

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

What is the Origin of the Roman Catholic Church?

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The Roman Catholic Church contends that its origin is the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ in AD 30. The Roman Catholic Church proclaims itself to be the church that Jesus Christ died for, the church that was established and built by the apostles. Roman Catholicism teaches that the Roman Catholic Church was established by Christ through Peter as the first visible head. The authority was the authority that God gave to Christ and that Christ in turn gave to the church.¹ But is that the true origin of the Roman Catholic Church? Non-Catholics would establish the beginning of the Roman Catholic church in AD 590 with Gregory I “who consolidated the power of the bishopric in Rome and started that church on a new course.”²

Even a cursory reading of the New Testament will reveal that the Roman Catholic Church does not have its origin in the teachings of Jesus or His apostles. In point of fact, there is absolutely no mention in the New Testament of:

1. The Papacy

Following a dispute with the patriarch of Constantinople, Pope Leo IX in 1053 signed an official letter advocating the authority of the pope. By the time of Pope Gregory IX, bishops were required to take an oath of obedience to the pope, much as a vassal to his lord; in addition, the pope was crowned with the triple crown originally used by the deified rulers of Persia.³ At the crowning, the officiating cardinal declared: “Receive the tiara adorned with three crowns, and know that thou art the Father of Princes and Kings, Ruler of the World, the Vicar of our Saviour Jesus Christ.”⁴ In 1299 Pope Boniface VIII

¹ Loraine Boettner (1962). *Roman Catholicism*, 126. Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed; cf. A. M. Renwick (1958). *The Story of the Church*, 64. London: InterVarsity.

² Enns, P. P. (1989). *The Moody handbook of theology*, 529. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

³ Pigginn, F.S. “Roman Catholicism,” in Walter A. Elwell (1984). *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 956. Grand Rapids: Baker.

⁴ Quoted from *The National Catholic Almanac* in Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, 127.

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declared, "It is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff."⁵

A significant declaration concerning the primacy of the pope was given at the First Vatican Council in 1870. It declared that in order to preserve the unity of the church, Christ set Peter over the other apostles to preserve this unity. The constitution further states that

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Peter, the Prince and Chief of the Apostles, the pillar of faith and foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, and lives, presides, and judges, to this day and always, in his successors the Bishops of the Holy See of Rome which was founded by him and consecrated by his blood. Whence, whoever succeeds to Peter in this See, does by the institution of Christ himself obtain the primacy of Peter over the whole Church.... blessed Peter, abiding in the strength of the Rock that he received, has not given up the direction of the Church undertaken by him.... the Roman Pontiff possess the primacy over the whole world, and that the Roman Pontiff is the successor of Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and is true Vicar of Christ, and Head of the whole Church, and Father and Teacher of all Christians; and that full power was given to him in Blessed Peter to feed, rule, and govern the Universal Church by Jesus Christ our Lord.⁶

Several points are noteworthy. The Roman Catholic church declares the succession of popes to have the authority of Peter; that Peter continues to direct the church; that the pope is the representative of Christ on earth; it also emphasizes papal authority over the church. The Roman church pronounces anathema on anyone who would dispute these conclusions.⁷

Vatican I further emphasized that all were to submit to this doctrine "from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and of salvation."⁸ It also defined papal infallibility as "the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of Pastor and Doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the Universal Church ... is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals."⁹

⁵ Kenneth Scott Latourette (1953). *A History of Christianity*, 487. New York: Harper.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 223–24.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁸ Rahner, Karl, S.J. (1967). *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*, 225. Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 229.

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The Second Vatican Council, held 1962–65, upheld the subordination of the people to the teaching of the pope, even when he spoke informally: “This loyal submission of the will and intellect must be given, in a special way, to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak ex cathedra in such wise, indeed, that his supreme teaching authority be acknowledged with respect, and sincere assent be given to decisions made by him.”^{10 11}

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2. Mariology

The position Mary occupies in the theology of the Roman Catholic church is the result of centuries of development. The first recognition of Mary as the “Mother of God” was granted her at the Council of Ephesus in AD 431. That council qualified the expression by declaring that Mary was the “mother of God according to the manhood” of Jesus. While the phrase was considered inappropriate when applied to any mortal, yet it was intended to refer only to the humanity of Christ. This is not the position of the Roman church today. Today Catholicism teaches:

The principal mysteries concerning the motherhood of God, the immaculate conception, sinlessness, and virginity are gifts made to Mary in view of her vocation to be Mother of God. Her motherhood of the Word of God is not just an external bringing about of Christ’s bodily existence. Mary was mother of the Redeemer in the full sense of being his assistant in the work of redemption ... The mystery which completes Mary’s cooperation in the work of Christ is her role as Mediatrix of Grace.... All of the graces which God accords us on account of Christ’s merits come to us directly or indirectly through Mary.¹²

The doctrines concerning Mary are a recent development. One of the early statements concerning Mary was Pope Siricius’s letter to the bishop of Thessalonica in AD 392. That letter declared Mary’s perpetual virginity.¹³ It was not until the Council of Trent in 1547 that the Roman Church announced the sinlessness of Mary, enabling her to avoid venial sins.¹⁴ The most significant doctrines concerning Mary have been promulgated in little more than the past one hundred years. In 1854 Pope Pius IX declared Mary to be free of any sin throughout her entire life. He states: “We, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by Our own authority declare, pronounce and define that the doctrine which holds that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary

¹⁰ Fox, Robert J. *The Catholic Faith*, 164. Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1983. Clearly written and includes the documents of Vatican II.

¹¹ Enns, *The Moody handbook of theology*, 530–531.

¹² Rahner, ed., *Teaching of the Catholic Church*, 181–82.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

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from the first moment of her conception was, by the singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Christ Jesus the Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin, is revealed by God.”¹⁵

Mary's role as the mediatrix of grace and the co-redemptrix of Christ is prominent in recent Catholic theology. Pope Leo XIII declares in his 1891 Encyclical *Octobri Mense*: “The eternal Son of God, when he wished to take the nature of man for the redemption and glorification of mankind, ... did not do so without first having the *absolutely free consent of his chosen mother* who in a sense personified the whole human race, ... so that, just as no one can attain to the supreme Father except through the Son, to a certain extent, no one can attain to the Son except through the Mother.”¹⁶ The encyclical further declares that since people tremble before the justice of God, an advocate and protector is needed where none will be refused. “Mary is such a one, Mary worthy of all praise; she is powerful, mother of the all-powerful God; ... So God gave her to us.... We should place ourselves under her protection and loyalty, together with our plans and our deeds, our purity and our penance, our sorrows and joys and pleas and wishes. All that is ours we should entrust to her ...”¹⁷

In 1892 Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical *Magnae Dei Matris* declared adherents of the Catholic faith to pray to Mary and receive help from her treasury of grace. He declares her exalted position: “she stands high above all the orders of angels and men and she alone is next to Christ.”¹⁸ In 1904 Pope Pius X declared that all who are joined to Christ “came from Mary's womb in the manner of a Body joined to its Head. So we may call ourselves in a spiritual and mystical way children of Mary, and she is the Mother of us all.”¹⁹ He further declares that because Mary shared the sufferings of Christ, God “promoted her to the high dignity of restorer of the lost world and thus the dispenser of all the goods which Jesus won for us by his death and at the price of his blood.”²⁰ Thus in the eyes of the Catholic church Mary has become “the most powerful mediatrix and conciliator between the whole world and her only-begotten Son ... (and) *the chief minister in the distribution of graces.*”²¹

Pope Pius XII declared in 1943 in his Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* that Mary was immune from all sin; she offered her son on Golgotha to the Father; she obtained the

¹⁵ Ibid., 186.

¹⁶ Ibid., 187; italics added.

¹⁷ Ibid., 188.

¹⁸ Ibid., 189.

¹⁹ Ibid., 190.

²⁰ Ibid., 191.

²¹ Ibid., italics added.

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outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost; she now provides motherly care for the church; and she now reigns in heaven with Christ.²² In 1950 Pope Pius XII declared that Mary was preserved from corruption of the body in death; “she conquered death and was raised body and soul to the glory of heaven, where as Queen she shines refulgent at the right hand of her Son ... We proclaim and define it to be a dogma revealed by God that the immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven.”²³ Vatican II reaffirmed Mary’s role in Catholic theology as previously taught.^{24 25}

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Interestingly, most Roman Catholic beliefs and practices regarding Mary are completely absent from the Bible. Where did those beliefs come from? The Roman Catholic view of Mary has far more in common with the Isis mother-goddess religion of Egypt than it does with anything taught in the New Testament. Surprisingly, the first hints of Catholic Mariology occur in the writings of Origen, who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, which happened to be the focal point of Isis worship.

Within Roman Catholicism the Mother and the Child are the grand objects of worship. Exactly so, in this latter respect, also was it in ancient Babylon. The Babylonians, in their popular religion, supremely worshipped a Goddess Mother and a Son, who was represented in pictures and in images as an infant or child in his mother's arms. From Babylon, this worship of the Mother and the Child spread to the ends of the earth. In Egypt, the Mother and the Child were worshipped under the names of Isis and Osiris.²⁶ In India, even to this day, as Isi and Iswara;²⁷ in Asia, as Cybele and Deoious; in Pagan Rome, as Fortuna and Jupiter-puer, or Jupiter, the boy; in Greece, as Ceres, the Great Mother, with the babe at her breast, or as Irene, the goddess of Peace, with the boy Plutus in her arms; and even in Thibet, in China, and Japan, the Jesuit missionaries were

²² Ibid., 193.

²³ Ibid., 195–96.

²⁴ Abbot, Walter M., S.J., ed. (1966). *The Documents of Vatican II*, 85-96. New York: Herder and Herder. See index for additional references.

²⁵ Enns, *The Moody handbook of theology*, 531–533.

²⁶ Osiris, as the child called most frequently Horus. Bunsen, vol. I, p. 438, compared with pp. 433-434.

²⁷ Kennedy's *Hindoo Mythology*, p. 49. Though Iswara is the husband of Isi, he is also represented as an infant at her breast. *Ibid*, p. 338, Note.

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astonished to find the counterpart of Madonna²⁸ and her child as devoutly worshipped as in Papal Rome itself.²⁹

3. Purgatory

Roman Catholicism describes purgatory as “a place or state in which are detained the souls of those who die in grace, in friendship with God, but with the blemish of venial sin or with temporal debt for sin unpaid. Here the soul is purged, cleansed, readied for eternal union with God in Heaven.”³⁰

The suffering in purgatory is twofold: physical pain and separation from God. The suffering in purgatory is necessary because the person has not made complete satisfaction for sins and is not ready to see God because of imperfection. Further, in forgiving baptized people, Christ chose to change the greater punishment to a lesser punishment (instead of abolishing sins entirely), “changing eternal suffering into temporal suffering,”³¹ thereby requiring cleansing in purgatory.

²⁸ The very name by which the Italians commonly designate the Virgin, is just the translation of one of the titles of the Babylonian goddess. As Baal or Belus was the name of the great male divinity of Babylon, so the female divinity was called Beltis. (HESYCHIUS, Lexicon) This name has been found in Nineveh applied to the "Mother of the gods" (VAUX'S Nineveh and Persepolis); and in a speech attributed to Nebuchadnezzar, preserved in EUSEBII Proeparatio Evangelii, both titles "Belus and Beltis" are conjoined as the titles of the great Babylonian god and goddess. The Greek Belus, as representing the highest title of the Babylonian god, was undoubtedly Baal, "The Lord." Beltis, therefore, as the title of the female divinity, was equivalent to "Baalti," which, in English, is "My Lady," in Latin, "Mea Domina," and, in Italina, is corrupted into the well known "Madonna." In connection with this, it may be observed, that the name of Juno, the classical "Queen of Heaven," which, in Greek, was Hera, also signified "The Lady"; and that the peculiar title of Cybele or Rhea at Rome, was Domina or "The Lady." (OVID, Fasti) Further, there is strong reason to believe, that Athena, the well known name of Minerva at Athens, had the very same meaning. The Hebrew Adon, "The Lord," is, with the points, pronounced Athon. We have evidence that this name was known to the Asiatic Greeks, from whom idolatry, in a large measure, came into European Greece, as a name of God under the form of "Athan." Eustathius, in a note on the Periergesis of Dionysius, speaking of local names in the district of Laodicea, says the "Athan is god." The feminine of Athan, "The Lord," is Athan, "The Lady," which in the Attic dialect, is Athena. No doubt, Minerva is commonly represented as a virgin; but, for all that, we learn from Strabo that at Hierapytna in Crete (the coins of which city, says Muller, Dorians have the Athenian symbols of Minerva upon them), she was said to be the mother of the Corybantes by Helius, or "The Sun." It is certain that the Egyptian Minerva, who was the prototype of the Athenian goddess, was a mother, and was styled "Goddess Mother," or "Mother of the Gods." — See Wilkinson, vol. iv, p. 285.

²⁹ Hislop, Alexander (1916, Second American Edition 1959), 20-21. *The Two Babylons*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers.

³⁰ Brantl, George, ed. (1962). *Catholicism*, 232. New York: Braziller.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 234.

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The length of suffering in purgatory is determined by the person's degree of sinfulness. The time of suffering can be shortened through the prayers and good works of living adherents. This is based on 2 Maccabees 12:43–45, 45. The souls of the departed are purified by fire in purgatory, as suggested in 1 Corinthians 3:14–15, according to Catholic interpretation.³²

4. Infant baptism

“Baptism is the sacrament that frees man from original sin and from personal guilt, that makes him a member of Christ and his church.”³³ The Council of Trent affirmed that (water) baptism is necessary for salvation, that baptism of infants is legitimate, that adult believer's baptism is unnecessary, that keeping the law is still essential—faith alone is inadequate.³⁴ The core of Roman Catholic teaching on baptism is that it is necessary for salvation and, in fact, produces salvation. It also unites the person with the church. Catholics also teach a “baptism of desire” for those who desire to be baptized by water but are prevented.³⁵

5. Confession of sin to a priest

Roman Catholicism teaches that Christ forgives sins through the priest at confession or penance. The outward sign that the confessor has been forgiven is the statement of absolution by the priest. He has the authority through Christ's statement in John 20:23. In this the priest has the power to forgive or retain sins.³⁶ A good confession requires five things: examination of conscience, sorrow for sins, a firm intention of avoiding sins in the future, confession of sins, willingness to perform the penance determined by the priest.³⁷

The sacrament of penance is described in the Council of Florence in 1439:

The fourth sacrament is penance, of which as it were the matter consists of the actions of the penitent which are in three parts. The first of these is contrition of heart, which consists of sorrow for sin committed and the intention not to sin in the future. The second is oral confession, whereby the sinner confesses to the priest all the sins he remembers in their entirety. The third is satisfaction for sins according to the judgment of the priest, which is mainly achieved by prayer, fasting and almsdeeds. The form of this sacrament is the words of absolution spoken by the priest when he says: I absolve thee etc.... The minister of this sacrament is the priest who has the

³² Enns, *The Moody handbook of theology*, 533.

³³ Rahner, ed., *Teaching of the Catholic Church*, 265.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 269–71.

³⁵ Enns, *The Moody handbook of theology*, 533.

³⁶ Fox, *The Catholic Faith*, 197.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 199.

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authority either ordinary or by commission from his superior, to absolve. The effect of this sacrament is absolution from sins.³⁸

6. The petitioning of saints in heaven for their prayers

Roman Catholicism has “saints” one can pray to in order to gain a particular blessing. For example, Saint Gianna Beretta Molla is the patron saint of fertility. Francis of Assisi is the patron saint of animals. There are multiple patron saints of healing and comfort. Nowhere is even a hint of this taught in Scripture. Just as the Roman pantheon of gods had a god of love, a god of peace, a god of war, a god of strength, a god of wisdom, etc., so the Catholic Church has a saint who is “in charge” over each of these and many other categories. Many Roman cities had a god specific to the city, and the Catholic Church provided “patron saints” for cities as well.

7. Apostolic succession

The idea that the Roman bishop is the vicar of Christ, the supreme leader of the Christian Church, is utterly foreign to the Word of God. The supremacy of the Roman bishop (the papacy) was created with the support of the Roman emperors. While most other bishops (and Christians) resisted the idea of the Roman bishop being supreme, the Roman bishop eventually rose to supremacy, again, due to the power and influence of the Roman emperors. After the western half of the Roman Empire collapsed, the popes took on the title that had previously belonged to the Roman emperors—Pontifex Maximus.

8. The equal authority of church tradition and Scripture.

Whereas Protestantism holds that authority for faith and practice rests solely with the sixty-six books of Scripture, Roman Catholicism teaches that authority rests with the apocryphal writings (extra-biblical books accepted as canonical by Catholics) and church tradition as declared by the church Fathers and the papal pronouncements—as well as with the Bible. This disagreement over authority marks a foundational difference between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

Roman Catholicism recognizes fifteen books as authoritative in addition to the sixty-six books of Scripture. These are known as the Apocrypha (meaning “hidden”) and are First and Second Esdras, Tobit, Judith, additions to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Song of the Three Children, Susanna, Bell and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasseh, and First and Second Maccabees.

³⁸ Rahner, ed., *Teaching of the Catholic Church*, 307–8. Enns, *The Moody handbook of theology*, 535.

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The Council of Trent in 1546 officially decreed the authority of tradition as well as Scripture in this statement.

The holy, ecumenical and general Council of Trent ... keeps this constantly in view, namely, that the purity of the Gospel may be preserved in the Church after the errors have been removed.... It also clearly perceives that these truths and rules are contained in the written books and unwritten traditions which have come down to us, having been received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ himself ... Following, then, the example of the orthodox Fathers, it receives and venerates with the same piety and reverence all the books of both Old and New Testaments—for God is the author of both—together with all traditions concerning faith and morals, for they come from the mouth of Christ or are inspired by the Holy Spirit and have been preserved in continuous succession in the Catholic Church.³⁹

The Council of Trent also decreed the Latin Vulgate as the standard Bible for reading and teaching. A further important decree of the council was that the Roman church is to be the interpreter of Scripture.

Further it determines, in order to restrain irresponsible minds, that no one shall presume in matters of faith or morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine to rely on his own conceptions to turn Scripture to his own meaning, contrary to the meaning that Holy Mother Church has held and holds—for it belongs to her to judge the true sense and interpretation of Holy Scripture—or to interpret the Scripture in a way contrary to the unanimous consensus of the Fathers.⁴⁰

This is important to note. The Roman church declared it is the official interpreter of the faith; no one is to interpret Scriptures for himself in a way that is contrary to the Roman Catholic interpretation.⁴¹

9. Indulgences

An indulgence is the extra-sacramental remission of the temporal punishment due, in God's justice, to sin that has been forgiven, which remission is granted by the Church in the exercise of the power of the keys, through the application of the

³⁹ Josef Neuner, S.J., and Heinrich Roos, S.J. (1967) *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*, edited by Karl Rahner, S.J., 59. Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁴¹ Enns, *The Moody handbook of theology*, 528–529.

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superabundant merits of Christ and of the saints, and for some just and reasonable motive.⁴²

10. The ordinances of the church functioning as sacraments

THE SEVEN ROMAN CATHOLIC SACRAMENTS ⁴³			
Sacrament	Procedure	Significance	Vatican II Emphasis
Baptism	Priest performs the rite on infants.	Produces rebirth, "infant Christian." Necessary for salvation. Frees one from original sin and guilt. Unites one to Christ and the church.	Baptism to receive greater emphasis. Convert to receive instruction beforehand. Illustrates commitment to Christ. Emphasizes unity of all members in Christ.
Confirmation	Bishop lays hands on person whereby they receive the Holy Spirit.	Necessary sequence after baptism. With baptism, part of the "Sacrament of initiation." Person receives the Holy Spirit, bringing one to maturity and dedication.	Endeavor to unite baptism and confirmation as one act of initiation. Separating the two sacraments suggests there are "degrees of membership in church."
Eucharist	Priest celebrates Mass, Upon pronouncing, "This is my body" bread and wine turn to body and blood of Christ.	Mass is ongoing sacrifice of Christ. Same as Calvary except Mass in unbloody. In Mass, Christ offers atonement for sin. Participant receives forgiveness from venial sins. Eating the bread is eating Christ.	Frequent participation encouraged to increase "union with Christ." Ceremony now involves lay people. Shorter, simpler ceremony; more use of Scripture.

⁴² Catholic Answers, <https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/indulgences> Retrieved: April 15, 2021.

⁴³ Enns, *The Moody handbook of theology*, 536–538.

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Confession (Penance)	Three steps: 1. Sorrow for sin. 2. Oral confession to priest. 3. Absolution of sins by priest.	Having confessed all known sins to priest, and stated intention not to sin in the future, the adherent receives absolution from sins by priest.	New view of sin: distorted personal relationship and motives. Allows for general confession and absolution. General confession performed in service of singing, Scripture, prayer, sermon, self-examination, confession, absolution.
Holy Orders	Ordination to office: bishop, priest, deacon. As successor to the apostles, bishop ordains priest.	Confers on recipient power to sanctify others. Priest receives power to offer body and blood of Christ and to remit sins. Priests mediates between God and men as Christ mediated between God and men.	Greater involvement of lay people in ministry. Laypeople to develop/use gifts in church. Reduced distinction between priest and people. Priest considered "brother among brothers."
Marriage	Vows are exchanged in presence of a priest.	Sign of union of Christ and church. Indissoluble because marriage of Christ and the church is indissoluble.	Marriage is not just for procreation. Greater emphasis on love in marriage. Mass permitted at weddings with baptized non-Catholics.
Anointing the Sick	Bishop consecrates oil. Person near death anointed by priest.	Removes infirmity and obstacles left by sin, which prevent soul from glory. Prepares people for death by making them like the risen Christ. Prepares soul for eternity.	Broadened usage: change from "extreme unction" to "anointing the sick." Used to strengthen/heal body and soul. Sick person shares in readings, prayers.

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So, if the origin of the Catholic Church is not in the teachings of Jesus and His apostles, as recorded in the New Testament, what is the true origin of the Catholic Church?

For the first 280 years of Christian history, Christianity was banned by the Roman Empire, and Christians were terribly persecuted. This changed after the “conversion” of the Roman Emperor Constantine. Constantine provided religious toleration with the Edict of Milan in AD 313, effectively lifting the ban on Christianity. Later, in AD 325, Constantine called the Council of Nicea in an attempt to unify Christianity. Constantine envisioned Christianity as a religion that could unite the Roman Empire, which at that time was beginning to fragment and divide.

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While this may have seemed to be a positive development for the Christian church, the results were anything but positive. Just as Constantine refused to fully embrace the Christian faith but continued many of his pagan beliefs and practices, so the Christian church that Constantine and his successors promoted progressively became a mixture of true Christianity and Roman paganism.

Of course, the Roman Catholic Church denies the pagan origin of its beliefs and practices. The Roman Catholic Church disguises its pagan beliefs under layers of complicated theology and church tradition. Recognizing that many of its beliefs and practices are utterly foreign to Scripture, the Catholic Church is forced to deny the authority and sufficiency of Scripture.

The origin of the Roman Catholic Church is the tragic compromise of Christianity with the pagan religions that surrounded it. *Instead of proclaiming the gospel and converting the pagans, the Roman Catholic Church “Christianized” the pagan religions and “paganized” Christianity!* By blurring the differences and erasing the distinctions, the Roman Catholic Church made itself attractive to the idolatrous people of the Roman Empire. One result was the Roman Catholic Church becoming the supreme religion in the Roman world for centuries. However, another result was the most dominant form of Christianity apostatizing from the true gospel of Jesus Christ and the true proclamation of God’s Word.

“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”

~ 2 Timothy 4:3–4 (ESV)

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SUMMARY EVALUATION OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

While Roman Catholic theology has a number of doctrines in common with conservative Protestant theology (Trinity, deity of Christ, etc.), there are many deviations from orthodox theology. A fundamental difference is the authority of tradition in addition to the authority of the Bible. In its outworking, tradition in a sense supersedes the authority of the Bible because tradition and church councils make decrees that countermand and/or add to the explicit teachings of Scripture. The recognition of the Apocrypha is a further deviation. The place of Mary in Roman Catholic theology removes Christ from His rightful place as sole mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5). Also, the entire system of sacraments is a genuine rejection of the true grace of God and salvation by grace. Salvation in Roman Catholic theology is not by grace through faith but a complex adherence to the sacraments and rituals as legislated by the church hierarchy.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Enns, *The Moody handbook of theology*, 538–539.