

resided. Since Rome was the most powerful and prestigious city in the world at the time, it stood to unbiblical reason that the most prominent and influential bishop should be the Bishop of Rome. Gradually the honor and respect given to these bishops grew, and they in turn desired this adulation from bishops of other cities. The church was in such decline that with the passing of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries the bishops of Rome began to demand recognition for the exalted position they now saw as their possession.

**Gradual Rise of Papal Rome—**In the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries as the gospel was watered down, it was replaced by ritualism and ceremony. True worship of God and inner conviction of the Holy Spirit gave way to formal rites and idolatry. Pagan practices were also introduced, white washed with an external Christianity. From the beginning, the gospel produced an internal unity among the believers, but when ritualism replaced the gospel, an external visible unity for the church was insisted upon.

The clergy-laity division of the church became the accepted base. This further devolved into a hierarchy of the ruling clergy. By the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, a sacrificing priesthood in which the priest presumed to mediate between God and men had replaced the early ministers of the gospel. The church was no longer a fellowship of believers under Christ, united by the gospel, true worship, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but rather an institution dominated by a hierarchy of bishops and elders.

Simultaneously, from early to mid-5<sup>th</sup> century, Rome was beset first by Alaric the Goth, who captured it in 410 but did not stay to rule; Attila the Hun, who in 452 was persuaded by Leo, Bishop of Rome (440-461), to stop his advance and leave Italy altogether; and finally Genseric, leader of the Vandals, who captured the city, but was persuaded by Leo to spare the lives of Romans. Leo's fame as Rome's protector grew enormously as a result.

The position of the Imperial Roman emperor by now had become clearly vacant. A vacuum had been established because the Imperial leadership had left Rome and none of the barbaric leaders had tried to set himself up in that position. Leo, as the Bishop of Rome, saw the opportunity that lay in front of him.

Leo began to feel that the time had come to materialize the claims of Augustine regarding the temporal millennial kingdom of Christ, and with his avowed vested powers of loosing and binding openly to declare his right to the vacant throne as the fitting seat of Christ's universal kingdom. In this way the Roman church pushed its way into the place of the Western Empire, of which it is “the actual continuation.” Thus the empire did not perish; it only changed its form. The pope became Caesar's successor.<sup>1</sup>

**Bishop of Rome Becomes the Pope—**The removal of the seat of the empire from Rome to Constantinople in 330AD enhanced marvelously the Bishop of Rome's power. The ecclesiastical contest which had been going on for some time between Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Rome as to which was the greatest was now for the most part confined to the dioceses of Rome and the new contender, Constantinople.

The barbarian invasions of the Western Roman Empire helped immeasurably to build the whole structure of papal Rome. The ten barbarian kingdoms that were a serious threat were the Alamanni, Franks, Visigoths, Burgundians, Suevi, Anglo-Saxons, Lombards, Heruli, Vandals, and the Ostrogoths. The

emperor of Rome now lived in Constantinople; yet his armies uprooted and destroyed the Vandals and the Heruli.

Clovis, king of the Franks, was the first of the barbarian princes to accept the faith of the Roman church. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the Burgundians of Southern Gaul, the Visigoths of Spain, the Suevi of Portugal, and the Anglo-Saxons of Britain all followed suit in joining Rome's religion. These barbaric kings and their peoples accepted easily the faith of Rome. Because it lacked the gospel, it was not very different in form and substance from their own pagan worship. All of these conversions advanced the power of the Roman bishop. Then, too, these barbaric nations more easily accepted the religion of Rome because this city had traditionally been the seat of authority of the Caesars as masters of the world. The bishops of Rome now played their role as rightful heirs to the Caesars. The city that had been the seat of power for the empire became the place for the bishop to exercise his authority. More and more nations accepted his position.

Emperor Justinian I (527-565) was the one, more than anyone else, to establish the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome. He did it in a formal and legal manner by bringing purely ecclesiastical edicts and regulations under the control of civil law.

[One of Justinian's] great achievement[s] was the regulation of ecclesiastical and theological matters, crowned by the imperial Decretal Letter seating the Bishop of Rome in the church as the “Head of all the holy churches,” thus laying the legal foundation for papal ecclesiastical supremacy.<sup>2</sup>

Justinian's official civil codex of law was to be enforced civilly in all of the empire, although that did not come about immediately.

“Hence, in accordance with the provisions of these Councils, we order that the Most Holy Pope of ancient Rome shall hold the first rank of all the Pontiffs, but the Most Blessed Archbishop of Constantinople, or New Rome, shall occupy the second place after the Holy Apostolic See of ancient Rome, which shall take precedence over all other Sees.”...Thus the supremacy of the pope over all Christians received the fullest sanction that could be given by the secular master of the Roman world. From this time, then, is to be dated the secular acknowledgment of the papacy's claims to ecclesiastical primacy, which became effective generally in 538, by the freeing of Rome from the Ostrogothic siege.<sup>3</sup>

Justinian's decree did not create the office of the pope but rather set the legal foundation for advancement in ruling power by the bishops of Rome. The emperor had his purposes:

Justinian improved the advantage afforded by his reconquest of Italy to achieve his design of *a universal conformity in religious matters* that would exclude heresy and schism, as well as strengthen his own authority over the Western kingdoms. His object was to secure a unity of the church which should embrace both East and West. He considered that there was no surer way of reducing them all to one religion than by the advancement of the authority of ecclesiastical Rome, and by acknowledgment of the head of that church as the promoter of unity among them, whose business it should be to overawe the conscience of man with the anathemas of the church, and to enforce the execution of heavy penalties of the law. From about 539, the sovereign pontiff and the patriarchs began to have a corps of officers to enforce their decrees, as civil penalties began to be inflicted by their own tribunals.<sup>4</sup>

Thus to allay the demise of the Imperial Empire, ecclesiastical unity was to be imposed by coercion if necessary. As proclaimed

head of the empire's church, the job fell to the bishop. The title of “Pope” began to fit the one who sat as “Bishop of Rome,” who now was free to use the civil sword of coercion given him by Justinian's decree. Formerly, ecclesiastical unity came by the moral persuasion of the gospel alone to save individuals who then would be salt and light to their civil societies. But such unbiblical methods as the bishops of Rome had so willingly sought after and received could only produce worldly corruption. Soon the Bishop of Rome desired to reign like a king with worldly power. Our Lord specifically told us, “*The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them...but ye shall not be so*” (Luke 22:25-26).

The empire continued to crumble. The Emperor Phocas reigned in Constantinople from 602 to 610. Boniface III, who became pope in 607, had been a legate to Emperor Phocas before becoming pope. Boniface showed great skill in obtaining further official recognition from the emperor.

He [Boniface] sought and obtained a decree from Phocas which restated that “the See of Blessed Peter the Apostle should be the head of all the Churches.” This ensured that the title of “Universal Bishop” belonged exclusively to the Bishop of Rome, and effectively ended the attempt by Cyriacus, Bishop of Constantinople, to establish himself as “Universal Bishop.”<sup>5</sup>

Pope Boniface III shrewdly took hold of two measures to secure papal hegemony in the ecclesiastical domain of the failing empire. First, he made excellent use of the conjecture that Peter was the first bishop in Rome. Second, his acquisition of the title of “Universal Bishop” gave him power to reign in ecclesiastical supremacy from the central city of Rome throughout all the empire. This twofold stratagem has continued in history.

**Fraudulent Documents and the Rise of the Papacy as a Temporal Power—**In the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century the outlandish claim was made that Constantine had transferred his power, authority, and palace to Rome's bishop. The fraudulent “Donation of Constantine” was said to be the legal document in which the emperor bestowed on Sylvester, Bishop of Rome (314-335), much of his property and invested him with great spiritual power. The enormity of the bequest allegedly given to Sylvester in the spurious document is seen in this quotation from the manuscript:

We attribute to the See of Peter all the dignity, all the glory, all the authority of the imperial power. Furthermore, we give to Sylvester and to his successors our palace of the Lateran, which is incontestably the finest palace on the earth; we give him our crown, our miter, our diadem, and all our imperial vestments; we transfer to him the imperial dignity. We bestow on the holy Pontiff in free gift the city of Rome, and all the western cities of Italy. To cede precedence to him, we divest ourselves of our authority over all those provinces, and we withdraw from Rome, transferring the seat of our empire to Byzantium; inasmuch as it is not proper that an earthly emperor should preserve the last authority, where God hath established the head of his religion.<sup>6</sup>

This “Donation” was most likely forged a little before 754AD.

In it Constantine is made to speak in the Latin of the eighth century, and to address Bishop Sylvester as “Prince of the Apostles, Vicar of Christ.” During more than 600 years Rome impressively cited this deed of gift, inserted it in her codes, permitted none to question its genuineness, and burned those who refused to believe in it. The first dawn of light in the 16<sup>th</sup> century sufficed to discover the cheat.<sup>7</sup>

It was also in the 8<sup>th</sup> century that civil power came within the grasp of the papacy. The kings of Lombardy, once barbarian and now believers in the Arian heresy, were intent on the conquest of all Italy, threatening even Rome itself. At the same time, the Muslims had overrun Africa, conquered some of Spain, and were also endangering Rome. Pope Stephen II looked to France for help. He called on Pepin the Short. Pepin, the son of Charles Martel (Charles the Hammer) and the father of Charlemagne, was the chief steward of the king's lands and army. Pepin had just usurped the throne from Childeric and needed approval for his new position. He therefore crossed the Alps with an army and was able to defeat the Lombards. He conceded the conquered towns to the pope for his possession. Thus in 755AD Pepin the Short made material the temporal power of the popes, and achieved papal approval for himself.

Charlemagne, Pepin's son, continued to strengthen the temporal power of the pope. The Lombards were again about to besiege Rome. The pope again looked to France for help and this time to Charlemagne, who answered the call and defeated the Lombards. He confirmed and enlarged cities and lands given by his father, Pepin, to the Church of Rome. Later, on Christmas Eve 800, Charlemagne, as master of nearly all the Romano-Germanic nations, knelt before Pope Leo III. The pope placed on his head the crown of the Western Empire. This act exhibited the pope's growing power. In 538 the Emperor Justinian had given the Bishop of Rome the title of Pontifex Maximus; 262 years later, it was the pope who was crowning an emperor.

The fraudulent “Donation of Constantine,” less than 50 years old, was already proving to be a very useful tool. Pope Nicholas I in 865 drew from this and other forgeries a way to demand submission from bishops and princes and to amass tremendous riches to the papacy. The arrogance of the popes grew from this time onward, as did their treasury. Popes became intoxicated with their own pride, some in their teens and twenties, losing their senses in nefarious practices. Infamous women of history, Theodora and Marozia, for many years governed the papal throne. As they desired, they installed and deposed their lovers, sons, and grandsons as so-called masters of the church. That unholy See, which pretended to rise above the majesty of kings and princes, descended into dregs of sin. For two centuries, the papacy was one wild arena of bedlam as the most powerful families of Italy disputed and fought over it like a possession.

The candidate who was rich enough to offer the largest bribe, or powerful enough to appear with an army at the gates of Rome, was invariably crowned emperor in the Vatican...The popes did not trouble the world with any formal statement of their principles on the head of the supremacy; they were content to embody them in acts. They were wise enough to know that the speediest way for the world to acknowledge theoretic truth is to familiarize it with its practical applications—to ask approval of it, not as a theory, but as a fact. Thus the popes, by a bold course of dexterous management, and of audacious but successful aggression, labored to weave the doctrine of supremacy into the general policy of Europe.<sup>8</sup>

**Lusts of the Mind Followed by Murder and Torture**

The year 1073 was a turning point from the centuries of gross immorality. Rigorous discipline now became the norm of the papacy. Reaching above the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of papal minds continued to clutch at total dominion, both ecclesiastical

and civil. By this time, the line of Charlemagne had grown too weak to keep papal ambitions in check, and Pope Gregory VII (also known as Hildebrand) was ambitious beyond all who had preceded him. He was convinced that the reign of the pope was in fact the reign of God on earth and determined to subject materially all authority and power, both spiritual and temporal, to the “chair of Peter.” Gregory envisioned what was to become the vast structure of the papacy. His goal was to be the supreme ruler and judge of all leaders both of church and state.

Gregory rekindled, with all the ardour and vehemence characteristic of the man, the war between the throne and the mitre. The object at which Gregory VII aimed was twofold: (1) To render the election to the pontifical chair independent of the emperors; and (2) To resume the empire as a fief of the church, and to establish his dominion over the kings and kingdoms of the earth. His first step towards the accomplishment of these vast designs was...to enact clerical celibacy. His second was to forbid all ecclesiastics to receive investiture at the hands of the secular power.<sup>9</sup>

Gregory advocated the idea that the Bishop of Rome is the successor of Peter, the prince of the apostles, and in virtue of being so, is Christ's Vicar on earth. This supremacy, which he claimed by Divine right, demanded sure dominion over both emperors and kings. This idea had been circulating for some time.

The primacy had been promulgated by synodical decrees, ratified by imperial edicts; but the pontiffs perceived that what synods and emperors had given, synods and emperors might take away. The enactments of both, therefore, were discarded, and the *Divine right* was put in their room, as the only basis of power which neither lapse of years nor change of circumstances could overthrow. Rome was henceforward indestructible.<sup>10</sup>

The material supremacy of such a notion was not won in a day. But it was Gregory's astute grasp of the notion and his crushing ambition, coupled with the enormous wealth that the Roman Catholic Church by then possessed, that made its implementation possible. These shrewd enactments began to bear fruit even in Gregory's own rule from 1073-1085.

The pontiffs that followed him developed the structures he had established. They continued his projects and strove by deceit, by crusades, and by interdicts, to place the world under papal political control. For two centuries from the time of Gregory's reign, the papacy increased in power and glory, always at the price of thousands of destroyed lives, many deposed kings and princes, numerous ruined cities, and countless homesteads and farms utterly wasted, all in the name of the religion of Rome.

Popes Innocent III (1198-1216) and Boniface VIII (1294-1303) put the final touches to papal triumph of spiritual and temporal power. Pope Innocent proclaimed a crusade against the Albigenses and offered to all who would engage in it the pardon of all sins to get to heaven without passing through purgatory. It was a war perpetrated with unimaginable cruelty. Whole villages and towns were indiscriminately butchered; thousands of others were burned alive at the stake, while others were subjected to the most hideous torture. The history of these horrendous deeds of cruelty and murder are established by numerous accounts. Pope Boniface “was stubborn, ambitious, intelligent, vain and unscrupulous. He believed deeply that the pope was literally the Vicar of Christ on earth and that he held extraordinary powers. Anyone who opposed him opposed God and therefore must certainly be

wicked.” He is most famous for a statement in his papal bull *Unum Sanctum*, “We declare, say, define, and proclaim to every human creature that they by necessity for salvation are entirely subject to the Roman Pontiff.” From Pope Innocent III to Pope Pius VII, 75 popes, one after another approved of torture, murder, and burning at the stake, and the confiscation of the property of true believers in the horrific centuries of the Inquisition.

**More than 600 Years of Papal Inquisition—**The “Inquisition” is a term specific to the time when the popes of Rome took the initiative in attempting to stamp out by torture, imprisonment, and death what they called “heresy.” Before they began to decree such torture and death, persecution involving incarceration and confiscation of property was practiced by the Roman Catholic Church. The Scriptures had predicted what indeed happened—“*And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them*” (*Rev 13:7*). This text was fulfilled in the wars against the Waldenses, the Albigenses, and many other true followers of Christ at the time of the papal persecutions (*see Dan 7:21*).

[During the Inquisition] the most ghastly abomination of all was the system of torture. The accounts of its cold-blooded operations make one shudder at the capacity of human beings for cruelty. And it was decreed and regulated by the popes who claim to represent Christ on earth. In 1252 Pope Innocent IV solemnly authorized it. Confirmatory or regulatory decrees about it were issued by Alexander IV, Clement IV, Urban IV and Clement V.<sup>11</sup>

The papacy had become “*drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*” (*Rev 17:6*). No other kingdom or power has ever drunk so deeply of this blood as papal Rome. The facts are undeniable.

From the birth of Popery in 600, to the present time, it is estimated by careful and credible historians, that more than 50 MILLION of the human family, have been slaughtered for the crime of heresy by popish persecutors, an average of more than 40 THOUSAND religious murders for every year of the existence of Popery.<sup>12</sup>

The torture chambers of the Inquisition, which lasted more than 600 years, were all across the nations controlled by Rome. The instruments of torture were horrendous. If you are sensitive you ought to pray for courage to read the following account:

We pass on into the chamber, where more dreadful sights meet our gaze. It is hung round and round with instruments of torture, so numerous that it would take a long while even to name them, and so diverse that it would take a much longer time to describe them. We must take them in groups, for it were hopeless to think of going over them one by one, and particularizing the mode in which each operated, and the ingenuity and art with which all of them have been adapted to their horrible end. There were instruments for compressing the fingers till the bones should be squeezed to splinters. There were instruments for probing below the finger-nails till an exquisite pain, like a burning fire, would run along the nerves. There were instruments for tearing out the tongue, for scooping out the eyes, for grubbing-up the ears. There were bunches of iron cords, with a spiked circle at the end of every whip, for tearing the flesh from the back till bone and sinew were laid bare. There were iron cases for the legs, which were tightened upon the limb placed in them by means of a screw, till flesh and bone were reduced to a jelly. There were cradles set full of sharp spikes, in which victims were laid and rolled from side to side, the wretched occupant being pierced at each movement of the machine with innumerable sharp points. There were iron ladles with long handles, for holding molten lead or boiling pitch, to be poured

down the throat of the victim, and convert his body into a burning cauldron. There were frames with holes to admit the hands and feet, so contrived that the person put into them had his body bent into unnatural and painful positions, and the agony grew greater and greater by movements, and yet the man did not die. There were chestfuls of small but most ingeniously constructed instruments for pinching, probing, or tearing the more sensitive parts of the body, and continuing the pain up to the very verge where reason or life gives way. On the floor and walls of the apartment were the larger instruments for the same fearful end—lacerating, mangling, and agonizing living men; but these we shall meet in other dungeons we are yet to visit.<sup>13</sup>

**Indictment on the Inquisition—**The best summary statement on the papacy's Inquisition is that of the renowned *Catholic historian Lord Acton*. He declares,

The Inquisition is peculiarly the weapon and peculiarly the work of the popes. It stands out from all those things in which they co-operated, followed or assented as the distinctive feature of papal Rome. It was set up, renewed and perfected by a long series of acts emanating from the supreme authority in the church. No other institution, no doctrine, no ceremony is so distinctly the individual creation of the papacy, except the dispensing power. It is the principal thing with which the papacy is identified, and by which it must be judged. The principle of the Inquisition is the pope's sovereign power over life and death. Whosoever disobeys him should be tried and tortured and burnt. If that cannot be done, formalities may be dispensed with, and the culprit may be killed like an outlaw. That is to say, the principle of the Inquisition is murderous, and a man's opinion of the papacy is regulated and determined by his opinion of religious assassination.<sup>14</sup>

The papacy inflicted excruciating torture and cruel death on true believers, like the sufferings of the Old Testament—“cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy” (*Heb 11:36-38*).

Papists have exceeded pagans herein: witness their cruel massacres in France and other places: well may the Holy Spirit represent the whore Babylon as being “*drunk with the blood of the saints*” (*Rev 17:6*)...the most merciless, conscienceless, cruel, and inveterate persecutors of God's elect have been *religious* people! (*A.W. Pink*)

—Adapted from the Book: **CATHOLICISM East of Eden**  
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- 8 Wylie, *The Papacy*, Book 1, Ch.4, p.63.     9 *Ibid.*, p.74.     10 *Ibid.*, p.36.
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- 12 John Dowling, *The History of Romanism*, Book 8, Ch.1, p.542.
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# THE PAPACY

## An Overview of its History and Nature

The Papal Church is a magnificently rich, splendidly housed political and ecclesiastical power headquartered in Rome. It stands in stark contrast to what started there in the 1<sup>st</sup> century with pastors ministering to small congregations. The differences are graphic. These early home churches looked to the authority of the writings of the apostles and the Old Testament. They had a true and living faith in God's grace through the gospel (*see Rom 1:8*). The faith of the churches of Rome continued to be well known and faithfully lived for 250 more years under very adverse situations, including extreme persecutions, the most famous taking place under Emperor Nero in 64AD.

Totally unimaginable for these early believers in Rome would be the present concept of “*the most holy Roman Pontiff*.” Also unthinkable would be the belief that rituals confer the grace of the Holy Spirit, and that Mary, the mother of Jesus, could be addressed in prayer as “*the All Holy One*” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2677*). A top-heavy hierarchical system, from layperson to priest, from priest to bishop, from bishop to cardinal and cardinal to pope would have been totally abhorrent, as from the world and not from Christ, who said, “*Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren*” (*Mat 23:8*).

The spread of the Christian faith during the 1<sup>st</sup> three centuries was extensive and rapid. In the providence of God, the main reasons for this were the fidelity and zeal of all preachers of the gospel, the heroic deaths of the martyrs, and the translation of the Scriptures into the Roman world languages. Under Emperor Septimius Severus (193-211) Christians suffered appallingly. The most severe persecution was under the Emperor Diocletian and his co-regent, Galerius, during the years 303-311. The historian Philip Schaff said, “all copies of the Bible were to be burned; all Christians were to be deprived of public office and civil rights; and last, all, without exception, were to sacrifice to the gods upon pain of death.” Yet far from exterminating the Christians and the gospel, these persecutions purified those who preached and increased their ability to set forth the gospel.

The persecution of Christians ended in 313AD when the emperors Constantine in the West and Licinius in the East proclaimed the Edict of Milan. This decree established the policy of religious freedom for both paganism and Christianity. Four vice-prefects governed the Roman Empire under Constantine. Accordingly, under his authority the Christian world was to be governed from four great cities: Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Rome. Over each city there was set a Patriarch, who governed all the elders of his domain. The purpose of Constantine was that the Christian churches were to be organized in a fashion similar to the government of the empire.

The respect enjoyed by the various Christian elders was usually in proportion to the status of the city in which they