now Iznik, Tur.). **It was called by the emperor Constantine I, an unbaptized catechumen, or neophyte, who presided over the opening session and took part in the discussions. He hoped a general council of the church would solve the problem created in the Eastern church by Arianism, a heresy first proposed by Arius of Alexandria that affirmed that Christ is not divine but a created being.**" - Britannica.com

At the council the views of Arius and the Arian party were represented by Eusebius of Caesarea.

"Arianism - A creed was drawn up on behalf of the Arian party by Eusebius of Caesarea in which every term of honour and dignity, except the oneness of substance, was attributed to Our Lord." - Catholic Encyclopedia

To be sure, the Creed put forth by Council of Nicaea in response to the issue of the nature of Christ was by all means concretely orthodox. Arius, the founder of Arianism, was condemned and sent into exile by Constantine.

"Nicaea, Council of - The council condemned Arius and, with reluctance on the part of some, incorporated the nonscriptural word homoousios ("of one substance") into a creed (the Nicene Creed) to signify the absolute equality of the Son with the Father. **The emperor then exiled Arius, an act that, while manifesting a solidarity of church and state, underscored the importance of secular patronage in ecclesiastical affairs.**" - Britannica.com

"Arius - The Council of Nicaea, in May 325, declared Arius a heretic after he refused to sign the formula of faith stating that Christ was of the same divine nature as God." - Britannica.com

"Arius - c.256-336, Libyan theologian, **founder of the Arian heresy.** A parish priest in Alexandria, **he advanced the doctrine famous as Arianism** and was excommunicated locally (321). **He was declared orthodox in Asia Minor, where he had fled (323), but he was anathematized by the Council of Nicaea (see Nicaea, First Council of) and banished by Roman Emperor Constantine (325).**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Arius - He must have been of great age when, after fruitless negotiations and a visit to Egypt, **he appeared in 325 at Nicaea, where the confession of faith which he presented was torn in pieces. With his writings and followers he underwent the anathemas subscribed by more than 300 bishops. He was banished into Illyricum.** Two prelates shared his fate, Theonas of Marmarica and Secundus of Ptolemais. **His books were burnt.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

Eusebius of Caesarea reluctantly signed the Nicene Creed, but made not attempt to cover his disagreement with it.

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - After some delay Eusebius subscribed to the uncompromising creed drawn up by the council, making no secret, in the letter which he wrote to his own Church, of the non-natural sense in which he accepted it." - Catholic Encyclopedia

Of greater interest than the events of the council itself, however, are the developments that occurred in the aftermath of the council. These events paint an altogether questionable picture of Eusebius of Caesarea as an advocate of heresy and an opponent of orthodoxy. In the decade that followed the Council of Nicaea, Constantine eagerly set about a campaign to unify the Church at the expense of orthodox doctrine.

"Eusebius Of Caesarea - In the years following the Council of Nicaea, the emperor was bent on achieving unity within the church, and so the supporters of the Nicene Creed in its extreme form soon found themselves forced into the position of dissidents." - Britannica.com

Those persons who were chiefly responsible for the orthodox creed and the denunciation of Arius were relentlessly

pursued by the heretic's closest allies. One of those who adamantly opposed Arius and his teaching was a man named Athanasius, who led the Council of Nicaea in its acceptance of the orthodox view of Jesus Christ and condemnation of Arianism.

"Athanasius, Saint - born c. 293, Alexandria died May 2, 373, Alexandria; feast day May 2, theologian, ecclesiastical statesman, and Egyptian national leader; he was the chief defender of Christian orthodoxy in the 4th-century battle against Arianism, the heresy that the Son of God was a creature of like, but not of the same, substance as God the Father. His important works include The Life of St. Antony and Four Orations Against the Arians." - Britannica.com

"Nicaea, First Council of - 325, 1st ecumenical council, convened by Roman Emperor Constantine the Great to solve the problems raised by Arianism. It has been said that 318 persons attended, but a more likely number is 225, including every Eastern bishop of importance, four Western bishops (among them Hosius of Córdoba, president of the council), and two papal legates. The chief figures at the council were Arius and his opponent, Athanasius." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Athanasius, Saint - c.297-373, patriarch of Alexandria (328-73), Doctor of the Church, great champion of orthodoxy during the Arian crisis of the 4th cent. (see Arianism). In his youth, as secretary to Bishop Alexander, he took part in the christological debate against Arius at the Council of Nicaea (see Nicaea, First Council of), and thereafter became chief protagonist for Nicene orthodoxy in the long struggle for its acceptance in the East. He defended the homoousion formula that states that Jesus is of the same substance as the Father, against the various Arian parties who held that Jesus was not identical in substance with the Father." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

Eusebius of Caesarea, who had formerly represented the heretic Arius at the Council of Nicaea, and sheltered him in his own bishopric, was actively involved in the removal of Athanasius from his bishopric in Alexandria.

"Eusebius Of Caesarea - Eusebius took part in the expulsion of Athanasius of Alexandria (335), Marcellus of Ancyra (c. 336), and Eustathius of Antioch (c. 337). Eusebius remained in the emperor's favour, and, after Constantine's death in 337, he wrote his Life of Constantine, a panegyric that possesses some historical value, chiefly because of its use of primary sources." - Britannica.com

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - In 334 and 335 he took part in the campaign against St. Athanasius at the synods held in Cæsarea and Tyre respectively." - Catholic Encyclopedia

The result of the Arian persecution of Athanasius, in which Eusebius took part, was Constantine's eventual exile of the bishop of Alexandria (Athanasius) to Gaul without a formal trial.

"Athanasius, Saint - Soon began the struggle with imperialist and Arian churchmen that occupied much of his life...When both parties met the emperor Constantine at Constantinople in 336, Athanasius was accused of threatening to interfere with the grain supply from Egypt, and without any formal trial Constantine exiled him to the Rhineland." - Britannica.com.

"Eusebius Of Nicomedia - His unrelenting harassment of the leaders of the Homoousians helped lead Constantine to depose and exile Bishop St. Athanasius the Great of Alexandria at a synod in Tyre in 335 and to reinstate Arius at a synod in Jerusalem in 335." - Britannica.com

"Constantine I, Roman emperor - He seems to have favored compromise with Arianism, and in 335, in defiance of the Council of Tyre, he exiled St. Athanasius." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - They carefully avoided renewing the accusations of murder and sacrilege, which Constantine had already examined; and Athanasius tells us that five Egyptian bishops reported to him that they rested their case on a new charge, that he had threatened to delay the corn ships from Alexandria which supplied Constantinople. The emperor was enraged. No opportunity of defense was given, and Athanasius was banished to Gaul." - Catholic Encyclopedia

(NOTE: Eusebius of Nicomedia is not to be confused with Eusebius of Caesarea. They are two different Arian supporters. We will take a look at Eusebius of Nicomedia a little later on in our study.)

In the mean time, Constantine commuted Arius's exile and reinstated him back into the Church due to influence from his former allies, including Eusebius of Caesarea and Constantine's daughter, Constantia.

"Arius - Influential support from colleagues in Asia Minor and from Constantia, the emperor Constantine I's daughter, succeeded in effecting Arius' return from exile and his readmission into the church after consenting to a compromise formula. Shortly before he was to be reconciled, however, Arius collapsed and died while walking through the streets of Constantinople." - Britannica.com

"Arius - He was declared orthodox in Asia Minor, where he had fled (323), but he was anathematized by the Council of

Nicaea (see Nicaea, First Council of) and banished by Roman Emperor Constantine (325). But **in the reaction after Nicaea, he came into imperial favor. The emperor had ordered the Athanasians at Alexandria to receive him at communion when he suddenly died.**" - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Eusebius of Cæsarea - From Tyre the assembly of bishops were summoned to Jerusalem by Constantine, to assist at the dedication of the basilica he had erected on the site of Calvary. After the dedication they restored Arius and his followers to communion. From Jerusalem they were summoned to Constantinople (336), where Marcellus was condemned." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Arius - The Arians, joined by their old Meletian friends, created troubles in Alexandria. Eusebius persuaded Constantine to recall the exile by indulgent letters in 328; and the emperor not only permitted his return to Alexandria in 331, but ordered Athanasius to reconcile him with the Church. On the saint's refusal more disturbance ensued. The packed and partisan Synod of Tyre **deposed Athanasius on a series of futile charges** in 335. Catholics were now persecuted; **Arius had an interview with Constantine and submitted a creed which the emperor judged to be orthodox. By imperial rescript Arius required Alexander of Constantinople to give him Communion.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Arianism - Her dying words affected him, and he recalled the Lybian, extracted from him a solemn adhesion to the Nicene faith, and ordered Alexander, Bishop of the Imperial City, to give him Communion in his own church (336). Arius openly triumphed..." - Catholic Encyclopedia

So, though the Council of Nicaea initially upheld orthodoxy and exiled the heretic, the final result was the expulsion of the orthodox bishop who championed the Nicene Creed, the systematic effort to undermine the Council's ruling, and the reinstatement of the heretic, Arius. And who was involved in this effort? Well, among others, emperor Constantine and Eusebius of Caesarea.

In order to fully understand Eusebius of Caesarea it is necessary to take a closer look at the men with whom he was closely associated with and on whose behalf he acted as well as the beliefs of these men, which he both represented and shared.

The first of these men is Arius himself.

The two most important facts about Arius' theology are its incorporation of the Gnostic view of Jesus Christ as a subordinate and created being not to be identified with divinity and the Gnostic fusion of Neoplatonic mysticism with Christianity. In this second aspect, Arius is really no different than Origen or Ambrose and Augustine who, like Arius, shared great affection for Origen and Neoplatonic paganism.

"Arianism - a Christian heresy first proposed early in the 4th century by the Alexandrian presbyter Arius. It affirmed that Christ is not truly divine but a created being. Arius' basic premise was the uniqueness of God, who is alone self-existent and immutable; **the Son, who is not self-existent, cannot be God.** Because the Godhead is unique, it cannot be shared or communicated, so **the Son cannot be God.** Because the Godhead is immutable, **the Son, who is mutable, being represented in the Gospels as subject to growth and change, cannot be God. The Son must, therefore, be deemed a creature** who has been called into existence out of nothing and has **had a beginning.** Moreover, **the Son can have no direct knowledge of the Father since the Son is finite and of a different order of existence.**" - Britannica.com

"Arianism - Christian heresy founded by Arius in the 4th cent. It was one of the most widespread and divisive heresies in the history of Christianity. As a priest in Alexandria, Arius taught (c.318) that God created, before all things, a Son who was the first creature, but who was neither equal to nor coeternal with the Father. According to Arius, Jesus was a supernatural creature not quite human and not quite divine. In these ideas Arius followed the school of Lucian of Antioch." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Arius - An ascetical, moral leader of a Christian community in the area of Alexandria, Arius attracted a large following through a message integrating Neoplatonism..." - Britannica.com

"Arianism - In the New Testament and in Church teaching Jesus of Nazareth appears as the Son of God. This name He took to Himself (Matthew 11:27; John 10:36), while the Fourth Gospel declares Him to be the Word (Logos), Who in the beginning was with God and was God, by Whom all things were made. A similar doctrine is laid down by St. Paul, in his undoubtedly genuine Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians. It is reiterated in the Letters of Ignatius, and accounts for Pliny's observation that Christians in their assemblies chanted a hymn to Christ as God. **But the question how the Son was related to the Father (Himself acknowledged on all hands to be the one Supreme Deity), gave rise, between the years A.D. 60 and 200, to a number of Theosophic systems, called generally Gnosticism,** and having for their authors Basilides, Valentinus, Tatian, and other Greek speculators. Though all of these visited Rome, they had no following in the West, which remained free from controversies of an abstract nature, and was faithful to the creed of its baptism. **Intellectual centres were chiefly Alexandria and Antioch, Egyptian or Syrian,** and speculation was carried on in Greek. The Roman Church held steadfastly by tradition. **Under**

these circumstances, when Gnostic schools had passed away with their "conjugations" of Divine powers, and "emanations" from the Supreme unknowable God (the "Deep" and the "Silence") all speculation was thrown into the form of an inquiry touching the "likeness" of the Son to His Father and "sameness" of His Essence." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Arianism - That disputes should spring up even among the orthodox who all held one faith, was inevitable. And of these wranglings the rationalist would take advantage in order to substitute for the ancient creed his own inventions. The drift of all he advanced was this: to deny that in any true sense God could have a Son; as Mohammed tersely said afterwards, "God neither begets, nor is He begotten" (Koran, 112). We have learned to call that denial Unitarianism. **It was the ultimate scope of Arian opposition to what Christians had always believed. But the Arian, though he did not come straight down from the Gnostic, pursued a line of argument and taught a view which the speculations of the Gnostic had made familiar. He described the Son as a second, or inferior God, standing midway between the First Cause and creatures; as Himself made out of nothing, yet as making all things else; as existing before the worlds of the ages; and as arrayed in all divine perfections except the one which was their stay and foundation. God alone was without beginning, unoriginate; the Son was originated, and once had not existed. For all that has origin must begin to be.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

So, we see that history records Eusebius of Caesarea as a man who sheltered the Neoplatonic, pagan heretic Arius, who represented Arian heresy at the Council of Nicaea, and who afterwards worked tirelessly against those who had opposed Arius and his heresy at the Council.

PART TWELVE:

The second individual who plays an important part in understanding Eusebius of Caesarea is emperor Constantine. Throughout his life, Constantine did not abolish paganism in the empire as we would expect a genuine Christian convert to do. Nor did he personally abandon the pagan customs that were the heritage of the Roman emperors.

"Constantine I, Roman emperor - Constantine was now sole ruler of the empire, and in a reign of peace he set about rebuilding the strength of old Rome. **Constantine continued to tolerate paganism and even to encourage the imperial cult.** At the same time, however, he endeavored to unify and strengthen Christianity." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

Instead of rejecting paganism, Constantine's actions were spent attempting to fuse his devotion to Mithra (or Sol Invictus) with Jesus Christ and Christianity into a single, unifying Roman religion. His efforts aided in the establishment of December 25, the pagan feast of the birth of the Unconquered Sun, as the birthday of Christ.

"Church Year - The establishment of Christianity as a state religion, **following the conversion of the emperor Constantine (AD 312), brought new developments...A new focus of celebration, to commemorate the birthday of Christ, the world Redeemer, was instituted at ancient winter solstices (December 25 and January 6) to rival the pagan feasts in honour of the birth of a new age brought by the Unconquered Sun.**" - Britannica.com

And no wonder that after Constantine's alleged conversion pagan feast days such as the birth of the Sun god at the Winter Solstice would be "Christianized," given Constantine's authority as pontifex maximus to control both religious ceremonies as well as the calendar year.

"pontifex maximus - highest priest of Roman religion and official head of the college of pontifices. As the chief administrator of religious affairs he regulated the conduct of religious ceremonies, consecrated temples and other holy places, and controlled the calendar. During the time of the empire, and until Christianity became firmly established, the emperor was designated pontifex maximus. After the supremacy of Christianity, the popes assumed the title." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Mystery Religion - The emperor Aurelian (270-275) elevated Sol to the highest rank among the gods. Sanctuaries of Sol and the gods of other planets (septizonium) were constructed. Even **the emperor Constantine the Great, some 50 years later, wavered between Sol and Christ. For some time his religious policy was devised so as to allow the coexistence of both religions.** Finally, Christianity was accepted as the official religion." - Britannica.com

"Constantine the Great - When such conditions prevailed it is easy to understand that many of the emperors yielded to the delusion that they could unite all their subjects in the adoration of the one sun-god who combined in himself the Father-God of the Christians and the much-worshipped Mithras; thus the empire could be founded anew on unity of religion. Even Constantine, as will be shown farther on, for a time cherished this mistaken belief. It looks almost as though the last persecutions of the Christians were directed more against all irreconcilables and extremists than against the great body of Christians." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Constantine the Great - But it was especially in the western part of the empire that the veneration of Mithras predominated. Would it not be possible to gather all the different nationalities around his altars? Could not Sol Deus Invictus, to whom even Constantine dedicated his coins for a long time, or Sol Mithras Deus Invictus, venerated by Diocletian and Galerius, become the supreme god of the empire? **Constantine may have pondered over**

this. Nor had he absolutely rejected the thought even after a miraculous event had strongly influenced him in favour of the God of the Christians." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Constantine the Great - For a time it seemed as if merely tolerance and equality were to prevail. Constantine showed equal favour to both religions. As pontifex maximus he watched over the heathen worship and protected its rights. The one thing he did was to suppress divination and magic; this the heathen emperors had also at times sought to do. Thus, in 320, the emperor forbade the diviners or haruspices to enter a private house under pain of death. Whoever by entreaty or promise of payment persuaded a haruspex to break this law, that man's property should be confiscated and he himself should be burned to death. Informers were to be rewarded. Whoever desired to practise heathen usages must do so openly. **He must go to the public altars and sacred places, and there observe traditional forms of worship. 'We do not forbid', said the emperor, 'the observance of the old usages in the light of day.'** And in an ordinance of the same year, intended for the Roman city prefects, Constantine directed that if lightning struck an imperial palace, or a public building, the haruspices were to seek out according to ancient custom what the sign might signify, and their interpretation was to be written down and reported to the emperor. **It was also permitted to private individuals to make use of this old custom,** but in following this observance they must abstain from the forbidden sacrificia domestica. A general prohibition of the family sacrifice cannot be deduced from this, although in 341 Constantine's son Constantius refers to such an interdict by his father (Cod. Theod., XVI, x, 2). A prohibition of this kind would have had the most severe and far-reaching results, for most sacrifices were private ones. And how could it have been carried **out while public sacrifices were still customary? In the dedication of Constantinople in 330 a ceremonial half pagan, half Christian was used. The chariot of the sun-god was set in the market-place, and over its head was placed the Cross of Christ,** while the Kyrie Eleison was sung. **Shortly before his death Constantine confirmed the privileges of the priests of the ancient gods. Many other actions of his have also the appearance of half-measures, as if he himself had wavered and had always held in reality to some form of syncretistic religion.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Constantine the Great - The emperor went at least one step further when he withdrew his statue from the pagan temples, forbade the repair of temples that had fallen into decay, and suppressed offensive forms of worship. But these measures did not go beyond the syncretistic tendency which Constantine had shown for a long time." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Constantine the Great - As early as 313 the Church obtained immunity for its ecclesiastics, including freedom from taxation and compulsory service, and from obligatory state offices--such for example as the curial dignity, which was a heavy burden. The Church further obtained the right to inherit property, and Constantine moreover placed Sunday under the protection of the State. It is true that the believers in Mithras also observed Sunday as well as Christmas. Consequently **Constantine speaks not of the day of the Lord, but of the everlasting day of the sun.** According to Eusebius, the heathen also were obliged on this day to go out into the open country and together raise their hands and repeat the prayer already mentioned, a prayer without any marked Christian character (Vita Const., IV, xx)." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Constantine the Great - On the other hand, the imperial power was increased by receiving a religious consecration. The Church tolerated the cult of the emperor under many forms. It was permitted to speak of the divinity of the emperor, of the sacred palace, the sacred chamber and of the altar of the emperor, without being considered on this account an idolater. From this point of view Constantine's religious change was relatively trifling; it consisted of little more **than the renunciation of a formality. For what his predecessors had aimed to attain by the use of all their authority and at the cost of incessant bloodshed, was in truth only the recognition of their own divinity; Constantine gained this end, though he renounced the offering of sacrifices to himself.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Constantine I, Roman emperor - Constantine was now sole ruler of the empire, and in a reign of peace he set about rebuilding the strength of old Rome. Constantine continued to tolerate paganism and even to encourage the imperial cult. At the same time, however, he endeavored to unify and strengthen Christianity." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Constantine I - Some of the ambiguities in Constantine's public policies were therefore exacted by the respect due to established practice and by the difficulties of expressing, as well as of making, total changes suddenly. The suppression of paganism, by law and by the sporadic destruction of pagan shrines, is balanced by particular acts of deference. A town in Asia Minor mentioned the unanimous Christianity of its inhabitants in support of a petition to the Emperor; while, **on the other hand, one in Italy was allowed to hold a local festival incorporating gladiatorial games and to found a shrine of the imperial dynasty...**" - Britannica.com

"The church and its history - Constantine brought the church out of its withdrawal from the world to accept social responsibility and helped pagan society to be won for the church. On both sides, the alliance of the church and emperor evoked opposition, which among the Christians emerged in the monks' retirement to the desert." - Britannica.com

Constantine's duplicitous fusion of Mithra and Jesus Christ is also evident in his making Sunday, a protected day in the Roman Empire.

"Constantine the Great - The Church further obtained the right to inherit property, and Constantine moreover placed Sunday under the protection of the State. It is true that the believers in Mithras also observed Sunday as well as Christmas. Consequently Constantine speaks not of the day of the Lord, but of the everlasting day of the sun." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"The church and its history - Despite massive legislation (some attempting to express Christian ideals-e.g., making Sunday a rest day), he failed to check the drastic inflation that began about 250 and that soon created deep unrest and weakened the empire before the barbarian invasions of the 5th century." - Britannica.com

Constantine's religious devotion is, at best, a mixed bag, a man whose ambitions as emperor left him deeply divided between his pagan heritage and Christianity. Perhaps more reasonably, however, history records Constantine as a man who veiled his pagan devotion and compromised with Christianity in order to bring about a syncretistic and political unity between the ardently pagan Roman Empire and the stubbornly anti-pagan Christian Church.

The Catholic Encyclopedia argues that Constantine's syncretism diminished gradually over time.

"Constantine the Great - Thus his life became more and more Christian, and thus gradually turned away from the feeble syncretism which at times he seemed to favour. The God of the Christians was indeed a jealous God who tolerated no other gods beside him. The Church could never acknowledge that she stood on the same plane with other religious bodies, she conquered for herself one domain after another." - Catholic Encyclopedia

However, such a conclusion is dubious in light of the historical record. Near the end of his life, Constantine was less orthodox than ever. He decisively supported Arian and was not baptized until just before he died. His baptism was conducted in Nicomedia by another man, Eusebius of Nicomedia, who was also known Arian heretic.

"Constantine the Great - As a catechumen he was not permitted to assist at the sacred Eucharistic mysteries. He remained a catechumen to the end of his life, but not because he lacked conviction nor because, owing to his passionate disposition, he desired to lead a pagan life." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Constantine the Great - When at last he felt the approach of death he received baptism, declaring to the bishops who had assembled around him that, after the example of Christ, he had desired to receive the saving seal in the Jordan, but that God had ordained otherwise, and he would no longer delay baptism. Laying aside the purple, the emperor, in the white robe of a neophyte, peacefully and almost joyfully awaited the end." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Constantine I - Constantine had hoped to be baptized in the Jordan River, but perhaps because of the lack of opportunity to do so-together possibly with the reflection that his office necessarily involved responsibility for actions hardly compatible with the baptized state-he delayed the ceremony until the end of his life. It was while preparing for a campaign against Persia that he fell ill at Helenopolis. When treatment failed, he made to return to Constantinople but was forced to take to his bed near Nicomedia. **There, Constantine received baptism, putting off the imperial purple for the white robes of a neophyte; and he died in 337.** He was buried at Constantinople in his Church of the Apostles, whose memorials, six on each side, flanked his tomb. Yet this was less an expression of religious megalomania than of **Constantine's literal conviction that he was the successor of the evangelists, having devoted his life and office to the spreading of Christianity.**" - Britannica.com

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - Until 337 the Eusebians were busy obtaining, by calumny, the deposition of the bishops who supported the Nicene faith. Of these the best known are Paul of Constantinople, Aselepas of Gaza, and Marcellus Metropolitan of Ancyra. In the case of Marcellus they had received considerable provocation. Marcellus had been their active enemy at Nicæa. At Tyre he had refused to condemn Athanasius, and he presented a book to the emperor in which the Eusebians received harsh words. He was convicted, not without grounds, of Sabellianizing, and took refuge in Rome. **On 22 May, 337 Constantine the Great died at Nicomedia, after having been baptized by Eusebius, bishop of the place.**" - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Arianism - Her dying words affected him, and he recalled the Lybian, extracted from him a solemn adhesion to the Nicene faith, and ordered Alexander, Bishop of the Imperial City, to give him Communion in his own church (336). Arius openly triumphed; but as he went about in parade, the evening before this event was to take place, he expired from a sudden disorder, which Catholics could not help regarding as a judgment of heaven, due to the bishop's prayers. His death, however, did not stay the plague. **Constantine now favoured none but Arians; he was baptized in his last moments by the shifty prelate of Nicomedia;** and he bequeathed to his three sons (337) an empire torn by dissensions which his ignorance and weakness had aggravated." - Catholic Encyclopedia

So, we see that Constantine's two closest associates were both named Eusebius. We have already been discussing and will continue to discuss Eusebius of Caesarea. However, Eusebius of Nicomedia, who baptized Constantine and supported Arius, needs further introduction.

Eusebius of Nicomedia was a devout supporter of Arius and very close to emperor Constantine and his family, during his life, and as we have seen, at his death as well.

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - d. 342, Christian churchman and theologian, leader of the heresy of Arianism. He was bishop of Nicomedia (330-39) and patriarch of Constantinople (339-42); Eusebius was powerful because of his influence with Roman Emperor Constantine I and particularly with the emperor's son, Constantius II. He sheltered Arius in 321 and fought his condemnation at Nicaea (see Nicaea, First Council of). Eusebius signed the Nicene formulary but was exiled by Constantine shortly afterward. Eusebius' influence on the emperor's sister Constantia, however, soon won him his reprieve (328). As adviser to Constantius, a committed Arian, he systematically advanced a moderate Arianism throughout the empire." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Eusebius Of Nicomedia - born , Syria? died c. 342 an important 4th-century Eastern church bishop who was one of the key proponents of Arianism (the doctrine that Jesus Christ is not of the same substance as God) and who eventually became the leader of an Arian group called the Eusebians." - Britannica.com

"Eusebius Of Nicomedia - Eusebius may have met Arius, the Alexandrian priest and originator of Arianism, in Antioch as a fellow student under the theologian and martyr St. Lucian. Eusebius was, successively, bishop of Berytus and, about 318, bishop of Nicomedia. In August 323 Arius wrote Eusebius for aid when his teachings were being investigated by Bishop Alexander. In support of Arius' cause, Eusebius appealed to other bishops. When Arius was condemned in a synod at Alexandria (September 323), Eusebius sheltered him and sponsored a synod (October 323) at Bithynia, which nullified Arius' excommunication." - Britannica.com

"Eusebius Of Nicomedia - Through his friendship with the emperor's sister, Constantia, he was probably responsible for much of the powerful Arian reaction of the emperor's last years." - Britannica.com

"Arius - Influential support from colleagues in Asia Minor and from Constantia, the emperor Constantine I's daughter, succeeded in effecting Arius' return from exile and his readmission into the church after consenting to a compromise formula." - Britannica.com

"Arianism - Because of his heretical teachings, Arius was condemned and deprived of his office. He fled to Palestine and spread his doctrine among the masses through popular sermons and songs, and among the powerful through the efforts of influential leaders, such as Eusebius of Nicomedia and, to a lesser extent, Eusebius of Caesarea." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - Bishop, place and date of birth unknown; d. 341. He was a pupil at Antioch of Lucian the Martyr, in whose famous school he learned his Arian doctrines. He became Bishop of Berytus; but from ambitious motives he managed to get transferred, contrary to the canons of the early Church, to the see of Nicomedia, the residence of the Eastern Emperor Licinius, with whose wife, Constantia, sister of Constantine, he was in high favor." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - Arius, when he was condemned at Alexandria, by Alexander, bishop of that see, took refuge at Caesarea, where he was well received by the famous apologist and historian Eusebius, and wrote to Eusebius of Nicomedia for support. The letter is preserved. In it the heretic explains his views clearly enough, and appeals to his correspondent as to a "fellow Lucianist". Eusebius put himself at the head of the party, and wrote many letters in support of Arius. One is preserved, addressed to Paulinus, Bishop of Tyre. We learn from it what Eusebius's doctrine was at this time: the Son he says is "not generated from the substance of the Father", but He is "other in nature and power"; He was created, and this is not inconsistent with his Sonship, for the wicked are called sons of God (Is., i, 2; Deut., xxxii, 18) and so are even the drops of dew (Job, xxxviii, 28); He was begotten by God's free will. This is pure Arianism, borrowed from the letters of Arius himself, and possibly more definite than the doctrine of St. Lucian." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - Eusebius replied by assembling a council in his own province, which begged all the Eastern bishops to communicate with Arius, and to use their influence with Alexander in his favor." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - Constantine ostentatiously declared at the council went no further than the guardianship of the bishops, but Eusebius of Caesarea makes it clear that he spoke on the theological question. The bishop of Nicomedia and his friends put forward an Arian confession of faith, but it had only about seventeen supporters from among three hundred members of the council, and it was hooted by the majority." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Arius - While many Syrian prelates followed the innovator, he was condemned at Alexandria in 321 by his diocesan in a synod of nearly one hundred Egyptian and Libyan bishops. Deprived and excommunicated, the heresiarch fled to Palestine. He addressed a thoroughly unsound statement of principles to Eusebius of Nicomedia, who yet became his lifelong champion and who had won the esteem of Constantine by his worldly accomplishments." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Arianism - A council was, therefore, assembled in Nicaea, in Bithynia, which has ever been counted the first ecumenical, and which held its sittings from the middle of June, 325...a letter was received from Eusebius of

Nicomedia, declaring openly that he would never allow Christ to be of one substance with God." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - It is said that it was Constantia, the widow of Licinius, who induced Constantine to recall Arius, and it is probable that she was also the cause of the return of her old friend Eusebius. By 329 he was in high favor with the emperor with whom he may have had some kind of a relationship, since Ammianus Marcellinus makes him a relative of Julian." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Arianism - Meanwhile, Constantia, the Emperor's sister, had recommended Arius, whom she thought an injured man, to Constantine's leniency. Her dying words affected him, and he recalled the Lybian, extracted from him a solemn adhesion to the Nicene faith, and ordered Alexander, Bishop of the Imperial City, to give him Communion in his own church (336)." - Catholic Encyclopedia

Like Eusebius of Caesarea and Constantine, Eusebius of Nicomedia was also instrumental in the exile of Athanasius and only reluctantly signed the Nicaea Creed.

"Arianism - Eusebius of Nicomedia withdrew his opposition to the Nicene term, but would not sign the condemnation of Arius." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - Eusebius of Nicomedia had bad luck. Though he had signed the creed, he had not agreed to the condemnation of Arius, who had been, so he said, misrepresented; and after the council he encouraged in their heresy some Arians whom Constantine had invited to Constantinople with a view to their conversion." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius Of Nicomedia - His unrelenting harassment of the leaders of the Homoousians helped lead Constantine to depose and exile Bishop St. Athanasius the Great of Alexandria at a synod in Tyre in 335 and to reinstate Arius at a synod in Jerusalem in 335." - Britannica.com

"Arianism - Eusebius of Nicomedia used this fear of Sabellianism to persuade Constantine to return Arius to his duties in Alexandria. Athanasius, chief defender of the Nicene formula, was bishop in Alexandria, and conflict was inevitable. The Eusebians managed to secure Athanasius' exile." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Athanasius, Saint - Made bishop of Alexandria upon the death of his superior, he faced a conspiracy led by Eusebius of Nicomedia to return the condemned Arius to Egypt. When Athanasius refused to yield, a pro-Arian council held at Tyre (335) found him guilty of sacrilege, the practice of magic, dishonest grain dealings, and even murder. Athanasius appealed to Constantine who demanded a retrial, then unaccountably ordered Athanasius into exile-the first of five." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - The great see of Alexandria was filled in 328 by the deacon Athanasius, who had taken a leading part in Nicæa. Small in stature, and young in years, he was at the head of a singularly united body of nearly a hundred bishops, and his energy and vivacity, his courage and determination marked him out as the one foe the Eusebians had to dread. The Alexandrian Arians had now signed an ambiguous formula of submission, and Eusebius of Nicomedia wrote to Athanasius, asking him to reinstate them, adding a verbal message of threats." - Catholic Encyclopedia

And after the Council of Nicaea, Eusebius of Nicomedia, like Eusebius of Caesarea, and Constantine worked diligently to overthrow the orthodox ruling of the council.

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - As adviser to Constantius, a committed Arian, he systematically advanced a moderate Arianism throughout the empire." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - From this time onward we find Eusebius at the head of a small and compact party called, by St. Athanasius, the Eusebians peritōn Eusebion, whose object it was to undo the work of Nicæa, and to procure the complete victory of Arianism. They did not publicly recall the signatures that had been forced from them. They explained that Arius had repented on any excess in his words, or had been misunderstood. They dropped the Nicene formulæ as ambiguous. They were the leaders of a much larger party of conservative prelates, who wished to stand well with the emperor, who revered the martyr Lucian and the great Origen, and were seriously alarmed at any danger of Sabellianism." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - Until 337 the Eusebians were busy obtaining, by calumny, the deposition of the bishops who supported the Nicene faith." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - He may really have believed Arian doctrine, but clearly his chief aim had ever been his own aggrandizement, and the humiliation of those who had humbled him at Nicæa. He had succeeded. His enemies were in exile. His creatures sat in the sees of Alexandria and Antioch. He was bishop of the imperial city, and the young emperor obeyed his counsels." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Arianism - While the plain Arian creed was defended by few, those political prelates who sided with Eusebius carried on a double warfare against the term "consubstantial", and its champion, Athanasius." - Catholic Encyclopedia

Eusebius of Nicomedia's appreciation of Origen is also another noteworthy comparison to Eusebius of Caesarea (as well as to Arius, Ambrose, and Augustine). His reverence for Lucian was also shared by Arius.

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - From this time onward we find Eusebius at the head of a small and compact party called, by St. Athanasius, the Eusebians peri ton Eusebion, whose object it was to undo the work of Nicæa, and to procure the complete victory of Arianism. They did not publicly recall the signatures that had been forced from them. They explained that Arius had repented on any excess in his words, or had been misunderstood. They dropped the Nicene formulæ as ambiguous. They were the leaders of a much larger party of conservative prelates, who wished to stand well with the emperor, who revered the martyr Lucian and the great Origen, and were seriously alarmed at any danger of Sabellianism." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Arius - An heresiarch, born about A.D. 250; died 336. He is said to have been a Libyan by descent. His father's name is given as Ammonius. In 306, Arius, who had learnt his religious views from Lucian..." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Arianism - Associated with Paul, and for years cut off from the Catholic communion, we find the well-known Lucian, who edited the Septuagint and became at last a martyr. From this learned man the school of Antioch drew its inspiration. Eusebius the historian, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Arius himself, all came under Lucian's influence." - Catholic Encyclopedia

"Eusebius of Nicomedia - Bishop, place and date of birth unknown; d. 341. He was a pupil at Antioch of Lucian the Martyr, in whose famous school he learned his Arian doctrines." - Catholic Encyclopedia

Lucian's views concerning the nature of Christ contained similar heretical concepts as those expressed by Arius and are known to have influenced Arius.

"Arianism - Christian heresy founded by Arius in the 4th cent. It was one of the most widespread and divisive heresies in the history of Christianity. As a priest in Alexandria, Arius taught (c.318) that God created, before all things, a Son who was the first creature, but who was neither equal to nor coeternal with the Father. According to Arius, Jesus was a supernatural creature not quite human and not quite divine. In these ideas Arius followed the school of Lucian of Antioch." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

"Lucian of Antioch - In the field of theology, in the minds of practically all writers (the most notable modern exception being Gwatkin, in his "Studies of Arianism", London, 1900), he has the unenviable reputation of being the real author of the opinions which afterwards found expression in the heresy of Arius. In his Christological system - a compromise between Modalism and Subordinationism - the Word, though Himself the Creator of all subsequent beings was a creature, though superior to all other created things by the wide gulf between Creator and creature. The great leaders in the Arian movement (Arius himself, Eusebius, the court bishop of Nicomedia, Maris, and Theognis) received their training under him and always venerated him as their master and the founder of their system." - Catholic Encyclopedia

In conclusion we see that these four men were closely allied to one another in cause and in believe: Constantine, Eusebius of Caesarea, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Arius. All of these men shared an affection for both Neoplatonic paganism and Arian heresy and acted against orthodox Christianity on behalf of those who also held esteem for these beliefs.

Conclusions on Roman Catholic Neoplatonic Paganism

The influences, associations, and actions of Augustine and Eusebius of Caesarea cannot be overlooked. Augustine's life and work exhibits a profound dedication to Neoplatonism and allegorical interpretation just as his mentors Ambrose and Origen. Similarly, Eusebius of Caesarea possessed in his writings and his life an abiding commitment to Arian heresy and the Roman imperial paganism of his close associates emperor Constantine, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Arius himself.

It should be disturbing then that these two men, Augustine and Eusebius of Caesarea, occupy a place of such significance in the earliest development of Roman Catholicism and Roman Catholic theology. To Augustine the Roman Catholics attribute the single largest and unparalleled contribution to the theology of the RCC. To Eusebius, the RCC owes its understanding of the papacy, the Church, and the relationship of the Church and the state.

The overriding and paramount influence of these two men (and by extension their associates and those who were later influenced by them) decisively and conclusively demonstrates that the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church in the 4th century A.D. was the result of the syncretistic fusion of Christianity with both Roman imperial paganism, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, and perhaps (at least for a time) Arianism.

Study Conclusions on Roman Catholicism

In this long study we have established that, contrary to their claims, the Roman Catholic Church is NOT the true church of Jesus Christ and does NOT possess authentic Christian teaching. This conclusion has been demonstrated through a number of facts.

1. The defining Roman Catholic doctrine of papal authority and Roman primacy is a development of 4th century Roman imperial paganism and cannot be found in the New Testament nor in the writings of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd century Church.

2. Roman Catholic theology is largely the result of such men as Augustine and Eusebius of Caesarea, who exhibit a clear dedication to Neoplatonism, Gnostic Arianism, and Roman imperial paganism.

3. In addition, the Roman Catholic Church has been shown to be an invalid theological system on its own merits for two reasons.

First, the RCC claims that a change in organization by the Church from that instituted by Jesus Christ would constitute a deviation that would undermine the legitimacy of the Church and cannot be permitted, accepted, or adopted. The RCC has deviated from the organization of the Church that was established by Jesus Christ and replaced it with a system, which cannot be found in the New Testament or the Church of the first two and a half centuries, but is instead clearly modeled after Roman imperialism and the pontifex maximus.

Second, the RCC claims that the New Testament scripture and the writings of Tradition are both the inerrant, inspired, and authoritative Word of God. Yet, the teachings of the RCC contradict this very claim, wherein the RCC makes additional claims which conflict with both the New Testament scripture and the writings of Tradition from the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd century Church.

For all of the above reasons we can dismiss Roman Catholicism and the Roman Catholic Church as an invalid and unviable transmitter of the true teachings of Jesus Christ. Those who wish to be disciples of Jesus Christ and His teachings must reject and abandon Roman Catholicism and seek instead to understand, embrace, and practice a faith, whose sole origin is contained in the New Testament scripture and not in the Roman, Neoplatonic, Gnostic, and pagan traditions of men.

Acknowledgements: www.biblestudy.net