

Beliefs of the Original Catholic Church

Could a remnant group have continuing apostolic succession?

What did early Church of God leaders, Greco-Roman saints, and others record?

By

Bob Thiel, Ph.D.



"Polycarp ... in our days was an apostolic and prophetic teacher, bishop/overseer in Smyrna of the Catholic Church. For every word which he uttered from his mouth both was fulfilled and will be fulfilled." (Martyrdom of Polycarp, 16:2)

"Contend for the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3, Douay-Rheims)

Are all professing Christian churches, other than the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholics, Protestant?

What did the original catholic church believe?

Is there a church with those original beliefs today?

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Art: Front cover edited Polycarp engraving by Michael Burghers, ca 1685, originally sourced from Wikipedia. Back cover photo of Ephesus Amphitheater by Joyce Thiel.

Scriptural quotes are mostly taken from Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox approved Bibles like the Challoner Douay-Rheims (DRB), Original Rheims NT of 1582 (RNT 1582), New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), Eastern Orthodox Bible (EOB), Orthodox Study Bible (OSB), New American Bible (NAB), Revised Edition (NABRE), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), English Standard Version-Catholic Edition (ESVCE) plus also the A Faithful Version (AFV) and some other translations. The capitalized term 'Catholic' most often refers to the Roman Catholic Church in quotes. The use of these brackets { } in this book means that this author inserted something, normally like a scriptural reference, into a quote. Note: although early texts from post-New Testament writers are not scripture, and some were not preserved as written (as some were tampered with), overall they give clues and other information on what early Christians and other professors of Christ believed. Most of the non-scriptural texts quoted come from either Greco-Roman sources or at least sources generally accepted by Greco-Roman scholars.

About the Author

The author, Dr. Bob Thiel, was baptized, took catechism classes, confirmed, and raised Roman Catholic as a child. He also attended Roman Catholic school for part of his elementary school years and studied Latin in high school. From his youth, he has always striven to hold to the original Christian faith.

After seeing shockingly major scriptural issues with Roman Catholic and Protestant teachings, he was later baptized by a Church of God (COG) minister in 1977. He was confirmed as a member of the “original catholic church” in 2008 by formerly Armenian Apostolic Orthodox catholic, but then original apostolic catholic Church of God clergyman evangelist, Dibar Apartian in France. Dr. Thiel later had hands laid on him related to ordination in 2011 and 2017 from other long-time ordained COG ministers (Gaylyn Bonjour, Evans Ochieng, and Samuel Gyeabour).

Though interested in church history all his life, this interest intensified after one of his numerous trips to Vatican City, which then led to his formal studies in church history. Dr. Thiel also made numerous trips to other locations (such as Greece, Israel, and Turkey) where he also learned about early Christianity as well as aspects of the Eastern Orthodox Church. He has a graduate degree in information systems (M.S., USC) along with doctorates in nutrition science (Ph.D. UIU) and early Christianity (Th.D., TGSAT).

The Bible shows that Jesus was attacked for His relatively young physical age in relationship to history (cf. John 8:5-7), His not accepting certain established religious traditions which conflicted with scripture (Matthew 15:1-9), and because of false statements about Him (e.g. John 8:41b). Jesus’ response to those providing false statements was:

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. ⁴⁶ Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? ⁴⁷ He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God. (John 8:44-47, OSB).

Dr. Thiel notes that the apostles were disdained for not being trained in institutions with worldly acceptance (Acts 4:13). Their response to religious authorities was, “we can not but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20, DRB).

He has noted that because of false and maligning information about himself and/or various Church of God groups (particularly on the Internet), that many prefer to ‘attack the messenger’ instead of dealing with the scriptural and historical proofs he and others have provided in *Continuing Church of God* literature.

The truth is the truth. Dr. Thiel’s view is, like that of Jesus, “if I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?” Though unlike Jesus, Dr. Thiel is not asserting that he, himself, must always be right. But he asserts that showing proofs from the word of God, as well as from actual historical facts, is something that should be believed.

Author's Preface

The fascinating story of early Christianity has certainly been the subject of many books.

Why another?

I contend that most have overlooked one or more vital areas of inquiry. Plus, most have failed to deal with major contradictions in teachings among those they often consider to have been saints/true Christians.

My purpose for this book is to delve in a fairly unique way into some of the most often neglected beliefs of the original catholic church. It does not try to cover all of them (which would likely result in multiple volumes to discuss in proper depth), but enough to show the reader the connection between the original beliefs and that of the *Continuing* Church of God today.

Some revelations may surprise, even shock, some readers. But hopefully you will be willing to “prove all things” (1 Thessalonians 5:21, DRB) and have “the love of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:10, NJB). Do not be deceived like the bulk of humanity is prophesied to be (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). According to many early and later writers, there were two significantly different groups, with one that continued to hold to the original faith, and another which took a different view.

In addition to citing scripture, in this book I will offer testimony from early catholic and other scholars to back up the authenticity of those early beliefs. This includes primary, non-primary, conventional, and unconventional sources—which also tend to validate the continuity of those beliefs as well. And yes, I often come to conclusions that differ from the cited non-biblical authors. This book is part of a documented search for truth. Similar to the Apostle Paul, I realize that in the flesh we only “know in part” (1 Corinthians 13:9, DRB). So, undoubtedly future revisions to this book will be warranted. Yet, the basic concept about what the truth church taught and that a church still teaches those truths today is valid, despite some confusion on certain leaders and their teachings.

Regarding original Christianity, the Book of Acts reported that “everywhere, people speak against this sect” (Acts 28:22, EOB).

Sadly, that often remains so in the 21st century.

Yet in the 1st century, those of Berea/Beroea “welcomed the word very readily; every day they studied the scriptures to check whether it was true” (Acts 17:11, NJB). They were willing to change when they saw the truth—despite it being talked against (Acts 28:22). Their scriptural example still should be followed in the 21st century.

This book is for readers that have a genuine love of the truth who are willing to be like the biblical Bereans.

Foreword

One could assume, as I did, that a book titled *Belief of the Original Catholic Church*, might chronicle the beliefs that are still held today by the Catholic Church that I grew up in. I was raised as a Roman Catholic, but am currently unaffiliated with any church. As a child, it was so simple: I got baptized as an infant and confirmed as a teen. I received a beautiful catechism booklet with answers to all the questions we might have. The only knowledge I had of the Bible was from the priest, our “conduit to God,” during the “Gospel” part of the mass.

This book documents original beliefs, as well as later changes, on matters such as baptism, the canon of scripture, creeds, crosses, foods, the Godhead, the Gospel of the Kingdom, heaven, holidays/holydays, immortality, liturgy/church services, military service, the name of church, the purpose of humanity, and salvation. Additionally, this book has a documented view of church history and apostolic succession that relatively few have even considered.

Regardless of your background, Dr. Thiel’s offering in this book will make you contemplate the beliefs you have and the practices you follow if you claim Christianity. I have known Dr. Thiel for over 20 years. I have witnessed his dedication to research, traveling around the world to early Christian sites to pursue original sources, learning enough of early languages to seek contemporary meaning, and welcoming input from those with historical expertise. He is the most honest man, in business and in life that I have ever known, and one of very few I have met that lives his life true to his beliefs, often at financial and personal cost.

It is fascinating to discover how, when, where and why beliefs and practices have been renounced, replaced or forgotten since Jesus walked the earth. This book will help you learn about Christians that held to Jesus’ original teachings and continuously obeyed His laws.

Read this book with courage, an open heart, and a receptive mind.

D. M. Bruscia, M.Ed.

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1. Inquiry and the True Church

Many books have tried to tell the story of early Christianity.

Yet, nearly all of them overlook much of what the original church taught.

This has been confirmed by scholars, including the late French Cardinal Jean-Guenole-Marie Danielou.

Dr. Danielou wrote that church history has generally been mistaught by downplaying the fact that the Romans considered Christianity a Jewish sect, and not a new religion. Cardinal Danielou specifically wrote that not properly teaching the truth about the 'Jewishness' of early Christianity has led to a "false picture of Christian history" (Daniélou J, Cardinal. *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*. Translated by John A. Baker. The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1964, p. 2).

Church history is more important than most lay people realize.

Leaders in various churches called "catholic," however, have properly asserted that the truth about it is quite important.

For example, on March 4, 2019, then Pope Francis stated:

The Church is not afraid of history, rather, loves it and would like to love it more and better, as God loves it! (Grogan C. Vatican to open WWII secret archives of Pope Pius XII. Catholic News Agency, March 4, 2019)

Likewise, Bartholomew I, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople of the Eastern Orthodox Catholic Church, wrote:

Whoever believes that Orthodoxy has the truth does not fear dialogue, because truth has never been endangered by dialogue. (Bartholomew I. Patriarchal and Synodal Encyclical on the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Prot. No. 213, February 21, 2010)

An Eastern Orthodox bishop, Timothy 'Kallistos' Ware, wrote:

Christianity, if true, has nothing to fear from honest inquiry. (Ware T. *The Orthodox Church*. Penguin Books, London, 1997, p.201)

Documenting the beliefs of original catholic leaders should assist anyone pursuing honest inquiry. Many will be surprised by the documented positions in this book, and hopefully will be unafraid of the truth in history.

It is the hope of this author that those who have the “love of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:10, NJB) can learn more about it, respond to it, and not be deceived like the rest of the world are prophesied to be (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

Pope Benedict XVI taught:

The Church considers that her most important mission in today’s culture is to keep alive the search for truth ... (Church’s Mission Is to Seek Truth, Says Pope. Zenit. May 12, 2010).

This book is intended for those in today’s culture who are interested in the search for truth.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches:

2104 All men are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and his Church, and to embrace it and hold on to it as they come to know it. (Catechism of the Catholic Church. Imprimatur Potest +Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. Doubleday, NY, 1995, p. 566)

According to *Catholic Answers*, the reason to “Catholicize” professors of Christ who are not part of the Church of Rome is to give them the fullness of truth:

They are Christians, but they have some serious errors. ... So we want to Catholicize them. That’s right. Give them the fullness of the truth. (Kellett C, Staples T. Did Baby Jesus Have the Beatific Vision? Catholic Answers, October 31, 2019. Catholic.com accessed 05/07/20)

Hopefully, all who see the original and true “catholic church” beliefs will be willing to accept “the fullness of the truth” instead of being stuck in non-biblical paradigms of human traditions that differ.

The Apostle Paul told Christians:

²¹ But prove all things; hold fast that which is good. (1 Thessalonians 5:21, DRB).

Perhaps YOU are one who is willing to believe the Apostle Paul and prove all things and hold fast that which is good?

This book has both biblical and historical ‘proofs’ from sources mainly accepted as valid (and often from those considered to have been saints) by the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholic churches.

Many will be surprised, and some greatly shocked, to learn many of the beliefs that were held by the original catholic church.

This book goes into the first few times the term “catholic church” appears in the earliest Christian literature. While that is something others have noted, this may be the first book to provide as many quotes

of teachings and practices of the original catholic church that faithful Christians have continued to hold throughout the church age.

As far as a region being faithful to original Christianity and scripture goes, notice the following:

The lineage of bishops in the region of Asia Minor may be the most important area of all for crystallizing Christian theology by providing a direct link between the writings of the Scripture and the tradition of the fathers. (Simons J. "Ecclesia enim per universum orbem": Unity in Ephesus as Claimed by Irenaeus. Wheaton College Graduate School, April 2016, p. 57).

That is part of why the reader will see that the early bishops in the region of Asia Minor (including Antioch which is just south of its border) are often quoted in this book as advocating original Christianity. Asia Minor writers (most of whom were bishops/pastors) are a most important link to see how biblical doctrines were understood.

Names and Terms

Regarding the term "Christian," the New Testament records:

²⁶ ... It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians'. (Acts 11:26, NJB)

In this book, the term "Greco-Roman" normally refers to the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches or leaders/scholars from those churches. The Eastern Orthodox Church is officially known as the Orthodox Catholic Church, but the term Eastern will often be used in this book as that is more commonly understood in English-speaking lands. The Romans prefer to call theirs the "Catholic Church," but for historical purposes and for accuracy, the term Roman Catholic is often used here to show that this is the church based out of Vatican City and whose 'cathedra' (which they define as the spiritual chair of succession) is in Rome at St. John's Lateran cathedral.

Some historical documents cited in this book may use the terms Romans or Latins for the Church of Rome, whereas some use the terms Greeks or the East for the Orthodox Catholic Church. The abbreviation COG stands for "Church of God" and CCOG stands for the *Continuing* Church of God. While Greco-Romans sometimes use the term "Church of God," unless otherwise noted (or in a quote from a Greco-Roman source), COG is intended to refer to groups holding doctrinal positions closer to the CCOG than the modern Greco-Romans.

This book has many quotes from people considered to be saints or scholars by the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, as well as many considered as saints or scholars by the *Continuing* Church of God. This book is not intended to bash other faiths or their members, but to demonstrate from many sources widely accepted by Greco-Roman Catholics and Protestants which church looks to be the truest to the original catholic beliefs. It should NOT be considered "Catholic bashing" to quote the Bible and sources from or accepted by Greco-Roman scholars to support truthful and logical conclusions.

The Church?

The Eastern Orthodox have written:

It is agreed that properly speaking, the word 'Church' refers to people, not to a building. ...

The ... *Catechism of the Orthodox Church* contains this question and answer:

Q. Why is the Church called *Catholic*, or *Universal*, which is what catholic means?

A. Because she is not limited to any place, time, or people, but contains true believers of all places, times, and peoples.

... the Church, strictly speaking, is the Body of Christ, the eschatological unity of all those who have been united to Christ's life in all times and places. This is the foundational use of 'Church' in the New Testament. (Cleenewerck L. Appendix B: Church and Apostles. THE EASTERN – GREEK ORTHODOX BIBLE: NEW TESTAMENT, 2013, pp. 601,604,606)

It is correct to conclude that a church is not a building, nor limited in ways many think. The Church is a spiritual organism consisting of followers of Jesus who possess the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9).

Now notice the following observation regarding doctrines from the 'East':

Most people in the West know very little about the doctrines of the Eastern and Near-Eastern Christian Churches. There are many churches under this umbrella such as Syrian, Nestorian, Armenian and other churches of Eastern tradition. (Zivadinovic D. REVISED and CORRECTED "SABBATH in the EAST." Andrews University, 2016)

And while many of the Eastern and Near-Eastern churches are very close doctrinally to the Western churches (Rome and many Protestants), there are "other churches of Eastern tradition" that strive to be closer to the original faith of the apostles in the East (Asia Minor/Antioch)—like the CCOG.

Notice the following Vatican report:

"From a Catholic perspective," the Vatican said, "**the term 'church' applies to the Catholic Church in communion with the bishop of Rome. It also applies to churches which are not in visible communion with the Catholic Church but have preserved the apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist, remaining true particular churches.** Other Christian communities which have not preserved the valid episcopacy and Eucharist are called 'ecclesial communities'" in official Catholic documents. (Wooden C. Vatican notes growing ecumenical consensus on what 'church' means. Crux, October 24, 2019)

Based on that **bolded** Vatican definition, the church known as the *Continuing* Church of God would be considered as a true church by the Vatican.

How so?

We have retained the original and valid Eucharist, have the clearest initial documented succession from the original apostles (to Polycarp, hence possess “the valid episcopacy”), and throughout history have remained true to the original apostolic faith, as this book helps document. In other pronouncements, the Vatican specifically includes as churches those that meet the above even if they broke off communion with the major church in Rome, which the COG did in the 2nd century A.D.

Another requirement to be a “church” according to the Vatican is to have a clergy that anoints the sick, baptizes, performs marriages, and conducts the “Eucharist” (which early church writers tied in with Jesus’ Passover instructions), all of which the ministry in the CCOG does.

The Original Faith

The *Rheims New Testament of 1582* (an English translation from the Latin) states:

³ ... contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

¹⁶ Take heed to thyself and to doctrine: be earnest in them (1 Timothy 4:16)

The *Eastern Orthodox Bible* states:

³ ... fight hard for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3)

¹⁶ Watch yourself and your teaching. Continue in these things! (1 Timothy 4:16)

The *Lamsa Bible* states:

³ ... earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. (Jude 3)

¹⁶ Take heed to yourself and to your doctrine; and be firm in them: for in doing this, you shall both save yourself and those who hear you. (1 Timothy 4:16)

The original apostles practiced what has been called Judeo-Christianity.

Once the original apostles were gone (all of which seemingly died in the first century, with the possibility that John lived until the start of the second century), who was supposed to contend for the original faith and be earnest in that doctrine?

Why, the true saints of course! The real Christians who practiced and held to the original faith (cf. Revelation 14:12).

Specifically, at first, the real saints of the 1st century, some of which lived into the 2nd century. And then others born later.

Theological scholars realize that “everyone in the first generation of Christianity was Jewish Christian” (Reed AY. Jewish-Christianity and the History of Judaism. J.C.B. Mohr Verlag, 2018, p. XXII)—they held to the original faith.

Consider also, that biblical warnings are given to NOT depart from the original faith. Not from a specific organization.

The Apostle John also confirmed that former point about those who failed to continue in what he taught (1 John 2:19) and that latter point when he wrote about a church group that started out as true that ended up not willing to accept him or other true believers (3 John 9-10). John pointed out that although they claimed to represent the original organization and they claimed that organization still existed, they did not continue with the original faith.

Further consider who will be with Jesus when He returns:

¹⁴ ... they that are with him are called, and elect, and faithful. (Revelation 17:14c, DRB)

¹⁴ ... those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful. (Revelation 17:14c, OSB)

It is those who truly hold to the original faith that are called, chosen, and faithful.

Who would that be today?

What were the beliefs of “original catholic church” and who was in it?

Can you prove which church is best contending for the original faith in the 21st century?

2. The Catholic Church of God

Let's consider church names. The Bible helps us document the original name of the Christian church.

What is the original name of the Christian church in the Bible?

Was the church called "catholic" in the Bible?

In this chapter, we will see how the name "*Continuing* Church of God" conveys Biblical teachings. Then we will look at the historical use of the term "catholic."

The first times we see the word "church" associated with a location or description is in Acts 8:1 & 11:22 which refer to the "church at/in Jerusalem." The next time is a reference to the "church ... at Antioch" (Acts 13:1).

The first time we see "church of" in the Bible is in Acts 20:28, where it is called "church of God."

Jesus said that Christians would be kept in His Father's name (John 17:12), which most often is simply "God" in the New Testament (over 1,300 times!), hence leading to the name "Church of God."

Many people are unaware that the predominant name of the true Church in the New Testament is "Church of God." Variants of this expression are clearly stated in singular and plural forms in twelve different places in the New Testament (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:16,22; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:5,15). The only other singular "church of" statement in scripture is a reference to the "church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23).

Throughout Christian history, the true church has normally used a version of the expression "Church of God" (or "Church/es of Christ," cf. Romans 16:16) though often with another term, like a geographic region (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) or another word, with it (1 Timothy 3:15).

However, critics tended to call members of the faithful Church of God other names (e.g. Acts 24:5). The true church is also called "holy" in Ephesians 5:27, though that is not used as a name.

The Church of God is not just some brand-new group, as some claim; it has continued for nearly 2,000 years, despite relocations, name variants, and organizational changes.

Since the true Church of God has continued from the time of the original apostles in Acts 2, and since the Bible teaches that 'Philadelphia' was to continue (cf. Hebrews 13:1, literal), the use of the name *Continuing* Church of God helps convey those biblical concepts and historical facts.

The Apostle Paul wrote the following mentioning the church:

² PAUL called to be an Apostle of JESUS Christ, by the will of God, and Sothenes a brother, To the **Church of God** that is at Corinth, to the sanctified in Christ JESUS, called to be saints, with all that invoke the name of our Lord JESUS Christ in every place of theirs and ours (1 Corinthians 1:2, DRB).

¹ PAUL an Apostle of JESUS Christ, by the will of God, and Timothy our brother: to the **Church of God** that is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in all Achaia (2 Corinthians 1:1, DRB).

¹³ ... I persecuted the **Church of God** ... (Galatians 1:13, NJB/OSB)

¹⁴ For you, brethren, are become followers of the **churches of God** which are in Judea, in Christ Jesus: for you also have suffered the same things from your own countrymen, even as they have from the Jews, (1 Thessalonians 2:14, DRB)

¹⁵ But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to converse in the house of God, which is the **CHURCH of the living God**, the pillar and ground of truth (1 Timothy 3:15, DRB).

(Note that this author bolded the above, but did not capitalize anything--capitalization was by the translators.)

The Roman document that is commonly called *1 Clement* begins with:

The Church of God which sojourneth in Rome to the Church of God which sojourneth in Corinth, to them which are called and sanctified by the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (As cited in Lightfoot JB. The Apostolic Fathers, Macmillan & Co. 1891)

So yes, the first document that has been found from the Roman church referred to itself as the Church of God, not the "Catholic Church." The term "catholic church" is not found in that 1st century document.

In the 2nd century, Bishop/Pastor Polycarp wrote from Smyrna:

Polycarp and the presbyters with him to the church of God that sojourns at Philippi. (Polycarp. Letter to the Philippians. In Holmes M. The Apostolic Fathers--Greek Text and English Translations, 3rd printing. Baker Books, Grand Rapids (MI), 1999, p. 207)

After Polycarp's martyrdom, those in his area wrote:

The church of God which sojourns at Smyrna to the church of God which sojourns in Philomelium. (The Martyrdom of Polycarp. In Holmes, p. 227)

Thus, some of the earliest post-New Testament Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholic-accepted writings (which also tend to be accepted by Protestant scholars) clearly refer to the church as the Church of God.

The Catholic Church of God in Smyrna

But what about church being called “Catholic”?

The word ‘catholic’ means ‘about whole’ ‘according to the whole’ or ‘throughout the whole’ or ‘complete’ and has come to mean ‘universal.’

The first time the term “catholic church” has been found in ancient writings is in a letter from Ignatius to the Church of God in Smyrna (Holmes, footnote 109, p. 191). It was not in a document related to the Church of Rome until almost a century later (Ibid).

Being raised Roman Catholic, this author was surprised to see that the earliest references to the “catholic church” were not references to Rome.

Notice also the following comments from over a century ago from some not part of the COG:

The word “Catholic” had its origin in the Greek language; and the things it stands for in Christianity originated at a time when the Greek language was the religious language of Christians in the West as well as in the East, in Rome and Africa and Gaul, as well as in Alexandria, Asia, and Antioch. The word is not found in the Greek Bible of the Old Testament, or the New Testament. It is an adjective compounded of the preposition κατά, meaning in this connection “throughout,” and the adjective ὅλος, “whole,” properly in the accusative, ὅλον or ὅλην, in accordance with the noun to which it is attached. ... We first meet the word in the epistle of Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, to the church at Smyrna, early in the second century ... We find three uses of the word in the letter of the church of Smyrna on the martyrdom of Polycarp, its bishop, soon after the martyrdom in 155 or 156. There is no good reason to question their genuineness. (Briggs CA. CATHOLIC-THE NAME AND THE THING. The American Journal of Theology, Volume VII, JULY 1903, Number 3, pp. 417-418)

The Catholic Church was founded in the East by the apostles thirty years before Paul visited Rome. Pentecost was a. d. 33, Hence, the original “Catholic Apostolic Church” was not the Roman Church at all, but the Greek Church in the early days of the apostles. (Canwright DM. The Lord’s Day., 2nd ed. Fleming H. Revell Company, 1915, p. 84)

While 31 or 34 or 35 A.D. is a more historically accurate start year, yes, the original apostolic catholic church began in the East after originating in Jerusalem.

Here are some quotes from Bishop/Pastor Ignatius of Antioch, in the early 2nd century:

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the church of God the Father and of the beloved Jesus Christ at Smyrna in Asia ... Wherever the bishop appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church. (Ignatius. Letter to the Smyrnaeans, 0.0., 8.2. In Holmes, pp. 185-191)

So, Ignatius of Antioch refers to the Church of God in Smyrna and later says that the catholic church is where Jesus is. The bishop there, he would be referring to in this case, was Polycarp of Smyrna. In Ignatius' extant letters (including one to Rome) he never refers to any bishop/pastor in or near Rome. Those would include the first-claimed Roman Catholic "popes," like Linus, Cletus, Clement, Evaristus, or Alexander. Nor does he mention the term 'catholic church' in relationship to Rome.

Furthermore, according to Roman Catholic scholars, there are no clear early records proving the existence of any Roman bishops that early in the 2nd century (e.g. Sullivan F.A. *From Apostles to Bishops: the development of the episcopacy in the early church*. Newman Press, Mahwah (NJ), 2001, pp. 13-15, McBrien, Richard P. *Lives of the Popes: The Pontiffs from St. Peter to Benedict XVI*. Harper, San Francisco, 2005 updated ed., p. 396, and Duffy E. *Saints & Sinners: A History of the Popes*. Yale University Press, New Haven (CT), 2002, pp. 2,6; Jedin H, ed. *History of the Church, Volume 1*. Crossroad, New York, 1993, p. 44). While Asia Minor and Antioch clearly had bishops by the early 2nd century, that was not the case for Rome (ibid, p. 44).

The fact that it was in Ignatius' letter to Smyrna that the term "catholic church" was first used is known and accepted by Roman Catholic scholars. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* specifically states (**bolding mine**):

The combination "the Catholic Church" (*he katholike ekklesia*) is found for the first time in the letter of St. Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans, written about the year 110. The words run: "Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be, even as where Jesus may be, there is the *universal [katholike]* Church." However, in view of the context, some difference of opinion prevails as to the precise connotation of the italicized word ... by the beginning of the fourth century it seems to have almost entirely supplanted the primitive and more general meaning ... The reference (c. 155) to "the bishop of the catholic church in Smyrna" (Letter on the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, xvi), a phrase which necessarily presupposes a more technical use of the word, is due, some critics think, to interpolation ... (Thurston H. Catholic. Transcribed by Gordon A. Jenness. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume III. Published 1908. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat, November 1, 1908. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York)

Although Ignatius did use the transliterated expression, *he katholike ekklesia* (ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία) in his letter, understand that he used it when addressing the Church of God at Smyrna in Asia Minor. That is the main region through which the *Continuing* Church of God traces its descent after the deaths of the apostles Peter, Paul, and John. The name "Continuing" captures how this church continues to faithfully preach their message in an unstable world influenced by Satan's deceptions.

Ignatius did not use the term for "catholic" in his letter to the Romans. Therefore, **in a historical sense, the Church of God in Smyrna was (or at least an important part of) the original "catholic church."** Please read that factual statement again.

Acts 9:31

Perhaps it should be noted that it has been speculated by some lay people that an expression in Acts 9:31 (related to the churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria) might truly be transliterated as “churches catholic.”

However, it is a somewhat different Greek expression (ἐκκλησία καθ’ ὅλης) than those used by Ignatius (ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία) or the expression later in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* (καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας). “Church(es) throughout all” or “Assembly throughout all” seems to be a more linguistically accurate translation than “churches catholic” in Acts 9:31 (Rude N. Paper on Beginning and End, Part 1 to Dr. Thiel, 03/03/2011).

Furthermore, here is how the original Rheims New Testament renders the first portion of Acts 9:31:

“The CHURCH truly through all Jewry and Galilee and Samaria had peace ...”

That is a reasonable portrayal. Therefore, to suggest that Acts 9:31 is precisely using the term “Catholic Church” as a name does not appear to be correct. However, Acts 9:31 somewhat supports the view that some version of the term “catholic” can be used as a partial descriptor of the true church.

The Martyrdom of Polycarp, the Smyrnaeans, and Antioch

The Smyrnaeans wrote a document known as *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* which seems to have been the second document we still possess that contains the expression translated as “catholic church”:

The church of God which sojourns at Smyrna to the Church of God which sojourns in Philomelium and to all the congregations of the Holy and Catholic Church in every place ... the elect, of whom this most admirable Polycarp was one, having in our own times been an apostolic and prophetic teacher, and bishop of the Catholic Church which is in Smyrna. For every word that went out of his mouth either has been or shall yet be accomplished. (The Smyrnaeans. The Encyclical Epistle of the Church at Smyrna Concerning the Martyrdom of the Holy Polycarp, 0:1, 16.2. In Roberts A, Donaldson J, eds. Ante-Nicene Fathers. Volume 4, 1885. Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody (MA), printing 1999, p. 42)

Therefore, by looking at Ignatius’ *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* as well as the Smyrnaeans *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, it is clear that it was Polycarp’s church, the Smyranean Church of God, that the oldest literature points to as the original “catholic church.” (Note: this book has used lower case for the term “catholic church” in many discussions here because the term, according to most scholars, was used originally as more of a description than a title.) By the time of Polycarp’s death, though, the churches in Asia Minor and Antioch were in communion with each other, yet they were NOT in communion/fellowship with the predominant churches in Rome or Alexandria.

But also note that Polycarp was listed by the Smyrnaeans as “an apostolic and prophetic teacher, and bishop of the Catholic Church which is in Smyrna.” This points to the declaration that Polycarp had apostolic succession and should have been considered to have a/the mantle of top leadership of the known faithful prior to his death.

Because it had succession from the apostles (as well as early writings), one could say that the Smyrna church was the original apostolic catholic Church of God. This view was carried forward into the 3rd century in Smyrna via Pionius.

Getting back to *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* itself, scholar Gerd Buschmann says that document is “catholic-normative” and displays “the dogmatic common sense of the proto-Catholic Church” (Weidmann FW. Reviewed Work: *Das Martyrium des Polykarp* by Gerd Buschmann. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 120, No. 3 Autumn, 2001, pp. 585-587).

Yet, that is somewhat misleading. Instead, a more logical view would be that the original portions of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* should be considered part of the original, not “proto” needing to be changed, catholic church. And, if the *Martyrdom of Polycarp’s* statement related to Polycarp, “For every word that went out of his mouth either has been or shall yet be accomplished,” is accurate related to doctrine—that doctrine should NOT change!

In the mid-3rd century, presbyter Pionius of Smyrna (who allegedly wrote *The Life of Polycarp* based on ancient manuscripts) said he was part of the catholic church:

On the second day of the sixth month, on the occasion of a great Sabbath, and on the anniversary of the blessed martyr Polycarp, while the persecution of Decius was still on, there were arrested the presbyter Pionius, ... a presbyter of the Catholic Church. ... It was Saturday ... Polemon the temple verger came in on them with his men in order to seek out the Christians and drag them off ...

“Pionius, ... “Are you a Christian?” asked Polemon.

“Yes,” said Pionius.

Polemon the verger said: “What church do you belong to?”

“The Catholic Church,” was the answer; “with Christ there is no other.” (The Martyrdom of Pionius and his Companions. Text from H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. Oxford, 1972, pp. 137, 147)

So, the above account points to some type of a Sabbath-keeping “Catholic Church” in Smyrna. Note: This particular “great Sabbath” is believed by certain scholars to have taken place on the first Day of Unleavened Bread; (see Lightfoot JB. *S. Ignatius. S. Polycarp: Revised Texts with Instructions, Notes, Dissertations, and Translations*, Volume 1, 2nd edition. Macmillan, 1889, pp. 45,702), however for it to have fallen on a Saturday, it would have been the 7th, the last, Day of Unleavened Bread in either 249 or 252 A.D.

When Pionius stated that there was no other true church than the catholic church, Smyrna and the rest of Asia Minor was not in fellowship with predominant churches in Rome or Alexandria (cf. Eusebius. *The History of the Church*, Book VII, Chapter V, Verse I. Digireads.com, 2005, p. 147). Hence, Pionius was not

referring to the Roman or Eastern Orthodox Catholic churches that were confederate at that time. Pionius also did not eat biblically unclean meats, but the Greco-Romans had adopted that practice in the 2nd century according to the pseudepigraphal *Epistle of Barnabas* and the less-than-fully-accurate *Liber Pontificalis*.

It should be mentioned that there is some controversy associated with the expression “catholic church” in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, as there are differing manuscripts with and without it (Holmes, footnote 22, p. 241; Dehandschutter B. *Polycarpiana, Selected Essays*. Leuven University Press, 2007, pp.5, 48-50).

The following is a slightly shortened portion of the Greek portion 16:2 of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* as reported by Kirsopp Lake and it does use the expressions Polycarp, bishop, Smyrna, catholic, and churches all of which this author **bolded** in that order below (this verse is also translated on the front cover of this book).

Πολύκαρπος, ἐν τοῖς καθ’ ἡμᾶς χρόνοις διδάσκαλος ἀποστολίδος καὶ προφητικὸς γενόμενος, ἐπίσκοπος ἀποστολικὸς καὶ προφητικὸς γενόμενος, **ἐπίσκοπος** τῆς **ἐν Σμύνῃ καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας**. (Lake K. *The Apostolic Fathers in Greek: The Martyrdom of Polycarp*. Harvard University Press, 1926)

The above rendering shows that there is an ancient writing in Greek that claims that Polycarp (**Πολύκαρπος**) was the bishop/overseer (**ἐπίσκοπος**) in Smyrna (**ἐν Σμύνῃ**) of the catholic church (**καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας**).

So, we have seen that Ignatius and *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* show that in the first and second document a church was referred to as “catholic,” it was a descriptive term that included the Smyrnaean Church of God that was led by Polycarp.

Now, lest anyone think that this author has ‘pulled a fast one,’ Roman and Eastern Orthodox scholars teach that Polycarp, Ignatius, Pionius, and others we consider early Church of God leaders in Asia Minor (including Smyrna) were all catholics and all were saints. We in the CCOG concur.

Thus, real writings from those leaders (“real,” as there are questions about whether some were improperly changed) should be considered as reliable records (though containing some opinions) of the beliefs of the original catholic church. Such writings from early Church of God leaders are cited further in this book to demonstrate, and help document, the beliefs of the original catholic church.

In the 20th century, the old Worldwide Church of God taught:

Well might Jesus say: “I know . . . where Satan’s seat is . . . where Satan dwelleth.” His “Pergamos” Church knew, too! This was a different kind of era. An age in which the True Church was actively pursued, and had to remain in hiding. No longer was any part of the True Church associated, as even Polycrates had been, with any part of “the catholic church of God.” The great conspiracy had succeeded-it had stolen the name of Christ, the name of God’s Church. (Lesson 50 – What Became

of the Church Jesus Built? 58 Lesson: Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, 1968, p. 8)

Polycrates was a late 2nd century Church of God leader that the old WCG taught was faithful. By the time of Pergamos, the Roman church took the names 'catholic' and 'church of God' even though the faithful still used them.

In the late 3rd through early 4th century, there was a church leader known as Lucian of Antioch. Lucian was not in communion with the succession of at least three Greco-Roman bishops of Antioch, had a school based on literal biblical interpretation, "savoured of Judaism," and was "Semi-Arian" (binitarian) (Newman JH, Cardinal. *The Arians of the Fourth Century*. Longmans, Green, & Co., New York, 1908, pp. 5, 9, 277, 406). Lucian reportedly was a Sabbatarian (Wilkinson BG. *The Truth Triumphant*. TEACH Services, Reprint 1994, pp. 55-57; Kohen E. *History of the Byzantine Jews*. University Press of America, 2007, p. 53).

In a seemingly 4th century creed ascribed to him, Lucian (or perhaps penned by a disciple) used the term "Catholic Church of God" (Schaff P. *The Creeds of Christendom: The Greek and Latin creeds, with translations*, Volume II. Harper and Brothers, 1877, pp. 28-29). This would not seem to have been a reference to the Greco-Roman churches as Lucian opposed the Alexandrian school which they encouraged. Lucian looks to have been a Church of God leader.

Lucian's Creed seems to be the oldest known document with the exact expression "Catholic Church of God." Although as shown already, Ignatius implied that as he used both "church of God" and "catholic Church" expressions in his 2nd century *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*.

What About Italy?

Perhaps it should be pointed that after *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, we then see a version of the term "catholic church" in a document known as the *Muratorian Fragment*. However, the original Greek manuscript was lost and what is now available is a 7th century document written in Latin, which was not the original.

It is claimed that this document originally came from the late 2nd century. It was discovered in Milan, Italy and is also known as the *Muratorian Canon*. Here is what it states about certain heretical writings:

ra quae in catholicam ecclesiam recepi non (Latin original)

which cannot be received into the catholic church (English translation)

While some consider the *Muratorian fragment* to be the earliest list of New Testament books, it improperly includes the heretical book the *Apocalypse of Peter*, but excludes Book of Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and one of John's epistles.

Even if it did use the expression 'catholicam ecclesiam' in the late 2nd century, this was not the same 'catholic church' that was in Smyrna. The faithful in Asia Minor and Antioch were in communion with each

other in the 2nd and early 3rd centuries (e.g. Polycarp. Letter to the Philippians, 13:2; Serapion. Letter to Caricus and Pontius, as cited in Eusebius Book V, Chapters 18-19). Yet, by the late 2nd century, not with the predominant church in Rome. Nor did the Christians of Asia Minor or Antioch accept the extra heretical books that the *Muratorian fragment* included.

Plus, it should be pointed out that *Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians* showed that at least those in Asia Minor and Philippi recognized books that the *Muratorian fragment* excluded since Polycarp quoted Hebrews 3:1, 12:28 and 1 Peter 1:21, 2:12,21,22,24, 3:9,22, 4:7 and refers to teachings in James, 2 Peter, and the three epistles of John.

What About Clement of Alexandria?

In the apparently early 3rd century, we see what seems to be one of the first uses of the term “catholic church” in the ancient literature in Egypt from the semi-Gnostic Clement of Alexandria (Clement. Stromata, Book VII, Chapter XVII; in Ante-Nicene Fathers). His references did not point to any location, but essentially said that the catholic church existed before the rise of apostates such as Valentinus and Marcion--both of whom were part of the Church of Rome for decades, despite both being denounced by Polycarp. Tertullian of Carthage also used the expression ‘catholic church’ in relationship to Marcion and Valentinus, but he tied it in with Rome (Tertullian. The Prescription against Heretics, Chapter 30; in Ante-Nicene Fathers).

The Catholic Encyclopedia (in its article on Marcus, founder of the Marcosians) has the statement **“Clement of Alexandria, himself infected with Gnosticism.”** Yes, Clement was a type of Gnostic (believer in salvation through special knowledge). Because of his Gnosticism, Clement would not have been in true fellowship with the churches in Asia Minor, such as the Church of God in Smyrna. Cardinal Danielou essentially confirmed that when he wrote “It remains to decide to what type of community Clement’s Elders belonged. It seems to have been very different from that of the Asiatic Elders” (Danielou, p. 52).

Right. Clement was not in communion with the original catholic church of Smyrna and other faithful churches in Asia Minor.

But, from Clement onwards, we see two different churches using the expression “catholic church.”

In this 21st century, then-Pope Benedict XVI taught:

In our meditations on the great figures of the ancient Church, today we will get to know one of the most outstanding. **Origen of Alexandria** is one of the key people for the development of Christian thought. He **draws on the teachings he inherited from Clement of Alexandria, ... and brings them forward in a totally innovative way, creating an irreversible turn in Christian thought.** (Benedict XVI. Homily On Origen of Alexandria. Vatican City. Zenit - April 25, 2007)

A totally innovated way means it was not original.

Furthermore, consider that although the Greco-Roman churches now officially condemn Gnosticism, some of their top leaders have taught that their teachings were CHANGED (innovated) by one or more infected with Gnosticism. Perhaps it should be emphasized that the school in Antioch that Lucian ran was opposed to the allegorical and semi-Gnostic school of Alexandria. The schools were NOT in true communion with each other.

That said, Clement wrote he once accidentally met a Judeo-Christian man who was “the most virtuous, the most valorous of men ... in Egypt” (Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision*, p. 48). There were some faithful there as we later hear of Nepos of Egypt as a faithful leader who was not an allegorist.

Imperial “Catholic Church” and Jewish Christians

It has been reported by Roman Catholic sources:

For the first 250 years of the church’s existence, there was no doubt in the churchmen’s minds about the ... power of the church ... was solely and purely spiritual. ...

Pope Sylvester I, “the first rich church father,” ... made the agreement with Emperor Constantine that in an instant changed the church from being the prey of civil authority into its moral and spiritual prop: ... Alas! Constantine! What evil you bore into the world! ...

Constantine first established the bishop of Rome in full power in Western Europe. The popes received from him considerable real estate, extensive judicial authority, much liquid wealth, control over the armed forces, and political dominance. The Roman Church ... thereby acquired inestimable status in the eyes of the public ... because of Constantine, the Bishop of Rome became a monarch and his church a monarchy. (Martin M. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church*. Bantam edition, 1983, pp. 3,5,39)

Sylvester I, St. (314-335) ... The emperor gave Sylvester the Lateran Palace as his seat. (Lopes, p. 11)

Roman Catholic priest Malachi Martin lived and worked in Vatican City for years. He was deeply involved in researching and writing about Church history, theology, and the inner workings of the Roman Catholic Church. In a book he wrote, Malachi Martin reported a meeting between relatives of Jesus, called the *desposyni*, and Bishop of Rome Sylvester I, but gave no source (so, perhaps, it may have come from the archives in the Vatican library?):

Jewish Christians ... occupied the oldest Christian churches in the Middle East and whose leaders were always from the family of Jesus himself. ... they shunned all worldly power ... their first bishop was James, first cousin of Jesus. ...

A meeting between Silvester and the Jewish Christian leaders took place in 318. ... The vital interview was not, as far as we know, recorded, but the issues were very well known, and it is probable the Joses, the oldest of the Christian Jews, spoke on behalf of the *desposyni* and the rest.

That most hallowed name, *desposyni*, had been respected by all believers in the first century and a half of Christian history. The word literally meant, in Greek, "belonging to the Lord." It was reserved uniquely for Jesus' blood relatives. Every part of the ancient Jewish Christian church had always been governed by a *desposynos*, and each of them carried one of the names traditional in Jesus' family--Zachary, Joseph, John, James, Joses, Simeon, Matthias, and so on. But no one was ever called Jesus. ...

Silvester knew their history well. Jewish Christians had composed the only church ever in Jerusalem until the year 135. ... Jewish Christian churches were set up all over Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia ... and always in quarrel with Greek Christians who refused to ... observe the Torah ...

They therefore asked Silvester to revoke his confirmation of Greek Christian bishops at Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Ephesus, and in Alexandria, and to name instead *desposynos* bishops to take their place. ...

Silvester curtly and decisively dismissed the claims of the Jewish Christians. He told them that the mother church was now in Rome, with the bones of the Apostle Peter, and he insisted that they accept the Greek bishops to lead them.

It was the last known discussion between the Jewish Christians of the old mother church and the non-Jewish Christians of the new mother church. ...

The Jewish Christians had no place in such a church structure. (Martin M. The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church. Bantam edition, 1983, pp. 30-32).

So, apparently some who are long-descended nephews of Jesus did attempt to see if the Church of Rome would accept various aspects the original faith, but they were denied. It has been claimed, elsewhere, that the leader of the *desposyni* was named James or Jacob. There was a Judeao-Christian doctor in Caesarea named James in the 4th century (Bagatti, The Church from the Circumcision, p. 19), but whether he was the leader is not certain. Interestingly, there was also a Judeao-Christian doctor in the 4th century, named Jude, who was also a bishop (Ibid, p. 21).

Silvester refused to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3), even when he was reminded of aspects of it. Dr. Bagatti noted that in the 2nd century, at least three bishops of Rome (Pius I, Eleutheris, and Victor I) pushed back against attempts to return to original Judeao-Christians practices (Ibid, p. 25). Hence, true succession of doctrine was not coming from Rome.

Let it be understood that the historian Eusebius acknowledged that there was a succession of Jewish bishops in Jerusalem existing into his day (Church History, Book 7, chapter XIX, pp. 155-156).

Dr. Bagatti wrote:

The fact of having recognized the apostolicity of the primitive church of Jewish stock in the 4th century, when bitter strife raged between the two groups living in Jerusalem, is much to the credit of Eusebius. (Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision*, p. 83)

But notice there was a bitter struggle between the two groups. One reason Dr. Bagatti praised Eusebius is that Emperor Constantine did not care for the Judeo-Christian group, because it was the other group obtained major Imperial favor after that sun-worshipping Emperor claimed to have a vision and a dream.

Eusebius, himself, also acknowledged that the desposyni still existed in Judea (Eusebius. *Church History*, Book I, Chapter 7, verse 14, p. 16). The “relatives of Jesus” look to have been “descendants of Jude” who “returned to Nazareth” (Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision*, p. 20).

So in Eusebius, we see support that something like Malachi Martin’s account could have taken place. It has been elsewhere asserted that the desposyni did exist into the fourth century and may have passed on various oral traditions (Harris T. *Proving Biblical Nazareth: Evidence for the Key Sites of Jesus*, Key-line Christian Research Pty, Limited, 2016, p. 120), but that is not certain.

Orthodoxy and the ‘Catholic Church’?

Afterwards there are the rulings of Emperor Constantine’s 325 Council of Nicea (such as the Sunday was the day of worship) which were ecclesiastical in nature, but thanks to Constantine’s backing, they carried the weight of imperial law.

Imperial pressure, plus the giving of wealth, made what is often now known as orthodoxy.

“The first use of the word ‘orthodox’ by Greek theologians occurred in the fourth century CE” (Roeber AG, et al. *CHRISTIANITY: EASTERN ORTHODOXY*. Worldmark Encyclopedia of Religious Practices, 2nd Edition, Volume 1, Gale Research Inc, 2014, p. 223).

It was not until the latter middle of the 4th century that the term “Catholic Church” was clearly used to identity the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholic churches. That was in 348 when the Greco-Roman bishop Cyril of Jerusalem used it (Cyril. *Catechetical Lectures*, XVIII, 26; in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*).

Furthermore, **in an Imperial decree in 380, Emperor Theodosius declared that the “Catholic Church” was the official religion of the Roman Empire** (Theodosian Code XVI.1.2. Cited in Bettenson H, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, London: Oxford University Press, 1943, p. 31). **He also issued an Imperial decree that said any who would not embrace his definition of the Godhead were prohibited from using the term “catholic,” and he also labelled such persons as “foolish madmen” and “heretics”** (ibid). Or as it is translated elsewhere, he labelled them “demented” and “insane.” (Theodosius’ declaration show that there were trinitarian and non-trinitarians using the term “catholic” in his day.)

Notice the following from Theodosius:

C. Th. XVI.i.2. IT IS Our will that all the peoples who are ruled by the administration of Our Clemency shall practice that religion which the divine Peter the Apostle transmitted to the Romans, as the religion which he introduced makes clear even unto this day. It is evident that this is the religion that is followed by the Pontiff Damasus and by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic sanctity; that is, according to the apostolic discipline and the evangelic doctrine, we shall believe in the single Deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, under the concept of equal majesty and of the Holy Trinity. We command that those persons who follow this rule shall embrace the name of Catholic Christians. The rest, however, whom We adjudge demented and insane, shall sustain the infamy of heretical dogmas, their meeting places shall not receive the name of churches, and they shall be smitten first by divine vengeance and secondly by the retribution of Our own initiative, which We shall assume in accordance with the divine judgment (28 February 380).

C. Th. XVI. i.3. We command that all churches shall immediately be surrendered to those bishops who confess that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are of one majesty and virtue, of the same glory, and of one splendor; to those bishops who produce no dissonance by unholy distinction, but who affirm the concept of the Trinity by the assertion of three Persons and the unity of the Divinity. . . . All, whoever, who dissent from the communion of the faith of those who have been expressly mentioned in this special enumeration shall be expelled from their churches as manifest heretics and hereafter shall be altogether denied the right and power to obtain churches, in order that the priesthood of the true Nicene faith may remain pure, and after the clear regulations of Our law, there shall be no opportunity for malicious subtlety (30 July 381) (The Theodosian Code and Novels, and the Sirmondian Constitutions. Lawbook Exchange, USA, 2001, p. 440)

Yet, the Nicene faith of Pontiff Damasus and Bishop Peter of Alexandria was not the original catholic faith of the Apostle Peter. It should be noted that the Judeo-Christians community remained on Mt. Sion until the seizure of their church/synagogue by the Byzantines soon thereafter. Those of the original catholic faith had to flee into the wilderness from many locations (Revelation 12:6).

Nazarenes

Shortly thereafter, Greco-Roman Catholic scholars such as Jerome and Epiphanius referred to later Christians who held aspects of original catholic doctrines as Nazarenes.

The fourth century Greco-Roman Catholic historian Epiphanius wrote of a seemingly related group from the time of 69/70 A.D. until his day:

All Christians were called Nazarenes once ... They were so-called followers of the apostles ... they dedicate themselves to the law ... However, everyone called the Christians Nazarenes as I said before. This appears from the accusation against Paul ... [Acts 24:5] ... For they use not only the New Testament but also the Old ... For they also accept the resurrection of the dead and that everything has origin in God ... Only in this respect they differ from the Jews and Christians: with the Jews they do not agree because of their belief in Christ, with the Christians because they are

trained in the Law, in circumcision, the Sabbath and the other things ... This heresy of the Nazarenes exists in Beroea in the neighborhood of Coele Syria and the Decapolis in the region of Pella and in Basanitis in the so-called Kokabe, Chochabe in Hebrew. For from there it took its beginning after the exodus from Jerusalem and to go away since it would undergo a siege. Because of this advice they lived in Perea after having moved to that place as I said. There the Nazarene heresy had its beginning. (Epiphanius. Panarion 29 as cited in Pritz, Nazarene Jewish Christianity. Magnas, Jerusalem, 1988, pp. 30-35)

So Epiphanius states that the remnant who fled to Pella from Jerusalem, while professing Christ, believed the entire Bible, kept the Sabbath, and had other practices that he considered to be Jewish. Hence, here is a historical admission that the original church did keep the Sabbath and that for several centuries were often referred to as Nazarenes. But instead of embracing original Christianity, Epiphanius calls it an early "heresy." Epiphanius' own report contradicts his claim that the Nazarenes had their beginning in Pella.

Notice also the following statement:

From Justin to Jerome, however, the **Nazarenes were viewed as doctrinally within the fold of what could be called "catholic Christianity."** (Varner W. Baur to Bauer and Beyond: Early Jewish Christianity and Modern Scholarship. Academ.edu, Received November 16, 2019)

And it should be noted that the Nazarene "catholics" were not part of the church that Justin Martyr and Jerome were affiliated with. But they held doctrines consistent with the Church of God in Ephesus and Smyrna. Many Nazarenes lived in Northern Syria (Skarsaune O, Hvalvik R, eds. Jewish Believers in Jesus. Hendrickson Publishers, 2007, p. 486).

Notice the following from an 18th century Protestant scholar and then a 20th century Roman Catholic one:

...the *Nazareans* ... are not reckoned, by the ancient Christians, among heretics ... For those who bore the title of *Christians* among the Greeks, were among the Jews called *Nazareans*; and they did not esteem it a name of disgrace. ... They ... rejected the additions to the Mosaic ritual, made by the doctors of the law and by the Pharisees. (Mosheim JL. Institutes of ecclesiastical history: ancient and modern, in four books, much corrected, enlarged, and improved from the primary authorities, Volume 1, 2nd edition. Harper & brothers, 1844, p. 139)

St. Epiphanius ... enumerates the Holy Sites of the Passion ... Since the Cenacle, which is not mentioned, is of prime importance ... and other places are of little importance, **we must admit that the omission is intentional.** We guess that he did not wish to record it because he held the Judaeo-Christians as heretics. (Bagatti, The Church from the Circumcision, pp. 11)

Yes, many did not report enough about true history of the faithful.

Further notice the following:

... the Nazarenes ... had its own hierarchy ... Even regarding the Nazarenes, who had many contacts with the gentile Christian {Greco-Roman Catholic} church we have only few details, because our historians have completely neglected to hand down the doings of those separated Christians. ... **regarding the Nazarenes, both St. Epiphanius and St. Jerome have nothing to condemn them for except the observance of customs forbidden by the Councils.** (Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision*, pp. 30, 35)

The Nazarenes had their own hierarchy, which would be consistent with possibly having their own succession list, but many details were neglected by Greco-Roman historians. Furthermore, those rejected Councils mentioned would have included the Councils of Nicea (325 A.D.) and Constantinople (381 A.D.) which were called and directed by Imperial Roman emperors (the unbaptized 'lay bishop' Constantine and Theodosius respectively).

And that is a major difference between the *Continuing* Church of God and most others who consider themselves catholic.

The Greco-Roman churches accept several Imperial (and other) Councils as divinely authoritative (they are selective about the various councils as some contradict others) as their basis to change some aspects of the original catholic beliefs, whereas we in the CCOG consider those councils of mainly historical interest documenting changes that the attending groups adopted.

"Paulicians"

As far as the name 'catholic' goes, those who disagreed with Theodosius still sometimes used it after Theodosius' decree. Fred Conybeare reported that in the Middle Ages the Paulicians of Armenia continued to state, "They were the 'holy, universal, and apostolic Church,' founded by Jesus Christ and his apostles" (Conybeare, p. xxxiii). They opposed Sunday observance and the Greco-Roman festivals, while apparently observing the seventh-day Sabbath (Ibid, pp. clii, cxciii).

Notice also about them:

They called themselves the Apostolic Catholic church, but ... nicknamed Paulicians by their enemies ... (Paulicians. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*: Mun to Pay. 1911, p. 961; Blackwell D. A HANDBOOK OF CHURCH HISTORY: A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Ambassador College Graduate School of Theology. April 1973, p.29)

In Kurtz's Church History, article Nostic and Manichean Heretics:

The Catholics, this sect called Romans, gave them the name Paulicians.

See how they received that name. The Catholics, whom this sect called "Romans." ... Paulicians. They did not give themselves that name.

But they designated themselves Christians.

Yes, the Bible had said they had not denied His name. And when you read about the Paulicians, that is one thing that is mentioned quite often. They were named Paulicians by the Catholics. They considered themselves Christians and they would not call the Romans “Christians.” They called them Romans. (Blackwell, p. 48)

The Paulicians They called themselves only Χριστιανοί {Christians} (Kurtz JH, Jr., Macpherson J. Church History: Volume 1. 1891, p. 423)

The Paulicians did not call themselves Paulicians or Tonrakians, but the Universal and Apostolic Church. To them the orthodox churches, ... had apostatized from the faith, lost their orders, and forfeited their sacraments. As to their Mariolatry and adoration of saints and pictures and crosses, it was all nothing but idolatry. (Arpee L. Armenian Paulicianism and the Key of Truth. The American Journal of Theology, Vol. 10, No. 2, Apr., 1906: 267-285)

The Paulicians claimed to be THE ‘holy universal and apostolic church’ founded by Jesus Christ and his apostles. Of the false churches, they would say: “We do not belong to these, for they have long ago broken connection with the church.” ... 6th century. (Lesson 50 – What Became of the Church Jesus Built? 58 Lesson: Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, 1968, p. 13).

So, these Paulicians considered that they had apostolic succession, were the true catholic church, and that the Roman churches were not. They appear to have continued with beliefs of the original church whose remnants in Antioch passed them on to Armenia no later than in the 5th century (Conybeare, p. cix).

A 19th century Sabbatarian publication referred to the persecuted Paulicians, Albigenses, and Waldenses as “martyrs of Jesus” (*Rock. Prophecy in its Bearing on the Present Crisis. Hope of Israel. February 27, 1872, p. 132*).

Throughout history, descendants of the faithful were called different names:

“The Waldenses and Albigenses were very numerous, and scattered in distant countries. They appear to have existed, under a great variety of names, throughout the dark ages: though they became more conspicuous in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.” ...

Bernard, who had many disputes with them, says “The Cathari, a sect of the Waldenses, laughed at the {Roman} catholics, for baptizing of infants.” (Taylor A. The history of the English General Baptists of the Seventeenth Century. 1818, pp. 22, 24)

Furthermore, around the 12th century, the Vaudois (Waldensians) would not call the pope’s church the “Catholic church,” but they called it the:

Roman Church ... they refused to give it the name of Catholic, and showed in what it had departed from true catholicity ... The Vaudois, therefore, are not schismatics, but the continued inheritors of the church founded by the apostles ... This church then bore the name of Catholic, (Muston A.

THE ISRAEL OF THE ALPS. A COMPLETE HISTORY OF THE WALDENSES AND THEIR COLONIES.
Translated by J. Montgomery. LONDON: BLACKIE & SON, 1875, pp. 11,12,13).

“No people of modern times,” says Boyer, “exhibits so much analogy to the ancient Jewish people, as the Vaudois of the Alps of Piedmont ...” (Ibid, p. v)

A 19th century Sabbatarian publication, which had some Protestant confusion, correctly pointed out that the Protestant Reformers should have worked “to restore THE PRIMITIVE CATHOLIC CHURCH” (Davidson S. A World in Darkness. Advent and Sabbath Advocate and Hope of Israel, April 23, 1982, p. 170).

The Christian original apostolic catholic church continues, with laying on of hands succession, to this day in the *Continuing Church of God*.

And our apostolic beliefs have been documented throughout history.

Protestant?

Regarding Protestants, Greco-Roman Catholic apologists sometimes ask a version of the following:

“Where was your church before the Reformation? Show us a people who before Calvin and Luther had the same beliefs as you . . . Let us see the uninterrupted link which binds you to the Church of the first centuries and through her to the apostles and to Jesus Christ. This conjunction should exist. But it is impossible for you to point to such a link. You are introducing a new movement; you have a beginning. It is possible to assign to your movement a precise date; and this simple fact condemns you.” (Dumoulin, op. cit., I, 28, 29; Rébelliau, op. cit., p. 345; Jean- Baptiste Dantecourt, Remarques sur le livre d’un potestant, intitulé Considerations sur les lettres circulaires de l’assemblke du clergk de France, de l’annke 1682 . . . Paris, 1683: as cited in Walther D. WERE THE ALBIGENSES AND WALDENSES FORERUNNERS OF THE REFORMATION? Andrews University Seminary Studies. 1968 (2), 5, p. 199)

It is true that the Protestant movement had a post-New Testament date. Plus, Protestants also cannot find many of their core beliefs in the first couple of centuries of the Christian church era (more on that can be found in the free book, online at ccog.org, *Hope of Salvation: How the Continuing Church of God differs from Protestantism*).

But what about the *Continuing Church of God*?

We are absolutely NOT Protestant. See also our free book, available online at ccog.org, titled *Hope of Salvation: How the Continuing Church of God Differs from Protestantism*.

Consider also that there are records of claims of a written bishop successor list of Sabbatarians from the apostles via Greek church (Antioch/Asia Minor) though the 16th century (e.g. Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association: ... Annual Meeting with Constitution and By-laws and List of Members, Volume 17; Volume 19. The Association, 1919, pp. 190-191).

While some point to a corporate declaration date of the *Continuing* Church of God in the 21st century to try to callously dismiss our apostolic continuity, consider:

- We do not hold to the unbiblical views of Luther or Calvin (nor hold them to be true Christian leaders).
- Various early Christian leaders, including many of those called *Apostolic Fathers*, documented our beliefs in the first centuries of Christianity.
- We can clearly trace our leaders into the first centuries of the church age.
- **Leaders with our doctrines considered themselves to be part of the “catholic church.”**
- Greco-Romans have doctrines in opposition to many that *they* consider to be saints, whereas we hold to the basic theological views of the early leaders *we* consider to be saints.
- Our forebearers also claimed apostolic laying on of hands succession, plus claimed to have one or more lists from the apostles through perhaps as late as the 16th century.
- While records in many centuries are sparse, we can identify groups with certain COG beliefs, and often leaders, throughout the entire church age.
- We have unbroken laying on hands succession from the original apostles to present.

The CCOG is simply in a different category than the Protestants. Technically, Protestants include the Church of Rome into the 16th century as representing the original Christian church, whereas we in the CCOG say that the Greco-Roman churches split off from the original Christian church in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. More details related to the above are found later in this book.

As far as designations go, those once part of the old Worldwide Church of God may be interested in learning that Dibar Apartian, a late Worldwide Church of God (WCG) evangelist, confirmed with this author and his family in Evian, France, in 2008, that we were all part of the original catholic church.

He, and some other church historians and evangelists, have understood this.

3. Original Catholic Doctrines of the Apostles?

There are differing views on many aspects of early church history.

So, what would be the basis of the true and original catholic doctrines?

Well, obviously, this would be the teachings of Jesus, His apostles, and others consistent with them.

In order to know them for certain, we need to look to the Bible as the Apostle Paul wrote:

¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, OSB)

Yes, scripture is to be the source to learn doctrine and to be complete. The following statement from the *Catholic Encyclopedia* is essentially correct:

When a controversy rises recourse is had first to the Bible. (Bainvel J. Tradition and Living Magisterium)

Yes, Christians should first check out the scriptures. Furthermore, in addition to scripture, we can also look into early literature to show how people familiar with koine Greek (the language of the New Testament) understood the doctrines.

If an early writer was faithful, his (we do not have any very early faithful writings from women) writing should give us support.

If, however, he makes a statement that is in conflict with sacred scripture, then we can conclude that it was NOT an original catholic belief, even if many believed it.

Based on various historical writings, the original “catholic church” was the Church of God in Asia Minor, which came from the original church in Jerusalem. Hence, teachings of leaders affiliated (or in true communion) with that church are those that help demonstrate what the original catholic beliefs were.

Yet, because early apostates and heretics sometimes had contact with the apostles and/or some of the earliest successors of the apostles, writings from some of them can sometimes also give us a clue as to original catholic doctrine. Again, so long as their writings do not conflict with sacred scripture.

Didascalia Apostolorum

That being said, there is a 3rd century document, apparently originating in Syria, called the *Didascalia Apostolorum* which purports to lay out catholic doctrine from the twelve original apostles. Notice the following improper claim from it:

GOD'S planting and the holy vineyard of His Catholic Church, the elect, who rely on the simplicity of the fear of the Lord, ... hear the **Didascalia of God, you that hope and wait for His promises, which hath been written after the command of our Saviour** and is in accord with His glorious words. (Connolly RH. *Didascalia Apostolorum*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929)

Didascalia essentially means the teaching of the twelve. Claiming to be what Jesus commanded the twelve apostles to write it is false from the start.

Here is a statement from *The Catholic Encyclopedia* about it:

Didascalia Apostolorum A treatise which pretends to have been written by the Apostles at the time of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), but is really a composition of the third century. ... The full title given in the Syriac is "Didascalia, that is, the Catholic doctrine of the twelve Apostles and the holy disciples of our Lord". ... The place of composition was Syria, though what part cannot be determined. The author was apparently a bishop, and presumably a Catholic. His book is badly put together, without logic, ... (Chapman J. *Didascalia Apostolorum*)

So, it is recognized that the *Didascalia Apostolorum* is a fraudulent document from a Greco-Roman Catholic bishop somewhere in Syria. It is because of the fact that bishops listed after Serapion on the succession lists from the Orthodox Antiochian Church were not faithful, that we do not use that portion of their list.

We also see here in the *Didascalia* an appropriation of the term "Catholic," which again is not a reference to Rome. Syria is next to Asia Minor and since Asia Minor was using the term catholic, the writer of the fraudulent document apparently decided to use it as well. No true Church of God leader would have written such a document and claim it came at the command of Jesus.

Notice another problem, as the *Didascalia Apostolorum* states:

But the Sabbath itself is counted even unto the Sabbath, and it becomes eight (days); thus an ogdoad is (reached), which is more than the Sabbath, even the first of the week. (Chapter XXVI)

To teach the "ogdoad" is a pagan Gnostic concept related to the number 8. Furthermore, we do not see anything in the Bible transferring the seventh-day Sabbath to anything called in sacred scripture as the eight day.

Another problem with the *Didascalia Apostolorum* is that it often cites the false *Gospel of Peter* (Bauer W. *Orthodoxy & Heresy in Earliest Christianity*. Sigler Press, 1996, p. 248), even though Serapion of Antioch denounced it (Serapion of Antioch. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 1*. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890) before it is believed that the *Didascalia Apostolorum* was written.

This is important to understand, because it is from the false *Gospel of Peter* that we have the first known writing that claimed that the Lord's Day was Sunday. While it also has other doctrines that the Greco-

Roman churches adopted, the *Didascalia Apostolorum* cannot be considered as a reliable source for original, true, catholic doctrines. Despite its claims, the *Didascalia Apostolorum* often does not truthfully lay out catholic doctrines of the Apostles.

We must be wary of false documents in order to establish original catholic doctrines, especially where those documents are also in conflict with scripture.

Separation by the 3rd Century

In the early 2nd century, apparently the bulk of professing Christians in Rome were in communion with the true Church of God in Antioch and Asia Minor. We can see this from Ignatius' letters, to cite one example.

But that changed.

As cited earlier, those of the "holy universal and apostolic church" called "Paulicians" by their enemies asserted that Greco-Roman churches "have long ago broken connection with the church."

How long ago?

In the 2nd century, many changes in practice seem to have taken place in Rome and Jerusalem (Alexandria may have had changes even earlier).

Justin Martyr (then in Ephesus) reported that he did not wish to associate with those in Asia Minor who kept the Sabbath (Dialogue with Trypho. Chapter 47; In Ante-Nicene Fathers) as he kept Sunday (The First Apology. Chapter 67; In Ante-Nicene Fathers), and then he moved to Rome. Justin seems to have accepted the false *Gospel of Peter* (Taylor C. Justin Martyr and the 'Gospel of Peter.' The Classical Review. Vol. 7, No. 6 Jun., 1893: 246-248) which endorses Sunday as "the Lord's Day." Justin also supported a mystical eucharist (Ibid, Chapter 66), which differed from the Gospels and the practices of the faithful. Justin had many practices like the followers of Helios Mithras had (The First Apology. Chapters 61,66,67; In Ante-Nicene Fathers).

Other scholars have also noticed similarities the Greco-Romans had from Mithraism (Latourette KS. A History of Christianity, Volume 1: to A.D. 1500. HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1975, p. 198; Cumont, Franz. Translated from the second revised French edition by Thomas J. McCormack. The Mysteries of Mithra. Chicago, Open Court [1903] pp. 104-149; King ML. The papers of Martin Luther King, Jr, Volume 4. Clayborne Carson, Ralph Luker, Penny A. Russell editors/compliers. University of California Press, 1992, pp. 213-309).

Eusebius records that Serapion of Antioch went to see a group that he thought was Christian in the seaside port of Rhossus. When he got there, he was disappointed to learn that they were reading this *Gospel of Peter* and thus he realized that they were not all part of the 'true faith,' so Serapion wrote:

For we, brethren, receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ; but we reject intelligently the writings falsely inscribed with them, knowing that such were not handed down to. When I

visited you I supposed that all of you held the true faith ... I had not read the Gospel which they put forth under the name of Peter ... we have been able to read it through and, and we find many things in accordance with the true doctrine of the Saviour, but some things added to that doctrine ... (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book VI, Chapter XII, verses 3-4, p. 125-126)

Here is an expanded portion from a different translation:

For we, brethren, receive both Peter and the rest of the apostles as Christ [Himself]. But those writings which are falsely inscribed with their name, we as experienced persons reject, knowing that no such writings have been handed down to us. When, indeed, I came to see you, I supposed that all were in accord with the orthodox faith; and, although I had not read through the Gospel inscribed with the name of Peter which was brought forward by them, ... But, now that I have learnt from what has been told me that their mind was secretly cherishing some heresy, ... Moreover, brethren, we, having discovered to what kind of heresy Marcion adhered, and seen how he contradicted himself, not understanding of what he was speaking, as you will gather from what has been written to you for, having borrowed this said Gospel from those who were familiar with it from constant perusal, namely from the successors of those who had been his leaders ... (as cited in and translated by Fletcher W. The Works of Lactantius, Volume 2. T&T Clark, 1871, pp. 164-165)

Serapion is clearly denouncing the pseudepigrapha (and he actually called it that in Greek)— even if it did contain some truth. This denouncement is believed to have happened in the late 2nd century (Bock DL. The Missing Gospels. Thomas Nelson, 2006, p. 78). Further notice that Serapion said he had NOT read it before (hence it was not being used in his church in Antioch) and he was teaching that the proper books were “handed down to us” (or “received” as it has alternatively been translated). The true books were known and accepted by the faithful long before any canonical Greco-Roman council. Serapion’s statement shows he did NOT consider those who accepted the false *Gospel of Peter* as part of the true Christian faith.

Both some in Rome and Alexandria were using the false *Gospel of Peter* at the time, so the Rhossus group possibly had some sort of tie with them, possibly via Marcion or his followers (Harris JR. A Popular Account of the Newly-recovered Gospel of St. Peter. Hodder and Stoughton, 1893, p. 28).

Items such as the false *Gospel of Peter* show there was canonical confusion within the Greco-Roman churches — confusion that we did not see in the faithful churches in Asia Minor nor Antioch for that period. This canonical confusion is consistent with historical records that show that the faithful in Asia Minor and Antioch communicated with each other until at least the early third century, yet they did not seem to try to communicate much with Alexandria, Jerusalem, or Rome by then (though they tried with Rome at least twice in the 2nd century — once when Polycarp tried to get the Roman Bishop Anicetus to change the date of Passover and second when Polycrates wrote the Roman Bishop Victor that he did not recognize Victor’s authority over the word of God).

By the early 3rd century there were several significant differences between Christianity as practiced by the bulk of those in Asia Minor, Antioch & pockets of Jerusalem, and that which was practiced by the bulk in Rome, Jerusalem, and Alexandria:

- The bulk of those in Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Rome had switched to keep Passover on Sunday, whereas those of Asia Minor and Antioch (and pockets in Jerusalem) held to the original 14th of Nisan date.
- Those in Alexandria and Rome switched to hold church services on Sunday, whereas those of Asia Minor and Antioch continued to hold church services on Saturday.
- Those in Alexandria and Rome used the false *Gospel of Peter* (which endorsed Sunday as “the Lord’s Day”), whereas the faithful in Asia Minor and Antioch did not. According to Serapion of Antioch, he had never even seen it until he visited a church that seems to have had Greco-Roman ties.
- Serapion warned of a “lying confederacy” that was forming that he and those of Asia Minor were NOT part of.
- The bulk of those in Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Rome decided it was acceptable to eat biblically unclean meat at least partially per the false *Epistle of Barnabas*, *Pine’s Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source*, *Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho* (Justin was in communion with Rome and not the Sabbath keepers), and the *Liber Pontificalis* (a document the Vatican later denounced as inauthentic), whereas the faithful of those in Asia Minor Antioch, and elsewhere avoided biblically unclean meat.

It should be clear that no later than the early 3rd century (but most likely by the mid-late 2nd century) those in Asia Minor and Antioch were not in communion with the bulk of those of Rome, Jerusalem, and Alexandria. Rome was also supportive of the ‘allegorical’ school of Alexandria that Origen was part of, but not of the ‘literal’ school that Lucian of Antioch was associated with in the 3rd century. Origen also supported infant baptism that was not supported by those of Asia Minor or Antioch.

Dr. John Walvoord wrote the following about that Alexandrian school:

In the last ten years of the second century and in the third century the heretical school of theology at Alexandria, Egypt advanced the erroneous principle that the Bible should be interpreted in a nonliteral or allegorical sense. In applying this to the Scriptures, they subverted all the major doctrines of faith ... the Alexandrian school of theology is labeled by all theologians as heretical ... (Walvoord JF. *The Prophecy Handbook*. Victor Books, Wheaton (IL), 1990, pp. 9,15).

Over time, some of the more obvious Gnostic concepts (like Aeons) were never formally adopted as the Gnostics taught them, but others that the allegorists felt had some type of support from tradition and/or scripture were adopted by the forming Greco-Roman ‘Catholic/Orthodox’ confederation.

But, the bulk of those in Antioch and Asia Minor were holding to the original catholic doctrines in the early 3rd century.

Perhaps it should be pointed out that we do not believe that the faithful among the 4th century Nazarenes used the *Gospel of Peter* and we agree with various ones that Theodoret (who made a *Gospel of Peter* connection) misidentified them with the Ebionites (e.g. Krauss S. Nazarenes. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906).

Apostles’ Creed?

What about the writing known as the Apostles' Creed?

An Eastern Orthodox supporter wrote to this author back after she claimed something that was from the 5th or 6th century A.D. was an original Christian belief. After informing her it was not, she responded by listing what is called the Nicene Creed as what the Orthodox believed and asked, sarcastically, if that was "original enough?"

This author responded with no, that was a late 4th century document and was not from the original apostles. Furthermore, it was NOT accepted by the Patriarchs of Constantinople prior to imperial enforcement (Socrates Scholasticus. THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF SOCRATES. London, 1853, p. 266).

The Church of Rome concurs that the Nicene Creed is not original. As it cites a different document as the oldest known creed.

Here is translation of what Rufinus, a priest of Aquileia, put together of what has been claimed as the oldest creed (known as the Old Roman Form) as shown in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*:

- (1) I believe in God the Father Almighty;
- (2) And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord;
- (3) Who was born of (de) the Holy Ghost and of (ex) the Virgin Mary;
- (4) Crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried;
- (5) The third day He rose again from the dead,
- (6) He ascended into Heaven,
- (7) Sitteth at the right hand of the Father,
- (8) Whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
- (9) And in the Holy Ghost,
- (10) The Holy Church,
- (11) The forgiveness of sins;
- (12) The resurrection of the body.

(Thurston H. Apostles' Creed).

Furthermore, Roman Catholic scholars recognize that the apostles did not come up with this (e.g. *ibid*). But note that it does not have many statements that were later added and that in are parts of the creeds of the Greeks or the Latins. At least some of its statements have been claimed to have been from the mid-late 2nd century (Moehlman CH. The Origin of the Apostles' Creed. *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 13, No. 3, Jul., 1933: 301-319), but it looks to have not fully existed until sometime in the 4th century (Carola J. The Apostles' Creed. *Gregorianum*, Vol. 85, No. 3, 2004: 587-591).

Although we in the CCOG do not have a creed *per se*, there is the *Statement of Beliefs of the Continuing Church of God* which helps show how we understand many aspects of scripture. Nothing in what is believed to have been the "original creed" is in direct conflict with what the CCOG teaches. For example, the Bible teaches the true church is "holy" (Ephesians 5:27), and the old Radio Church of God taught,

“God’s church is a holy church” (Hoeh H. Does GOD Have a Headquarters Church Today? Good News, October 1953).

The following is claimed to be the *Creed of Lucian* of Antioch (it surfaced a couple of decades after he was martyred—if he were alive and the writer, it may be the oldest written creed):

We believe in ONE GOD, the Father Almighty; And in THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, his Son, who was begotten of him before all ages, the Divine Logos, through whom all things were made, both those in the heavens and those on the earth; who came down and was made flesh; and suffered; and rose again; and ascended to the heavens; and shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost; and in the resurrection of the flesh; and in the life of the world to come; and in a kingdom of heaven; and in one Catholic Church of God which extends to the ends of the earth. (Schaff P. The Creeds of Christendom: The Greek and Latin creeds, with translations, Volume II. Harper and Brothers, 1877, pp. 28-29)

Note: The original Greek text, καθολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, does not separately capitalize ‘Catholic Church.’ Yet it is interesting that it refers to the *catholic church of God*.

Lucian of Antioch was not in communion with the Greco-Roman bishops of Antioch, and yet is considered a saint by the Greco-Romans. Although there are contradictory reports about him and his theology (like him supposedly reconciling with the area’s Greco-Roman Bishop while still reportedly maintaining his binitarianism, Sabbath-keeping, biblical literalism, etc.), he looks to have been a COG leader. If so, Lucian may be one who held the succession mantle from about 275 through his martyrdom in 312.

The later Nicene Creed was not the original creed. But it was declared a required belief in 380 by Emperor Theodosius:

Theodosius ... Out of political as well as religious motives, he energetically undertook to bring about unity of faith within the empire. His position was improved by the fact that during 379 the followers of the Nicene Creed gained ground, whereupon **Theodosius on February 28, 380, without consulting the ecclesiastical authorities, issued an edict prescribing a creed that was to be binding on all subjects.** (Lippold A. Theodosius I Roman emperor. Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed online 09/16/19)

In 381, the Nicene creed was formally adopted at the Council of Constantinople that Theodosius had called. But since that creed had been changed, it was not original.

What kind of person was Theodosius who mandated that creed?

Well, in addition to being a persecutor of those who held to the original catholic date of the Passover, in 390 he brought in a pagan obelisk related to Tuthmosis III from Karnack, Egypt to placed in a central public location in Constantinople (Kahzdan A, editor-in-chief. Obelisk of Theodosius. The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, Volume 3. Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 1509). The obelisk was originally part of the worship of the pagan sun-god Amun-Ra. Theodosius had images of himself and his sons added to the base

of that obelisk (Kahzdan A, editor-in-chief. Theodosius I. The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, Volume 3. Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 2051)—hence directly connecting himself to the object of pagan sun-god worship. A similar obelisk, started by Tuthmosis III, but finished by Tuthmosis IV, was ordered to be brought to Constantinople by Constantine in 330 A.D. However, that one was delayed and sent to Rome in 337. Currently, that obelisk is at the Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome. So, we see that both Emperors Constantine and Theodosius took steps that promoted sun-god veneration after their alleged conversion to ‘Christianity.’

Here is what *The Catholic Encyclopedia* says about him:

Theodosius I Roman Emperor (also known as Flavius Theodosius), born in Spain, ... Theodosius is one of the sovereigns by universal consent called Great. He stamped out the last vestiges of paganism, put an end to the Arian heresy in the empire, pacified the Goths, left a famous example of penitence for a crime, and reigned as a just and mighty Catholic emperor. (Fortescue A. Theodosius I)

No, killing people who held to original catholic views on Passover as well as for other unscriptural reasons shows he did not reign justly as a real Christian emperor.

Furthermore, here is something written about Theodosius’ actions in 390 A.D. by a contemporary witness and Greco-Roman theologian named Theodoret who reported:

The emperor was fired with anger when he heard the news, and unable to endure the rush of his passion, did not even check its onset by the curb of reason, but allowed his rage to be the minister of his vengeance. When the imperial passion had received its authority, as though itself an independent prince, it broke the bonds and yoke of reason, unsheathed swords of injustice right and left without distinction, and slew innocent and guilty together. No trial preceded the sentence. No condemnation was passed on the perpetrators of the crimes. Multitudes were mowed down like ears of grain in harvest-tide. It is said that seven thousand perished. (Theodoret. Ecclesiastical History of Theodoret. Dalcassian Publishing Company, 2019, p. 200)

Theodosius pushed decisions of his council over scripture and did not act like a true Christian would.

Consider that in the early 2nd century, Polycarp of Smyrna wrote:

For I trust that ye are well versed in the Sacred Scriptures (Polycarp, Chapter XII. Letter to the Philippians. In Ante-Nicene Fathers).

Yes, true Christian beliefs come from the Bible. Not from councils of men who changed them from what the Bible teaches.

4. Liturgy, Baptism, & Pascha

What were early church services like?

Scripture-focused.

Teaching in harmony with scriptures (Eusebius, p. 112) is what the original liturgy (or format of services) was like. Notice something about Polycarp and his teachings:

For he would extend his discourse to great length on diverse subjects, and from the actual Scripture which was read he would furnish edification with all demonstration and conviction ...

And on the sabbath, when prayer had been made long time on bended knee, he, as was his custom, got up to read; and every eye was fixed upon him. Now the lesson was the Epistles of Paul (Life of Polycarp, Chapter 24. From J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 3.2, 1889, pp. 488-506)

As far as the original church services, Polycarp taught using actual scriptures and did so on the Sabbath (Saturday).

Bishop Melito of Sardis (considered a Greco-Roman and COG saint) said during a church service:

First of all, the Scripture about the Hebrew Exodus has been read and the words of the mystery have been explained as to how the sheep was sacrificed and the people were saved. (Melito, Homily on the Passover, Verse 1)

This is of liturgical interest as it shows that the Old Testament was being read, and that Melito may not have been the only speaker and that church service included more than one sermon message.

This is consistent with the *Continuing* Church of God practice of having a sermonette and sermon or two “split-sermons” as part of weekly church services.

Here is something from a Roman Catholic writer about the early church services, which for this purpose could also be called their ‘liturgy’:

The primary points of contact for our knowledge of the first century liturgy lie on one end with the Jewish liturgies, and the little data which can be gleaned from the New Testament, and ... a few texts, reliable but vague, from the second and third century that help us piece together the puzzle. ...

The Judeo-Centricity of Early Christianity

1. For about the first 10 years of Christianity, it was almost exclusively composed of Jewish converts.
2. The early Christians were in the habit of attending temple ...
3. The early Christians continued celebrating in the Synagogues alongside the Jews on the Sabbath for several years in some places.
4. Up to nineteen years after Christ's resurrection, new converts to Christianity, generally speaking, had to convert to Judaism before becoming Christian. Namely, they were to be circumcised, to eat Kosher, and to follow the Mosaic Law ...

'*Synaxis*' is the Greek word meaning "meeting" and is the organic continuity of the Saturday Synagogue worship. When the Christians were no longer allowed in the synagogues, they continued celebrating approximately the same rite with added Christian developments and themes (like using the New Testament). The original liturgies would have been held, like the synagogue service, in Hebrew, and some of the words, like "amen" and "hallelujah," survive to this day. In the early part of the first century, it is unlikely that the *Synaxis* would have been recognizably different from the Synagogue service except for the setting. ...

Basic Structure

1. Greeting and Response (The Lord be with you – or Peace be unto you)
2. Lections & Psalmody (The Jews read in order of descending importance, starting with the Pentateuch. The early Christian kept the original order of the Synagogue, but as Christian Scripture became available, it was tacked on at the end. Thus the order of importance became reversed for Christians. They read in ascending order of importance)
 - i. Old Testament Reading
 - ii. Psalmody (or chanted Psalm)
 - iii. New Testament Reading (sometimes included non-canonical books like 1 Clement)
 - iv. Psalmody
 - v. Gospel Reading
3. Homily (Bishop delivers while seated)
4. Dismissal of Catechumens by Deacon
5. Intercessory Prayers of the Faithful
6. Dismissal of the Faithful

Occasionally a collection would be taken for the poor at the end. ...

By the end of the first century, the standard Christian liturgical observations would be as follows. On Saturday, you would attend the *Synaxis*.

(Troutman TA. Christian Worship in the First Century. Called to Communion. © 2017 June 17, 2010. http://www.calledtocommunion.com/2010/06/christian-worship-in-the-first-century/#footnote_2_5127 accessed 07/06/20)

(Note: The term catechuman refers to a Christian convert who is under instruction before baptism.)

While some of the above details can be debated, yes, original church services (called the *Synaxis* above—synaxis means ‘congregating’ or ‘meeting’) were on Saturday. In time, the Greco-Romans adopted Sunday (with the Greeks retaining some aspects on Saturday), but the faithful in Judea/Palestine, Asia Minor, Antioch, etc. held to Saturday.

In the CCOG, similar to the previous listed “liturgy,” we have three sets of hymns/psalms, a short message, a sermon/homily, and a closing prayer. We accept Jesus’ “once for all” sacrifice (Romans 6:10), hence do not attempt to repeat it. We also have an opening prayer, as well as announcements, both of which likely were also part of the early Christian liturgy.

There was no daily nor weekly “sacrifice” of Jesus either—which is consistent with scriptures like:

¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; (Romans 6:10, OSB)

²⁴ ... Christ ... ²⁵ ... does not have to offer himself again and again, as the high priest goes into the sanctuary year after year with the blood that is not his own, ²⁶ or else he would have had to suffer over and over again since the world began. As it is, he has made his appearance once and for all, at the end of the last age, to do away with sin by sacrificing himself. (Hebrews 9:24-26, NJB)

¹⁰ And this will was for us to be made holy by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ made once and for all. (Hebrews 10:10, NJB)

So, no, early Christians did not have a “mass” where Jesus was regularly sacrificed. The New Testament is clear that Jesus was only sacrificed once.

This is known, of course, to Roman Catholic writers. Here is something from one of them:

The Letter to the Hebrews makes clear that Jesus definitively ended the need for the repetitive animal sacrifices of Temple worship, when he suffered and died once for all (Heb. 7:27). In doing so, he culminated his one Sacrifice of Calvary in everlasting glory in the heavenly sanctuary, not a mere earthly one, (Hebrews 8:1-3; 9:11-12, 23-24); (Nash T. Divinely Planned Obsolescence. The Catholic World Report, December 3, 2017).

Yes, Jesus was sacrificed once, and does not need to be sacrificed again. The Christian Passover is a memorial of the event, not a repeating of it.

Latin Mass and Liturgic Changes

Despite the view of some Roman ‘traditionalists,’ the original church liturgy was not in Latin nor did it resemble Roman Catholic mass. Notice three Roman Catholic reports:

In the third and fourth centuries A.D. ... Latin began to replace Greek as the common language of the Roman world and soon became the language of the liturgy. Exactly how this change in the liturgy came about is uncertain. ... Because Christians had not used Latin for worship prior to this, words had to be adapted or imported (often from Greek) to express Christian ideas, beginning the development of an ecclesiastical form of Latin. There is also evidence that the Roman Canon was influenced by prayers from the Eastern churches. (Tufano VM. When did we start celebrating Mass in Latin? US Catholic, June 18, 2010)

The word Mass (*missa*) first established itself as the general designation for the Eucharistic Sacrifice in the West after the time of Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604), ... Mass goes back in ... a custom that takes us at once into the third century (Pohle J. Sacrifice of the Mass. The Catholic Encyclopedia)

Roman Mass ... and the established customs became “ritualized” over the centuries. ... As early as the fourth century, fixed liturgical rites can be found in the Church. (The Traditional Latin Mass: A Brief History. MyCatholicSource.com, accessed 09/22/20)

Some, however, assert Latin Mass began to be used by the Roman Bishop Victor c. 190. But even if the early use of Latin in the late 2nd century is true (and using the common language of an area for church services makes sense), Latin still was not the original language of original church services—that was Aramaic/Hebrew. However, Greek quickly became used as the New Testament epistles—which were written in Greek—were read and/or referred to.

Not only were original church services not in Latin, according to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, they were not called Mass until the 7th century. Furthermore, as many rituals in Latin Mass came from the 3rd and 4th centuries, those practices were not really a part of the regular original services. A Roman Catholic priest explained the changes this way:

The practical union of the church and the state under Constantine and his successors led to the secularization of the church. The patriarch of Constantinople became the controller of the emperor, and the eastern church became the department of the state. The influx of pagans through the mass conversion of the era contributed to the paganization of worship as the church tried to make these barbarian converts feel at home within its fold. If the barbarians who had been used to worshipping images were to find any real help in the church, many church leaders believed that it would be necessary to materialize the liturgy to make God seem more accessible to these worshippers. The veneration of angels, saints, relics, pictures and status was a logical outcome of this attitude. Connection with the monarchical state also led to change from a simple democratic worship to a more aristocratic, colourful form of liturgy with a sharply drawn distinction between the clergy and the laity. (Thomas BM, priest. DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN CHRISTIANITY: CHRISTIAN WORSHIP, CHRISTIAN LIFE, MINISTRY, PATRIARCHATES, COUNCILS, CULTS OF MARTYRS, HAGIOGRAPHIC LITERATURE ETC. FEDERATED FACULTY FOR RESEARCH IN RELIGION AND CULTURE, KOTTAYAM, October 2015, p. 4)

A biblical outcome, not one based on human reasoning, would have been to not venerate “angels, saints, relics, pictures and status,” but to have kept to something like the original liturgy.

As far as Latin mass goes, Roman Catholic sources clearly teach that ritualized Latin Mass was a change from the original catholic liturgy. More changes occurred in the 13th through 15th centuries (Jedin H, ed. History of the Church, Volume 2. Crossroad, New York, 1993, p. 326).

The Eastern Orthodox, also, have freely admitted that their liturgy CHANGED. Notice this from one of their writers:

The liturgical practices of the church at Antioch did not stagnate. As does every early tradition of the church, the liturgy continued to expand in content and meaning. (Lucas J. Liturgical Pattern and Experience in First Century Antioch. By the Waters: Selected Works by Students of St. Tikhon’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, vol 7, Fall 2008, pp. 40-52)

The original church liturgy did not have much resemblance to Eastern Orthodox services, which begin and end with the “signing of the cross.” The teaching that the “liturgical practices of the church at Antioch did not stagnate” demonstrates that what ended up in Antioch changed—hence the Eastern Orthodox admit that what they now have is NOT the original catholic liturgy.

Some claim that they follow the “Divine Liturgy of St. James.” However, that was not original, nor did James come up with it as *The Catholic Encyclopedia* and the *OrthodoxWiki* also understand:

... the famous liturgy of St. James. That it was actually composed by St. James the Less, as first Bishop of Jerusalem, is not now believed by any one; (Fortescue A. Liturgy of Jerusalem. The Catholic Encyclopedia)

The general scholarly consensus is that this liturgy originated in Jerusalem during the late fourth or early fifth century. It quickly became the primary liturgy in Jerusalem and Antioch. Although it was later superseded in Jerusalem and Antioch by the Liturgy of St. Basil and the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, it had already spread to other areas of the Church. (Liturgy of St. James. OrthodoxWiki, accessed 06/04/21)

So, what the Eastern Orthodox now do was not original.

Unlike how Eastern Orthodox church service were conducted, there were no icons, incense, signing of the cross, or leavened bread as part of the original church services. Nor “chanting” sermons nor hymns sung to Mary. Neither were any of the known current Eastern Orthodox litanies (‘petitions’ recited by the clergy and responded to in a recurring formula by the people) originally used by early Christians.

The CCOG maintains it has continued the original catholic church practices when it comes to church services, or the liturgy.

Baptism

What about baptism?

The Book of Acts teaches:

³⁸ ‘You must repent,’ Peter answered, ‘and every one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38, NJB)

³² the Holy Spirit, which God has given to those who obey Him. (Acts 5:32b, AFV)

Those who can do repent, accept Jesus, and are ready for it can be baptized—which we do by immersion, then lay hands upon the baptized and pray that God will grant His Holy Spirit.

Infants, of course, cannot repent nor obey God.

In the 20th century Franciscan Jean Briand reported:

Authors of old only described adult baptisms. (Briand J. The Judeo-Christian Church of Nazareth. Translated from the French by Mildred Duell. 1st edition, Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem, 1982, p. 54)

After reviewing documents and other evidence, Roman Catholic scholar and priest Bagatti correctly concluded that Judeo-Christians did not baptize infants, “following the example of the Lord” (Bagatti, The Church from the Circumcision, p. 239).

The Roman Church admits that immersion was the original practice, without the use of baptismal fonts (like it now uses):

In the Apostolic Age, as in Jewish times (John 3:23), baptism was administered without special fonts, at the seaside or in streams or pools of water (Acts 8:38); Tertullian refers to St. Peter’s baptizing in the Tiber (De bapt., iv); similarly; in later periods of evangelization, missionaries baptized in rivers as is narrated of St. Paulinus in England by Bede (Hist. Eccl., II, xiv-xvi). (Peterson, Baptismal Font. The Catholic Encyclopedia).

The word *Baptism* is derived from the Greek word, *bapto*, or *baptizo*, to wash or to immerse. It signifies, therefore, that washing is of the essential idea of the sacrament ... **The most ancient form usually employed was unquestionably immersion.** This is not only evident from the writings of the Fathers and the early rituals of both the Latin and Oriental Churches, but it can also be gathered from the Epistles of St. Paul, who speaks of baptism as a bath (Ephesians 5:26; Romans 6:4; Titus 3:5). In the Latin Church, immersion seems to have prevailed until the twelfth century. After that time it is found in some places even as late as the sixteenth century. Infusion and aspersion, however, were growing common in the thirteenth century and gradually prevailed in the Western Church. The Oriental Churches have retained immersion. (Fanning, Baptism. The Catholic Encyclopedia)

1214 This sacrament is called *Baptism*, after the central rite by which it is carried out (Greek *baptizein*) means to “plunge” or “immerse”; the “plunge” into water symbolizes the catechumen’s burial into Christ’s death, from which he rises up by resurrection with him, as “a new creature.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 342)

Notice that *The Catholic Encyclopedia* admits that immersion was “unquestionably” the biblical practice, the practice of the early Church, and was slowly dropped in the Latin/Western Church. Hence it admits that it is not faithful to the original practice of baptism. Also notice that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* admits that baptism is a plunging/immersion that shows a burial and resurrection, but this certainly is not the ceremony that they use of infants (which most likely are the majority of those baptized by Roman Catholics).

Because some churches baptize infants, as well as for general convenience, sprinkling is used by some Protestants. We in the *Continuing Church of God* are NOT Protestant: we continue with the original practice of baptizing converted adults via immersion.

After immersion, the ministry lays hands upon the baptized to pray that they will receive the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 19:5-6):

Of course, the leaders' hands had no magical or mystical qualities. They merely symbolized and formally emphasized that God, not man, gave them authority and set them apart for a particular job. God commissioned them and issued them authority and jurisdiction to do His work. This again demonstrates one of the great lessons of the laying on of hands--that God works through man -- even in ordaining His own servants. ... Along with the physical act of baptism is promised the Holy Spirit -- through the laying on of hands. Millions have supposedly been baptized, but very few have had hands laid on them for the receiving of the Holy Spirit after baptism. (Bradley A. Laying On of Hands. Good News, February 1974)

The clergy beseeches the Father to give the baptized His Holy Spirit via prayer and the laying on of hands. The Spirit is given by the Father, if the Father answers the clergy’s prayer, which is mainly dependent upon the sincerity/repentance of the person. Therefore, even if the specific clergy member who performed the ceremony has issues or falls away from the truth, the procedure is still valid. The Holy Spirit comes from God, not one’s hands.

When the Holy Spirit enters one this way, that person is begotten by God:

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1 Peter 1:3)

The Christian’s remaining physical life can be considered analogous to human gestation. If one remains faithful (Revelation 17:14), “endures to the end” (Matthew 10:22, EOB), one will be born again into God’s kingdom at the resurrection.

Christians will be reborn (John 3:5-8) and transformed into divine spirit beings in the first resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:50-53). This is not a new teaching, but one that early Christians held.

Theophilus of Antioch taught about being born again at the resurrection:

But the moon wanes monthly, and in a manner dies, being a type of man; then it is born again, and is crescent, for a pattern of the future resurrection” (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapter XV)

This resurrection when Jesus returns is the “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13, DRB) for Christians when we will be transformed to immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

Greco-Roman Changes

Now notice what the Flemish Roman Catholic theologian named Jodocus Tiletanus (more commonly now referred to as Josse Ravesteyn, also spelled Ravestein; see Georgius Cassander’s ‘De officio pii viri’ (1561): Critical edition with contemporary French and German translations Volume 134 of *Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte*. Publisher: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2016, p. 3) admitted in a book written in 1567 against the confession of the preachers of Antwerp (The Beehive of the Romish Church. Lulu, 2008, p. 21):

We are not satisfied with that which the apostles or the Gospel do declare, but we say that, as well as before as after, there are divers matters of importance and weight accepted and received out of a doctrine which is NOWHERE SET FORTH IN WRITING. For we do blesse the water wherewith we baptize, and the oyle wherewith we annoynt; yea and besides that, him that is christened. And (I pray you) OUT OF WHAT SCRIPTURE have we learned the same? HAVE WE NOT IT OF A SECRET AND UNWRITTEN ORDINANCE? And further what scripture hath taught us to grease with oyle? Yea, I pray you, whence cometh it, that we do dype the child three times in that water? Doth it not come out of this hidden and undisclosed doctrine, which our forefathers have received closely without any curiosity, and do observe it still? (Harvet, Gentianus. *Review of Epistles*, PP. 19B, 20A, London 1598, as quoted by A. Hislop in *The Two Babylons*. Originally 1853, expanded 1858. Loizeaux Brothers, Inc.; 2nd edition, 1959)

Hence it is known and declared that infant baptism is not from scripture. Notice that it is claimed to have somehow entered Greco-Roman Catholicism from a secret ordinance.

Furthermore, consider that in the 2nd century, Irenaeus wrote that apostates like the Valentinians had heretical views regarding baptism and regarded their views about scripture (and look to possibly be the source of the “unwritten ordinance” that Jodocus Tiletanus referred to):

They gather their views from other sources than the Scriptures ... In doing so, however, they disregard the order and the connection of the Scriptures, and so far as in them lies, dismember and destroy the truth. By transferring passages, and dressing them up anew, and making one thing

out of another, they succeed in deluding many through their wicked art in adapting the oracles of the Lord to their opinions ... (Adversus Haereses. Book 1, Chapter 8, Verse 1)

But there are some of them who assert that it is superfluous to bring persons to the water, but mixing oil and water together, they place this mixture on the heads of those who are to be initiated, with the use of some such expressions as we have already mentioned. And this they maintain to be the redemption ... (Irenaeus. Adversus Haeres. Book 1, Chapter 21, Verse 4)

Irenaeus condemned the oil and water mixture on the head as a Valentinian heresy. 'Traditions' that many churches have come from apostates and/or pagan sources that are in conflict with scripture.

We in the CCOG do not use the oil and water mixture, but instead continue the original practice to baptize by immersion, followed by the laying on of hands.

Baptism, Infants, Sprinkling, and Immersion

Should infants be baptized?

The Bible never shows that infants were baptized.

Notice something from Tertullian which is opposed to it:

The Lord does indeed say, "Forbid them not to come unto me." Let them "come," then, while they are growing up; let them "come" while they are learning, while they are learning whither to come; let them become Christians when they have become able to know Christ. Why does the innocent period of life hasten to the "remission of sins?" More caution will be exercised in worldly matters: so that one who is not trusted with earthly substance is trusted with divine! Let them know how to "ask" for salvation, that you may seem (at least) to have given "to him that asks." (Tertullian. On Baptism, Chapter 18. In Ante-Nicene Fathers)

But the Greco-Romans changed from the original teaching.

The Catholic Encyclopedia admits that infant baptism and other practices are simply based upon tradition:

Divine traditions not contained in Holy Scripture ...

The designation of unwritten Divine traditions was not always given all the clearness desirable especially in early times; however Catholic controversialists soon proved to the Protestants that to be logical and consistent they must admit unwritten traditions as revealed. Otherwise by what right did they rest on Sunday and not on Saturday? How could they regard infant baptism as valid, or baptism by infusion? How could they permit the taking of an oath, since Christ had commanded that we swear not at all? The Quakers were more logical in refusing all oaths, the Anabaptists in re-baptizing adults, the Sabbatarians in resting on Saturday. But none were so consistent as not to be open to criticism on some point. (Bainvel, Tradition and Living Magisterium).

It is true that most of the traditions mentioned above from outside of scripture are practices that majority in the Greco-Roman-Protestant churches accept. Since those traditions do contradict the biblical teachings (and even *The Catholic Encyclopedia* admitted that on some of them), those practices should be rejected and should not be part of the traditions of either of those groups.

We in the CCOG, however, are consistent on all those points as we rest on Saturday, do not swear oaths, and do not baptize infants. Hence, we believe we do hold the original, scriptural position on all of these.

We are consistent in rejecting anti-biblical traditions that are not in harmony with scripture. That is one way we differ from the Protestants.

Understand that the Greco-Romans changed their mind and decided (late 2nd/early 3rd century) to accept infant baptism. The Romans also accept sprinkling.

Others with COG leanings throughout in church history rejected infant baptism:

Infant baptism ... The Waldenses and Cathari and later the Anabaptists, rejected the doctrine that infants are capable of receiving valid baptism, and some sectarians at the present day hold the same opinion. (Fanning, W. Baptism. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*)

There is a long history of Christians opposing infant baptism.

Blessing of Little Children

As far as children go, the Apostle Paul taught that they are sanctified if even one parent is a true Christian (1 Corinthians 7:14).

Jesus blessed little children (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:14-16; Luke 18:15-17). It may be that a misunderstanding of that practice was at least part of the basis of promoting infant baptism by the Greco Romans (e.g. Fanning, W. Baptism. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*).

Following Jesus' example, we in the CCOG bless little children, but we do not baptize them.

Polycarp's Age and Baptism

Some Greco-Roman Catholics have pointed to Polycarp as proof of infant baptism in the early church (e.g. Bonocore MJ. Infant Baptism. Catholic Fidelity.com. <https://www.catholicfidelity.com/apologetics-topics/baptism/infant-baptism-by-mark-j-bonocore/> viewed 07/12/21; Bajis J. Infant Baptism. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. <http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith7067> viewed 07/04/15).

Was Polycarp baptized as an infant and killed when he was 86?

No.

As far as Polycarp's final age, here is something from the Syriac 3rd century documents known as the *Harris Fragments*:

There remained [---]ter him a disciple[e ---] name was Polycar[p and] he made him bishop over Smyrna ... He was ... {an} old man, being one hundred and f[our] of age. He continued to walk [i]n the canons which he had learned from his youth from John the a[p]ostle (Weidman FW. Polycarp and John: The Harris Fragments and Their Challenge to Literary Traditions. University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame (IL), 1999, pp. 43-44)

When asked to revile Christ, Polycarp stated:

For 86 years I have been His servant, and He has done me no wrong. (Martyrdom of Polycarp, 9:3)

Subtracting 86 from 104 years at the time of his death, this points to Polycarp being baptized at age 18. This is mentioned, because some have falsely asserted he died at age 86 and was baptized as an infant by the Apostle John.

Polycarp had to have been older than 86 when he died to have possibly been appointed a bishop by any of the original apostles if this happened when Polycarp was around age forty. The following claim from the Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States is of interest:

Polycarp ... Appointed to be Bishop of the See of Smyrna by the Apostles themselves, at the age of 40, he provides us with an important link in our long historical chain of Orthodox tradition clasping together the Apostles and the Second Century Church. (Youssef HG, Bishop. St. Polycarp the Blessed Peacemaker. Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States. <http://suscopts.org/resources/literature/174/st-polycarp-the-beloved-peacemaker/> viewed 07/06/2020)

The above is of interest as it also supports the view that Polycarp lived to be an older age than many seem to believe and that there could have been bishops in Smyrna prior to him.

If Polycarp only lived to age 86, all the original apostles would have been dead by the time he was 40 (an 86 year-long life, would have made Polycarp age 40 around 118 A.D. and John seems to have died over a decade prior). But if Polycarp lived to 104, he would have been 40 in 94 A.D. and the Apostle John (who was alive then), and possibly others such as Philip, could have ordained him then. Although some suggest that 104 was too old for a Christian leader back then, let it be noted that Eusebius reported that Simeon, successor to the Apostle James in Jerusalem, was killed at age 120 (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book III, Chapter 32, vs. 3 & 6, p. 64).

Perhaps it may be of interest to mention that back in 1821, "Cler. Gloc." wrote that Polycarp was placed in charge of the "See of Smyrna" for around seventy years, that he calculated that Polycarp probably lived around 100 years based upon other historical records, and that the idea Polycarp died at age 86 was a "misconception" (Gloc, C. Letter to the Remembrancer, August 1821. As shown in Scott W. Garden F. Mozely JB. The Christian remembrancer. Printed for F.C. & J. Rivington, 1821, p. 454).

Irenaeus of Lyon wrote that Polycarp lived A VERY LONG TIME, was APPOINTED BISHOP BY THE APOSTLES, and was martyred when he was A VERY OLD MAN:

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, (Against Heresies. Book III, Chapter 3, verse 4)

So, consistent with Irenaeus' writings and other reports, it is reasonable to conclude that Polycarp lived until age 104 and was baptized at 18.

Thus, the example of Polycarp does not support infant baptism, but does support waiting until early adulthood for baptism.

Passover and Easter Sunday

Early Christians tended to call the bread and wine ceremony, Passover, or since many originally used Greek, *Pascha*. The Greek Orthodox still refer to the Passover as Pascha (a transliteration of the term used in the New Testament), whereas many in the Church of Rome adopted the term Easter. The term 'eucharist' (meaning thanksgiving) was also sometimes used by early Christians.

Herbert W. Armstrong taught:

Jesus ... He was referring here really to the Passover. ... today people call it Lord's Supper, or Communion, or Eucharist, ... in the Bible it's called Passover, just plain Passover.

And He said; "...Except [you] eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, [you] have [no] life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:53-54 ASV) (Armstrong HW. Jesus is the Bread of Life. Radio broadcast, 20th century)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches:

1339 Jesus choose the time of the Passover...And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them ... (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 373)

Now the above is scriptural. Here are some related scriptures:

¹⁹ And the disciples did as Jesus appointed to them, and they prepared the pasch. ...

²⁶ And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke: and gave to his disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat. This is my body. (Matthew 26:19,26 DRB)

²² And whilst they were eating, Jesus took bread; and blessing, broke, and gave to them, and said: Take ye. This is my body. (Mark 14:22, DRB)

¹⁹ And taking bread, he gave thanks, and brake; and gave to them, saying: This is my body, which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of me. (Luke 22:19, DRB)

Notice, it is very clear that Jesus **BROKE** the bread on Passover (Pasch means Passover).

The Apostle Paul confirmed that it was the practice of the early Christians to break bread:

¹⁶ The chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And **the bread, which we break**, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord? (1 Corinthians 10:16, DRB).

²³ For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread.

²⁴ And giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye, and eat: this is my body, which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of me. (1 Corinthians 11:23-24, DRB)

In the *Continuing* Church of God, we still break bread as part of the Passover ceremony.

The Apostle Paul followed Jesus' practice and broke bread. Furthermore, notice what *The Catholic Encyclopedia* teaches in its article "Host":

... the first Christians ... simply used the bread that served as food. It seems that the form differed but little from what it is in our day. (Leclercq H. Host.)

Roman Catholic scholars admit that the adopted changes to the eucharist as the following also confirms:

The eucharistic celebration also admitted new elements in the fourth and fifth centuries and through continued development in individual points drew ever closer to the form of the Mass." (Jedin, Volume 1, p. 296)

Yes, the Greco-Roman churches changed. A rounded host was adopted by the Romans, whereas the Greeks adopted leavened bread. Both differ from what Jesus did and said to be continued (1 Corinthians 11:23-24).

The original Christian observance of Passover involved unleavened bread, wine, and footwashing on the 14th of the first month of the biblical calendar. And this was continued by the Christians in Judea and those in Asia Minor (Holweck F. Easter. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*; Thurston, H. Washing of Feet and Hands. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*). It was considered as a commemoration of Christ being the Passover lamb slain for us and was not a resurrection holiday on that day (Holweck F. Easter).

There is an ancient document called the *Didache*. In its present form, it looks like it is from sometime into the second century. Anyway, it states:

Now concerning the Thanksgiving (Eucharist), thus give thanks. First, concerning the cup: We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David Your servant, which You made known to us through Jesus Your Servant; to You be the glory forever. And concerning the broken bread: We thank You, our Father, for the life and knowledge which You made known to us through Jesus Your Servant; to You be the glory forever. Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Your kingdom; for Yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever. But let no one eat or drink of your Thanksgiving (Eucharist), but they who have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord has said, Give not that which is holy to the dogs.

So, this clearly is referring to a ceremony related to Jesus' last Passover. It uses forms of the Greek word eucharist four times, with the first one referring to a ceremony. And it is clearly referring to breaking the bread. It also points out that the Eucharist/Passover is to only be taken by baptized people.

That would be consistent with the writings of the Apostle Paul:

²⁷ Therefore, whoever eats this bread or drinks the Lord's cup in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let everyone do a self-examination, and then eat the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For whoever eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment to himself, if such a one does not discern the body of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 11:27-29, EOB)

⁵ Try your own selves if you be in the faith; prove ye yourselves. Know you not your own selves, that Christ Jesus is in you, unless perhaps you be reprobates? (2 Corinthians 13:5, DRB)

Since only baptized people have truly examined themselves, only they are to partake in the Passover/Eucharist.

Now, in the early second century, Ignatius of Antioch wrote:

13:1 Take heed, then, often to come together to give thanks to God, and show forth His praise. (Letter to the Ephesians 13:1)

20:2 obey the bishop and the presbytery with an undivided mind, breaking one and the same bread, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote to prevent us from dying, but [which causes] that we should live for ever in Jesus Christ. (Letter to the Ephesians 13:1)

4:1 Take heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to [show forth] the unity of His blood; one altar; as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow-servants: that so, whatsoever you do, you may do it according to [the will of] God. (Letter to the Philadelphians 4:1).

8:1 But avoid divisions, as being the beginning of evils. Do ye all follow the bishop, as Jesus Christ doth the Father; and follow the presbyters as the apostles; and have respect unto the deacons as unto the commandment of God. Let no one, apart from the bishop, do any of the things that appertain unto the church. Let that eucharist alone be considered valid which is celebrated in the presence of the bishop, or of him to whom he shall have entrusted it. (Letter to the Smyrnaeans 8:1, Hoole).

The first citation is giving thanks. These letters are consistent with a Eucharist ceremony that was done annually, as opposed to weekly or daily.

In the second century, it was reported that Passover was an annual event and that it was held at night (Epistula Apostolorum, Chapter 15 as shown in Elliot JK. The apocryphal New Testament: a collection of apocryphal Christian literature in an English translation, reprint edition. Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 565). The Eastern Orthodox realize that this is so, as one of their priests has written:

Pascha is the feast of universal redemption. Our earliest sources for the annual celebration of the Christian Pascha come to us from the second century. The feast, however, must have originated in the apostolic period ... According to the earliest documents, Pascha is described as a nocturnal celebration ... (Calivas AC. The Origins of Pascha and Great Week. Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1992. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-origins-of-pascha-and-great-week?inheritRedirect=true> 07/14/2021)

in the *Continuing Church of God*, we still keep Passover annually at night on the 14th as the original “mother church” did. Notice some statements from a Roman Catholic priest and scholar:

St. John spent the first years of his apostolate in Palestine, together with James, it is obvious that he had the custom of celebrating Easter {Passover} **on the 14th of Nisan from the mother Church.** ... the common belief ... the date had been fixed by the Lord and was, therefore, unchangeable (Bagatti, The Church from the Circumcision, pp. 80, 81)

Notice something that the Apostle John wrote:

¹⁹ They went out from us: but they were not of us. for if they had been of us, they would surely have remained with us: but that they may be manifest that they are not all of us. (1 John 2:19, RNT 1582)

Why bring that up here?

Because one of the first documented changes between the practices of the Apostle John and what became the Greco-Roman confederacy was change of the date of Passover, then the time of Passover, and then the practices associated with Passover.

Essentially, because of fear of Imperial Rome's reaction to the Jews because of their Bar Kochba revolt (c. 130-135), many in Rome, Alexandria, and Jerusalem compromised and stopped keeping Passover on the 14th.

Notice the following:

Pope Pius, who lived about the year 147, had made a decree, that the annual solemnity of the pasch should be kept only on the Lord's day; and in confirmation of this he pretended, that Hermes, his brother, who was then an eminent teacher among them, had received instruction from an angel, who commanded, that all men should keep the pasch on the Lord's day. Yet, notwithstanding this, the Asiatics kept to their ancient custom ... (Bingham JW. *ORIGINES ECCLESIASTICÆ; OR THE ANTIQUITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH*, Volume VII, Book XX, Chapter V. London, 1834, p. 72)

... one of the letters forged in the name of Pius, where one Hermas is mentioned as the author; and it is stated that in his book a commandment was given through an angel to observe the Passover on a Sunday. In our consideration of the authorship we may omit this third witness as not trustworthy and a bungler. (Donaldson J. *A CRITICAL HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE AND DOCTRINE FROM THE DEATH OF THE APOSTLES TO THE NICENE COUNCIL*. MACMILLAN AND CO., 1864, p. 260)

If this letter was a deliberate forgery, it was invented after Polycarp's time *in an effort to lend weight to the new custom* of Anicetus, bishop of Rome, who falsely maintained the Sunday observance of the eucharist. If it were not a forgery, then Pius himself was the author of this deceptive letter. (Pius died just prior to the visit of Polycarp to Rome.). At any rate, Sunday commenced in the church as a "pious fraud" — Satanic trickery! (Hoeh H. *Why Do the Churches Observe SUNDAY?* Good News, April 1957, p. 5)

If the Pius declaration really happened in 147 (and lack of real evidence, see McBrien, p. 9, suggests it did not—plus nothing about this is in the *Shepherd of Hermas* book), remember that the Apostle Paul warned about making changes that come about from "an angel in heaven" (Galatians 1:8)—such a change should not have been done.

Most likely, this declaration about Pius and an angel happened after Polycarp visited because someone felt that they needed to appeal to someone with more authority than Polycarp, and an angel from heaven was the source that was selected.

Furthermore, consider that it is obvious that later faithful Asia Minor COG leaders, like Melito, Sagaris, Thraseas, etc. did NOT accept the reportedly "angelic" change as authoritative—no matter when that declaration was written.

Additionally, consider that after learning that bishop Victor of Rome was pushing a Sunday Passover date instead of the 14th of Abib/Nisan, c. 192 bishop Polycrates of Ephesus wrote him to say:

We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall seek out all the saints. Among these are Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who fell asleep in Hierapolis; and his two aged virgin daughters, and another daughter, who lived in the Holy Spirit and now rests at Ephesus; and, moreover, John, who was both a witness and a teacher, who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord, and, being a priest, wore the sacerdotal plate. He fell asleep at Ephesus. And Polycarp in Smyrna, who was a bishop and martyr; and Thraseas, bishop and martyr from Eumenia, who fell asleep in Smyrna. Why need I mention the bishop and martyr Sagaris who fell asleep in Laodicea, or the blessed Papius, or Melito, the Eunuch who lived altogether in the Holy Spirit, and who lies in Sardis, awaiting the episcopate from heaven, when he shall rise from the dead? All these observed the fourteenth day of the passover according to the Gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, do according to the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have closely followed. For seven of my relatives were bishops; and I am the eighth. And my relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven. I, therefore, brethren, who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord, and have met with the brethren throughout the world, and have gone through every Holy Scripture, am not affrighted by terrifying words. For those greater than I have said 'We ought to obey God rather than man'... I could mention the bishops who were present, whom I summoned at your desire; whose names, should I write them, would constitute a great multitude. And they, beholding my littleness, gave their consent to the letter, knowing that I did not bear my gray hairs in vain, but had always governed my life by the Lord Jesus (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book V, Chapter XXIV, pp. 114-115).

Notice that Polycrates said that he and the other early church leaders (like the Apostles Philip and John, and their successors like Polycarp, Thraseas, Sagaris, Papius, Melito) would not deviate from the Bible, and that they knew the Bible taught them to keep the Passover on the correct date, and thus they rejected Sunday. Also notice that they always observed the day when the people put away the leaven. Polycrates also reminded the Roman bishop that true followers of Christ "obey God rather than men."

Keeping Passover on the 14th was a belief of the original apostolic catholic church.

Hence it is clear, that throughout the second century, the churches in Asia Minor continued the original practice to observe the Passover on the 14th of Nisan (and for doing so, they were labeled as Quartodecimans by the Romans). Unlike many of the Romans, the faithful refused to accept the authority of any Roman bishop over scripture.

That is also consistent with the Pionius' *Life of Polycarp* which says that the Apostle Paul told the faithful in Smyrna to keep Passover at the time of unleavened bread (Pionius. Life of Polycarp, Chapter 2. In The Apostolic Fathers, vol. 3.2, 1889, pp. 488-506).

As far as the day putting away leaven, that was a reference to what is done immediately prior to the Days of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:19).

Luke, a Gentile writing to another Gentile (Theophilus per Acts 1:1) refers to the Days of Unleavened Bread in Jerusalem (Acts 12:3) and the Gentile area of Philippi (Acts 20:6), as well as “the Fast” near Crete (Acts 27:9), without the need to explain what they were. That is consistent with the fact that early Christians would have both known and kept them.

It should also be noted that according to Eamon Duffy, a Roman Catholic scholar and then a member of the *Pontifical Historical Commission*, a statement in Eusebius’ account that the presbyters “sent the eucharist” to the Quartodeciman churches (Eusebius. *The History of the Church*. Book V, Chapter 24, verse 15, p. 115) proves that Victor’s concern was originally a local matter.

Why?

Dr. Duffy explains:

... because any fragments of the eucharistic bread sent on the long sea journey to the churches of Asia Minor would have gone mouldy or hard long before they reached their destination ... Victor was not brawling randomly around the Mediterranean spoiling for a fight, but trying to impose uniformity of practice on all the churches in his own city, as part of a more general quest for internal unity and order. The churches of proconsular Asia may well have protested the condemnation of a custom ... but Victor’s excommunication was aimed at Asian congregations in Rome, not broadside at churches over whom he which had no direct jurisdiction. (Duffy, pp. 15-16)

Dr. Duffy’s explanation does make sense--though it does seem that Victor also wanted to do something to Asia Minor. While Victor apparently hoped that Asia Minor would go along with him, obviously as Polycrates wrote, Asia Minor would not. It should be understood that Eamon Duffy is correct that his Roman church did NOT have any jurisdiction over the Churches of God in Asia Minor at that time.

Instead of indicating any real superiority of the Church of Rome (which some have improperly asserted), Polycrates’ letter clearly supports the view that the Church of God in Asia Minor towards the end of the 2nd century considered the Bible, and not Rome, as authoritative.

Polycarp and others listed by Polycrates were NOT the Greco-Roman type of catholic.

Do Roman Catholics recognize that ones they called “early fathers” kept Passover on the 14th?

Yes.

Their scholars have also noted Quartodecimanism was taught in both Matthew’s and John’s Gospel accounts (Pessina A, Catholic University of Sacred Heart *The Central Role of the Cross in the Passion Narrative of Matthew: A Quartodeciman Interpretation of the First Gospel*. 2019 SBL INTERNATIONAL MEETING ABSTRACTS. July 2, 2019, Rome, Italy.).

Quartodecimanism was also practiced in the British Isles.

Notice what the medieval historian and Roman Catholic Priest Bede (also known as “the Venerable Bede”) recorded from an Abbot named Wilfrid who was trying to justify near the beginning of the eighth century why it was acceptable to not follow the Apostle John’s practices regarding Passover:

Far be it from me to charge John with foolishness: he literally observed the decrees of the Mosaic law when the Church was still Jewish in many respects, at a time when the apostles were unable to bring a sudden end to that law which God ordained ... They feared, of course, that they might make a stumbling block for the Jewish proselytes ...

So John, in accordance with the custom of the law, began the celebration of Easter Day in the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month, regardless of whether it fell on the sabbath or any other day. But when Peter preached at Rome, remembering that the Lord rose from the dead and brought to the world the hope of the resurrection on the first day of the week...he always waited for the rising of the moon on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month in accordance with the customs and precepts of the law as John did, he proceeded to celebrate Easter as we are accustomed to do at this present time. But if the Lord’s day was due, he waited for it, and began the holy Easter ceremonies the night before, that is on Saturday evening; so it came about that Easter Sunday was kept only between the fifteenth day of the moon and the twenty-first. So this evangelical and apostolic tradition does not abolish the law, but fulfills it, by ordering the observance of Easter from the evening of the fourteenth day of the moon in the first month up to the twenty-first day of the moon in the same month. All the followers of St. John in Asia since his death and also the whole church throughout the world have followed this observance. That this is the true Easter and that this alone must be celebrated ... (Bede, monk. Edited by Judith McClure and Roger Collins. *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Oxford University Press, NY, 1999, pp. 156-157).

Does that make theological sense? Let’s look at the facts:

1. It is admitted that John and the early Church was fairly Jewish in their practices.
2. It is admitted that keeping Passover on the 14th was a practice of the Apostle John.
3. While Jesus was resurrected by Saturday evening, there is no early document (such as prior to the third century) that states that Peter changed the Passover observance (a time to proclaim “the Lord’s death” per the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:26) from the 14th of Nisan to a Saturday evening observance.
4. Abbot Wilfrid is oddly arguing that Peter began a Passover service on Saturday night which is why Easter on Sunday morning is now kept.
5. The New Testament is clear that the Apostle John, who Abbot Wilfrid admits kept Passover on the 14th, was often with the Apostle Peter after the resurrection (Acts 3:1-11; 4:13; 8:14; Galatians 2:9) and perhaps even to the time that Peter died (cf. 2 Peter 1:14-15). Does anyone actually think that John and Peter kept differing dates? The Bible indicates otherwise (cf. Luke 22:8; Jude 3).

6. Most who now observe Easter Sunday do so during Sunday morning, yet as a resurrection holiday—not as a commemoration of Passover.

7. Those who followed John's practices, for over one hundred years after his death in Asia Minor, kept Passover on the 14th and not on a Sunday. So how could Abbot Wilfrid argue that they kept the same practice as the Romans who chose Sunday?

8. Abbot Wilfrid admits that John followed the Bible in his own practice, but that somehow Peter allegedly made up a tradition that he did not learn from Jesus or the Bible (there is no verse in the Bible that states Passover should be observed on a Sunday), but that he came to the change on his own—and for which there is NO early historical proof.

9. So while the Roman church does not observe the biblical practice of observing the days of unleavened bread, it apparently believes that the dates in Exodus 12:18 and Leviticus 23:5-6 regarding them need to be used to determine the date of Passover (that is where Abbot Wilfrid would have needed to get the dates of the 15th and 21st from as they are the "days of unleavened bread associated with the Passover), Abbot Wilfrid feels that the actual date (the 14th) of Passover should not be used unless it is on a Sunday.

Hence, John and the faithful in Ephesus, Smyrna, and the bulk of Asia Minor did what the Bible taught. But because someone claimed there is a later tradition from an unknown time that Peter supposedly reasoned that if Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week, that the anniversary of His death should be observed on a Saturday night instead—and that Sunday morning is thus acceptable—but that is not biblically acceptable.

Saint John also wrote:

¹⁹ We are well aware that we are from God, and the whole world is in the power of the Evil One. (1 John 5:19, NJB).

We in the CCOG keep John's practices as he was from God. It makes no theological sense to deviate on things like the date of Passover. Other faithful leaders kept the same practice.

In the late 2nd century Bishop/pastor Apollinaris of Hierapolis wrote:

The fourteenth day, the true Passover of the Lord; the great sacrifice, the Son of God instead of the lamb, who was bound, who bound the strong, and who was judged, though Judge of living and dead, and who was delivered into the hands of sinners to be crucified, who was lifted up on the horns of the unicorn, and who was pierced in His holy side, who poured forth from His side the two purifying elements, water and blood, word and spirit, and who was buried on the day of the passover, the stone being placed upon the tomb (Apollinaris. From the Book Concerning Passover).

Apollinaris is considered a saint by the Greco-Romans and CCOG—his statements show that he did NOT consider that dates other than the 14th could be THE TRUE PASSOVER OF THE LORD.

One scholar commented:

... there is no doubt that Apollinarius was a Quartodeciman ... Those who kept Passover in the evening understood it to be a repetition of the Lord's Supper. (Stewart-Sykes A. Melito of Sardis On Pascha. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood NY, 2001, p. 81).

Those who are used to a weekly, monthly, or even daily 'eucharist,' may be surprised to learn that into the 4th century Emperor Constantine understood that Passover was to be a one-time, annual event. According to the fifth century historian Theodoret, Constantine declared:

"For we could never tolerate celebrating the Passover twice in one year. But even if all these facts did not exist, your own sagacity would prompt you to watch with diligence and with prayer, lest your pure minds should appear to share in the customs of a people so utterly depraved. It must also be borne in mind, that upon so important a point as the celebration of a feast of such sanctity, discord is wrong. **One day has our Saviour set apart for a commemoration of our deliverance,** namely, of His most holy Passion." (Theodoret of Cyrus. Ecclesiastical History (Book I). In Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches:

1170 At the Council of Nicea in 325, all the Churches agreed that Easter, the Christian Passover, should be celebrated on the Sunday following the first full moon (14 Nisan) after the vernal equinox. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 332)

But that idea that "all the Churches agreed" is not true as the bishops from the faithful eastern churches with original beliefs did not attend that Council (nor was it called "Easter" then) nor did they agree.

Notice what the Roman Catholic priest and historian Bellarmino Bagatti wrote:

... the inhabitants of Syria, of Cilicia and of Mesopotamia were still celebrating Easter {Passover} with the Jews ...

The importance of the matters to be discussed and the great division that existed had led Constantine to bring together a big number of bishops, including confessors of the faith, in order to give the impression that the whole of Christendom was represented.

In fact ... the churches of Jewish stock had had no representation ... **no Judaeo-Christian bishop participated in the Council. Either they were not invited or they declined to attend.** And so the capitulars had a free hand to establish norms for certain practices without meeting opposition or hearing other view points. Once the road was open future Councils would continue on these lines, thus deepening the breach between the Christians of two-stocks. **The point of view of the Judaeo-**

Christians, devoid of Greek philosophical formation, was that of keeping steadfast to the *Testimonia*, and therefore not to admit any word foreign to the Bible, including *Homoousion* ... no Judeo-Christian bishop attended the council. ... future councils followed the same track, ever widening the division, (Bagatti B. Translated by Eugene Hoade. *The Church from the Gentiles in Palestine*. Nihil obstat: Ignatius Mancini, 1 Februari 1970. Imprimi potest: Herminius Roncari, 26 Februari 1970. Imprimatur: +Albertus Gori, die 28 Februarii 1970. Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem, 1971, pp. 47-48, 87)

So not every church was represented and the faithful believed the Bible. Nor did everyone accept the degree of the sun-worshipping emperor as the Roman Catholic supporting Epiphanius noted a few decades after that Council:

The Quartodecimans contentiously keep Passover on one day, once per year ... They keep the Passover on whichever day the fourteenth of the month falls ... Christ had to be slain on the fourteenth of the month in accordance with the law ... (Epiphanius. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, Books II and III, Sects 47-80, *De Fide*. Section IV, Verses 1,3;1,6;2,6. Translated by Frank Williams. EJ Brill, New York, 1994, pp. 23-25)

The Quartodecimans only kept Passover ceremony once per year--not daily like most Roman Catholic priests somewhat do. It is of interest to note that Epiphanius recognized that Jesus HAD to be slain on the 14th of the month. It is sad that he and others did not believe they needed to observe it when and how Jesus taught. Strangely he wrote this about the practices of the Greco-Roman church (which we now call Roman and Orthodox Catholics, but he calls "God's holy church"):

But God's holy church does not miss the truth in any way in her fixing the date of this mystery. She uses not only the fourteenth day. but also the seven days which recur order of the seven days of the week ... And she uses not only the fourteenth day of the lunar month, but the course of the sun as well, to keep us from observing two Passovers in one year and not even one in another. We observe the fourteenth day, then, but we wait until after the equinox and bring the end of our full observance to the sacred Lord's day. (Epiphanius. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, Books II and III, p. 25)

Well, the Roman Catholics most certainly do not observe Passover on the evening of the 14th unless that happens to fall when some observe an evening mass--the equinox argument is not scriptural. It was absurd for Epiphanius to claim his church did observe the 14th. Consider also that since the "Lord's Supper" is observed frequently, most practicing Greco-Roman Catholics and Protestants do observe their version of it more than once per year.

According to Epiphanius, some who observed Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, claimed that Emperor Constantine mandated a Sunday observance of it in the Council of Nicea in 325 in order to somehow honor his birthday:

"You changed the Passover to Constantine's birthday" (Epiphanius. The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III (Sects 47-80), De Fide). Section VI, Verse 9,4. Translated by Frank Williams. EJ Brill, New York, 1994, pp. 410-411).

Epiphanius even admits that the church used to observe the 14th when he wrote of the "Audians" (Audius was from Mesopotamia):

Audians ... they choose to celebrate the Passover with the Jews--that is they contentiously celebrate the Passover at the same time as the Jews are holding their Festival of Unleavened Bread. **And indeed that this used to be the church's custom** ... they tell churchmen ... "You abandoned the fathers' Paschal rite in Constantine's time from deference to the emperor, and changed the day to suit the emperor." (Epiphanius. The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III, pp. 420-421)

So, the 14th is again documented as the original practice—and that the earlier practices were changed to suit Emperor Constantine. Notice that Epiphanius claimed that Constantine made his decision "for the unity of the church" (Ibid, 9,5). He claimed that there was quarrelling over the date of Passover that began "**after the time of the circumcised bishops**" (Ibid, 9,9)--that is the first fifteen faithful bishops of Jerusalem (through c. 135 A.D.).

Here is the quote from Epiphanius as published in Brill:

(4) And there were altogether fifteen bishops from the circumcision. And at that time, when the circumcised bishops were consecrated in Jerusalem, it was essential that the whole world followed them, so that there would be one accord and agreement, the celebration of one festival.
(5) Hence their concern [was] to bring people's minds into accord for the unity of the church.

<But> since <the festival> could not be celebrated <in this way> for such a long time, by God's good pleasure <a correction> was made in the time of Constantine. (Epiphanius. The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III, p. 422)

So, Epiphanius basically is admitting that the early Christians kept Passover on the 14th, but he has the audacity to claim that God decided a change/correction needed to be made and supposedly had the pagan sun-god worshiping Emperor Constantine make that change uniform.

That change was not biblical.

Anyway, since Constantine's declarations did not stop everyone from properly observing Passover, a later Roman Emperor (named Theodosius) after he became a baptized "Christian" decreed the death penalty:

Edicts of Theodosius against the heretics, A.D. 380-394 ... Theodosius ... decreed that ... by the death of the offender; and the same capital punishment was inflicted on the Audians, or Quartodecimans, who should dare to perpetrate the atrocious crime of celebrating on an

improper day the festival (Gibbon E. Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume III, Chapter XXVII. ca. 1776-1788).

The various enactments against heretics are contained in the Code of Theodosius (16. tit. 5. s. 6—23; and the commentary of Gothofredus): the Eunomians, whose guilt consisted in denying any resemblance between the two substances, and who were accordingly Anomoeans, were also deprived of the power of testamentary disposition, and of taking by testamentary gift: they seem, in fact, to have been deprived of all the rights of citizens. The Manichaean heresy was punishable with death; and the same penalty threatened the Audians or the Quartodecimans, who celebrated the festival of Easter on the wrong day. **To the reign of Theodosius belonged the glory or the infamy of establishing Inquisitors of Faith, who seem to have been specially enjoined to look after the crime of the Quartodecimans.** (Smith W. A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology: Oarses-Zygia. J. Murray, 1890 Item notes: v. 3, p. 1064)

Theodosius was a persecuting Greco-Roman Catholic, was endorsed by the Greco-Roman churches, and killed people for following Polycarp's (as well as others') example of keeping Passover on the 14th of Nisan.

Is Theodosius' order to kill those that followed the example of Jesus and John to observe the Passover on the 14th instead of Sunday a sign of a true Christian leader or more of a sign of a supporter of antichrist? Understand that the office of the "Inquisitors" was actually first formed to deal with people who kept Passover on the original biblical date--did you know that the date of Passover was considered to be that important?

Centuries after many compromisers switched to Sunday, the name of what was supposed to be the observance of Passover was changed in some Teutonic languages (English, German) to Easter.

Easter was the name of a Babylonian sex goddess (often spelled Ishtar, but pronounced about the same as Easter). Ishtar was the "queen of heaven" who was celebrated each Spring by the pagans. Various non-biblical trappings were part of the Ishtar celebration that are similar to many that who observe Easter use today.

That the term Easter comes from paganism is confirmed by *The Catholic Encyclopedia*:

The English term, according to the Ven. Bede (*De temporum ratione*, I, v), relates to Estre, a Teutonic goddess of the rising light of day and spring, which deity ... Anglo-Saxon, eâster, eâstron; Old High German, ôstra, ôstrara, ôstrarûn; German, Ostern. April was called easter-monadh. (Holweck, Easter)

As the above indicates, instead of Ishtar, some believe "Easter" was derived from the pagan-German goddess Eostre/Ostara (who also had ties to Ishtar). She was the "bringer of light" or the "goddess of the dawn," and is sometimes called "the queen of heaven." She was celebrated each Spring. She looks to be a direct tie to Easter sunrise services (since the Bible instead, has Passover right after sunset) as well as rabbits. Her favourite flower was the rose which is also the flower that the Roman Catholics associate with

their version of 'Mary' (Philips G. The Virgin Mary Conspiracy: The True Father of Christ and the Tomb of the Virgin. Bear & Company, 2005, pp. 218-219).

Various researchers, such as the 19th century scholar L.L.C. Hamilton, have taught that Ishtar was both the "Astarthe" (1 Kings 11:33 DRB) or "Astarte" (1 Kings 11:33 NJB/NABRE) or "Ashtoreth" (3 Kingdoms 11:30, OSB) condemned in the Old Testament AND the Eostre of the Germans (Hamilton LLC. Ishtar and Izdubar, the epic of Babylon; or, The Babylonian goddess of love and the hero and warrior king, restored in mod. verse by L.L.C. Hamilton. 1884, pp. 207-208).

Whether originally from a Babylonian goddess, a later German one, or a combination of both, 'Easter' is a term, not for our Saviour, but of a pagan goddess. Items such as "hot cross buns" would not have been used by early Christians for many reasons, including the fact that they kept the Days of Unleavened Bread, which comes right after Passover. And that the Bible warns against making similar cakes to the queen of heaven (Jeremiah 7:18, 44:16-29).

Original Christians did not refer to any of their annual biblical observations with the names of pagan gods and goddesses—nor do we in the CCOG do so today.

We also still keep Passover on the original date like the early faithful Christian leaders did—who followed the practices of Jesus and His apostles.

5. Tradition, Holy Days, Apocatastasis, Ten Commandments, Celibacy

The Bible teaches that we are to have understanding by the word of God:

¹⁶⁹ give me understanding according to thy word. (Psalm 118:169, DRB)

¹⁶⁹ Yahweh; by your word give me understanding. (Psalm 119:169, NJB)

While the Bible indicates that certain traditions can be fine (1 Corinthians 11:2), those in conflict with scripture are not. Jesus told the Scribes and the Pharisees:

⁶ Thus, you have made the commandment of God void because of your tradition. ⁷ You hypocrites! Isaiahs (Isaiah) prophesied about you quite well when he said:

⁸ *These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips; but their heart is far from me!* ⁹ *In vain do they express adoration to me, teaching as doctrine rules made by men.* (Matthew 15:6-8, EOB)

Now, these tradition-bound people had a zeal for God, but sadly, it was not based on accurate information as the Apostle Paul wrote:

² Certainly, I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not according to accurate knowledge. (Romans 10:2, EOB)

Sadly, this is true about many who profess Christ today. But, people willing to accept the truth, like the Bereans of old who checked into teachings that went against the traditions of many (Acts 17:11), can change to be more scripture-based. Those so willing can be used of God in this age and the age to come.

The Apostle Paul told the Gentiles in Thessalonica:

⁶ And we charge you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother walking disorderly, and not according to the tradition which they have received of us. ⁷ For yourselves know how you ought to imitate us: for we were not disorderly among you; (2 Thessalonians 3:6-7, DRB)

Those “traditions” to “imitate” would have included keeping the Sabbath (Acts 17:2). But also notice that Paul said to withdraw from those who took a different approach. Paul did NOT say to stay with a church because it may have started out properly. All of Paul’s “traditions” to be imitated were in harmony with scripture.

The Apostle Paul also warned people could be deceived by traditions of men that are not part of the original faith:

⁸ Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy, and vain deceit; according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ: (Colossians 2:8, DRB)

In the late 2nd century, Irenaeus reported:

Polycarp related all things in harmony with the Scriptures. (Eusebius. The History of the Church. Book V, Chapter XX, verse 6c, p. 112)

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 ... 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** ... (Irenaeus. Adversus Haeres. Book III, Chapter 3, Verse 4)

So, it was written that Polycarp did relate all things in harmony with scripture as did those who succeeded him in Asia Minor into the early 3rd century. All valid traditions must be in harmony with scripture.

Polycarp condemned those who accepted human traditions above the Bible. Sadly, he found that by his time, many had:

For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is antichrist, and whosoever does not confess the testimony of the *stauros*, is of the devil; and whosoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and says that there is neither a resurrection nor a judgment, he is the first-born of Satan. Wherefore, forsaking the vanity of many, and their false doctrines, let us return to the word which has been handed down to us from the beginning. (Polycarp. Letter to the Philippians, Chapter VII)

The Eastern Orthodox state the following in a ceremony about Polycarp:

As a sharer of the ways and a successor to the throne of the Apostles, O inspired of God, thou foundest discipline to be a means of ascent to divine vision. Wherefore, having rightly divided the word of truth, thou didst also contest for the Faith even unto blood, O Hieromartyr Polycarp ... This apostolic and prophetic man, and model of faith and truth, was a disciple of John the Evangelist (Polycarp the Holy Martyr & Bishop of Smyrna. Greek Archdiocese of America. <https://www.goarch.org/chapel/saints?contentid=439> viewed 01/21/21).

Bishop/Pastor Polycarp was a faithful saint who rightly divided the word of truth—meaning he properly understood the Bible. He contended for the original catholic faith. Polycarp was a martyr and also refused to accept the traditions as accepted by the Bishops of Rome (and later Eastern Orthodox leaders), like an Easter Sunday Passover (FRAGMENTS FROM THE LOST WRITINGS OF IRENAEUS, Chapter 3. Translated by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. © 1885).

The Greco-Roman saint Irenaeus also blasted heretics who tried to have tradition trump scripture:

When, however, they are confuted from the Scriptures, they turn round and accuse these same Scriptures, as if they were not correct, nor of authority, and [assert] that they are ambiguous, and that the truth cannot be extracted from them by those who are ignorant of tradition. For [they allege] that the truth was not delivered by means of written documents, but *vivâ voce*: wherefore also Paul declared, “But we speak wisdom among those that are perfect, but not the wisdom of this world.” And this wisdom each one of them alleges to be the fiction of his own inventing, forsooth; so that, according to their idea, the truth properly resides at one time in Valentinus, at another in Marcion, at another in Cerinthus, then afterwards in Basilides, or has even been indifferently in any other opponent, who could speak nothing pertaining to salvation. For every one of these men, being altogether of a perverse disposition, depraving the system of truth, is not ashamed to preach himself. (Irenaeus. *Adversus Haereses*, Book III, Chapter II, Verse 1).

Bishop Melito of Sardis spoke about religious tradition as follows:

Again, there are persons who say: Whatsoever our fathers have bequeathed to us, that we reverence. ... Nay, it is not well for a man to follow his predecessors, if they be those whose course was evil; but rather that we should turn from that path of theirs, (Melito. *A DISCOURSE WHICH WAS IN THE PRESENCE OF ANTONINUS CAESAR, AND HE EXHORTED THE SAID CAESAR TO ACQUAINT HIMSELF WITH GOD, AND SHOWED TO HIM THE WAY OF TRUTH*. Translation by Roberts and Donaldson)

We in the CCOG hold the same belief as Melito as we agree that Christians should turn from the path of evil error—even if the errors are from traditions of many.

Keeping God’s Holy Days Helps Christians to Understand God’s Plan

Keeping the holy days listed in Leviticus 23 is something that most who profess Christ do not keep because of their traditions.

One of the reasons to keep them, other than biblical commands and apostolic practices, is that God’s plan of salvation is actually laid out in the biblical Holy Days.

Jewish and Gentile Christians had expanded, as well as new understandings, for what the holy days represented than the pre-Christian Jews had (Danielou, pp. 343-345).

Briefly, starting with Passover, Christians saw Jesus as the true Passover lamb sacrificed (1 Corinthians 5:7) for us at Passover (cf. Luke 22:15) for the forgiveness of our sins. Passover is followed by the Days of Unleavened Bread which show that Christians are to strive to live without sin and hypocrisy (cf. Luke 12:2; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

As far as Pentecost goes, it not only pictures the granting of the Holy Spirit and the start of the New Testament church (Acts 2), Pentecost also pictures a small, Spring harvest, of firstfruits. It is referred to as the Day of Firstfruits (Numbers 28:26) and Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16) in the Old Testament. Pentecost helps show the calling of the elect as the firstfruits in this age. These are those who will be

raised in the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6). Christians now “have the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Romans 8:23, OSB). More on God’s calling of firstfruits can be found in the free booklet, online at ccog.org, *Is God Calling You?*

The relatively long time-gap between the Day of Pentecost (third month of the biblical calendar) and Feast of Trumpets (seventh month of the biblical calendar) helps picture the approximately 2,000 year-long church age that we are now in, which ends at the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15).

The Feast of Trumpets, itself, points to the reality that God will pour out His wrath upon the world (Revelation 8:1-13, 9:1-19), Jesus will return to establish God’s Kingdom (Revelation 11:15-19), and the first resurrection of the elect is coming (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

The Day of Atonement helps show that Satan the devil and his role in our sins is real (cf. Leviticus 16:20-22,26), but also that his deceit will not exist in the millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:1-3). Since it comes after the Feast of Trumpets (of which the final trumpet pictures the end of the church age), the ancient sin-offering sacrifice performed on it (Leviticus 16:9), helps picture that Jesus’ sacrifice was not just for the called in this age, but for others who were to be later called. Yet, many who profess Jesus effectively “close the door” on that.

The Feast of Tabernacles helps picture the joys of the physical and spiritual abundance (cf. Deuteronomy 16:13-15) of the millennial kingdom of God on earth with Jesus as King.

The Last Great Day, also sometimes known as the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles points to the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11) in the age to come (cf. Matthew 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; Hebrews 6:5; Isaiah 65:20). It also points to the realization that God will offer salvation to all when parts of God’s plan are revealed and made available to all as Jesus taught (cf. John 7:37-38). The dead will be raised (Revelation 20:5, 11-12) at this second resurrection, and live 100 years (Isaiah 65:20).

Holy Days to Be Kept

As testimony from early apostolic successors confirm, they and the original apostles kept Passover on the 14th of Nisan/Abib.

It is well recognized that the Judean-based Christians kept them, but so also did the Gentile Christians.

A book on church history by Roman Catholic scholars acknowledges that the Christian Passover in Asia Minor was observed on the 14th of Nisan, and a celebration was observed on the 15th (Jedin, Volume 1, p. 107). While that source equates the celebration on the 15th as a resurrection celebration, we in the COG would tend to equate it with what is termed “the observable night of the Lord” (Exodus 12:42, DRB) or “a night to be much observed to the LORD” (Exodus 12:42, AFV) which begins the Days of Unleavened Bread. Various ones in the British Isles were still observing Passover on the 14th until at least the 8th century (Bede, pp. 156-157).

The Days of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost were kept in Asia Minor as reports from Polycrates and others demonstrate.

Perhaps it should be pointed out the old Worldwide Church of God taught that the “apostolic Church of God” kept “God’s annual festivals” (Lesson 23 - Why Christians Should Keep GOD’S HOLY DAYS. Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, 1984, p. 7).

Although they changed the date and practices, the Greco-Romans still claim to keep Passover, and also they keep a version of Pentecost (Eusebius of Caesaria. The life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine [with the oration of Constantine to the assembly of saints and the oration of Eusebius in praise of Constantine], Chapter LXIV. 1845).

And while some Greco-Romans switched Passover to Sunday in the 2nd century, numerous groups (in and out of the COG) continued to keep Passover on the 14th. The Sunday date change was adopted at Emperor Constantine’s Council of Nicea in 325. Yes, it was that unbaptized murderer, who still held the title of Pontifex Maximus, who got a decree out to push Sunday “Sabbath” and a Sunday “Passover.” While most of the world accepted that, many in Asia Minor and scattered ones elsewhere did not change. The use of the biblical 14th date was also condemned at the Council of Laodicea c. 364. But, the Bible did not change—nor did those faithful to the teachings and practices of the original catholic church.

There is a somewhat questionable book containing what seems to be fantasies in parts, called *The Life of Polycarp*, that is of some interest. This book, which seems to be based on some historical truths in the second century, was changed—at least slightly—in or by the fourth century (other scholars agree that the text was tampered with after originally written. See Monroy MS. The Church of Smyrna: History and Theology of a Primitive Christian Community. Peter Lang edition, 2015, p. 31). Yet, *the Life of Polycarp* contains some possibly helpful information about Polycarp.

For example, it specifically mentions the Sabbath, Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and the Last Great Day of the Feast of Tabernacles. And it endorses keeping them:

In the days of unleavened bread Paul, coming down from Galatia, arrived in Asia, considering the repose among the faithful in Smyrna to be a great refreshment in Christ Jesus after his severe toil, and intending afterwards to depart to Jerusalem. So in Smyrna he went to visit Strataeas, who had been his hearer in Pamphylia, being a son of Eunice the daughter of Lois. These are they of whom he makes mention when writing to Timothy, saying; *Of the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and in thy mother Eunice;* whence we find that Strataeas was a brother of Timothy. Paul then, entering his house and gathering together the faithful there, speaks to them concerning the Passover and the Pentecost, reminding them of the New Covenant of the offering of bread and the cup; how that they ought most assuredly to celebrate it during the days of unleavened bread, but to hold fast the new mystery of the Passion and Resurrection. For here the Apostle plainly teaches that we ought neither to keep it outside the season of unleavened bread, as the heretics do, especially the Phrygians ... but named the days of unleavened bread, the Passover ... thus ratifying the Gospel (Pionius. Life of Polycarp, Chapter 2. In The Apostolic Fathers, pp. 488-506).

What must one say, when even He that was gentler than all men so appeals and cries out at the feast of Tabernacles? For it is written; *And on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirsteth, let him come to Me and drink* (Chapter 19).

And on the sabbath, when prayer had been made long time on bended knee, he, as was his custom, got up to read; and every eye was fixed upon him. Now the lesson was the Epistles of Paul to Timothy and to Titus, in which he says what manner of man a bishop ought to be. And he was so well fitted for the office that the hearers said one to another that he lacked none of those qualities which Paul requires in one who has the care of a church. When then, after the reading and the instruction of the bishops and the discourses of the presbyters, the deacons were sent to the laity to enquire whom they would have, they said with one accord, 'Let Polycarp be our pastor and teacher' (Chapter 22).

And on the following sabbath he said; 'Hear ye my exhortation, beloved children of God ...' (Chapter 24).

So, we see, then, that there is an ancient document that claims Polycarp did keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days, a claim supported by other ancient documents, as shown in this book. There would have been no reason for Greco-Roman supporters in the 4th century to change the document to indicate that he did so. Hence, *The Life of Polycarp* does claim that Polycarp kept the Sabbath and the Holy Days, but there are reasons to believe that information was added about Sunday and some wrong statements about Passover. That is why I consider that *The Life of Polycarp* was tampered with.

That being said, Polycarp of Smyrna in the 2nd century and certain others in Asia Minor in the late 4th century also kept the Feast of Tabernacles in Asia Minor, not Jerusalem. This is confirmed by sources such as research done by the 20th century Cardinal Danielou (Danielou, Cardinal Jean-Guenole-Marie. *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, pp. 345-346) and Jerome.

In his paper known as *On the Prophets*, Bishop/Pastor Melito of Sardis wrote:

You anoint the body, providing the tools, you variously anoint humanity with your festivals. (Melito, *On the Prophets*. Translated by Bob Thiel from the Greek from the H. Paulsen Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1.5. Und Die)

Festivals, plural, would have included the Spring and Fall festivals--all of which still have prophetic ramifications.

Jerome reported that the 'Nazarene'/Judeo Christians of Asia Minor kept the Feast of Tabernacles in the fourth/fifth centuries (Migne JP *Argumentum Patrologia Latina Volumen MPL025 Ab Columna ad Culumnam* 1415 - 1542A, pp. 922, 930).

The Greco-Roman bishop & saint Methodius of Olympus in the late 3rd or early 4th century taught that the Feast of Tabernacles was commanded and that it had lessons for Christians. And he tied it in with the teaching of the millennial reign of Christ (he also twice quotes Proverbs 1:5 about understanding):

1) ... these things ... foretell the resurrection and the putting up of our tabernacle that had fallen upon the earth, which at length, in the seventh thousand of years, resuming again immortal, **we shall celebrate the great feast of true tabernacles ...**

For since in six days God made the heaven and the earth, and finished the whole world, and rested on the seventh day from all His works which He had made, and blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, so by a figure in the seventh month, when the fruits of the earth have been gathered in, **we are commanded to keep the feast to the Lord**, which signifies that, when this world shall be terminated at the seventh thousand years, when God shall have completed the world, ... in the seventh month, the great resurrection-day, it is commanded that the Feast of our Tabernacles shall be celebrated to the Lord, of which the things said in Leviticus are symbols and figures, which things, carefully investigating, we should consider the naked truth itself, for He says, A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: to understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

4) ... Whoso, therefore, desires to come to that Feast of Tabernacles, to be numbered with the saints ...

5) ... whoever shall not be found decorated with the boughs of chastity, shall neither obtain rest, because he has not fulfilled the command of God according to the law, nor shall he enter into the land of promise, because he has not previously celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. **For they only who have celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles come to the Holy Land, setting out from those dwellings which are called tabernacles, until they come to enter into the temple and city of God, advancing to a greater and more glorious joy, as the Jewish types indicate.** For like as the Israelites, having left the borders of Egypt, first came to the Tabernacles, and from hence, having again set forth, came into the land of promise, so also do we. For I also, taking my journey, and going forth from the Egypt of this life, came first to the resurrection, which is the true Feast of the Tabernacles, and there having set up my tabernacle, adorned with the fruits of virtue, on the first day of the resurrection, which is the day of judgment, celebrate with Christ the millennium of rest, which is called the seventh day, even the true Sabbath. (Methodius. Banquet of the Ten Virgins, Discourse 9. In Ante-Nicene Fathers)

So, yes, even Greco-Roman bishops were aware what original Christians taught related to the Feast of Tabernacles.

And that was not the only Fall festival Christians kept.

The New Testament prophesies about the use of trumpets (Revelation chapters 8,9, & 11), as well as Jesus' return on the last trump (Matthew 24:30-31; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57). Parts of the meaning of the Feast of Trumpets was still understood in the 4th century by the Greco-Roman Bishop Ambrose of Milan (Ambrose of Milan. Book II. On the Belief in the Resurrection, sections 105-107, 108. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Socrates, Sozomenus: Church histories. Schaff P, Wace H, editors. Christian literature Company, 1896).

The Day of Atonement is referred to as “the Fast” in the New Testament (Acts 27:9, NJB). Christians, furthermore, kept the Day of Atonement after the New Testament was written.

An Arabic document, dated from the period of the fifth-tenth century, states that Jesus and His disciples kept the fast on the same days as the Jews. It indicates that Judeo-Christians were still keeping the Day of Atonement while the Greco-Romans came up with a 50 day Lenten-like fasting period that Jesus did not keep (Tomson P. Lambers-Petry L. The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature, Volume 158 of Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. Mohr Siebeck, 2003, pp. 70-72; Stern SM. Quotations from Apocryphal Gospels in ‘Abd Al-Jabbar. Journal of Theological Studies, NS. Volume XVIII, (1) April 1967: 34-57).

Related to Lent, the Roman Catholic Saint Abbot John Cassian (also known as Cassianus, monk of Marseilles) in the 5th century admitted:

Howbeit you should know that as long as the primitive church retained its perfection unbroken, this observance of Lent did not exist. (Cassian J. Conference 21, THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF ABBOT THEONAS. ON THE RELAXATION DURING THE FIFTY DAYS. Chapter 30 in The Conferences of the Desert Fathers, Aeterna Press, 2015)

Notice that “the primitive church,” the original catholic church, did not keep Lent. Lent was a change. But pagans who wept for Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:14) kept a 40 day fast in the Spring (Hoeh H. How ROME Counterfeited Gods Holy Days! Good News, April 1958).

Reports from other historians support the view that early Christians observed Atonement, not Lent (cf. Pines S. The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source. Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Volume II, No.13; 1966. Jerusalem, pp. 32-34).

This is further substantiated in a Jewish account (reported in the Talmud) which has been related by a Roman Catholic scholar. Priest Bellarmino Bagatti stated that it is recorded that an early second century Christian named Jacob (100-120 AD) held a discussion with a Jewish scholar about the Day of Atonement. In it, the Christian Jacob explained how it was a reminder which helped show “Christ head of the angels” and that we are to be “blameless” in our “conduct” (Bagatti, Bellarmino. Translated by Eugene Hoade. The Church from the Circumcision. Nihil obstat: Marcus Adinolfi. Imprimi potest: Herminius Roncari. Imprimatur: +Albertus Gori, die 26 Junii 1970. Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem, p.97). There is also evidence of it being kept in the 3rd and 4th centuries in Antioch (Ben Ezra DS. The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from Second Temple Judaism to the Fifth Century. Mohr Siebeck, 2003, pp. 2, 261, 277).

Here is something related to the holy days in the 1500s in Transylvania:

The Sabbatarians viewed themselves as converted Gentiles ... They held to the biblical holidays ... The Day of Atonement was a day of fasting, although they emphasized that penitence is more easily achieved by a peaceful and quiet meditation on the law and one’s life than by fasting. The Day of Remembrance (New Year, which they celebrated in the Fall of the year) was the day on

which they thanked God especially for the creation of the universe. (Liechty D. Sabbatarianism in the Sixteenth Century. Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs (MI), 1993, pp. 61-62).

The “Day of Remembrance” is more properly called the Feast of Trumpets.

Our Christian ancestors kept both the Spring and the Fall Holy Days throughout history: from apostolic times through the Middle Ages, through modern times (e.g., see also LESSON 51, AMBASSADOR COLLEGE BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE subtitled: “And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place ...” Rev. 12:6. 1968).

Related to the first/second century, the 20th century Roman Catholic Cardinal Jean Danielou wrote:

Did the Jewish Christians retain the Jewish feasts while giving them new meaning...?

... the Feast of Tabernacles was certainly kept in the month of September by Jewish Christianity as by the Jews. (Danielou, Cardinal Jean-Guenole-Marie. The Theology of Jewish Christianity, pp. 343,345)

This temporal Messianism had a strong influence on Christians in the form of millenarianism, which had its centre in the Asiatic environment to which ... Papias ... belonged. This Messianic agitation was connected with the mystique of festivity, which belonged essentially to the Feast of Tabernacles. (Ibid, pp. 345-346)

The holy days were still prevalent in Asia Minor and Antioch later (Dacy MJ. Sukkot. c. 2015, pp. 155-168), even among the Greco-Romans. If not, they would not have felt the need to condemn them and the other biblical festivals in Canons 37 & 38 of the Council of Laodicea of the fourth century (c. 363-364). They were also condemned in Canon 69/70 of the *Syrian Apostolic Canons*. Hence, LATER councils in Asia Minor and Antioch condemned the practices of the early catholic Christians from those regions.

Notice also the following:

As late as the beginning of the fifth century in Asia Minor, the bishop Chrysostom bewailed members of the Catholic Church, who, upon learning the truth from the scattered remnants of the true Church, repented of their ways and began to observe the sabbath and “the feast of trumpets, the feast of tabernacles, and the feast of the great expiation” (Bingham’s *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Bk. XVI, ch. VI {originally 1720}). (Hoeh H. A True History of the True Church. Radio Church of God, 1959, p. 19)

He {Chrysostom} styles all such as Half-Christians, (Bingham J. *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Bk. XVI, ch. VI, 1720, p. 311)

Yes, John Chrysostom of Constantinople condemned professors of Christ in Asia Minor and Antioch who observed the biblical holy days. Here is part of one of his condemnations of the late 4th century:

The festivals of the pitiful and miserable Jews are soon to march upon us one after the other and in quick succession: the feast of Trumpets, the feast of Tabernacles, the fasts. **There are many in our ranks who** say they think as we do. Yet some of these are going to watch the festivals and others **will join the Jews in keeping their feasts** and observing their fasts. I wish to drive this perverse custom from the Church right now ... If the Jewish ceremonies are venerable and great, ours are lies ... Does God hate their festivals and do you share in them? He did not say this or that festival, but all of them together. (John Chrysostom. Homily I Against the Jews I:5;VI:5;VII:2. Preached at Antioch, Syria in the Fall of 387 AD. Medieval Sourcebook: Saint John Chrysostom (c.347-407): Eight Homilies Against the Jews. Fordham University. Accessed 2005).

Now, while many of John Chrysostom's arguments are in error, the fact is that he would not have given messages condemning the biblical holy days if professors of Christ were not still keeping them. As far as his festival comment about "all of them together," he overlooked the fact that his church said to keep Passover (though on the wrong day) as well as Pentecost (though with an incomplete understanding of it).

Furthermore, as far as which days are great, related to the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day, notice what the Apostle John wrote:

³⁷ On the last day, the great day of the festival, Jesus stood and cried out: 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me! (John 7:37, NJB)

³⁷ On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. (John 7:37, OSB)

It is the biblical holy days that are great.

Apocatastasis

Notice the following:

Apokatastasis The term refers to the *prospect* of the final universal restoration of creatures to God. ... Though often equated with universalism (the salvation of all beings), early exponents couched the *apokatastasis* in God's eschatological victory over evil, which would still entail a purgatorial state. (Benedetto R, Duke J, eds. The New Westminster Dictionary of Church History: The early, medieval, and Reformation eras. John Knox Press, 2008, pp. 36-37)

The Bible teaches that "God is love" (1 John 4:8), God is good (Mark 10:18), and God is all-powerful, all-knowing (Isaiah 46:9-11).

Notice also:

²⁰ Our God is the God of salvation ... (Psalm 68:20, NKJV)

²⁰ This God of ours is a God who saves ... (Psalm 68:20, NJB)

²⁰ The God of our salvation ... ²¹ Our God is the God who saves us ... (Psalm 68:20-21, OSB)

³ ... God our Saviour: ⁴ he wants everyone to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:3b-4, NJB)

Certainly, the loving God of salvation has a plan that results in the vast majority of humankind being saved.

Jesus taught:

¹⁶ For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. (John 3:16-17, NJB)

Notice, though, what the New Testament and the Old Testament plainly teach:

⁶ And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. (Luke 3:6, DRB)

¹⁰ ... And all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. (Isaiah 52:10, DRB)

Some have called versions of this teaching “the age to come” (cf. Matthew 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; Hebrews 6:5) or the Greek word ἀποκαταστάσεως, transliterated as ‘apokatastasis’ (sometimes also spelled in English as ‘apocatastasis’).

Apocatastasis basically means ‘restoration.’ The Greek word ἀποκαταστάσεως is used in the Book of Acts 3:21 (Green’s Interlinear Bible. 1986, p. 824).

The Apostle Peter taught:

²⁰ and so that the Lord may send the time of comfort. Then he will send you the Christ he has predestined, that is Jesus, ²¹ whom heaven must keep till the universal restoration comes which God proclaimed, speaking through his holy prophets. (Acts 3:20-21, NJB)

²⁰ That when the times of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord, and he shall send him who hath been preached unto you, Jesus Christ, ²¹ Whom heaven indeed must receive, until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets, from the beginning of the world. (Acts 3:20-21, DRB)

Early Christians understood that God had a plan to offer salvation to all, the elect in this age, and the rest in an age to come (cf. Matthew 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; Hebrews 6:5; Isaiah 65:20).

While all have sinned and will be judged, the New Testament teaches:

¹³ ... Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:13b, EOB)

¹³ ... mercy exalteth itself above judgment. (James 2:13, DRB)

Our “God is a merciful God” (Deuteronomy 4:31, DRB; cf. Hebrews 2:17).

The Catholic Encyclopedia teaches:

Apocatastasis A name given in the history of theology to the doctrine which teaches that a time will come when all free creatures will share in the grace of salvation; in a special way, the ... lost souls. (Batiffol P. Apocatastasis)

In the early 2nd century, Bishop/Pastor Ignatius of Antioch exhorted Bishop/Pastor Polycarp of Smyrna to teach that all may be saved:

I entreat you, by the grace with which you are clothed, to press forward in your course, and to exhort all that they may be saved. (Ignatius. Letter to Polycarp, Chapter 1).

Notice the teaching “to exhort ALL that they may be saved.” Not only the Jews. Not only some Gentiles. Not only those who are called in this age.

In the 2nd century, Polycarp wrote of “the prophetic mystery of the coming of Christ” (Polycarp, Fragments from Victor of Capua. Translated by Stephen C. Carlson, 2006).

There was a mystery about God’s plan that many still do not understand (see also our free online book, available at www.ccog.org, titled *The Mystery of God’s Plan: Why did God create anything? Why did God make you?*).

In the late 2nd century, Bishop/Pastor Theophilus of Antioch wrote:

And on the sixth day, God having made the quadrupeds, and wild beasts, and the land reptiles, pronounced no blessing upon them, reserving His blessing for man, whom He was about to create on the sixth day. The quadrupeds, too, and wild beasts, were made for a type of some men, who neither know nor worship God, but mind earthly things, and repent not. For those who turn from their iniquities and live righteously, in spirit fly upwards like birds, and mind the things that are above, and are well-pleasing to the will of God. But those who do not know nor worship God, are like birds which have wings, but cannot fly nor soar to the high things of God. Thus, too, though such persons are called men, yet being pressed down with sins, they mind grovelling and earthly things. And the animals are named wild beasts [θηρία], from their being hunted [θηρεύεσθαι], not as if they had been made evil or venomous from the first — for nothing was made evil by God, but all things good, yea, very good — but the sin in which man was concerned brought evil upon them. For when man transgressed, they also transgressed with him. For as, if the master of the house himself acts rightly, the domestics also of necessity conduct themselves well; but if the master sins, the servants also sin with him; so in like manner it came to pass, that in the case of

man's sin, he being master, all that was subject to him sinned with him. When, therefore, man again shall have made his way back to his natural condition, and no longer does evil, those also shall be restored to their original gentleness. (Theophilus. To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapter 17)

And God showed great kindness to man in this, that He did not allow him to remain in sin for ever; but, as it were, by a kind of banishment, cast him out of Paradise, in order that, having by punishment expiated, within an appointed time, the sin, and having been disciplined, he should afterwards be restored. (Ibid, Chapter 26)

Theophilus was teaching that although God consigned humans to be put out of Paradise, this was for the good of humanity so that sinful humans could later be restored.

Italian 21st century researcher and Roman professor Ilaria Ramelli considers some passages from Ignatius and those just cited from Theophilus to be supportive of the early Christian understanding of the doctrine of apokatastasis:

In *Ep ad Eph.* 20, Ignatius describes the destructiveness of evil and salvation brought about by Christ in strongly universalistic terms.

Every spell of evilness has been destroyed, every chain of evilness has disappeared; ignorance has been swept away; the old kingdom has fallen into ruin, when God appeared in human form for the novelty of the life that is absolutely eternal [αἰδίου]. What was established by God has begun: since then, all beings have been set in motion for the providential realisation of the destruction of death. ...

This *destruction of death is a work of God*, and the death at stake is not only physical, but also spiritual, since its disappearance is linked to the elimination of evil and ignorance. ...

In *Aut.* 2, 17 Theophilus foretells the final restoration of both humans and animals to their original condition ... Theophilus expresses here a notion of apokatastasis ... Also, Theophilus at the same time interprets beasts as the symbol of evil human beings. (Ramelli I. *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena*, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*. Brill, 2013, pp. 63, 65, 66).

Note: Professor Ramelli should have cited *Ep ad Eph.* 19, not *Ep ad Eph.* 20, for her translation in the section above. *Ep ad Eph* is an abbreviation for what in English we would title *Epistle (or letter) to the Ephesians*.

Though not a dogma, the idea that 'non-elect' humans will have an opportunity for salvation after death is a hope of the Eastern and Russian Orthodox churches (Benedetto, p. 37; Ware T. *The Orthodox Church*. Penguin Books, London, 1997, p. 262).

In the late second century, Irenaeus of Lyon, wrote:

It is indeed proper to God, and befitting His character, to show mercy and pity, and to bring salvation to His creatures, even though they be brought under danger of destruction. “For with Him,” says the Scripture, “is propitiation.” (Fragments of Irenaeus, Fragment 10. Roberts and Donaldson)

Propitiation is a way to gain favour. All humans can have this who will truly accept Jesus and His sacrifice.

Professor Ramelli brought out the following related to Irenaeus:

Irenaeus connects again ἀνάστα- σις and ἀποκατάστασις in fr. 10: “Life will seize humanity, will chase death away, and will restore [ἀποκαταστήσει] humanity. Likewise, at the end of fr. 15 from AH 5 Irenaeus refers ἀποκατέστησε to the work of Christ, who restores humanity to friendship with God Humanity will be restored to its original condition, anterior to the fall, and even to a better state. (Ramelli, p. 105)

Yes, it will ultimately be much better (cf. Revelation 21:4-5). Perhaps it should be pointed out that while Irenaeus’ writings do not show he believed all would be saved, some of his writings are consistent with the view that God has a plan to save more than just the elect of this age.

Andreas Andreopoulos wrote the following related to the 4th century Eastern Orthodox bishop Gregory of Nyssa:

Gregory does not accept the restoration of all and the subsequent forgiveness of all as an inescapable necessity. Nobody will be saved without going through repentance, cleansing and forgiveness, and his view of the apokatastasis is merely the belief that everyone will be able to see truth as it is at the end, and everyone will be given the chance to repent ... The restoration of all however, a valid possibility according to the Church, although not a doctrine, has a special place in the hopes of saints who pray for the redemption of their enemies, and it expresses our hope for the charity of God. (Andreopoulos A. Eschatology and final restoration (apokatastasis) in Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor. Theandros an Online Journal of Orthodox Christian Theology and Practice, Volume 1, number 3, Spring 2004)

Dr. Ramelli wrote (**bolding** in source):

It clearly emerges that for Gregory, just as for Origen, the doctrine of **apokatastasis** is a Christological, and indeed Christocentric, doctrine. In their view, it **is a specifically Christian doctrine**. This is also why Origen was at such pains to distinguish his own, Christian notion of apokatastasis from the Stoic. Both in Origen’s and in Gregory’s view, universal apokatastasis is made possible, not by any metaphysical or cosmological necessity, but by Christ’s inhumanation, sacrifice, and resurrection, and by the grace of God. The very fact that for both Origen and Gregory the eventual universal restoration begins with, and coincides with a holistic vision of, the **resurrection** makes it clear that their concept of apokatastasis is thoroughly **Christian**, given the Christian—and not ‘pagan’ or ‘Platonic’—roots of the doctrine of the resurrection. (Ramelli, p. 390)

Despite numerous issues that Origen of Alexandria and others had, the idea that God has a plan to offer salvation to those not called in this age is a Christian doctrine—and is consistent with the Bible as well as the writings of Ignatius and Theophilus.

It should be pointed out that some have erroneously claimed that Origen invented this doctrine. That view is clearly erroneous, since in his *Commentary on John*, Origen called it the ‘so-called apocatastasis’ he obviously learned of it from an earlier source (such as Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, or elsewhere). Professor Ilaria Ramelli agrees (Ramelli, p. 3), and throughout her books, she cites scriptures in the Old and New Testaments that support the view that this is a biblical doctrine.

In the 4th century, the Alexandrian Didymus the Blind also believed in some version of apocatastasis (Daily B. *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology*. CUP Archive, 1991, p. 90).

Even Roman Catholic Hans Urs von Balthasar (who was named a cardinal by Pope John Paul II, but died shortly before being formally inducted into the College of Cardinals), in his book titled *Dare We Hope: “that All Men be Saved”?*, laid out biblical and historical positions he felt were in favour of such a hope.

The Catholic Encyclopedia reports:

apokatastasis ton panton, restitutio omnium ... There were individual adherents of this opinion in every century. (Hontheim J. Hell)

In the 21st century, Swiss theologian and Roman Catholic priest Hans Kung wrote (as translated into English):

Neither in Judaism nor in the New Testament is there any uniform view of the period of punishment for sin. In addition to statements about eternal punishment, there are texts which assume a complete destruction (“eternal corruption”). And throughout Church history, in addition to the traditional dualism, the possibility of annihilation or even universal reconciliation (*restitutio omnium, apokatastasis ton panton*) have been defended.

But, however the scriptural texts are interpreted in detail, the “eternity” of the punishment of hell may never be regarded as absolute. It remains subject to God, to his will and his grace. And individual texts suggest -- in contrast to others -- a reconciliation of all, an act of universal mercy. (Kung H. *Eternal Life*. Wipf & Stock Pub; Reprint ed., 2003, p. 140)

Yes, there are scriptures that clearly support a reconciliation as well as a more universal mercy.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, referring to a time around the Protestant Reformation, states:

The doctrine of apokatastasis viewed as a belief in a universal salvation is found among the Anabaptists ... the doctrine was formally condemned in the first of the famous anathemas pronounced at the Council of Constantinople in 543: (Batiffel P. *Apocatastasis*)

It should be pointed out that Protestant reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin did not hold to apocatastasis, but instead condemned it (they also condemned the Anabaptists—e.g. see The Confession of Faith: Which Was Submitted to His Imperial Majesty Charles V. At the Diet of Augsburg in the Year 1530).

But it is a view that the COG has held to throughout history.

Age to Come

In the mid-19th century, some Sabbath-keepers published a periodical called the *Messenger of Truth* which “vigorously promoted the age-to-come doctrine until the paper closed in 1858” (Bull M, Lockhart K. Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream. Indiana University Press, 2007).

In the late-19th century, people including James P. Stephenson taught versions of the ‘age to come’ and a ‘fair chance’ (Stephenson JP. God’s Plan of Salvation. Thomas Wilson, Chicago, 1877, pp. 70, 268).

In the mid-20th century, the old Radio Church of God taught the coming post-millennial 100 year age of Isaiah 65:20 (Meredith CP. Is This the ONLY Day of Salvation? Plain Truth, August 1958).

In the late-20th century, the old Worldwide Church of God taught the ‘age to come,’ after the millennium, and the Last Great Day (Schroeder JR. God’s Annual HOLY DAYS: Sneak Preview of Your Future! Plain Truth, March 1979).

God “will plead with all flesh” (Jeremiah 25:31, AFV). God will *offer* salvation to all that ever lived (cf. Luke 3:6). That is what “the merciful Father and the God who gives every possible encouragement” (2 Corinthians 1:3, NJB) teaches in His word.

The *Continuing* Church of God (CCOG) believes that the Bible teaches that all will ultimately be given an opportunity for salvation through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; John 17:2-3; Luke 3:6)—“there is no other Name under heaven that is given among mortals by which we should be saved!” (Acts 4:12, EOB).

The CCOG believes that nearly all people who ever lived (likely over 99.9%—cf. Luke 15:4-6) will accept that opportunity and thus gain eternal life in the kingdom of God. We teach that the relatively few who do not accept will not be eternally tormented, but will be put out of their misery. So, yes, theologically speaking we are also annihilationist (Malachi 4:3) Christians. Our biblical view differs from some who promote apocatastasis who assert that all must be saved.

Therefore, although the CCOG does not teach universal salvation, we teach that the opportunity for salvation will be offered to all, either in this age or the age to come. The Church of Rome officially changed its position on apocatastasis in the 6th century, whereas many within the Eastern Orthodox still accept it (as have some Roman Catholics throughout history).

The CCOG maintains the original catholic view of apocatastasis. For more details, including when the Roman Catholics adopted purgatory as a substitute “age to come,” please check out the free book, online

at ccog.org, titled *Universal OFFER of Salvation, Apokatastasis: Can God save the lost in an age to come? Hundreds of scriptures reveal God's plan of salvation.*

Ten Commandments

Jesus and the Apostles kept the Ten Commandments.

In his *Letter to the Philippians*, Polycarp repeatedly taught that Christians should keep the commandments (chapters 2,4,5, & 11) and other rules of morality. Notice:

He who raised Him up from the dead will raise up us also, if we do His will, and walk in His commandments, and love what He loved, keeping ourselves from all unrighteousness, covetousness ... Knowing, then, that “God is not mocked,” we ought to walk worthy of His commandment and glory. ... “neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, shall inherit the kingdom of God,” nor those who do things inconsistent and unbecoming. ... The virgins also must walk in a blameless and pure conscience. ... If a man does not keep himself from covetousness, he shall be defiled by idolatry, and shall be judged as one of the heathen. But who of us are ignorant of the judgment of the Lord?

Polycarp also denounced Marcion of Pontus, who essentially taught that they were done away with (like certain Protestants also do—see also the free book, online at ccog.org titled: *Hope of Salvation: How the Continuing Church of God Differs from Protestantism*).

Bishop/Pastor Melito of Sardis was also a Gentile like Polycarp. In his *Discourse Which Was in the Presence of Antoninus Caesar*, he taught the commandments and mentioned that it was a sin to break them.

Gentile Bishop/Pastor Theophilus of Antioch taught that the Ten Commandments (which he called “ten heads”), including the seventh-day Sabbath, was still in effect (To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapters XI, XII, XIX, Book 3, Chapter IX).

An anonymous 2nd century document that has been called “the oldest complete Christian sermon that has survived” (Holmes M. Apostolic Fathers, p. 102) repeatedly teaches that Christians must keep the commandments to be God’s people (2 Clement 3:4, 4:2-5, 6:7, 8:4, 17:3-7).

Clement of Alexandria (Clement. Stromata, Book VI, Chapter 16) numbered the Ten Commandments in the same way that the Eastern Orthodox, many Protestants, and the CCOG number them. The Church of Rome seems to have changed its numbering of them after influence from the 5th century Augustine of Hippo. The Lutheran Church also accepts the Augustine numbering.

We in the CCOG advocate striving to keep the Ten Commandments and warn about those who try to reason around them (see also our free book, online at ccog.org, *The Ten Commandments: The Decalogue, Christianity, and the Beast*).

Titles

What were early Christian leaders called?

The New Testament lists various clerical roles (**bolding** added):

¹¹ And to some, his 'gift' was that they should be **apostles**; to some **prophets**; to some, **evangelists**; to some, **pastors** and **teachers** (Ephesians 4:11, NJB)

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with their **presiding elders** and the **deacons**. (Philippians 1:1, NJB)

¹ Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ; to all the saints in Christ Jesus, who are at Philippi, with the **bishops** and **deacons**. (Philippians 1:1, DRB)

²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the holy Spirit has appointed you **overseers**, in which you tend the church of God that he acquired with his own blood. (Acts 20:28 NABRE)

¹ I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a **deaconess** of the church at Cenchreae (Romans 16:1, NJB)

²³ Greetings to you from Gaius, my host here, and **host** of the whole church. (Romans 16:23, NJB)

² ... Timothy, our brother and God's **minister** (1 Timothy 3:2, EOB)

¹ I urge the **elders** among you ... (1 Peter 5:1, NJB)

We in the Church of God have used all of those titles at one time or the other and have leaders with nearly all of those titles today.

Notice something reported in Appendix A of the *Eastern Orthodox Bible* (**bolding** in source):

For instance, as seen in the New Testament literature itself, it is an indisputable fact that the **earliest Christians used the terms "bishop" ("overseer") and "presbyter" ("elder") interchangeably:**

Titus 1:5-7: For this reason, I left you in Crete so that you might set right what remains to be done and appoint presbyters in every town, as I directed you, on condition that a man be blameless, married only once, with believing children who are not accused of licentiousness or rebellious. For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless, not arrogant..." (See also: 1 Tim 3:1-7; 5:17-22)

Acts 20:17-28: From Miletus he (Paul) had the presbyters of the Church of Ephesus summoned. When they came to him, he addressed them... "Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, in which you tend the Church of God..."

Early Christian leaders had titles, basically the ones in those lists.

The New Testament-listed positions are titles that the CCOG uses to this day.

Other Titles

As far as titles go, we do not see terms like Archbishop, Cardinal, Metropolitan, or Patriarch used for the clergy in the New Testament. Nor are they found in the more widely used Greco-Roman translations of the New Testament.

Thousands of years ago, pagan emperors used to use the title Pontifex Maximus. This is NOT a title listed in the Bible.

Tertullian wrote about a corrupt (according to one or more Roman Catholic saints) Roman bishop named Callistus:

The Pontifex Maximus — that is, the bishop of bishops — issues an edict: “I remit, to such as have discharged (the requirements of) repentance, the sins both of adultery and of fornication.” (Tertullian. On Modesty. In Ante-Nicene Fathers)

Basically, Tertullian said Callistus was following in the practices of pagan leaders, like the Pontifex Maximus. Calling a professed Christian leader the “Pontifex Maximus” was considered to be highly insulting. Perhaps it should be pointed out that while God does tend to have one main leader at a time, nothing in the Bible tells of a title like “bishop of the bishops.”

Yet, a version of that title was given to the Roman bishop Damasus by Roman Emperor Theodosius:

Imppp. Gratianus, Valentinianus et Theodosius aaa. edictum ad populum ... declarat quamque pontificem Damasum sequi claret et Petrum Alexandriae episcopum virum apostolicae sanctitatis, (380 febr. 27). (IMPERATORIS THEODOSII CODEX, LIBER DECIMUS SEXTUS, CTh.16.1.3,)

Imperial emperors Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius {sent} out a decree to the people ... declares that the high pontiff Damasus and by Peter, bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness, (IMPERATORIS THEODOSII CODEX, LIBER DECIMUS SEXTUS, CTh.16.1.3, February 27, 380. Translated by Bob Thiel)

So, in 380 the Bishop of Rome was formally granted the title “high pontiff.” Sometimes rendered as ‘supreme bridger’ or ‘supreme bridge builder.’

Roman Catholic sources claim that Damasus’ successor, Siricius then picked up the title pope:

SIRICIUS, ST. (384-399) ... was the first to assume the title of pope from the Greek *papa* meaning father (Lopes, p. 13).

Since Jesus taught:

⁹ And call none your father upon earth; for one is your father, who is in heaven. (Matthew 23:9, DRB)

Taking the pagan title pontiff as well as the title pope (meaning father) would have sent a strong signal to those who wanted to hold to the original faith that many in Rome had clearly changed.

This, along with the acceptance of other changes, may be part of the reason that some Paulicians and other groups began to call the Roman Catholic pontiff the “Antichrist” in the 4th and later centuries (Newman JH. The Protestant Idea of Antichrist. [British Critic, Oct. 1840]. Newman Reader -- Works of John Henry Newman. Copyright © 2004 by The National Institute for Newman Studies). The “Antichrist” matter is discussed later in this book.

Dress, Mithratic, and Other Traditions

The 19th century Cardinal Newman wrote:

We are told in various ways by Eusebius, that Constantine, in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen, transferred into it the outward ornaments to which they had been accustomed in their own. ... The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees; incense, lamps, and candles; votive offerings on recovery from illness; holy water; asylums; holydays and seasons, use of calendars, processions, blessings on the fields; sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure, the ring in marriage, turning to the East, images at a later date, perhaps the ecclesiastical chant, and the Kyrie Eleison, **are all of pagan origin**, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church. (ibid, pp. 359-360)

While the use of rings related to marriage greatly predates Emperor Constantine, and even has scriptural support (cf. Genesis 24)—hence are not from paganism, notice that many things associated with various churches came from compromises with paganism, including from an imperial follower of Mithraism.

But these vestiges of paganism were not part of the original catholic faith, nor are they accepted by the CCOG. They are pagan and, in time, became entrenched traditions for the Greco-Romans.

Roman Catholic historian William Durant wrote:

When Christianity conquered Rome the ecclesiastical structure of the pagan church, the title and vestments of the *pontifex maximus*, the worship of the Great Mother and a multitude of comforting deities, the sense of supersensible presences everywhere and the pageantry of immemorial ceremony, passed like maternal blood into the new religion, and captive Rome captured her conqueror. (Durant W. The Complete Story of Civilization: Our Oriental Heritage, Life of Greece, Caesar and Christ, Age of Faith, Renaissance, Age of Reason Begins, Age of Louis XIV, Age of Voltaire, Rousseau and Revolution, Age of Napoleon, Reformation. Reprint: Simon and Schuster, 2014, last page)

Regarding vestments, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* teaches:

The liturgical vestments have by no means remained the same from the founding of the Church until the present day. **There is as great a difference between the vestments worn at the Holy Sacrifice in the pre-Constantinian period, and even in the following centuries, and those now customary at the services of the Church,** ... in the ... era before Constantine. ... priestly dress did not yet differ from the secular costume in form and ornament. The dress of daily life was worn at the offices of the Church. (Braun, Vestments)

Though the modern reverse white collar was reported to have been invented in the 19th century, something similar was worn by Roman and Eastern Orthodox priests much earlier. Egyptian pagan priests wore some version of those collars thousands of years ago (e.g. Jarus O. 2,300-Year-Old Cemetery with Mummy Priests Found in Egypt. LiveScience, February 26, 2018).

A collar and cap were associated with the sun-god Mithras:

Mithra wears the Phrygian cap ... Rays of light emerge from Mithra's head much like a halo. His choke collar is a serpent. (Cooper JD. Mithras: Mysteries and initiation rediscovered. Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1996).

The Bible teaches that Christian men are not to cover their head while praying:

³ And I will have you know, that the head of every man, is Christ: and the head of the woman, is the man: and the head of Christ, is God. ⁴ Every man praying or prophesying with his head covered: ... ⁷ The man indeed ought not to cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God dishonoreth his head. (1 Corinthians 11:3-4,7 DRB)

Unlike Greco-Roman clergy, the ministry in the CCOG does not wear the priestly collar nor head coverings when praying. Distinctive clothing for the ministry was not employed by early Christians—they dressed the same as their congregants. The original catholic clergy did not have special sacerdotal vestments.

However, after influence from Emperor Constantine, the Greco-Roman clergy adopted versions of many of the clothing styles that sun-god priests and other members of his court had worn (including versions of the collar and Phrygian cap). It is known that special clerical clothing came from pagans and was adopted because of Emperor Constantine (e.g. Newman, pp. 358-360; De Rosa, Peter. Vicars of Christ. Poolberg Press, Dublin, 2000, pp. 34,45). The clergy of Constantinian Christianity ended up looking very different than that of the original catholic church.

We in the CCOG do not believe that the Christian ministry should wear distinctively religious clothing. Nor do we promote clerical celibacy.

Nor do we, like original catholics, incorporate icons, including crosses, as part of our worship. Early Christians also did not have things like “holy water.”

Celibacy?

Although many act like they think otherwise, history and the Bible shows that there was no requirement for celibacy for bishops, presbyters, or other church leaders in the first or second centuries. Actually, bishops and elders were mainly supposed to have a wife and children to demonstrate they could handle a church as Paul wrote:

1. FAITHFUL saying. If a man desire a Bishops office, he desireth a good work. 2. It behoveth therefore a Bishop to be irreprehensible, the husband of one wife, sober, wise, comely, chaste, a man of hospitality, a teacher, 3. Not given to wine, no fighter, but modest, no quarreler, not covetous, 4. Well ruling his own house, having his children subject with all charity. 5. But if a man know not to rule his own house: how shall he have care of the Church of God? (1 Timothy 3:1-5, DRB)

5. For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest reform the things that are wanting, and shouldst ordain priests by cities, as I also appointed thee: 6. If any be without crime, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not in the accusations of riot, or not obedient. 7. For a Bishop must be without crime, as the steward of God: not proud, not angry, nor given to wine, no striker, nor covetous of filthy lucre. (Titus 1:5-7, DRB)

Note that the term translated as priest in verse 4, presbyter, simply means elder. Also notice that the Bishop is also allowed to be married. In Eastern Orthodox circles, while their priests are allowed to be married, their bishops are not.

Polycrates confirmed that the clergy could be married in the second century when he wrote:

Among these are Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who fell asleep in Hierapolis; and his two aged virgin daughters, and another daughter ... And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, do according to the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have closely followed. For seven of my relatives were bishops; and I am the eighth. And my relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven. I, therefore, brethren, who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord, (Eusebius. The History of the Church History. Book V, Chapter XXIV, verses 3,6 & 7, p. 114)

Polycrates probably could not have been one of a line of bishops if all bishops and church leaders practiced celibacy. Note that since the Apostle Philip had at least three daughters, he could not have practiced celibacy.

Now everyone is aware that Peter had a wife (see Matthew 8:14), but did you know that even Judas had a wife (cf. Acts 1:20, Psalm 109:8-9)?

Hippolytus notes that in the third century, celibacy was not required for the clergy (at least not by his rival, Bishop of Rome Callistus):

About the time of this man, bishops, priests, and deacons, who had been twice married, and thrice married, began to be allowed to retain their place among the clergy (Hippolytus. Refutation of All Heresies, Book IX, Chapter VII. In Ante-Nicene Fathers).

Furthermore, consider that, “Mithras was a chaste god, and his worshippers were taught reverence for celibacy” (Fingrut D. Mithraism: The Legacy of the Roman Empire’s Final Pagan State Religion 1993)—and that may have influenced the Greco-Romans who changed on this matter.

Even *The Catholic Encyclopedia* acknowledges that celibacy was not a requirement for original catholic church leaders:

Turning now to the historical development of the present law of celibacy, we must necessarily begin with St. Paul’s direction (1 Timothy 3:2, 12, and Titus 1:6) that a bishop or a deacon should be “the husband of one wife”. These passages seem fatal to any contention that celibacy was made obligatory upon the clergy from the beginning (Thurston H. Celibacy of the Clergy).

Celibacy became an ideal for the clergy in the East gradually, as it did in the West. In the fourth century we still find St. Gregory Nazianzen’s father, who was Bishop of Nanzianzos, living with his wife, without scandal. But very soon after that the present Eastern rule obtained. It is less strict than in the West. No one can marry after he has been ordained priest (Paphnutius at the first Council of Nicaea maintains this; the first Canon of the Synod of Neocaesarea in 314 or 325, and Can. Apost., xxvi. The Synod of Elvira about 300 had decreed absolute celibacy for all clerks in the West, Can. xxxiii, ib., pp. 238-239); priests already married may keep their wives (the same law applied to deacons and subdeacons: Can. vi of the Synod in Trullo, 692), but bishops must be celibate. As nearly all secular priests were married this meant that, as a general rule, bishops were chosen from the monasteries, and so these became, as they still are, the road through advancement may be attained (Fortesque A. Eastern Monasticism).

Thus, it should be clear that the celibacy requirement for clergy did not occur until the fourth century. Furthermore, it contradicts the biblical teaching on this matter and has never been a requirement for the true Church of God.

And the tonsure?

Mithraism had its monks and nuns, as Tertullian admits, with the tonsure in honour of the disc of the Sun. To be shorn of hair is, doubtless, a sign of asceticism; but it is the form of the tonsure (Khwaja K. The Sources of Christianity. The Basheer Muslim Library, 1924, p. 100)

Tonsure A sacred rite instituted by the Church by which a baptized and confirmed Christian is received into the clerical order by the shearing of his hair and the investment with the surplice ... St. Jerome (in Ezech., xlv) disapproves of clerics shaving their heads. ... Towards the end of the fifth, or beginning of the sixth, century, the custom passed over to the secular clergy. ... In Britain, the Saxon opponents of the Celtic tonsure called it the tonsure of Simon Magus. (Fanning W. Tonsure. The Catholic Encyclopedia)

The tonsure is in conflict with Leviticus 21:5 and Ezekiel 44:20, and while some may suggest that those prohibitions were done away, Jesus and His apostles did not teach that Christians should attempt to look like pagan priests. The original catholic faith did not endorse tonsures, nor do we in the CCOG.

As far as Simon Magus goes, some now considered to be early supporters of the Roman Catholic Church condemned him and his followers for utilizing religious statues, revering a woman, the doctrine of the immortal soul, incantations, mysteries, mystic priests, claiming divine titles for leaders, accepting money for religious favors, preferring allegory and tradition over many aspects of scripture, having a leader who wanted to be thought of as God/Christ on earth, and divorcing themselves from Christian biblical practices considered to be Jewish (details can be found in the article at: <https://www.cogwriter.com/simonmagus.htm>).

We in the CCOG hold to the original catholic view of Simon Magus' practices and have not adopted the condemned ones.

6. What Type of Catholic Was Polycarp?

Various historians have called Polycarp of Smyrna some type of catholic—but what type was he?

We have clues from information, some solid, and some less so, about Polycarp's beliefs and teachings.

The *Life of Polycarp* (an apparently altered document from the 3rd century) suggests that the church in Smyrna was begun by the Apostle Paul:

TRACING ... with the visit of the blessed Paul to Smyrna ... in Smyrna he went to visit Strataeas, who had been his hearer in Pamphylia, being a son of Eunice the daughter of Lois. ... But after the departure of the Apostle, Strataeas succeeded to his teaching, and certain of those after him, whose names, so far as it is possible to discover who and what manner of men they were, I will set down. But for the present let us proceed at once to Polycarp.

One whose name was Bucolus being bishop in Smyrna at that time, there was ... a little lad named Polycarp. ... And in his untiring diligence, he from his Eastern stock bore (if one may so say) blossom as a token of good fruit hereafter to come. For the men who dwell in the East are distinguished before all others for their love of learning and their attachment to the divine Scriptures. (Pionius, Pseudo? Life of Polycarp, Chapters 1-3. In *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 3.2, 1889, pp. 488-506)

Because Lois was the grandmother of Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5) and Timothy was a church leader then (c. 58-66 A.D.), those four listed leaders, presuming they existed, may have been deceased by the time Polycarp was appointed. Polycarp was less than 20 years of age at the time of Paul's reported visit (possibly as young as 4, if he was martyred in 158 A.D. and the visit from Paul was in 58 A.D.). And if Polycarp died when he was 86 as some claim, he could not have had contact with the Apostle Paul.

As far as being of Eastern (apparently Greek) stock goes, understand that Polycarp held on to practices considered to be Jewish at the time when the majority churches in Rome and Jerusalem abandoned them because of fear, cowardice, and compromise. Christians with original practices considered to be 'Jewish' have been despised by many throughout the centuries.

Polycarp would have endured hate and derision from Imperial authorities as we in the CCOG do from those that do not practice the original catholic faith to this day.

Until near the time of Apostle John's death, the idea of apostolic succession was probably not considered to be a major issue. Yet, based on what information we have, by being placed in his position by one or more original apostles, Polycarp was designated as a leader in a manner that led people to believe he did have apostolic succession.

Some believe that Polycarp was mainly of a disciple of the Apostle Paul as the Life of Polycarp suggests, whereas others believe he was more of a disciple of the Apostle John as Irenaeus and the *Harris Fragments* assert (Berding K. John or Paul? Who was Polycarp's Mentor? Tyndale Bulletin 59 (2008):135-143).

Although some doubt Irenaeus' testimony as biased to support his own "successor agenda" and claim that Polycarp did not know John (e.g. Sdao MC. Polycarp of Smyrna: Historical Enigma and Literary Legacies. Ohio State University History Honors Thesis, c. 2015), a later report from Polycrates is also supportive that John and Polycarp knew each other.

Perhaps it should also be mentioned that a flawed 2nd century collection of writings (which contains some erroneous doctrines) related to the Apostle John, teaches that he put Polycarp to be "bishop over the church" (Acts of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 8)

The late COG leader Herbert W. Armstrong understood that Polycarp succeeded John:

It is significant that after his release John trained Polycarp elder of Smyrna, a city near Ephesus in the province of Asia. And according to Revelation 2:8-11, Smyrna follows Ephesus! ...

In ... Smyrna, Polycarp presided over the Church of God for half a century after John's death. Polycarp stood up boldly for the truth while many fell away ... (Armstrong HW. The Church They Couldn't Destroy. Good News, December 1981, pp. 7-8)

Polycarp, himself, was a unique apostolic successor:

1. Polycarp is the only possible direct apostolic successor considered by any church we are aware of that had a letter written to him while he was alive. Yes, there were letters written in the New Testament to leaders, but none of them are in any of the 'accepted' succession lists this author has seen other than Timothy (but the Apostle John came to Ephesus after Timothy).
2. Polycarp is the only possible direct apostolic successor considered by any church we are aware of to have written any document that we still possess to this day. While there is a letter claimed to have been written by Clement of Rome, it does not say that he wrote it, nor is Clement now considered to be the direct successor of any apostle (the Roman Catholic Church currently claims that Linus was Peter's direct successor). There are also letters written by Ignatius of Antioch, but the two largest Antiochian Churches we are aware of claim that Evodius/Eudoius, not Ignatius, was Peter's direct successor.
3. Polycarp is the only possible direct apostolic successor considered by any church we are aware of to have any significant document written about him shortly after his death.
4. Polycarp is the only possible direct successor to the apostles that was clearly called "bishop" (or overseer) while he was alive.
5. Roman Catholic, Orthodox Catholic, and Church of God historians all teach that Polycarp was a spiritually-faithful Christian leader. Yet, consider that Polycarp refused to accept the authority of the Roman Bishop Anicetus.
6. Polycarp is also the only possible successor to have a writing *perhaps*, at least partially (like in a dual way), directed to him in the Bible. Some scholars believe that when John wrote to the

“angel of the church Smyrna” that this actually was addressed to the leader of the church (the Greek term translated as “angel” can mean human representatives, e.g. Luke 7:24) who they feel was Polycarp (e.g. Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Revelation 2:8).

7. The ancient Romans stated about Polycarp, “This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, and the overthrower of our gods, he who has been teaching many not to sacrifice, or to worship the gods” (Martyrdom of Polycarp, 12:2). Even his opponents felt he was important to Christianity and apparently Christianity’s main leader.

Clearly Polycarp was a most important apostolic successor. Protestant scholars tend to call Polycarp “proto-orthodox” essentially meaning that he was a faithful Christian and what they now consider to be acceptable (or “orthodox”) was the result of a later change.

Which Catholic Church?

The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* states:

Polycarp was one, having in our own times been an apostolic and prophetic teacher, and bishop of the Catholic Church which is in Smyrna (Martyrdom, 16:2).

Which “Catholic Church” was Polycarp part of?

At risk of being repetitious, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* states:

The Church of God which sojourns at Smyrna ... (Martyrdom, 0:1b)

So, obviously this ‘Catholic Church’ was one that was in Smyrna (of Asia Minor) and would include all catholic churches accepting Polycarp’s role (Martyrdom, 0:1b).

The Eastern Orthodox, which once had a substantial presence in Asia Minor, consider Polycarp was their type of ‘catholic.’

Interestingly, when this author and his wife visited Smyrna (now called Izmir), the “Church of St. Polycarp” was a Roman Catholic one. That, thus, supports the view that the Church of Rome holds that Polycarp was their type of ‘catholic.’ We also confirmed that in a conversation with a priest inside that church building.

That being said, those of us in the *Continuing* Church of God assert that Polycarp held to doctrines consistent with ours, yet held some positions in major conflict with the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholics.

According to the Greco-Roman saint Irenaeus:

Polycarp related all things in harmony with the Scriptures. (Eusebius. The History of the Church. Book V, Chapter XX, verse 5, p. 112).

And while certain traditions can be important, they must be in harmony with the Scriptures in order to be valid.

Polycarp taught that the Kingdom of God, not heaven, was the reward of the saved:

Blessed are the poor, and those that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God. (Polycarp. Letter to the Philippians, Chapter II. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1)

And on the following sabbath he said; 'Hear ye my exhortation, beloved children of God. ... His advent suddenly manifest as of rapid lightning, the great judgment by fire, the eternal life, His immortal kingdom. And all things whatsoever being taught of God ye know, when ye search the inspired Scriptures, engrave with the pen of the Holy Spirit on your hearts, that the commandments may abide in you indelible.' (Life of Polycarp, Chapter 24. In The Apostolic Fathers, vol. 3.2, pp. 488-506)

COG leaders in Asia Minor and elsewhere taught that as well as the millennium for centuries.

Life of Polycarp and Harris Fragments

Although many modern scholars have dismissed the *Harris Fragments* and *Life of Polycarp* as inauthentic, they are still considered to have value (Still TD, Wilwhite DE, eds. The Apostolic Fathers and Paul. T&T Clark, 2018, p. 205). And certainly, they do.

It is known that the document called the *Life of Polycarp* has questionable parts and was changed in the fourth century (Hartog P, ed. Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp: Introduction, Text, and Commentary. University Press, 2013, p. 6).

So, how should these questioned documents be looked at?

Well, consider that they were intended to convey parts of Polycarp's life and beliefs, which would have been in place in Asia Minor for much of the second century.

The *Harris Fragments* tend to confirm other information about Polycarp, such as his association with John and his age. But statements in it claiming Polycarp never forgot anyone he met, would seem to be an embellishment.

Furthermore, while, for example, the *Life of Polycarp* was believed to have been corrupted through additions in the 4th century, one would have to ask, "What would not have been added?"

The *Life of Polycarp* teaches that early Christians kept the Days of Unleavened Bread and that the Passover had to be in that same season. That would not have been a later addition by Greco-Roman writers who held to a different view. Nor would they have included Polycarp's observance of the Sabbath or discussing the biblical holydays known as the Last Great Day and the Feast of Tabernacles if those were not part of

his life. The idea that Polycarp read from the Old and New Testaments at church services would not seem to have been added either. These types of details are also consistent with other reports about Polycarp as well as those for early Christians in Asia Minor.

However, the comment in the *Life of Polycarp* about Polycarp also keeping the “Lord’s Day” as an apparent reference to Sunday would seem to logically have been an unauthorized addition—and that is part of a section that certain other scholars have felt was questionable (Hartog, p. 5; Dehandschutter, Polycarpiana). Also probably questionable, were certain stories of his early youth, and some claimed miracles, and visions (Hartog, p. 5). Those type of embellishments were relatively common in questionable and inaccurate literature.

Yet they, of themselves, do not dismiss everything in the documents as invalid. But, so far, some points in it have simply not been corroborated elsewhere.

Passover on the 14th and the Days of Unleavened Bread

As a successor to the Apostle John, Polycarp also kept Passover on the 14th of the month of Abib/Nisan (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book V, Chapter XXIV, pp. 114-115), like the descendants of Israel did (Exodus 12:6), and Jesus would have.

Eusebius noted that in Polycarp’s region:

... the parishes of all Asia, as from an older tradition, held that the fourteenth day of the moon, on which day the Jews were commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should be observed as the feast of the Saviour’s Passover. (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book V, Chapter XXIII, Verse 1, p. 113)

An “older tradition” perhaps would be more accurately called *the original practice of the apostles*, which was also specifically done by Jesus (cf. Mark 14:12-25). Polycarp and his spiritual descendants continued the practices of the apostles in their area, who were known to have been Philip and John in the latter portion of the 1st century, but Paul earlier.

Yet during Polycarp’s time, Bishop of Rome Anicetus preferred Sunday. Irenaeus reported:

And when the blessed Polycarp was sojourning in Rome in the time of Anicetus, although a slight controversy had arisen among them as to certain other points ... For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp to forego the observance [in his own way], inasmuch as these things had been always observed by John the disciple of our Lord, and by other apostles with whom he had been conversant; nor, on the other hand, could Polycarp succeed in persuading Anicetus to keep [the observance in his way], for he maintained that he was bound to adhere to the usage of the presbyters who preceded him. And in this state of affairs they held fellowship with each other; and Anicetus conceded to Polycarp in the Church the celebration of the Eucharist, by way of showing him respect. (Irenaeus. FRAGMENTS FROM THE LOST WRITINGS OF IRENAEUS. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol 1)

Polycarp told the one that many now consider to have been “the pope,” no. This also shows that Rome did not have dominion over the faithful as many now wrongly believe that it did.

Furthermore, consider that Anicetus acquiesced to having Passover service when Polycarp said to:

Anicetus’ acquiescence to Polycarp’ views concerning the Pascha ... presumes an accepted representation of some ‘apostolic’ tradition in the latter. (Hartog p. 16)

Yes, Polycarp was recognized, even by the Bishop of Rome, as having major ecclesiastical standing.

That being said, this author does not agree with Irenaeus’ ‘spin’ (which may have been edited that way by Eusebius) that Polycarp and Anicetus were fine with each other’s differences. What Irenaeus was really saying was that the two held a Passover service together on the date Polycarp insisted. Scholars such as H. Wace and W.C. Piercy also concluded that Irenaeus was referring to a Passover service (Wace H, Piercy WC, eds. *Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature to the End of the Sixth Century A.D., with an Account of the Principal Sects and Heresies*. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. edition. ISBN: 1-56563-460-8 reprinted from the edition originally titled *A Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature*, published by John Murray, London, 1911, reprint 1999).

What seems to have happened is that Anicetus realized that since Polycarp made it clear he was going to observe Passover on the 14th, if he wanted to be seen with Polycarp, he’d better do so. So, he did.

Notice a statement from the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*:

21:1 Now, the blessed Polycarp suffered martyrdom on the second day of the month Xanthicus just begun, the seventh day before the Kalends of May, on the great Sabbath, at the eighth hour.

Certain scholars, like Adolphus Hilgenfeld, have concluded that Polycarp was killed on the First Day of Unleavened Bread:

Hilgenfeld ... adopts the day given by the *Paschale Chronicle*, vii Kal. April. ..., so that Polycarp must have suffered on the 15th Nisan, i.e. on the First Day of Unleavened Bread. (Lightfoot JB. S. Ignatius. S. Polycarp: Revised Texts with Instructions, Notes, Dissertations, and Translations, Volume 1, 2nd edition. Macmillan, 1889, p. 45)

Bucher ... further calculates that in A.D. 169, March 26 coincided with Nisan 15, the First Day of Unleavened Bread. ... In like manner, Ussher... adopts 169 as the year of the martyrdom and accepts the day as given in the *Paschale Chronicle*. (Ibid, p. 702)

This author does not believe that the martyrdom of Polycarp took place in February around Purim (like some claim) as the term ‘great Sabbath’ was not used for weekly Sabbaths that occurred that time of the year nor was Purim a Sabbath. Even Greco-Roman scholars like Mauricio Saavedra Monroy recognize that the Passover season is alluded to as the time in the *Martyrdom* (Monroy MS. *The Church of Smyrna: History and Theology of a Primitive Christian Community*. Peter Lang edition, 2015, pp. 284, 318). Let it

be mentioned that a martyrdom of 158 also coincides with the first Day of Unleavened Bread being on a Saturday.

So why the confusion on the date of his death?

There may also be a confusion here since the Macedonian month of Xanthicus corresponds to the Roman month of February, but also the month of April on the Syro-Macedonian calendar, widespread in the East (Monroy, p. 280).

That said, based upon Polycrates' report to Bishop Victor (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book V, Chapter XXIV, Verses 2-7, p. 114), various ones concluded that Polycarp also kept the Days of Unleavened Bread. The previous report from the *Life of Polycarp* points to him observing the Fall biblical Holy Days as well.

Sabbath

Polycarp kept the seventh-day Sabbath. "Specifically, *Vita Pol.* supplies evidence ... for Christian gatherings on the Sabbath" (Hartog, p. 6), after New Testament times.

Sabbath keeping continued with Polycarp (Life of Polycarp, Chapter 24) and later (Sozomen. THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF SOZOMEN. Comprising a History of the Church, from a.d. 323 to a.d. 425. Book VII, Chapter XIX).

Perhaps the earliest influential person who tried to do away with the seventh-day Sabbath was Marcion of Pontus (Tertullian. Against Marcion, Book IV, Chapter 12. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 3), whom Polycarp directly denounced (Irenaeus. Adversus Haereses. Book III, Chapter 3, Verse 4. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1).

Polycarp and his region kept the seventh-day Sabbath.

On the Ministry

Related to elders in the ministry, Polycarp wrote:

And let the presbyters be compassionate and merciful to all, bringing back those that wander, visiting all the sick, and not neglecting the widow, the orphan, or the poor, but always "providing for that which is becoming in the sight of God and man; "abstaining from all wrath, respect of persons, and unjust judgment; keeping far off from all covetousness, not quickly crediting [an evil report] against any one, not severe in judgment, as knowing that we are all under a debt of sin. If then we entreat the Lord to forgive us, we ought also ourselves to forgive; for we are before the eyes of our Lord and God, and "we must all appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, and must every one give an account of himself." Let us then serve Him in fear, and with all reverence, even as He Himself has commanded us, and as the apostles who preached the Gospel unto us, and the prophets who proclaimed beforehand the coming of the Lord [have alike taught us]. Let us be

zealous in the pursuit of that which is good, keeping ourselves from causes of offence, from false brethren, and from those who in hypocrisy bear the name of the Lord, and draw away vain men into error. (Polycarp, Chapter VI. Letter to the Philippians. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1).

It may be of interest to note that the term sacraments is not part of Polycarp's description (nor is that term in the New Testament). This does not mean that elders and pastors did not baptize or perform marriages, which took a relatively small part of their time, for example, but does indicate that sacramental duties were not the focus of church leaders in the first and second centuries.

Notice also:

And on the sabbath, when prayer had been made long time on bended knee, he, as was his custom, got up to read; and every eye was fixed upon him. Now the lesson was the Epistles of Paul to Timothy and to Titus, in which he says what manner of man a bishop ought to be. And he was so well fitted for the office that the hearers said one to another that he lacked none of those qualities which Paul requires in one who has the care of a church. (Life of Polycarp, Chapter 22)

The epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus focus on the character of the ministry and are not focused on what some may consider to be sacramental duties.

Polycarp's focus, when speaking at church services, was messages from the Bible.

Godhead

Although some lay people have claimed that Polycarp held a trinitarian view of the Godhead, there are no quotes from him, nor early quotes about him, that truly support that claim.

Actually, the existing evidence is to the contrary.

Polycarp wrote:

But may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ Himself, who is the Son of God, and our everlasting High Priest, build you up in faith and truth, and in all meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, forbearance, and purity; and may He bestow on you a lot and portion among His saints, and on us with you, and on all that are under heaven, who shall believe in our Lord and God Jesus Christ, and in His Father, who "raised Him from the dead (Polycarp. Letter to the Philippians. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1. Chapter 12 modified by B. Thiel to correct omission in translation).

For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is antichrist (Ibid, Chapter VII.).

Him who died for us, and for our sakes was raised again by God from the dead (Ibid, Chapter IX).

Even scholars like the Greco-Roman Mauricio Saavedra Monroy recognize that Polycarp made binitarian statements:

As for the binitarian confessional formula, which confesses the Father and the Son, we likewise find examples in Polycarp and Ignatius. (Monroy, p. 292)

Furthermore, consider that the 4th century Orthodox Catholic bishop Marcellus of Ancyra wrote:

Valentinus the heresiarch first invented ... three hypostases and three persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit ... (Logan A. Marcellus of Ancyra (Pseudo-Anthimus), 'On the Holy Church': Text, Translation and Commentary. Verses 8-9. Journal of Theological Studies, NS, Volume 51, Pt. 1, April 2000, p.95).

This is relevant here because Polycarp denounced Valentinus' teachings and turned people away from him (Irenaeus. *Adversus Haereses*. Book III, Chapter 3, Verse 4).

Polycarp held a binitarian view of the Godhead and denounced an apostate who was claimed to be the first to teach the trinitarian view of three hypostases.

Let it also be noted that early Christians also did not eat biblically-unclean meat, and Polycarp would have held to that original practice. This is further supported by a writing from Irenaeus, who claimed to have met Polycarp, that animals that did not divide the hoof and chew cud were unclean (Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*, Book V, Chapter 8, Verse 4).

The Greco-Roman saint Jerome wrote:

Polycarp disciple of the apostle John and by him ordained bishop of Smyrna was chief of all Asia, where he saw and had as teachers some of the apostles and of those who had seen the Lord. (Jerome. *De Viris Illustribus* (On Illustrious Men), Chapter 17. Translated by Ernest Cushing Richardson. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 3. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892)

So, Jerome considered that Polycarp was a faithful apostolic leader.

Yet, Polycarp's doctrines show he was essentially a COG, not Roman, type of original catholic.

7. Early Heretics and Heretic Fighters

Cambridge Dictionary defines *heresy* as “a belief that is against the principles of a particular religion.”

Nearly every writer of the New Testament recorded warnings about false or heretical teachers and their teachings. The historical reality is that many false leaders did arise, as Jesus, Himself, foretold they would (cf. Matthew 24:11, 24). The Christian church was definitely affected early on by false leaders and other heretics.

How did the earliest changes, the earliest heresies, come in?

The Apostle Peter warned:

¹ There were also false prophets among the people, just as **there will be false teachers among you, who will introduce destructive heresies** and even deny the Master who ransomed them, bringing swift destruction on themselves. ² **Many will follow their licentious ways**, and because of them the way of truth will be reviled. (2 Peter 2:1-2, NABRE)

Yes, destructive heretics did arrive and persuaded people to follow their licentious ways—as opposed to the ways of the God of the Bible.

The Apostle John had to deal with them when he was alive:

¹⁹ They went out from us, but they did not belong to us! If they had belonged to us, they would have continued with us. But [in fact] they left, so that it might be revealed that none of them belonged to us! (1 John 2:19, EOB)

⁹ I wrote to the Church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. ¹⁰ Therefore, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds and how he unjustly accuses us with wicked words. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brethren. He also stops those who would do so and throws them out of the Church! (3 John 9-10, EOB)

So, yes, there were heretics that emerged from within the true Church.

In the 1st and 2nd centuries, a number of heretics arose who professed Christ. Among these we have 2nd century reports about were followers of Simon Magus (who was condemned by the Apostle Peter in Acts 8:20-23), Cerinthus (condemned by the Apostle John), Marcion (who personally came to Rome), Valentinus (who personally came to Rome from Alexandria, Egypt), and Montanus. The last four were condemned by church leaders in, or based out of, Asia Minor.

Around 135 A.D. Polycarp (Polycarp. Letter to the Philippians, Chapter VII) reported that “many” who professed Christ went the changed way which he called “vanity.”

Additionally, even those now considered to have been early supporters of the Church of Rome (such as Justin, Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus) condemned Simon Magus and his followers for doctrines such as using statues for worship, revering a woman, incantations, mysteries, mystic priests, claiming divine titles for leaders, accepting money for religious favors, preferring allegory and tradition over many aspects of scripture, divorcing themselves from Christian biblical practices considered to be Jewish and having a leader who wanted to be thought of as God/Christ on Earth. Yet, versions of these practices/doctrines have since emerged within the Greco-Roman churches.

Notice the following:

The “Parting of the Ways” between “Judaism” and “Christianity, as it has been called, ... Ignatius of Antioch is traditionally seen as being at the forefront of that development. ...

Indeed, it is clear today that, even after Ignatius’s time, at least other Christian communities also continued to insist upon maintaining these and other Jewish ritual practices—so much so that scholars have begun to suspect that **the ways never really parted as neatly as once thought**. The result has been a much more nuanced picture of Christian identity and Jewish-Christian relations, including a more acute awareness of growing anti-Judaism in Christian thought during the second and third century (Boin D. Hellenistic ‘Judaism’ and the Social Origins of the ‘Pagan-Christian’ Debate. *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, Volume 22, Number 2, Summer 2014, pp. 181-183)

It should be pointed out that Ignatius was not the start of a Christian separation, as he was warning against considering the scores of added Pharisaical rules related to keeping the Sabbath. Ignatius was NOT advocating doing away with Christian practices such as the Sabbath that people like Simon Magus seemingly did. Ignatius was dealing essentially with Pharisaical heretics.

In the late 2nd century, the Roman-supporting historian Irenaeus wrote that the idea that the Old Testament laws are dissimilar and contrary to the Gospel came from followers of Simon Magus. Irenaeus essentially taught that Simon and his followers practiced lawlessness (in the manner many Protestants do). Irenaeus also noted it was the Apostle John from Ephesus and Polycarp from Smyrna (major cities in Asia Minor) who strongly denounced the Gnostic and similar heretics (Irenaeus. *Adversus Haereses*. Book III, Chapter 4, Verse 3 and Chapter 3, Verse 4).

Men such as Cerinthus, Valentinus, and Marcion are considered by Greco-Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Church of God scholars to have been apostates and/or Gnostic heretics. But a major heretic, Marcus of Jerusalem, has been accepted by most of them, but not the COG.

There is a general misconception about early church history that early Christians did not keep the seventh-day Sabbath, the biblical holy days, and, for another example, did accept the consumption of biblically unclean meat. Yet, that was not true (Socrates Scholasticus. *Ecclesiastical History*, Book V, Chapter XXII, p. 289; Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision*).

The early 20th century theologian J.J.L. Ratton noted:

The early Church at Jerusalem, retained most of the distinctive customs of the Jews, such as circumcision, kosher meats, the Jewish Sabbath, the Jewish rites, and worship of the Temple. Our Lord, Himself, lived the exterior life of a Jew, even so far as the observance of Jewish religious customs was concerned. The early Church of Jerusalem followed His example. The Jews looked upon the Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem simply as a Jewish sect, which they called the sect of the Nazarenes. (Ratton J.L. The Apocalypse of St. John: a commentary on the Greek text, 2nd edition. R. & T. Washbourne, Ltd., 1915, p. 4)

However, it has essentially been assumed by many scholars that since many did not follow these practices sometime in the 2nd century, that they were basically the case from the beginning. But that is not so. A series of steps and heretics set the stage that resulted in changes.

Yet, some in Jerusalem, Asia Minor, Antioch, and elsewhere fought those type of changes. In this chapter, we will look into how and why some of the heresies entered in.

Marcus of Jerusalem

After the Jewish Bar Kochba revolt, Emperor Hadrian decided no Jewish-types were allowed in Jerusalem. Here is an 18th century report from Edward Gibbon:

Hadrian ... [t]he emperor founded, under the name of Alia Capitolina, a new city on Mount Sion, to which he gave the privileges of a colony; ...

They {some who claimed Christianity} elected Marcus for their bishop, a prelate of the race of the Gentiles, and most probably a native either of Italy or of some of the Latin provinces. **At his persuasion the most considerable part of the congregation renounced the Mosaic law, in the practice of which they had persevered above a century.** By this sacrifice of their habits and prejudices they purchased a free admission into the colony of Hadrian ...

When the name and honours of the church of Jerusalem had been restored to Mount Sion, the crimes of heresy and schism were imputed to the obscure remnant of the Nazarenes which refused to accompany their Latin bishop. ...

It has been remarked with more ingenuity than truth that the virgin purity of the church was never violated by schism or heresy before the reign of Trajan or Hadrian, about one hundred years after the death of Christ. (Gibbon E. Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume I, Chapter XV, Section I. ca. 1776-1788, pp. 160-161)

History shows Marcus finally implemented several of the false doctrines some of those heretics held to. That is why we in the CCOG do not accept Marcus as an apostolic successor (but the Eastern Orthodox do).

2nd century writer Hegippus wrote that the corruption in Jerusalem began in that century a decade or two prior to Marcus. Hegippus reported that Jerusalem started off well, but one called Thebuthis had

doctrines of Simon (Magus) and Marcion, but that the Jewish Christians and their leaders would not then accept them:

Hegesippus ... describes the beginnings of the heresies which arose in his time, in the following words: And after James the Just had suffered martyrdom, as the Lord had also on the same account, Symeon, the son of the Lord's uncle, Clopas, was appointed the next bishop. All proposed him as second bishop because he was a cousin of the Lord. Therefore, they called the Church a virgin, for it was not yet corrupted by vain discourses.

But Thebuthis ... began to corrupt it. He also was sprung from the seven sects among the people, like Simon, from whom came the Simonians, and Cleobius, from whom came the Cleobians, and Dositheus, from whom came the Dositheans, and Gorthæus, from whom came the Goratheni, and Masbotheus, from whom came the Masbothæans. (Eusebius. History Of the Church, Book IV, Chapter 22, verses 1, 4-5, pp. 86-87)

Although the Book of Revelation warns about an improper alliance between kings of the world and a compromised religion, we see imperial pressures being a factor after Thebuthis.

Notice the following from an Arab source about what the faithful (called companions below) said to the Greco-Romans (called Christians below) about when Marcus rose up (all parenthetical words/statements below in source):

(71a) 'After him', his disciples (*axhab*) were with the Jews and the Children of Israel in the latter's synagogues and observed the prayers and the feasts of (the Jews) in the same place as the latter. (However) there was a disagreement between them and the Jews with regard to Christ.

The Romans (al-Rum) reigned over them. The Christians (used to) complain to the Romans about the Jews, showed them their own weakness and appealed to their pity. And the Romans did pity them. This (used) to happen frequently. And the Romans said to the Christians: "Between us and the Jews there is a pact which (obliges us) not to change their religious laws (*adyan*). But if you would abandon their laws and separate yourselves from them, praying as we do (while facing) the East, eating (the things) we eat, and regarding as permissible that which we consider as such, we should help you and make you powerful, and the Jews would find no way (to harm you). On the contrary, you would be more powerful than they."

The Christians answered: "We will do this."

(And the Romans) said: "Go, fetch your companions, and bring your Book (*kitab*)."(The Christians) went to their companions, informed them of (what had taken place) between them and the Romans and said to them: "Bring the Gospel (*al-injil*), and stand up so that we should go to them."

But these (companions) said to them: "You have done ill. We are not permitted (to let) the Romans pollute the Gospel. In giving a favourable answer to the Romans, you have accordingly departed from the religion. We are (therefore) no longer permitted to associate with you; on the

contrary, we are obliged to declare that there is nothing in common between us and you;" and they prevented their (taking possession of) the Gospel or gaining access to it. In consequence a violent quarrel (broke out) between (the two groups). Those (mentioned in the first place) went back to the Romans and said to them: "Help us against these companions of ours before (helping us) against the Jews, and take away from them on our behalf our Book (kitab)." Thereupon (the companions of whom they had spoken) fled the country. And the Romans wrote concerning them to their governors in the districts of Mosul and in the *Jazirat al-'Arab*. Accordingly, a search was made for them; some (*qawm*) were caught and burned, others (*qawm*) were killed.

(As for) those who had given a favorable answer to the Romans they came together and took counsel as to how to replace the Gospel, seeing it was lost to them. (Thus) the opinion that a Gospel should be composed (*yunshi`u*) was established among them...a certain number of Gospels were written. (Pines S. The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source. Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Volume II, No.13; 1966. Jerusalem, pp. 14-15).

The above, which appears to be accurate, would seem to have taken place in the second century--probably concluding around 134/135 A.D. It is interesting for a number of reasons. It shows that there were two group that professed Christ then. The compromisers called "Christians" above, and the other (the faithful ones) called "companions." The fact that the companions did not eat unclean meat and would no longer associate with the compromisers showed that in whatever area the above occurred in, there were definitely two very different groups. With the faithful being separatists, as were those later associated with Polycarp and Serapion.

Fear of losing their homes and livelihoods, fear of the Romans, political expediency, and licentious views were reasons that one group went with Marcus.

Yet, the faithful group had the true gospel manuscripts and would have fled with them, probably initially to Pella. Yet, the other group made their own gospels up--this may be why some of the 'gnostic gospels' started to appear in the early second century. The departure from the biblical laws, called Mosaic by Gibbon, also affected areas outside of Judea.

The theological historian Johann Lorenz Mosheim wrote:

In consequence in this favourable alteration of the sentiments of the Romans towards them ... Marcus, at whose insistence, they were prevailed on to renounce the law of Moses ...

Nothing, in fact, can be better attested than that there existed in Palestine two Christian churches, by the one of which an observance of the Mosaic law was retained, and by the other disregarded. This division amongst the Christians of Jewish origins did not take place before the time of Hadrian, for it can be ascertained, that previously to his reign the Christians of Palestine were unanimous in an adherence to the ceremonial observances of their forefathers. There can be no doubt, therefore, that this separation originated in major part of them being prevailed upon by Marcus to renounce Mosaic ritual, by way of getting rid of the numerous inconveniences to which

they were exposed, and procuring for themselves a reception, as citizens, in the newly formed colony of Ælia Capitolina. (Mosheim J.L. Commentaries on the affairs of the Christians before the time of Constantine the Great: or, An enlarged view of the ecclesiastical history of the first three centuries, Volume 2. Translated by Robert Studley Vidal. Publisher T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1813, pp. 196-197)

Yes, one group, split into two. One group remained faithful, and the other changed. It was not the elimination of “Mosaic ritual” that Marcus insisted upon, as much of what would be so considered by the faithful (like washings and animal sacrifices) was gone earlier (cf. Hebrews 9:6-28)—but it was improper political compromise that Marcus and his followers ended up accepting.

The 19th century scholar Joseph Barber Lightfoot wrote:

The Church of Ælia Capitolina was very differently constituted from the Church of Pella and the Church of Jerusalem ... not a few doubtless accepted the conqueror’s terms, content to live henceforth as Gentiles ... in the new city of Hadrian. But there were others who hung to the law of their forefathers ... (Lightfoot J.B. Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes and Dissertations. Published by Macmillan, 1881, pp. 317, 331)

The Church of Pella was Sabbath-keeping (cf. Bagatti, The Church from the Circumcision, p. 202), where many of the faithful fled to, as had been the Jerusalem church.

The Eastern Orthodox Church in Jerusalem seemed to have acknowledged that change came at the time of Marcus, but they have been a bit guarded about it:

In 135 AD the Roman emperor Hadrian builds on the ruins of Jerusalem a new Roman city and names it Aelia Capitolina and permits the Christians to come back. However the Jewish are not permitted to come in town. (The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem. <http://www.holylight.gr/patria/enpatria.html> accessed 11/30/07)

Notice the statement that “the Jewish are not permitted to come in town.” That was correct, but only in a limited sense. It was not just the normal Jews: it was also those who kept “Jewish” (biblical) practices like the seventh-day Sabbath that were not permitted to come into Jerusalem after its 135 A.D. takeover.

Yes, changes did take place in and after 135 A.D. in Jerusalem. Fear, etc., because of Emperor Hadrian seems to have affected other areas, such as Rome and probably also Alexandria.

Cerinthus

Cerinthus came to Asia Minor from Egypt. Irenaeus “says, on the authority of Polycarp, that the apostle John once entered a bath to bathe; but, learning that Cerinthus was within, he sprang from the place and rushed out of the door, for he could not bear to remain under the same roof with him. And he advised those that were with him to do the same, saying, ‘Let us flee, lest the bath fall; for Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within’” (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book III, Chapter XXVIII, verse 6, p. 62).

How was Cerinthus the enemy of the truth?

Well, one way, was that he claimed to get doctrines from angels (Ibid, verse 1). So, he may be the first apostate who claimed to see apparitions or hear locutions. Signs and lying wonders were warned about (2 Thessalonians 2:9), and Cerinthus, perhaps like Simon Magus, either had them or claimed to.

The Bible also warns:

² 'If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you, offering you some sign or wonder, ³ and the sign or wonder comes about; and if he then says to you, "Let us follow other gods (hitherto unknown to you) and serve them," ⁴ you must not listen to that prophet's words or to that dreamer's dreams. Yahweh your God is testing you to know if you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and all your soul. (Deuteronomy 13:2-4, NJB)

Despite warnings, many ended up accepting false teachings because of signs and wonders.

Irenaeus also wrote:

Cerinthus ... represented Jesus as having not been born of a virgin, but as being the son of Joseph and Mary according to the ordinary course of human generation ... (Irenaeus. *Adversus Haereses*, Book I, Chapter XXVI, Verse 1)

So, Cerinthus was clearly false as his representation goes against scripture (e.g. Luke 1:26-43).

The Alexandrian Bishop Dionysius stated:

Cerinthus ... fancied, in the delights of the belly, and what comes beneath the belly, that is to say, in eating and drinking, and marrying, and in other things under the guise of which he thought he could indulge his appetites with a better grace ... (Dionysius. *From the Two Books on the Promises*, Chapter 3. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 6)

So, Cerinthus was one who attempted to "pervert the grace of our God to debauchery and deny all religion, rejecting our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" as warned against in Jude 4 (NJB). He may have been an early one to promote biblically-unclean meat consumption.

An Armenian scholar called Ananias of Shirak, circa 600 A.D., wrote:

The Festival of the holy Birth of Christ, on the 12th day before the feast of the Baptism, was not appointed by the holy apostles, nor by their successors either, as is clear from the canons ... which is 6th of January, according to the Romans. But many years after their fixing the canons, this festival was invented, as some say, by the disciples of the heretic Cerinthus; and was accepted by the Greeks, because they were truly fond of festivals and most fervent in piety; and by them it was spread and diffused all over the world. But in the days of the holy Constantine, in the holy

Council of Nice, this festival was not received by the holy fathers (Ananias of Shirak. On Christmas. The Expositor, 5th series vol. 4, 1896. Translation. pp. 323-337, as reported by ccel).

Twelve days before January 6th is December 25th (see also Conybeare, pp. 185). Hence, the above report suggests that December 25th as some version of 'Christmas' was originally developed by the apostate Cerinthus. That date was later formally adopted by the Greco-Romans in the 4th century after having been endorsed by Emperor Constantine.

Why would Cerinthus pick December 25th? Probably because that was the day of celebration of the birthday of the sun-god Mithra/Mithras. December 25th also took place at the end of the Saturnalia, hence it was acceptable to at least two groups of pagans. Followers of Mithra represented an influential group in the Roman Empire. Note also that Ananias of Shirak correctly declared that the original "holy fathers" had NOT accepted the December 25th festival date and that it supposedly became acceptable sometime after Constantine's Council of Nicea.

Valentinus

Valentinus was a 2nd century heretic who attempted to blend much pagan Gnosticism with what he perceived to be the Christian faith. He came from Alexandria (Egypt) and went to Rome. Valentinus and his followers clearly believed in merging Greek pagan philosophy with Christianity, believed in tradition over the Bible, believed in having a higher knowledge, endorsed a non-immersion form of baptism, and developed the idea of God existing as three hypostases. He taught that Jesus really was not made flesh, taught that Jesus was a defect, and taught that man was not fashioned from the earth (Irenaeus. Against Heresies. Books I-IV; Hippolytus. Refutation of All Heresies. Books VI, VIII, X).

The Catholic Encyclopedia states:

Valentinus, the best known and most influential of the Gnostic heretics ... went to Rome ... and ... allied himself with the orthodox community in Rome, ... his system is obviously an attempt to amalgamate Greek and Oriental speculations of the most fantastic kind with Christian ideas. He was especially indebted to Plato (Healy PJ. Valentinus and Valentinians).

So, he was accepted in Rome for a long time, and blended Platonic and other pagan speculations to develop his apostate system.

Greco-Roman bishop Marcellus of Ancyra, said Valentinus' teachings on the Godhead corrupted part of the early church:

Now with the heresy ... which has corrupted the Church of God ... Valentinus the heresiarch ... was the first to invent three hypostases and three persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit ... (Logan, p. 95)

Valentinus, whom Polycarp denounced, is believed to have been the first person affiliated with Christianity to teach the trinitarian concept of three hypostases or make any clear statement of 'equality'

regarding three alleged persons of God. On the other hand, Polycarp, Melito, Theophilus of Antioch, and the Apostle John (John 1:1-3) specifically referred to both the Father and the Word/Son as God, but never referred to the Holy Spirit as God. Ignatius did the same in his letters to the Ephesians and the Smyrnaeans (Ignatius. Letter to the Ephesians, verse 0 and Letter to the Smyrnaeans, verses 0 & 1. In: Holmes, pp. 136-137; 184-185. "As for the binitarian confessional formula, which confesses the Father and the Son, we likewise find examples in Polycarp and Ignatius" per Monroy, p. 292).

In the 2nd and 3rd centuries, even Roman supporting leaders such as Irenaeus and Hippolytus held a binitarian view. Early trinitarians, like the Montanists and Valentinians, were called heretics. It was not until around 380 that even the majority of Greco-Romans formally accepted a trinitarian formula like most of the Protestant churches accept today.

Valentinus' gospel changed Jesus into something that could not have fulfilled scripture (cf. Philippians 2:5-11) (as did Montanus) and blended pagan philosophy with the pretence of scripture (cf. Colossians 2:8).

The True Gospel and Another Gospel

Many heretics basically taught about the person of Jesus Christ but did not understand Him or His message. Versions of their *other/different gospels* have infected what is often called Christianity outside the real Church of God.

Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15). Kingdoms require a king, territory, subjects and laws. The good news is that God will come to the earth and His Kingdom will eliminate pain and sorrow (Revelation 21:4). Of course, to be part of this kingdom requires repentance of sins (Acts 2:38), the sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 10:12-14), the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-9), the acceptance of Jesus Christ as savior (Titus 2:11-14), proper baptism (Acts 2:39), the keeping of the commandments to "walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:3-6), having the Spirit of God (Romans 8:9-11), and allowing Jesus to live His life in us (Galatians 2:20). The fact that sinners will be saved after conversion is also part of the gospel.

The Apostle Paul warned of those who turned away from the true gospel to a false one (Galatians 1:6-9).

Simon Magus brought forth another gospel that included ritual/human tradition over grace (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9; Colossians 2:8) and obedience to God (cf. Jude 4). According to Eusebius, via Justin, Simon Magus "led many people of the inhabitants of Rome astray" (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book II, Chapter XIII, Verses 1-2, pp. 31-32). The Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:1, 14-15) tried to turn the grace of the gospel into lasciviousness (Irenaeus. Adversus Haereses. Book 1, Chapter 26, Verse 3; cf. Jude 4).

Marcion was an apostate denounced by Polycarp of Smyrna, but tolerated by the Church of Rome for decades. He denied Jesus. Some scholars have referred to Marcion as the first Protestant (Soulén R & R. Handbook of Biblical Criticism. Presbyterian Publishing Corp, 2011, p. 122). Marcion also brought forth another gospel of turning grace into lasciviousness (cf. Jude 4), supposedly eliminating the Sabbath and other commandments (cf. 1 John 2:3-6; Hebrews 4:9), claiming Christianity was too Jewish (Latourette, p. 126; cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:14), and denying the coming kingdom (cf. Revelation 20:4-6).

As far as being too Jewish goes, the unbaptized sun-worshipping Emperor Constantine declared after pushing a Sunday Passover date:

Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Saviour a different way. (Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, Book III chapter 18)

But Jesus did keep Passover on the 14th and not a Sunday. Furthermore, He also avoided unclean meat, kept the seventh-day Sabbath, and kept other biblical Holy Days that Emperor Constantine did not endorse.

Regarding Roman Emperors and religious compromise, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* reported:

... 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. (Herbermann C, Grupp G. Constantine the Great)

The Beast and the False Prophet will take Constantinian Christianity even further away from the truth with its persecuting intolerance (cf. Revelation 13).

In the Book of Revelation, we see the following:

¹ One of the seven angels that had the seven bowls came to speak to me, and said, 'Come here and I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute who is enthroned beside abundant waters, ² with whom all the kings of the earth have prostituted themselves, and who has made all the population of the world drunk with the wine of her adultery.' (Revelation 17:1-2, NJB)

The above ties in with the Apostle James' warnings:

⁴ Adulterers, know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God.

⁵ Or do you think that the scripture saith in vain: To envy doth the spirit covet which dwelleth in you? (James 4:4-5, DRB)

Yet, from no later than those associated with Marcus of Jerusalem through Emperor Constantine and beyond, we see people who professed Christianity compromising with the kings of this world.

And because much of this began in the 2nd through 4th centuries, most seem to think this type of compromise is proper. While it is established tradition, it is in opposition to the Bible and has led to a Babylonian confusion amongst most in the world concerning the true Church.

That is not to say that early Christian leaders did not resist this and contend for the original faith. But, in time, most who claimed Christianity have not been able to properly discern the true from the false.

Chart of Early Heretics/Heresies Generally First Denounced by Leaders of Asia Minor

2nd Century Heretic	Heresy	Heretic/Heresy Denounced by Asia Minor Leaders	Tolerated by Rome Until
Simon Magus,* Nicolaitans,* Marcion, Montanus, Valentinus	Promoted a different gospel.	Peter (Acts 8:20-23), Paul (2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 1:8), Church of God in Ephesus (Revelation 2:6), Polycarp, Melito, Thraseas, and Theophilus.	Variations of the different gospels have been accepted by essentially all of the Greco-Roman Catholic and Protestant faiths.
Cerinthus	Excessive allegory, improper tradition, improper festivals, and apparitions as sources of doctrine.	Apostle John in Ephesus.	Variations adopted by Greco-Roman Catholic and Protestant faiths.
Marcus of Jerusalem	Sabbath, Passover on the 14 th , and Unclean Meat avoidance not required.	Nazarenes who fled as they were not allowed back in Jerusalem. Some ended up in Asia Minor.	Marcus' changes are still tolerated by the Greco-Roman Catholic and Protestant faiths.
Marcion	Sabbath and Ten Commandments done away.	c. 155 A.D. by Polycarp and later by Theophilus and Serapion.	Rome tolerates anti-Sabbath teaching to this day.
Marcion	Jesus not coming for millennial reign.	c. 170 A.D. by Melito.	c. 180 Marcion excommunicated, but heresy later accepted.

Valentinus	God is three hypostases.	c. 155 A.D. by Polycarp.	Still accepted; adopted by Council in 381.
Valentinus and Anicetus	Traditions in conflict with the Bible can be source of doctrine.	c. 155 A.D. by Polycarp; c. 170 A.D. by Melito.	c. 180 A.D. Valentinus was excommunicated, but heresy still accepted.
Anicetus, Victor, and some other early Roman leaders	Passover is on Sunday.	c. 155 A.D. by Polycarp; c. 195 A.D. by Polycrates.	Still accepted.
Montanus	False prophecies.	c. 157 A.D. by Thraseas, 177 by a synod in Asia Minor, and later others, like Apollonius, Apolinarius, and Serapion.	c. 206-218 A.D. Montanists finally denounced.
Montanus	God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.	c. 157 A.D. by Thraseas, etc.	Later adopted and now still accepted.
Tradition originated in the false "Gospel of James" circa 120-200 A.D.	Mary remained a virgin after giving birth to Jesus or Mary is a perpetual virgin.	c. 200 by some in Asia Minor and Jewish-Christians.	Adopted as the 5 th General Council of Constantinople in 553 granted "perpetual virgin" title to Mary. Now a Roman dogma.
Noetus/Sabellius	Father is same as Son.	c. 200 by Smyrna presbyters.	c. 220 A.D. finally denounced; though a version still accepted.
"Gospel of Peter"	Considering false gospel as scripture.	c. 200 by Serapion of Antioch.	Probably into 4 th century.

Origen of Alexandria	Bible should be interpreted allegorically.	3 rd century by Nepos of Arsinoe and Lucian of Antioch.	Often still accepted.
Platonic-Gnostic and pagan sources, including Justin Martyr claiming Plato.	Cross is a Christian religious symbol of signing and/or veneration.	c. 4 th -7 th centuries by Paulicians and Cathari of Armenia and Asia Minor. It could have been denounced prior, but the practice was not so widespread in Asia Minor earlier.	This heresy started to appear in the 2 nd century and was essentially finally formally adopted at a council in 843.

* While these were originally 1st century heretics, their heresies lasted and versions of them were denounced in Asia Minor/Antioch in the 2nd century and by other COG leaders in later centuries. Although Greco-Roman supporting leaders outside of Asia Minor/Antioch sometimes denounced these particular heretics, their churches often ended up adopting portions of their heresies. 3rd century African Bishop Nepos stood for the millennium and the Bible and denounced allegorical Greco-Roman opponents (ChapmanJ. Dionysius of Alexandria. The Catholic Encyclopedia). There were other heresies introduced in the 2nd to 4th centuries that were never accepted by the faithful Quartodeciman successors to the 2nd century Asia Minor leaders, as they did not teach the Jewish apocrypha, special dress for the clergy, clerical celibacy, immortal souls going to heaven, baptism by sprinkling, unclean meat consumption, military service for Christians, a mystic Eucharist, or a winter holiday somewhat coinciding with Saturnalia/Mithra ceremonies, etc. Even certain Catholic/Orthodox “saints” in the first few centuries originally condemned many of those particular doctrines. Variations of such teachings are now accepted by the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholics.

Historical evidence shows that leaders in Asia Minor denounced heresies generally before Rome did. And sadly, Rome adopted or later accepted some version of many of these denounced heresies.

Would the leaders of the true Church be more likely to tolerate or denounce heretics? The answer should be obvious (and to those it is not, recall that Jesus, Peter, Paul, Jude, John and others denounced false religious leaders in the New Testament).

8. The Canon of Scripture

As far as the books of the New Testament go, understand that the *Continuing* Church of God, Church of Rome, Eastern Orthodox, and traditional Protestant faiths accept the same 27 books as inspired.

As far as the books of the Old Testament go, most of the Protestants and the *Continuing* Church of God point to what are considered now to be 39 books of the Old Testament, whereas the Church of Rome and the Eastern Orthodox point to 46 books. The Greco-Roman churches accept something they call the deuterocanonical books, which are also sometimes called the Apocrypha.

In the 2nd century, Melito of Sardis listed the books of the Old Testament, and he did NOT include the Old Testament Apocrypha (Eusebius. *The History of the Church*, Book IV, Chapter XXVI, p. 90). Even *The Catholic Encyclopedia* concluded that only the ‘protocanonicals’ (the 39 books) are in Melito’s list (Reid G. Canon of the Old Testament).

The Canon of the New Testament

What about the New Testament?

The position of the *Continuing* Church of God is that the original catholic Christian church had the canon of the New Testament right after the Apostle John penned the Book of Revelation (as instructed by Jesus in Revelation 1:11) in the very late 1st century A.D. It is likely that passages such as Revelation 22:18 clarified to John that the New Testament canon was complete for the church age.

However, many Greco-Roman scholars do not accept that—they believe that the canonization did not take place for centuries and that many were confused until then about which New Testament books were valid (e.g. Bruce FF. *The Canon of Scripture*. InterVarsityPress, 1988; Unger M. *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*. Moody Press, 2009, p. 204).

While it is true that various leaders that the Greco-Roman Catholics and Protestants considered as real Christians used false 2nd century books for a time (like the wrongly titled *Gospel of Peter* and the *Shepherd of Hermas*), those books were not accepted by known actual Church of God leaders.

History demonstrates that false gospels and other false books were produced in the 2nd century. A “certain number of Gospels were written” (false ones) by those who were associated with Marcus of Jerusalem when he apostatized on matters like the Sabbath, unclean meats, and Passover (Pines S. *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source*. Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Volume II, No.13; Jerusalem, 1966, pp. 14-15). Furthermore, both true and false writings appeared in Rome and Alexandria in the second century.

In the early 2nd century, Polycarp made it clear that he and those in Philippi he wrote to, had to have the correct Bible otherwise he would not have written:

For I trust that ye are well versed in the Sacred Scriptures, and that nothing is hid from you; but to me this privilege is not yet granted. It is declared then in these Scriptures, “Be ye angry, and sin not,” and, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” (Polycarp. Letter to the Philippians. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1).

Note that Polycarp quoted a verse that is in the New Testament, when he used the term Scriptures. They could not have been *well versed in the Sacred Scriptures* if they did not know what they were! Polycarp, himself, quoted or alluded to seemingly every book of the New Testament in his *Letter to the Philippians* (Thiel B. Polycarp’s Letter to the Philippians with New Testament Scriptural Annotations. Trinity Journal of Apologetics and Theology, June 2008).

Furthermore, consider that there is a document known as the *Harris Fragments* (ca. 2nd or 3rd century) that also discusses Polycarp. Here are some translated quotes from the *Harris Fragments*:

Polycarp[p ... He continued to walk [i]n the canons which he had learned from his youth from John the apostle (Weidman, pp. 43-44)

The canons from his youth would seem to include the first books of the New Testament, and then later (since Polycarp continued) the rest of the canon which John would have known.

In the late 2nd century, Polycrates of Ephesus wrote that he (and others in his area) had “gone through every Holy Scripture” (Polycrates. Eusebius. Church History. Book V, Chapter 24) which shows that he claimed to have them all.

In the early 3rd century, COG leader Serapion of Antioch reported that a group he visited was not associated with him because they were using the false *Gospel of Peter*—he also said that he had not even seen it before visiting them. Furthermore, he claimed that the proper New Testament books were “handed down to us” or “received” as it has alternatively been translated (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book VI, Chapter XII, verses 3-4, p. 125-126). This shows that those in his area also knew the books.

The Greco-Roman Jerome accepted the same 27 books of the New Testament and 39 books of the Old Testament that the COG accepts. He wrote against the ‘deuteroncanonical’ Apocrypha, but ended up translating those writings per the Pope’s instructions (Reid G. Canon of the Old Testament. The Catholic Encyclopedia).

Church of God leaders knew the books of the New Testament from the beginning and did NOT need the later councils that many Greco-Roman Catholics and Protestant scholars claim were necessary to determine the canon of the New Testament.

Yet, notice the following improper assertion from the 19th century Roman Catholic Cardinal Gibbons:

The Catholic Church ... For fifteen centuries the Church was the sole guardian and depository of the Bible, (Gibbons J, Cardinal. The faith of our fathers: being a plain exposition and vindication of the church founded by Our Lord Jesus Christ, 83rd reprint edition. P. J. Kenedy, 1917, p. 90,91)

Rome had both possession issues and lack of a firm understanding of the New Testament canon for many centuries, and also adopted Old Testament books that the original catholic faith did not recognize.

Without going into all the details here, the following table shows and contrasts the Church of God 'chain of custody' of the books of the Bible and the Greco-Roman Catholic and Protestant view:

Timeline of Custody Chart

<i>Church of God</i>	Date	<i>Greco-Roman-Protestants</i>
God inspired various ones to write the gospels and other letters, and other parts of the New Testament.	c. 40-92	God inspired various ones to write the gospels and other parts of the New Testament.
Paul writes Timothy to bring Mark and the parchments (2 Timothy 4:11-13).	c. 66	Paul writes Timothy to bring Mark and the parchments (2 Timothy 4:11-13).
Peter has Paul's writings (2 Peter 3:15-16).	c. 66	Peter has at least some of Paul's writings (2 Peter 3:15-16).
John gets writings from Peter.	c. 66	John gets some writings from Peter.
Peter and Paul are killed.	c. 67	Peter and Paul are killed.
In Patmos, John pens the last book of the Bible (Revelation 1:9-11). He is the last disciple to bind and seal the testimony (cf. Isaiah 8:16).	c. 92	In Patmos, John pens the last book of the Bible (Revelation 1:9-11).
John moves back to Ephesus.	c. 96	John moves back to Ephesus.
John passes knowledge, including the finalized canons, on to Polycarp of Smyrna and others.	c. 98	John passes knowledge to Polycarp of Smyrna.
Papias of Hierapolis shows he accepted Revelation as scripture.	c. 120	Papias of Hierapolis shows he accepted Revelation as scripture.
Polycarp quotes or alludes to every one of the 27 books of the New Testament (including Hebrews, 1 & 2	c. 135	Polycarp refers to various NT books and notes that those of Philippi are "well versed in the Sacred Scriptures."

Peter, and James) and notes that those of Philippi are “well versed in the Sacred Scriptures.”		
Those fleeing Ælia Capitolina bring the gospel manuscripts with them, and Judah Kyriakos may have brought those to Edessa.	c. 136	
	c. 160	<i>Shepherd of Hermas</i> and <i>Gospel of Peter</i> are considered to be scripture.
	c. 175	<i>Muratorian Canon</i> includes the false <i>Apocalypse of Peter</i> , but excludes Book of Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and one of John’s epistles.
Melito of Sardis lists the books of the Old Testament, but does not include any of the Apocrypha. Melito’s use of the term ‘Old Testament’ presupposes that he also knew the New Testament.	c. 175	Melito of Sardis lists the books of the Old Testament, but does not include any of the Apocrypha. Melito’s use of the term ‘Old Testament’ presupposes that he also knew the New Testament. Apocrypha is used by some Greco-Romans.
Polycrates of Ephesus said he and others in Asia Minor had “gone through every Holy scripture.”	c. 192	
Serapion of Antioch condemns <i>Gospel of Peter</i> as pseudepigrapha (ψευδεπιγραφα) after seeing it for the first time.	c. 209	<i>Gospel of Peter</i> still being used.
Serapion says the books were “handed down” to those in Antioch/Asia Minor, as opposed to those he encountered in Egypt.	c. 209	
	c. 180-250	School in Alexandria, with Origen in the 3 rd century, classifies Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2

		and 3 John, James, and Jude as “contested writings.”
	c. 230	Origen sees major problems with the Septuagint texts, but it is still used.
	c. 250	Cyprian of Carthage’s “first Latin Bible” fails to include Hebrews, 2 Peter, James, and Jude.
Lucian predecessors like Macarius, then Lucian of Antioch himself, improves Greek Septuagint by using Hebrew Masoretic documents and also edits the ‘Traditional Text’ of the Greek New Testament.	c. 250-312	
	c. 320	Eusebius writes that Hebrews, James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation are disputed.
	367	Athanasius lists the 27 books of the New Testament.
	c. 380	Canon 85 of the <i>Apostolic Constitutions</i> includes the “two Epistles of Clement” among its “sacred books.”
	382	Damasian catalogue has a canon for the Roman Church with the Book of Hebrews.
Nazarene Christians use the Old and New Testaments without the Apocrypha.	c. 382 - 395	Jerome works on Latin Vulgate Bible, but does not want to include the Apocrypha. He notices that he is often using corrupted Septuagint texts.
Nazarenes continued with the original canon.	c. 382-404	Jerome consults with one or more Nazarene Christians on the canon.
	393	Augustine said Hebrews was still disputed.
	c. 405	Pope Innocent I seemingly left Hebrews out of his list of

		the New Testament canon he sent to Exsuperius.
	c.405	Jerome completes his Bible, and, after succumbing to pressure, includes the Apocrypha.
	419	Council of Carthage adopts catalogue of canon.
Nazarenes and Proto-Waldenses preserve the books. Their canon included the whole of the New Testament.	5 th -7 th centuries	
Constantine of Mananali receives much of the New Testament in Greek from an Antiochian and translates it.	c. 650	
Proto-Waldenses preserve and translate the books.	7 th -11 th centuries	
Team led by Peter Waldo translates the entire New Testament and parts of the Old Testament.	12 th century	
Waldenses preserve and translate the books.	12 th -15 th centuries	
Waldensian books taken by supporters of Rome.	12 th -15 th centuries	Edicts against the Waldenses issued by Roman Catholics in 1184 (Synod of Verona), 1215 (Fourth Lateran Council), and 1487 (Bull by Innocent VII).
	1522	Martin Luther included Apocrypha in his translation of the Bible.
	16 th century	Huldrych Zwingli did not accept Revelation as scripture.
	1546	Martin Luther still doubted the inclusion of Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation.

	1546	Rome's Council of Trent declares fixed canon is a dogma that cannot be changed.
	1611	King James Version published with the Apocrypha as part of the appendix.
	1672	Eastern Orthodox finalize their canon, at the Synod of Jerusalem, which includes the Apocrypha.
	19 th century	Protestants drop the Apocrypha from the appendix of the edited KJV.
Church of God leaders continued to cite the same canon of scripture from prior to the Protestant Reformation to present. They basically continue to point to the Masoretic Hebrew and a version of the Textus Receptus as the best available scriptural texts.	16 th -21 st centuries	

There are basic two views of the canon. The column on the right reflects, to a significant degree, the major scholastic view today. It shows a lack of chain of custody of the books of the Bible as the Greco-Roman churches were confused.

It is because of Greco-Roman confusion that most scholars do not believe that the true church had the canon from the beginning. But that scholastic view is not only historically wrong, it essentially goes against scripture (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Matthew 16:17-18; Colossians 3:16; John 14:23).

That being said, the first column summary hopefully provides enough scriptural and historical information to show the honest inquirer that, yes, the Church of God could have had the canon from the beginning. This is also consistent with scriptures such as Isaiah 8:16, Matthew 16:18, and Ephesians 2:19-22. More details on this can be found in the free book, online at ccog.org, titled *Who Gave the World the Bible?*

The true chain of custody for the Church of God has continued to hold the same books of the canon of scripture to this day.

Because the Greco-Roman churches often included certain books they dropped and did not include others which they added, that would not be considered an unbroken chain of custody. Furthermore, Greco-Roman canonical confusion was a factor in certain improper doctrines being adopted which became

entrenched traditions before they adopted the proper New Testament canon. Many such improper traditions exist in those churches to this day.

Although Jesus taught that His church would be a “little flock” (Luke 12:32) and the Apostle Paul wrote “at this present time also, there is a remnant saved according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:5, DRB), most scholars ignore the ramification that the true Christian church would be quite small. Most scholars presume that the Greco-Romans (and later the Protestants) represent true Christianity as a whole. So, sadly, they have tended to teach the Greco-Roman view on the canon as fact.

9. Apostolic Laying on of Hands Succession

Jesus said, “I will build My church, and the gates of hades will not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18, EOB). Some type of succession must, therefore, exist from His time to the present.

Like many Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholics (and Protestants), we in the *Continuing* Church of God consider that the Christian church started on the Day of Pentecost mentioned in the second chapter of the Book of Acts.

As far as ‘apostolic succession’ goes, the term apostolic succession has several possible meanings. Notice the following definition from a Roman Catholic priest and scholar:

Apostolic Succession ... In its strict sense, apostolic succession refers to the doctrine by which the validity and authority of the Christian ministry is derived from the Apostles. The outward sign by which this connection is both symbolized and effected is the laying on of hands by the Bishop at ordination. In its broader sense, apostolic succession refers to the relationship between the Christian church today and the apostolic church of New Testament times. Thus, apostolic succession refers to the whole church insofar as it is faithful to the word, the witness, and the service of the apostolic communities. Understood in this way, the church is not simply a collectivity of individual churches; instead, it is a communion of churches whose validity is derived from the apostolic message that it professes and from the apostolic witness that it lives (McBrien RP. Apostolic Succession. <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txo/apossucc.htm> 05/28/20).

In other words, according to the above priest (who this author has also communicated with), apostolic succession is actually related to the acceptance of the succession of biblical truth, as taught by the original apostles—spiritual apostolic succession is the most important factor to consider when it comes to the subject of apostolic succession. If there is NOT spiritual succession, then no physical laying on of hands succession counts.

The COG has both spiritual and laying on of hands succession (though one does NOT need to be a “bishop” to lay on hands).

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

² And the things which thou hast heard of me by many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2, DRB)

Succession was to exist, but only through “faithful men”—those who kept to the original faith.

In addition to apostolic faithfulness, the ‘laying on of hands’ is also a factor as that is how one is ordained—which is what Paul did to Timothy (2 Timothy 1:6, NJB).

The laying on of hands, along with doctrinal continuity, is the type of “succession” that the Bible points to. Eastern Orthodox priest and scholar Laurent Cleenewerck (who this author has also communicated with) wrote:

Apostolic succession involves a physical link (the laying on of hands) between the Apostles and their successors. (Cleenewerck L. *His Broken Body: Understanding and Healing the Schism Between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches (An Orthodox Perspective)*. Euclid University Consortium Press, Washington DC, 2007, p. 53)

The Catholic Encyclopedia also endorses the “laying on of hands,” though it uses a slightly different expression:

The Apostles imposed hands on the newly baptized, ... on those to be promoted to holy orders (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; Matthew 13); and on others to bestow some supernatural gift or corporal benefit (Acts, *passim*). (Morrisroe Patrick. *Imposition of Hands*)

As the Bible states, the “laying on of hands” (Hebrews 6:2, NJB/EOB/ESVCE/AFV) is an essential Christian doctrine.

The *Letter from the Romans to the Corinthians* commonly called *1 Clement* teaches:

Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect foreknowledge of this, they appointed those [ministers] already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry. We are of opinion, therefore, that those appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ, in a humble, peaceable, and disinterested spirit, and have for a long time possessed the good opinion of all, cannot be justly dismissed from the ministry. (Chapter 44)

The above clearly envisions a kind of succession here, yet it is not apostolic succession as ordinarily taught by the Greco-Romans. It does NOT require one who succeeds to be directly appointed by one considered to be the top bishop/overseer, but could be from any minister/pastor/elder.

There are many groups that claim apostolic succession.

In general, the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholic churches recognize 5 “apostolic sees” in existence, while also recognizing that there was a “See of Ephesus” that they believe lost that status.

As far as those not considered to be Protestant, there is also the Roman Catholic Church in Malta, the Armenian Apostolic Church, and various other Roman Catholic, Eastern Rite, Coptic, and Eastern Orthodox groups which claim apostolic succession.

Including Paul, there were well over a dozen 1st century apostles and, thus, there must have initially been many lines of succession. Though for any line to be valid now, it would need to hold to something closely resembling the original faith.

The *Continuing Church of God* asserts it holds to the beliefs of the original catholic church, which became based in Asia Minor (“the east”) under the Apostle John and that the “See of Ephesus/Smyrna” moved, but did not ever completely die out. Furthermore, the CCOG asserts it should be considered to best represent the original Christian “eastern rite” in terms of liturgy and doctrine. In that sense, and via our history, we are the original eastern rite catholic church.

The See of Ephesus/See of Smyrna

There are a total of 27 books in the New Testament. At least 9 books of the New Testament were directly written to the church leaders in Asia Minor. The ones clearly written to those in Asia Minor include Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Timothy (Timothy was in Ephesus), Philemon, 1 Peter, 3 John, and Revelation. According to *The Ryrie Study Bible* John’s Gospel, 1 Corinthians, 1 & 2 John, and possibly Philippians, were written from Ephesus. In addition to these 14, there seem to be more as 1 & 2 John and 2 Peter, and possibly Jude may have also been mainly directed to one or more of the churches in Asia Minor.

The bulk of the books written by the Apostles John and Paul were written from Asia Minor or to those in Asia Minor. Asia Minor included the seven churches of Revelation, such as the cities of the Ephesus and Smyrna (Revelation 1:11).

The Bible is clear that the Apostle Paul went to Asia Minor. The only Christian ‘school’ mentioned in the Bible (Acts 19:9) was in Tyrannus, which is in Ephesus (Fairchild, pp. 34-35). Within Asia Minor, he went to Ephesus and taught for two years (Acts 19:1-20). Paul wrote he laid hands on Timothy (2 Timothy 1:6) who became a Bishop/Evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5) there. And legend ties some of his preaching to its amphitheatre, which is referred to in Acts 19:29. “Ephesus — on western coast of Asia Minor, was apostolic church” (Blackwell, p. 226) and “a small but unbroken chain of witnesses continued {throughout history with} the faith and worship of the apostolic Church” (Meredith RC. *The Plain Truth about the PROTESTANT Reformation* - Part II. Plain Truth, August 1958).



Amphitheatre in Ancient Ephesus

Reportedly, no later than 67 AD, John was in Ephesus and led the churches in Asia Minor (Ruffin C.B. The Twelve: The Lives of the Apostles After Calvary. Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington (IN), 1997, p. 94).

Furthermore:

John visited Ephesus to spread the word of his Messiah Jesus in the enormous Ephesus amphitheatre. Thousands came to hear the Apostle speak, and ... there was great concern for his safety. According to legend, authorities kept his location shrouded in secrecy before he sprang to the stage. (Ephesus, the Hollywood of the Ancient World. T&D, January 16, 2009).

Although for a time he was in Patmos (Revelation 1:9), the Apostle John ended up living in the city of Ephesus. John may have outlived the Apostle Peter by over 30 years.

Interestingly, in the second century, the Greco-Roman Catholic saint Irenaeus wrote:

... 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. Adversus Haereses. Book III, Chapter 3, Verse 4, p. 416)

The early Asia Minor church of Ephesus and Smyrna was faithful and we in the CCOG trace our succession through the leadership there (while also recognizing that nearby Antioch also played a role). And one of those biblically observed traditions was the observance of Passover on the 14th for over two centuries by those of Ephesus and Smyrna (Trajan reigned from 98-117).

In Ephesus, the early “Church of God” (1 Timothy 3:5, NJB) was led by Paul for at least three years (Acts 20:17,31), probably Timothy (1 Timothy 1:3), and later John. Ephesus clearly was a Gentile church (Ephesians 2:11; 3:1) that kept God’s Holy Days such as Pentecost (1 Corinthians 16:8) and Passover/Unleavened Bread (as Polycrates’ later testimony indicates). Paul, who was given to be the

apostle to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:7; Ephesians 3:8) and approved to do so by Peter and John (Galatians 2:7-9), played a major role in the church at Ephesus as well as others in Asia Minor.

In the early 4th century, Eusebius wrote:

Timothy, so it is recorded, was the first to receive the episcopate of the parish in Ephesus ... (Eusebius. The History of the Church. Book III, Chapter IV, verse 6, p. 44)

An episcopate means a bishopric (or pastorate), which demonstrates that in the time of Timothy, evangelist ranked ministers (2 Timothy 4:5) and not mainly apostles, were considered to be bishops (Roman Catholic accepted writings do not normally refer to bishops as apostles). Hence, this further suggests that the Apostle John would not be subservient to any bishop of Rome as most historians believe John came to Ephesus after Timothy was there (though even if he came before, he still would never have been under Timothy's ecclesiastical authority).

Prior to John, yes, Timothy was in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3) and seemingly had succession from the Apostle Paul. Yet, since Paul wrote ALL in Asia had turned away from him (2 Timothy 1:15), the church had to later begin anew in Asia. Throughout true church history, various ones have fallen away, making the church look to seemingly start again elsewhere, and often called by another name (though without unbroken laying on of hands succession). Since the Apostle John moved to Ephesus after Paul was there, we did not list a non-apostle as a successor before him (like Timothy).

The Catholic Encyclopedia teaches that "the See of Ephesus, {was} founded by St. John the Apostle" (Gerland, Ernst. The Byzantine Empire). Merriam-Webster defines "see" as "a seat of a bishop's office."

"John had a disciple named Polycarp (AD 69-155), a young man who heard the apostle's sermons in Ephesus, absorbed his teaching and became a bishop and martyr in nearby Smyrna" (Belmonte K. Let John Be John and Let Jesus Be Jesus. Huffington Post, October 6, 2013). Polycrates of Ephesus reported in the late 2nd century that the Apostle John died in Ephesus (Eusebius. Church History. Book V, Chapter XXIV, verse 3, p. 114).

Protestant historian James Charles Wall wrote of "Polycarp, the successor of St. John in the see of Ephesus" (Wall JC. The first Christians of Britain. Talbot & Co., 1927, p. 34). "See," in this context, is pointing to an area where there was believed to be apostolic succession. Not simply to the city of Ephesus as Polycarp lived in Smyrna.

Coptic Orthodox Bishop H.G. Yousef wrote:

Polycarp ... Appointed to be Bishop of the See of Smyrna by the Apostles themselves, at the age of 40, he provides us with an important link in our long historical chain of Orthodox tradition clasp together the Apostles and the Second Century Church. (Youssef HG, Bishop. St. Polycarp the Blessed Peacemaker. Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States. Suscopts.org, accessed October 20, 2020)

Ephesus was recognized as important as the theologian and historian John M. Neale explained in 1850:

The See of Ephesus has always been esteemed one of the first in the Church ... This dignity arose, not so much from the fact that Ephesus was the residence of the Proconsul of Asia, as because the Church there was planted by S. Paul, and regarded S. John as its second founder. That S. Timothy was its first Bishop, ecclesiastical tradition is constant in asserting: on his suffering Martyrdom, S. John is related to have consecrated a namesake of his own as second Prelate. From that time the See of Ephesus possessed Patriarchal authority over the whole Dicecese of Asia: till, as we have related, it became subject to Constantinople, not without many struggles ... (Neale JM. A history of the Holy Eastern Church, Part 1. Joseph Masters, 1850, pp. 35-36)

Notice that Ephesus was considered to be the real true church with “apostolic succession” and that it took struggles for Constantinople to claim to be above it.

Some have also referred to the church there as “the apostolic see of Ephesus” (Duchesne L, Jenkins C. Early History of the Christian Church: The fifth century Volume 3 of Early History of the Christian Church: From Its Foundation to the End of the Third Century. Longmans, Green, 1924, p. 320).

In the 19th century, the non-COG historian Francis Patrick Kenrick wrote:

Ephesus was an autocephalous see ... which it derived from the apostles Paul and John, its founders (Kenrick FP. The primacy of the Apostolic see vindicated. Murphy, 1875, p. 179).

The term “autocephalous see” means that it was on its own, as opposed to being dependent upon another church, like being dependent on, for one example, the Church of Rome. Plus, Ephesus was a Church of East, not West like Rome.

Notice an early 20th century observation by, Llewelyn Powys, another non-COG historical writer:

It is not, perhaps, from the church at Rome that it is easiest to trace the direct tradition of that apostolic succession which connects primitive Christianity with the disciples of Jesus. We must go to Asia Minor to do this. The names that form the bridge are those of John the Evangelist; Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna; (Powys L. The Pathetic Fallacy: A Study of Christianity. Published by Longmans, Green, 1930, p. 57)

Ignatius somewhat combined Ephesus and Smyrna together when he wrote:

The Ephesians from Smyrna (whence I also write to you), who are here for the glory of God, as you also are, who have in all things refreshed me, salute you, along with Polycarp, the bishop of the Smyrnæans. (Ignatius. Letter to the Magnesians, Chapter 15, verse 1)

As shown before, some consider that Polycarp was the apostolic successor in the See of Ephesus, while others use the term See of Smyrna.

Note Roman Catholic citations, followed by Protestant ones using the See of Smyrna term:

See of Smyrna ... Polycarp ... its first patron ... particularly charged by the Apostles to instruct it ... (Annals of the Propagation of the Faith, Volumes 4-5. Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 1841, p. 82)

Polycarp ... See of Smyrna ... made Archbishop of Smyrna (Manahan P. Triumph of the Catholic Church in the Early Ages. Patrick Donahue, Boston, 1860, pp. 321-322)

Polycarp himself had learned from the Apostle John and others who had seen Jesus, and was appointed to the see of Smyrna by the Apostles themselves. (Mirus TV. Church Fathers: St. Polycarp and St. Papias. CatholicCulture.org, January 24, 2015)

Polycarp had been the disciple of St. John, that he had supposed to have been consecrated by him to the See of Smyrna, (Hore HA. History of the Catholic Church. E.P. Dutton, New York, 1896, p. 104)

in the see of Smyrna — Kamerios, who had been made a Deacon by Polykarp (Cadoux CJ. Ancient Smyrna: A History of the City from the Earliest Times to 324 A.D. Blackwell publishing, 1938, p. 356)

(Camerius, spelled Kamerios above, died c. 220.)

Tertullian's Two Groups

Throughout the centuries of the church age, we have reports of people who held Church of God doctrines who asserted possessing succession from the original apostles.

In the late second century, Tertullian of Alexandria wrote of Ephesus of Asia Minor being an apostolic church:

Come now, you who would indulge a better curiosity, if you would apply it to the business of your salvation, run over the apostolic churches, in which the very thrones of the apostles are still pre-eminent in their places, in which their own authentic writings are read, uttering the voice and representing the face of each of them severally ... Since you are able to cross to Asia, you get Ephesus (Tertullian. Prescription Against Heretics, Chapter 36).

Tertullian asserted that there was apostolic succession in Ephesus of Asia Minor, which elsewhere he ties to Smyrna.

Tertullian concluded that there were basically two possibly apostolic churches, plus the heretics:

Anyhow the heresies are at best novelties, and have no continuity with the teaching of Christ. Perhaps some heretics may claim Apostolic antiquity: we reply: Let them publish the origins of their churches and unroll the catalogue of their bishops till now from the Apostles or from some bishop appointed by the Apostles, as the Smyrnaeans count from Polycarp and John, and the Romans from Clement and Peter; let heretics invent something to match this. (Tertullian. *Liber de praescriptione haereticorum*. Circa 200 A.D. as cited in Chapman J. Tertullian. The Catholic Encyclopedia)

When Tertullian wrote the above, Alexandria and Jerusalem were basically aligned with the Romans, whereas Antioch was still aligned with the Smyrnaeans and the faithful in Asia Minor (it seems to have had some connection to Armenia, parts of Europe, parts of Africa, and some in the British Isles then, but that is more difficult to prove). The Romans and those of Asia Minor were not then in true fellowship with each other as Polycrates' letter to the Roman Bishop Victor around the same time helps demonstrate (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book V, Chapter XXIV, Verses 2-7, p. 114).

Tertullian must have known that the two groups had different beliefs. And, of course, that meant only one, at most, could have been contending for the original faith (Jude 3; 1 John 2:19). Only one could really be the faithful and original apostolic catholic church: Either the Church of the West or the one that best represented the original Church of the East, such as in Mesopotamia. Perhaps it should be pointed out that before being known as Asia Minor, the Smyranean territory was part of what was earlier called Anatolia, from the Greek: Ἀνατολή, Anatolḗ, "East."

Although Rome considers Tertullian as a highly important early historian (Joyce GH. The Church. The Catholic Encyclopedia), it stopped teaching that it had initial succession through Clement as Tertullian wrote, but instead changed that to Linus.

Tertullian's later writings indicate he did not consider that Bishop of Rome Callistus truly had apostolic succession (cf. Tertullian, On Modesty, Chapters 1 & 3).

From the group Tertullian referred to as Smyrnaeans, the Church of God has continued through the entire church age (Matthew 10:23, 16:18; Luke 12:32; Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 2 & 3).

Judeao-Christians in the East and Elsewhere

Judeao-Christian practices were widespread. And not just in Smyrna of Asia Minor. Roman Catholic priest and scholar Bagatti wrote:

Well known is the movement of Asia Minor ... The movement depends in great part on the Judeao-Christian ideas regarding millenarianism, ... the celebration of Easter {Passover} on the 14th of Nisan, ... etc. ... the churches were in great part of gentile Christians ...

In Rome, ... Judeao-Christians ... we meet many individuals who settled in the capital, bringing with them a Jewish formation. ...

In other parts of the then inhabited world, Mesopotamia, Cyprus, etc., we find faithful in the different communities attached to Jewish ideas and customs, ... According to the legend of Addai, the Church of Mesopotamia was founded by Judeo-Christians from Palestine. ...

Judeo-Christians, we note that the communities of Jerusalem, of Judea, of Galilee, of Syria and Asia Minor constitute assuredly the most important centres giving us the ideas and customs of the Judeo-Christians, but we must not neglect those of other parts of the then known world, because the Judeo-Christians were scattered all over. (The Church from the Circumcision, pp. 26, 28, 29)

Notice that priest Bagatti has published that those who were FAITHFUL held to ideas he considered to be Jewish in the Church of the East as well as around the ancient known world.

Regarding what else could be called the Church of the East, notice the following 19th century report:

There has been no period since the time of Christ when there were not Sabbath-keeping Christians in the church ... 302 A.D. From that time until English missionaries entered Armenia early in the present century, Sabbath keeping continued without interruption. The ... Chaldean Christians have also continued their original practice of Sabbath keeping through the present century. (Sanford EB. A Concise Cyclopedia of Religious Knowledge: Biblical, Biographical, Geographical, Historical, Practical and Theological. S.S. Scranton, 1890, pp. 853,854)

Commenting on that report, Dean Blackwell stated, "They {the Chaldean Christians} were the ancestors ... {and} the Sabbath keeping Bohemian Bogomils were the ancestors" (Blackwell, p. 182).

Notice two translations of the Apostle Paul's writings from Bibles used by various groups who refer to themselves as the "Church of the East":

⁴ According to what he said about the Sabbath: "God rested on the seventh day from all his works." ... ⁹ So then, it remains for the people of God to keep the Sabbath. (Hebrews 4:4,9, Aramaic Bible in Plain English)

⁴ For he said concerning the sabbath, God rested on the seventh day from all his works. ... ⁹ It is therefore the duty of the people of God to keep the Sabbath. (Hebrews 4:4,9 Lamsa Bible--note the translator, George Lamsa was a member of the Assyrian Church of the East)

The Sabbath is a clear command for Christians. Those who hold to the original teachings of the "Church of the East," as well as the original (until c. 135) Christian church in Jerusalem, keep the seventh day Sabbath to this day.

No Continuing City

A Roman Catholic posted some information in Portuguese which for the purpose of this book was translated into English:

The construction of St. Peter's Basilica only visibly confirmed something that had been a reality for many years: the seat of the Christian faith had been transferred from Jerusalem, the heart of Judaism, to Rome, the center of paganism. And thus Christ's prophecy about Israel was fulfilled:

"Therefore I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken from you, and it will be given to a people who will bear the fruits of it." (Matthew 21.43)

This prophecy is reaffirmed by St. Paul. He calls Roman Christians of pagan origin "wild olive", which was grafted in place of "cut branches" (Jews who rejected Jesus as Messiah):

"If some of the branches were cut, and if you, the wild olive tree, were grafted in its place and now you receive sap from the root of the olive tree, do not flatter or belittle the branches." (Romans 11:17) (A Catequista. Circo de Nero: de matadouro de cristãos a Sede da fé católica. OCatequista.com, 25 Agosto 2017)

Yet saying these verses were intended for rule by the Church of Rome is not how these verses should be understood.

Now, it is true that the seat of top Christian leadership did transfer from Jerusalem. But it ended up in Asia Minor.

That is where the Apostle John went. He was the last writer of the New Testament and the last of the original apostles to die (he died in Ephesus). After John's death, as well as after the apostasy to hit Jerusalem c. 135, the top leadership went to a Greek leader named Polycarp, who was then succeeded by Greeks and others outside of Judea in various communities.

Furthermore, one very real question to consider is: *Was it biblically possible for any "See," any "headquarters," of the true church to remain in the same city?*

Let us look at what Jesus taught on this matter:

²² You will be hated by all for my Name's sake, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

²³ Nevertheless, when they persecute you in this city, flee into another. Amen, I tell you: you will not have finished going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes. (Matthew 10:22-23, EOB).

Jesus, of course, has not yet returned. Whatever Christians there have been in the area of Judaea/Palestine have been chased through all the significant cities in that geographic region since Jesus made this statement. The horrible Crusades also probably helped to insure this. Jesus must be referring to more cities than just those in the area of Judaea/Palestine (such as those regions Jacob was alluding to in Genesis 49:1-27 and James in James 1:1).

Although Jesus taught His church would be continuing (Matthew 16:18; cf. Hebrews 13:1), He also prophesied it would not be possible that any headquarters of the true church could permanently remain in one city for nearly two thousand years (Matthew 10:22-23). Nor would we expect the church to remain headquartered in Ephesus per Jesus' warning to move its lampstand in Revelation 2:1-5—and the spiritual descendants did move. Jesus also taught that Jerusalem was not essential for worship (John 4:21-24), and that His church would have significant tribulations (John 16:33). **Statements from Jesus show that only a church whose headquarters moved many times could possibly be the true church.**

Jerome's Latin Vulgate has Hebrews 13:14 as follows:

"Non enim habemus hic manentem civitatem, sed futuram inquirimus."

Literally that can be translated in English as:

"For we have not here a continuing city, but we seek one to come."

Yet Rome, since no later than the mid 2nd century, has essentially been a continuing "Roman Catholic" city (although for a relatively short time leading Roman Catholic Bishops were based out of Avignon, France in the 14th century).

Furthermore, Roman Catholics tend to call Rome, "The Eternal City" (Gibbons J, Cardinal. The faith of our fathers: being a plain exposition and vindication of the church founded by Our Lord Jesus Chris, 83rd reprint edition. P. J. Kenedy, 1917, p. 120)

Consider, further, the following using Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholic accepted translations of Hebrews 13:14:

¹⁴ For **there is no eternal city for us in this life** but we look for one in the life to come. (Hebrews 13:14, Jerusalem Bible of 1966).

¹⁴ For **we have not here a permanent city**: but we seek that which is to come (Hebrews 13:14, DRB).

¹⁴ we have an everlasting city, but not here; our goal is the city that is one day to be. (Hebrews 13:14, Knox Bible).

¹⁴ For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the one that is to come. (Hebrews 13:14, NABRE)

¹⁴ For we do not have here [on earth] an enduring city, but we seek the one that is to come. (Hebrews 13:14, EOB)

¹⁴ For **here we have no continuing city**, but we seek the one to come. (Hebrews 13:14, OSB)

Thus, the New Testament effectively proves that no single city, including Rome, could have remained the headquarters of Christendom. Claiming otherwise would contradict the New Testament. It should also be understood that since Hebrews was written in Italy (cf. Hebrews 13:24), this categorically rules out Rome.

The Bible shows that it is the Church of God (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28), not a single city, which would “continue” (cf. Hebrews 13:1, NJB) or “endure” (cf. 2 Timothy 2:12, OSB) throughout the Church age. Jesus’ words in Matthew 10:22 point to a church whose main leadership needed to move around a lot.

Furthermore, if there were any such “permanent city,” some think it would be Jerusalem (cf. Revelation 21:2).

Yet, as far as Jerusalem goes, Irenaeus wrote that it was “deservedly forsaken” and “no longer useful for bringing forth fruit” (Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*, Book IV, Chapter IV, Verse 1). Although the Eastern Orthodox consider Irenaeus to be a major saint and Jerusalem to be one of the five “Apostolic Sees,” *their saint* Irenaeus taught that God was finished using Jerusalem.

Irenaeus’ “forsaken” statement is possibly referring to those that fled Jerusalem prior to its destruction in 70 A.D. But much more likely it is a reference to the 135 A.D. takeover and renaming of the city to Ælia Capitolina (for decades it stopped officially being called Jerusalem right after Hadrian’s troops conquered it). The historical reality is that Jerusalem did not continue throughout the church age as THE leading church, nor did any other city for close to two thousand years during this age.

So, did the main leadership of the original catholic Church of God actually need to move around a lot throughout the church age?

Yes. And that is consistent with biblical prophecies.

Succession of Eras

Orthodox writer Vladimir Moss quoted the first part of Revelation 1:4 and had the following:

1.4. John to the seven churches which are in Asia.

... the seven Churches express the fullness of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. ...

“Thus there exists the opinion that the seven Churches represent seven periods in the life of the whole Christian Church from her foundations to the end of the world: 1) the Church of Ephesus represents the first period ... 2) the Church of Smyrna represents the second period ... 3) the Church of Pergamos represents the third period ... 4) the Church of Thyateira - the fourth period ... 5) the Church of Sardis ... of the 16th to 18th centuries; 6) the Church of Philadelphia - the last but one period of the life of the Church of Christ ... 7) the Church of Laodicea - the last, most terrible epoch before the end of the world, characterized by indifference to the faith and external prosperity.” (Archbishop Averky). ...

The Church of Smyrna, according to tradition, was founded by the holy Apostle John the Theologian, and the latter's disciple, St. Polycarp ... (Moss V. APOCALYPSE -THE BOOK OF THE END. 2018, pp. 28,29, 46-47,51)

Yes, the seven churches of Revelation represent the one holy catholic and apostolic church throughout the church age. The above writer also claimed that Philadelphia “peaked” in the 20th century (Ibid, p. 73).

Like *some* Greco-Roman Catholics who believe in “church eras” (many do not), we in the *Continuing Church of God* consider that we are part of the unbroken (cf. Matthew 16:18b) successors to previous church eras related to the churches of the first three chapters of the Book of Revelation.

The CCOG traces its succession and doctrines back to the New Testament through the apostles and their faithful followers in places like Ephesus, such as those known as the Smyrnaeans, and later through successive eras. These ‘eras’ are also known as the ‘seven churches of Revelation’ as listed in Revelation 1:11 with additional information prophesied about them in chapters 2 & 3 of Revelation.

Those of the Smyrna era were in Asia Minor and Antioch, and also reported to be elsewhere in Asia, Europe, Africa, and Palestine.

Those called Nazarenes existed in the time of Smyrna and into the era of Pergamos. These Christians claimed to essentially have succession from the original church and practiced what was called “primitive Christianity” (cf. Pines, p. 20; Skarsaune, p. 481).

Some with Nazarene doctrines became known as Paulicians.

It has been asserted that certain Paulicians had a “simple-minded form of Judaic Christianity ... Paulicianism was spread from Syria, across Armenia and Asia Minor, possibly to Crete, eventually to Italy, and unquestionably over the Balkans” (Garsoïan NG. Byzantine Heresy. A Reinterpretation. Dumbarton Oaks Papers, Vol. 25, 1971: 85-113). As far as the Balkans go, the Apostle Paul, himself, did go to Illyricum (Romans 15:19), which is in what we now call the Balkan peninsula.

That being said, misinformation about true church history has often been the result of “guilt by association” (Ibid, p. 91)—which means that those of the true COG were lumped in with those that were not. This type of situation has affected the true Church of God throughout history.

Some of the Paulicians also went to Bulgaria:

The next stage of the Pergamos Church went up into Bulgaria about 800 A.D. (Blackwell, p. 66)

Historians have noted that the Bogomils of Bulgaria, who “called themselves Christians” (Klaar K. Bosnia and Herzegovina. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*) and not Bogomils, received various of their “*primitive Christianity*” teachings from Greek Asia Minor with “Judeo-Christian ... elements” (Lavrin J. The Bogomils and Bogomilism. *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 8, No. 23, Dec., 1929: 269-283).

Speaking about the Bogomils, Roman Catholic scholars have written, "The heretics took their religious and moral requirements to a great extent from the New Testament" (Jedin, Volume 1, p. 680). Taking moral and religious requirements from the New Testament, of course, would not be heretical.

Notice the following about the Sabbath and the Bogomil/Paulicians:

In the Chambers Encyclopedia, article "Sabbath":

"In the reign of Elizabeth it occurred to many conscientious and independent thinkers as it had previously done ... in Bohemia that the fourth commandment required of them the observance, not of the first, but of the specified seventh day of the week and a strict bodily rest as a service then due God."

Notice then, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth this same conviction had occurred previously to some ... in Bohemia. So right there he {Robert Chambers} shows you these Bogomils were Sabbath keepers, as the other man {F.C. Conybeare} showed the Paulicians were. (Blackwell, p. 177)

Often, those in the true COG were called various names and/or lumped in with groups that were not faithful as can be seen in the following:

We find the identification of the true church, both by the name and doctrine, scattered from Palestine to Spain, and from the Piedmont valley of Italy to Scotland, Ireland and England. As has already been shown that the people honoring the true faith, and bearing the Scriptural name, were called by the world, Waldenses, Vaudois, Henricians, Catharists, Puritans, Bougres, Paulicans, Publicans, Lombardists, Albigenses, and also other names from leading preachers among them, and from countries from which they would be expelled; but they disowned these names, calling themselves the Church of God. (Dugger, p. 104)

Not all called by the names listed above were COG. Actually in many cases, only a small percentage really were.

Notice also:

The Paulicians in the Key of Truth denounced Mani as fanatical and radical. But nonetheless, they are always called a dualistic Manicheist sect. They were first "of Thrace, Macedonia and Bulgaria ... Originated in the early part of the tenth century, spread over Servia, Bosnia, Dalmatia and Croatia...In the latter countries, the church was called Patarenes."

Actually, some of these names of the smaller segments give you the background of the doctrines of the true church better than the name of the larger segments because they called all the heretics in Bulgaria, "Bogomils." They called all the heretics in Italy, "Waldenses;" all the heretics in France, "Albigenses." Some church histories even admit such. (Blackwell, p. 53)

Yes, even Roman Catholic scholars admit that there were major variations among groups they called by the same name (e.g. Jedin, Volume 2, pp. 56-57).

Though some have called the Paulicians some type of unitarian, notice the following from the late fourth century, by Orthodox saint and bishop Gregory of Nyssa:

I am aware, too, that the Manichees go about vaunting the name of Christ. Because they hold revered the Name to which we bow the knee, shall we therefore number them amongst Christians? So, too, he who both believes in the Father and receives the Son, but sets aside the Majesty of the Spirit, has "denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," and belies the name of Christ which he bears ... (Gregory of Nyssa. On the Holy Spirit, Against the Followers of Macedonius. In Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series Two, Volume 5)

Gregory condemned the Paulicians/Manicheans for being unitarian. It should be pointed out that while the ones called Paulicians were not Manicheans, they were sometimes called Manicheans by the Greco-Romans, but they themselves denied it (Fortescue A. Paulicians. The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1911).

Mani was the founder of the Manicheans. We know that Paulicians were NOT Manicheans because:

the Paulician beliefs anathematized Mani (Conybeare FC. Key of Truth, p. cxxxi)

The faithful called Paulicians were a continuation of the original catholic church as they themselves declared (Paulicians. The Encyclopaedia Britannica, p. 961).

Like the Paulicians, some of those called Bogomils and Albigenses were also part of what we have termed the Pergamos era of the Church, which was followed by the Thyatira era.

Reporting about the ancient Cathari, in the 17th century Dr. Peter Allix wrote there were different groups of them and there are erroneous reports about their doctrine. He mentioned reports saying the Cathari kept the Sabbath, believed "that the cross is the mark of the beast, whereof we read in the Revelation and *the abomination standing in the holy place*," a pope was Antichrist, said it was sufficient to confess sins to God, the Son was subordinate to the Father, did not accept Greco-Roman trinitarianism, did not eat "the flesh of beasts dying of themselves, or of hens drowned in a pit," "they rejected the invocation of saints, and prayers for the dead," they opposed the doctrine of purgatory and giving alms for the benefit of the dead, said they practiced the Christianity of the Apostles, and used scripture for to defend their doctrines (Allix P. Some Remarks Upon the Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Churches of Piedmont and of the Albigenses. Originally published in 1690 and 1692, Revised in 1821. Edited 1989, 2005).

Anyway, despite name calling and confusion, the faithful Church of God held to many basic doctrines throughout the entire church age.

The Waldenses, some of whom held to COG doctrine during the time of Thyatira, claimed to have originally descended from the Greek church (Martin JH. Historical Sketch of Bethlehem in Pennsylvania With Some Account of the Moravian Church. Philadelphia, 1873, pp. 8, 52,78; Benham D. Notes on the Origin and

Episcopate of the Bohemian Brethren. Dalton & Lucy, 1867, pp. 7,94,126; Staunton W. An Ecclesiastical Dictionary. General Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union and Church Book Society, 1861, p. 658), which would have been Asia Minor or possibly Antioch. Consider that:

The Waldenses recognized that they were the true successors of the apostolic church. They kept the SABBATH, also the yearly PASSOVER. (Lesson 51 - The Light In The Dark Ages. Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, 1968)

“Their enemies confirm their great antiquity. Reinerius Saccho, an inquisitor, and one of their most implacable enemies, who lived only eighty years after Waldo, admits that the Waldenses flourished five hundred years before that preacher (600 A.D.), Gretzer, the Jesuit, who also wrote against the Waldenses, and had examined the subject fully, not only admits their great antiquity, but declares his firm belief that the Toulousians and Albigenses . . . were no other than Waldenses.’ In fact, their doctrine, discipline, government, manners, and even the errors with which they have been charged [by the {Greco-Roman} Catholics], show that the Albigenses and Waldenses were distinct branches of the same sect, or that the former sprang from the latter.” - *Dr. Rankin’s History of France, vol. III, p. 198, 202; Jones’ Church History, p. 233.* (as cited in Dugger AN, Dodd CO. A History of True Religion, 3rd ed. Jerusalem, 1972, Church of God, 7th Day. 1990 reprint, Chapter 10, p. 108)

Furthermore, those ancient peoples objected to being called Waldenses: “From E. Comba’s work, Guild Hall Library, London, we get the following. ‘The Waldenses objected to being called after Peter Waldo. They teach that We are a little Christian flock, falsely called Waldenses’” (Dugger, p. 142).

There was reportedly a written list of successors from the original apostles all the way into the 16th century that the Waldensians once had (Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association: ... Annual Meeting with Constitution and By-laws and List of Members, Volume 17; Volume 19. The Association, 1919, pp. 190-191; The American Universal Cyclopaedia: A Complete Library of Knowledge. A Reprint of the Last Edinburgh and London Ed. of Chambers’s Encyclopaedia, Volume 15. S.W. Green’s Son, 1882, p. 201; Martin, pp. 8, 52, 78).

Such a list of successors may have been a factor for Roman Catholic prelates to ordain some Waldensian prelates who moved in their direction in 1433 and 1434 (Benham, pp. 96-97). It was also apparently a factor in the Greek Orthodox sending clerical orders to some in 1451 (On the Episcopacy of the Herrnhuters, Commonly Known as the Moravians. The British Magazine, volume 7. 1835, p. 647). A letter from Neophytus, Patriarch of Constantinople dated May 19, 1740 confirmed them as an “ancient” fellowship from the time of the start of the Christian church (cited in Acta Fratrum Unitatis in Anglia, Appendix, p 36). At that time the Greek Orthodox considered the Moravians to be a representative of “the OLD APOSTOLICAL EASTERN CHURCH” (Ibid, p. 50).

In the 1500s, we have reports of Sabbatarians called Anabaptists in Moravia:

During the years 1526 to 1535, then, eight Anabaptist groups may be identified as existing in Moravia ... Sabbatarians Moravia ca. 1530-1568 ... Even as late as the early seventeenth century

Austerlitz was known for its religious confusion. According to one report, there were twelve sects in the town, four of which seemed to have been Anabaptist: Sabbatarians, fratest flebiles (ejulantes), Cornelians and Anabaptists (Clasen, pp. 256-279).

In the early 1700s, John Potter, Anglican Bishop of Oxford/Canterbury, said the Moravian bishops (who claimed descent from the **Waldenses**) had **“true succession”** and made a point that **“only those ignorant of church history could cast any doubt about it”** (Podmore C. The Moravian Church in England, 1728-1760. Clarendon Press, 1998, p. 210).

THERE ABSOLUTELY WAS THE ACCEPTANCE OF APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION AND SOME ‘WALDENSES’ WERE PART OF IT.

However, whatever actual lists that may have been shown in the 15th through 18th centuries have seemingly been lost, hidden, or destroyed. BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT THERE HAS BEEN AN UNBROKEN LAYING ON OF HANDS SUCCESSION IN THE CHURCH OF GOD FROM THE TIME OF THE ORIGINAL APOSTLES.

Notice a claim from the late 19th century:

Sabbatarians. They hold to the immersion of adult believers and also to the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath, arguing that since the institution of the Sabbath at the close of creation and its formal annunciation as a part of the Sinaitic code there has always been an unbroken chain for men who have kept the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath ... and considering the introduction of the observance of Sunday, in the second century, as the first step to apostasy. (Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia, Volume 7. A.J. Johnson, 1895, p. 142.)

Notice some comments about the above from the 20th century:

Do you fully grasp their claim? Every stage of the true church knew that they didn't come through the Reformation, or out of the {Roman} Catholic church. They claimed an unbroken chain of men who kept the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week “from the time of the apostles, ...” (Blackwell, p. 176)

Sardis era leaders taught church eras and apostolic succession:

J.T. Williamson in the April 1, 1924, Bible Advocate said, “to properly describe the conditions of this Church, from Christ's first advent until His second coming, this entire period of time [of the New Testament Church] is subdivided into seven periods ... The first period or Apostolic age is called the Church of Ephesus” ... He goes on to divide Church history into seven periods, based on the seven churches (Nickels R. Seven Churches of Revelation. Study 164. G&S).

Succession in Apostolic Ordination The Scriptures teach us most emphatically that the apostolic virtue and power was handed down from apostle to apostle by the divine ordinance of laying on of hands and prayer. -- Numbers 8:10, 27:28; Acts 6:6; 13:3; I Timothy 4:14; II Timothy 1:5.

That the Sabbath-keeping “Church of God,” has a most definite link of connection back through holy men to the days of the apostles is certain. (Dugger AN, Dodd CO. A History of True Religion, 3rd ed. Jerusalem, 1972 (Church of God, 7th Day). 1990 reprint, p. 308).

The old Radio/Worldwide Church of God, of the Philadelphian church era, taught:

Jesus promised to be with the faithful remnant to the end of the age — to guide His people into truth. ... Soon after John finished the book of Revelation, the remnant of the true church, which kept the commandments and believed the gospel of the kingdom, was cast out and scattered over the length and breadth of the whole Roman Empire. This fulfilled Jesus’ warning: “I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place” (Rev. 2:5). ... Thus ended the Apostolic Age typified by the church of Ephesus. The church at Smyrna arises next. ...

For centuries, Catholic writers mention remnants of the true church within the bounds of the Roman Empire. Sometimes they were individuals, sometimes scattered families, and especially in the Near East there were still a few local congregations preaching the gospel and keeping the commandments. ...

A Remnant Remains! ...

John writes to the church of Philadelphia: “I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and that kept my word and hast not denied my name” (Rev. 3:8).

Here is a church with little strength, few in numbers, but which has kept the word of God; one which has not denied the truth. Here is a church which is preaching the gospel because Jesus promises to set before it an open door until the work of the church is completed. Here is a church which Jesus loves! (Hoeh H. Amazing 2000-Year History of the Church of God. Good News, August 1957)

1933 ... This was the “Philadelphia” succession of the CHURCH OF GOD founded the day of Pentecost, A. D. 31, by Jesus Christ. (Armstrong HW. The History of the Beginning and Growth of the Worldwide Church of God - Chapter 4. Good News, August 1980)

The old Radio/Worldwide Church of God considered that it rose up as the Philadelphia era in 1933 and had succession from Ephesus and then through the other eras that preceded Philadelphia.

Those of us in the *Continuing* Church of God consider ourselves to be the spiritual and laying on of hands descendants of the Ephesus era (through 135 A.D.; Revelation 2:1-7), followed by the eras of the Smyrnaeans (c. 135 – 450 A.D.; Revelation 2:8-11), Pergamosians (c. 450-1050; Revelation 2:12-17), Thyatirans, (c. 1050-1600; Revelation 2:18-29), Sardisians (c. 1600-1933; Revelation 3:1-6), and Philadelphians (c. 1933-1986; Revelation 3:7-13). Specifically, we consider ourselves as the most faithful remnant of the Philadelphian church living in the Laodicean church era (c. 1986-present; Revelation 3:14-22).

Here is a table that helps a bit with names and time periods:

Continuity, Yet No Permanent City, Table

Scriptural Period Calendar Date	Main Leadership Location Other Locations	Called Itself Derisively Called by Others
Ephesus/Apostolic c. 31 - 67 (Apostolic)	Jerusalem Antioch, Asia Minor, Greece, Judea, Rome, British Isles	Church of God Christians (Acts 11:26), Nazarene sect/cult (Acts 24:5)
Ephesus/Apostolic c. 67 - 100 (Apostolic) c. 100 - 135 (Post Apostolic)	Jerusalem/Asia Minor Antioch, Greece, Rome, British Isles, Asia, Judea	Church of God, Catholic Church Nazarene sect/cult, Minim ¹
Smyrna c. 135 – 250	Asia Minor Antioch, Greece, Rome, British Isles, Asia, Africa, Judea/Palestine	Church of God, Catholic Church Nazarenes, Minim (and non- derisively as Smyrnaeans)
Smyrna c. 250 – 380	Asia Minor Antioch, Greece, Rome, British Isles, Asia, Africa, Judea/Palestine	Church of God, Catholic Church Nazarenes, Minim
Smyrna, Church in the Wilderness (Revelation 12:6) c. 380 – 450	Armenia Balkans, Asia Minor, Greece, Syria, British Isles, Asia, Africa, Judea/Palestine	Church of God, Catholic Church, Nazarene Paulians, Nazarenes, Judaizers, Ebionites, “Foolish madmen” ²
Pergamos, Church in the Wilderness c. 450 – 1050	Armenia/Balkans/Bulgaria Asia Minor, Europe, Arab lands, Syria, British Isles, Asia, Africa, Judea/Palestine	Church of God, Catholic Church, Christian Paulicians, Bogomils, Cathars, Patarenes, Albigensians, Vaudois, Catharists, Puritans, Bougres*, Publicans, Lombardists, Waldenses ³
Thyatira, Church in the Wilderness c. 1050-1600	France Asia Minor, Europe, Arab lands, Syria, British Isles, Asia, Africa, Judea/Palestine	Church of God, Church of Christ Cathars, Patarenes, Lollards, Sabatati, Manicheans, Publicani, Brabanter, Aragonese, Arnoldists, Navarrese, Leonesti, Basques, Petrobrusians, Coterelli, Anabaptists, Waldensians ³
Sardis c. 1600 – c. 1700	Great Britain Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, South America	Church of God, Church of Christ Judaizers, Anabaptists, Traskites, Sabbath keepers

Sardis c. 1700 – 1933	United States Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, South America, Australia, Pacific Islands	Church of God, Church of God Seventh Day Saturday people
Philadelphia c. 1933 – 1986	Western USA Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, South America, Australia, Pacific Islands	Radio/Worldwide Church of God, Christian Armstrongism cult
Philadelphia continuation c. 1986 – present	Mainly Western USA Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, South America, Australia, Pacific Islands	Worldwide Church of God (1986-1992), Global Church of God (1992-1998), Living Church of God (1998-2011), Original Catholic Church (2008-2011, confirmed by Dibar Apartian in 2008), Continuing Church of God & Original Apostolic Catholic Church of God (2012 to present), Christian Armstrongism cult, Protestants ⁴
Laodicean 1986 – present	Mainly USA Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, South America, Australia, Pacific Islands	(Various) Church of God, Christian Armstrongism cult

¹ Minim was a derisive term from Jews towards heretical Jews, such as those who professed Christ.

² This appears to be the start of the time that Greco-Roman professors of Christ began to regularly refer to those with the original catholic faith as heretics and to place various labels on them. Then they also often grouped them together with the unfaithful who were not also supportive of the predominant Greco-Roman religious authorities. The vast majority of most people identified by the names often given by the Greco-Romans were NOT part of the true Church of God—but some relatively few in many of the groups listed in this and later sections were. How do you tell? By looking at the records that are available on doctrine and practice. Basically, those who are considered to have practices and teachings consistent with the Church of God in Judea (1 Thessalonians 2:14), the Apostle John (1 John 2:18-21, 5:19) and the original faith (Jude 3). Obvious doctrines include keeping the Sabbath, avoiding unclean meats, not being trinitarian, professing Jesus, keeping the Ten Commandments, observing Passover, baptism by immersion only of adults, denying immortality of the soul, looking forward to the millennial kingdom of God, etc. We do NOT include those who were militaristic, adopted Sunday, or otherwise did not hold Church of God doctrines.

³ The Waldenses/Waldensians claimed to have a list of bishops with succession from the apostles until the Reformation. But that list appears to be lost, yet was reportedly at least partially seen and accepted by Episcopal representatives in the 18th century. Also, no militaristic nor

“Protestant” Lombardists were COG. Contacts made by this author in the 21st century revealed none had the list, so a copy was provided to representatives in Italy and the USA in the year 2021 and graciously received.

⁴ Some Greco-Romans have improperly labelled the *Continuing* Church of God as Protestant as they are either not knowledgeable of, or improperly dismissive of, our continuing history. The Church of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2) preceded the Protestant movement by about 1500 years as the table above shows. Our doctrines also differ from theirs as can be found in the free book, online at ccog.org, titled: *Hope of Salvation: How the Continuing Church of God Differs from Protestantism*.

Early Succession Lists

For those interested in named Church of God ‘succession’ from the original apostles, this chapter includes lists of succession of leaders from the 1st through as late as the 3rd centuries, as well as a list to present.

We in the CCOG do not view our ‘succession lists’ the same way that those in the Roman or Eastern Orthodox Catholic churches view theirs. We declare that we are the true spiritual descendants of the apostles and this is not dependent upon a bishop to bishop transfer, but a true holding of teachings in a little flock--Luke 12:32—along with a laying on of hands succession. While ordination is one aspect of spiritual authority, the church’s authority comes not so much from apostolic succession as it does from the word of God. In other words, the ministry is to be followed as it follows Jesus (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1) and what the Bible teaches (e.g. 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

A laying on of hands succession means that, although there were unfaithful bishops/pastors throughout history, we in the CCOG declare that our members and leaders have an unbroken laying on of hands connection to the original apostles who received God’s Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-4. We of the *Continuing* Church of God also have the ‘last days signs’ of Acts 2:17-18, which we assert shows God’s confirmation of our church (cf. Mark 16:20; Hebrews 12:2).

While Jesus is perfect (Hebrews 2:10) and the true head of the church (Colossians 1:18), unlike the Church of Rome (Gibbons, pp. 62-63), **we do not claim infallibility of any of our human leaders nor any of their writings**. Plus, we acknowledge that there can be more than one accurate succession list as there were many early apostles and branches.

Jerusalem

We in the CCOG consider that the following, presuming Eusebius’ information was accurate, had apostolic succession in Jerusalem:

Jerusalem Succession List Per Eusebius

1. The chronology of the bishops of Jerusalem ...

2. ... I have learned this much from writings, that until the siege of the Jews, which took place under Adrian, there were **fifteen bishops in succession there, all of whom are said** to have been of Hebrew descent, and **to have received the knowledge of Christ in purity**, ...

3. The first, then, was James, the so-called brother of the Lord; the second, Symeon; the third, Justus; the fourth, Zacchæus; the fifth, Tobias; the sixth, Benjamin; the seventh, John; the eighth, Matthias; the ninth, Philip; the tenth, Seneca; the eleventh, Justus; the twelfth, Levi; the thirteenth, Ephres; the fourteenth, Joseph; and finally, the fifteenth, Judas. These are the bishops of Jerusalem that lived between the age of the apostles and the time referred to, all of them belonging to the circumcision. (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book IV, Chapter 5, Verses 1-3, p. 71)

We consider the above to have been Church of God leaders. They held to many COG doctrines that Roman and Eastern Catholics do not hold to—such as the Saturday Sabbath, biblical Holy Days, and avoiding unclean meats. They received the knowledge of Christ in purity.

The Greek Orthodox teach:

The Church of Jerusalem is the "Mother of all Churches" of all of Christendom, because it was in Jerusalem that the Church was established on the day of Pentecost with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples of Jesus Christ. From Jerusalem the gospel of Christ was spread to the world. (Church of Jerusalem. Orthodox Wiki, accessed 04/15/25)

The Church of Jerusalem, as the Mother of all Churches, during the first days of Christianity consisted of the centre of life. From it, the Holy Apostles went to visit all nations and renounced the whole world (Marc. 16, 15). (Archim. Titos (Chortatos). THE CHURCH OF JERUSALEM. Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem <http://www.jerusalem-patriarchate.org/> May 24, 2005)

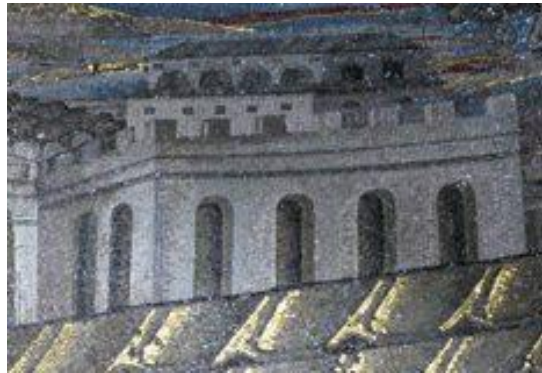
Notice what the Roman Catholic historian E. Gibbon wrote:

The first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were all circumcised Jews; and the congregation over which they presided **united the law of Moses with the doctrine of Christ. It was natural that the primitive tradition of a church** which was founded only forty days after the death of Christ, and was governed almost as many years under the immediate inspection of his apostle, **should be received as the standard of orthodoxy.** The distant churches very frequently appealed to the authority of their venerable Parent, (Gibbon, p. 160)

Yes, the early Jewish bishops of Jerusalem had the STANDARD OF ORTHODOXY. That should not have been changed by any who accept Jude's admonition to contend earnestly for the original faith (Jude 3).

Perhaps it should pointed out that the Symeon in Eusebius' list (also known as Simon of Clopas/Kleophas) is believed to have had the first Christian church in Jerusalem built. And that the Christians reportedly used stones/ashlars from the Jewish temple that General Titus destroyed as its foundation as well as for its original walls (Pixner B. Church of the Apostles Found on Mt. Zion. Biblical Archaeology Review,

May/June 1990: 16-35,60). It resembled a Jewish synagogue and did not resemble the type of rounded building that the sun-god worshipping Emperor Constantine built.



*4th century mosaic of Church of God in Western Hill building
(photo by Joyce K. Thiel)*

Now, a church is not just a building. Notice something from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*:

But *ecclesia* is never used by the Apostles to denote the Jewish Church. The word as a technical expression had been transferred to the community of Christian believers. (Joyce G. The Church)

The above is a reference to Jews who were not Christian—but that statement has confused some.

To clarify, the fact is that the Churches of God in Judea were ‘Jewish’ churches and called *ecclesia* by the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2:14. The Bible also uses the *ecclesia* term related to the church in Jerusalem in several places (Acts 8:1, 11:22, 15:4). Sadly, many have been confused, and hence failed to follow the teachings of the original Christian church—which had practices many consider to have been too Jewish.

The Christian church originated in Jerusalem, was based out of Jerusalem for a time, and the twelve apostles reportedly remained there for at least twelve years before venturing out (Eusebius Book V, Chapter 18)—the Church of Rome also teaches that (Joyce G. The Church). Jerusalem was the location of the original Christian church which held the original faith.

That being said, we do not consider that a claimed Jerusalem successor, the ‘Latin’ Marcus of Jerusalem who compromised with doctrine and came to power 134/135 A.D. (and was allegedly there until 185), as a true successor nor part of the Church of God. Nor did Irenaeus of Lyon as he wrote that apostolic fruits in Jerusalem ended essentially before the time Marcus gained power as he wrote:

Jerusalem ... The fruit, therefore, having been sown throughout all the world, she (Jerusalem) was deservedly forsaken, and those things which had formerly brought forth fruit abundantly were taken away; for from these, according to the flesh, were Christ and the apostles enabled to bring forth fruit. But now these are no longer useful for bringing forth fruit. For all things which have a

beginning in time must of course have an end in time also. (Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*, Book IV, Chapter IV, Verse 1).

Since the Eastern Orthodox consider Irenaeus as a major saint, if they accepted his conclusion, they would have to concur that Jerusalem, the city, stopped having apostolic succession in the early 2nd century. True Christians had to separate from (and have continued to be considered separatists by) the compromisers (and by many others who refuse to accept the original faith).

It has been asserted that when the last Jewish bishop, Judah Kyriakos, separated from Jerusalem, he went to Pella (Gibbon, p. 161). And he would have had gospel manuscripts with him (cf. Pines, pp. 14-15). As has been claimed, perhaps he later went to Edessa, arrived in 136 A.D., and remained there (List of Patriarchs of The Church of the East--not in communion with Eastern Orthodoxy. EasternOrthodoxChristian.com accessed 04/13/25). This makes a certain amount of sense as Edessa, though a client state, was not part of the Roman Empire at that time. Therefore, this location may have been considered a safe one to flee to (cf. Matthew 10:22-23).

Anciently, Edessa was the capital of the small principality of Osrhoene east the Euphrates. Reportedly, Ephiphanius indicated that Judah Kyriakos lived somewhere until 147/148 (Arav R. Jesus and His World, An Archaeological and Cultural Dictionary. Fortress Press, 1995, p. 117). If that is that case, Judah Kyriakos seemingly would have endorsed/established original Christianity wherever he was (such as in Edessa), after he separated from the Marcus supporters.

As far as Christians remaining being separatists, notice the following about a claimed COG group:

In the days of the Empress Irene, around 800 A.D., they acquired the name of Attingians, another name. The more you look, the more names you come up with. "Attingians," or as this word means, "Separatists," because they rejected image worship. (Blackwell, p. 52)

They were not just called separatists because they did not have images in their worship, but because they did not think they should worship with those that did have the images (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14-17).

Antioch and Edessa

Antioch on the Orontes, also known as Syrian Antioch, was an ancient Greek city on the eastern side of the Orontes River. Its ruins lie near the current city of Antakya, Turkey. Followers of Jesus were first called Christians in ancient Antioch (Acts 11:26).

The following names and dates are from the Eastern Orthodox (e.g. Orthodox Succession of Primates of the Apostolic See of Antioch. Saint Mary Orthodox Church of Palos Heights, Illinois. Viewed 06/02/21) and may or may not be precisely accurate:

Antiochian Succession List

- 1 **45-53** The Episcopacy of St. Peter, the Apostle, in Antioch.
- 2 **53** The Episcopacy of Eudoius in Antioch.
- 3 **68** The Episcopacy of St. Ignatius (d. 107) in Antioch.
- 4 **100** The Episcopacy of Heros in Antioch.
- 5 **127** The Episcopacy of Cornelius in Antioch.
- 6 **151** The Episcopacy of Heros II in Antioch.
- 7 **169** The Episcopacy of Theophilus (d. 181/182) in Antioch.
- 8 **188** The Episcopacy of Maximianus (d. 190/191) in Antioch.
- 9 **191-212** The Episcopacy of Serapion in Antioch.

Scholars are aware of writings from at least three of those successor listed past Peter which demonstrate that they held Church of God as opposed to Protestant or Eastern Orthodox or Roman Catholic doctrines on matters such as Passover and the Godhead.

We in the CCOG consider that those on the succession list in Antioch from Peter through Serapion through his death in c. 211/212 are part of the true Christian church.

Yet, we do not consider that Asclepiades the Confessor (c. 211/212-220, who is next on Orthodox Church succession lists for Antioch) was a faithful successor to Serapion.

It is reported by the 13th century Bar Hebraeus, that Abris (Abres or Ahrasius, c. 121 – c. 136 AD) and Abraham (Abraham I of Kashker, c. 148 – c. 171 AD) were anointed to be bishops of Edessa by the bishop of Antioch—as was later one called Palut (Burkitt FC. *Early Christianity Outside the Roman Empire*. Cambridge: University Press, 1899, pp. 12, 28-29).

About the time that Judah Kyriakos died, we see in a succession list for the Church of the East (Baumer C. *Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity*. I.B.Tauris, 2016, pp. 330-331), Abraham (Abraham I of Kashker, 148–171 AD) and Ya'qob I (Mar Yacob I, c. 172–193 AD), both Jews, hence they likely were faithful to the original faith. But after the death of Ya'qob something must have happened in Edessa.

Some documents point to Palut of Edessa being ordained by Serapion of Antioch. Palut was followed by Abshelama/Barshelama (Ancient Syriac Documents. Ante-Nicene Christian Library. Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325 · Volume 20. 1882, p. 34). Notice some reports:

Palut, and Barshelama (who is also called 'Abshelama) ... ministered ... in the church ... They also believed in the resurrection of the dead. . . . They kept also the festivals of the Church at their proper season. . . .

Palut himself went to Antioch, and received the hand of priesthood from Serapion, bishop of Antioch, the same Serapion who also received the hand from Zephyrinus, bishop of the city of Rome ...

There seems little doubt that his fellow-Christians in this area, like early Christians elsewhere, maintained Jewish practices; they avoided, for example, eating meat before the blood had been removed, and at the Passover they ate unleavened bread. (Segal JB. *Edessa: The Blessed City*. Gorgias Press, 2005. pp. 79, 81, 100)

Palut who, as a representative of the Orthodox Church in Edessa in the late second and early third centuries, represented a minority of believers calling themselves Christian ... At that time there predominated at Edessa an internal Christian syncretism of Babylonian proportions in which Marcionites and Manichaeans referred to themselves as Christians and the followers of Palut were called 'Palutians.' (Baumer, p. 17)

We have seen that there was some evidence to suggest that Palut, with his Antiochene consecration, occupied the position in Edessa of a dissenter from the main body of Christians. (Burkitt, p. 32)

As a dissenter who was connected to Serapion, this would point to Palut opposing the heresies that had affected Edessa in the 3rd century—such as Marcionism which was prevalent there at the time. In time, various Greco-Roman faiths ended up with aspects of Marcionism (anti-millennial, anti-Sabbath, etc.) and syncretism with non-biblical religions. Let it also be pointed out that the ancient claim that Serapion was ordained by Zephyrinus of Rome is false. History points to the fact that Serapion became Bishop of Antioch about a decade before Zephyrinus became Bishop of Rome, therefore as others have noted Zephyrinus "certainly did not consecrate Serapion" (Burkitt, p. 26).

Barshelama/'Abshelama was seemingly succeeded by Macarius/Makarios of Edessa, who trained Lucian, and Lucian later moved to Antioch (Cruttwell CT. *The heretical sects*, Volume 2. Scribner, 1893, p. 532). The translated Suda states:

Lucian ... In his youth he met a certain man called Makarios, who lived in Edessa and gave explanatory lectures on the sacred books, and in a short time [Lucian] made his own whatever excellence this man had. (Makarios. *Suda On Line*. <http://www.stoa.org/sol-entries/lambda/685> Translated by: Akihiko Watanabe on 21 May 1999. Accessed 16 April 2025)

It may be that Macarius/Makarios had access to the manuscripts or copies of the gospel manuscripts that Judah Kyriakos possibly brought the prior century.

Around the time of Barshelama, it has been said that one called Ahadabui hoped to be ordained by the bishop of Antioch, but after getting to Antioch he was reportedly accused of being a spy by the government and fled to Jerusalem and was ordained there (Bar Hebraeus, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, ed. Abeloos and Lamy, ii. 24–6). However, Ahadabui would NOT seem to have been a true Christian as those in charge of the Jerusalem from 136 A.D. onwards into the 3rd century, including that council in 231 A.D., were NOT faithful Christians. But Ahadabui is on succession lists for the various churches of the east.

Although Macarius looks to have been a faithful leader in the late 3rd century, many in Edessa had adopted non-original beliefs no later than 250 A.D. (Thomas BM, p. 7).

Perhaps it should be added that from around the end of the 2nd century:

The bishops of Edessa traced their succession to Serapion, Bishop of Antioch ... The later Syrians had ... a different standard of orthodoxy from their forefathers ... (Burkitt FC. Early Christianity Outside the Roman Empire. Cambridge: University Press, 1899, pp. 12,13)

A different standard of orthodoxy than their forefathers shows that the above 'Church of the East' did not retain the original faith.

Throughout church history, the mystery of iniquity has been present (2 Thessalonians 2:7), false leaders have appeared (1 John 2:19; 2 Timothy 4:14-15), as were prophesied to do so (2 Peter 2:1-2; Acts 20:29; 2 Timothy 3:13, 4:3-4). Prior to that taking hold in Asia Minor, c. 200 Serapion of Antioch warned (Serapion. From the epistle to Caricus and Ponticus) of a "lying confederacy (Greek *Ψευδοῦς τάξεως*), to which is given the name of New Prophecy" that was forming (which enveloped much of Antioch after his death). At the time of Serapion's writing it appears that Rome and Alexandria were still accepting the "New Prophecy" that the Montanists were promoting.

Also, Polycarp warned earlier of the "vanity of many" (Polycarp. Letter to the Philippians, Chapter VII), which ended up resulting in large church organizations that did not hold to the original biblical, catholic, and apostolic beliefs.

It should be noted, however, that during the time of Asclepiades the Confessor we assert that there were Christian leaders in Antioch of Syria that did not follow him. We feel that later leaders that are NOT on the Orthodox succession lists, such as perhaps Lucian (270-312) who looked to have held COG doctrines, would have had God's faithful succession—the succession we in the CCOG would consider as the standard. That position is consistent with the following:

Jewish Christianity ... up to the fourth century, the followers of Jesus who observed ritual practices of the Mosaic Law and preserved theological traditions of Judaic origin had notable communities in Syria – (Myllykoski M. James the Just in History and Tradition: Perspectives of Past and Present Scholarship. Currents in Biblical Research, 2006, Vol. 5.1: 73-122)

Hence, we believe that there were 'Judaic' Syrian Antiochians in our 3rd and 4th century succession lists (some whose names are known, with others unknown) as well as Edessa into at least part of the 3rd century, which is consistent with some available historical claims.

British Isles

Perhaps it should be mentioned that there are legends that the Apostle Paul and Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43; John 19:38) made it to the British Isles (Wall JC. The first Christians of Britain. Talbot & Co., 1927, pp. 36-40, 168).

Note the following claims:

The true Chriftian Religion was planted here moft anciently by Jofeph of Arimathea, Simon Zelotes, Ariftobulus, yea by St. Peter, and St. Paul, as may be proved by Dorotheus, Theodoretus and Sophronius. (Camden W. Remains Concerning Britain--Their Languages, Names, Surnames, Allusions, Anagramms, Armories, Moneys, Impresses, Apparel, Artillerie, Wise Speeches, Proverbs, Poesies, Epitaphs. London, 1674, p. 5)

Christianity was first introduced into Britain by Joseph of Arimathea, AD 36—39; followed by Simon Zelotes, the apostle; then by Aristobulus, the first bishop of the Britons; then by St. Paul. (Morgan RW. St. Paul in Britain; or, the origin of British as opposed to Papal Christianity. J. B. and Jas. Parker, 1861, p. 129)

Though this seems possible, it may only be a later legend. More on Britain and Christianity can be found in the free online book: *Hope of Salvation: How the Continuing Church of God Differs from Protestantism*. There could have been some apostolic succession in the early centuries in the British Isles (as well as later which will be shown in this chapter).

While there are reports of early possible apostolic succession in the British Isles, we have not included any such list as we have been unable to put together a sufficiently reliable one consisting of the names of faithful early Christians there for any significant length until the 17th century.

That being said, notice the following:

The Keltic Churches of Ireland, of Galloway, and of Iona were at one with the British Church. These claimed, like Southern Gaul and Spain, to have drawn their faith from the Apostolic See of Ephesus. Their liturgies, or such fragments as have come down to us, bear marks of belonging to the Oriental family of liturgies. (Dawson W. The Keltic Church and English Christianity. Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, New Series, 1884, p. 377)

So, at least one ancient group in the British Isles claim to have gotten doctrine from the apostolic church in Ephesus.

As far as doctrines go, some of the Celts of the British Isles of the Middle Ages practiced footwashing (Hardinge, p. 111), were Arian/Semi-Arian (ibid, pp. 2, 54-55), practiced tithing (ibid, p. 161), avoided unclean meats (ibid, p. 196), forbade sexual intercourse during menstruation consistent with Leviticus 18:17 & Ezekiel 36:17 (ibid, 198), kept the seventh-day Sabbath (Celtic Sabbath-Keeping Study No. 264, from *Cherith Chronicle*, April-June 1998, pp. 46-47), did not observe Easter Sunday, yet kept Passover on the 14th (Bede, pp. 71-72). Those are CCOG, not Greco-Roman or Protestant positions. So, it is logical to conclude that the British Isles had been reached by faithful leaders long ago.

Peter, the Keys, and Asia Minor

Based on available records, we have put together a list beginning with the original apostles starting with Peter through John in Ephesus, then tracing through the faithful leaders in Asia Minor, like Smyrna.

Jesus said to Peter:

¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:18-19, OSB)

Many Roman Catholics have misunderstood these passages. Many think they mean this is a reference to Peter being the only the apostle to have those keys and/or valid succession had to be to one later called a bishop after Peter.

It should be pointed out that according to the Greco-Roman Catholic saint Cyprian, it was not limited to Peter (Cyprian Epistle as cited in Willis JR, ed. The Teachings of the Church Fathers. Ignatius Press, 2002; Cyprian of Carthage. Treatise 1, Chapter 4. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 5.). Furthermore, according to the Greco-Roman Catholic saint John Chrysostom, the holder of "the keys" specifically included the Apostle John (John Chrysostom. Homily 1 on the Gospel of John, Preface, 2). Origen of Alexandria also specifically stated that John received the keys to the kingdom and was a builder of of the church (Origen on Matthew XII, 10 as cited in Meyendorff J. The Primacy of Peter: essays in ecclesiology and the early church St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992, p. 61).

As far as the "rock" goes, the Greek text supports this being a reference to Jesus (Maxwell J. The Dawn. A Publication of the Diocese of the South, Orthodox Church in America, October 1998). That is also consistent with numerous scriptures (e.g. 1 Corinthians 10:4; Deuteronomy 32"4; 2 Samuel 22:47; Acts 4:10-11; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4). It should also be understood that Jesus referred to Himself as the chief cornerstone in the Gospels (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17), not Peter.

Even Augustine of Hippo reported confusion in his day (early 5th century) about whether the "rock" was Jesus or Peter (Augustine, Retractions, 1:21). It was NOT the belief of the original catholic church that Peter was the rock of Matthew 16:18 or that he alone held the keys.

For additional verification, the devout Roman Catholic historian Johann Joseph Ignaz von Döllinger reminds us of the following facts (*italics* in original):

Of all the Fathers who interpret these passages (Matthew xvi. 18, John xxi. 17), *not a single one applies them to the Roman bishops as Peter's successors*. ... Not one of them has explained the rock or foundation on which Christ would build His Church of the office given to Peter to be transmitted to his successors, they understood by it either Christ Himself, or Peter's confession of faith in Christ; often both together. Or else they thought Peter was the foundation equally with all the other Apostles, the Twelve being together the foundation -stones of the Church (Apoc. xxi. 14) . (Döllinger J. The Pope and the Council. Roberts Brothers, 1870, p. 74)

Roman Catholic scholars realize:

There is no clear statement in either Clement or Ignatius, in the form of a dogmatic pronouncement of Rome's primacy ... (Ray SK. *Upon This Rock. St. Peter and the Primacy of Rome in Scripture and the Early Church.* Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1999, p. 141).

There is no statement in scripture pointing to the primacy of Rome.

We in the *Continuing* Church of God do believe that while Peter was alive, Peter (not a city like Rome) did have pre-eminence. And that is not simply a recent COG opinion. Notice what the late Herbert W. Armstrong taught:

God has always worked through one man, primarily, at a time. ... In founding God's Church, Jesus worked primarily through one man, Peter, even though He originally chose His 12 disciples. Few have ever noticed how Peter was the real leader. Jesus had told His disciples to go NOT to the gentiles, but to the "lost sheep of the House of Israel". ... The Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) showed that PETER was predominant over even Paul, although Paul was the ONE MAN God worked through primarily in the ministry to gentiles. ... Acts 8: PETER with John went to Samaria ... Acts 15. This crucial crux chapter has been misinterpreted, twisted and distorted. I have tried to take space to MAKE IT CLEAR in this article. The other apostles and ministers were all in confusion, arguing and disputing. But CHRIST silenced them by speaking through His CHOSEN chief apostle, PETER! (Armstrong HW. *And Now Christ Sets Church Back On Track Doctrinally!* Worldwide News, February 19, 1978, pp. 1-2).

We in the *Continuing* Church of God also teach the same about Peter. Furthermore, we trace our apostolic succession through him to the Apostle John and then to Polycarp of Smyrna. It should be understood that there is sufficient evidence from even Greco-Roman Catholic approved sources to show that succession was handed off (via the laying on of hands) from the Apostle John to Polycarp.

It may be of interest to note, that in a sense, the "Smyrnaean" leaders that Tertullian earlier referred to could also be considered as the "succession list of the see of Ephesus." It was accepted for centuries among the Greco-Romans that there was an apostolic succession in Ephesus/Asia Minor.

We in the *Continuing* Church of God believe (and this is supported by some Greco-Roman scholars), that after the mid third century, the list of our leaders can now be considered to be "lost" as the Greco-Roman historian Eusebius did not report them in Asia Minor. Plus, non-COG leaders ended up dominating Asia Minor in the latter portion of the third century. Hence, we do not show faithful leaders by name after Pionius in lists like the one below:

Asia Minor/Ephesian/Smyrnaean Succession List

- c. 31 – c. 64-68 Apostle Peter
- c. 67 – c. 98-102 Apostle John
- c. 100 – c. 157 Polycarp
- c. 157 – c. 160 Thraseas
- c. 160 – c. 167 Sagaris

- c. 167 – c. 170 Papirius
- c. 170 – c. 180 Melito
- c. 180 – c. 200 Polycrates
- c. 200 – c. 220 Camerius
- c. 220 – c. 245 Eudaemon *
- c. 245 – c. 250 Pionius **
- c. 250 – 339 Unknown in Asia Minor as Eusebius did not report (apparently intentionally according to even Roman Catholic sources).

* Eudaemon reportedly apostatized by c. 250, but precisely when is not clear. A group calling itself the 'Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Ephesus, of All Asiana, and the Americas' used most of the list through above (including dates) through Eudaemon (though originally this author, then they had, him through 250—this author changed the date later after learning more about Eudaemon's falling away and Pionius' faithfulness). This claimed Greek patriarchate is NOT in full communion with the official Orthodox Catholic Church. As far as the origin of the list goes, Dr. Thiel, the author of this text originated it and later the other organization seemingly looked to have copied much of it. When this author called to speak to their patriarch about that, that patriarch told him he was uncertain of its origin, so this informed him how and when his church used my information and developed their list.

** We in the CCIoG do not consider that Pluinos of Ephesus, who is the first claimed leader in certain lists to come after Pionius, was a true Church of God Christian; nor do we consider that Heliodorus of Laodicea was either. This is partially based on a mid-late 3rd century writing from Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria where he said that Asia Minor no longer was divided from Alexandria and Jerusalem (Eusebius. Church History, Book VII, Chapter V, verse I, p. 147) as the main regions became part of a confederacy, which meant compromise hit Asia Minor, and Pluinos and Heliodorus would have thus not held original catholic church of God beliefs.

Anyway, with the exception of Eudaemon, all on the above list are considered to be saints by Roman, Orthodox, and CCOG catholics.

We in the *Continuing Church of God* would call the earlier shown list of successors from the Apostle John through Pionius as *Smyrnaeans*, partially because of the time that Polycarp of Smyrna arose in prominence as well as Tertullian's use of the term (earlier, Ignatius also wrote that Polycarp was the bishop of the Smyrnaeans in his *Epistle to Polycarp*). The Greek Orthodox officially consider the early Smyrnaeans to have been true saints. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* points to the leaders through Polycrates as having apostolic succession (see Dunin-Borkowski S. Hierarchy of the Early Church, 1910). Those early listed leaders held to Church of God doctrines which the Greco-Roman churches no longer accept. Examples include the observance of Passover on the 14th, the binitarian nature of the Godhead, avoidance of unclean meats, and the coming of a literal millennium. However, all of these are still doctrines retained in the *Continuing Church of God*.

Whether referred to as Smyrnaeans or the See of Ephesus, the early leaders in the list shown above clearly held Church of God doctrines that were later condemned by the Greco-Roman churches (and often called an anathema to Protestant ones).

It should perhaps be mentioned that in the CCOG, we also accept there were saints (Romans 1:7) and then apostles in Rome beginning with the Apostle Paul, but we do not trace our succession through 2nd century Roman leaders such as Pius I or Anicetus I as they did not continue with, for example, the Apostle John's Passover date (cf. 1 John 2:19). It perhaps should be pointed out that in 251, there were forty-four Jewish-Christian congregations in Rome (Orchard GH. *A Concise History of Foreign Baptists*. George Wightman Paternoster Row, London, 1838, p. 37), and one or more of them could have held true succession.

Perhaps it should also be mentioned that the vast majority of the early leaders in the *Asia Minor/Ephesian/Smyrnaean Succession List* wrote letters or had treatises about them that survive until this day (and parts of several are cited throughout this book).

Scholars have noted that the Greco-Roman Catholic historian Eusebius intentionally did not report later details in Asia Minor about those they have considered to be Judeo-Christians (e.g. Briand, p. 66; Bagatti B. *The Church from the Circumcision*, p.11). Hence, the list shown above ended with Pionius.

Furthermore, the Roman Catholic Norbertine priest Bernard Ardura, president of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences, reported that it was "obvious" that the continuity Eusebius tried to portray between the 1st and 4th century Greco-Roman churches did not reflect reality (Esteves JA. Vatican conference convenes experts to study early Christian history. *National Catholic Reporter*, October 26, 2021).

Eusebius, himself, admitted that he did not list all (apparently in the 3rd century), but put in his book "only those events" he thought to be useful to "ourselves and afterwards to posterity" (Eusebius. *The History of the Church*, Book VIII, Chapter 2, verse 3, p. 181). Since Eusebius was the official Imperial historian for Emperor Constantine, this is one reason the CCOG early succession lists do not have named Christian leaders past certain points. Scholars realize that various records retained by those we consider to have been early COG sources were destroyed, lost, unwritten, and/or suppressed by Eusebius and others (Schaff P. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd series, Volume I, Chapter XXVI, Note 1, p. 203; Bagatti. *The Church from the Gentiles in Palestine*, p.64; Bagatti. *The Church from the Circumcision*, p. 30).

As far as claimed succession in Constantinople goes:

Not until the end of the 7th C., however, did the idea appear that Andrew ordained Stachys, the first (legendary) bishop of Constantinople. (Kahzdan A, editor-in-chief. *Andrew*. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Volume 1. Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 92)

Even if Stachys became the first bishop of the area that later became Constantinople, and that is not simply a late legend, the reality is that Andrew and Stachys would have held to COG doctrines. Doctrines

such as observing Passover on the 14th, the Saturday Sabbath, avoiding unclean meats, and holding a binitarian view of the Godhead—doctrines not held today by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.

Wilderness Quotes and Assertions

Revelation 12:6 prophecies:

⁶ And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, that there they should feed her a thousand two hundred sixty days. (Revelation 12:6, DRB)

Based on the day for a year principle in scriptures like Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:5-6, this has been considered to be a reference to 1260 years according to a variety of theological writers. Notice a quote from the mid-1600s:

Rev. 12: 6 ... 1260 days ... prophetically ... are 1260 years (Brayn J. The Churches Going In, and Coming Out of the Wildernes Opened. London, 1649, p. 2)

Here is something from the 19th century:

The Church ... fled into the wilderness, there to remain for 1260 years. (Wallen E. Sketch of a Sermon. Hope of Israel. September 14, 1863)

Here is something from the 20th century:

Revelation 12:6 And the woman (the Church) fled into the wilderness... Now we get into the Middle Ages. ... where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. That's twelve hundred and sixty years. Now that particular twelve hundred and sixty years is not synonymous with the twelve hundred and sixty years of the revival of the ancient Roman Empire. (Armstrong HW. Sermon. April 18, 1981)

In a sense, the true church has often been a church in the wilderness throughout the church age because of its small size and its being persecuted.

Before going further, even though some within the Roman Church believe that the woman in Revelation 12:6 is Jesus' mother Mary not all do. Notice that in comments in the Rheims New Testament, certain Roman Catholic scholars correctly teach that the woman in 12:6 is the church fleeing persecution:

ANNOTATIONS Chapter 12

6. *The woman fled.*] This great persecution that the Church shall flee from... And by enlarging the sense, it may also very well signify the desolation and affliction that the Church suffereth and hath suffered from time to time in this wilderness of the world, by all the forerunners and ministers of

Antichrist, Tyrants and Heretics (The Original And True Rheims New Testament Of Anno Domini 1582., pp. 556-557)

Disputing that the woman in Revelation 12 potentially being Mary, an Eastern Orthodox Catholic leader noted it is the Church of God:

Patriarch Nikon of Moscow: "Theologians understand by this woman the Church of God."

... it is contrary to tradition to describe the Mother of God as travailing in birth to give birth to Christ" (Moss, p. 181).

Reportedly there was a literal astronomical event that occurred in 3 B.C. involving the stars of 'virgo' when "clothed with the sun" (the Earth's sun being within the constellation) and "the moon under her feet" (Revelation 12:1, DRB). The presence of the moon this way happens less than once per century, lasts less than 90 minutes, and this reportedly occurred on September 11 in 3 B.C., and possibly was pointing to Jesus' birth then (Martin E. The Star of Bethlehem: The Star That Astonished the World, Chapter 5, The Timing of Jesus' Birth. ASK Research, 1991). Furthermore, it has been asserted:

Revelation 12:1–3 shows a New Moon day that could only be observed from earth just after sunset, and the day was September 11th ... Jesus was born in early evening, and Revelation 12 shows it was a New Moon day. ... September 11, 3 B.C.E. was Tishri ... The Day of Trumpets — Leviticus 23:23–26 (Ibid).

A "star" related to this event has been claimed to be what the magi said they followed in Matthew 2:2 (Ibid). Thus, at least according to this understanding, Jesus' mother Mary was not the woman of Revelation 12 (nor would she be the "queen of heaven" as Revelation 12 does not show her in heaven like some hold to).

Furthermore, a Roman Catholic priest wrote the following:

The woman of chapter 12 is not the Blessed Virgin Mary. The ancient interpreters beginning with Hippolytus and Methodius understood this was a figure of the Church. ... Verse 6 relates to the flight of the woman ... exile ... (Kramer HB. The Book of Destiny. Nihil Obstat: J.S. Considine, O.P., Censor Deputatus. Imprimatur: +Joseph M. Mueller, Bishop of Sioux City, Iowa, January 26, 1956. Reprint TAN Books, Rockford (IL), pp. 276, 286=287)

Although many Roman Catholics currently teach this was Mary, that is a change from some early Roman Catholic writings.

That being said, there is a 1260 year period that various ones believe ran from the 4th to the 16th or 17th century.

More precisely?

Some believe the wilderness period started at the time of Constantine's Council of Nicea in 325. But since that Council's decisions did not require fleeing, that seems early. Constantine's edict against heretics in 331 has also been proposed and could be the correct starting date.

However, perhaps the start of that period was a few decades later. Because of actions, intensive persecutions, intolerance, and statements by Emperor Theodosius, a c. 380 date may be a reasonable starting point.

Thus, it is possible that the time period during the "wilderness" period was from c. 380 – c. 1640.

Accurate information during that period is difficult to come by. However, we know that during this wilderness period, there were groups who sometimes had ties to true COG apostolic succession and who seemingly even possessed lists which we no longer have access to.

There are MANY sources that back up this view, and even *The Catholic Encyclopedia* admits early succession for one "wilderness" group that it was actually a "probable conclusion." So, let's look at some quotes related to groups during the "wilderness" period:

Cathari (From the Greek *katharos*, pure), ... To their geographical distribution they owed the names of ... "Albigenses" (from Albi). The designations "Pauliciani", ... point to their probable Oriental origin. **However attractive it may be to trace the origin of the Cathari to the first centuries of Christianity, we must be cautious not to accept as a certain historical fact what, up to the present, is only a probable conclusion.** (Weber NA. Cathari. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*)

Paulicians ... a succession of teachers and congregations repeatedly arose ... (Gibbon, pp. 5,28)

The Paulicians claimed to be THE "holy universal and apostolic church" founded by Jesus Christ and his apostles. ... They taught that the Church is not a building, not just an organization, but an organism — the body of truly converted baptized persons, which has continued unbroken with the apostolic traditions from its beginning. Jesus Christ was and is the HEAD of that Church. ... **The succession of ministers thus begun by the hands of Jesus Christ remained unbroken in the True Church through all ages.** (Lesson 50 – What Became of the Church Jesus Built? 58 Lesson: Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, 1968, p. 13)

Since Gibbon the Paulicians have often been described as a survival of early and pure Christianity, godly folk who clung to the Gospel, rejecting later superstitions, who were grossly calumniated by their opponents. ... Paulicians practically disappear from history. But they left traces of their heresy. In Bulgaria the Bogomile sect, which lasted through the Middle Ages and spread to the West in the form of Cathari, Albigenses, and other Manichaean heresies, is a continuation of Paulicianism. In Armenia, too, similar sects, derived from them, continue till our own time. (Fortesque A. Paulicians. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*)

The Bogomils ... They believed their own ministers were the true spiritual successors of the apostles. ... Much has been said of the origin of the Waldenses. ...

The Waldensians claimed that they had an uninterrupted succession of bishops from the time of the apostles and they are probably correct in their claim. ... Jones then quotes from Peter Allix, History of the Churches of Piedmont:

In his church history of the churches of Piedmont, Allix mentions the church as the Church of God. It will be observed that the people called them Waldenses.

They called themselves the Church of God. ... declare themselves to be the apostles' successors, to have apostolic authority. Even their ministers have been ordained in an unbroken chain since the apostles. That is some claim, but it is true. (Blackwell, p. 142)

Reflecting therefore on the appointment of ministers, they were desirous of obtaining in all faithfulness that which they believed to be the alone truly authorised succession of Christ's genuine priesthood ... And they practised a truly Christian life in the midst of trials from poverty, having among them the rightly appointed and untainted apostolic succession, &c. ...

Being scattered abroad in various countries, they came at last to us, particularly to Austria, and often held their meetings here. Yet they supported amongst them the true apostolic succession of ministers and bishops, after the aforesaid manner of appointment, without break, down to the year 1450, about which time the separation of the Bohemian Brethren ...

And as the Waldenses, already mentioned, affirmed that they had legitimate bishops and an uninterrupted legitimate succession from the apostles downwards, the Brethren sent to them three ministers from their own Unity, (Benham, pp. 46, 94, 96, 97, 100-101, 102-103, 104, 115, 117, 118)

We shall now briefly trace the apostolic Christian Sabbath-keepers from Antioch in Syria ... When the Portuguese (Roman Catholics) came to Malabar, India, in 1503, ... they found that these Hindoo Christians maintained the order and discipline of a regular church under Episcopal jurisdiction: and that, for 1300 years past, they had enjoyed a succession of Bishops appointed by the Patriarch of Antioch. 'We,' said they, 'are of the true faith, whatever you from the West may be; for we came from the place where the followers of Christ were first called Christians.'" (Edwardson C. FACTS of FAITH. Christian Edwardson, 1943, pp. 153-155)

The ... Waldenses ... Their own historians assert that the community has remained from apostolic times independent of the church of Rome and they boast **they can show a regular apostolic succession of bishops from the earliest period of Christianity, till that of the reformation.** (Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association: ... Annual Meeting with Constitution and By-laws and List of Members, pp. 190-191)

Furthermore, each of our churches has bishops ordained in an historic succession. ... We affirm the local adaptation of the ministry of bishops through the tremendous faithfulness that the Moravian Church has demonstrated in maintaining a succession of bishops which they had originally understood to be of apostolic origin. (Finding Our Delight in the Lord: A Proposal for Full

Communion Between The Episcopal Church; the Moravian Church--Northern Province; and the Moravian Church--Southern Province. pp. 10, 20 https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/07/eir_finding_our_delight_official_text.pdf)

Waldenses ... branch of the branch of the Hussites ... the Hussites, in 1451 ... did apply for, and did receive, orders from the Greek church (On the Episcopacy of the Herrnhuters, Commonly Known as the Moravians, pp. 645-647)

The Moravian church ... are a branch of the Greek Church, and have preserved Episcopal succession. ... It appears this is a branch of the Greek Church, which have preserved Episcopal succession with care and circumspection. (Martin, pp. 8,51)

That in the year 1716-1717 ... Potter... *Archbifhop* declared, ' ... That no *Englifhman* who had any notion of Ecclefiastical History could doubt of their the fucceffion ... of the *Moravian* Church.' ... the *Archbifop* of Caneterbury ... declared, 'That the *Moravian* Brethren were an Apoftolical and Epifcopal Church ...' (Acta Fratrum Unitatis in Anglia. London, 1749, pp. 6,7).

The claim of apostolic succession through the Waldensians did help the Moravian Church to be recognized by the Parliament of England in 1749. (Atwood CD. Community of the Cross Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem. Penn State Press, 2004, p. 23; see also Acta Fratrum Unitatis in Anglia, Appendix, pp. 112-113)

Sabbatarians. They hold ... there has always been an unbroken chain for men who have kept the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath. (Adams, CK ed. Johnson's Universal Cyclopædia: A New Edition, Volume 7. D. Appleton, 1896, p. 440)

Waldenses ... push back their beginnings to the age of primitive Christianity. Thus they deny that they first appeared as a set of heretics breaking off from the historical Church, and claim to have preserved the purity of the faith through the ages, while all the rest of the Church was degenerating and accumulating the corruptions against which they protested from the first.

Claim to apostolic origin. -- This claim is first met with in a Dominican monk at Passau in the year 1316, who states that the Waldenses are the most ancient of all the sects, some even saying that this sect '*duravit a tempore patrum*.' It was but a step to add that the Waldensian church was founded by St. Paul when on his way to Spain. (Adeney W. Waldenses, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics Volume 12. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922, p. 664)

The Latin *duravit a tempore patrum* translated to English means they "lasted from the time of the fathers." While there could be groups with ties to Spain, since the Waldenses elsewhere indicated that they came from part of the Greek church originally, that would seemingly rule out Spain (though there were different groups called Waldensians).

From the above, we see that to a degree that there were some among the Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans/Episcopalians, and others who accepted that there was some type of a valid succession list into the 14th through as late as 18th centuries.

This is pointed out to show that it is not simply a COG assertion that there was a succession list back to the apostles—many religious groups have made and/or accepted this assertion throughout history.

A list of leaders was put together by this author that began with the Apostle Peter (c. 31 A.D.) and went through the period ending 1540 and published in 2022 (Thiel B. Sabbatarian/Waldensian Apostolic Succession List? The Sabbath Sentinel, January-February 2022, pp. 16-19).

Church in the Wilderness Leaders

Several writers have claimed that certain leaders during the time in the wilderness were part of the true Church of God. Here are quotes from the late Dr. Herman Hoeh and Dean Blackwell:

It was about 650 A.D. that God, as if by miracle, raised up among the scattered remnants of his Church in Cappadocia and Armenia a man who revitalized his people and spread the gospel. This well educated man, by the name of Constantine of Mananali, was given a gift of portions of the Bible. He was utterly amazed by the truth he found revealed in it after study. Soon he began preaching and with the help of trained evangelists found such a fruitful harvest that there were tens of thousands converted to the truth.

After twenty-seven years of ministry he was stoned to death in 684 A.D., but an officer, Simeon, sent to destroy him, was so stirred by his death that he became converted and carried forth the gospel until he was burned at the stake six years later! Within another hundred years God raised up a third great minister, Sergius, to guide His people who were allowing many false teachings to grow in their midst.

The names given to these people of God by their enemies were “ATHYNGANI” — meaning “those who understood prophecy” — and “PAULICIANS” — the followers of the apostle PAUL. The reports circulated about the doctrines of these people were slanderous and false. Often “false brethren” who lived among God’s people were confused with the true Church. It was not till almost the beginning of the twentieth century that a book called “THE KEY OF TRUTH”, containing many of their teachings — and the teachings of other groups — was translated into English by Fred C. Conybeare.

This partially preserved record of God’s people proves that THEY PREACHED THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM, THAT THEY BELIEVED THE CHURCH WAS FOUNDED NOT ONLY UPON JESUS CHRIST, BUT ALSO UPON THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS (EPH. 2:20); THAT THEY BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION; THAT THEY LAID ON HANDS FOR THE “RECEPTION OF THE SPIRIT” (p. CXXIV). THEY NOT ONLY “CONTINUED TO KEEP THE PASSOVER ON THE FOURTEENTH OF NISAN,” BUT THEY ALSO OBSERVED THE SABBATH AND THE FESTIVAL OF UNLEAVENED BREAD (pages CLXII and CLII of “The Key of Truth”). ...

It was the close of the twelfth century. In Lyons, France, lived an astonishingly successful and wealthy merchant, Peter Waldo. ... Comba says that "he brought to the study of the Scriptures that practical common sense which had guided him in his business transactions ... The word of Christ was clear enough, for Waldo it was simply a question of furnishing a literal translation" (p. 243 of Comba's "History").

The humble remnant of the Church of God listened to him. Soon many new disciples were coming to repentance. "His disciples became almost as many CO-WORKERS for him" (p. 26). The world called them Waldenses.

God's Church was once again spreading the gospel! A SCHOOL FOR MINISTERS WAS ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE THE TRAINED HELP TO CARRY THE GOSPEL. ...

But in 1315 A.D., long before the crusade against the Waldenses occurred, the truth of God was carried to England by a German Waldensian preacher, Walter Lollard. It took deep root for a while until the Protestant Reformation. (Hoeh HA. True History of the True Church. Radio Church of God, 1959)

God took a branch of Bogomils and moved them down to northern Italy. Henry of Lauson was the first minister of the Thyatira age. When he died, his student took his place. His name was Arnold of Brescia. ...

Now this particular stage of the church is the first you find supervised by three separate leaders. These aren't the two separate divisions of the Thyatira church, but the three are the ministers or apostles of the first stage of that church. The first of these men was Peter DeBruy. The second one is Arnold of Brescia. The third minister or apostle of this group was Henri of Lausanne. You will find they were actually known by different names than these.

Peter DeBruy {12th century} was the leader and the first one to take the Truth from the Bogomils and then after he was put to death, Arnold of Brescia began to carry on the Truth. After he was put to death, Henri of Lausanne began to carry on the same Truth. ...

Prophet Inspired by God

From *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, article Arnold of Brescia:

They looked on him as a prophet inspired by God.

Why would they do that if he were a politician, trying certainly to establish democratic government in pagan Rome? That disagrees with what else they were trying to get across. They [these people in this country who followed him] looked on him as a prophet inspired of God. ...

Henry of Lausanne, a monk of Cluny ... when he came into contact with Peter De Bruy, he quit using a cross. ... They said he was endowed with a spirit of prophecy. ...

The church of the Waldenses has inscribed the name of Arnold as in her spiritual genealogy. (Blackwell, pp. 20, 100)

So, despite often being in hiding, there are various names and historical assertions of COG-related groups and leaders during the wilderness time.

Small True Church?

While there are erroneous and contradictory reports about history (including those from various non-Greco-Roman leaders), consistent with Jesus' words in Matthew 16:18, we know the true church would never die out.

But what about the size of the true church?

Jesus pointed out that the His church would be rather small as He said:

³² Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom. (Luke 12:32, DRB)

³² Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the Kingdom. (Luke 12:32, EOB)

The Apostle Paul clearly wrote that it will ONLY be a remnant which is to be saved during the church age:

^{8:28} And we know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as, according to his purpose, are called to be saints. ²⁹ For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated ... ^{11:5} Even so then at this present time also, there is a remnant saved according to the election of grace. (Romans 8:28-29, 11:5, DRB)

⁵ Likewise, at this present time, there is also a remnant according to the election of grace. (Romans 11:5, EOB)

The reality is that there was always a small remnant of saints/true believers throughout the church age.

The Rheims New Testament has the English word "saints" 61 times in its scriptures. And in the vast majority of those times, it is pointing to all true Christians in one or more areas being saints (e.g. Jude 3; Revelation 2,3, & 14:12). It is known that it is not a reference to the relatively few who have been 'officially canonized' and that is agreed to by Greco-Roman Catholic sources (Catechism of the Catholic Church, pp. 239, 268-271, agrees with that).

Jesus taught that He would return with all the elect (Matthew 24:31). The Apostle Paul taught that Jesus would return with "all his saints" (1 Thessalonians 3:13, DRB/EOB), which includes those who died and those alive when He returns (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16).

Is that billions?

No.

Jude recorded the following prophecy about the number of saints:

¹⁴ Now of these Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying: Behold, the Lord cometh with thousands of his saints, (Jude 14, DRB)

¹⁴ It was with them in mind that Enoch, the seventh patriarch from Adam, made his prophecy when he said, 'I tell you, the Lord will come with his holy ones in their tens of thousands, (Jude 14, NJB)

¹⁴ Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, (Jude 14, EOB)

The Bible points to tens of thousands, not tens of billions, of saints.

The true Church of God was always to be relatively small during the church age. Those who believe otherwise have seemingly not understood several passages in the New Testament.

Because of the relatively small size, that does make it more difficult to find records and accurate information about the true church during the Revelation 12:6 wilderness period.

Emergence from the Wilderness

When did the Church of God emerge from the wilderness?

It looks like no earlier than towards the end of the 16th century or no later than the middle of the 17th century.

A similar church in the wilderness view was also a teaching of the old Radio Church of God who had the period end around 1585 or 1591 or 1650 (Hoeh HA. TRUE History of the TRUE CHURCH) or 1605 (Neff LL. SHOULD A CHRISTIAN FIGHT? A Thesis Presented to the Graduate School Committee, Ambassador College, In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Theology. 1962, pp. 40-41).

The 17th century Sabbatarian Peter Chamberlen was reportedly influenced by a non-Sabbath keeping millenarian named John Brayne (also spelled Brayn) who felt that the 1260 years in the wilderness of Revelation 12:6 would end no later than 1666 (Ball, p. xxi-xxii; Brayn, p. 14), but he indicated it ended as soon as 1640 (Brayn, pp. 2-14, cf. beginning with 380 as hinted by p. 4). John Brayne wrote that the 1260 years could not have started before Constantine (Ibid, p. 11).

A 19th century non-COG researcher wrote:

The Pope, as he is now, was at the close of the fourth century. ... as he bears on his head at this day the mitre of Dagon ... It is from this period that the well-known 1260 days can begin to be counted; for not before did the Pope appear as ... Head of the Universal Church. (Hislop A. Two Babylons, 1858. Loizeaux Brothers, 2nd American edition 1959, p. 255)

The papacy as that author described it, seems to have risen between 380-384, hence another writer pointing to around 1640.

The 17th, 19th, and 20th century references were mentioned to point out that it is a historical fact that the view that the 1260 years in the wilderness was ending near or in the 17th century is an old one and not a modern invention to justify gaps in the named successor list.

The Bible tells of a time the church would flee into the wilderness for 1260 years (Revelation 12:6)—yet, while we have evidence of continuity of the true Church of God, consistent with Jesus' words in Matthew 16:18, we do not have all the names of individual leading men. What we do have is that various names by outsiders were placed on the Church of God, though the name 'Church of God' was generally kept by the faithful. But it was not until the 1800s that more legally formal organizations formed, then re-formed, etc.

That being said, the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholics consider nearly all the leaders in the earlier mentioned COG succession lists through the 4th century to be saints (as well as do many Protestants). Yet, they held beliefs and practices closer to the CCOG than to those held now by Greco-Romans Catholics or Protestants.

COG Beliefs, Different Organizational Names

As far as names go, we even see different names for the faithful in the New Testament: Church of God—sometimes with other terms (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:16,22; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:5,15), Church of the firstborn (Hebrews 12:23), Christian (Acts 11:26, 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16), Jews (Acts 16:20-21; Romans 2:28-29; Revelation 2:9; 3:9), and Nazarenes (Acts 24:5).

Regarding more recent succession, we see this with leaders who often had differing organizational names.

Yet it should be mentioned, that those who say the COG came in existence because of the 'Millerite Movement' of the 1840s are in error. The COG was never part of the Protestant Millerite Movement.

Consider also that the United States government published the following:

The Church of God (seventh day) was organized in separate church organizations in this country soon after the landing ... here from London, England, in 1620 ... The ... Sabbatarian Christian Church in America was connected with the oldest in London-the Mill Yard Church ... In the fall [of 1933] a general meeting was called of many ministers and leaders of the church to consider a reorganization ... 1933" (RELIGIOUS BODIES: 1936 VOLUME II PART1 DENOMINATIONS A to J

STATISTICS, HISTORY, DOCTRINE ORGANIZATION, AND WORK. UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE p. 423,424)

Yes, there was ancient succession that went through Europe and ultimately to the Western Hemisphere.

In the 17th century, on September 1, 1677, Peter Chamberlen wrote that there was someone called Mr. Cotton that attended college in Britain with him and came to New England. Mr. Cotton would have had laying on of hands by a Church of God minister. Peter Chamberlen wrote Mr. Cotton was faithful (SDB, Volume 2, pp. 1264-1265, Clarke, pp. 12-13). It looks like that he had something to do with passing the true faith into New England to people like Joseph Crandell or the senior John Maxson in New England. One of the Cottrells may have been involved in passing laying on of hands succession from the Old World to the New World as well.

When I checked ship passenger manifests and I found that Sabbath keepers were on ships that came from the British Isles to North America. Until finding that, I was unsure if Sabbath keepers were willing to be on ships that would be traveling on the Sabbath--but I was personally able to verify that this was the case. I also saw Nicholas Cottrell's name in a list of male, mainly, immigrants who settled in New England (mainly Rhode Island) and were Sabbath-keepers in what appears to be the late 17th and early 18th centuries (Dedication of Minsters' Monument, Aug. 28, 1899. By Hopkinton (R.I. : Town). First Hopkinton Cemetery Association, First Hopkinton Cemetery Association, Hopkinton, R.I. First Hopkinton cemetery association. Published by Printed for the Association by the American Sabbath tract society, 1899, pp. 6,22). The fact that was a reasonably long list (about 150 names) shows that Sabbath-keepers did come to the New World, and not just a few of them. I also found on another ship passenger manifest that some Sabbath keepers came over in 1854.

There were named Sabbatarian American leaders in the 1700s like Nathan Rogers and from 1797-1820 there was James Dunn. From the 1820s to around 1850 we see Sabbatarian leaders such as John Cottrell and 1823-1850 Peter Davis. Followed by Sabbatarians like Asa Bee into the 1870s. None of these men were Millerites.

There was also A.C. Long a pre-Civil War Sabbatarian (later of Church of God in Missouri, later briefly called Church of God, Adventist, then General Conference of the Church of God). He seemed to hold the succession mantle from 1871-1900, followed by his brother W.C. Long from around 1900 -1905. W.C. Long was succeeded by S. W. Mentzer 1905-1921.

A.N. Dugger of the same Sardis-era church, renamed Church of God, Seventh Day (in 1923) specifically claimed to have the mantle of apostolic succession (Dugger, p. 308). He may have held it from 1921 through 1933. In 1933, that church organization reorganized, lost the mantle, and it passed to Philadelphian-era leader Herbert W. Armstrong (Church of God Seventh Day, then Radio, then in 1967 Worldwide, Church of God), who held it until his death in 1986.

Philadelphian succession was seemingly pushed to Dibar Apartian (Radio, then Worldwide, then in 1995 Global, then in 1998 Living, Church of God) who died in late 2010, then to Bob Thiel (Worldwide, then Global, then Living, then in 2012, *Continuing*, Church of God) who was anointed to receive a double

portion of God's Spirit and was twice told by the anointing Living Church of God minister this was reminiscent of passing of the mantle in 2011 and 2012 (which would have been the Philadelphian mantle).

While scripture shows that there will be no continuing city for the Christian church (Hebrews 13:14), it does not state that an organizational name or structure will not change. It is partially due to changes of location and name that has led many to wrongly conclude that the CCOG does not have continuity, yet it does.

An Apostolic Laying on of Hands Successors List

While recognizing that certain historical records are sparse, and many COG documents (including lists) were destroyed, we have put together a tentative list as the details of several leaders as well as dates are not firmly established. While the first two and last four centuries are reasonably firm, there is speculation related to several of the names as we have less information about leaders during the "church in the wilderness" (Revelation 12:6) time. To a major degree, the records for that period are mainly reports from those who opposed many COG doctrines.

We also hold that some 'records' about individuals and groups from enemies were not accurate. Various other historians agree:

Enemies have sought to confound, so there might be imputed to the Waldenses any evil which had been brought home to the Albigenses and these last having been convicted of enormous errors in doctrines and practice, that the condemnation might embrace the Waldenses as well. (Trench RC. Lectures on Medieval Church History: Being the Substance of Lectures Delivered at Queen's College, London. Macmillan, 1877, p. 246)

It is only from the enemies of God's Church that we have scanty, malicious records of God's people, who were now defined as "heretics" and "enemies of the church." These records attribute beliefs to God's people which they never held. Heretics and the true Church are often called by the same names. For centuries Catholic writers mention small remnants of the true Church within the bounds of the Roman Empire. Sometimes they were individuals, sometimes scattered families, and especially in the Near East there were still a few local congregations preaching the gospel and keeping the commandments. (Hoeh, A True History of the True Church, pp. 18-19)

The "Near East" means places like Asia Minor, Antioch, and Armenia. To "confound" means to condemn and confuse, in this case, with misinformation. The pagans and Jews did this related to early Christians (e.g. Acts 25:7-8), but sadly this happened with later Christians as well. So, it should not come as a surprise that less than flattering statements, or even claimed doctrinal issues, related to true Christian leaders has occurred throughout the church age.

That being said, the following imperfect list includes leaders from the time of the Apostles and may best represent a/the top COG leader/pastor at the time throughout history (with the understanding that there could be other acceptable lists) or at least apparent Sabbath-keeping leaders whose teachings seemed to suggest having laying on of hands succession:

Apostolic Succession List as put together by the *Continuing Church of God*

c. 31 - c. 64-68 Apostle Peter
c. 67 - c. 98-102 Apostle John
c. 100 - c. 157 Polycarp of Smyrna ¹
c. 157 - c. 160 Thraseas of Smyrna
c. 160 - c. 167 Sagaris of Laodicea
c. 167 - c. 170 Papius of Smyrna
c. 170 - c. 180 Melito of Sardis
c. 180 - c. 200 Polycrates of Ephesus
c. 200 - c. 220 Camerius of Smyrna
c. 220 - c. 254 Nepos of Arsinoe
c. 254 - c. 275 Macarius²
c. 275 - 312 Lucian of Antioch ²
c. 313 - 380 Unnamed Antiochians/Lucianists ²
c. 380 - c. 470 Unnamed Nazarenes ³
c. 470 - c. 500 Constantine of Antioch and Aushin ³
c. 500 - c. 645 Unnamed 'Paulicians' ³
c. 645 - c. 650 Leader with New Testament from Syria ⁴
c. 650 - c. 684 Constantine of Mananali (Silvanus) ⁴
c. 684 - c. 696 Simeon ⁴
c. 697 - c. 702 Sergius ⁴
c. 702 - c. 717 Paul the Armenian ⁴
c. 717 - c. 746 Gegnesius (Timothy) ⁴
c. 746 - c. 782 Joseph (Epaphroditus) ⁴
c. 783 - c. 800 Unnamed Paulician(s)
c. 801 - c. 835 Sergius (Tychicus) ⁴
c. 836 - c. 842 Theodotus ⁴
c. 843 - c. 919 Unnamed Paulicians
c. 920 - c. 950 Basil ⁵
c. 951 - c. 980 Jeremiah ⁵
1000s Sergius (27 years) ⁶
c. 1110 - 1140 Peter DeBruy (Pierre De Bruy)
1140 - 1150 Henry of Lauson ⁶
1150 - 1155 Arnold of Brescia ⁶
1156 - 1181 Nicetas ⁶
1181 - 1205 Peter Waldo ⁶
1205 - 1224 Arnold Hot ⁷
1224 - 1300 Unnamed Sabbatarian Waldensians
c. 1310 - 1322 Walter the Lollard ⁸
1322 - c. 1335 Raymond the Lollard
c. 1335 - c. 1460 Unnamed Sabbatarian Waldensians ³
c. 1460 - 1492 Anthony Ferrar ⁹
1492 - 1525 Stefano Carlino ⁹ or Unnamed Sabbatarian Waldenesians ³

1526 - 1528 Moravian Sabbatarian Anabaptist 'traveling minister' ¹⁰
 1529 - 1540 Andreas Fischer ¹¹
 c. 1540 - 1563 Michiel Rovillart of Arras ¹²
 1560 - 1579 Francis David ¹³
 1580 - 1587 Unnamed Sabbatarian ¹⁴
 1588 - 1600 Andreas Eossi
 1600 - 1616 Simon Péchi
 1617 - 1619 John Traske ¹⁵
 1620 - 1652 John Pecke ¹⁵
 1652 - 1654 Peter Chamberlen ¹⁵
 1654 - 1661 John James ¹⁵
 1661 - 1678 William Saller/Seller ¹⁵
 1678 - 1711 Henry Soursby ¹⁵
 1712 or 1716 - 1743 Thomas Lucas ¹⁶
 1712 - 1716 Mr. Cotton or John Maxson ¹⁶
 1716 - 1718 John Maxson, Jr.
 1718 - 1737 Joseph Crandall ¹⁶
 1737 - 1748 Joseph Maxson
 1748 - 1778 John Maxson
 1779 - 1797 Nathan Rogers ¹⁶
 1797 - 1820 James Dunn ¹⁷
 1820 - 1850 John Cottrell ¹⁸ or 1823-1850 Peter Davis
 1839 or 1850 - 1871 Asa Bee or unnamed Sabbatarian
 1871 - 1900 A.C. Long
 1900 - 1905 William C. Long
 1905 - 1921 S.W. Mentzer
 1921 - 1933 Andrew N. Dugger or 1922 - 1933 John S. Stanford ¹⁹
 1933 - 1986 Herbert W. Armstrong
 1986 - 2011 Aaron Dean 1986 -2011 or Roderick C. Meredith ²⁰ or 1986 - 2010 Dibar Apartian ²¹
 2011 - present Bob Thiel

¹ Though he had laying on of hands succession, we in the *Continuing* Church of God do recognize that Polycarp may not have had the succession leadship mantle until 135 as someone else in Asia Minor or someone in Jerusalem could have held it from the time of the Apostle John's death until then.

² There were those in Antioch and nearby Edessa who were not part of the Greco-Roman confederation of churches. They were binitarians that kept the seventh-day Sabbath and the biblical holy days (and were not allegorists, but opposed them). There was Macarius who had a school in Edessa, and he later trained Lucian (Saint Lucian the Martyr of Antioch. Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East. <https://www.antiochpatriarchate.org/en/page/806/> accessed 04/09/25). That school may have moved and became the Antiochene school that Lucian taught at (see also Downey G. History of Antioch. Princeton University Press, 2015, pp. 327-328). There were also successors to Lucian, who were referred to as Lucianists (Lucianists. Charles Buck

Theological Dictionary. J. Johnson, 1802) or Talucians (Blackwell D. A HANDBOOK OF CHURCH HISTORY. A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Ambassador College Graduate School of Theology, April 1973, p. 136)--but not all called those names were faithful true Christians. It is presumed that Lucian's followers/former students would have been successors in the 4th century, but we do not have specific names. The existence of COG practices in Antioch is later supported by homilies by John Chrysostom against them into the late 4th century (Harkins PW. Discourses Against Judaizing Christians--in The Fathers of the Church, Volume 68. Catholic University of America Press, pp. xxxvii-xliv). Scholars of various sorts have concluded that his 387 A.D. homilies against the Jews were really against "Judaizing Christians" in Antioch (Hadjoannou T. PAUL AND THE LAW IN JOHN CHRYSOSTOM AND MODERN SCHOLARSHIP. Submitted to the Faculty of Divinity University of Glasgow for the Ph. D Degree. June 2005, pp. iv, 258-308). We suspect that some succession would have taken place in Antioch until about 380-387 A.D., yet with the combination of Emperor Theodosius' decrees against "heretics" and John Chrysostom's influence these would have driven the many of the faithful out into the wilderness.

³ c. 380 – c. 1640 (or c. 331 – c. 1591). This time represents a possible time for the 1260 years in the wilderness (Revelation 12:6). Faithful leaders would be in some minority of groups called Nazarenes, Paulicians, Cathari, Waldenses, Anabaptists and/or sometimes other names. Jerome and Epiphanius taught that the Nazarenes were Sabbatarians. Priest Bagatti wrote, "regarding the Nazarenes ... we have only a few details, because our historians have completely neglected to hand down the doings of these separated Christians" (The Church from the Circumcision, p. 30). We later have limited leaders' names, though we hear of some early missionaries from Antioch into Aushin of Armenia named Constantine, Petrus, and Theodore (Key of Truth, cix). Symeon and Sergius were Greek (Garsoïan, p. 92). The Waldenses claimed to have had a complete and unbroken list of bishop succession from the original apostles until the 16th century, but such document(s) were either lost, hidden, or destroyed. A Moravian portion claimed to have originally descended from "a branch of the Greek church" from the 9th century and a branch of the Episcopal Church seemed to accept that in the 18th century (Martin JH, pp. 8, 51). The tie to the "Greek church" seemingly would have been Asia Minor or Antioch. Some indicate that the branch came from the 4th century Greek church (Atwood, p. 23); In the 1740s, a Waldensian Bishop named Stephen pointed to descent from in the 4th century (Acta Fratrum Unitatis in Anglia, Appendix, pp. 112-113), seemingly from the Greek church through the Apostle John and Polycarp, but later some apostates (Ibid, p. 113). Another source seems to point to the Waldensians being a branch of the 3rd or 4th century Antioch church (Edwardson C. FACTS of FAITH. Christian Edwardson, 1943, pp. 18, 153). "The claim of apostolic succession through the Waldensians did help the Moravian Church to be recognized by the Parliament of England in 1749" (Atwood, p. 23) and called it "the *Moravian* Apoftolical See" (Acta Fratrum Unitatis in Anglia, p. 4). While the current Moravian Church is not COG, note that it was because some of them claimed to have succession from the Waldenses (and because some Moravians were Sabbatarians in the 16th century), we include this information about them. Many specific leaders named during this 'wilderness period' have been considered to have had COG doctrines, but information is sparse.

⁴ Most of these names and dates came from COG literature, with the most detailed being: Lesson 50 - What Became of the Church Jesus Built? Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course,

1968. 'Paulicians' became later known as Bogomils per Blackwell, p. 66. Those listed from Constantine to Joseph were also confirmed as "successor" by a source that added Theodotus: Garsoïan NG. The Paulician heresy: a study of the origin and development of Paulicianism in Armenia and the Eastern Provinces of the Byzantine empire. De Gruyter Mouton, 1967, pp. 116-121.

⁵ From Kahzdan A, editor-in-chief. Bogomil. The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, Volume 1. Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 301. Some say Basil preceded Bogomil. Some say Jeremiah was Bogomil, where others assert Jeremiah was a successor. We have sketchy information on these these men, but one or more may have had succession. For Bogomil himself, we only have a report of an enemy and do not believe that source accurately reported all beliefs—his (as well as Basil's and Jeremiah's) personal status as COG is not certain, though some of his claimed doctrinal positions were COG—as were some who were derisively called Bogomils or Bogomiles.

⁶ Mainly from: Dugger AN, Dodd CO. A History of True Religion, 3rd edition, 1972. Johnson Graphics 1995 reprint. pp. 133-134. There was also a leader named Berengarius who taught from about 1035 to 1079. The reason he is not in the list is that he reportedly recanted on three different occasions before the Roman Catholic authorities. Jesus mentioned that those who deny Him before men would also be denied (Matthew 10:33; Luke 12:9), hence he is not in the above list. But his existence does show that there were people in the Vaudois area with 'Waldensian' beliefs prior to Peter Waldo—we also do not consider Waldo possessed succession until a period of time after he rejected the Church of Rome, plus we are of the view he later would have had hands laid upon him when he had more understanding, cf. Acts 18:24-27 (this is also consistent with what happened with various 'Anabaptist' leaders). Henry of Lauson and Arnold of Brescia per Blackwell, p. 21. Nicetas (not to be confused with Niketas Stethatos of the 11th century) was in France (Wilkinson, p. 260). There was also a Frederick Reiser in the 15th century who taught at least some COG doctrines, but he too recanted under pressure and is also not shown in the list above. However, there were others who remained faithful that we simply do not have the names of.

⁷ From: Lesson 51 - The Light In The Dark Ages. Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, 1968.

⁸ From: Armstrong HW. The Church They Couldn't Destroy, pp. 8-10. "Be careful, because two separate groups were termed Lollards. One group, the followers of John Wycliffe, were called Lollards. Also the followers of Walter Lollard were called Lollards ... The monk of Canterbury derives the origin of the word Lollard from Lollium, a tare, as if the Lollards were the tares sown in Christ's vineyard. Abell says that the word signifies 'praising God' from the German word "lobin" to praise and hear, Lord, because the Lollards employed themselves in travelling about from place to place singing Psalms and hymns." (Blackwell, pp. 161-162)

⁹ Anthony Ferrar from: Davis, Tamar. A General History of the Sabbatarian Churches. 1851; Reprinted 1995 by Commonwealth Publishing, Salt Lake City, pp. 87-88. Stefano Carlino was "tortured till his guts gushed out" (Dugger, pp. 128-129).

¹⁰ Oswald Glaidt later had contact with the Moravian Sabbatarians (Clasen, pp. 256-279). As Andreas Fischer “supported the idea of a traveling ministry and perhaps considered himself something of an itinerant apostle” (Liechy D. Andreas Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists. Herald Press, 1988, p. 63), it seems likely a traveling minister preceded him.

¹¹ Goertz HJ. The Anabaptists. Taylor & Francis, 2013, p. 18. Oswald Glaidt and Andreas Fischer worked together, but since Oswald Glaidt seemingly apostatized and Andreas Fischer did not (Goertz, p. 18), we did not include Oswald Glaidt on the above list.

¹² From: Pastor Jan Voerman to Bacchiocchi S. End Times Newsletter 87 A REPLY TO CRITICISM, Did the Waldenses Observe the Sabbath? August 2002. Michiel Rovillart was killed in 1563, but prior to that used the Old and New Testaments, plus writings from the early “Church Fathers” to confront the Jesuits and others who did not hold to original doctrines (Adrianus Haemstedius, Historie der Martelaren, Utrecht, Herdruk 1980, p. 804).

¹³ From: Lesson 52 - The Book And The Church They Couldn’t Destroy. Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, 1968. But doctrinal information on Francis Davis is sparse. That being said, it should be pointed out that many binitarians were called unitarians or otherwise grouped with them—and though the true COG was never strictly unitarian, the Arian label has sometimes been applied to groups and individuals in the true COG.

¹⁴ Christiern Francken and Jacob Paleologus were both martyred and were public Sabbatarian teachers during this time (Davis, p. 99). But it is unlikely that Christiern Francken or Jacob Paleologus were truly COG as several reports indicate that they were not. It is possible, though, they may have had COG exposure.

¹⁵ Most of this comes from: Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America: a series of historical papers written in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the organization of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, celebrated at Ashaway, Rhode Island, August 20-25, 1902, Volume 1. Printed for the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference by the American Sabbath Tract Society, 1910, pp. 39-40. But let me add here that we do not consider that Robert Cornthwaite, who is listed in the early 1700s in the SDB reference for the British Isles was COG. John Maulden, who is also listed by the SDBs, had lost some truth (Revelation 3:1-6). One source that helped distinguish COG from SDB was: Ball B. Seventh Day Men: Sabbatarians and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600-1800, 2nd edition. James Clark & Co., 2009.

¹⁶ Sometime in the 1660s, John Maxson and John Crandall embraced the Sabbath. Though the Seventh Day Baptists who reported about them are not sure from where (Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, p. 611). But it looks to have had to do with a ‘Mr. Cotton’ who Dr. Chamberlen had contact with who had come over from England (Clarke H. A History of the Sabbatarians Or Seventh Day Baptists, in America; Containing Their Rise and Progress to the Year 1811, with Their Leaders’ Names, and Their Distinguishing Tenets, etc. Utica, 1811, pp. 12-13). John Crandall was an elder no later than 1671 (Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, p. 612). We have limited information on Nathan Rogers (ibid, p. 132) who became a pastor (Davis,

p. 168) but suspect he was COG and not SDB (cf. Randolph CF. A History of the Seventh Day Baptists in West Virginia, 1905. Reprint 2005. Heritage Books, Westminster, MD, p.79) and Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, p. 132. At this basic time, Thomas Lucas was in the British Isles and seemed to hold the leadership succession there (there is a document that only exists at the Bristol Baptist Library, per Ball p. xxxiii, which could assist with that determination which I have not seen), with the essentially overlapping of dates here shown as there was a transition from the Isles to the Americans then.

¹⁷ James Dunn was a Sabbatarian who seemingly objected to the SDB confederation but his ordination status is not certain. There were other non-SDB Sabbatarian ministers at the time.

¹⁸ John Cottrel did not have association with the organization known as Seventh Day Baptist for apparently decades because of differences of doctrine (Nickels R. Six Paper on the History of the Church of God. Giving & Sharing, 1977 pp. 41, 161-162). However, when he was elderly and influenced by his son Roswell, he fell to become a Seventh Day Adventist, so lost whatever succession he may have had by 1851 when he and Roswell (who advocated for the name “Church of God”) both became SDAs.

¹⁹ A.N. Dugger claimed to have apostolic succession, yet lost what he may have had shortly after he knowingly refused to teach truth. John S. Stanford taught doctrines like the Holy Days that A.N. Dugger refused to teach, but lost whatever succession he had when he basically ‘faded out’ of leading the work (probably at least partially because of some of his prophetic misunderstandings).

²⁰ Three leaders, out of many possible, are listed here in the transitional phase from Philadelphia to the Philadelphian remnant to lead the final phase of the work. All three had laying on of hands succession (as do all true Christians and ministers) as well as reasons why they could have had the Philadelphian succession mantle as well as reasons why that would not remain. Aaron Dean though maintaining many Philadelphian traits, has remained supportive of a non-Philadelphia-era governance structure. In Dr. Meredith’s case, he followed in the error of A.N. Dugger by refusing to teach what he said was true. Dibar Apartian, himself, died December 2010, and had tried to get Dr. Meredith to change.

²¹ We accept that scores of others from the time of Herbert W. Armstrong have laying on of hands succession related to Laodicea (and perhaps other eras), but since Philadelphia was to continue (cf. Hebrews 13:1) it is through Dibar Apartian to Bob Thiel that we tend to assert the Philadelphian leadership succession occurred.

When looking towards the beginning of the list, we further wish to state that we do not believe that the Apostle John was subservient (in God’s eyes) to any Roman, Ephesian, Smyrnaean, Antiochian, or other non-apostle bishop/overseer while John was still alive.

Summary

The true Christian church has continued throughout the ages with successive sequential domination by the seven churches of Revelation 1:11 and chapters 2 and 3. History shows that groups called different names, but who held COG doctrines, have existed from the time of Jesus until present.

The *Continuing* Church of God asserts that all true Christian ministers have (or should have) succession from the original apostles (cf. Acts 6:6, 13:2-3; Hebrews 6:2). The *Continuing* Church of God asserts that it has succession through the laying on of hands from the original apostles to the ministry to the members today.

We also contend that the CCOG holds to the original faith that the Jesus' original apostles and those that the original catholic church held. The *Continuing* Church of God further asserts that ONLY a group that holds to the original faith can possibly have true apostolic succession (cf. Jude 3).

The late Pastor General of the old Radio/Worldwide Church of God considered himself as a "voice crying out in the wilderness of modern religious confusion" (Armstrong HW. Behind the Work 1983. A Worldwide Church of God video presentation, 1983). We in the *Continuing* Church of God do the same.

Therefore, our succession list can be considered at a list of the church of the wilderness throughout the church age. A little flock (Luke 12:32), among wolves per Jesus (Luke 10:3), that speaks out (cf. Isaiah 40:3; John 1:23).

Greco-Roman Catholics, Protestants, and others interested in learning more about church history should consider reading the free book, available online at ccog.org, *Continuing History of the Church of God*.

10. Miscellaneous Doctrines

In this chapter, a variety of miscellaneous original doctrines are discussed.

Three Days and Three Nights

How long was Jesus in the grave?

Well, He said three days and three nights:

⁴⁰ For as Jonah remained in the belly of the sea-monster for three days and three nights, so will the Son of man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40, NJB).

There were two Sabbaths the week Jesus was killed:

³¹ Then the Jews, (because it was the parasceve,) that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath day, (for that was a great sabbath day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. (John 19:31, DRB)

³¹ Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. (John 19:31, OSB)

One of the Sabbaths was a “high day” (the First Day of Unleavened Bread), which began the evening called Wednesday in modern times. The other was the weekly Sabbath that began Friday at sunset.

It should also be pointed out that the gospels do not teach Jesus was resurrected on a Sunday morning, only that He was not in the grave before dawn on the day we call Sunday:

¹ It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb. (John 20:1, NJB)

There is no verse in the Bible that says Jesus’ resurrection was on the first day of the week.

The Greco-Roman saint Irenaeus referred to three days and three nights for Jesus to be in the grave:

1 ... But the case was, that for three days He dwelt in the place where the dead were, as the prophet says concerning Him: ... And the Lord Himself says, As Jonas remained three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth. (Against Heresies, Book V, Chapter 31)

For the Judge of the whole world is thus proclaimed, who, having been hidden in the heart of the earth in a tomb for three days (Irenaeus. Fragments of Irenaeus, Fragment XXXI. In Ante-Nicene Fathers)

Passover, the year He was killed, was on a Tuesday evening. Jesus died the afternoon on the day (Matthew 27:46-50—the ‘ninth hour’ was about 3:00 pm) we now call Wednesday. Jesus was resurrected three full days and nights later, on Saturday afternoon. As He was put in the grave just before sunset (cf. John 19:31-40) on a high holy day (John 19:31), He would have left the grave shortly before sunset on a Saturday.

Officially, instead of accepting three full days and three full nights, the Greco-Romans changed. They, and most Protestants, have accepted a lessor time calculation in order to claim a Friday afternoon crucifixion and a pre-dawn Sunday resurrection such as was put forth in the fraudulent *Didascalia Apostolorum*. A lessor calculation was also put forth by Augustine of Hippo (Augustine. On the Trinity, Book IV, Chapters 5 & 6. Translated by Arthur West Haddan, B.D. Revised and annotated by the Professor W.G.T. Shedd, D.D. Excerpted from Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series One, Volume 3. Edited by Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D. American Edition, 1887).

Some moderns have falsely asserted that “Three Days and Three Nights begins upon the Arrest” (Was Jesus Crucified on Friday? Was Easter on Sunday? Was Jesus in the tomb literally 72 hours? CatholicBridge.com, accessed 06/10/21) as opposed to being “in the heart of the earth” as Jesus Himself taught.

Now, some scholars realize that their traditional understanding of this is off and that Jesus was buried on a Wednesday and rose late on a Saturday (e.g. Miller M. Bend Time is relative in determining chronology of Holy Week. Weekly News for Oregon. March 16, 2007).

Even in the 21st century, some Roman Catholic and other leaders have indicated that Jesus’ last Passover (which they call the Last Supper) was kept on a Tuesday night and that He was betrayed on a Wednesday (Zanchettin L, ed. Meditations, Tuesday, April 11, Wednesday April 12. the WORD among us--The #1 Monthly Devotional for Catholics. 2006; Volume 25, Number 4, pp. 63-64), but killed on a Friday (Ibid, p. 65; Nodet É. On Jesus’ Last Week(s). Biblica, vol. 92, no. 2, 2011, pp. 204–230; Didascalia Apostolorum, Chapter 21). Some scholars seem to think that Jesus was held for two days before He was killed (Nodet, p. 216; Humphreys C. The Mystery of the Last Supper: Reconstructing the Final Days of Jesus. Cambridge University Press, 2011), which differs from the biblical account.

That being said, scholars realize that several ancient (and questionable) references outside of the Bible also support the position of a Tuesday evening ‘Last’ Passover and an early Wednesday morning arrest of Jesus (Walther JA. The Chronology of Passion Week. Journal of Biblical Literature, vol. 77, no. 2, 1958, pp. 116–122). Despite the questionable reliability of some of them, the written existence of those beliefs is consistent with the Bible and suggests that they were commonly known and accepted over a millennia ago.

In the *Continuing Church of God* we believe that Jesus’ last Passover was on what we call Tuesday evening, He was arrested in the early morning hours of Wednesday, He died on Wednesday afternoon, Jesus was

put in the tomb just before sunset on Wednesday, He rose from the dead Saturday afternoon, and left the “heart of the earth” just before sunset Saturday, which makes three days and three nights.

Abortion

One of the earliest claimed Christian writings outside of the Bible, the *Didache* (believed to be from the first or early second century), contains the following instructions:

You shall not murder ... you shall not be sexually promiscuous ... you shall not abort a child or commit infanticide. (*Didache*, II, 2 as translated in Holmes, p. 253)

Abortion was also considered to be murder by those that professed Christ in the second and third centuries. Notice what Tertullian wrote in the late second century:

... Christians ... they accounted it murder for any woman by evil arts to procure abortion, to stifle the embryo, to kill a child, in a manner before it is alive. (Tertullian. *Apology*, Chapter 9 as cited in Cave W. *Primitive Christianity*. Henry Cary, ed. Oxford, 1840, pp. 280-281)

But in regard to child murder, as it does not matter whether it is committed for a sacred object, or merely at one’s own self-impulse. (Tertullian. *Apology*. Chapter 9)

So even in the late second century, those who professed Christ considered abortion to be murder. This was also the case in the third century when Roman Catholic saint Hippolytus condemned a Bishop of Rome named Callistus:

Callistus ... permitted females, if they were unwedded, and burned with passion at an age at all events unbecoming, or if they were not disposed to overturn their own dignity through a legal marriage, that they might have whomsoever they would choose as a bedfellow, whether a slave or free, and that a woman, though not legally married, might consider such a companion as a husband. Whence women, reputed believers, began to resort to drugs for producing sterility, and to gird themselves round, so **to expel what was being conceived on account of their not wishing to have a child either by a slave or by any paltry fellow, for the sake of their family and excessive wealth. Behold, into how great impiety that lawless one has proceeded, by inculcating adultery and murder at the same time!** (Hippolytus. *Refutation of All Heresies*, Book IX, Chapter VII. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5).

So, early religious writers considered abortion to be murder. And fornication to be adultery. The Bible does not give anyone the right to commit fornication, adultery, nor murder. The idea that abortion is murder is an original catholic belief, despite abortion’s acceptance by Bishop of Rome, “Pope” Callistus.

The Catholic Encyclopedia reported:

Callistus allowed the lower clergy to marry, and permitted noble ladies to marry low persons and slaves, which by the Roman law was forbidden; he had thus given **occasion for infanticide** (Chapman J. Pope Callistus I)

Callistus was not the only Greco-Roman leader to permit abortion.

The *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* has the following:

Like their Jewish contemporaries, second century Christian communities rejected abortion. Many early Christian writings, like the Didache ..., preach against abortion. ...

Aristotle said that human ensoulment did not take place until 40 days after conception for males and 80 for females.

Aquinas accepted Aristotle's ... theory of the late ensoulment ... he saw abortion of the unsouled fetus as a sin against marriage, but not murder. (Flinn FK. Encyclopedia of Catholicism. Facts on File, 2007, pp. 3-4)

The famous medieval jurist Gratian wrote, "He is not a murderer who brings about abortion before the soul is in the body."

It is important to note that for roughly 500 years the Catholic church followed the teaching of Aristotle and St. Thomas on the status of the fetus. The Council of Vienne (1312) under Pope Clement V affirmed Aristotle's teaching on delayed hominization. (Flinn FK. Joe Biden, abortion and the Catholic vote. The Source, Washington University in St. Louis, October 24, 2008)

The above argument is similar to the argument abortion-pushers made in the 1970s that the fetus was not yet a human. But, of course, the fetus is an unborn human. As far as ensoulment goes, being alive who make a fetus a "living soul" (cf. Genesis 2:7, DRB).

Here is information related to various Roman Catholic leaders:

St. Augustine declared that abortion is not homicide but was a sin if it was intended to conceal fornication or adultery. During the period of 600-1500, illicit intercourse was deemed by the Irish Canons to be a greater sin than abortion ... (Abortion and Catholic thought. The little-known history. Conscience. Autumn 1996;17(3):2-5)

Gregory VI (1045-6) said, "He is not a murderer who brings about abortion before the soul is in the body." (Hunt DA. Women Rides the Beast. Harvest House Publishers, Eugene (OR), 1994, pp. 519-520)

{c.} 1213 ... Pope Innocent III ... denied abortion was murder. ...

Saint Jerome is a Doctor of the Church. But Jerome wrote:

The seed gradually takes shape in the uterus and [abortion] does not count as killing until the individual elements have acquired their external appearance and limbs.

... Church canon law until 1917 accepted delayed ensoulment. (McCloskey J. *The Pope Who Said Abortion Is Not Murder*. CreateSpace, 2015, pp. 14, 23, 84)

In the fifteenth century, moralists began to ask whether it was not possible in certain circumstances to get rid of the foetus without fault ... Some went further. They said it was permissible to save a mother's life even *after* the foetus was humanized ...

Gregory XIII (1572-85) said it was not homicide to kill an embryo of less than forty days since it was not human ... His successor, the tempestuous Sixtus V, who rewrote the Bible, disagreed entirely. In his *Bull Effraenatum* of 1588, he said all abortions for whatever reason were homicide and were penalized by excommunication reserved to the Holy See. Immediately after Sixtus died, Gregory XIV realized that, in the current state of theological opinion, Sixtus' view was too severe. In an almost unique decision, he said Sixtus' censures were to be treated as if he had never issued them. (De Rosa, Peter. *Vicars of Christ*. Poolbeg Press, Dublin, 2000, pp. 374-375)

The Church of God position has not changed as true Christians have always opposed abortion.

Anti-Semitism

Christianity was originally considered to be a sect of the Jews.

However, because of the Bar Kochba revolt by the Jews (132-135), many who professed Christ dropped practices considered Jewish.

This, in time, led to antisemitism.

The 2nd apostate Marcion of Pontus was one who contributed to that:

Marcion insisted that the Church had obscured the Gospel by seeking to combine it with Judaism. (Latourette, p. 126)

In other words, the original true Church of God truly did combine faith in Christ with practices that Marcion considered to be too Jewish.

History records Marcion was condemned by COG leaders Polycarp, Melito, Theophilus, and Serapion.

Later, antisemitism is seen coming from the pagan Roman emperor Constantine (who is considered as an Eastern Orthodox saint). Constantine, after getting his decision in 325 A.D. that Passover should only be observed on Sunday, stated:

Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Saviour a different way. (Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, Book III chapter 18)

The "different way" that Jesus, who was Jewish (Matthew 1:1-3; John 4:9-10), taught was emphasizing more about love (cf. Matthew 5). Jesus never taught to have "nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd."

Emperor Constantine's views also affected what his official church historian, Eusebius, taught.

As far as antisemitism goes, in 387, the Eastern Orthodox saint and bishop John Chrysostom preached the following in his *Homily Against the Jews* (of which there are at least eight anti-Semitic homilies):

But do not be surprised that I called the Jews pitiable. They really are pitiable and miserable. (I:II:1)

So the godlessness of the Jews and the pagans is on a par. But the Jews practice a deceit which is more dangerous. (I:VI:4)

Do you see that demons dwell in their souls and that these demons are more dangerous than the ones of old? (I:VI:7)

Since it is against the Jews that I wish to draw up my battle line, let me extend my instruction further. Let me show that, by fasting now, the Jews dishonor the law and trample underfoot God's commands because they are always doing everything contrary to his decrees. When God wished them to fast, they got fat and flabby. (VI:IV:2)

Indeed, the fasting of the Jews, which is more disgraceful than any drunkenness, is over and gone. (VIII:I:5)

John Chrysostom is considered to be a major Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox saint. He is one of the four 'doctors of the church' who is shown supporting a large black chair that is called the *Cathedra Petri* (Chair of Peter) in St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City.

Early Protestant leaders, like Martin Luther, were also anti-Semites. Martin Luther's advice about Jews was hateful, not Christian. Here are two of one of his lists of seven anti-semitic dictates:

What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews? Since they live among us, we dare not tolerate their conduct ... I shall give you my sincere advice:

First to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our Lord and of Christendom ...

Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed. (Medieval Sourcebook: Martin Luther (1483-1546): On the Jews and Their Lies, 1543)

For more details on Protestant antisemitism, check out the free book, online at ccog.org, *Hope of Salvation: How the Continuing Church of God Differs from Protestantism*.

We in the *Continuing Church of God* condemn antisemitism. We hold the original catholic belief on this topic.

And like the early Christians (cf. Galatians 2:7), we strive to reach Jews and Gentiles about Jesus (see also the free book, online at ccog.org, *Proof Jesus is the Messiah*).

Hymns

The Book of James teaches:

¹³ Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms (James 5:13).

The Apostle Paul noted:

²⁶ Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm (1 Corinthians 14:26).

The noted historian K.S. Latourette observed:

From a very early date, perhaps from the beginning, Christians employed in their services the psalms found in the Jewish Scriptures, the Christian Old Testament. Since the first Christians were predominantly Greek-speaking, these psalms were in a Greek translation. We hear of at least one form of service in which, after the reading from the Old Testament, the "hymns of David" were sung ... Until the end of the fourth century, in the services of the Catholic Church only the Old Testament Psalms and the hymns or canticles from the New Testament were sung ... Gradually there were prepared versical paraphrases. (Latourette, pp. 206,207)

Reportedly, because of fears of gnostic influence, Christians did not add outside poetic phrases or non-biblical lyrics until well after the second century (Ibid).

On the Roman date of 7 March 203, Tertullian records that while being prepared for martyrdom:

Perpetua sang psalms (Tertullian. Perpetua and Felicitas. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 3)

Here is a quote from a late fourth century publication known as the *Apostolic Constitutions*:

Be not careless of yourselves, neither deprive your Saviour of His own members, neither divide His body nor disperse His members, neither prefer the occasions of this life to the word of God; but assemble yourselves together every day, morning and evening, singing psalms and praying in the Lord's house: in the morning saying the sixty-second Psalm, and in the evening the hundred and fortieth, but principally on the Sabbath-day. (Apostolic Constitutions, Book II, Chapter LIX. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7)

Isn't this astounding? Even in the Church that was ruled by Greco-Romans, psalms were mainly sung on the *Sabbath*. This is most likely due to the continuance of the practice that the early (before the Greco-Roman confederation increased their influence) church had.

In the CCOG, our hymns are mainly Psalms set to music. We also have other hymns based on biblical, mostly New Testament, passages.

Ecumenism

The Bible warns against compromise with those who do not hold the true original faith:

¹⁴ Do not harness yourselves in an uneven team with unbelievers; how can uprightness and law-breaking be partners, or what can light and darkness have in common?

¹⁵ How can Christ come to an agreement with Beliar and what sharing can there be between a believer and an unbeliever?

¹⁶ The temple of God cannot compromise with false gods, and that is what we are -- the temple of the living God. We have God's word for it: I shall fix my home among them and live among them; I will be their God and they will be my people.

¹⁷ Get away from them, purify yourselves, says the Lord. Do not touch anything unclean, and then I shall welcome you.

¹⁸ I shall be father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me, says the almighty Lord. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18, NJB)

Polycarp warned against it.

Polycarp in his letter To the Philippians . . . invites his recipients to abandon the vanity of the multitude and their false doctrines (τάς ψευδιδασκαλίας), to return to the word that was transmitted from the beginning ... (Monroy MS. The Church of Smyrna: History and Theology of a Primitive Christian Community. Peter Lang edition, 2015)

By warning about “the vanity of the multitude,” Polycarp was admonishing the Church of God to be separate. And a distance, a separation, occurred throughout history. Both Polycrates of Ephesus and Serapion of Antioch were witnesses to this separation into the third century.

Sadly, most of “the many” who claim that Polycarp was a saint of their faith do not have the same teachings or practices that Polycarp did. Nor will they keep “the word which has been handed down to us from the beginning” (cf. Jude 3).

Pope Francis and the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople have both pushed for unity despite doctrinal differences that do not align with the biblical teachings of the original catholic church. They have also supported major efforts of the United Nations and World Council of Churches which essentially support at least a type of a one-world government as well as various biblical immoral positions.

Yet, not all associated with the Roman or Greek churches currently support this.

The following is a letter from two Greek Orthodox prelates to then Pope Francis:

Your Excellency is a favorite of the Freemasons, who, according to their own publications, were anxiously awaiting your election and rejoiced when you were chosen! In a statement by the “Grand Master,” G. Raffi, he stresses that, “With Pope Francis, nothing will be as it was before. It is a clear choice of fraternity for a Church of dialogue, which is not contaminated by the logic and temptations of temporal power. ... Fraternity and the desire to dialogue were his first concrete words. Perhaps nothing in the Church will be as it was before. The simple cross he wore on his white cassock lets us hope that a Church of the people will re-discover its capacity to dialogue with all men of good will and with Freemasonry, which, as the experience of Latin America teaches us, works for the good and progress of humanity!”

So here is the heart of the matter: “dialogue with all men of good will,” which means an intensifying of ecumenism! Are you not aware, Your Excellency, that Freemasonry promotes, through Ecumenism, the universal religion of Lucifer, as well as the fact that the source and womb of Freemasonry is the hideous International Zionism? ...

Freemasonry is “pagan cult worship, an adversary of the pure Orthodox Catholic Church.” That is to say, it is clearly an antichristian and pagan religion. The Masons are “Satan worshipers and luciferists, followers of the religion of Antichrist.”...

You, Your Excellency, have not ceased from the moment of your election to speak in glowing terms about all the religions of the world, and to call them to collaborate for “the good of mankind” ...

It is obvious why you decided to lead the effort in uniting the religions of the world, believing that you can become their leader! The “Holy See” is leading the way in the creation of a one-world religion, supposedly for the good of the world. In essence, however, it will be for its devastation...

Ecumenism adopts and legitimizes all heresies as “churches,” and it insults the dogma of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church ... (+ Andrew of Dryinoupolis, Pogoniani and Konitsa, + Seraphim of Piraeus and Faliro. Letter to Francis. HOLY AUTOCEPHALOUS ORTHODOX CATHOLIC CHURCH OF GREECE. April 10, 2014)

Roman Catholic Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò wrote:

The Holy See has deliberately renounced the supernatural mission of the Church, making itself the servant of the New World Order and Masonic globalism in an antichristic counter-magisterium. The same Roman Dicasteries, occupied by people ideologically aligned with Jorge Mario Bergoglio and protected and promoted by him, now continue unrestrained in their implacable work of demolishing Faith, Morals, ecclesiastical discipline, and monastic and religious life, in an effort as vain as it is unprecedented to transform the Bride of Christ into a philanthropic association enslaved to the Strong Powers. The result is the super-imposition over the true Church of a sect of heretical and depraved Modernists who are intent on legitimizing adultery, sodomy, abortion, euthanasia, idolatry, and any perversion of the intellect and will. (Viganò CM. Viganò on Vatican ‘health’ conference with Fauci: Holy See is ‘making itself the servant of the New World Order.’ LifeSite News, April 20, 2021)

Roman Catholic Cardinal Burke criticized the notion of a one-world government:

“The idea of a one-world government is fundamentally the same phenomenon that was displayed by the builders of the Tower of Babel who presumed to exercise the power of God on earth to unite heaven with earth, which is simply incorrect,” he said. (Baklinski C. Cdl Burke: Vatican’s global pact for ‘new humanism’ promotes one-world gov’t, opposes Christ’s Kingship. LifeSite News, January 3, 2020)

In the CCOG, we believe it is only the establishment of the coming Kingdom of God which is the type of one-world government Christians are biblically told to be supportive of (cf. Revelation 11:15; see also our free booklet, online at ccog.org, titled *The Gospel of the Kingdom of God*).

As far as the Church of Rome goes, notice something it came out with in 2020 along with certain historical statements:

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity has fielded a handbook, three years in the making, entitled: *The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum*. ... the Vatican is at least becoming more forthright: **it no longer hesitates to point out its own break with tradition**, as it openly prescribes acts regarded by our forebears as *intrinsically evil* – as in, gravely sinful in themselves. As in, inadmissible.

No obfuscation, just brazen novelty. From n. 17 of the document, our emphasis:

*Catholics not only can, but indeed must, seek out opportunities to pray with other Christians. Certain forms of prayer are particularly appropriate... [T]he ancient Christian practice of **praying the psalms and scriptural canticles together (the Prayer of the Church)** is a tradition ...*

[L]et's revisit that particular moral act in past Church teaching and legislation. Just a quick fly-over, mind you ...

- “No one shall pray in common with heretics and schismatics” –*Synod of Laodicea, 363*
- “No one must either pray or sing psalms with heretics” –*Council of Carthage, 397*
- “It is not licit for Catholics to attend or take part in an active way in non-catholic ceremonies” –*Canon Law, 1917*
- “In all these meetings and conferences, any communication whatsoever in worship must be avoided” –*Cong. of the Holy Office, 1949*

With those few in mind ..., reread the *Vademecum* quote above. What else is there to say?

“Yes, we once thought that was evil. But not anymore. Now, it’s a *moral imperative*.” (Veni E. Vademecum? “Interchurch,” “Ministers” and Nonsense, Oh My. Whispers of Restoration, December 5, 2020)

So, the Vatican says something it says was evil has been changed to be a moral imperative. The Church of Rome has changed on many things.

It should be mentioned that this author publicly denounced the *Ecumenical Vademecum* upon learning of it (Thiel B. Ecumenical Vademecum: Rome’s ecumenical plans are NOT what Jesus ‘willed for’. COGwriter.com, December 5, 2020) and later did so on the behalf of the CCOG in a video made public on multiple platforms.

The CCOG is NOT involved in the ecumenical or interfaith movements and has no intention ever to be. This differs from the Vatican, the World Council of Churches, and many in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

This does not mean that the CCOG can never have areas of cooperation with other groups or that all the ecumenical and interfaith movements are working on is of no good. But we believe only having agreement on true biblical doctrine is the way to unite in what might be called an ‘ecumenical’ fashion.

Warfare and Violent Sports

Many may be surprised to learn that early Christians would not participate in carnal warfare nor watch violent sporting events.

Jesus taught:

³⁶ Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought ... As it is, my kingdom does not belong here. (John 18:36, NJB)

Based on statements like these, early Christians would not voluntarily join the military nor be involved with intentionally violent sports. This was not to change in this age.

Notice also something from the late 1st century:

Let us cleave, therefore, to those who cultivate peace with godliness, and not to those who hypocritically profess to desire it. (1 Clement 15)

Yes, there is a difference between those who cultivate peace and those who actively engage in war while claiming they want peace.

In the early 2nd century, the Greco-Roman Justin (Martyr) taught:

... we who formerly used to murder one another do not only now refrain from making war upon our enemies, but also, that we may not lie ... (Justin. First Apology, Chapter 39)

COG bishop/pastor Theophilus of Antioch around 180 A.D. wrote about false accusations about Christians and the truth:

Consider, therefore, whether those who teach such things can possibly live indifferently, and be commingled in unlawful intercourse, or, most impious of all, eat human flesh, especially when we are forbidden so much as to witness shows of gladiators, lest we become partakers and abettors of murders. But neither may we see the other spectacles, lest our eyes and ears be defiled, participating in the utterances there sung. (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolycus, Book III, Chapter XV)

True Christians did not believe that they were to fight nor even watch the violent sports that were popular in the second century. Theophilus correctly considered being a spectator was abetting/assisting the violence.

In the late 2nd century, the Greco-Roman Tertullian wrote:

... Christians ... held it unlawful to be present in gladiatorial sports, where men's lives were so wantonly sacrificed to the pleasure and curiosity of the people: (Tertullian. Apology, Chapter 9 as cited in Cave W. Primitive Christianity. Henry Cary, ed. Oxford, 1840, pp. 280-281)

Notice that this is also the position of the third century Roman Catholic theologian and bishop Hippolytus, who also adds various occupations to those that reject one from being a follower of Christ:

16:6 A charioteer, likewise, or one who takes part in the games, or one who goes to the games, he shall cease or he shall be rejected. 7 If someone is a gladiator, or one who teaches those among the gladiators how to fight, or a hunter who is in the wild beast shows in the arena, or a public official who is concerned with gladiator shows, either he shall cease, or he shall be rejected. 8 If someone is a priest of idols, or an attendant of idols, he shall cease or he shall be rejected. 9 A military man in authority must not execute men. If he is ordered, he must not carry it out. Nor must he take military oath. If he refuses, he shall be rejected. 10 If someone is a military governor, or the ruler of a city who wears the purple, he shall cease or he shall be rejected. 11 The catechumen or faithful who wants to become a soldier is to be rejected, for he has despised God. (Hippolytus. The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome. From the work of Bernard Botte (La Tradition Apostolique. Sources Chretiennes, 11 bis. Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1984) and of Gregory Dix (The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome, Bishop and Martyr. London: Alban Press, 1992)

Around 250 A.D., COG elder/presbyter Pionius of Smyrna asked:

To whom have we done wrong? Have we perchance murdered someone? Or, do we persecute anyone? Or have we obliged anyone to venerate idols? (Martyrdom of Pionius as translated in Monroy, p. 155)

This was based on several passages from the New Testament. Notice also that the catholic Pionius points to the fact that his faith was never a persecuting one. The same cannot be said of the Greco-Romans or the Lutherans (and many other Protestants), but can be said of the CCOG.

Paul wrote:

¹⁹ **Now the works of the flesh are evident**, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, **hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions**, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, **murders**, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that **those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.** (Galatians 5:19-21, OSB)

Those who practice military behaviors in this life WILL NOT BE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

Notice that what the New Testament admonishes Christians:

¹⁴ Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14, OSB)

¹⁴ Seek peace with all people, and the holiness without which no one can ever see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14, NJB)

You cannot observe the above if you are engaging in carnal warfare.

Paul also wrote:

¹⁵ But God has called us to peace. (1 Corinthians 7:15, OSB)

¹¹ Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. (2 Corinthians 13:11, OSB)

¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:18-21, OSB)

Vengeance is God's. Christians are to live peaceably.

While it is true that the resurrected saints will help Christ crush His enemies (Jude 14-15), the saints are changed and not physical humans at that time (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Peter wrote about Christian behavior in this life:

¹⁰ For "He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. ¹¹ Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it..." (1 Peter 3:10-11, OSB)

The Apostle Paul wrote that "Love does no harm to a neighbor" (Romans 13:10, OSB).

John the Baptist answered military members:

¹⁴ And the soldiers also asked him, saying: And what shall we do? And he said to them: Do violence to no man; neither calumniate {falsely accuse} any man; and be content with your pay. (Luke 3:14, DRB)

There is no way a soldier cannot do violence to no one if they are killing someone.

Jesus had some comments that should be mentioned here:

²¹ "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.' ²² But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, 'Raqa,' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna. (Matthew 5:21-22, NABRE)

¹⁸ ... Jesus said, "You shall not murder..." (Matthew 19:18, OSB)

As Jesus' comments in Matthew 5:21-22 demonstrate, He expanded the restrictions against murder. Those expansions generally do not condone carnal warfare nor encourage violence in sports. Many get inappropriately angry who are fans of violent sports.

The Apostle John was inspired to record:

⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; **he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword**. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. (Revelation 13:9-10, OSB)

Notice that even until the end, **saints are to be patient and NOT be among those that kill with the sword**. Is it any wonder that Martin Luther discounted the literal understanding of the Book of Revelation? Otherwise, he and his followers would have to change their positions on warfare.

Like the original catholics, the Greco-Romans tended to be pacifists until after the rise of Emperor Constantine. He had his soldiers paint crosses on their shields for the Battle of Milvian Bridge in 312.

The Greco-Romans changed their views on carnal warfare after the influence of Emperor Constantine and other non-Christians, not the Bible. "According to the view of many historians, the Constantinian shift turned Christianity from a persecuted into a persecuting religion" (History of Christian thought on persecution and tolerance. World Heritage Encyclopedia. Copyright © 2021, World Library Foundation). Of course, original catholic Christians were never the persecutors, only the persecuted—and this was never to change in this age. Constantinian Christianity accepted many changes from the original catholic faith.

In the later centuries, this violent trend worsened.

Although Jesus taught to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-44), hate and violence against others who differed doctrinally was promoted by the Greco-Roman bishop and saint Gregory of Nyssa in the fourth century:

I affirm, then, that it is a lawful thing to hate God's enemies, and that this kind of hatred is pleasing to our Lord: and by God's enemies I mean those who deny the glory of our Lord, be they Jews, or downright idolaters, or those who through Arius' teaching idolize the creature, and so adopt the error of the Jews. Now when the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are with orthodox devotion being glorified and adored by those who believe that in a distinct and unconfused Trinity there is One Substance, Glory, Kingship, Power, and Universal Rule, in such a case as this what good excuse for fighting can there be? (Gregory of Nyssa. Letter 17 to Eustathia, Ambrosia, and Basilissa. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 5. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 1893)

So, before the end of the 4th century there were people teaching that hatred and fighting against those who did not accept a doctrine that was not formally adopted by the Greco-Romans until 381 A.D. was good.

Then, “As early as the fifth century, St. Augustine of Hippo was considering the moral consequences of war. He was one of the first people to articulate a philosophical statement on war and justice, known as the Just War doctrine” (Just War Doctrine. Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, October 21st, 2014).

The concept of “just war,” whereby limited uses of war were considered acceptable originated with earlier non-Christian Roman and Greek thinkers such as Cicero and Plato (Syse H. The Platonic roots of just war doctrine: a reading of Plato’s Republic. Diametros, 2010, 23: 104–123). Augustine (and others) borrowed much of the justification for warfare from pagan writers and Roman Law (Wells D, ed. An Encyclopedia of War and Ethics. Greenwood Press, 1996, pp. 30–31.).

Despite Greco-Romans accepting the views of Constantine, Plato, and other pagans, those associated with the Church of God, as well as some who were not, did not believe Christians were to be militaristic:

The Cathari ... One of the charges made against the established Church was that it countenanced war and marshalled armies. (Schaff P, Schaff DS. History of the Christian Church. C. Scribner’s sons, 1907 Item notes: v.5:pt.1, pp. 474-490)

The heresy of the Bogomili was started in the tenth century ... followers called themselves Christians and considered their faith the only true one. In Bosnia they were named Paterines. The Paterines, or Bogomili ... forbade intercourse with those of other faiths, disbelieved in war, (Klaar K. Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Catholic Encyclopedia)

It has been reckoned that in the last and most savage persecution under Emperor Diocletian about two thousand Christians perished, worldwide. In the first incident of Pope Innocent’s Crusade ten times that number of people were slaughtered. Not all were Albigensians. It comes as a shock to discover that, at a stroke, a pope killed far more Christians than Diocletian. (De Rosa, pp. 160-161)

The next major step in the establishment of the Inquisition was taken by Innocent III ... In the West, the same pope launched a “Crusade” against the Cathars, or Albigenses, of Southern France in 1208 ... In the second century of the Christian Era, most Christians refused to take up arms at all. One millenium later, Christians were not only fighting for the church against “infidels” who had conquered ancient biblical lands, but against other Christians, heretical ones, who only asked to be able to live in peace on their ancestral soil ... No matter how dreadful the use of violence against the dualistic Albigenses was, it must be acknowledged that their heresy is incompatible with Christianity, indeed with biblical religion as such ... Perhaps for medieval popes the crucial factor that caused them to condemn dissidents was really the dissidents’ rejection of papal authority. (Brown HOJ. Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church. Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody (MA), 1988, p. 260-261)

Waldenses ... Their opposition to bearing arms, and to war in all its operations, was unanimous and unequivocal. Whoever commanded them to the field they refused to obey, alleging that they could not conscientiously comply. (Quoted from Davis, pp. 76, 78)

As early as the tenth century Empress Theodora had put to death a multitude of Paulicians, and in 1118 Emperor Alexius Comnenus treated the Bogomili with equal severity ... (Blötzer, J. Inquisition. The Catholic Encyclopedia)

It was reported that the “multitude” the Eastern Orthodox Empress Theodora killed was around 100,000.

Even prior to this, those who held to Church of God doctrines did not care for the Eastern Orthodox whom they often called Byzantines. Notice something that an Arabic source essentially reported about how Sabbath-keepers felt about them:

Christian Judaizantes ... at the end of the fourth, in the fifth, and probably also into the sixth centuries ... mainly were concerned {to} put an end to Byzantine rule, which they hated, and the persecutions that tended to go along with it. (Pines, p. 35)

Those who read and understood the New Testament realized that persecuting and being part of carnal warfare was wrong.

In the 13th century, the Roman Catholic saint Thomas Aquinas actually listed some of the objections he was told that Christians should have towards war:

Objection 1. **It would seem that it is always sinful to wage war.** Because punishment is not inflicted except for sin. Now those who wage war are **threatened by Our Lord with punishment, according to Mt. 26:52: “All that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” Therefore all wars are unlawful.**

Objection 2. Further, whatever is contrary to a Divine precept is a sin. But **war is contrary to a Divine precept, for it is written (Matthew 5:39): “But I say to you not to resist evil”;** and (Romans 12:19): “Not revenging yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place unto wrath.” Therefore war is always sinful.

Objection 3. Further, nothing, except sin, is contrary to an act of virtue.

But war is contrary to peace. Therefore **war is always a sin.** (Aquinas Thomas. The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas. Second and Revised Edition, 1920. Literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Nihil Obstat. F. Innocentius Apap, O.P., S.T.M., Censor. Theol. Imprimatur. Edus. Canonicus Surmont, Vicarius Generalis. Westmonasterii. APPROBATIO ORDINIS. Nihil Obstat. F. Raphael Moss, O.P., S.T.L. and F. Leo Moore, O.P., S.T.L. Imprimatur. F. Beda Jarrett, O.P., S.T.L., A.M., Prior Provincialis Angliæ)

Martin Luther and his followers also endorsed military service and warfare. Furthermore, they condemned the Anabaptists in 1530 for not accepting their views of “civil” service:

Article XVI: Of Civil Affairs. Of Civil Affairs they teach that lawful civil ordinances are good works of God, and that it is right for Christians to bear civil office, to sit as judges, to judge matters by

the Imperial and other existing laws, to award just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers ... They condemn the Anabaptists who forbid these civil offices to Christians.

It should be noted that some of those called Anabaptists were in the Church of God.

We in the *Continuing* Church of God hold to the original Christian teaching on this and hence do not participate as soldiers in carnal warfare nor do we endorse watching intentionally violent sporting games.

You cannot “love your neighbor” and do “no harm to a neighbor” by being involved in violent persecution, encouraging physical harm, or carnal warfare against them in this age.

Clean and Unclean Meats

The Apostle Peter wrote:

¹⁴ Do not allow yourselves to be shaped by the passions of your old ignorance, ¹⁵ but as obedient children, be yourselves holy in all your activity, after the model of the Holy One who calls us, ¹⁶ since scripture says, ‘*Be holy, for I am holy.*’ (1 Peter 1:14-16, NJB).

Now where is that *first written* in the Bible to *be holy for God is holy*?

It is in Leviticus 11:44-45 where God is talking about avoiding unclean meat! The statement Peter quoted about being Holy as God is holy is repeated only three more times in the Hebrew Bible, the first in Leviticus 19:2 where it then discusses the Sabbath and the second in Leviticus 20:7 where it teaches about not being involved with witchcraft and then keeping God’s statutes. Does your church teach that you are to be holy as God?

The final time is in Leviticus 20:25-26 where God explains about avoiding unclean animals and being holy.

So, what could Peter have been talking about? The only subjects from the Old Testament could have unclean meat, the seventh-day Sabbath, or the statutes in the Law, including the warning against witchcraft. However, the context says to avoid lusts. Lust is unlawful desire. Apparently, Peter is including desires such as eating that which is unlawful.

Paul emphasized that Christians were not to be unclean nor be mislead by those who did not teach that:

⁷ For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification. ⁸ Therefore, he that despiseth these things, despiseth not man, but God, who also hath given his holy Spirit in us. (1 Thessalonians 4:7-8, DRB)

Notice that God says that eating unclean animals makes one abominable and that God’s people are to be separate:

²⁵ Therefore do you also separate the clean beast from the unclean, and the clean fowl from the unclean: defile not your souls with beasts, or birds, or any things that move on the earth, and which I have shewn you to be unclean. ²⁶ You shall be holy unto me, because I the Lord am holy, and I have separated you from other people, that you should be mine. (Leviticus 20:25-26, DRB).

Notice what the Apostles Paul wrote:

¹⁷ Wherefore, Go out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: (2 Corinthians 6:17, DRB).

Also notice what John was inspired to write:

¹¹ Meanwhile let the sinner continue sinning, and the unclean continue to be unclean; let the upright continue in his uprightness, and those who are holy continue to be holy. (Revelation 22:11, NJB).

Notice that the holy are distinguished from the unclean. Notice also that the Bible warns about those who love and believe a lie:

¹⁵ Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and unchaste, and murderers, and servers of idols, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie. (Revelation 22:15, DRB)

And, in this author's view, those who believe that God's people are to eat biblically unclean animals are accepting a lie. Consider also that dogs are biblically-unclean animals that eat any type of animal and that they are not to be emulated in the last chapter of the last book of the Bible.

All should realize that Paul did not want Gentile Christians to participate in uncleanness and that is something that they should repent of. Paul also wrote:

⁵ For know you this and understand, that **no fornicator, or unclean, or covetous person (which is a serving of idols), hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ** and of God. ⁶ **Let no man deceive you with vain words.** For because of these things cometh the anger of God upon the children of unbelief. ⁷ Be ye not therefore partakers with them. (Ephesians 5:5-7, DRB).

Is eating biblical prohibited foods or not eating them a sign of disobedience? Is not consuming what the Bible prohibits covetous?

Paul further warned "uncleanness" was a "work of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19, DRB) and "that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:21, DRB).

Peter added:

⁹ The Lord knoweth how ... to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be tormented. ¹⁰
And especially them who walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise government
... (2 Peter 2:9-10, DRB).

Some, sadly, despise biblical authority to eat whatsoever they lust after.

What about arguments related to the vision in Acts 10? What Peter stated he understood from it was that God did not want him to call Gentiles common or unclean (Acts 10:28). He did not say it meant he should eat unclean animals.

Origen of Alexandria taught that after the resurrection Peter did not believe he could eat unclean meats:

Peter himself seems to have observed for a considerable time the Jewish observances enjoined by the law of Moses ... Peter “went up into the upper room to pray about the sixth hour. And he became very hungry, and would have eaten”... Peter is represented as still observing the Jewish customs respecting clean and unclean animals. (Origen. *Contra Celsus*, Book II, Chapter 1)

So, Peter was understood to have observed ‘Jewish practices’ as late as the time of Origen, and of course never ate unclean meat (Acts 10:14).

In order to officially be allowed back into Jerusalem after the Jewish Bar Kochba revolt (c. 135), Roman soldiers said that the professors of Christ needed to eat unclean animals like they did (Pines S. *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source*. *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, Volume II, No.13; 1966. Jerusalem, pp. 14-15). The compromisers who followed the lead of ‘Bishop Marcus’ of Jerusalem and did so in order to be able to live in Jerusalem. The faithful did not. Justin Martyr’s writings (*Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapters 10 & 20) seems to suggest he supported unclean meat consumption near the same time.

Despite Marcus’ compromising and Justin’s seeming acceptance, the Greco-Roman saint Irenaeus c. 180 A.D. wrote that there were still unclean animals:

Now the law has figuratively predicted all these, delineating man by the [various] animals: whatsoever of these, says [the Scripture], have a double hoof and ruminates, it proclaims as clean; but whatsoever of them do not possess one or other of these [properties], it sets aside by themselves as unclean ... The unclean, however, are those which do neither divide the hoof nor ruminates ... **But as to those animals which do indeed chew the cud, but have not the double hoof, and are themselves unclean** ... the Lord says, “Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say to you?” For men of this stamp do indeed say that they believe in the Father and the Son, but they never meditate as they should upon the things of God, neither are they adorned with works of righteousness; but, as I have already observed, they have adopted the lives of swine and of dogs, giving themselves over to filthiness, to gluttony, and recklessness of all sorts. Justly, therefore, did the apostle call all such “carnal.” (Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*, Book V, Chapter 8, Verse 4. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 1)

Although Irenaeus endorsed not eating unclean meats, shortly thereafter, according to the *Liber Pontificalis* and the Church of Rome, Bishop Eleutherus (Kirsch JP. Pope St. Eleutherius/Eleutheros. The Catholic Encyclopedia) made a pronouncement that all animal flesh could be eaten.

This is interesting as it shows that even in Rome 150 years after Jesus' resurrection, many/most professors of Christ did NOT believe that Jesus cleansed unclean animals to make them food.

Despite the claimed pronouncement of Eleutherius, Church of God Christians continued to avoid consuming unclean animals. In 250 A.D., Pionius of Ephesus stated that he was part of the catholic church and he refused to eat biblically unclean meat. He was put to death for that refusal (The Martyrdom of Pionius and his Companions, Chapters 3,6, & 9. Text from H. Musurillo, The Acts of the Christian Martyrs, Oxford, 1972, 137-167).

Related to the Nazarenes:

Manichean Faustus, {in} the fourth century ... complained. "Such people practice circumcision, keep the Sabbath, then shun swine's meat and other things like that, all according to the Law. And yet they still claim to be Christians" (As cited in Frederickson P. When Christians Were Jews: The First Generation. Yale University Press, 2018, p. 100)

One Protestant scholar, who advocates eating unclean meat, wrote:

For centuries Christians stayed away from pork and other unclean foods. (Ortiz K. Can Christian Eat Meat, Pork, or Bacon? The Biblical Answer. JustDisciple.com accessed 06/08/21)

And true Christians still avoid biblically-unclean meat.

Furthermore, it is known that after Church of God Christians moved back to Jerusalem, they refused to eat unclean animals. To try to change that in the 4th century, the Roman Emperor Constantine, who supported a 'Babylon' mixture of religions, ordered the death penalty for those who would not eat pork (Bagatti, The Church from the Circumcision, pp. 13-14).

We in the *Continuing* Church of God hold to the original belief and also do not eat biblically unclean animals.

Tithes and Offerings

Tithing is discussed, with many specifics, in the Old Testament. The terms "tithe," "tithing," or giving a "tenth" occur ten times in the New Testament (NKJV), thus it is also a New Testament subject.

Multiple tithes were commanded in the Bible (Leviticus 27:30; Deuteronomy 12:17-18, 26:12-15) and historical accounts show they were paid (cf. Tobit 1:6-8).

And Jesus confirmed that when He stated:

²³ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You pay tithes of mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier things of the law: judgment and mercy and fidelity. [But] these you should have done, without neglecting the others. (Matthew 23:23, NABRE)

While justice and mercy and faith are weightier matters of the law, paying tithes was endorsed by Jesus as something to be done. The Church of God in Jerusalem would have taught tithes there until the rise of Marcus around 135 A.D.

Early Christians tithed. And it takes faith to do so.

Collier's Encyclopedia stated:

"TITHE [taith] {O.E. teotha, a tenth}, generally defined as the tenth part of fruits and profits justly acquired, owed to God in recognition of his supreme dominion, and paid to the ministers of region. ... Adopted in principle by the Christian Church from apostolic times ... (Collier's Encyclopedia: With Bibliography and Index, Bernard Johnston (M.A.). 1993, ISBN 0029425484, p. 336)

An Antiochian (likely Eastern Orthodox related), but spurious, source from the 3rd century states:

Set by part-offerings and tithes and first fruits to Christ, the true High Priest, and to His ministers ... the priests and Levites now are the presbyters and deacons ... (Didascalia Apostolorum, Chapter IX)

The above suggests that at least some affiliated with the Greco-Romans tithed in the 3rd century.

The Catholic Encyclopedia states:

The payment of tithes was adopted from the Old Law, and early writers speak of it as a divine ordinance and an obligation of conscience (Fanning W. Tithes).

The Greco-Catholic bishop and saint Cyprian of the third century wrote about tithing as an obligation ... (Plowden F. The Principles and Law of Tithing. C. and R. Baldwin, London, 1806, p. 60)

The Greco-Roman saint Jerome recorded that there were people in the late 4th/early 5th century who claimed descent from the Church of God who had fled to Pella from Jerusalem. Jerome reported that these "Nazarenes" kept the 'old law' and had 'Judeo-Christian' practices (Pritz R. Nazarene Jewish Christianity. Magnas, Jerusalem, 1988, pp. 58,62,63; Bagatti, The Church from the Circumcision, p. 202). Such a group would have tithed. Jerome's report, thus, indicates tithing was still in place towards the end of the Smyrna era of the Church of God.

Even Augustine of Hippo [Append. Sermon. Cclxxcii] [qu. I Can. Decimae], said: "It is a duty to pay tithes, and whoever refuses to pay them takes what belongs to another."

Historical accounts show that multiple tithes were endorsed by Christians in the Middle Ages, who gave one tithe to the church, used one tithe to pay for church festivals, and (in 2 of 7 years) an additional tithe for the poor (George Morel, Waldensian elder, quoted by Lennard, "History of the Waldenses" as cited in Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, Lesson 51, 1968).

The attachment to money keeps people away from the Kingdom of God (Matthew 10:17-25). Furthermore, remember that Jesus said:

³³ So likewise every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:33, DRB)

It can take a lot of faith to tithe, particularly in difficult times.

Yet, God's word promises blessings to those who tithe and give generous offerings (Malachi 3:8-12).

We in the CCOG still practice tithing, as well as the giving of offerings.

Three Resurrections

The New Testament teaches about three judgments and three resurrections.

Church age Christians, those called, chosen, and faithful (Revelation 17:14), also called the elect (cf. 2 Timothy 2:10), are judged in this life and are resurrected first:

¹⁷ The time has come for the judgement to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who refuse to believe God's gospel? ¹⁸ If it is hard for the upright to be saved, what will happen to the wicked and to sinners? (1 Peter 4:17-18, NJB)

⁴ Then I saw thrones, where they took their seats, and on them was conferred the power to give judgement. I saw the souls of all who had been beheaded for having witnessed for Jesus and for having preached God's word, and those who refused to worship the beast or his statue and would not accept the brandmark on their foreheads or hands; they came to life, and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were over; this is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection; the second death has no power over them but they will be priests of God and of Christ and reign with him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4-6, NJB)

¹⁵ We can tell you this from the Lord's own teaching, that we who are still alive for the Lord's coming will not have any advantage over those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ At the signal given by the voice of the Archangel and the trumpet of God, the Lord himself will come down from heaven; those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, ¹⁷ and only after that shall we who remain

alive be taken up in the clouds, together with them, to meet the Lord in the air. This is the way we shall be with the Lord for ever. ¹⁸ With such thoughts as these, then, you should encourage one another. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, NJB)

Notice that the Apostle Paul is pointing to the first resurrection as something to look forward to.

Others will be resurrected one thousand years later and also judged:

⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were over; this is the first resurrection. ...

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and the One who was sitting on it. In his presence, earth and sky vanished, leaving no trace. ¹² I saw the dead, great and small alike, standing in front of his throne while the books lay open. And another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged from what was written in the books, as their deeds deserved. (Revelation 20:5, 11-1, NJB)

Although all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), most people were not incorrigibly wicked and have NOT committed the 'unpardonable sin.'

But what about a third resurrection?

Eric Meyers published the following about Christians in the 2nd to 4th centuries:

These Jewish Christian groups, referred to by Epiphanius (Williams, 1987) as Nazarenes or Elkasaites, professed the following beliefs: They proclaimed Jesus as Messiah; insisted upon the validity of the Torah & laws of ritual purity; spoke of three resurrections; professed a millenarian eschatology; (Meyer E. Early Judaism and Christianity in the Light of Archaeology. Biblical Archaeologist, Vol. 51, No. 2, June 1988: 69-79)

Roman Catholic scholar Bellarmino Bagatti wrote the following related to a late fourth century Greco-Roman bishop:

St. Gregory of Nyssa ... he himself was not considered a true Christian by some who held the three resurrections, the millenarianism, the restoration of ... bloody sacrifices; these are all doctrines of the Judaeo-Christians (Bagatti, The Church from the Circumcision, p.11).

So, we see that the teaching of the three resurrections is an ancient one considered to have been a doctrine of the Judaeo-Christians—it was an original catholic belief. In the 19th century three resurrections was still being taught by Sabbatarians (The Three Resurrections. Hope of Israel, August 27, 1867, pp. 41-42)

In Isaiah 65:20, we see that there will be two types of people at the end of the hundred year white throne judgment period--those who are condemned as sinners and those who are not. Those who are not

accursed are those who would get their names listed in the book of life. All are shown to somehow physically die.

And this ties to the third and final resurrection:

¹⁵ there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. (Acts 24:15)

¹³ The sea gave up all the dead who were in it; ¹⁴ Death and Hades were emptied of the dead that were in them; and every one was judged as his deeds deserved. Then Death and Hades were hurled into the burning lake. This burning lake is the second death; ¹⁵ and anybody whose name could not be found written in the book of life was hurled into the burning lake. (Revelation 20:13-15, NJB)

So, the second death is not like physical death—it is a permanent annihilation. Now, while the incorrigibly wicked will be destroyed with the second death at the time of the third resurrection, those who would be written in the book of life at that time would not be. Death and Hades, but not the sea, were cast into the lake of fire. The “sea” seems to be a reference to holding the ashes/sand of the dead that are to be saved (cf. Romans 9:27; 11:26; Hebrews 11:12; Isaiah 10:22; Genesis 32:12; cf. Habakkuk 2:14), though this ashes/sand view may be a speculative interpretation.

Yet, various theologians do realize that the Bible literally teaches three resurrections. Here are two items from the 19th century related to that:

Rev xx. ... In this chapter there are THREE resurrections mentioned. The first takes place *before* or *at* the Millennium, the second *immediately after* it, and the third not until the *end* of the season that *succeeds* the Millennium. It is evident, from the language that these are *distinct* and *separate* resurrections. (The Original Secession Magazine. A Short and Easy Method with the Ultra-Millennarians. September 1865, later published by J. Maclaren, 1866, pp. 274-275)

The theorists of the literal school lose all the righteous except martyrs and confessors; else they must have three resurrections ... (Campbell A. The Christian Messenger and Reformer. Churches of Christ, May 1843, p. 79)

In the 19th century, non-SDA Sabbath-keepers published the belief that the Bible taught three resurrections (Kramer IN. The Threefold Resurrection. Advent and Sabbath Advocate, May 26, 1874, pp. 33-34).

In the 20th century, the late evangelist Raymond McNair wrote about the 3rd one:

When the time for the third resurrection arrives, everyone will have had his chance. (McNair R. The Third Resurrection: Part V. Good News, May 1974)

In the late 20th century, the late evangelist Dr. Herman Hoeh wrote:

How, then, does one understand the expression that “the child shall die”? Because the righteous will not continue to live in the flesh. They shall be given immortality by becoming spirit beings, the eternal sons of God, just as the righteous who are alive when Christ returns at His Second Coming: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (I Corinthians 15:51-52). ... The change from mortal to immortal is a death of the cells of the natural body, but it will happen “in a moment,” as Paul said, so one will not even be aware of a loss of consciousness!

Isaiah 65:20 is describing this kind of momentary death, when one is changed to immortality; not the lake of fire, which is the second death, which the sinner who is accursed suffers. So the great purpose of the second resurrection will be finished in 100 years! (Hoeh H. The. Resurrection at the LAST DAY. Good News. Sept-Oct 1988, p. 22)

For believers, the change at the “third resurrection” will be like what happens to living Christians at the time of the first resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

But at this ‘third resurrection’ change, consistent with Jesus’ words in Matthew 10:28, the wicked who will not repent and support God’s Kingdom will be condemned (John 5:28-29), burnt up (Revelation 20:14), annihilated, totally destroyed:

¹ Do not get heated about the wicked or envy those who do wrong. ...

⁹ for evil-doers will be annihilated, while those who hope in Yahweh shall have the land for their own. ¹⁰ A little while and the wicked will be no more, however well you search for the place, the wicked will not be there; ...

²² ... those he curses be annihilated.

³⁴ Put your hope in Yahweh, keep to his path, he will raise you up to make the land your own; you will look on while the wicked are annihilated. (Psalm 37:1,9-10,22,34, NJB)

¹⁹ 'For look, the Day is coming, glowing like a furnace. All the proud and all the evil-doers will be the stubble, and the Day, when it comes, will set them ablaze, says Yahweh Sabaoth, leaving them neither root nor branch. ²⁰ But for you who fear my name, the Sun of justice will rise with healing in his rays, and you will come out leaping like calves from the stall, ²¹ and trample on the wicked, who will be like ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act, says Yahweh Sabaoth. (Malachi 3:19-21, NJB; considered Malachi 4:1-3 in many other Bibles)

The Bible calls this the ‘second death’:

¹¹... those who prove victorious will come to no harm from the second death. (Revelation 2:11, NJB)

¹⁴ ... Then Death and Hades were hurled into the burning lake. This burning lake is the second death; (Revelation 20:14, NJB)

⁸ But the legacy for cowards, for those who break their word, or worship obscenities, for murderers and the sexually immoral, and for sorcerers, worshippers of false gods or any other sort of liars, is the second death in the burning lake of sulphur.' (Revelation 21:8, NJB)

Thus, it is a type of death, but permanent. Note: The fact of the boy God had Elijah raise (1 Kings 17:17-22), Lazarus who Jesus raised from the dead, (John 11:11-44), and all those who were raised after Jesus was executed (Matthew 27:52-53) shows that human beings can physically die more than once. For those who have been resurrected to physical life prior to the 21st century, their experiencing physical death again is NOT the second death of Revelation 20:14 and Matthew 10:28. THE SECOND DEATH IS DEFINED IN REVELATION 20:14 AS WHEN DEATH AND HADES ARE CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AFTER THE THIRD RESURRECTION. It is not a reference to any humans who, after being resurrected, die again.

Now, the permanent second death, is not eternal torturing like many claim. Jesus came so we would not have to PERISH, but have eternal life (John 3:16; Romans 6:23). Jesus did not come so that people would not experience physical death—He came to help prevent the second death, which comes after the third resurrection (Revelation 20:6,14).

The prophet Nahum wrote:

⁹ What do ye devise against the Lord? he will make an utter end: there shall not rise a double affliction. ¹⁰ For as thorns embrace one another: so while they are feasting and drinking together, they shall be consumed as stubble that is fully dry. ¹¹ Out of thee shall come forth one that imagineth evil against the Lord, contriving treachery in his mind. ¹² Thus saith the Lord: Though they were perfect: and many of them so, yet thus shall they be cut off, and he shall pass: I have afflicted thee, and I will afflict thee no more. (Nahum 1:9-12, DRB)

Thus, this in another prophetic book is teaching that there is not a permanent, torturing affliction.

Remember that Malachi 4:1-3 teaches that the wicked (those who will not repent) will be burned up and will be ashes (see also Luke 13:1-3; Matthew 10:28). This is not an everlasting torment, but a destruction of those that refuse God.

For most, salvation will not happen until after the seeds of the gospel are laid in this age and more fully come to fruition in harvest in the age to come.

Notice Mark 4:26-29, NJB:

²⁶ He also said, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the land. ²⁷ Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know. ²⁸ Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ And when the crop is ready, at once he starts to reap because the harvest has come.'

A massive harvest is coming. And that latter harvest has always been part of God's plan.

And three resurrections are involved in it.

Crosses and Icons

Early Christians did not have crosses or icons.

This started to change by some of the Greeks in the 3rd century and was adopted by many of the Greco-Romans in the 4th century after being influenced by Emperor Constantine.

And what does the Bible, specifically the New Testament say about crosses?

Not as much as most believe as it is not certain that the word was ever used in it.

Why?

Well, amongst other reasons, the Greek word commonly translated as "cross" in the New Testament is *stauros*, which means pole or stake.

NT:4716 *stauros* (stow-ros'); from the base of NT:2476; a stake or post (as set upright), i.e. (specifically) a pole ... (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright 1994, Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

σταυρός... 'upright, pointed stake' or 'pole';... **a pole to be placed in the ground and used for capital punishment** (Bauer W, Danker FW. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 3rd edition. University of Chicago, 2000, p. 941)

It should be noted that according to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* every time in the NT (KJV) the word cross appears, it comes from word 4716.

But, some may ask, what about the word "crucify" or "crucified"? Does this mean being killed on a cross? While that is how people interpret that in English, the two Greek words translated as crucify in the NT (KJV) come from *stauros* and mean impale:

NT:4717 *stauroo* (stow-ro'-o); from NT:4716; to impale (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

NT:4957 *sustauroo* (soos-tow-ro'-o); from NT:4862 and NT:4717; to impale in company with (literally or figuratively) (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary)

(There is a third word once incorrectly translated as "crucify" in some NT translations, but it means to kill again, and thus has nothing to do with an actual cross.)

Neither the apostles nor their immediate followers—who would know first century *koine* Greek better than any currently alive—ever were recorded using or wearing or honoring any cross. The fact is that modern scholars know that *stauros* meant a stake, but many have chosen because of tradition to translate it as "cross." In Greece now, because of 'tradition' the word *stauros* is now considered to mean 'cross' even though it clearly did not originally.

Furthermore, consider that in the second half of the second century, a Greek satirist and anti-Christian named Lucian wrote in his *The Death of Peregrinus* about Christians:

... that one whom they still worship who was impaled because he brought this new form of initiation into the world.

Lucian used the Greek word *anaskolopizien*, which means to impale (McDowell J, McDowell S. Evidence that Demands a Verdict. Thomas Nelson, 2017, p. 148). Impalement, which implied being on a single stake, had been understood by many after Jesus' death.

Notice what Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, wrote in the second century:

Let us then continually persevere in our hope, and the earnest of our righteousness, which is Jesus Christ, "who bore our sins in His own body on the tree," (*Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians*, Chapter VIII)

He, like others, referred to Jesus being killed on a tree. Notice some passages from the New Testament:

³⁰ it was the God of our ancestors who raised up Jesus, whom you executed by hanging on a tree. (Acts 5:30, NJB)

³⁹ And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. (Acts 10:39, OSB)

²⁹ Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised Him from the dead. (Acts 13:29-30, OSB)

²⁴ Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree: that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice: by whose stripes you were healed. (1 Peter 2:24, DRB)

¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), (Galatians 3:13, OSB)

The Greek word ‘xulon’ (ξύλον) translated as ‘tree’ above, basically means tree, stick or piece of timber. As far as Galatian 3:13 goes, that contains a reference to Deuteronomy 21:23—and the Hebrews were NOT crucifying people on crosses then.

Even though Greco-Roman scholars titled a paper by Melito of Sardis (late second century) *The Discourse on the Cross*, he actually wrote Jesus was killed on a tree:

God who is from God; the Son who is from the Father; Jesus Christ the King for evermore...He that bore up the earth was borne up on a tree. The Lord was subjected to ignominy with naked body—God put to death, the King of Israel slain!

Melito also wrote in his *Discourse on Faith* and elsewhere:

He who was hanged on the tree; . . .

This is He who took a bodily form in the Virgin, and was hanged upon the tree, and was buried within the earth, and suffered not dissolution; ... who put on a bodily form in the Virgin; who was hanged upon the tree; who was buried in the earth; who rose from the place of the dead, and ascended to the height of heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father.

Early Christians reported Jesus was killed on a tree.

In circa 135 in Jerusalem, there was a group of compromised, Roman supporting “Christians” that wrote down what they thought were the gospel accounts. Yet, according to a later source, “In all this there was no mention of the cross or crucifix.” (Pines, p. 16).

Notice an accusation against those who professed Christ c. 197 in a supposed argument between the heathen Caecilius and the claimed Christian Octavius:

Why have they no altars, no temples, no acknowledged images? (Minucius. Octavius. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 4, Chapter 10).

If the cross was an oft used symbol or sacred image for early Christians, the above accusation would not have been made against them. The same goes for statues supposedly of Jesus. As far as fixed altars, this became a Greco-Roman practice in the 4th century (Kahzdan, p. 71) and was not an original catholic feature.

According to the historical records, no real Christian prior to the late second or early third century is ever described as carrying an idol, having images in any worship services, or even wearing a cross (though some apostates started to advocate crosses in the late second and third centuries).

Some have suggested that catacombs and funeral-related items for Christians proves an early acceptance of the cross. But this is not the case.

While some have pointed to the letter “X” or other symbols on certain Christian documents and/or artifacts as a sign for the cross and/or proof of the early widespread acceptance of crosses, notice what Catholic priest and scholar B. Bagatti discovered:

The doctrine of millenarianism, being widespread, left many iconographical traces. As a sign of millenarianism, also called chiliasm, we find the Greek letter X, initial for the word *chilioi* (thousand) ... Studying funeral monuments we find ourselves face to face with very many signs which lead us to millenarian iconographic repertoire. (Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision*, pp. 297, 298)

Ancient artifacts showing versions of “+,” (Bagatti, *From the The Church from the Circumcision*, pp. 298-299) or “YO (=Ω), YT, YX, {were} all in relation of the doctrine of the chiliad” (Saller SJ, Testa E. *The archaeological setting of the shrine of Bethphage*; Issue 1 of *Smaller series*. Franciscan Press, 1961, p. 108) also known as the millennium. The symbol sigma “Σ” was also sometimes used as a symbol of the pre-millennial resurrection of the saints (Revelation 20:4-6) signally the “seventh millennium” (Saller, p. 113). This pre-millennial resurrection coinciding with Jesus’ return was, and still should be, a chief hope of Christians (Acts 23:6; 1 Corinthians 15:12-23; Titus 2:13).

Icons and crosses were normally discouraged by Greco-Roman leaders until the fourth century.

But several factors, include sun god worship, came into play. Here is a report from a Roman Catholic scholar:

During the third and fourth centuries, the Roman Empire saw a proliferation of solar cults as the Sun became a favored patron and protector of many emperors. Perhaps the most noteworthy turning point was {Roman Emperor} Aurelian’s elevation of Sol as the focal point of state cult, which would prove even more significant decades later under Constantine. ... Furthermore, contemporary literary accounts describe the Unconquerable Sun as a restorer of order and a god of rebirth and renewal, making him a powerful symbol of unification during a turbulent era. (DesRosiers N, Stonehill College. *Aurelian, Sol, and Roman Identity*. 2019 SBL INTERNATIONAL MEETING ABSTRACTS. July 2, 2019, Rome, Italy)

Emperor Constantine, himself, had a vision of the sun god Sol in a grove of Apollo in Gaul in 310 (Rodgers BS. “Constantine’s Pagan Vision,” *Byzantion*, vol. 50, 1980, pp. 259–78). Then in 312 he claimed he had a vision of a spear that had a bar overlaid on it to look like a cross. He interpreted this to mean his forces should use crosses as a symbol to kill under (Eusebius. *The Life of Constantine*, Book I, Chapters 28,30,31).

Since he had been a follower of the militaristic Mithra cult, and it used crosses, this seemed fine to him. It should be pointed out that even after his alleged conversion to his claimed version of the Christian faith in 312, nearly 25 years later Emperor Constantine was intentionally buried in a grave originally dedicated to the sun god. His 337 burial still had sun-god elements (Walraff M. *CONSTANTINE’S DEATH. SOLAR AND*

CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS OF IMPERIAL PROPAGANDA. LIBRERIA EDITRICE VATICANA. Città del Vaticano 2014, pp. 123-125, 135).

After winning the 312 Battle of Milvian Bridge, Constantine prepared an arch, which contained no “recognizable Christian signs” but instead portrayed “the SOL INVICTUS whose image occurs four times” (Kahzdan, pp. 159-150). “The triumphal arch ... completed in 315, was naturally decorated with carvings which corresponded to the ideas of a pagan senate” (Jedin, Volume 1, p. 152). Real Christian leaders do not “naturally” decorate with pagan images or similar icons. Yet, Constantine kept doing that until at least 322 by having a sun-god on Roman coins (Ibid, p. 153).

Now, Constantine’s acceptance of icons he claimed to be Christian (like crosses) proved highly popular with the Greeks, though some Latins had problems with them. Centuries later, in 843, the Eastern Orthodox consider their getting the Roman Church to accept icons was “the triumph of Orthodoxy” (Ware, pp. 31-33)—which, of course, proves that they were not part of the original catholic church.

Crosses, and then crucifixes, became common in the 5th and 6th centuries according to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*:

Although in the fifth century the cross began to appear on public monuments, it was not for a century afterwards that the figure on the cross was shown; and not until the close of the fifth, or even the middle of the sixth century, did it appear without disguise. ...

A very important monument belonging to the beginning of the third century shows the Crucifixion openly. This would seem to contradict what we have said above, but it should be remembered that this is the work of pagan, and not of Christian, hands (cf. De Rossi, Bull, d'arch, crist., 1863, 72, and 1867, 75), and therefore it has no real value as a proof among purely Christian works. (Marucchi O. Archæology of the Cross and Crucifix)

So, the oldest known crucifix was by a pagan, with crucifixes to have been adopted by the Greco-Roman Catholics no earlier than around the 5th century.

Anyway, because of non-Christian influence, and as well the Emperor Constantine, the Greco-Romans began changing their minds about crosses and other icons in the 4th century.

Yet, there was resistance by some associated with COG doctrines:

... **the Cathari also** renounced priestly vestments, altars, and crosses as idolatrous. They **called the cross the mark of the beast**, and declared it had no more virtue than a ribbon for binding the hair. (Fortescue A. Paulicians. The Catholic Encyclopedia).

Isaac Newton (who was NOT Church of God) seemingly agreed with the Cathari as he cited part of Revelation 13 and wrote:

And he causeth all men to receive a mark in their right hand or in their forehead, and that no man might buy or sell save he that had the mark, or the name of the Beast, or the number of his name; all the rest being excommunicated by the Beast with two horns. His mark is † † †, and his name ΛΑΤΕΙΝΟΣ, and the number of his name, 666. (Sir Isaac Newton: Chapter 3. Of the relation which the Prophecy of John hath to those of Daniel; and of the Subject of Prophecy)

The reference to three crosses by Newton also aligns with his view that trinitarianism was part of the false beast system (cf. Revelation chapters 13,17, & 18).

Some Roman Catholics have indicated that the image, or perhaps mark of, the Beast may be something that resembles Constantine's cross:

Priest P. Huchedé (19th century): Antichrist will further make all men, great and small, rich and poor, freemen and bondmen, bear a sign on their right arm or their forehead. (*Apoc.* 13:16). What this sign shall be time alone will reveal. Yet there are some {Catholic} commentators of the Holt Writ, who, according to a special revelation pretend to say that it shall be formed out of the Greek letters X and P, interlaced ... which resembles the number of Christ. (Cornelius a Lapide in *Epis. 2 to Thes.*). No one can either buy or sell without this mark, as specified in the Apocalypse (13:17). (Huchedé, P. Translated by JBD. *History of Antichrist.* Imprimatur: Edward Charles Fabre, Bishop of Montreal. English edition 1884. TAN Books, Rockford (IL), Reprint 1976, p. 24).

Countess Francesca de Billiante (died 1935): Many in this land will carry the hooked cross on their forehead and their breast, not suspecting that this is a sign of Satan. (Culleton, G. *The Prophets and Our Times.* Nihil Obstat: L. Arvin. Imprimatur: Philip G. Scher, Bishop of Monterey-Fresno, November 15, 1941. TAN Books, Rockford (IL), Reprint 1974, p. 226).

St. Hildegard of Bingen (12th century): The mark of the Antichrist will be a symbol of Baptism ... (Culleton RG. *The Reign of Antichrist,* 1951. Reprint TAN Books, Rockford, IL, 1974, p. 129).

Greco-Roman baptism involves some type of the 'sign of the cross.' It may be that some type of cross will be a/the mark of the Beast.

The stigmatic Roman Catholic Marie-Julie Jahenny, who claimed to see apparitions of Mary, stated that the following prayer needed to be said for protection during times of great calamities:

I hail thee, I adore thee, I embrace thee, O, Adorable Cross of my Saviour, protect us, keep us, save us. Jesus loved thee so much, by His example I love thee. By thy holy image calm my fears, I only feel peace and confidence. (Translated from the French book: *Servant M.* vol. 1: *Veuillez-et-priez Car L'Heure Est Proche.* France; pp. 316-317)

The Bible never indicates that Jesus loved the cross nor that anyone who adore or venerate it. Marie-Julie Jahenny also claimed "blessed wax candles" were needed for protection for a coming "three days of darkness" as they would be the only ones to give light (ibid). While it is possible that, like there were three days of darkness in a plague of the Exodus (Exodus 10:21-23), we will see three days of darkness again (cf.

Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12), there is no scriptural reason to believe Christians need blessed candles for protection.

Marie-Julie Jahenny claimed that the Virgin Mary stated:

Always have ready and at hand your objects of protection: your blessed wax candles, your medals, your pictures and holy objects from which flow all blessings. (Servant, pp. 316-317)

It is not possible that Jesus' mother Mary said that. The Bible teaches that blessings flow from God (cf. Genesis 49:25; Deuteronomy 28:2) and protection comes from Him (2 Samuel 22:3; Psalm 62:5-8), not physical objects.

Nor were any of these physical items part of the original catholic faith.

We in the CCOG have not accepted that we should rely on candles, 'holy objects,' or crosses for blessings or protection.

That being said, we do not believe that use of crosses by civic organizations (like the Red Cross) or their use on government documents means such should be avoided by Christians. We, however, do not consider that they are a true Christian symbol.

Consider the following:

For the Lord says, "Every way My Name is blasphemed among all the Gentiles"; and again, "Woe unto him by reason of whom My Name is blasphemed." Wherein is it blasphemed? In that you do not the things which I desire. (2 Clement 13:2)

Original catholics did not venerate nor use crosses, images of Jesus, or other icons for religious purposes. Since the "heaven of heavens cannot contain him" (2 Chronicles 2:8, DRB), it is wrong to think God can be represented by any statue or icon.

The use of them has called the true Christian faith to be blasphemed.

Marianism, Lighting Candles, Veneration of Saints

The original Christian church, though respectful of Jesus' mother Mary in the few writings that mention her (e.g. Fragments of Papias, Chapter X), did not venerate her like modern Greco-Romans do.

The Catholic Encyclopedia concurs:

Devotion to Our Blessed Lady ... we do not meet with any clear traces of the cultus of the Blessed Virgin in the first Christian centuries. The earliest unmistakable examples of the "worship" — we use the word of course in the relative sense — of the saints is connected with the veneration paid

to the martyrs who gave their lives for the Faith. ... the same idea, was derived from the cult of the angels, which, while pre-Christian in its origin, ... seems to have been only as a sequel of some such development that men turned to implore the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. ... Evidence regarding the popular practice of the early centuries is almost entirely lacking ... evidence of certain apocryphal writings, notably that of the so-called Gospel of St. James, or "Protevangelion." ... and ... certain interpolated passages found in the Sibylline Oracles, passages which probably date from the third century, show an equal preoccupation with the dominant role played by the Blessed Virgin in the work of redemption (see especially II, 311-12, and VIII, 357-479). ...

The existence of the obscure sect of the Collyridians, whom St. Epiphanius (d. 403) denounces for their sacrificial offering of cakes to Mary ... Epiphanius laid down the rule: "Let Mary be held in honour. Let the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be adored, but let no one adore Mary" (*ten Marian medeis prosknueito*). (Thurston H. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary)

Things that did not happen in the first centuries of the Christian era obviously were not original catholic practices. Yet, they were found in falsified documents, such as in the 2nd (the Apostle James did NOT write the *Protevangelion*) and later centuries.

A Roman Catholic priest reported (**bolding** in the original):

The worship of Saints and Martyrs ... By 250 this custom was established at Edessa. It became universal in the churches after great persecutions of Shapur (339-379). (Thomas BM, p. 7)

Only God is to be worshipped or venerated in the manner many Greco-Romans act towards their saints.

Notice, also, as late as the 5th century a Greco-Roman saint states that Mary is NOT to be adored:

The HAIL MARY did not exist as we pray it today ... The word JESUS was not added until the 14th century, and the second half of the prayer came later still. (Duffner PA, Priest. IN DEFENSE OF A TRADITION. The Rosary Light & Life - Vol 49, No 5, Sep-Oct 1996)

In c. 300 A.D., the Greco-Roman Bishop Lactantius wrote:

The same blindness everywhere oppresses the wretched men; for as they know not who is the true God, so they know not what constitutes true worship.

Therefore ... they kindle lights to Him, as though He were in darkness. But if they were able to conjecture or to conceive in their mind what those heavenly goods are, the greatness of which we cannot imagine, while we are still encompassed with an earthly body, they would at once know that they are most foolish with their empty offices. Or if they would contemplate that heavenly light which we call the sun, they will at once perceive how God has no need of their candles, who has Himself given so clear and bright a light for the use of man. (Lactantius. Divine Institutes, Book VI Of True Worship, Chapters 1-2. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7)

Lactantius was objecting to lighting candles as part of worship, yet this is now done by Greco-Romans for Jesus, Mary, various saints, and other reasons.

It was shortly after Constantine's rising up that candles were adopted by the Greco-Romans according to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*:

We need not shrink from admitting that candles, like incense and lustral water, were commonly employed in pagan worship and in the rites paid to the dead. But the Church from a very early period took them into her service, just as she adopted many other things indifferent in themselves, which seemed proper to enhance the splendour of religious ceremonial. ... Eusebius (*Vita Constant.*, IV, xxii) speaks of the "pillars of wax" with which Constantine transformed night into day, ... Not to speak of the decree of the Spanish council at Elvira (c. 300), which seems to condemn as an abuse some superstitious burning of candles during the daytime in cemeteries, ... Candles were, and are, commonly used to burn before shrines towards which the faithful wish to show special devotion. The candle burning its life out before a statue is no doubt felt in some ill-defined way to be symbolical of prayer and sacrifice. (Thurston H. Candles)

Well, the "very early period" candles were adopted appears to have been after the sun-worshipping Emperor Constantine became involved with the Greco-Roman churches.

In the CCOG, we hold to the original catholic practice of NOT lighting candles to/for Jesus, Mary, etc. We do not agree that it is biblically "proper to enhance the splendour of religious" ceremonies by adopting pagan practices. Notice this warning from the Bible:

²⁸ Observe and hear all the things that I command thee, that it may be well with thee and thy children after thee for ever, when thou shalt do what is good and pleasing in the sight of the Lord thy God. ²⁹ When the Lord thy God shall have destroyed before thy face the nations, which then shalt go in to possess, and when thou shalt possess them, and dwell in their land: ³⁰ Beware lest thou imitate them, after they are destroyed at thy coming in, and lest thou seek after their ceremonies, saying: As these nations have worshipped their gods, so will I also worship. ³¹ Thou shalt not do in like manner to the Lord thy God. For they have done to their gods all the abominations which the Lord abhorreth, offering their sons and daughters, and burning them with fire. ³² What I command thee, that only do thou to the Lord: neither add any thing, nor diminish. (Deuteronomy 12:28-32, DRB)

When pagans are converted, one should not add their practices to the true God. We in the CCOG do not endorse nor do that.

Consider also what Nehemiah said he did:

²⁹ Remember against them, my God, how they defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites! ³⁰ So I cleansed them of all foreign contamination. (Nehemiah 13:29-30, NABRE)

²⁹ Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. ³⁰ Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan. (Nehemiah 13:29-30, NKJV)

Nehemiah was a leader that God appointed and he rightly stood against foreign pagan contamination that had affected what was supposed to be the religion of God's people.

Yet, now notice the following by a Roman Catholic historian Durant:

Paganism survived ... by an often indulgent Church. An intimate and trustful worship of saints replaced the cult of pagan gods. Statues of Isis and Horus were renamed Mary and Jesus; the Roman Lupercalia and the feast of purification of Isis became the feast of Nativity; the Saturnalia were replaced by Christmas celebration, the Floralia by Pentecost, an ancient festival of the dead by All Souls' day, the resurrection of Attis by the resurrection of Christ. Pagan altars were rededicated to Christian heroes; incense, lights, flowers, processions, vestments, hymns, which had pleased the people in the older cults were domesticated and cleansed in the ritual of the Church; and the harsh slaughter of a living victim was sublimated in the spiritual sacrifice of the Mass. ... soon people and priests would use the sign of the cross as a magic incantation to expel or drive away demons. (Durant W. The Story of Civilization: A History of Medieval Civilization: A history of Medieval Civilization- Christian, Islamic and Judaic-from Constantine to Dante: AD325-1300, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1950)

In the late 2nd century, Tertullian condemned professors of Christ as idolaters who kept Saturnalia, had related wreaths, gave gifts in that season, and observed the pagan mid-winter New Year's (Tertullian. On Idolatry, Chapter XV). Original Christians did not celebrate pagan holidays or birthdays or a mid-winter New Year's (the Bible teaches that the first month for God's people begins around early Spring in Exodus 12:2). While much of what is called Halloween originally came from the pagan Druids, Satanists consider Halloween and birthdays two of their three biggest holidays, with Walpurgis Night the third biggest (Lavey A, Gilmore P. The Satanic Bible. Avon, September 1, 1976, p. 96).

December 25th was the birthday of the sun-god Mithras/Sol, and Emperor Constantine promoted that date as the birth of Christ. That date is now commonly referred to as Christmas.

A Roman Catholic priest correctly published that the date not chosen because it was the day Jesus was born, but to appeal to pagans:

Christmas day on December 25th to commemorate Christ nativity. The date was chosen deliberately and principally to draw the converts away from the pagan solemnities. (Tomas BM, p. 5)

As William Durant indicated, Greco-Roman practices associated with veneration of their saints do bear an uncanny resemblance to pagan worship practices.

Notice also:

There is no historical evidence that our Lord's birthday was celebrated during the apostolic or early postapostolic times. ... The earliest record of the recognition of Dec. 25 as a church festival is in the Philocalian Calendar (copied 354 but representing Roman practise in 336...) ...

The pagan Saturnalia and Brumalia were too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence. The recognition of Sunday (the day of Phœbus and Mithras as well as the Lord's Day) by the emperor Constantine as a legal holiday, along with the influence of Manicheism, which identified the Son of God with the physical sun, may have led Christians of the fourth century to feel the appropriateness of making the birthday of the Son of God coincide with that of the physical sun. The pagan festival with its riot and merrymaking was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit or in manner. Christian preachers of the West and the Nearer East protested against the unseemly frivolity with which Christ's birthday was celebrated, while **Christians of Mesopotamia accused their Western brethren of idolatry and sun-worship for adopting as Christian this pagan festival. Yet the festival rapidly gained acceptance** ... (Newman AH. Christmas. In The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge Embracing Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal, and Practical Theology and Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Biography from the Earliest Times to the Present Day · Volume 3. Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1910, p. 47-48)

Consider also that, the 'Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East' lists 'The Feast of the Nativity,' which it also calls Christmas, on 25 December, as the first of its "Holy Feasts" (Holy Feasts. <https://acote.church/holy-feasts> viewed 04/25/25)--despite the fact that its claim ancestors objected to it.

Here are to items related to the Eastern Orthodox Catholics:

The first recorded celebration of Orthodox Christmas took place in the year 336 AD in Rome. ... While the Orthodox Church adopted the Julian Calendar, many Orthodox Christians still celebrate Christmas on December 25th, following the tradition of Western Christians. However, some Orthodox Churches use the Julian Calendar to calculate Christmas, which falls on January 7th. (A History Timeline About Orthodox Christmas. History Timelines. <https://historytimelines.co/timeline/orthodox-christmas> accessed 04/28/25)

St. Chrysostom in a Christmas sermon, delivered at Antioch in the year 386, says, "it is not ten years since this day [Christmas Day on December 25] was clearly known to us, ..." (Addis WE, Arnold T. A Catholic Dictionary: Containing Some Account of the Doctrine, Discipline, Rites, Ceremonies, Councils, and Religious Orders of the Catholic Church. Benziger Brothers, 1893. Original from Columbia University, Digitized Sep 15, 2009, p. 178)

Unlike various churches calling themselves catholic, the true Church of God did not accept the re-labelled pagan practices.

The Bible condemns the pagan practice of using trees and decorating them (Jeremiah 10:2-4). Furthermore, it warns against the use of evergreens in worship (cf. Deuteronomy 12:2-4; Jeremiah 3:13). The then Roman-Catholic supporting historian Tertullian condemned the use of wreaths and evergreens in the late 2nd early 3rd centuries in December/January of the year (Tertullian. On Idolatry, Chapter X).

Centuries ago, Roman Catholics condemned Protestantism as a “tannebaum religion” because of its use of Christmas trees (Felton E. The Stranger in the House, but eventually adopted them for themselves. Wall Street Journal, November 16, 2012). This author has seen the use of them in Vatican City, and they most certainly were not believed to be Christian by original Catholics.

Confession and Penance?

While the Bible clearly teaches repentance (e.g. Acts 2:38), what about auricular confession and penance?

Scripture states:

¹⁶ Confess therefore your sins one to another: and pray one for another, that you may be saved. For the continual prayer of a just man availeth much. (James 5:16, DRB)

Notice that this was not a command to confess sins to the clergy/ministry.

Here is the other time the Bible specifically talks about confessing sins:

⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he also is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:7-10, DRB)

The above says that Christians are to confess sins, and Jesus will forgive them. There is no discussion of penance here or in James 5:16.

The 1st century *Letter to the Corinthians* (often called I Clement) teaches similarly about confession and repentance:

Let us look steadfastly to the blood of Christ, and see how precious that blood is to God which, having been shed for our salvation, has set the grace of repentance before the whole world. Let us turn to every age that has passed, and learn that, from generation to generation, the Lord has granted a place of repentance to all such as would be converted unto Him. Noah preached repentance, and as many as listened to him were saved ... The Lord, brethren, stands in need of nothing; and He desires nothing of any one except that confession be made to Him ... You therefore, who laid the foundation of this sedition, submit yourselves to the presbyters, and receive correction so as to repent, bending the knees of your hearts. (Letter to the Corinthians, Chapters 7,52,57).

In the 2nd century, Ignatius of Antioch wrote:

And as many as shall, in the exercise of repentance, return into the unity of the Church, these, too, shall belong to God, that they may live according to Jesus Christ. (Ignatius. Letter to the Philadelphians, Chapters 3)

Ignatius was teaching that those who left the church should be allowed back if they repent. That is not the same as teaching that the individuals who left the faith have to fulfill a form of prescribed penance.

The Roman Callistus was a factor in getting more involvement from some of the clergy. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* reported:

Pope Callistus (218-22) published his “peremptory edict” in which he declares: “I forgive the sins both of adultery and of fornication to those who have done penance.” (Hanna, The Sacrament of Penance)

Because of Callistus’ decrees and actions, Tertullian, after he discontinued any fellowship with the Roman Church himself, sarcastically dubbed him “our good pontifex maximus” (Tertullian. De Pudicitia, Chapter 1, verse 10).

According to Greco-Roman saint and bishop Augustine, auricular confession to a priest was not a required practice in the 4th/5th century—instead he advised people to pray to God for forgiveness:

15. Forgiveness of sins. You have [this article of] the Creed perfectly in you when you receive Baptism. ... For the sake of all sins was Baptism provided; for the sake of light sins, without which we cannot be, was prayer provided. What has the Prayer? Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. Once for all we have washing in Baptism, every day we have washing in prayer. (Augustine. Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed, Chapter 15. In: Seventeen short treatises of S. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo. Volume 22 of Library of fathers of the Holy Catholic Church. J. H. Parker, 1847, p. 575)

The Catholic Encyclopedia, however, has pointed to John 20:23 as proof that auricular confession is to be made to priests. Let’s look at it in context:

²¹ and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' ²² After saying this he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained. (John 20:21-23, NJB)

What is the problem with citing that as proof of private confession with a priest from the beginning?

For one, no early leader in the Church of God or Greco-Roman Catholic churches believed that this meant that Christians were supposed to confess each of their sins to a priest who would then prescribe penance. This is clear from early church history as well as what the current *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches.

Historically, here is how the Church of God has explained John 20:23:

Some try to use John 20:23 to prove that persons in ecclesiastical offices have the power to forgive sins. This verse reads: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (New King James Version). However, it does not mean that mere men can actually forgive sins in a spiritual sense. God alone can forgive sins (Mark 2:7-10; Luke 5:21-24). Christ spoke these words to His future apostles in the context of the Church authority He was giving them (see John 20:21)--the power to disfellowship those who were dissenters or heretics (see I Corinthians 5:2 and I Timothy 1:20) and bring them back into the congregation upon repentance (II Cor. 2:6-10). (Letter 032. Confession. Personal Correspondence Course. Worldwide Church of God, January 1989)

The above is how early professors of Christ seemed to understand the Church of God's authority, along with the fact that Church has the biblical right to "mark" dissenters (Romans 16:17, DRB). Forgiveness was related to allowing the marked or disfellowshipped to return.

Yet, the Council of Trent in the 16th century declared the following:

CANON VI.--If any one denieth, either that sacramental confession was instituted, or is necessary to salvation, of divine right; or saith, that the manner of confessing secretly to a priest alone, which the Church hath ever observed from the beginning, and doth observe, is alien from the institution and command of Christ, and is a human invention; let him be anathema. (The Council of Trent The Fourteenth Session: The canons and decrees of the sacred and ecumenical Council of Trent, Ed. and trans. J. Waterworth, London: Dolman, 1848, Reprint Hanover Historical Texts, 1995, pp. 92-121)

That, however, differs from what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches:

1447 Over the centuries the concrete form in which the Church has exercised this power received from the Lord has varied considerably. During the first centuries the reconciliation of Christians who had committed particularly grave sins after their Baptism (for example, idolatry, murder, or adultery) was tied to a very rigorous discipline, according to which penitents had to do public penance for their sins, often for years, before receiving reconciliation. To this "order of penitents" (which concerned only certain grave sins), one was only rarely admitted and in certain regions only once in a lifetime. During **the seventh century** Irish missionaries, inspired by the Eastern monastic tradition, took to continental Europe the "private" practice of penance, which does not require public and prolonged completion of penitential works before reconciliation with the Church. From that time on, the sacrament has been performed in secret between penitent and priest. **This new practice envisioned the possibility of repetition and so opened the way to a regular frequenting of this sacrament.** It allowed the forgiveness of grave sins and venial sins to be integrated into one sacramental celebration. In its main lines this is the form of penance that the Church has practiced down to our day. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 31).

Therefore, it should be clear auricular private confession was NOT “ever observed from the beginning.” So, the Council of Trent, which made statements of dogma and faith and were approved by the Pope, was in error as it contradicts church history and this is basically now admitted by Rome’s *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The truth is that the original catholic church did not believe in auricular confession to priests nor did it advise penance.

Seven Sacraments?

The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches claim what they call seven sacraments. Their lists are similar, but not identical.

The Eastern Orthodox list and explanation is closer to the original catholic church than Rome’s list.

The Eastern Orthodox Church (Fitzgerald T. The Sacraments. St. George Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church. <http://www.stgeorgenj.com/the-seven-sacraments-of-the-orthodox-church.html> accessed 08/06/21) and the CCOG both teach:

- 1) Baptism (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38).
- 2) Laying on of hands after baptism (Acts 19:5-6).
- 3) Confession of sins to God (1 John 1:9).
- 4) Eucharist, normally referred to as Passover in the CCOG (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- 5) Marriage (Matthew 19:6).
- 6) Ordained ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- 7) Anointing the sick (James 5:14-16).

Rome teaches that Confirmation replaces 2 above and confession to a priest is preferred for 3 above.

The Bible does not refer to the term “seven sacraments,” but as the list above shows, there is scriptural support for the seven items that the CCOG endorses.

Saved to Do What?

Some feel that eternity will be spent primarily gazing upon the face of God. This is known as the ‘Beatific Vision.’

While the Bible teaches we can see God’s face forever (Psalm 41:12), the Beatific Vision is taught by various Greco-Roman faiths as the Christian reward and purpose of the creation.

Here is how the *New World Encyclopedia* describes it:

The **Beatific Vision** is a term in Catholic theology describing the direct perception of God enjoyed by those who are in Heaven, imparting supreme happiness or blessedness. In this view, humans' understanding of God while alive is necessarily indirect (mediated), while the Beatific Vision is direct (immediate). ...

Thomas Aquinas explained the Beatific Vision as the ultimate goal of human existence after physical death. Aquinas' formulation of beholding God in Heaven parallels Plato's description of beholding the Good in the world of the Forms, which is not possible while still in the physical body.

...

The philosophy of Plato hints at the concept of the Beatific Vision in the Allegory of the cave, which appears in the Republic Book 7 (514a-520a), speaking through the character of Socrates:

My opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good (the Good) appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual (517b,c).

For Plato, the Good appears to correspond to God in Christian theology. ...

St. Cyprian of Carthage (third century) wrote of the saved seeing God in the Kingdom of Heaven. How great will your glory and happiness be, to be allowed to see God, to be honored with sharing the joy of salvation and eternal light with Christ your Lord and God... to delight in the joy of immortality in the Kingdom of Heaven with the righteous and God's friends. ...

In the thirteenth century, philosopher-theologian Thomas Aquinas, following his teacher Albertus Magnus, described the ultimate goal of a human life as consisting in the intellectual Beatific Vision of God's essence after death. According to Aquinas, the Beatific Vision surpasses both faith and reason. ...

George Fox and the other early Quakers believed that direct experience of God was available to all people, without mediation. (Beatific Vision. New World Encyclopedia, 2013. accessed 04/16/19)

Those who accept versions of the Beatific Vision as the end goal, the hope of salvation, tend to think that seeing God will fill them with His or their own happiness.

Here is an opposing view of that vision from a onetime Church of God writer:

If eternity is to be spent gazing blissfully up into God's face, or having our every wish immediately fulfilled — as many religions teach — after a few months (or after a few octillion years, it doesn't really matter), life would get boring. And once life got boring, it would be sickeningly and fiendishly terrifying. Because there would remain nothing but an unending eternity of boredom

to come — with death a wonderful but impossible way of escape (see Luke 20:35-38). This would indeed be the ultimate torture.

But our Eternal Father has a better idea. He has designed a plan in which eternity will not grow progressively more boring. But, as unbelievable as it seems, eternity will grow progressively more exciting, more scintillating, and more enjoyable as each eon follows eon. (Kuhn RL. The God Family – Part Three: To Inhabit Eternity. Good News, July 1974)

Yes, God made what He did so that eternity could be better. Notice something from a deceased Church of God writer:

The God who put this world together did so with a plan in mind. That plan was not the hopeless Nirvana of one major religion of the world which promises you will become an unconscious part of the great whole of nothing with no worries forever — because you have no individual consciousness forever. It is not the bliss of slumbering in a hammock slung between two date palms in an oasis, being fed by voluptuous maidens forever, the promise of which the followers of Allah are assured. It is not walking the golden streets with golden slippers, strumming on a harp with your only worry being how to keep your halo straight, as seems to be the promise of the majority of Protestant groups. It is most certainly not the promise of finally being able to look into the face of God and appreciate the beatific vision (whatever that is), as is the promise to those who follow the Catholic faith: What the God who created everything proposes is to bring you into His very family. To be God as God is God! Not just to be a God in the euphemistic sense of us all being brothers and sisters with God as our figurehead Father, but to share His divine nature completely. ...

God's real plan is practical. He says of His family Kingdom that there will never be an end to its expansion. His plan is to continue adding sons and daughters who look, feel, act like Him and who are composed of the same self-regenerating eternal spirit life as He is, forever! That is why the goal God has set before Himself is a hope that not even He will ever fulfil. Endless, eternal, forever creating an ever-expanding family to enjoy and rule the great creation He has already made — and to have you and me share in future creations without end. A busy, practical, interesting, challenging, ongoing plan that gives an eternal reason to live.

There is no boredom in that plan. Never a time when your interest will run out. No mythical, religious-sounding folderol about some spiritual never-never land where you do nothing forever — but an eternal job of creating, governing! Problem-solving with visible benefit. ... He has the power to resurrect you ... (Hill DJ. What the World Needs Now Is...HOPE. Plain Truth, February 1979)

Notice something from a late Church of God leader:

"If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). This should be a time of HOPE, because even if THIS WORLD dies — and it shall — there will follow a **RESURRECTION of a new and better world** — a world at PEACE — a world of contentment, happiness, abundance, JOY! God help us to

comprehend! Not merely continuous existence — but the full, happy, interesting, ABUNDANT life! Yes — and that for ALL ETERNITY! (Armstrong HW. What Is the Purpose of the Resurrection? Good News, March 1982)

Eternity, itself, will not be better just because of being saints being changed from mortal to immortal (1 Corinthians 15:54). Eternity will be better because God will only change those who willingly obeyed Him and built character while alive in the flesh, so they will be better to reign with Him (Revelation 5:10).

Because many do not fully understand scripture, they have promoted views, like the beatific vision, which are not fully consistent with God's plan.

Us looking at God does not, of itself, make eternity better. Though His blessing us forever certainly will do that (cf. Psalm 72:17-19).

All Things Created for Jesus

The New Testament teaches this related to Jesus and the creation:

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. Colossians 1:15-16, OSB)

² ... His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; ³ who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, (Hebrews 1:2-3, OSB)

Now, were we simply created to look at Jesus for eternity?

No, that is not the hope of salvation.

Notice why Jesus said He came:

¹⁰ ... I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10, OSB)

By having "life" and having it "more abundantly," Jesus is teaching that He came so that we could have a better eternity and that we could help make eternity better.

God did not create humans for the purpose of humans staring at Him for all eternity.

Humans Were Created to Make Eternity Better

God has a job for each person individually:

¹⁵ If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time in the grave I will wait, until my change comes. (Job 14:15, AFV)

Each human being is the work of God's hands! He has a plan for everyone who will properly respond to Him and it involves doing a work to help make eternity better.

The CCOG teaches that God made humanity to reproduce Himself and be part of His family (Malachi 2:15). He made us to share in His glory (Romans 8:17) and to rule the universe (Hebrews 2:5-17).

Jesus taught:

³⁵ It is a more blessed thing to give, rather than to receive. (Acts 20:35, DRB).

³⁵ There is more happiness in giving than in receiving. (Acts 20:35, NJB).

God MADE humanity in order to give love (cf. 1 John 4:7-12) and so that there would be more love in the universe (cf. Matthew 22:37-39). The Father sent Jesus so that all, but the incorrigible, can be saved (John 3:16-17).

The CCOG teaches that God made humans so each one could give love in a unique way (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:20-13:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:12) to make eternity better for themselves and all others who will heed God. That, in essence, is the CCOG hope of salvation.

But how do we move towards that?

Essentially, by now living by faith and obedience to God in this life.

Christians, themselves, later will be changed and perfected at the first resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:50-54) in order to help give love and actually make eternity better.

The Apostle Paul referred to this change as "a mystery" (1 Corinthians 15:51).

Those who are currently non-Christian will have this opportunity after they are resurrected.

God created what He did so eternity would be better (cf. Hebrews 6:9,11:16; Philippians 1:23). Not so humans would simply be in awe of Him for eternity. For more details, see our free online book, available at www.ccog.org, titled *The Mystery of God's Plan: Why did create anything? Why did God make you?*

Immortality and Heaven

Ezekiel was inspired to write:

⁴ For all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son, they are mine: the soul that sins, it shall die. (Jezekiel 18:4, Septuagint)

Solomon was inspired to write:

⁵ For the living will know that they shall die: but the dead know nothing ... (Ecclesiastes 9:5, Septuagint)

Jesus said:

¹³ No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of man; (John 3:13, NJB)

Hence, people like Moses, Enoch, Elijah, Abraham had not gone to heaven according to Jesus' words.

The Roman Catholic saint Hippolytus wrote:

The Father of immortality sent the immortal Son and Word into the world, who came to man in order to wash him with water and the Spirit; and He, begetting us again to incorruption of soul and body, breathed into us the breath (spirit) of life, and endued us with an incorruptible panoply. If, therefore, man has become immortal, he will also be God. And if he is made God by water and the Holy Spirit after the regeneration of the layer he is found to be also joint-heir with Christ after the resurrection from the dead (Hippolytus. The Discourse on the Holy Theophany, Chapter 8).

The Apostle Paul wrote:

¹⁵ ... the King of kings and the Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal ... (1 Timothy 6:15-16, NJB)

¹⁵ ... the King of kings, and Lord of lords; ¹⁶ Who only hath immortality (1 Timothy 6:15-16, DRB)

2 Clement states:

14:5 So excellent is the life and immortality which this flesh can receive as its portion, if the Holy Spirit be joined to it. (2 Clement 14:5)

Greco-Roman saint Justin Martyr wrote:

For if you have fallen in with **some who are called Christians**, but ... **who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians.** (Justin. Dialogue with Trypho. Chapter 80)

Early Christians did not teach that humans had an immortal soul or that they went to heaven upon death. Justin also specifically taught that souls were not immortal (Dialogue. Chapter 4-5).

The idea that humans could not die as they possessed immortality was, according to Justin, believed by false Christians who descended from Simon Magus:

“To Simon the holy God.” And almost all the Samaritans, and a few even of other nations, worship him, and acknowledge him as the first god; and a woman, Helena, who went about with him at that time, and had formerly been a prostitute, they say is the first idea generated by him. And a man, Meander, also a Samaritan, of the town Capparetaea, a disciple of Simon, and inspired by devils, we know to have deceived many while he was in Antioch by his magical art. He persuaded those who adhered to him that they should never die, and even now there are some living who hold this opinion of his...All who take their opinions from these men, are, as we before said, called Christians; just as also those who do not agree with the philosophers in their doctrines, have yet in common with them the name of philosophers given to them...But I have a treatise against all the heresies that have existed already composed, which, if you wish to read it, I will give you (Justin. First Apology, Chapter XXVI. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1)

The Gnostics, which were denounced by early Christian leaders, taught heaven (Fairchild MR. Christian Originas in Ephesus & Asia Minor, 2nd ed. Hendrickson Publishers, 2017, p. 126) as did various pagans.

Furthermore:

Platonists entering the church during the second and third centuries brought with them their confidence that they had an “immortal soul,” they also brought with them their notion that, following death, the souls of those departed entered into a place called Hades. (Milovec A, Catherine of Siena Virtual College. How the mission of Jesus in Hades expanded during the first three centuries. Academic Letters, 2021)

But the true and faithful church did NOT accept such changes.

While apostates, certain Greek philosophers (e.g. Plato), false documents, and Mithraism taught immortality and going to heaven (and hell), the reality is that this was not a teaching of the New Testament nor early professors of Christ.

In what is commonly called *1 Clement*, there is the following:

24. Day and night declare to us a resurrection. The night sinks to sleep, and the day arises; the day [again] departs, and the night comes on.

44. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect foreknowledge of this, they appointed those already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry.

50. For it is written, “Enter into your secret chambers for a little time, until my wrath and fury pass away; and I will remember a propitious day, and will raise you up out of your graves.”

Yes, death was portrayed like sleep and a resurrection was taught by true Christians.

Theophilus of Antioch taught:

For if He had made him immortal from the beginning, He would have made him God. ... Neither, then, immortal nor yet mortal did He make him, but, as we have said above, capable of both; so that if he should incline to the things of immortality, keeping the commandment of God, he should receive as reward from Him immortality ... (Theophilus, To Autolycus, 1:3, 2:27)

So, the COG leader and Greco-Roman-COG saint Theophilus declared humans were NOT made immortal.

The Catholic Encyclopedia teaches:

the doctrine of immortality ... received its complete philosophical elaboration from St. Thomas. Accepting the Aristotelean theory ... Aquinas ... holds that we can prove the fact of the soul's conscious life when separate from the body. (Maher M. Immortality)

Thomas Aquinas also looked to Plato for his justification (Ibid). Thus, the complete elaboration of the immortality of the soul doctrine for the Roman Church did not happen until the 13th century -- and pagan philosophers, as well as false documents, were involved.

One document, that the Romans for a time considered to be scripture, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, has people in heaven right after death (*The Shepherd of Hermas* 1:4-6). But, *The Shepherd of Hermas* is not scripture, but has demonic and pagan overtones.

Now, notice something that the *Biblical Archaeological Society* asserted:

... the "Apocalypse of Peter," the first Christian writing to describe a journey through Heaven and Hell (Heaven and the Place Below. Biblical Archaeological Society. April 30, 2021)

But the *Apocalypse of Peter* is a fake 2nd century document, a pseudepigraphal writing—it was not written by Peter (who died in the 1st century) nor any real Christian.

Yet, many accept versions of what it declared. It is NOT a Christian writing.

The false *Apocalypse of Peter* has the following regarding punishment of the unsaved:

²⁰. And over against that place I saw another, squalid, and it was the place of punishment; and those who were punished there and the punishing angels had their raiment dark like the air of the place.

²¹. And there were certain there hanging by the tongue: and these were the blasphemers of the way of righteousness; and under them lay fire, burning and punishing them. ²². And there was a

great lake, full of flaming mire, in which were certain men that pervert righteousness, and tormenting angels afflicted them.

²³. And there were also others, women, hanged by their hair over that mire that bubbled up: and these were they who adorned themselves for adultery; and the men who mingled with them in the defilement of adultery, were hanging by the feet and their heads in that mire. And I said: I did not believe that I should come into this place.

24. And I saw the murderers and those who conspired with them, cast into a certain strait place, full of evil snakes, and smitten by those beasts, and thus turning to and fro in that punishment; and worms, as it were clouds of darkness, afflicted them.

While early Christians taught annihilation, pagan concepts like the above, as well as from Mithraism, began to be accepted by those who did not hold to the original catholic faith.

A Roman Catholic priest wrote of pagan connections:

The resemblances between Mithraism and Christianity may be quickly summed up,—belief in the immortality of the soul ... heaven ... (Aiken CF. Mithraism and Christianity. The Catholic University bulletin, Volume 19, 1913, p. 380).

As far as heaven goes, here are some items from Anglican bishop and 21st century historian, Dr. N.T. Wright wrote:

One of the central stories of the Bible, many people believe, is that there is a heaven and an earth and that human souls have been exiled from heaven and are serving out time here on earth until they can return. Indeed, for most modern Christians, the idea of “going to heaven when you die” is not simply one belief among others, but the one that seems to give a point to it all.

But the people who believed in that kind of “heaven” when the New Testament was written were not the early Christians. They were the “Middle Platonists” — people like Plutarch ...

The followers of the Jesus-movement ... believed ... [t]he point was not for us to “go to heaven,” but for the life of heaven to arrive on earth. Jesus taught his followers to pray: “Thy kingdom come on earth as in heaven.” From as early as the third century, some Christian teachers tried to blend this with types of the Platonic belief, generating the idea of “leaving earth and going to heaven,” which became mainstream by the Middle Ages. But Jesus’ first followers never went that route. ...

What then was the personal hope for Jesus’ followers? Ultimately, resurrection — a new and immortal physical body in God’s new creation. But, after death and before that final reality, a period of blissful rest. (Wright NT. The New Testament Doesn’t Say What Most People Think It Does About Heaven. Time, December 16, 2019)

First-century Jews who believed Jesus was Messiah also believed he inaugurated the Kingdom of God ... Wright said. This inauguration, however, was far from complete and required the active participation of God's people practicing social justice, nonviolence and forgiveness to become fulfilled. (Murawshi J. N.T. Wright Asks: Have Christians Gotten Heaven All Wrong? Huffington Post, May 17, 2012)

The modern doctrine of going to heaven upon death simply was not part of early Christianity or taught in the New Testament. Christians taught the resurrection. And that Christians would then reign with Jesus for 1,000 years on the earth (Revelation 20:4-6). We in the CCOG continue with those original catholic beliefs today.

Sadly because of the influence by the pre-Christian Plato, false documents, and the sun-god worshipping Emperor Constantine in the 4th century, many pagan ideas became adopted by the Greco-Romans, out of whom, the Protestants later sprang.

The heaven as the reward of the saved has further been grabbed a hold of by Protestants as they tend to claim the earth is too flawed, but heaven is spiritual so people will not have problems like on earth.

But heaven as the reward of the saved simply was not the original Christian belief.

11. Sabbath or Sunday?

One of the Ten Commandments is:

⁸ 'Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. ⁹ For six days you shall labour and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath for Yahweh your God. You shall do no work that day, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your servants, men or women, nor your animals nor the alien living with you. ¹¹ For in six days Yahweh made the heavens, earth and sea and all that these contain, but on the seventh day he rested; that is why Yahweh has blessed the Sabbath day and made it sacred. (Exodus 20:8-11, NJB)

This was considered the 4th commandment by original catholics, and still is considered so by the CCOG, the Eastern Orthodox, and most Protestants (Roman Catholics and Lutherans consider it to be the third commandment). God made the seventh-day sacred in Genesis 2:1-3.

The seventh-day of the week in ancient times is the day commonly called Saturday in English.

The Greco-Roman churches as well as the CCOG teach that Saturday is the Sabbath:

The Orthodox believe that Sabbath is Saturday (to this day, the Greek word for Saturday is pronounced 'sabbado' - as is the case in many other languages). (Cleenewerck L, editor. Orthodox Answers: Sabbath. <http://www.orthodoxanswers.org/details.asp?ID=10> viewed 06/13/09)

345 The sabbath ... The sacred text says that “on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done” ... and that God “rested on this day and sanctified and blessed it.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 100)

However, unlike the CCOG, the Greco-Roman churches do not teach that one needs to refrain from work that day nor have a “holy convocation” then (though many Greco-Romans do attend church services on Saturday).

Did original catholics attend weekly church services on Saturday or Sunday?

Before answering that, consider that Jesus taught:

⁴ “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” (Matthew 4:4, OSB)

Jesus was specifically referring to the Hebrew scriptures, commonly referred to as the Old Testament, and He attended synagogue on Saturdays (e.g. Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16).

Consider also that the Apostle Paul taught ALL scriptures were profitable (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and he attended on Saturdays as well (Acts 13:13-14, 42-45, 16:13, 18:1-4).

We know that the Old Testament enjoined the seventh-day Sabbath (e.g. Exodus 20:8-11) on at least the children of Israel (and those that dwelt among them, cf. Exodus 12:49). In modern times, the seventh day of the week is known as Saturday.

But do the portions of scriptures known as the New Testament actual enjoin keeping the seventh day Sabbath for Christians?

Notice which day Jesus taught He was Lord of:

⁸ For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath. (Matthew 12:8, EOB)

²⁸ Therefore the Son of man is also Lord of the sabbath. (Mark 2:28, DRB)

⁵ "The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath." (Luke 6:5, NABRE)

So, the Sabbath is clearly the Lord's day. The Apostle Paul, who also kept the Sabbath (cf. Acts 28:17; Philippians 3:5), taught to imitate (or follow) him as he imitated Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Furthermore, the New Testament specifically enjoins keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. Let's see several translations that show this:

³ However, we who have faith are entering into that rest, even as God said: As I swore in my wrath, they will not enter into my rest. And yet, the works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ Somewhere [else], God said this about the seventh day: God rested on the seventh day from all his works. ... ⁹ There must still be, then, a Sabbath rest for God's people, ¹⁰ and anyone who has entered into his rest has also rested from his [own] works, just as God did. ¹¹ Therefore, let us do our utmost to enter into that rest, for fear that anyone should fall according to the same pattern of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:3-4, 9-11. EOB)

³ We, however, who have faith, are entering a place of rest, as in the text: And then in my anger I swore that they would never enter my place of rest. Now God's work was all finished at the beginning of the world; ⁴ as one text says, referring to the seventh day: And God rested on the seventh day after all the work he had been doing. ⁵ And, again, the passage above says: They will never reach my place of rest. ⁶ It remains the case, then, that there would be some people who would reach it, and since those who first heard the good news were prevented from entering by their refusal to believe ... ⁹ There must still be, therefore, a seventh-day rest reserved for God's people, ¹⁰ since to enter the place of rest is to rest after your work, as God did after his. ¹¹ Let us, then, press forward to enter this place of rest, or some of you might copy this example of refusal to believe and be lost. (Hebrews 4:3-6,9-11, NJB)

³ For we, that have believed, shall enter into their rest; as he said: As I sware in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: and truly the works from the foundation of the world being perfected. ⁴ For he said in a certain place of the seventh day thus: And God rested the seventh day from all his works ... ⁹ Therefore there is left a sabbatisme for the people of God. ¹⁰ For he that is entered into

his rest, the same also hath rested from his works, as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us hasten therefore to enter into that rest; lest any man fall into the same example of incredulity. (Hebrews 4:3-6,9-11, RNT 1582)

³ For we who believed enter into [that] rest, just as he has said: "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter into my rest,'" and yet his works were accomplished at the foundation of the world.

⁴ For he has spoken somewhere about the seventh day in this manner, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works"; ⁵ and again, in the previously mentioned place, "They shall not enter into my rest." ⁶ Therefore, since it remains that some will enter into it, and those who formerly received the good news did not enter because of disobedience,... ⁹ Therefore, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God. ¹⁰ And whoever enters into God's rest, rests from his own works as God did from his. ¹¹ Therefore, let us strive to enter into that rest, so that no one may fall after the same example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:3-6,9-11, NABRE)

Thus, this clearly shows that the command to keep the seventh day Sabbath is in the New Testament. The seventh-day Sabbath remains for the faithful Christians. The New Testament also shows that only those who will not observe it, because of their disobedience, argue otherwise. Early Christians realized that the Sabbath was in place for God's people.

How important is obedience? Notice what the next chapter of Hebrews teaches:

⁹ ... he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:9, NJB)

⁹ ... He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9, OSB)

⁹ ... He became the Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him, (Hebrews 5:9, AFV)

Obviously, that would include obeying Him (Jesus) on the seventh-day Sabbath commandment, particularly because a warning of disobeying that was mentioned in the chapter preceding this.

The Apostle John

As an observant Jew, and possibly a Levite, the Apostle John would have kept the seventh-day Sabbath.

An historical, though questionable, flawed document called the *Acts of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian* has the following:

John ... on the seventh day, it being the Lord's day, he said to them: Now it is time for me also to partake of food. ...

John went to Ephesus, and regulated all the teaching of the church, holding many conferences, and reminding them of what the Lord had said to them, and what duty he had assigned to each. And when he was old and changed, he ordered Polycarp to be bishop over the church. (Acts of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian. Translated by Alexander Walker. From Ante-

Nicene Fathers, Vol. 8. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, 1885, p. 561)

While the above is not scripture, notice that it identifies the “Lord’s Day” as the seventh day of the week, hence provides evidence that the ‘Lord’s Day’ was not universally understood then to be Sunday.

The idea that the seventh day as the original Lord’s Day is consistent with Jesus’ own words in about which day He is Lord of.

We also see this report points to the belief that John put Polycarp over the church. This seems to be a reference to the entire church as it only mentions Ephesus and Polycarp was in Smyrna. Or at minimum, this is showing that the Apostle John put Polycarp in charge of what might be called the See of Ephesus or See of Smyrna.

The New Testament shows that Christians in Asia Minor kept the Sabbath (cf. Acts 13:13-14, 42; 14:1).

The evidence of your Bible proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that Christians in God’s original Apostolic Church observed the seventh-day Sabbath! (Lesson 28 - The Sabbath Is The Most Important Day! Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, 1967, p. 10)

Historical records support that as well.

Furthermore, it is known that Gentile Christians were keeping the seventh-day Sabbath:

[T]here are many traces of continual Sabbath-keeping, especially among Greek-speaking churches in the East ... Christians in Smyrna were still keeping the Sabbath around 156 A.D. (Zivadinovic D. REVISED and CORRECTED “SABBATH in the EAST.” Andrews University, 2016).

The East includes places like Asia Minor and Antioch.

Jerusalem Bishops

Early faithful Christian leaders in Jerusalem kept the Sabbath. Notice what the 4th century Greco-Roman historian Eusebius wrote:

James, the first that had obtained the episcopal seat in Jerusalem after the ascension of our Saviour ... until the siege of the Jews, which took place under Adrian, there were fifteen bishops in succession there, all of whom are said to have been of Hebrew descent, and to **have received the knowledge of Christ in purity**, ... For their whole church consisted then of believing Hebrews who continued from the days of the apostles until the siege which took place at this time ... the bishops of Jerusalem that lived between the age of the apostles and the time referred to, all of them belonging to the circumcision. (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book III, Chapter V, Verses 2,3. & Book IV, Chapter 5, Verses 2-4, pp. 45, 71)

It is universally believed by historical scholars that all the fifteen pre-135 A.D. Jerusalem bishops that Eusebius referred to, which included James (known as the brother of Jesus), Symeon, Justus, Zacchæus, Tobias, Benjamin, John, Matthias, Philip, Seneca, Justus, Levi, Ephres, Joseph, and Judas all kept the seventh-day Sabbath (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book III, Chapter V, Verses 2,3 & Book IV, Chapter 5, Verses 2-4, pp. 45, 71).

Those leaders are all considered to be saints by our church as well as by the Greco-Roman-Protestant churches.

Consider then that all those “early fathers” kept the Saturday Sabbath and it was the practice of the original Christian church (see also Bacchiocchi S. From Sabbath to Sunday. Imprimatur 16 Junii 1975 RP Herve. The Pontifical Gregorian Press, 1977, pp. 132-164).

Understand that since the 1st and early 2nd century Christian leaders in Jerusalem “received the knowledge of Christ in purity,” their teachings should have been continued.

Those bishops/pastors were keeping the Sabbath until after Judas of Jerusalem (who was the last one) died (c. 134-135 A.D.) and Emperor Hadrian took over Jerusalem. These Jewish Christian leaders obviously did not believe that the Sabbath was done away over a century since Jesus was resurrected.

Because of the Jewish revolt, Emperor Hadrian outlawed many practices considered to be Jewish, including the Sabbath (as well as Passover on the 14th). The 20th century historian Salo W. Barron wrote:

Hadrian ... According to rabbinic sources, he prohibited public gatherings for instruction in Jewish law, forbade the proper observance of the Sabbath and holidays and outlawed many important rituals. (Barron SW. Social and Religious History of the Jews, Volume 2: Christian Era: the First Five Centuries. Columbia University Press, 1952, p. 107)

In the early 2nd century, the Christians in Judea were forced to make a decision. They either could continue to keep the Sabbath and the rest of God’s laws and flee, or they could compromise and support a religious leader (Marcus) who would not keep the Sabbath, etc. Sadly, many who claimed Christ made the wrong choice.

But not all did and some returned to Jerusalem per Dr. Bagatti:

Jerusalem ... the Judeao-Christians, after having left the city for a time, returned very quickly. This is explained by the fact that a distinction was made between the Jew and the Judeao-Christians ...

A half a century after Hadrian’s war we meet in the community an open dispute between the Hellenistic hierarchy and the Judeao-Christian faithful ... bishop Narcissus ... at the Council of Caesaria (196) ... established that Easter {Passover} should be celebrated on a Sunday instead of the 14th of Nisan. ... the Judeao-Christians were convinced that the traditional day of Nisan the 14th was not capable of change. ...

In the 4th century, we find the Judeo-Christians installed on Sion, in the primitive centre of the church {in the Cenacle building there} with the bishops of gentile stock installed at the Holy Sepulchre. (Bagatti. The Church from the Circumcision, pp. 9-10)

Various Greco-Romans in the 4th and 5th centuries referred to them as Nazarenes (Ibid, p. 13).

Eusebius wrote:

The chair of James, who first received the episcopate of the church at Jerusalem from the Saviour himself and the apostles, and who, as the divine records show, was called a brother of Christ, has been preserved until now, the brethren who have followed him in succession there exhibiting clearly to all the reverence which both those of old times and those of our own day maintained and do maintain for holy men on account of their piety. So much as to this matter. (Eusebius. Church History. Book VII, Chapter 19, pp. 155-156)

It would have been great if Eusebius would have listed the names of the later bishops, but he did not. But notice he claimed they existed into the fourth century, which was his time. There was one Judeo-Christian who lived near Jerusalem in the 3rd century until his martyrdom c. 311, Peter Absalon (Bagatti, The Church from the Circumcision, p. 16) --also known as Peter Abselamus, Peter Balsamus, and Peter of Atroa. He reportedly taught “the kingdom of God” (Eusebius. HISTORY OF THE MARTYRS IN PALESTINE. Edited by William Cureton. WILLIAMS AND NORRIS, London, 1861). Perhaps this Peter was considered the Jewish bishop of Jerusalem in the late 3rd to early 4th century.

Theophilus of Antioch

Theophilus taught the following about the Sabbath:

And on the sixth day God finished His works which He made, and rested on the seventh day from all His works which He made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because in it He rested from all His works which God began to create ... Moreover, [they spoke] concerning the seventh day, which all men acknowledge; but the most know not that what among the Hebrews is called the “Sabbath,” is translated into Greek the “Seventh” (ebdomas), a name which is adopted by every nation, although they know not the reason of the appellation. ... Of this great and wonderful law, which tends to all righteousness, the ten heads are such as we have already rehearsed (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapters XI, XII; Book III, Chapter IX. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 2).

Theophilus, thus, endorsed the seven-day Sabbath as one of the Ten Commandments. He also wrote a treatise against Marcion who opposed the Sabbath (Eusebius of Caesarea, Ecclesiastical History, Syriac version, Book 4 Extract, Chapter 24. Spicilegium Syriacum, 1855).

Hence, this is consistent with the view that Theophilus and those in Antioch observed the seventh day Sabbath—as does the later testimony from others.

Recognitions, Irenaeus, Origen, and Other Greco-Romans

Notice the following admission from a 1701 Sunday-keeper (modified to modern spelling; *italics* in original):

Primitive Christians had a great veneration for the *Sabbath*, and spent the day in devotion and sermons. And it is not to be doubted but they derived this practice from the *Apostles* themselves, as appears by several scriptures (84) to that purpose. ... (84) Acts xiii, 14, xvi, 13, xviii, 4 (Morer TH. A Discourse into Six Dialogues on Name, Notion, and Observation of the Lord's Day. London: 1701, p. 189).

A c. 2nd century document called *Recognitions* sometimes attributed to Clement of Rome states:

On account of those, therefore, who by neglect of their own salvation please the evil one, and those who by study of their own profit seek to please the good One, ten things have been prescribed as a test to this present age, according to the number of the ten plagues which were brought upon Egypt. (*Recognitions*, Book III, Chapter 55).

The Old Testament points to the Sabbath as the 'test commandment' (Exodus 16:4-5) and that it was a to be a sign between God and His people (Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:20). That is consistent with New Testament writings in Hebrews 4:9-11.

In the late 2nd century, Irenaeus wrote:

These are [to take place] in the times of the kingdom, that is, upon the seventh day, which has been sanctified, in which God rested from all the works which He created, which is the true Sabbath of the righteous. (Irenaeus. *Against Heresies*. Book V, Chapter 33, Verse 2).

Orthodox Catholic saint Origen of Alexandria understood some of Hebrews 4 as he wrote:

But what is the feast of the Sabbath except that which the apostle speaks, "There remaineth therefore a Sabbatism," that is, the observance of the Sabbath, by the people of God ... let us see how the Sabbath ought to be observed by a Christian. On the Sabbath-day all worldly labors ought to be abstained from ... give yourselves up to spiritual exercises, repairing to church, attending to sacred reading and instruction ... this is the observance of the Christian Sabbath (Translated from Origen's *Opera* 2, Paris, 1733, Andrews JN. in *History of the Sabbath*, 3rd edition, 1887, pp. 324-325).

One reason that many today do not understand this is that many (mainly Protestant) translators have intentionally mistranslated the Greek term *sabbatismos* (σαββατισμός) which is specifically found in Hebrews 4:9 (Green JP. *The Interlinear Bible*, 2nd edition. Hendrickson Publishers, 1986, p. 930).

The Protestant KJV and NKJV mistranslate the word as 'rest.' Yet, there is a different Greek term (*katapausin*), translated as 'rest' in the New Testament. *Sabbatismos* clearly refers to a 'sabbath-rest' and

honest scholars will all admit that. At least partially because of the mistranslations, most Protestants today do not seem to realize that the seventh-day Sabbath was specifically enjoined for Christians in the New Testament.

The biblical Sabbath is kept from sunset on the day commonly called Friday through sunset on the day commonly called Saturday.

In 1893, *The Catholic Mirror* had several articles that went through scriptures that Protestants claim changed the Sabbath to Sunday and properly concluded that all their arguments were false and/or a twisting and misapplication of scriptures. *The Catholic Mirror* also reported:

God's written word enjoins His worship to be observed on *Saturday*, absolutely, repeatedly, and most emphatically, ...

The Catholic Church for over one thousand years before the existence of a Protestant, by virtue of her Divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday. (Senex. The Christian Sabbath. The Catholic Mirror, September 23, 1893, pp. 28,29)

So, yes, Sunday was a change—it was NOT part of the original catholic faith.

Cardinal Gibbons confirmed that Sunday did not come from the Bible when he wrote:

You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, ... (Gibbons J, Cardinal, pp. 72-73)

Yes, scripture points to Saturday and that the Sabbath still should be kept. Notice some statements from Pope Francis:

"We live with the accelerator down from morning to night," the pope declares in Spanish, with English subtitles. "This ruins mental health, spiritual health and physical health. More so: It affects and destroys the family. And therefore society."

Pope Francis quotes from Genesis to buttress his case: " 'On the seventh, day, he (God) rested.' What the Jews followed and still observe, was to consider the Sabbath as holy. On Saturday you rest. One day of the week, that's the least! Out of gratitude, to worship God, to spend time with the family, to play, to do all these things." (Pattison M. Pope 'most fearless man I ever met,' says filmmaker Wenders. National Catholic Reporter, May 11, 2018)

Although the Sabbath is a time of refreshing rest, many ignore that and consider it a burden.

Notice the following prophecy that seems to apply to those who do not keep the Sabbath:

¹¹ Now, with stammering lips and in a foreign language, he will talk to this nation. ¹² He used to say to them, 'Here you can rest! Here you can let the weary rest! Here all is quiet.' But they refused to listen. (Isaiah 28:11-12, NJB)

We in the CCOG continue to listen—we hold to the original catholic faith on this.

Marcion, Justin, and Others

Christianity was originally considered by Roman Imperial authorities to be a sect of the Jews. Antisemitism and fear of reprisal by Imperial authorities for looking like the Jews (especially because of their Bar Kochba revolt 132-135 A.D.) led to various ones adopting Sunday (as well as adopting 'Easter Sunday').

Now, it is well known that people like the apostate Marcion of Pontus taught against the Sabbath.

In his book *Against Marcion*, Tertullian wrote:

Marcion ... displayed a hatred against the Jews' most solemn day, He was only professedly following the Creator, as being His Christ, in this very hatred **of the Sabbath** (Tertullian. *Against Marcion*, Book IV, Chapter 12).

While some may seem to have kept Sunday earlier, the first clear reference to those professing Christ meeting on Sunday was from Justin Martyr around 150 A.D.

The actual Greek expression Justin used was:

τῇ τοῦ Ἡλίου λεγομένη ἡμέρᾳ.

The terms he used specifically used were ἡμέρᾳ (transliterated as i'me'ra) which means *day*, Ἡλίου is considered to mean *Sun* (although it is actually the term for the sun god Helios), and λεγομένη (transliterated as legome'vi) currently means *said*.

Thus, Justin literally stated "on the day said {of} Helios" or perhaps more literally "on the Helios named day." Justin probably used this expression to suggest to the Roman Emperor that Justin's version of Christianity was not totally different from the worship of gods that the emperor was familiar with (and this was true regarding aspects of Justin's faith).

But why Sunday? Justin Martyr actually claimed that God chose the eighth day for meeting because of the fact that circumcision was performed on the eighth day:

Now, sirs," I said, "it is possible for us to show how the eighth day possessed a certain mysterious import, which the seventh day did not possess, and which was promulgated by God through these rites ... there is now another covenant, and another law has gone forth from Zion. Jesus Christ

circumcises all who will--as was declared above--with knives of stone; that they may be a righteous nation, a people keeping faith, holding to the truth, and maintaining peace [47].

In the 2nd / 3rd century, followers of the apostate Valentinus reportedly falsely claimed that Jesus said:

I am the logos. ... I was in the eighth, which is the Lord's day. (Epistula Apostolorum. English translation of the Coptic text by A. Alcock, 2013, p. 7.)

The apostate Marcosians, who were involved with the zodiac, also pushed Gnostic eighth day logic (Irenaeus. *Adversus Haereses*, Book I, Chapter 17, Verse 1).

The semi-Gnostic Clement of Alexandria pointed to Plato as prophesying Sunday:

And the Lord's day Plato prophetically speaks of in the tenth book of the *Republic*, in these words: "And when seven days have passed to each of them in the meadow, on the eighth they are to set out and arrive in four days." By the meadow is to be understood the fixed sphere, as being a mild and genial spot, and the locality of the pious; and by the seven days each motion of the seven planets, and the whole practical art which speeds to the end of rest. But after the wandering orbs the journey leads to heaven, that is, to the eighth motion and day. And he says that souls are gone on the fourth day, pointing out the passage through the four elements. But the seventh day is recognised as sacred, not by the Hebrews only, but also by the Greeks; according to which the whole world of all animals and plants revolve. (Clement of Alexandria. *Stromata*, Book V, Chapter 14)

Basically, Clement is admitting that the 7th day is supposed to be the sacred day of rest, but based on pagan logic, the Lord's Day should be observed based on two sets of four—which equals eight. And, of course, doing something every eight days would be less often than once per week.

The illogic of both Justin's, the Valentinian's, and Clement's explanations do NOT demonstrate "a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7, OSB; "sound-mindedness" AFV)—which is what a Christian is supposed to have.

The average person who worships on Sunday probably does not wish to believe that various forms of eighth day logic (which came from early Gnostics) are what the first Sunday references base based their claimed superiority on (including, as mentioned, the alleged *Epistle of Barnabas*).

The Church of Rome specifically endorses the use of the "eighth day" for Sunday (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 349, p. 100), as have many Protestant churches (e.g. Erskine E, Fisher J. *The Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism Explained*. William S. Young publisher, 1840, p. 81).

Although they have their own biases, Sunday-inclined scholars such as Jeremy Taylor, Philip Schaff, and Johann Gieseler correctly understood that early faithful Christians kept the seventh-day Sabbath:

The primitive Christians did keep the Sabbath of the Jews . . . therefore the Christians, for a long time together, did keep their conventions upon the Sabbath, in which some portions of the law

were read: and this continued till the time of the Laodicean council.” *The Whole Works of Jeremy Taylor*, Vol. IX, p. 416. (R. Heber’s Edition, Vol. XII, p. 416)

The Jewish Christians, at least in Palestine, conformed as closely as possible to the venerable forms of the cultus of their fathers, which in truth were divinely ordained, and were an expressive type of the Christian worship. So far as we know, they scrupulously observed the Sabbath, the annual Jewish feasts, the hours of daily prayer, and the whole Mosaic ritual. (Schaff Philip, *History of the Christian Church*, Chapter 9.)

While the Jewish Christians of Palestine retained the entire Mosaic law, and consequently the Jewish festivals, **the Gentile Christians observed also the Sabbath and the passover** (1 Cor. v. 6-8), with reference to the last scenes of Jesus’ life, but without Jewish superstition (Gal. iv. 10 ; Col. ii. 16). (Gieseler, Johann Karl Ludwig. *A text-book of church history*, Volume I, Chapter II. New York: Harper & brothers. Date 1857-80)

In other words, it is known that the true early Christians did keep the seventh-day Sabbath and God’s biblical Holy Days.

And it was not just Judea/Palestine, but also in Antioch, Asia Minor, and beyond.

Ignatius, the Didache, and the false Gospel of Peter

Though some have pointed to Ignatius of Antioch’s *Letter to the Magnesians* to endorse Sunday and not the seventh day Sabbath, here is a properly translated portion of the relevant passages:

8.1 Be not seduced by strange doctrines nor by antiquated fables, which are profitless.

8.2 For if even unto this day we live according to the manner of Judaic concepts, we admit that we have not received grace: for the godly prophets lived after {the manner of} Christ Jesus. For this cause also they were persecuted, being inspired by His grace to the end that they which are disobedient might be fully persuaded that there is one God who manifested Himself through Jesus Christ His Son, who is His Word that proceeded from silence, who in all things was well-pleasing unto Him that sent Him.

9.1 If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer keeping sabbaths contrariwise according to the Lord’s way of life, on which our life also arose through Him and through His death which some men deny – a mystery whereby we attained unto belief, and for this cause we endure patiently, that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ our only teacher –

9.2 if this be so, how shall we be able to live apart from Him? Seeing that even the prophets, being His disciples, were expecting Him as their teacher through the Spirit. And for this cause He whom they rightly awaited, when He came, raised them from the dead. (Thiel B. Ignatius and the Sabbath. *The Sabbath Sentinel*, May-June 2016)

According to a scholar of *koine* Greek, the late Dr. Theony Condos (a non-Sabbathkeeper and one time Parish Council President at Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church in Santa Barbara), the first portion of 9.1 could grammatically be better translated as:

If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer {Judaically} keeping sabbaths but according to the Lord's way of life ... (Condos T. Meeting with Dr. Thiel regarding Ignatius' Letter to the Magnesians. Santa Barbara, California. July 31, 2005)

This is because she insisted that the term 'but' (or 'contrariwise' as translated earlier above) had to refer to the "Lord's way" instead of the Sabbath, and that Judaically was appropriate for the context.

There are at least two reasons for this. The first is that the godly prophets had been keeping the seventh day Sabbath. And the second is that, since the portion of the Greek term translated as the first part of "no longer" is a 'qualified negative' (Strong J. Words 3371 & 3361 in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Greek Dictionary of the New Testament, Abington, Nashville, 1890, p.48), the context supports that the 'Judaic concepts' (verse 8.2) are part of the qualification. It may be of interest to note that the terms first, day, or Sun are not in the above passages by Ignatius.

Furthermore, notice something related to the Syriac version of the Letter to the Magnesians as reported by the old Radio Church of God:

The Greek version of Ignatius already quoted is an indication of Western Christianity, influenced by Rome. But there is a longer Eastern version in Syriac that is truly remarkable. It indicated the difference of opinion in the Eastern churches where the apostolic tradition was strongest. Here is what it reads in part:

"Those who were conversant with the ancient Scriptures came to newness of hope.... Let us therefore no longer keep the Sabbath after the Jewish manner, and rejoice in days of idleness; for 'he that does not work, let him not eat.' For say the... oracles, 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread,' But let every one of you keep the Sabbath after a spiritual manner, rejoicing in meditation on the law, not in relaxation of the body, admiring the workmanship of God, and not eating things prepared the day before...

These words from the Syriac version of ... Ignatius clearly demonstrate the importance of the Sabbath in the early Catholic churches. (Hoeh H. Why Do the Churches Observe SUNDAY? Good News, April 1957)

Despite some tampering with Ignatius' writings (there are various versions and lengths of his letters), he was NOT doing away with the seventh-day Sabbath and replacing it with Sunday, like many seem to want to believe.

Let it also be pointed out, mistranslations aside, that early writings show that Ignatius of Antioch also kept the Sabbath (cf. Ignatius. Letter to the Smyrnaeans, Chapters IV-V. Excerpted from Ante-Nicene Fathers,

Volume 1. Edited by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. American Edition, 1885.), as did other Church of God leaders like Polycarp of Smyrna and Theophilus of Antioch.

It should also be noted that the document known as the *Didache* also does NOT endorse Sunday. The Greek word for day is NOT in it, even though translators have sometimes improperly added it (for Greek details, see Thiel B. The *Didache* and the Sabbath. The Sabbath Sentinel, March-April 2016).

It should also be noted that contrary to the views of some, Polycarp did keep the Sabbath.

Interestingly, what may be the oldest known document that uses the expression often translated as “Lord's day” and specifically ties it to the first day of the week is the pseudepigraphal *Gospel of Peter* (verses 35 & 50), which Greco-Roman-Protestant-COG scholars reject as false (it was written decades after Peter's death). However, since the Greco-Romans accepted it as legitimate until perhaps as late as the 4th century, but the COG never did, this false gospel was used to help cement an unbiblical tradition, which was not dropped when the Greco-Romans dropped it from their canon.

Gentiles Kept the Sabbath

The Apostle Paul commended the Greek Gentiles in Thessalonica because they “became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 2:14)—and the Churches of God in Judea kept the seventh-day Sabbath.

Church Fathers Iraeneus (190 A.D.), Eusebius (320 A.D.), Epiphanius (380), A.D.), and Jerome (400 A.D.), all report the existence of numerous Christian Sabbath keepers in Palestine, Syria and Asia Minor called *Nazarens*. (Zivadinovic D. REVISED and CORRECTED “SABBATH in the EAST.” Andrews University, 2016)

Those holding to the original catholic teaching on this were condemned in 364 by the Council of Laodicea:

CANON XXIX. CHRISTIANS must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honouring the Lord's Day; and, if they can, resting then as Christian Sozomens. But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ (THE COMPLETE CANONS OF THE SYNOD OF LAODICEA IN PHRYGIA PACATIANA).

Although that Council tried to abolish the Sabbath, sabbath-keeping continued among the faithful. Around 404 A.D. Jerome noted:

... the believing Jews do well in observing the precepts of the law, i.e....keeping the Jewish Sabbath...there exists a sect among... the synagogues of the East, ... The adherents to this sect are known commonly as Nazarenes; they believe in Christ the Son of God, born of, the Virgin Mary; and they say that He who suffered under Pontius Pilate and rose again, is the same as the one in whom we believe (Jerome. Translated by J.G. Cunningham, M.A. From Jerome to Augustine (A.D. 404); LETTER 75 (AUGUSTINE) OR 112 (JEROME). Excerpted from Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series One, Volume 1. Edited by Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D. American Edition, 1887).

It was not just Jewish Christians keeping the Sabbath:

There were Semi-Arians in Armenia who also kept the seventh-day Sabbath in the late fourth century: Eustathius was succeeded by Erius, a ... semi-Arian ... he urged a purer morality and a stricter observance of the Sabbath (Davis, p. 20).

Also in the fourth century, but in Ethiopia, Frumentius reported:

“And we assemble on Saturday,” he continues; “not that we are infected with Judaism, but to worship Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath” (Davis, Tamar. *A General History of the Sabbatarian Churches*. 1851; Reprinted 1995 by Commonwealth Publishing, Salt Lake City, pp. 41-42).

A Roman Catholic priest noted:

The observance of Sunday as the Christian holy day was furthered by the legislation of Constantine, (Thomas BM, p. 4)

Yes, imperial legislation also pushed the Sunday change.

In the 5th century, the Greco-Roman historian Socrates noted:

For although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this. (Socrates Scholasticus. *Ecclesiastical History*, Book V, p. 289).

Thus, while Rome and Egypt dropped the Saturday Sabbath, its historically-accepted records show that those in Asia Minor and elsewhere still observed it. This was also confirmed in the mid-5th century by the Greco-Roman historian Sozomen (Sozomen. *THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF SOZOMEN*. Comprising a History of the Church, from a.d. 323 to a.d. 425. Book VII, Chapter XIX. T&T CLARK, EDINBURGH, circa 1846).

The faithful, according to Arabic sources in the second through basically fifth centuries A.D. concluded:

Christ also observed the Jewish day of fast and not the fifty days fast ... Neither did he establish Sunday as a day of rest, or abolish for even an hour the observance of Saturday. (Pines, p. 7).

The Apostle Thomas reportedly reached people in India, Burma, Malaysia, the edge of China (Ruffin, pp. 132-134). People in India reportedly learned of the Sabbath from the Apostle Thomas and/or others from Antioch and were keeping it until at least the 16th century (Edwardson C. *FACTS of FAITH*. Christian Edwardson, 1943, pp. 153-155). Early Chinese Sabbath-keeping was also reported (Ibid, pp. 153-155).

Note also:

Dissenters who kept the Sabbath, existed under different names from the time of the Pope to the Reformation. They were either the descendants of those who fled from the heathen persecutions previous to the time of Constantine, or else those who, when he began to rule the church and force false practices upon it, refused submission, and sought seclusion and freedom to obey God. In their earlier history they were known as Nazarenes, ..., and later, as Vaudois, Cathari, Toulousians, Albigenses, Petrobrusians, Passagii, and Waldenses ... Their doctrines were comparatively pure and Scriptural ... (Rogers, AN, et al. Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, Volume 1, 1910, p. 15).

The above included people in western and eastern Europe, the Middle East, and the Near East of Asia.

Throughout the church age, the Sabbath has been kept by those who professed the faith of the original catholic church.

Sabbath in the British Isles

Some have asserted that Sabbath-keeping was happening in the British Isles since the 1st century, because of ties to either 1) Joseph of Arimathea, 2) the Apostle Paul, or 3) the Apostle Andrew.

Eusebius and allegedly Hippolytus asserted:

His disciples ... some have crossed the Ocean and reached the Isles of Britain. (Eusebius of Caesarea: *Demonstratio Evangelica*, Book 3, Chapter 5. Translated by W.J. Ferrar. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. London. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1920, p. 113)

... one of the seventy ... Aristobulus, bishop of Britain (Hippolytus or Pseudo-Hippolytus. *Where Each of Them Preached, And Where He Met His End*).

Some believe this Aristobulus was the one of the seventy Jesus sent out in Luke 10:1 and was the same Aristobulus mentioned in Roman 16:10. The Eastern Orthodox say he was the brother of the Apostle Barnabas and was placed in the British Isles by the Apostle Andrew or possible Paul (Saint Aristobulus, Apostle of Britain, † 1st century. *Orthodox Outlet for Dogmatic Enquiries*, February 9, 2009).

Eusebius reported that one named Aristobolus supported the seventh day Sabbath (Eusebius of Caesarea: *Demonstratio Evangelica*, Book 13, Chapter XII) around that time, but it is not clear this is the same Aristobulus. Whether or not that is the case, if Aristobulus was put in the British Isles by one of the apostles, he would have kept the seventh day Sabbath.

Augustine of Canterbury reportedly objected to finding Sabbath-keepers when he arrived in Saxony in the late 6th century (Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, p. 25).

Notice that a false document was used to justify the switch to Sunday:

The Roman 'movement' to supersede the Celtic Sabbath with Sunday 'culminated in the production of an (apocryphal) 'Letter of Jesus', or 'Letter of Lord's day', alleged to have been found on the altar of Peter in Rome; and is said in the annals to have been brought to Ireland by a pilgrim (c. 886). Upon this basis laws were promulgated, imposing heavy penalties for those that violated on Sunday certain regulations derived from Jewish prohibitions for Sabbath. ... There is in fact no historical evidence that Ninian, or Patrick, or Columba, or any of their contemporaries in Ireland, kept Sunday as a Sabbath.'(Celtic Sabbath-Keeping Study No. 264, from *Cherith Chronicle*, April-June 1998, pp. 46-47.

Whether or not Columba or Patrick kept Sunday can be debated (there are numerous claims as to which Patrick was the one of certain legends), but the reality is that there was Sabbath keeping in the British Isles and that a false document was pointed to as justification to change to Sunday.

In the British Isles, including Ireland, it appears that the Sabbath was widely, but not exclusively kept, by many until the late 11th century.

And then?

In the late 11th century, an English woman married Malcom III king of the Scots. She later forced Sunday upon her husband's subjects as James Moffat reported:

It seems to have been customary in the Celtic churches of early times, in Ireland as well as Scotland, to keep Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, as a day of rest from labor, and Sunday, commemorative of the Lord's resurrection, as one of rejoicing, with exercises of public worship. In that case they obeyed the fourth commandment literally upon the seventh day of the week ...

The queen insisted upon the single and strict observance of the Lord's Day. People and clergy alike submitted, but without entirely giving up their reverence for Saturday, which subsequently sank into a half-holy day preparatory for Sunday (Moffat, James Clement. *The Church in Scotland: A History of Its Antecedents, its Conflicts, and Its Advocates, from the Earliest Recorded Times to the First Assembly of the Reformed Church*. Published by Presbyterian Board of Education, 1882, p. 140).

The queen mentioned above was Margaret who died in 1093. Margaret (who was technically "the Queen consort of Malcolm III") was canonized a Roman Catholic saint in the year 1250 by Pope Innocent IV.

In the early 1600s there were around 20 Sabbatarian-type congregations in England (Ball, p. 153).

In the late 1600s, Thomas Bampfield (who had been Speaker of the House of Parliament at one time, under Cromwell) mentioned sabbath continuity in the British Isles:

Thomas Bampfield ... contended that the seventh day had been kept in England in unbroken succession until the thirteenth century ... (Ball, p. 21)

Perhaps it should be noted that because of practices of a few of the Lollards in the British Isles, some Sabbath-keeping would have occurred from the thirteenth through seventeenth centuries (Ball, pp. 30-31), so it would have been unbroken in the British Isles for even more centuries than Thomas Bampfield contended.

Notice that in 1719 England, John Ozell, a non-Sabbath-keeping Protestant, wrote the following about some of the Sabbath-keepers in that land:

People, who ... go by the name Sabbatarian make Profession of expecting a Reign of a Thousand Years ... These Sabbatarians are so call'd, because they will not remove the Day of Rest from Saturday to Sunday ... They administer Baptism only to adult People ... The major part of them will not eat Pork, nor blood ... their outward conduct is pious and Christian-like (Ozell JM. Mission Observations in His Travels over England. 1719. As cited in Ball, p. 9).

To this day, those of our faith do keep the seventh-day Sabbath and do not eat pork nor blood.

As far as history goes, In the 1600s, some Sabbath-keepers from the British Isles relocated to the Americas and small congregations began to form (Clarke H. A History of the Sabbatarians Or Seventh Day Baptists, in America; Containing Their Rise and Progress to the Year 1811, with Their Leaders' Names, and Their Distinguishing Tenets, etc. Utica, 1811).

And there remain Sabbath-keeping groups in the British Isles, the Americas, and throughout the world today.

Gentiles Were Prophetised to Keep the Sabbath

Notice what Isaiah 56:1-2 teaches:

¹ Thus says Yahweh: Make fair judgement your concern, act with justice, for soon my salvation will come and my saving justice be manifest.

² Blessed is anyone who does this, anyone who clings to it, observing the Sabbath, not profaning it, and abstaining from every evil deed. (Isiah 56:1-2, NJB)

Various commentators tend to believe that verse 1 is referring to Jesus coming (e.g. Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.).

But notice that verse 2 is talking about the Sabbath.

Does this include foreigners, like Gentiles? Notice the next several verses in Isaiah:

³ No foreigner adhering to Yahweh should say, 'Yahweh will utterly exclude me from his people.' No eunuch should say, 'Look, I am a dried-up tree.'

⁴ For Yahweh says this: To the eunuchs who observe my Sabbaths and choose to do my good pleasure and cling to my covenant, ⁵ I shall give them in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I shall give them an everlasting name that will never be effaced. ⁶ As for foreigners who adhere to Yahweh to serve him, to love Yahweh's name and become his servants, all who observe the Sabbath, not profaning it, and cling to my covenant: (Isaiah 56:3-7, NJB).

And while we in the CCOG believe that this has a future application, it also shows that foreign converts are also blessed who keep the Sabbath. But certainly GENTILES WERE PROPHESED TO KEEP THE SEVENTH DAY SABBATH.

Also, notice the following:

²³ From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, All flesh shall come to worship before me, says the LORD. (Isaiah 66:23, NABRE)

Future seventh-day Sabbath keeping is prophesied for all flesh in the Bible—and this clearly includes Gentiles.

Why Do Many Keep Sunday?

Since the Bible enjoins the seventh-day Sabbath, where did the Greco-Roman-Protestants get Sunday?

Well, it seemed to begin as a reaction to be distanced from the Jews because of their Bar Kochba revolt and Emperor Hadrian's reactions to it in the 130s A.D. as well as pagan observances of Sunday impacting Rome (Bacchiocchi, pp. 236-239). Some in Rome as well as those who followed Marcus of Jerusalem switched to Sunday. Gnostic philosophy also played a role in getting 'eighth day' acceptance.

The change did not come from the Bible.

We also know that the 2nd century pseudepigraphal *Gospel of Peter* and another false document falsely called the *Letter of Jesus* (or *Letter of the Lord's Day*) in the 9th century were used by Sunday proponents.

But those were not from the Bible or Jesus.

Notice what Roman Catholic leaders have asserted and admitted:

Sunday is our mark of authority. . . .The church is above the Bible, and this transference is proof of that fact. (The Catholic Record. London, Ontario, September 1, 1923)

Perhaps the boldest thing, the most revolutionary change the Church ever did, happened in the first century. The holy day, the Sabbath, was changed from Saturday to Sunday. 'The Day of the Lord' (dies Dominica) was chosen, not from any directions noted in the Scriptures, but from the Church's sense of its own power. The day of resurrection, the day of Pentecost, fifty days later, came on the first day of the week. So this would be the new Sabbath. People who think that the Scriptures should be the sole authority, should logically...keep Saturday holy". Priest Leo Broderick, Saint Catherine Catholic Church Sentinel, Algonac, Michigan, May 21, 1995. (as reported in Morgan K. Sabbath Rest. TEACH Services, Inc., 2002, p. 59)

While we do not have any proof of this change in the 1st century, we do in the 2nd and later centuries. Here is another Roman Catholic admission which points to Saturday kept by the Christ and His Apostles:

Saturday arrangement can be found ... in the Old Testament, which position is confirmed by the New Testament, endorsing fully by the life and practice of the Redeemer and His apostles teaching the sacred word for nearly a century of the Christian era. (Senex, p. 6)

Now consider some words of Jesus:

⁹ ... So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide. (Mark 10:9b, NJB)

Jesus, as proof that people should not divorce (that was the context here), is saying humans are not to change what God has joined together. The way He used this assertion would, thus, be applicable to any changes to the sacred word of God.

Consider that since God made the seventh-day sacred (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11), He joined the sacredness to the seventh-day. No human was to change what God joined together according to Jesus.

Jesus' words are also consistent with the following:

² You shall not add to the word that I speak to you, neither shall you take away from it: keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. (Deuteronomy 4:2, DRB)

Humans were not to change the commandments.

Notice, now, the following Protestant admissions about the Sabbath:

Dr. Edward T. Hiscox, author of "The BAPTIST MANUAL," ... went on to say: "Earnestly desiring information on this subject, which I have studied for many years, I ask, Where can the record of such a transaction (from seventh day to the first day) be found? NOT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, ABSOLUTELY NOT. THERE IS NO SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE OF THE CHANGE OF THE SABBATH INSTITUTION FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK."

What an admission!

Now a quotation from the LUTHERAN CHURCH. "THE OBSERVANCE of the Lord's day (meaning Sunday) IS FOUNDED NOT ON ANY COMMAND OF GOD, but on the authority of the church," states the "Augsburg Confession," part 2, chapter 1, sec. 10. Also we discover the following statement in Article 28 of the "Augsburg Confession": "They [Catholics] allege the Sabbath changed into Sunday, the Lord's day, contrary to the Decalogue, as it appears; NEITHER IS THERE ANY EXAMPLE MORE BOASTED OF THAN THE CHANGING OF THE SABBATH DAY. GREAT, SAY THEY, IS THE POWER AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE [Catholic] CHURCH SINCE IT DISPENSED WITH ONE OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS."

Next, let us hear from a PRESBYTERIAN source, "The Christian at Work," April 19, 1883, and January, 1884. "SOME HAVE TRIED TO BUILD THE OBSERVANCE OF SUNDAY UPON APOSTOLIC COMMAND, WHERE AS THE APOSTLES GAVE NO COMMAND ON THE MATTER AT ALL... The truth is, as soon as we appeal to the LITERAL WRITING OF THE BIBLE, THE SABBATARIANS [Sabbath keepers] HAVE THE BEST OF THE ARGUMENT. (McNair R. The TRUTH About Sunday Observance. Good News, February 1961)

The Archbishop of Reggio (Gaspar [Ricciulli] de Fosso) said the following at the last opening session of Trent, (17th Session) reconvened under Pope Pius IV) on the 18th of January, 1562:

The Protestants claim to stand upon the written word only. They profess to hold the Scripture alone as the standard of faith. They justify their revolt by the plea that the Church has apostatized from the written word and follows tradition. Now the Protestants claim, that they stand upon the written word only, is not true. Their profession of holding the Scripture alone as the standard of faith, is false. PROOF: The written word explicitly enjoins the observance of the seventh day as the Sabbath. They do not observe the seventh day, but reject it. If they do truly hold the scripture alone as their standard, they would be observing the seventh day as is enjoined in the Scripture throughout. Yet they not only reject the observance of the Sabbath enjoined in the written word, but they have adopted and do practice the observance of Sunday, for which they have only the tradition of the Church. Consequently the claim of 'Scripture alone as the standard,' *fails*; and the doctrine of 'Scripture *and tradition*' as essential, is fully established, the Protestants themselves being judges. (as cited in Fifield GE. The Sabbath, the Fathers, and the Reformation. Signs of the Times, Vol. 25, No. 47, Nov. 22, 1899, pgs. 6-7)

Let me state that although many Protestants claim that the New Testament did away with the Sabbath and/or replaced it with Sunday, this is simply not true (cf. Hebrews 4:9).

Interestingly, a Roman Catholic publication called *The Catholic Mirror* went through pretty much all the usual Protestant scriptural arguments in the late 19th century and correctly concluded that the New Testament was not the reason Protestants do not keep the seventh-day Sabbath (The Christian Sabbath, 5th ed. The Catholic Mirror, 1893). It concluded that the Church of Rome assumed the authority to change it and that it did not come from the Bible or the apostles.

It also stated:

“Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.”

No Protestant living today has ever yet obeyed that command, (Senez, p. 7).

The CCOG, which is not Protestant, keeps the seventh day Sabbath today as the Bible commands as did the original apostolic catholic Church of God in Asia Minor, Jerusalem, and elsewhere.

12. The Millennial Kingdom of God

Because of teachings and various scriptures, Jews (Psalm 90:4; Psalm 92:1-15) and early Christians (2 Peter 3:8; Hebrews 4:6-8; Revelation 20:4-6) believed that the Sabbath helped picture the millennial Kingdom of God.

Essentially, the many taught that the six days of physical creation represented six one-thousand year days, followed by the Sabbath, representing the millennial rest.

Jewish tradition also attributes supporting statements, not recorded in the Bible, given by the prophet Elijah (Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 97a).

So, did early Christians as Dr. N. West: confirmed:

John, six times, in six consecutive verses of the same chapter, emphasizes the Kingdom as the reign of “a thousand years,” ... **Christian Chiliasm was the orthodox faith of the primitive Church in its purest days.** (West N. HISTORY OF THE PRE-MILLENNARIAN DOCTRINE. The Prophetic Conference: New-York, October 30, 31, and November 1, 1878: Christ’s second coming. Issue 46 of New York Tribune, 1878, p. 81)

A book blessed by Pope Paul VI had the following:

IS THERE TO BE A MILLENNIUM?

In chapter 20 of the *Apocalypse* it is said ... The saints are then to reign with Christ a thousand years ... Many early Christians took this as a literal description ... Millenarians, i.e., **believers in the reign of a thousand years. This belief was common in the early Church** ... It appeared from time to time in the Middle Ages, and is still advocated by some of the more obscure sects ...

... the time of the First Resurrection will end ... It is the time when the Seventh Millennium will set in, and will be the day of Sabbath in the plan of creation ... **It has been the common opinion among Jews, Gentiles, and Latin and Greek Christians, that the present evil world will last no more than 6,000 years ... Christians and Jews, from the beginning of Christianity, and before, have taught that 6,000 years after the creation of Adam and Eve, the consummation will occur. The period after the consummation is to be the seventh day of creation--the Sabbath ... St. Jerome said, “It is a common belief that the world will last 6,000 years.”**

... I believe that as the last days come to an end so will the sixth day of creation (Culligan E. The Last World War and the End of Time. The book was blessed by Pope Paul VI, 1966. TAN Books, Rockford (IL), 1975, pp. 67, 113-115).

Yes, original catholics taught the millennial kingdom.

Millennium

In the New Testament, the Apostle John was inspired to write:

¹⁰ And hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests, and we shall reign on the earth. (Revelation 5:10, DRB)

¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ² He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

⁴ And I saw seats; and they sat upon them; and judgment was given unto them; and the souls of them that were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and who had not adored the beast nor his image, nor received his character on their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

⁵ The rest of the dead lived not, till the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

⁶ Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. In these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ; and shall reign with him a thousand years.

⁷ And when the thousand years shall be finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go forth, and seduce the nations, which are over the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, and shall gather them together to battle, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. (Revelation 20:4-7, DRB)

Christians, then, taught what is commonly referred to as millennium. And it would be on the earth. And a time without the direct influence of Satan the Devil.

Notice something from the 17th century by William Chillingworth:

That the same doctrine was by the church of the next age after the Apostles (mark this!) held true and catholic ... whatever doctrine is believed and taught by the most eminent fathers of any age of the church, and by none of their contemporaries opposed or condemned; therefore, it was the catholic doctrine of the church of those times; but **the doctrine of the Millennaries was believed and taught by the most eminent Fathers of the age next after the Apostles, and by none of that age opposed or condemned; therefore it was the catholic doctrine of those times.** ... It appears manifest out of this book of Irenaeus, that the doctrine of the Chiliasts was in his judgment Apostolic tradition" (Cited in Thompson Taylor D. The Reign of Christ on Earth. Horace Lorenzo Hastings, 1882, pp. 100-101).

The Catholic Encyclopedia states:

... a large number of Christians of the post-Apostolic era, particularly in Asia Minor, yielded so far to Jewish apocalyptic as to **put a literal meaning into these descriptions of St. John's Apocalypse; the result was that millenarianism spread and gained staunch advocates** not only among the heretics but **among the Catholic Christians** as well ... Papias of Hierapolis, a disciple of St. John, appeared as an advocate of millenarianism. He claimed to have received his doctrine from contemporaries of the Apostles ... A witness for the continued belief in millenarianism in the province of Asia is St. Melito, Bishop of Sardes in the second century (Kirsch JP. Millennium and Millenarianism).

Millenarianism was clearly a beliefs of the original catholic church and the faithful hold to that belief to this day.

Here is something else that *The Catholic Encyclopedia* reported:

An Egyptian bishop, Nepos, taught the Chiliastic error that there would be a reign of Christ upon earth for a thousand years, a period of corporal delights; he founded this doctrine upon the Apocalypse in a book entitled "Refutation of the Allegorizers" (Chapman J. Dionysius of Alexandria)

Nepos seemed to hold COG views. Not only did he teach the millennium in the 3rd century, he also was a biblical literalist, not an allegorist like many who he opposed in Alexandria were (Dionysius of Alexandria. From the Two Books on the Promises). Nepos looked like an original apostolic catholic COG leader. In Egypt, into the 4th and 5th centuries, at least some professors of Christ did keep Passover on the 14th, taught millenarianism, and were influenced by other "Judeo-Christian ideas" (PG 86, 353-8; Bagatti, The Church from the Circumcision, p. 28).

The millennial doctrine was widespread. People in Polycarp's area clearly taught it as it was an original catholic belief.

Various Greco-Roman saints/fathers, such as Irenaeus, Victorinus, Justin (Martyr), Hippolytus of Rome, Commodianus, and Methodius also taught it.

The Greco-Roman Catholic saint and doctor Jerome taught that, those sometimes called, Nazarenes taught it. Here is his actual Latin report, with a translation into English following it:

Judæi et Christiani judaizantes ... Judæi Christiani ... Omnes, inquit, qui relictī fuerint de gentibus quae venerint contra Jerusalem, ascendent per singulos annos, ut adorent regem Dominum exercituum, et celebrent festivitatem Tabernaculorum. Hæc quoque Judei cassa spe in mille annorum regno futura promittunt, cujus solemnitatis istud exordium est: (Jerome, Commentariorum in Zachariam Lib. III. Patrologia Latina 25. Petit-Montrouge, 1845, 1529; 1536).

Jews and Christian judaizers ... Christian Jews ... All, he says, those who remain survivors of the nations that come against Jerusalem, shall go up every year, to worship the King the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of Tabernacles. These also shall hope in, through the hollow devotion of

Jews, a thousand years old promise of the future kingdom, whose festival this is the beginning of: (Thiel B. Translation of Jerome's *Commentariorum in Zachariam* Lib. III. *Patrologia Latina* 25, 1529; 1535-1536)

We in the *Continuing* Church of God still teach the millennium and tie it in with the Feast of Tabernacles, as also the Greco-Roman saint Methodius did into the early 4th century (Methodius. *Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, Discourse 9, chapters 1 & 5).

Despite being an original catholic belief, the millennium was formally condemned by the Greco-Romans at Theodosius' Council of Constantinople in 381. However, it should be pointed out that some descendants of those churches (particularly among branches of the Eastern/Russian Orthodox) still hold to a version of the original millennial teaching.

Here is a writing from the Eastern Orthodox:

CHILIASM: Chiliasm, from the Greek word meaning "1000," is a belief based on Revelation 20:2-7. In its classical form (which interprets the Revelation 20 verses verbatim), Chiliasm teaches that Satan will be bound by Christ for 1000 years, at which time Jesus and the Saints will reign on earth, and after which, Satan will be finally defeated and the Eternal Kingdom of God will be inaugurated. In modern times, Chiliasm has been "boiled down" to the teaching that the world will end after one thousand years (or a number of years that is a multiple of one thousand). Though some Ancient Church Fathers of the first three centuries AD had Chiliast leanings, the Orthodox Church formally denounced Chiliasm at the Second Ecumenical Council, in 381. The Church maintains that the 1000 year reign mentioned in Revelation 20 is symbolic of the era of the Christian Church's ministry in this fallen world, which shall come to its completion at a time unknown to all but God the Father. (Orthodox Christian Beliefs and Practices. © 2006-2007 Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada. <http://www.uocc.ca/en-ca/faith/beliefs/> 09/24/14).

In other words, Orthodox Church scholars know that early Christian leaders, which it calls, "Ancient Church Fathers" taught chiliasm (called millenarianism in Latin), yet it CHANGED that teaching AND CONDEMNED it in a church council and now think it is somehow symbolic (note: Many Russian and American Orthodox Catholics still teach the millennium).

An Original Belief

Notice that the following Roman Catholic priest admitted that original Christians believed in a thousand year reign. First, he mentions chapter 20 (XX) of the Apocalypse (the Book of Revelation) as well as what John believed:

Chapter XX. relates to the expulsion of Satan from the world for 1,000 years...

In St. John's outlook, however, the end of the world could not have been included the "hour of temptation", because **a thousand years must intervene** between the days of Antichrist and the end of the world (Kramer, pp. 24, 101).

Records of human history do not point to any 1,000 year period where Satan was gone from the world. That, plus the fact that the Bible teaches the 1,000 years and the fact that the last living Apostle (John) believed in the 1,000 years should be sufficient evidence to anybody who wants to believe God that the 1,000 years is literal and still to happen.

The Catholic Encyclopedia notes:

The fundamental idea of millenarianism, as understood by Christian writers, may be set forth as follows: At the end of time Christ will return in all His splendour to gather together the just, to annihilate hostile powers, and to found a glorious kingdom on earth for the enjoyment of the highest spiritual and material blessings; He Himself will reign as its king, and all the just, including the saints recalled to life, will participate in it...The duration of this glorious reign of Christ and His saints on earth, is frequently given as one thousand years. Hence it is commonly known as the "millennium", while the belief in the future realization of the kingdom is called "millenarianism" (or "chiliasm", from the Greek *chilia*, scil. *ete*) ...

... a large number of Christians of the post-Apostolic era, particularly in Asia Minor, yielded so far to Jewish apocalyptic as to put a literal meaning into these descriptions of St. John's Apocalypse; the result was that millenarianism spread and gained staunch advocates not only among the heretics but among the Catholic Christians as well ...

Papias, a disciple of St. John, appeared as an advocate of millenarianism. He claimed to have received his doctrine from contemporaries of the Apostles, and Irenaeus narrates that other "Presbyteri", who had seen and heard the disciple John, learned from him the belief in millenarianism as part of the Lord's doctrine. According to Eusebius (Hist. Eccl., 111, 39) Papias in his book asserted that the resurrection of the dead would be followed by one thousand years of a visible glorious earthly kingdom of Christ, and according to Irenaeus (Adv. Haereses, V, 33), he taught that the saints too would enjoy a superabundance of earthly pleasures...

St. Irenaeus, a native of Asia Minor, influenced by the companions of St. Polycarp, adopted millenarian ideas, discussing and defending them in his works against the Gnostics (Adv. Haereses, V, 32) ...

A witness for the continued belief in millenarianism in the province of Asia is St. Melito in the second century ...

Gnosticism rejected millenarianism. In Asia Minor, the principal seat of millenarian teachings, the so-called Alogi rose up against millenarianism as well as against Montanism, but they went too far in their opposition, rejecting not only the Apocalypse of St. John, alleging Cerinthus as its author, but his Gospel also ...

In the West, the millenarian expectations of a glorious kingdom of Christ and His just, found adherents for a long time. The poet Commodian (Instructiones, 41, 42, 44) as well as Lactantius (Institutiones, VII) proclaim the millennial realm and describe its splendour...

Moreover, the attitude of the Church towards the secular power had undergone a change with closer connection between her and the Roman empire. There is no doubt that this turn of events did much towards weaning the Christians from the old millenarianism (Kirsch JP. Millennium and Millenarianism).

Yet, even though they know that opposition to millenarianism really came from Gnostics and other Alogi heretics ("the Alogi"-means against the word--the word of God, that is), scholars of the Roman Church also teach against this.

The semi-gnostic heretic Marcion opposed the original millennial teaching:

Marcion ... The first great heretic broke drastically with the faith of the early church in abandoning the doctrine of the imminent, personal return of Christ ... there was no logical place in his system for a real Second Coming. ...

Although millennial expectancy—the hope that Christ would return to to setup a thousand-year kingdom on earth—was prevalent in the early church, the influence of Augustine had caused most traditional Christians to give up on the idea of an earthly millennium ... (Brown, p. 64,65,266)

Those in the Church of God did NOT give up on the biblical millennial doctrine, denounced Marcion, never accepted Augustine, and we in the CCOG teach the millennial doctrine to this day.

The famed scientist Isaac Newton, who was not COG, noted:

Then he describes the sudden coming of the day of the Lord upon them, as a thief in the night, which is the APOCALYPTIC phrase; and the millennium, or thousand years, which are with God but as a day ...

JUSTIN MARTYR, who within thirty years after JOHN'S death became a CHRISTIAN, writes expressly that a certain man among the Christians whose name was John, one of the twelve Apostles of Christ, in the Revelation which was shewed him, prophesied that those who believed in Christ should live a thousand years at Jerusalem. And a few lines before he saith: But I, and as many as are Christians, in all things right in their opinions, believe both that there shall be a resurrection of the flesh, and a thousand years life at Jerusalem built, adorned and enlarged. Which is as much as to say, that all true CHRISTIANS in that early age received this Prophecy: for in all ages, as many as believed the thousand years, received the APOCALYPSE as the foundation of their opinion: and I do not know one instance to the contrary. PAPIAS Bishop of HIERAPOLIS, a man of the Apostolic age, and one of JOHN S own disciples, did not only teach the doctrine of the thousand years, but also I asserted the APOCALYPSE as written by divine inspiration. MELITO who flourished next after JUSTIN, 2 wrote a commentary upon this Prophecy; and he, being Bishop of SARDIS one of the seven Churches, could neither be ignorant of their tradition about it, nor impose upon them. IRENAEUS, who was contemporary with MELITO, wrote much upon it, and said, that the number 666 was in all the antient and approved copies; and that he had it also confirmed to him by those who had seen John face to face, meaning no doubt his master

POLYCARP for one. At the same time 1 THEOPHILUS Bishop of ANTIOCH asserted it, and so did TERTULLIAN, CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, and ORIGEN soon after; and their contemporary HIPPOLYTUS the Martyr, Metropolitan of the ARABIANS (HIERON), wrote a commentary upon it. All these were antient men, flourishing within a hundred and twenty years after JOHN'S death, and of greatest note in the Churches of those times. Soon after did VICTORINUS PICTAVIENSIS write another commentary upon it; and he lived in the time of DIOCLESIAN. This may surely suffice to shew how the APOCALYPSE was received and studied in the first ages: and I do not indeed find any other book of the New Testament so strongly attested, or commented upon so early as this. The Prophecy said: Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this Prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein. This animated the first CHRISTIANS to study it so much, till the difficulty made them remit, and comment more upon the other books of the New Testament. This was the state of the APOCALYPSE, till the thousand years being misunderstood, brought a prejudice against it: and DIONYSIUS of ALEXANDRIA, noting how it abounded with barbarisms, that is with HEBRAISMS, promoted that prejudice so far, as to cause many GREEKS in the fourth century to doubt of the book. But whilst the LATINS, and a great part of the GREEKS, always retained the APOCALYPSE, and the rest doubted only out of prejudice, it makes nothing against its authority. (Sir Isaac Newton's *Daniel and the Apocalypse with an introductory study of the nature and the cause of unbelief, of miracles and prophecy*, by Sir William Whitla, Murray, London, 1922, pp. 300, 303-304)

Yes, early professors of Jesus accepted and taught millenarianism.

The Roman Catholic Church, in spite of the fact that it admits that many of its claimed early saints taught the millennium, now **strongly condemns** this belief. Notice:

676 The Antichrist's deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgment. The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism, especially the "intrinsically perverse" political form of a secular messianism. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 194).

It should be noted that the millennial teaching appears to be the only doctrine associated with Antichrist that is condemned in the current official *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (which is the first new one in hundreds of years). This is the one that has the imprimatur of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger who is now called Pope Emeritus and was Pope Benedict XVI.

Hence, since Polycarp held what the Vatican is calling an Antichrist doctrine, Polycarp and those in his area obviously were not what are now called *Roman Catholics*.

Early Writers

In the early 2nd century, Papius of Hierapolis (which is in Asia Minor near Laodicea) taught:

... there will be a period of a thousand years after the resurrection of the dead, and that the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this very earth ... (Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book III, Chapter XXIX, Verse 12, p. 69)

Papias taught that it would be a time of great abundance:

In like manner, [He said] that a grain of wheat would produce ten thousand ears, and that every ear would have ten thousand grains, and every grain would yield ten pounds of clear, pure, fine flour; and that apples, and seeds, and grass would produce in similar proportions; and that all animals, feeding then only on the productions of the earth, would become peaceable and harmonious, and be in perfect subjection to man." [Testimony is borne to these things in writing by Papias, an ancient man, who was a hearer of John and a friend of Polycarp, in the fourth of his books; for five books were composed by him...] (Fragments of Papias, IV).

What Papias wrote was consistent with many scriptures in the Old Testament. Hence, the idea of an abundant millennium was held by early Christians.

'Church Fathers' in Asia Minor believed in it. Cardinal Danielou notes (*italics* in original, **bolding** added):

The ... most important, doctrine that Papias claims to have received from tradition is that of **millenarianism. This doctrine is already found in the New Testament Revelation of John**, ... Asiatic environment, since it was here that **millenarianism reached its full development by the church founded by John**, ... It remains to decide to what type of community Clement's Elders belonged. It seems to have been very different from that of the Asiatic Elders. There is no trace of millenarianism among them ..." (Danielou, pp. 47-48, 52)

Yes, the word of God teaches millenarianism. And yes, notice that the Church of God in Asia Minor, which later was the first called "catholic church," was founded by the Apostle John and it did believe in millenarianism. Therefore, no one should pay attention to or accept teachings of others who oppose that biblical doctrine.

Greco-Romans and the CCOG consider Melito of Sardis a saint. In the latter part of the 2nd century, Melito of Sardis taught the millennium:

A witness for the continued belief in millenarianism in the province of Asia is St. Melito, Bishop of Sardes in the second century (Kirsch JP. Millennium and Millenarianism).

in the surrounding areas of Ephesus, Melito of Sardis, a well-known bishop and his followers defended millennialism. He undoubtedly borrowed some of his theories from his compatriot, Papias and relied on the Apocalypse. (Gry L. Le millenarisme dans ses origines et son developpement. Alphonse Picard, Paris, 1904, p. 81. Translated into English by Gisele Gaudet, March 2015.)

Yes, Melito would have relied on sacred scripture as well as the scripturally-consistent tradition of teaching about the millennium.

Irenaeus of Lyon, who claimed to have known Polycarp, wrote:

John says ... : "And he will cause a mark [to be put] in the forehead and in the right hand, that no one may be able to buy or sell, unless he who has the mark of the name of the beast or the number of his name; and the number is six hundred and sixty-six," that is, six times a hundred, six times ten, and six units. [He gives this] as a summing up of the whole of that apostasy which has taken place during six thousand years.

For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded. And for this reason the Scripture says: "Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all their adornment. And God brought to a conclusion upon the sixth day the works that He had made; and God rested upon the seventh day from all His works." This is an account of the things formerly created, as also it is a prophecy of what is to come. For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand year.... He says, "Whosoever shall have left lands, or houses, or parents, or brethren, or children because of Me, he shall receive in this world an hundred-fold, and in that to come he shall inherit eternal life." ...

If, however, any shall endeavour to allegorize [prophecies] of this kind, they shall not be found consistent with themselves in all points, and shall be confuted by the teaching of the very expressions [in question]. (Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*, Book V, 28:2-3, 35:1. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 1)

Notice Irenaeus warned against allegorizing the millennium, but people like Origen of Alexandria did.

The Greco-Roman saint Irenaeus also wrote:

But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that "many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*, Book V, Chapter 30:4)

These are [to take place] in the times of the kingdom, that is, upon the seventh day, which has been sanctified, in which God rested from all the works which He created, which is the true Sabbath of the righteous, which they shall not be engaged in any earthly occupation; but shall have a table at hand prepared for them by God, supplying them with all sorts of dishes (Against Heresies. Book V, Chapter 33:2)

Notice the following related to the 3rd century Apollinarius of Hierapolis:

So Epiphanius, speaking on the notion of the millennium maintained by Apollinarius, says, "There is indeed a millennium mentioned by John..." (Panarion of Epiphanius, 77 in Bush G. The Millennium of the Apocalypse. 1842, p. 15).

It has been claimed by Rome that the 3rd century Roman Catholic saint "Hippolytus was the most important theologian and the most prolific religious writer of the Roman Church in the pre-Constantinian era" (St. Hippolytus of Rome, The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1910).

Notice what he wrote:

And 6,000 years must needs be accomplished, in order that the Sabbath may come, the rest, the holy day "on which God rested from all His works." For the Sabbath is the type and emblem of the future kingdom of the saints, when they "shall reign with Christ," when He comes from heaven, as John says in his Apocalypse: for "a day with the Lord is as a thousand years." Since, then, in six days God made all things, it follows that 6,000 years must be fulfilled. (Hippolytus. On the Hexaëmeron, Or Six Days' Work. From Fragments from Commentaries on Various Books of Scripture. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5).

Notice that "the most important theologian and the most prolific religious writer of the Roman Church in the pre-Constantinian era" taught the 6,000 year plan followed by a thousand year kingdom that lasts one thousand years.

Here is what *The Catholic Encyclopedia* reported about a 3rd century leader:

An Egyptian bishop, Nepos, taught ... that there would be a reign of Christ upon earth for a thousand years, a period of corporal delights; he founded this doctrine upon the Apocalypse in a book entitled "Refutation of the Allegorizers" (Chapman J. Dionysius of Alexandria)

The Catholic saint and Bishop Victorinus wrote the following about the Book of Revelation, in likely the late 3rd century:

FROM THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

1-3. "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the abyss, and a chain in his hand. And he held the dragon, that old serpent, which is called the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed a little season."] ...

For we know not of those who seem to stand whether they shall not fall, and of those who are down it is uncertain whether they may rise. Moreover, that he says that he is bound and shut up, that he may not seduce the nations, the nations signify the Church, seeing that of them it itself is

formed, and which being seduced, he previously held until, he says, the thousand years should be completed, that is, what is left of the sixth day, to wit, of the sixth age, which subsists for a thousand years; after this he must be loosed for a little season. The little season signifies three years and six months, in which with all his power the devil will avenge himself under Antichrist against the Church. Finally, he says, after that the devil shall be loosed, and will seduce the nations in the whole world, and will entice war against the Church, the number of whose foes shall be as the sand of the sea. (Victorinus. On the Apocalypse. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7).

In the third century North African Bishop Commodianus taught the millennium (Commodianus. On Christian Discipline. Translated by Robert Ernest Wallis. From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 4. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885). Greco-Roman Bishop Lactantius (late 3rd/early 4th century) clearly taught a millennial reign of the saints on the earth after a resurrection (Lactantius, Book VI, Chapter XXII. In AnteNiceneFathers, Volume 07).

So did the 4th century Greco-Roman saint and bishop Methodius who wrote:

For I also, taking my journey, and going forth from the Egypt of this life, came first to the resurrection, which is the true Feast of the Tabernacles, and there having set up my tabernacle, adorned with the fruits of virtue, on the first day of the resurrection, which is the day of judgment, celebrate with Christ the millennium of rest, which is called the seventh day, even the true Sabbath. (Methodius. Banquet of the Ten Virgins, Discourse 9, chapter 5)

Jerome observed that 5th century Sabbath-keeping Christians also believed that the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles also pictured the millennium (Jerome, Commentariorum in Zachariam Lib. III. Patrologia Latina 25, 1529; 1536).

In the 20th century, Roman Catholic priest and scholar Dr. Bagatti wrote:

The doctrine of millenarianism, being widespread, left many iconographical traces. As a sign of millenarianism, also called chiliasm, we find the Greek letter X, initial for the word chilioi (thousand) ... Studying funeral monuments we find ourselves face to face with very many signs which lead us to millenarian iconographic repertoire. (Bagatti B, From the The Church from the Circumcision, pp. 297, 298)

Furthermore, the palm tree (apparently because it is mentioned in Revelation 7:9 and is associated with the Feast of Tabernacles in Leviticus 23:33-40) and other plants were also used sometimes as millennial symbols on graves (Bagatti, From the The Church from the Circumcision, pp. 296-300). A palm tree is mentioned as a connection between heaven and earth for "Jewish-Christians" (Saller, p. 95). The millenarianism view, as historian Philip Schaff also noted, was "widespread" (Schaff Philip. History of the Christian Church, Volume 2. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, p. 381; 1884 version, p. 614).

The reason the millennial belief was widespread was because it was biblical and an original catholic belief.

The Bible teaches that the millennial reign will be a fantastic time and that the law will be taught then (Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-4) with reminders given by God's teachers to observe it (Isaiah 30:20-21). The Sabbath is a weekly reminder that God's millennial kingdom will come.

The Greco-Romans changed their mind about the millennium and condemned that belief in the "Second Ecumenical Council, in 381" (Orthodox Christian Beliefs and Practices. © 2006-2007 Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada).

Like original catholic Christians, the *Continuing* Church of God still teaches a literal millennium. And we also tie the Feast of Tabernacles in with it

Gospel of the Kingdom

Jesus taught:

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14, OSB)

The *Continuing* Church of God does not believe that this has been fulfilled as the end has not yet come.

This prophecy by Jesus also could tie in with the full number of Gentiles to be converted (Romans 11:25).

2nd century Christians did not believe this had been fulfilled, otherwise missionaries would not have been sent out from places like Asia Minor and Palestine (Moore TV. The Culdee Church, chapters 3 and 4, and Wilkinson, Our Authorized Bible Vindicated, pp. 25, 26 as cited in Dugger, A History of True Religion, pp. 90-91).

The *Continuing* Church of God believe that it needs to work to support the work of proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world as a witness.

We believe that events will occur that will focus attention on the gospel message in the future and then God will determine that Matthew 24:14 has been fulfilled and the end of this age and then the start of the Great Tribulation will begin consistent with Jesus' words in Matthew 24:15-21.

The Kingdom of God was a significant part of what is claimed to be "the oldest complete Christian sermon that has survived" (Holmes M. Apostolic Fathers, p. 102), which is often called 2 Clement. Here is some of what it says about it:

5:5 Moreover you know, brothers, that our stay in the world of the flesh is insignificant and transitory, but the promise of Christ is great and marvelous: rest in the coming kingdom and life eternal.

The above statement shows that the kingdom is not now, but will come and be eternal.

Furthermore, this ancient sermon states:

6:9 Now if even such righteous men as these are not able, by means of their own righteous deeds, to save their children, what assurance do we have of entering the kingdom of God if we fail to keep our baptism pure and undefiled? Or who will be our advocate, if we have not been found to have holy and righteous works?

9:6 Therefore let us love one another, that we all may enter into the kingdom of God.

11:7 Therefore, if we know what is right in God's sight, we will enter his kingdom and receive the promises which "ear has not heard nor eye seen nor the heart of man imagined."

12:1 Let us wait, therefore hour by hour for the kingdom of God in love and righteousness, since we know not the day of God's appearing.

12:6 he says, the kingdom of my Father shall come. The above statements show that love through proper living is needed, that we still have not entered the Kingdom of God, and that it occurs after the day of God's appearing—that is after Jesus returns again.

It is interesting that the oldest apparently Christian sermon that God has allowed to survive teaches the same Kingdom of God that the New Testament teaches and the *Continuing* Church of God now teaches.

Theophilus of Antioch taught:

I but mention His goodness; if I call Him Kingdom, I but mention His glory ... For if He had made him immortal from the beginning, He would have made him God. ... Neither, then, immortal nor yet mortal did He make him, but, as we have said above, capable of both; so that if he should incline to the things of immortality, keeping the commandment of God, he should receive as reward from Him immortality, and should become God. (Theophilus, To Autolycus, 1:3, 2:27)

Early Christians looked to the Kingdom of God as the answer to the problems facing the world and did not place their hopes in worldly politics.

However, Christians are to pray for those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-3). And we in the CCOG do that.

Early Christians kept the Feast of Tabernacles and looked forward to the millennial Kingdom.

(We have a free online booklet, available in over 100 languages, at ccog.org for more details titled *The Gospel of the Kingdom of God*.)

The New Testament clearly teaches a millennial kingdom of God (Revelation 20:4-6).

We in the CCOG still hold to the original position.

13. The Original Catholic View of the Godhead

How did the original catholic church view the Godhead?

Well, the Father was considered to be God. And Jesus was considered God, the Lord, the Son of God, our High Priest, and Saviour.

Saints like Polycarp and Melito wrote:

Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour ... Jesus Christ Himself, who is the Son of God ... Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal High-priest Himself, the God Jesus Christ ... (Letter to the Philippians, Chapters 1 & XII)

‘Father, and God of Truth’ (Melito, A Discourse Which Was in the Presence of Antoninus Caesar)

Saviour ... Head of the Lord-His simple Divinity; (Melito. Book of Extracts, IV & IX)

Yes, the Father is God and Jesus is our Divine High Priest and Savior.

Notice statements from Jesus and Peter related to Him being the Savior:

⁶ Jesus said: I am the Way; I am Truth and Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. (John 14:6, NJB)

⁹ ... **Jesus Christ of Nazareth** ... ¹² **There is salvation in no one else**, and there is no other Name under heaven that is given among mortals by which we should be saved! (Acts 4:9,12, EOB)

Salvation is only through the way of Jesus. God the Father sent Him (John 3:16) so that the “the world may be saved by him” (John 3:17, DRB).

“There is salvation in no one else.”

The Apostle Paul was inspired to state:

²⁹ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. (Acts 17:29, OSB)

So, it should be clear that early Christians did not think they should have icons of the Godhead (“divinity” in DRB).

The Apostle Paul wrote:

¹⁴ ... I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named ... ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14-15,19, OSB)

¹⁴ ... I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ... ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14-15,19, NABRE)

God is one family and Christians are to be part of that family.

Binitarian Formulas

Regarding the New Testament statements on the components of the Godhead, a trinitarian scholar William Rusch has admitted:

The binitarian formulas are found in Rom. 8:11, 2 Cor. 4:14, Gal. 1:1, Eph. 1:20, 1 Tim 1:2, 1 Pet. 1:21, and 2 John 1:13 ... No doctrine of the Trinity in the Nicene sense is present in the New Testament ...

There is no doctrine of the Trinity in the strict sense in the Apostolic Fathers ... (Rusch WG. *The Trinitarian Controversy*. Fortress Press, Phil., 1980, pp. 2-3).

Thus, a trinitarian scholar admits that the New Testament uses what he calls binitarian formulas and no doctrine of the trinity was found in the writings of those called "Apostolic Fathers." Trinitarianism was simply not part of the original Christian faith.

Here is something from a Roman Catholic scholar:

... nowhere does the Bible normally and explicitly state the doctrine of the Trinity, ... the doctrine is clearly a development ... (Sungenis RA. *NOT BY SCRIPTURE ALONE A Catholic Critique of the Protestant Doctrine of *Sola Scriptura**, 2nd ed. NIHIL OBSTAT Monsignor Carroll E. Satterfield Censor Librorum, IMPRIMATUR Monsignor W. Francis Malooly Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1997. Catholic Apologetics International Publishing, 2013, pp. 76-77)

In what has been called "the oldest complete Christian sermon that has survived" (Holmes MW. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 2nd ed. Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2004, p. 102)-outside those in the Bible--sometimes erroneously referred to as *Second Letter of Clement*, is supportive of binitarianism. This sermon was given perhaps within a year or so of John's death (though others have suggested that perhaps the Roman Bishop Soter wrote or gave it c. 170; Holmes, p. 103), has the following:

Brothers, we ought so to think of Jesus Christ, as of God, as "Judge of the living and the dead (An Ancient Christian Sermon (2 Clement), 1:1. In Holmes MW, p. 107).

So then, brothers, if we do the will of God our Father ... (Ibid, p. 121).

Now the church, being spiritual was revealed in the flesh of Christ, thereby showing us that if any of us guard her in the flesh and do not corrupt her, he will receive her back again in the Holy Spirit. For this flesh is a copy of the Spirit. No one, therefore, who corrupts the copy, will share in the original. This, therefore, is what he means, brothers: guard the flesh, in order that you may receive of the Spirit. Now if we say that the flesh is the church and the Spirit is Christ, then the one who abuses the flesh hath abuses the church. Consequently such a person will not receive the Spirit, which is Christ. So great is the life and immortality which this flesh is able to receive, if the Holy Spirit is closely joined with it, that no one is able to proclaim or to tell "what things the Lord hath prepared" for his chosen ones (Ibid, p. 121).

Thus, what may be the oldest preserved sermon says to think of Jesus as God and that the Father is God, but it never indicates that the Holy Spirit is God. This is consistent with the binitarian view.

Before going further, consider what Jesus Himself taught

²⁷ Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (Matthew 11:27, NJB)

Note that only the Father and Son know each other (other than those Jesus reveals)--which shows, for example, that the Holy Spirit, which is not mentioned, does NOT know. Therefore, it should be clear that according to Jesus' words, obviously the Holy Spirit is NOT a co-equal member of a Greco-Roman trinity. But Jesus' words are consistent with the binitarian view of the Godhead.

Consider that, Ignatius, the first known leader to use the term "catholic church," wrote the following around 110-135 A.D.:

For our God, Jesus Christ, was conceived by Mary in accord with God's plan: of the seed of David, it is true, but also of the Holy Spirit. He was born and baptized so that by His submission He might purify the water (Ignatius of Antioch, Letters to the Ephesians 18,2--note this is translated the same by at least three separate translations as done by Dr. Lightfoot, J.H. Srawley, and Roberts & Donaldson).

... God appeared in human form to bring newness of eternal life (Ignatius. Letter the Ephesians, 19,3. In Holmes, p. 149).

Permit me to be an imitator of the passion of my God. (Ignatius, Letter to the Romans, 6,3)

Hence, Ignatius clearly recognized Jesus as God, and thus could not have been a traditional unitarian. Nor was he trinitarian.

Ignatius further wrote to the Ephesians:

Ignatius, who is also Theophorus, unto her which hath been blessed in greatness through the plentitude of God the Father; which hath been foreordained before the ages to be for ever unto abiding and unchangeable glory, united and elect in a true passion, by the will of the Father and of Jesus Christ our God; even unto the church which is in Ephesus [of Asia], worthy of all felicitation: abundant greeting in Christ Jesus and in blameless joy. (Ignatius' Letter to the Ephesians, Verse 0. In Apostolic Fathers. Lightfoot & Harmer, 1891 translation)

He wrote something similar to the Smyrnaeans:

Ignatius, who is also Theophorus, to the church of God the Father and of Jesus Christ the Beloved, which hath been mercifully endowed with every grace, being filled with faith and love and lacking in no grace, most reverend and bearing holy treasures; to the church which is in Smyrna of Asia, in a blameless spirit and in the word of God abundant greeting. I give glory to Jesus Christ the God who bestowed such wisdom upon you." (Ignatius' Letter to the Symrnaeans, Verses 0-1.1. In Apostolic Fathers. Lightfoot & Harmer, 1891 translation)

Professor Hurtado notes that:

"there are numerous places where Ignatius refers to Jesus as "God" (*theos*) ... Yet Ignatius refers to Jesus as *theos* while still portraying him as subordinate to the ""Father"." (Hurtado LW. Lord Jesus Christ, Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity. William B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, 2003, pp.637, 638)

That is a binitarian view. Early Christians were careful about avoiding the charge of ditheism, likely because they were reinforcing the binitarian position that God is *one family*, currently consisting of the Father and the Son. That is a family relationship, in which the Father is greater than the Son (John 14:28)--but that the true saints will be part of.

It is important to note that Ignatius referred to both the Father and the Son as God in two of his letters (and this author verified that it is in the original Greek), but he never called the Holy Spirit 'God.' Instead he wrote:

... using as a rope the Holy Spirit (Ignatius. Letter to the Ephesians, 9:1. In Holmes, p. 143)

In the 2nd century, Church of God leaders who could be considered to be part of the "original catholic church" taught that the Father and Son were God, but did not teach that of the Holy Spirit. This has been called a "binitarian" view or formula:

As for the binitarian confessional formula, which confesses the Father and the Son, we likewise find examples in Polycarp and Ignatius. (Monroy, p. 292)

The following quote attributed to Polycarp shows that he (and thus by inference the rest of Smyrna) was not unitarian:

Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... the God Jesus Christ, build you up in faith and truth, and in all gentleness and in all avoidance of wrath and in forbearance and long suffering and in patient endurance and in purity; and may He grant unto you a lot and portion among His saints, and to us with you, and to all that are under heaven, who shall believe on our Lord and God Jesus Christ and on His Father (The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians in APOSTOLIC FATHERS (as translated by J.B. LIGHTFOOT) 12:6,7).

It should be pointed out that there is another translation of this section by Roberts and Donaldson in *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol, 1* which omitted the term “God” before Jesus Christ, but this author verified that the term “deum” is in the Latin version of this epistle {the original Greek versions did not survive past chapter 10}.

Dr. Lightfoot’s translation “our Lord and God Jesus Christ” is a literal translation of the Latin “dominum nostrum et deum Iesum Christum.” The *University of Notre Dame Latin Dictionary and Grammar Aid* states “deus -i m. [a god , deity].” The term “deum” is the masculine accusatory form of the word “deus.” Since traditional unitarians do not call Jesus God, it is clear that Polycarp clearly was not one of them. Furthermore, he did not ever call the Holy Spirit “God.”

Here is a report about how Jewish leaders described early Christian theology:

The argument that Christianity is not binitarian but trinitarian, hence could not be perceived as a two-powers heresy, ignores the fact that it is not so much what Christianity thought of itself that counts but how it appeared to its rabbinic critics. And there we see clearly that **it was often described as binitarian or dualistic** rather than trinitarian. (Summary of response by Alan F. Segal. International Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus. 13-17 June 1998)

Hence, the early Jewish rabbis recognized early Christianity as binitarian, not trinitarian or unitarian. But this observation is not limited to critics of the Christian religion.

The Greco-Roman saint Justin Martyr wrote:

When Scripture says, ‘The Lord rained fire from the Lord out of heaven,’ the prophetic word indicates that there were two in number: One upon the earth, who, it says, descended to behold the cry of Sodom; Another in heaven, who also is Lord of the Lord on earth, as He is Father and God; the cause of His power and of His being Lord and God. Again, when the Scripture records that God said in the beginning, ‘Behold, Adam has become like one of Us,’ this phrase, ‘like one of Us,’ is also indicative of number; and the words do not admit of a figurative meaning, as the sophists endeavor to affix on them, who are able neither to tell nor to understand the truth. (Dialogue with Trypho. Chapter CXXIX)

The first scripture that Justin cited above was Genesis 19:24. Notice what a trinitarian supporting website posted about it:

There are two Yahweh’s in Gen 19:24

A. "Then Yahweh [on earth in human form] rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Yahweh [in spirit form in heaven] out of heaven." Genesis 19:24 ...

There simply is no way to escape the clear context that there were two Yahweh's: One on earth that talked to Abraham and commanded Sodom be destroyed. And a second Yahweh in heaven who actually sent the fire. (Rudd S, et al. Trinity Proof Texts: Gen 19:24. Bible.ca accessed 11/18/20)

The above website is defending a binitarian, not trinitarian, concept of the Godhead. But it seemingly does not realize that.

A second century Greco-Roman apologist named Athenagoras wrote the following:

And, the Son being in the Father and the Father in the Son, in oneness and power of spirit, the understanding and reason (*nous kai logos*) of the Father is the Son of God ... The Holy Spirit ... which operates in the prophets, we assert to be an effluence of God, flowing from Him, and returning back again like a beam of the sun ... (Athenagoras. A Plea for the Christians, Chapter X. Translated by B.P. Pratten. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 2)

Thus, Athenagoras explained that the Father and the Son are God, have a oneness of power and spirit, and that the Holy Spirit is the effluence of God. He never called the Holy Spirit God. And he stated that both, the Father and the Son (the term in English refers to two), are both united and distinct--this is a binitarian view.

Near the end of the second century, Melito of Sardis (whom Greco-Roman Catholics and others consider to be a saint) wrote:

For the deeds done by Christ after His baptism, and especially His miracles, gave indication and assurance to the world of the Deity hidden in His flesh. For, being at once both God and perfect man likewise ... He concealed the signs of His Deity, although He was the true God existing before all ages ... (Melito. On the Nature of Christ. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 8)

This is the one who became human in a virgin, who was hanged on the tree, (Melito. On the Passover)

This clearly shows that Melito considered Christ to be God, though truly human while on earth. And as cited earlier, Melito wrote the Father was also God. There is no indication in any of the surviving writings of Melito that he considered that the Holy Spirit was also God, hence he seemed to hold a binitarian view.

Actually, like most binitarians, his writings suggest that the Holy Spirit was simply a manifestation of the power of God as he wrote:

The tongue of the Lord-His Holy Spirit. In the Psalm: "My tongue is a pen." (Melito. From the Oration on Our Lord's Passion, IX. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 8, p. 760).

The finger of the Lord-the Holy Spirit, by whose operation the tables of the law in Exodus are said to have been written (Melito. From the Oration on Our Lord's Passion. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 8).

Since God had the written the Ten Commandments Himself (Exodus 31:18), this shows that Melito only considered the Holy Spirit to be a manifestation of the power of God, not a separate person.

Instead of accepting what Melito taught about the Godhead and Holy Spirit as related to the original faith, at least trinitarian scholar (who is also an Anglican priest) wrote:

We must understand that Melito bears witness to the truth as it was understood in his day and that the orthodox faith has been gradually revealed (Stewart-Sykes A, p. 29).

Yes, Melito was bearing truth to the original catholic view, which was binitarian. The original faith was not to be changed (Jude 3).

Around the middle of the 4th century, Orthodox Catholic and binitarian bishop named Marcellus of Ancyra (who also apparently put together what is known as the oldest 'Apostles' Creed', known as the 'Old Roman Form') wrote on the nature of God:

Now with the heresy of the Ariomaniacs, which has corrupted the Church of God ...These then teach three hypostases, just as Valentinus the heresiarch first invented in the book entitled by him 'On the Three Natures'. For he was the first to invent three hypostases and three persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he is discovered to have filched this from Hermes and Plato (Logan, p. 95).

Valentinus was denounced by Polycarp of Smyrna in the 2nd century (Irenaeus. Adversus Haeres. Book III, Chapter 3, Verse 4).

One of the so-called *Montanist Oracles*, spoken by the apostate Montanus was:

"I am the Father and the Son and the Paraclete." (Didymus, De trinitate iii. 41. 1.) (Assembled in P. de Labriolle, *La crise montaniste* (1913), 34-105, by Bates College, Lewston (Maine) http://abacus.bates.edu/Faculty/Philosophy%20and%20Religion/rel_241/texts/montanism.html 01/31/06).

This is one of the first references to a trinitarian view of the Godhead (the other earliest one was from the heretic Valentinus is unclear which was first). The paraclete is a term used to signify the Holy Spirit (it is from the Greek term *parakletos*).

It was apostate 'catholics' who clearly taught the trinity in the 2nd century.

Consider, also, some quotes from the Greco-Roman saint Irenaeus:

... **there is none other called God by the Scriptures except the Father of all, and the Son**, and those who possess the adoption (Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*, Book IV, Preface, Verse 4)

... they believe in the Father and the Son (Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*, Book V, Chapter 8, Verse 4)

Notice that Irenaeus states that only the Father, the Son, and those who possess the adoption (Christians) are God. This is a binitarian, not a trinitarian view, of the Godhead.

The Roman Catholic saint Hippolytus, who had ties to Irenaeus, also held a binitarian view of the Godhead:

These things then, brethren, are declared by the Scriptures. And the blessed John, in the testimony of his Gospel, gives us an account of this economy (disposition) and acknowledges this Word as God, when he says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." If, then, the Word was with God, and was also God, what follows? Would one say that he speaks of two Gods? I shall not indeed speak of two Gods, but of one; of two Persons however, and of a third economy (disposition), viz., the grace of the Holy Ghost. For the Father indeed is One, but there are two Persons, because there is also the Son (Hippolytus. *Against Noetus*, Chapter 14. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5).

Hippolytus was elected to be "Bishop of Rome" (Lopes A. Translation by Charles Nopar. *The Popes. Pontifical Administration*, Rome, 1997 and 2005 editions, pp. 5-6). This seems to have happened either after or near the time Callistus allegedly paid a bribe to gain, at least access to, that office (Hippolytus. *Philosophumena* aka *Refutation of All Heresies*, Book IX, Chapter VI).

The Catholic Encyclopedia notes that it was claimed:

According to the "Philosophumena" (c. ix) Callistus ... obtained great influence over the ignorant, illiterate, and grasping Zephyrinus by bribes.

We are not told how it came about that ... Callistus ... became archdeacon and then pope. ... The orthodoxy of Callistus is challenged by both Hippolytus and Tertullian ... (Chapman, *Pope Callistus I*)

Despite his support for abortion, charges of simony (paying bribes for ecclesiastical office), and other forms of immorality, the Church of Rome chose to claim apostolic succession through Callistus and not Hippolytus.

The 3rd century Roman Catholic saint Hippolytus has been called Rome's "**most important theologian ... in the pre-Constantinian era**" (Kirsch JP. *St. Hippolytus of Rome*, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*). One can be forgiven for believing that Callistus has been claimed to be the true successor, and not Hippolytus, because Rome later adopted the trinity in 381 and Hippolytus clearly did not hold that view.

In the 3rd and 4th centuries, Lucian of Antioch was also known to be binitarian (Newman JH, Cardinal. *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, pp. 277, 406).

It should be pointed out that the Hebrew term for spirit, transliterated as *ruwach*, is feminine and the Greek term, *pneuma*, is neuter, not masculine. In Syriac, the word for spirit is feminine (Arendzen JP. *Bardesan and Bardesanites*. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*). “There is no text in the NT that clearly or even probably affirms the personality of the Holy Spirit through the route of Greek grammar” (Wallace DB. *Greek Grammar and the Personality of the Holy Spirit*. *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 13.1, 2003, p. 97). As far as scripture is concerned, the pronoun “he” is not properly applicable for the Holy Spirit (Ibid, pp. 97-125). An Eastern Orthodox scholar wrote, “The Greek... *pneuma* is neuter, which is why it is never spoken of with personal pronouns” (Cleenewerck, EOB: *The Eastern Orthodox New Testament*, p. 34). More details about the Holy Spirit are also found in the free online book: *Hope of Salvation: How the Continuing Church of God Differs from Protestantism*.

As far as trinitarian practices go, the late Cardinal James Gibbons wrote:

... most Christians pray to the Holy Ghost, a practice which is nowhere found in the Bible. (Gibbons J., Cardinal, 1917, p. 73)

Since the Bible never says to pray to the Holy Spirit (only to pray to receive it and/or gifts of it), praying to it was not a practice of the original catholic faith. The personhood of the Holy Spirit was debated and then accepted by Greco-Roman councils in the mid-late 4th century.

The following from that same Cardinal Gibbons suggests such changes should not have been accepted:

No new dogma unknown to the Apostles not contained in the primitive Christian revelation can be admitted. (John xiv 26; xi 15; xvi 13.) **For the Apostles received the whole deposit of God’s word**, according to the promise of the Lord: (Ibid, p. 9)

The reality is that trinitarianism, the personhood of the Holy Spirit, Sunday as the Christian day of worship, Christmas, Lent, Ash Wednesday (adopted around the 8th century per *The Catholic Encyclopedia*), eating unclean meats, Passover/Easter on Sunday, and many other Greco-Roman practices were unknown to the original Apostles and are also not in the Bible.

Was Jesus Fully God?

Did Jesus empty Himself of His divinity when He was born of Mary?

Yes, the Bible teaches that Jesus:

⁷ ... emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. (Philippians 2:7, DRB)

⁷ ... he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, (Philippians 2:7, NJB)

Jesus became human as we are human!

Binitarians, like the CCOG, teach that Jesus was fully human while on the earth. That is consistent with scripture and early beliefs.

Trinitarians, however, normally teach that Jesus was both fully God and fully human on the earth.

That view is also in conflict with what Irenaeus wrote in the 2nd century:

For as He became man in order to undergo temptation, ... that He might be capable of being tempted, dishonoured, crucified, and of suffering death, (Irenaeus. Adversus haereses, Book III, Chapter XIX, Verse 3)

We in the CCOG agree with the above (though we would have translated “crucified” as “impaled”).

As far as Jesus’ humanity goes, consider also the New Testament makes it clear that Jesus was tempted:

¹¹ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2:18, OSB)

Consider that the New Testament also teaches that God cannot be tempted by evil:

¹³ ... God cannot be tempted by evil (James 1:13, NJB)

It should be pointed out that James 1:13 uses the same basic Greek word for “tempted” that Hebrews 2:18 uses.

Furthermore, notice:

¹⁴ Having therefore a great high priest that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God: let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we have not a high priest, who can not have compassion on our infirmities: but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin. (Hebrews 4:14-15, DRB)

Humans, of course, can sin. Therefore, these verses clearly show that Jesus was not fully God after His incarnation and prior to His resurrection.

Consider that the Bible teaches God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18, Titus 1:2). For Jesus to have been “tempted in all things like as we are” to position Him to fully “have compassion on our infirmities,” He had to be capable of actually sinning, otherwise He was NOT tempted as we are.

Thus, since God cannot sin, and scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35), we must conclude Jesus could not have been fully God while on earth. For, if Jesus was fully God on earth, He was not tempted as we are. While Jesus was tempted like us, that does not happen with God.

Furthermore, Polycarp understood that Jesus actually died and needed to be resurrected:

Jesus Christ, who for our sins suffered even unto death, [but] “whom God raised from the dead, having loosed the bands of the grave” ... He who raised Him up from the dead will raise up us also, if we do His will, and walk in His commandments, and love what He loved ... (Polycarp’s Letter to the Philippians, Chapters 1,2)

The false Jesus that trinitarians actually claim to worship did NOT give up all so that humans could be saved, was not subject to transgression like humans, did not have to have the faith rely on the Father for miracles and His resurrection, did not really die, did not need His Father to resurrect Him, and, hence, did not really come in the flesh.

Although trinitarians do not word it that way, their view of Jesus is warned against by the Apostle John:

⁷ Many deceivers have gone out into the world, people who do not confess Jesus Christ came in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the Antichrist. (2 John 7, EOB)

⁷ For many seducers are gone out into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh: this is a seducer and an antichrist. (2 John 7, DRB)

This passage does not mean an antichrist would not believe that there was a Jesus. Even many atheists acknowledge the historical fact of Jesus, as do the demons (James 2:19). This passage is saying that an antichrist teaching is that Jesus was not truly human when incarnate.

The original catholic belief was that Jesus had emptied Himself of His divinity, became fully human, was tempted, and allowed Himself to be put to actual death in order to be our Saviour.

What About 1 John 5:7-8?

Some point to 1 John 5:7-8 as “proof” of the trinity.

But most rely on something ADDED to the text centuries later.

Consider that the *Codex Amiatinus* (Codex Amiatinus. Novum Testamentum Latine interpreter Hieronymo. Epistula Iohannis I V:6-8. Constantinus Tischendorf, Lipsiae. 1854), which is believed to be the closest to the original document that Jerome originally translated, also does not have the extra words.

Regarding its importance, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* states:

Codex Amiatinus The most celebrated manuscript of the Latin Vulgate Bible, remarkable as the best witness to the true text of St. Jerome ... (Fenlon JF. Codex Amiatinus. The Catholic Encyclopedia)

The Latin in the *Codex Amiatinus* differs from more modern version of the Latin Vulgate because the modern version adds “*in caelo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus. Et hi tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra:*” (Source: Latin Vulgate.com is provided by Mental Systems, Inc. <http://www.latinvulgate.com/verse.aspx?t=1&b=23&c=5> viewed 04/21/12).

Well, “*in caelo, Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus. Et hi tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra:*” translates into English as:

“in heaven, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. And these three are. And there are three that bear witness in earth”

In other words, the text that Jerome originally translated DID NOT include the above. What we see in the Douay-Rheims is from a CHANGED version of the *Latin Vulgate*. It is NOT a translation of what Jerome originally wrote.

Notice also a copy of the relevant section of a Greek document called the *Codex Sinaiticus* c. 350 (the *Codex Sinaiticus* is considered as the oldest complete copy of the New Testament):

ΚΑΙ ΤΩ ΑΙΜΑΤΙ ΚΑΙ
ΤΟΙΣ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΙΣ
ΤΙΝΑΣ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΗΜΑΣ
ΟΙ ΤΡΙΕΙΣ
ΟΙ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΙ
ΤΕ ΤΟΙΣ ΑΚΑΙΤΟΙΣ
ΑΙ ΤΟ ΑΙΜΑ
ΚΑΙ ΟΙ ΤΡΙΕΙΣ
ΕΝ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΙ
ΤΩ

Here is a translation of 1 John 5:7-8 as shown in the *Codex Sinaiticus* from a scholastic source:

⁷ For they that testify are three, ⁸ the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and the three are one.
(CodexSinaiticus.org accessed 07/02/20)

The added statements, found in some translations, was not in the *Codex Sinaiticus*.

So, when did the extra statement get put in?

Notice what seems probably to be the most accepted view from Dr. Daniel Wallace:

the earliest manuscript, codex 221 (10th century), includes the reading in a marginal note which was added sometime after the original composition. Thus, there is no sure evidence of this reading in any Greek manuscript until the 1500s; each such reading was apparently composed after Erasmus' Greek NT was published in 1516. Indeed, the reading appears in no Greek witness of any kind (either manuscript, patristic, or Greek translation of some other version) until AD 1215 (in a Greek translation of the Acts of the Lateran Council, a work originally written in Latin) ...

The Trinitarian formula (known as the *Comma Johanneum*) made its way into the third edition of Erasmus' Greek NT (1522) because of pressure from the Catholic Church ...

In reality, the issue is history, not heresy: How can one argue that the *Comma Johanneum* must go back to the original text when it did not appear until the 16th century in any Greek manuscripts? (Wallace DB, professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. The Textual Problem in 1 John 5:7-8. <http://bible.org/article/textual-problem-1-john-57-8> viewed 07/03/20)

Basically, what seems to have happened is that a monk put a personal note related to his interpretation of the 'three' mentioned in the first part of 1 John 5:7. One or more scribal monks after him, inserted his note actually in the text. It was NOT inspired by God.

Some wish to believe the expanded passage of 1 John 5:7-8 was real because early heretics seem to have possibly referred to it. At least one popular online source falsely claims that Tertullian, who followed the trinitarian heretic Montanus, quoted the omitted words in *Against Praxeas*. However, this is not true that writing does not have a full quote of 1 John 5:7-8.

Notice this condemnation by a Roman Catholic Cardinal for holding the original view of the Godhead:

Lucian, who schismatized or was excommunicated on his deposition, held heretical tenets of a diametrically opposite nature, that is, such as were afterwards called Semi-Arian . . . I would rather direct the reader's attention to the particular form which the Antiochene corruptions seem to have assumed, viz., that of Judaism . . . (Newman JH, Cardinal. The Arians of the Fourth Century, pp. 7,9).

This is showing that there were people in the Antioch area in the 3rd and 4th centuries that held to some form of Judeo-Christianity, as well to binitarianism, in the late 3rd century according to Catholic sources, who were not part of the group in communion with Rome and Alexandria.

The Catholic Encyclopedia states:

Lucian of Antioch ... Though he cannot be accused of having shared the theological views of Paul of Samosata, he fell under suspicion at the time of Paul's condemnation, and was compelled to sever his communion with the Church ... The opposition to the allegorizing tendencies of the

Alexandrines centred in him. He rejected this system entirely and propounded a system of literal interpretation ... (Healy PJ. Lucian of Antioch. The Catholic Encyclopedia)

Yes, those who literally believed scripture were condemned.

Yet, it is also a fact that Eastern Orthodox patriarchs in the 4th century held to a semi-arian/binitarian view of the Godhead.

The Catholic Encyclopedia reported:

Towards the middle of the fourth century, Macedonius, Bishop of Constantinople, and, after him a number of Semi-Arians, while apparently admitting the Divinity of the Word, denied that of the Holy Ghost. (Forget J. Holy Ghost).

The Catholic Encyclopedia also reported that binitarians were “**the conservative majority in the East in the fourth century**” (Chapman, Semiarians). This included the famous Greco-Roman historian Eusebius (and his successor Acacius). 85-90% of the Greco-Roman bishops who attended the Council of Nicea in 325 were not trinitarian (Gruner N, Priest. Part II FATIMA: Roadblocks and Breakthroughs. The Fatima Crusader 110, Fall 2014, p. 48; Feldmeth N. Early Christianity. CD Lecture. Fuller Theological Seminary, c. 2003).

The 18th century scientist Isaac Newton noted the late arrival of the trinity and pointed to its late acceptance (though Athanasius did not originate it, he was a factor in Nicea and its post-Nicean adoption):

Isaac ... Newton traced the doctrine of the trinity back to Athanasius (298- 373); he became convinced that before Athanasius the Church had no trinitarian doctrine. In the early 4th century Athanasius was opposed by Arius (256-336), who affirmed that God the Father had primacy over Christ. In 325 the Council of Nicea condemned as heretical the views of Arius. Thus, as viewed by Newton, Athanasius triumphed over Arius in imposing the false doctrine of the trinity on Christianity.

Newton further asserted that, in order to support trinitarianism, the Church deliberately corrupted the Bible by modifying crucial texts. For example, Newton claimed that the well-known words of I John 5:7 (“there are three that bear record in heaven, the father, the Word and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”) were not in the original, pre-4th century Bible (Newton, it seems, was not a King James only man). Newton writes that “the Fathers...preferred to desert the Scriptures than not to condemn Arius”. Soon thereafter a universal corruption of Christianity followed the central corruption of doctrine: in the 4th century trinitarianism fouled every element of Christianity.

According to Newton, the seventh seal began ... when trinitarianism was officially ratified at the Council of Constantinople. The great apostasy was not Romanism, but trinitarianism, “the false infernal religion”, to quote Newton’s own words. (Byl J. ON NEWTON AND THE TRINITY.

Translated in 2005. <http://www.geocentricity.com/ba1/no077/newton-b.html> accessed 05/22/21)

While the 7th seal was not opened in 381 (and is not opened yet), it is true that trinitarianism was not a belief of the original catholic church.

Into, the middle of the fourth century, even many major leaders of the Greco-Roman churches endorsed Semi-Arian, non-trinitarian positions. In 359, there was even a “semi-Arian council of Seleucia” attended by Greco-Roman church leaders (Bagatti B. *The Church from the Gentiles in Palestine*, p. 56).

However, the Greco-Romans changed their minds on this and officially changed at the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. To insure that people would be forced into accepting the trinity, Emperor Theodosius—just before calling that Council, declared:

... let us believe in the one diety of the father, Son and Holy Spirit, in equal majesty and in a holy Trinity. We authorize the followers of this law to assume the title Catholic Christians; but as for the others, since in our judgment they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to give their conventicles the name of churches. They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of divine condemnation and the second the punishment of our authority, in accordance with the will of heaven shall decide to inflict ... (Theodosian Code XVI.1.2. Cited in Bettenson H, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, London: Oxford University Press, 1943, p. 31).

So, the trinity ended up needing the force of Imperial Roman punishment against non-trinitarians. Part of the reason is that the trinity simply was not something that original Christians believed or taught.

Historical scholar Jonathan Roberts wrote:

Until Theodosius commanded his subjects to believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, and enforced his commands upon them by the most inhumane ways, that doctrine was rejected and resisted by the Greek and Roman followers of the Christos ... (Roberts JM. *Antiquity Unveiled: Ancient Voices from the Spirit Realms Disclose the Most Startling Revelations, Proving Christianity to be of Heathen Origin ...* Oriental publishing co., 1894, p. 468)

From Theodsius’ decree forward, Greco-Romans tended to call those who held to the original catholic beliefs by names such as heretics and Nazarenes. Also, to avoid persecution, those who held to the original catholic beliefs tended not to refer to themselves as catholic Christians in public.

Although some have improperly asserted that the trinity is a central doctrine of the New Testament, here is what one modern historian, Dr. Bart Ehrman, has written about it:

Like other doctrines that became central to the faith, however, belief in the Trinity was a historical development, not a “given” from the early years of the faith.

A. The basic notion of the Trinity is that there are three persons in the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These are all equally God and of the same substance, but despite the fact there are three persons, together, they compromise only one God, indivisible in nature.

B. This doctrine does not appear to be a doctrine pronounced by the historical Jesus, Paul, or any other Christian writer during the first hundred years or so of Christianity.

C. It cannot be found explicitly stated in the earliest Christian writings. The only passage of the New Testament that declares the doctrine (1 John 5:7-8) was not originally part of the text but was added by doctrinally astute scribes at a later date (it is not found in any Greek manuscripts until the 11th century) (Ehrman B. *From Jesus to Constantine: A History of Early Christianity*, Part 2. The Teaching Company, Chantilly (VA), 2004, p. 43).

It should be also pointed out that the terms trinity, threeness, or trinitarian are not found in the Bible.

In the 6th century A.D., centuries after the Greco-Romans changed and adopted the trinity, the so-called Athanasian Creed was written (Athanasius himself is not believed to have written it). It goes so far as to state that one cannot be saved unless one believes in the trinity. Here is part of that Creed:

... the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, let him thus think of the Trinity.

While the Bible says one must believe in God and Jesus to be saved (e.g. Romans 10:9) it NEVER says anything about the trinity and salvation. Yet, the promotion and use of this false Athanasian Creed has been widespread among the Greco-Romans, Lutherans, and some Anglicans.

Those in the COG did not accept the change that the Greco-Romans did on the Godhead and we in the CCOG continue to hold the original catholic binitarian view of the Godhead today.

What About Theophilus of Antioch? Tertullian?

It has been asserted that Theophilus of Antioch was the first to use the term trinity in the late 2nd century.

The Catholic Encyclopedia states:

In Scripture there is as yet no single term by which the Three Divine Persons are denoted together...The word trias (of which the Latin trinitas is a translation) is first found in Theophilus of Antioch about A.D. 180 ... Afterwards it appears in its Latin form of trinitas in Tertullian ("De pud." c. xxi) (Joyce G. *The Blessed Trinity*)

As far as Theophilus, here is a typical mistranslation of something he wrote in Greek:

In like manner also the three days which were before the luminaries, are types of the Trinity, of God, and His Word, and His wisdom. And the fourth is the type of man, who needs light, that so there may be God, the Word, wisdom, man (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapter XV. In Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 2).

It is mistranslated because trinity was NOT a Greek word, but a Latin one. Thus, the proper translation, in line with his other writings, would be:

In like manner also the three days which were before the luminaries, are types of the three of God, and His Word, and His Wisdom. And the fourth is the type of man, who needs light, that so there may be God, the Word, Wisdom, man. (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapter XV)

Some may argue that this is just a semantics issue and that Theophilus is actually still talking about the trinity. Yet, he was not.

Why?

The third part is what Theophilus was teaching that humans become. And that is what Theophilus is teaching--that now humans are a fourth type, but will become part of God.

Theophilus verifies when he wrote:

... if I call Him Wisdom, I speak of His offspring (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolycus, Book 1, Chapter III)

For if He had made him immortal from the beginning, He would have made him God ... so that if he should incline to the things of immortality, keeping the commandment of God, he should receive as reward from Him immortality, and should become God. (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolycus, Book 2, Chapter XXVII)

Theophilus clearly taught that deification for the converted was the third part in the 'threeness' of God. This is consistent with the binitarian view of the family of God (cf. Ephesians 3:14-15, 19).

Ignatius of Antioch also taught deification, the ultimate unity of God:

It is good to set from the world unto God, that I may rise again to Him ... it will be granted me to attain to God. (Ignatius. Letter to the Romans, Chapters 2,4)

He is the door of the Father, by which enter in Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the prophets, and the apostles, and the Church. All these have for their object the attaining to the unity of God. (Ignatius. Letter to the Romans, Chapter 9)

It, furthermore, has been claimed that:

The concept of *theosis* (English: “deification”) is central to Orthodox doctrine. (Roeber, p. 227)

We in the *Continuing* Church of God hold to the doctrine of being deified as a true member in the family of God to this day.

Getting back to Theophilus, he did not teach that the Holy Spirit was, or somehow would be, one of three persons in any trinity. He verified that when he taught the following about the Spirit of God:

... if I say He is Spirit, I speak of His breath ... the whole creation is contained by the spirit of God, and the containing spirit is along with the creation contained by the hand of God (Theophilus of Antioch. To Autolycus, Book 1, Chapters III,V)

So, no, Theophilus did not teach the Greco-Roman trinity. He taught the third part had to do with deification of the converted.

As far as Tertullian goes, he taught a threeness and followed the apostate Montanus.

But what Tertullian taught was not the same as the Greco-Roman trinity that was adopted later (see Tertullian. Against Praxeas, Chapters 3,4-5,9. In Ante-Nicene Fathers).

Neither of the two earliest sources of the word trinity, according to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, actually clearly taught the trinitarian concept the way it is now taught. Also, Tertullian admitted that the majority around the early third century did not accept the trinity (Against Praxeas, Chapters 3,4-5,9).

Here is a list of early binitarians and trinitarians with their respective centuries:

Binitarians

Ignatius 1st/2nd
Polycarp 1st/2nd
Justin Martyr 2nd
Athenagoras 2nd
Melito 2nd
Theophilus 2nd
Irenaeus 2nd
Hippolytus 3rd
Lucian 3rd/4th
Eusebius 4th

Trinitarians

Valentinus 2nd
Montanus 2nd
Tertullian 2nd/3rd

Everyone in that binitarian list is considered to be a saint by at least some of the Greco-Roman Catholics, whereas those listed as trinitarians are ALL considered to be heretics by the Greco-Roman Catholics. Though some Greco-Romans have asserted that several of those listed as binitarian were trinitarian, a

careful review of their writings demonstrates that those writings are significantly more in line with a binitarian, and not a trinitarian, view of the Godhead.

The original catholic church clearly was binitarian, not trinitarian.

Perhaps it should be pointed out that in the 3rd century, Origen of Alexandria, who often pushed allegory (though he castrated himself), put forth some type of subordinate trinitarian view which seemed to be a cross between trinitarianism and binitarianism (Origen. De Principiis, Book 1, Chapter 3, Verse 7. In Ante-Nicene Fathers). Origen, himself, did not have Christian “self-control” (2 Timothy 1:7, NJB/EOB) or a biblically “sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7, OSB). But, he himself, did help the movement towards trinitarianism.

As far as the fourth century goes, it was Emperor Constantine, whose pagan religion taught a trinity, that endorsed the trinitarian position put forth by Athanasius at the Council of Nicea. Yet even at that 4th century Council, 75-80% of the Greco-Roman bishops who attended were binitarian/semi-arian.

Notice also:

The second Formula of Sirmium (357) ... the Semi-Arian bishops, assembled at Ancyra, the episcopal city of their leader Basilus, issued a ... formula, asserting that the Son is in all things like the Father, afterwards approved by the Third Synod of Sirmium (358). This formula, ... was signed by a few orthodox bishops, and probably by Pope Liberius, (Benigni U. Council of Rimini. The Catholic Encyclopedia)

In the Council of Rimini, 359 A.D ... nearly all bishops present, 400 in number {decided} ... to sign a semi-Arian creed. (Kramer, p. 165)

EPISTLE OF THE SYNOD OF RIMINI TO THE EMPEROR CONSTANTIUS.

“We believe that it was by the appointment of God, as well as at the command of your piety, that we, the bishops of the West, came out of various districts to Rimini, in order that the faith of the Catholic Church might be detected. ... God the Father, through Jesus Christ our God and Lord, the power of ruling the world. ...” (Socrates, pp. 140-141)

Also in the 4th century, Bishop of Rome Liberius excommunicated the trinitarian’s champion Athanasius (Gruner, p. 48). Bishop Liberius also signed a binitarian statement (Lopes, p. 12). Furthermore:

367. COUNCIL OF TYANA accepted the letter of Liberius pronouncing the Semiarian Bishops to be orthodox. (Johnson CFH, ed. The book of Saint Basil the Great, Bishop of Cappadocia, on the Holy Spirit. Claredon Press, 1892, p. lviii)

A few years later, from 370-380, Demophilus was the Patriarch of Constantinople (List of Patriarchs of Constantinople. Patriarchate of Constantinople, <http://patriarchateofconstantinople.com/list-of-patriarchs.html> accessed 07/21/21).

The current Nicene creed, that was adopted at the 381 Council of Constantinople which was convened by Emperor Theodosius, met resistance before acceptance.

Please understand that Theodosius removed Demophilus from being the Patriarch of Constantinople because he would NOT accept the Emperor's trinitarian Nicene Creed. The 5th century Greco-Roman historian Socrates Scholasticus wrote:

When the emperor found the Church in this state, he began to consider by what means he could make peace, effect a union, and enlarge the Churches. Immediately therefore he intimated his desire to Demophilus, who presided over the Arian party, and inquired whether he was willing to assent to the Nicene creed, and thus reunite the people, and establish concord. Upon Demophilus's declining to accede to this proposal, the emperor said to him, "Since you reject peace and unanimity, I order you to quit the churches."

Which when Demophilus heard, weighing with himself the difficulty of contending against superior power, he convoked his followers in the church, and, standing in the midst of them, thus spoke: "Brethren, it is written in the Gospel.' If they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another. ' ' Since therefore the emperor excludes us from the churches, take notice that we will henceforth hold our assemblies without the city. (Socrates Scholasticus, pp. 265-266)

Therefore, consider that: 1) trinitarianism was not the position of the patriarchy of Constantinople, 2) Arian meant Semi-Arian above (and this happens in other writings), and 3) that political considerations, not theological, looks to have been the reason to push trinitarianism.

Even the official website of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople once admitted that the arians/semi-arians ruled that "see" for at least "forty years" in the fourth century (Gregory I of Nazianzen 379-381. © 2010 The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. <http://www.patriarchate.org/patriarchate/former-patriarchs/gregory-i-of-nazianzen> viewed 04/17/10). Furthermore, it should be understood that there is no evidence that Constantinople had any "bishops" prior to the fourth century who were actually trinitarians.

The pagan convert Theodosius declared the trinity to be the official policy of his empire in 380 A.D. But even that late declaration also supports the view that trinitarianism was not an original catholic belief.

NOT ONE of those that the Greco-Romans consider to be "early fathers" taught (prior to the 3rd century) the trinity (Rusch, pp. 2-3). The essentially unanimous view of the Godhead was binitarian (also called semi-arian).

Binitarianism did not just spring up in the 4th century have some have suggested—it was the original Christian view of the Godhead, as some scholars have affirmed (e.g. Hurtado, pp. 52-53, 605, 637; Summary of response by Alan F. Segal. International Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus. 13-17 June 1998).

(For more details about scriptures that Protestants sometimes claim supports trinitarianism, check out the free book, available online at ccog.org, *Hope of Salvation: How the Continuing Church of God Differs from Protestantism*.)

The Bible, as well as historical records, confirm that the original catholic view of the Godhead was binitarian, not trinitarian.

14. Pronouncements of Men, Apparitions, and Two Groups

Jesus told educated religious leaders and others:

⁶ ... Well did Isaias prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

⁷ And in vain do they worship me, teaching doctrines and precepts of men.

⁸ For leaving the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, ... ⁹ And he said to them: Well do you make void the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition. (Mark 7:6-9, DRB)

Jesus' words do not mean that tradition cannot be of value, but what He was condemning and warning about were traditions that conflicted with scripture, even if religious leaders did not think that they did.

Religious heresy is a departure from biblical faith. Any religious tradition that is in contradiction to any part of scripture is heresy.

Notice also the following warning:

² You shall not add to the word that I speak to you, neither shall you take away from it: keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. (Deuteronomy 4:2, DRB)

Clearly, the word of God teaches that caution is advised on matters of doctrine and practice.

Council of Trent on Doctrine and 'Unanimous Consent'

Notice something from the second decree of the Roman Catholic Council of Trent on the eighth day of the month of April, in the year 1546 (**bolding** added):

Moreover, the same sacred and holy Synod,--considering that no small utility may accrue to the **Church of God**, ... in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall,--in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, --wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which **holy mother Church**,--whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures,--hath held and doth hold; **or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers**; even though such interpretations were never (intended) to be at any time published. Contraveners shall be made known by their Ordinaries, and be punished with the penalties by law established. (The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Œcumenical Council of Trent. Celebrated Under the Sovereign Pontiffs, Paul III, Julius III and Pius IV. Translated by James Waterworth. C. Dolman, 1848, pp. 19-20)

That is interesting, and we will go through a few parts of the above and discuss their relevance for our time.

But first, one needs to understand that heresy is a belief, practice, and/or doctrine that was a change from the original biblical and apostolic catholic faith.

Though that is a generally understandable concept, throughout history, people who have tried to hold to certain parts of the original faith have been improperly labeled as heretics.

The Holy Mother Church?

Now, let's first consider the statement about the "holy mother Church."

It should be pointed out that the original "holy mother Church" was considered to be the church in Jerusalem which was one of "the churches of God which are in Judea" (1 Thessalonians 2:14, DRB).

Notice the following by Greco-Roman Catholic writers and translators:

Jerusalem ... this Holy City, from where the Mother Church greets all believers as brothers. (Archbishop Fouad Twal, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. Homily, April 5, 2012)

The mother-church of Jerusalem ... (The Church of Antioch. The Catholic Encyclopedia)

... the mother church of Sion. ... St. Luke in the Acts and then Eusebius ... speak only of the mother church in Jerusalem. ... (Bagatti B. The Church from the Circumcision, pp. 11-12, 49)

¹ ... Jerusalem the holy city ... (2 Esdras 11:1/Nehemiah 11:1, DRB)

²⁶ But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and the mother of us all. (Galatians 4:26, EOB)

²⁶ But the Jerusalem above is free, and that is the one that is our mother; (Galatians 4:26, NJB)

The original catholic Church of God was initially based out of Jerusalem.

Later, most of the original apostles, all of which were once part of the holy mother church in Jerusalem, went to Asia Minor. And the last of the original apostles to die, John, reportedly died in Asia Minor (Ephesus). Apparently while in Ephesus, John referred to the church, not exclusively to Jerusalem, as "the elect lady" who had "children" (2 John 1). From Ephesus, John passed the mantle of the "mother church" on to Polycarp, who was based in Smyrna.

Polycarp, himself, wrote, "the faith given you; 'which is the mother of us all'" (Polycarp. Letter to the Philipppians, 3:2-3). Only the church with the original true faith could be considered as "the mother of us all."

Also, in the 2nd century, Ignatius wrote:

Ignatius ... to the holy Church which is at Tralles, in Asia, (Ignatius. Letter to the Trallians, 0:1)

Ignatius ... to the Church of God ... the mother of saints ... which is in Smyrna in Asia. (Ignatius. Letter to the Smyrnaeans, 0:1. Hoole translation)

In the late 2nd/early 3rd century, Tertullian wrote:

being the offspring of apostolic churches. ... the apostolic churches, in which the very thrones of the apostles are still pre-eminent ... Since you are able to cross to Asia, you get Ephesus ... (Tertullian. Prescription against Heretics. Chapters 20, 36).

Notice the following from COG writers in the 20th century:

The Jerusalem Church of God began as the mother church, the headquarters church. In about A.D. 69 that church and others from Judea arrived in the town of Pella. ... Ephesus was so important a city on the Aegean Sea that it naturally served as the later headquarters of the Ephesian era, to which it gave its name. It was not coincidence that Christ chose Ephesus (Rev. 2:1) to represent the first era of the Church. ... The Pella congregation still called itself the Jerusalem church. ... the Jerusalem headquarters church was transferred to Pella. It was done spiritually when the authority and respect in which this mother church had been held was stripped from it ...

At the time John penned ... {Revelation 2} around A.D. 96, Jesus Christ already knew the performance record of the church at Ephesus. That church congregation was chosen by Christ, the Head of the Church, as a type of the entire Church in apostolic times. Jesus did not use the Jerusalem church for this purpose because John's headquarters was not at Jerusalem or Pella, but Ephesus. ... John trained Polycarp elder of Smyrna, a city near Ephesus in the province of Asia. And according to Revelation 2:8-11, Smyrna follows Ephesus! (Armstrong HW. The Church They Couldn't Destroy, p. 7)

In the first 38 years, as congregations and conversions multiplied, the distant churches had very frequently appealed to the authority of the mother church in Jerusalem ... the Jerusalem headquarters church was transferred to Pella. It was done spiritually when the authority and respect in which this mother church had been held ... Ephesus was the later headquarters of the Ephesian era, to which it gave its name. It was more than coincidence that Christ chose Ephesus to represent the first organization of the Church! ... **Leadership Shifts to Smyrna** At neighboring Smyrna, Polycarp presided over the Church for half a century after John's death. (Lesson 49 - I Will Build My Church, Part 1. 58 Lesson: Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, 1967)

The late Dr. Herman Hoeh basically taught that Jerusalem was the mother church which was also part of the Ephesus church era representing the Apostolic age, (Hoeh H. Amazing 2000-Year History of the Church

of God, pp. 7). He further taught it was followed by Smyrna, then Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia (Ibid, pp. 7-10).

Herbert W. Armstrong considered that the Philadelphian portion of the Church of God became the final mother church.

Sardis Church (Rev. 3:1- 6). ... Then, after God raised up the Mother Church of the “Philadelphia” era (Armstrong HW. Co-Worker Letter, April 30, 1964)

That is consistent with the following passages from the Book of Revelation:

¹⁴ But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵ So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. ¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. ¹⁷ And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 12:14-17, OSB)

The woman that flees to the wilderness for protection from that hour of trial is the church, which many realize (e.g. Kurz W, SJ. What Does the Bible Say About End Times? A Catholic View. Servant Books, Cincinnati. *Nihil Obstat*: Kistner H., Schehr T.P. *Imprimi Potest*: Link F., Paul J.M. *Imprimatur*: Carl K. Moeddel, Vicar General and Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Cincinnati, July 19, 2004, p. 159). In this case, she is the remnant of the Philadelphia church as Philadelphia is the only group promised protection by Jesus for that period according to Revelation 3:7-13. A characteristic of the Philadelphians is that they “hast kept my word” (Revelation 3:8, DRB)—they have kept to the original faith and not changed it.

The fact that sacred scripture points to that woman having offspring is consistent with the ‘mother church’ passing from Ephesus to Smyrna to Pergamos to Thyatira to Sardis to Philadelphia. That is what the COG has long asserted and there is scriptural support for that position. These ‘offspring’ are “the last segment of the church, the Laodicean era” (Armstrong HW. Pastor General's Report, Vol 2 No. 23, June 26, 1978).

Additionally, consider that others have specifically pointed to Ephesus as at least a successor of the “mother church.” Notice reports from non-COG sources:

It is significant that the letters to the seven churches in Asia (Revelation 2 and 3) begin with the letter to Ephesus, suggesting that Ephesus was the mother church of the seven. (Ephesus. Institute for Creation Research, <https://www.icr.org/books/defenders/7690> accessed 10/19/21)

The Ephesian church was ... {in} the metropolis of Asia (as Ephesus was called) but also of its heritage as the mother church of the region. Therefore, it is natural that this be the first church addressed, not only for its status but also because the mail route for these letters would naturally

begin there. (Osborne GR. Revelation in Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Baker Books, 2002, p. 111)

According to sacred scripture, Ephesus was the first of the seven churches in which Jesus dwelled in the midst of (Revelation 1:11-13). In that biblical sense, Ephesus, whose time included early Jerusalem, could be considered the “mother church” of all the churches or eras to come of the true church. Only a church in the 21st century with the same basic teachings as the 1st and 2nd century Jerusalem, Ephesus, and Smyrna leaders could be considered as faithful to the original “mother church.”

Ephesus was likely considered the headquarters of the Christian church in the latter years of the life of the Apostle John. Ephesus, and its faithful descendants, perhaps should be considered as the “holy mother church” as it is believed to have been the last city that one of the original apostles lived in.

As far as being “holy” goes, it was in the epistle to the the “saints” to the Church of God in Ephesus (Ephesians 1:1) that we see Apostle Paul calling the church “holy” (Ephesians 5:27).

The ‘longer recession’ of Ignatius’s 2nd century *Letter to the Ephesians* has the following:

the most holy Church of the Ephesians, ... the holy Church of God ... (Roberts and Donaldson translation, Chapters VIII, XVII)

Smyrna followed Ephesus, and the Smyrnaneans of the late 2nd century wrote they were:

The Church of God which sojourns at Smyrna ... the holy Church which is in Smyrna (Martyrdom of Polycarp, 0:1, 16:2).

The true Church of God is the holy church. In the late 2nd/early 3rd century, “church fathers” considered the churches in Antioch and Asia Minor to be “holy” (Theophilus. To Autolycus, Book II, Chapter XIV; Apollonius cited in Eusebius Book V, Chapter 18).

That has remained the Church of God position:

God's church is a *holy* church. ... The church of God at Jerusalem was a “headquarters church” to whom all looked for TRUTH! ... The church at Jerusalem was the mother church because it was the headquarters for carrying out the gospel. ... In our day, when the same gospel is being preached, there is again a *headquarters church*, PROVEN BY ITS FRUITS -- a church to whom *you* scattered brethren can turn ... (Hoeh H. Does God Have a *Headquarters* Church Today? Good News, October 1953)

Gods True Church ... the true Church of God ... is a holy Church. (Armstrong HW. A New Good News. Good News, July 1953, p. 1)

In the 21st century, we in the CCOG continue to hold to the teachings of the “holy mother church” that the Apostle John, who left Jerusalem, later directed from Ephesus. It is proving by its historic, doctrinal, spiritual, and prophetic fruits that it is the “headquarters” church today.

Doctrines “the Fathers” in Jerusalem Were in Agreement With

As far as the early “fathers” go, the Greek Orthodox Catholics teach:

The great Fathers of the Church expressed the Apostolic Tradition in an error-free manner, in their era ... (Tselengidis D. “POST - PATRISTIC” OR “NEO - BARLAAMIC” THEOLOGY? IGNORANCE OR DENIAL OF SANCTITY? THE CRITERIA FOR THEOLOGIZING IN AN ORTHODOX MANNER, WITHOUT ERROR. SYMPOSIUM OF THE HOLY METROPOLIS OF PIRAEUS, PIRAEUS, Greece, 2012)

And since the faithful were contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3), their teachings that are supported by scripture should still be retained.

Catholic scholars of all types recognize that not only the original apostles, but those in the early Jerusalem church who succeeded them (sometimes called “church fathers” by the Greco-Romans):

1. Kept the seventh-day Sabbath.
2. Kept the biblical holy days.
3. Did not keep Sunday nor days like Christmas and Halloween.
4. Avoided biblically unclean meat.

The above had the “unanimous consent of the Fathers” that were faithful to original biblical Christianity in Jerusalem until c. 135. Hence, according to the Council of Trent, changes from those doctrines are heresy.

Teachings of Early “Fathers”

It should perhaps be noted that all the so-called “church fathers” were men. But not all the men that the Greco-Romans call “fathers” are considered to have been faithful Christians by the CCOG.

In his *Discourse with was in the presence of Antoninus Caesar*, Melito of Sardis warned against accepting the tradition of fathers when they opposed scripture.

People with COG ties, throughout history, such as the Paterines in the 11th century, did NOT accept Greco-Roman “fathers” (like Ambrose of Milan, Gregory of Rome, etc), when any taught something in conflict with scripture. Actually the Paterines called them “pretended fathers” and properly considered them as “corrupters of Christianity” (Jones W. *The history of the Christian church from the birth of Christ to the xviii. Century*, Volumes 1-2, 3rd edition. R.W. Pomeroy, 1832, p. 289)—basically because they did not teach in accordance with scripture.

Let’s notice what the Apostle Paul wrote, per the NJB:

¹³ ... wicked impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others, and themselves deceived. ¹⁴ You must keep to what you have been taught and know to be true; remember who your teachers were, ¹⁵ and how, ever since you were a child, you have known the holy scriptures -from these you can learn the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All scripture is inspired by God and useful for refuting error, for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be upright. ¹⁷ This is how someone who is dedicated to God becomes fully equipped and ready for any good work. (2 Timothy 3:13-17, NJB)

Although all make mistakes, teachers we are to rely on do not teach in contradiction to scripture. Those claimed “fathers” who taught heretical changes from the Bible are not to be trusted.

Furthermore, while Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholic scholars are well aware that various ones they call “church fathers” disagreed on many major aspects of Christianity and doctrine, most of their members are unaware of those differences.

And the differences often represent errors.

Understanding when and where the faithful leaders were in different areas (some of which this book has laid out), helps us to better know who would be more reliable sources of understanding Christian doctrine. And, of course, the primary doctrinal test is sacred scripture—positions in conflict with the Bible are erroneous—no matter who may have held the faulty position.

That being said, recall that the Council of Trent declared that differing from the “unanimous consent” of the “fathers” who were supposed to be faithful was heresy.

Here are doctrines as found in writings of the faithful “fathers” and several of the less faithful ones accepted by the Greco-Romans (“fathers” essentially listed chronologically; *italics* used when the writing—but not writer, is named):

1. **Passover was to be observed the after sunset on the 14th day of the first month of the biblical calendar** (Apostle Philip, Apostle John, Polycarp, Thraseas, Sagaris, Papirius, Melito, Polycrates, Apollinarius).
2. **There would come a literal millennial reign of Jesus on the earth with His saints** (Apostle John, Papias, Justin, Melito, Irenaeus, Apollinaris, Nepos, Hippolytus, Lactantius, Victorinus, Commodianus, Methodius).
3. **Christians did not go to heaven upon death** (Justin, Polycarp—there is no early writing to the contrary, but some faulty ones appeared after Polycarp).
4. **The Godhead was binitarian** (Ignatius, Justin, Polycarp, Athenagoras, Melito, Irenaeus, Theophilus, Hippolytus, Lucian).
5. **Humans did not have an immortal soul** (*1 Clement*, *2 Clement*, Ignatius, Justin, Polycarp, Melito, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Irenaeus, Polycrates, Hippolytus, Commodianus, Victorinus).
6. **Entering military service was not permitted for true believers** (Justin, Melito, Tatian. Theophilus, Hippolytus, Pionius, Lactanus/Lactantius).

7. **Doctrines of early apostates like Marcion (anti-millennial, anti-Sabbath, pro-military), Montanus (trinitarian, false prophecies), and Valentinus (trinitarian, allegorical interpretation of scripture) were denounced** by Polycarp, Justin, Irenaeus, Theophilus, Serapion, Nepos, and Hippolytus (Tertullian denounced Marcion and Valentinus, but followed Montanus).
8. **All will have an opportunity for salvation** (Ignatius, Theophilus, Origen, but denied by Marcion).
9. **Early Christians did not celebrate Christ's birth.** No early Christian leader/father advocated doing so. December 25th was the birthday of Mithras. That date was apparently first proposed by the apostate Cerinthus and it was adopted by the Roman Catholics in the mid-4th century after influence from Emperor Constantine. The Eastern Orthodox adopted it in the late 4th century.
10. **Early Christians were separatists** (faithful 2nd century Jerusalem Christians, Polycarp, Polycrates, Serapion).

The *Continuing* Church of God still holds to those ten essentially unanimous views of the earliest faithful "fathers."

Chart of Early Men Promoting Error and Men/Fathers Opposing Error

Error	Early Men Promoting Error	Men/Fathers Opposing Error
No literal millennium.	Marcion of Pontus, Gnostic leaders, writer Caius of Rome, Origen of Alexandria.	Papias of Hierapolis, Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, Irenaeus of Lyon, Apollinaris of Hierapolis, Tertullian of Carthage, Hippolytus of Rome, Nepos of Egypt, Lactantius of North Africa, Methodius, Cyprian of Carthage.
Passover on Sunday.	Marcus of Jerusalem, Anicetus of Rome, Victor of Rome.	Polycarp of Smyrna, Melito of Sardis, Polycrates of Ephesus, Apollinaris of Hierapolis.
Trinitarianism.	Montanus, Valentinus.	Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyon, Hippolytus of Rome.
Most to be Lost.	Marcion of Pontus.	Ignatius of Antioch, Theophilus of Antioch, Origen of Alexandria.
Canon of scripture wrong, incomplete	Marcion of Pontus.	Polycarp of Smyrna, Polycrates of Ephesus, Serapion of Antioch.
Encouraged military service.	Emperor Constantine.	Polycarp of Smyrna, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Melito of Sardis, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Hippolytus of Rome, Pionius of Smyrna, Lactantius of North Africa.

Biblical canon wrong.	Marcion, various Alexandrians.	Polycarp of Smyrna, Polycrates of Ephesus, Serapion of Antioch.
Unclean meat allowed.	Probably Cerinthus, but certainly Justin Martyr, Eleutherius of Rome, and the author of the falsely named <i>Epistle of Barnabas</i> .	The first 15 bishops of Jerusalem: James, Symeon, Justus, Zacchæus, Tobias, Benjamin, John, Matthias, Philip, Seneca, Justus, Levi, Ephres, Joseph, Judas; Irenaeus of Lyon, Pionius of Smyrna.
Jesus' birth should be celebrated and on December 25 th .	Cerinthus, Emperor Constantine.	Apostle John, apparently Polycarp.
Sunday should be kept.	Marcus of Jerusalem, Justin Martyr, author of the falsely named <i>Gospel of Peter</i> .	First 15 bishops of Jerusalem, Ignatius of Antioch, Theophilus of Antioch, Serapion of Antioch.

Sabbatarians Citing the 'Fathers'

Those who kept Passover on the 14th have cited the "early fathers" as support of it being an original Christian practice as far back as in the 2nd and 4th centuries (Epiphanius. The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III, pp. 420-421).

However, Sabbatarians did not accept teachings of "fathers" over scripture, as testimony from Henri of Lausanne in the 11th century demonstrated (Weber, Nicholas. "Petrobrusians." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 11. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911).

In the 1530s, we see that Andreas Fischer cited "early fathers" in defense of keeping the Sabbath and against Sunday as also did Oswald Glaidt (Liechty D. Andreas Fischer ad the Sabbatarian Anabaptists. Herald Press, 1988, pp. 54-57).

Furthermore by 1563, which is less than two decades after Council of Trent declaration, we have evidence that at least one with COG doctrines referred to "early fathers" when disputing doctrines with Roman Catholic leaders (Adrianus Haemstedius, Historie der Martelaren Deel 6 Historie der martelaren die, om de getuigenis der evangelische waarheid, hun bloed gestort hebben, van Christus onze Zaligmaker af tot het jaar 1655. Predikant te ANTWERPEN Verdeeld in deze digitale uitgave in 7 delen STICHTING DE GIHONBRON MIDDELBURG 2004).

Additionally, early in the 1600s, John Traske referred to the "early fathers" regarding the date of Passover and keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread. The following is from a writing from a Roman Catholic priest published in 1618 using the English spellings at the time:

John Traske ... By reading in Eusebius history lib. 1. cap. 22. how Saint Policarpe and other holy Bishops of Asia obserued the lewes time of keeping Easter, he and his disciples are lately therein resolved to imitate them. ...

IOHN Traske ... the 14. of March-moone, wherin the lewes were commaunded by God to celebrate their Passouer. And vpon his late reading in Eusebius lib 5. hist. cap. 22. Policrates epistle di|rected to Victor Bishop of Rome concerning the Asian custome of keeping easter with the lews, ... he hath ob|serued the feast of Azimes, ... the ancient Bishop of Ephesus in a preposterous zeale of obseruing the yearly me|mony of our Sauioirs resurrection, as S. Policarpe and other great Saintes had done before him in those partes of Asia, wrote very earnestly in the defence of that Quartadeciman Custome. Whose authority hath, as it should seeme, much moued Iohn Traske ... IOHN Traske and his disciples hold the Legall difference of meates mentioned Leuit. 11. Deutron. 10. to be so morall in it selfe. (Falconer J. A briefe refutation of Iohn Traskes iudaical and nouel fancies Stiling himselfe Minister of Gods Word, imprisoned for the lawes eternall perfection, or God's lawes perfect eternity. English College Press, 1618, pp. 3,17,21,43,57-58,60 65)

So, John Traske (an “i” was often used then for a “j” in the 17th century) kept Passover on the 14th, cited church history, kept the Days of Unleavened Bread (called “the feast of Azimes” above), cited the practices of Polycarp and Polycrates, and avoided eating biblically unclean animals. Those are Church of God doctrines.

For Traske doing so, a Roman Catholic priest objected, referred to Passover as “Easter,” and called original Christian practices “preposterous”—yet even that Roman priest said that those who kept Passover when Polycarp did were “holy Bishops.”

Throughout history, starting no later than Polycrates (and probably Polycarp) those holding to COG doctrines continued to have cite those called the “early fathers” that they felt were faithful. False leaders like Marcion were denounced then and later by other Sabbath-keepers (e.g. *Sel. The Scriptural Form of Baptism. The Hope of Israel*, January 30, 1872, p. 125).

We also have evidence of citing ‘fathers’ and denouncing false leaders/doctrines in the 20th century as well by COG leaders (Dugger AN, Dodd C. *A History of the True Church. The Bible Advocate*, 1936; Hoeh H. *A TRUE History of the TRUE CHURCH. Radio Church of God*, 1959; Armstrong HW. *The Church They Couldn't Destroy*, pp.7-8) — including for the millennial teaching (e.g. Lesson 38 - *The Feast of Tabernacles - The World Tomorrow. Ambassador College*, 1965).

This book, and other CCOG literature, has also been doing that in the 21st century.

Seven Councils

What was the “official” way that many early beliefs of catholic saints were changed by the Greco-Romans?

Through councils of men.

Actually, the Eastern Orthodox Church refers to itself as the “church of the seven ecumenical councils.” In their *Patriarchal Encyclical of 1895*, it declared itself:

XIII. The one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of the seven Ecumenical Councils (As cited in Cleenewerck, *His Broken Body: Understanding and Healing the Schism Between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches* (An Orthodox Perspective), p. 400)

An Orthodox Catholic theologian wrote:

The Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787) are the seven pillars upon which the Orthodox Church is built (Proverbs 9.1), and every Orthodox Christian is obliged to accept their Divine authority. (Moss V. *THE RISE AND FALL OF CHRISTIAN ROME*. © Copyright 2018 Vladimir Moss, p. 30).

No, the changes from scriptures adopted by those councils did not have God's authority. The Bible ties pillars in with truth (1 Timothy 3:15, EOB) and truth with the word of God (John 17:17, EOB). Most of the seven councils had conclusions that contradicted scripture.

Consider further that the first of these seven councils was convened by the sun-god worshipping, murderous, Emperor Constantine. He declared himself a lay bishop, even though he had not even been baptized, as he oversaw his Council of Nicea. The second of these councils was called by the obelisk honoring, murderous, Emperor Theodosius who deposed the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople, Demophilus, because Demophilus would not go along with the trinitarian change Theodosius was proposing.

Do the Eastern Orthodox not realize that by accepting an emperor who deposed their Patriarch—Demophilus, a leader who tried to stick to a more original and biblical doctrine on the Godhead—this is in violation of the admonition to “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29, EOB)?

While Greco-Romans hope that God's Holy Spirit was what led to formal declarations of those councils, consider that the Bible enjoins Saturday, not Sunday as the weekly Sabbath, that there is no scripture that says that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday, or that the nightly annual Passover service should be changed to a Sunday morning celebration. Furthermore, the trinity, which was formally adopted in the 381 Council of Constantinople, clearly was not the original catholic nor biblical belief.

Later councils endorsed acceptance of icons and decided against the original millennial kingdom doctrine as a heresy.

In other words, several of these councils ruled against beliefs of the original catholic church and condemned many original beliefs as heresies.

Protestant leaders, in their own ways, have done the same thing. Even early Protestants condemned Bible-based beliefs of early Christians as heresies in the 16th century (e.g. *The Confession of Faith: Which Was Submitted to His Imperial Majesty Charles V. At the Diet of Augsburg in the Year 1530.* by Philip Melanchthon, pp. 37-95 and Brown, p. 260-261, 335).

But such condemnations do not change original doctrinal truth.

Two Groups

According to many who were early supporters of the Roman and Alexandrian confederate churches, there were two groups, two types, of allegedly faithful Christians.

Essentially, there were the real Christians that had ties to the apostles John and Philip in Asia Minor, and others who claimed Christianity associated with the Greco-Roman confederation. That confederation was mainly made up of the allegoristic churches that emerged in the second century in Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Rome.

The understanding that there were two groups (though not both always considered to be faithful) was the position of several in the second and third centuries, including many considered to be saints by the Catholics of Rome as well as the Eastern Orthodox.

Roman Catholic priest Bagatti pointed out a major difference between the two groups:

The major difference which exists between the Christians of Jewish origin and the Christians of Gentile origin is the manner of understanding the obligations of the Mosaic law.

Judeo-Christians ... felt obligated to observe it; (The Church from the Circumcision, p. 66)

Basically, the difference is that those who held to original practices held to the view that not keeping the laws of God was lawlessness, whereas the Greco-Roman confederation had abandoned, and later taught against, aspects of the law.

Here is a mainly summary (plus a few scriptures) related to the two groups for those mainly interested in just a few basic facts, starting with four biblical leaders, followed by other leaders/writers:

Jesus taught that there would be a large group that would go the wrong way and a few that went the right way (Matthew 7:13-14), which He called “the little flock” (Luke 12:32). Jesus taught how to distinguish the true from the false:

²¹. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but the one who is doing the will of My Father, Who is in heaven.

²². Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name? And did we not cast out demons through Your name? And did we not perform many works of power through Your name?’

²³. And then I will confess to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness.’

²⁴. Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and practices them, I will compare him to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock; (Matthew 7:21-24, AFV)

The **Apostle Paul** warned against mixing theology with those who used non-biblical practices (1 Corinthians 10:20-21), yet claimed to be Christian. He said “in our own time” (NJB) or “this present time” (EOB) only a “remnant” would be saved (Romans 11:5, NJB/EOB)—which is a very small amount. Paul also taught to “be separate” from those involved with “idols” or “unclean” things (2 Corinthians 6:15-17).

The **Apostle John** said there were those who “continued with” his doctrines and there were others “who went out from us, but they do not belong to us” as they failed to be faithful to his apostolic practices (1 John 2:18-19 EOB; cf. 3 John 9-12). Those in the genuine Church of God have continued to believe and do what John taught—including observing Passover the evening of the 14th day of the first month of the biblical calendar. This is an obvious way to separate most who do not hold to the beliefs and practices of the original catholic church.

Jude wrote that it was necessary to contend for the original faith as there were those who strayed from it (Jude 3-4,12). Many added non-biblical rituals, whereas a relative few kept to the original ‘liturgy’ and other original beliefs.

Marcus (c. 135), the first non-Jewish Bishop of Jerusalem, told people that because of the edicts of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, that they would not be allowed into Jerusalem unless they abandoned original Christian practices like the Sabbath, avoiding unclean meat, and Passover. Those unwilling to change separated from those who did. Hence, there were two groups in Judea by the early second century (others concur, e.g. Pines, p. 14-15). Scholars had said, prior to Marcus, the church there was pure in doctrine, etc.

Justin (c. 135) taught that there were Christians in Asia Minor who had Jewish practices like the Holy Days and the Ten Commandments, but that he did not care to associate with them. Justin also seemed to accept the false *Gospel of Peter*, which the true Christians did not. Hence, there were two groups in Asia Minor in the second century—one under the direction of faithful leaders such as Bishop Polycarp and others who more were independent like Justin. Apparently, the true Christians in Asia Minor (who were seemingly the majority at that time) did not care to associate with those like Justin either, as Justin left Asia Minor and went to Rome.

According to Justin, one group (his) adopted a mystical Eucharist, that according to Tertullian was similar to practices associated with Mithraism. Something like this was condemned by Irenaeus in the later portion of the second century and was not the practice of the faithful Asia Minor group.

Hegessipus (c. 150), who is considered a saint by the Greco-Roman churches, taught that there were two groups in Jerusalem in the early second century. The faithful one and those affected somehow by Simon Magus.

Bishop/Pastor **Polycarp** (c. 156) taught that Passover was to be observed on the 14th of Nisan, while Bishop Anicetus of Rome accepted Sunday (which came to be known in English as Easter). There were two different, but significant, groups in the second century: one mainly affiliated with Rome/Alexandria and one mainly affiliated with Asia Minor/Antioch. Polycarp's statement about the "vanity of many," suggested they were part of the group he supported.

Asia Minor leaders such as Bishop **Thraseas** of Eumenia (probably around A.D. 157), and Bishop **Apollinaris** of Hierapolis (2nd/3rd century), Bishop **Apollonius** of Ephesus (3rd century), denounced the Montanists, yet leaders in Rome and Egypt accepted the Montanists until some time into the 3rd century. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* reports that a synod of Asia Minor bishops denounced Montanus in 177—hence supporting the view of two groups in 177.

Irenaeus wrote that there were two groups with differing dates for Passover, and he also wrote that Polycarp's group was faithful to the Bible and the teachings of the original apostles.

Bishop/Pastor **Polycrates** (c. 192) told Roman Bishop Victor that he and those in Asia Minor were not concerned about frightful words from Rome that differed from the Bible related to Passover and he kept the same practice as the apostles like John. Hence, those in Asia Minor made it clear in the latter portion of the second century that they were separate from Rome. Later, there was a separation of the faithful mainly in Asia Minor (along then with Antioch) and the confederation that was emerging between Rome, Alexandria, and the changed church in Jerusalem.

According to **Clement** of Alexandria (late second century) and **Origen** of Alexandria (early third century), there were two groups who claimed Christianity: the mystic/allegorical group (that they were part of) and the non-mystic/non-allegorical group. Rome supported the Alexandrians (and still somewhat supports them), while those in Asia Minor and Antioch did not accept them.

According to **Tertullian** ("the father of Latin theology," c. 200), there were two groups of who claimed Christ that claimed ties to the original apostles: those associated with Rome and those associated with Asia Minor.

According to Bishop **Serapion** of Antioch, the true Christians did not accept the falsely named *Gospel of Peter* but there were false groups who did. He also warned of a growing "lying confederacy" he was not part of.

Palut of Edessa, reportedly ordained by Serapion, was considered as a "dissenter" from the main group in Edessa, hence around the start of the 3rd century, there were two groups there. Ephraim the Syrian noted that there were two groups in the 4th century and one was called Palutians after Palut. One wonders if some called Paulicians were spiritual descendants of those once called Palutians.

According to the African Bishop **Nepos** (3rd century), there were people in Alexandria/Egypt who accepted allegory over scripture regarding the coming millennium, but he opposed their position.

As mentioned earlier, there look to have been two groups in Edessa and Antioch. Later in the 3rd century, there was the **Macarius** of Edessa and **Lucian** of Antioch group that taught biblical literalism and the other group which accepted more allegorical views as well as aspects of Marianism.

Historian **Eusebius** acknowledged two groups having different succession in Jerusalem at the same time in the 4th century, the “chair of James” (Book 7, chapter XIX, pp. 155-156)— which was the Judeao-Christian one — and the Greco-Roman one under Hymenaeus (Book 7, chapter XXVIII, p. 163), who the Orthodox also call Hermon. Priest Bagatti confirmed that Eusebius was referring to these “two groups living in Jerusalem” who had “bitter strife” (The Church of the Circumcision, p. 83).

Emperor **Constantine** decreed that those in Jerusalem who still would not eat biblically unclean animals should be killed. Hence, he acknowledged that there were then two groups in Judea in the 4th century--the faithful and his group. He also indicated that those who held to the original Passover date in his empire were “detestable.”

Although all scholars recognize that early Christians would not kill others or participate in carnal warfare, after Emperor Constantine Greco-Roman bishops endorsed killing and other forms of persecution against those not part of their group. Those in the COG did not accept that change and its true members did not become militaristic—yet they became subject to his and later emperors un-biblical persecution.

Emperor **Theodosius** decreed that those who held to the original position of the apostles on Passover would be killed. Hence, there still were still at least two professing groups with differing approaches and practices near the end of the 4th century. Theodosius’ declaration that only trinitarians could be called “catholic” and others were “foolish madmen” demonstrates that there were at least two groups calling themselves catholic in his day.

Greco-Roman Catholic writers such as **Jerome** and **Epiphanius** observed that there were at least two groups—their confederation and the Nazarenes—in the 4th century.

Those who claimed ties to the original Nazarene Christians of the Bible and Jerusalem were long persecuted by Greco-Romans, but their “heresies,” according to even some affiliated with Rome, were mainly to stick to original Christian practices while not accepting the decisions of Imperial and other Greco-Roman councils to change doctrine.

(Note: this book has used the term “bishop” above to show that there were those in leadership positions in both groups--even though there were no historically proven bishops of Rome nor Alexandria until over 100 years after Jesus was resurrected.

Notice the following from a 20th century Roman Catholic scholar:

Eusebius speaking of the Christians of Sion who preserve the throne of James says of them: "those brothers" (*HE* 7,19), and St. Jerome speaking of the pretended finding of the body of St. James ... says it was done by "one of ours" (*PL* 23, 643). ... In both cases, the same James ... but there is a distinction between "them" and "us". ...

The same situation of two opposing communities appears in two letters of St. Gregory of Nyssa ...

this evidence, ... shows two rival communities ...(Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision*, pp. 10-11)

Judeo-Christians ... Antioch ... at the end of the 4th century, St. John Chrysostom believed that these followers to be so dangerous as to have to preach eight moving discourses against them ...

Well known is the movement of Asia Minor ... millenarianism ... Easter on the 14th of Nisan (*Ibid*, p. 26)

Is it not clear that there were two important, and opposing, groups?

There was one group that kept to the original apostolic practices such as observance of the ten commandments, the Passover on the 14th (no one called it Easter then), not condoning military participation, teaching the gospel of the kingdom, holding a binitarian view of the Godhead, and relying on the correct canon of the Bible. The CCOG holds to all of these.

And there was another group, which emerged in the late 1st and 2nd centuries. It became larger, much larger. Historically, it has minimized the full and proper observance of the ten commandments, often has preferred allegory and mysticism, required a Sunday Passover, became trinitarian, eventually sometimes killed those that would not accept its doctrinal and other changes, and took centuries to accept the proper New Testament canon.

By the end if the 4th century, ... the Christians of Jewish stock found the others too "pagan", the Christians of gentile stock found the others too "Jewish". (Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision*, p. 93)

It was the Apostle Paul taught that Christians were not to include pagan practices in their worship (1 Corinthians 10:14-22), not touch the unclean (2 Corinthians 6:17), and were to be separate (2 Corinthians 6:14-17). Jesus was a Jew. While He condemned Pharisaical additions and traditions to God's laws (e.g. Matthew 15:1-9), the fact is that Jesus kept the biblical requirements and wanted His followers to also do so. As far as being "too Jewish" goes, true Christians were NOT being Pharisaical that way, but following the Bible and the practices of the original mother church, which maintained biblical practices, without Pharisaical additions.

In the Middle Ages, the group Greco-Romans labelled as Paulicians referred to themselves as the "Apostolic Catholic church" (Paulicians. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*: Mun to Pay. 1911, p. 961). They referred to the Roman Catholics as simply Romans. Again, showing two major claimed "catholic" groups.

Even into the 20th and 21st centuries there have been two groups in several ways. But let's simply divide them into trinitarians and non-trinitarians.

The Vatican's 21st century, handbook, *The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum*, basically divides professing Christianity into two groups. One group that accepts the trinitarian godhead definition adopted by the 381 A.D. Council of Constantinople and the other that does not accept it. The Vatican's handbook only calls for ecumenical unity with the first group. Furthermore, that is consistent with the trinitarian position adopted last century by the World Council of Churches (WCC Approves a Trinitarian Basis, Christianity Today, December 22, 1961), that has remained in effect in the 21st century (Thomas TK. "WCC, Basis of," in Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 2nd ed., ed. Nicholas Lossky et al. Geneva: WCC Publications and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002: 1238–1239). The WCC only accepts trinitarians.

Thus, since the CCOG does not accept the 381 A.D. trinitarian adoption, it would not even be a target of the ecumenical efforts of the Vatican or the WCC. It, and churches closely like it, are a different group.

Why Did the Greco-Roman Catholics Change?

The Apostle Paul told Timothy:

³ The time is sure to come when people will not accept sound teaching, but their ears will be itching for anything new and they will collect themselves a whole series of teachers according to their own tastes; (2 Timothy 4:3, NJB)

This a prophetic warning that improper change was going to happen based on personal tastes, or as the EOB translates "lusts."

The documented truth is that the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholic churches changed various doctrines that were held by original catholics that they consider to be saints.

Why?

There were different reasons at different times. Loss of love of the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10; Revelation 2:4), fear (Revelation 21:8, cf. Matthew 21:26), false intellectualism (1 Timothy 6:20-21), worldly philosophy (Colossians 3:8), personal vanity (Romans 1:21-22, James 2:20), lusts (Jude 16-18), financial reasons (1 Timothy 6:10), accepting false documents (2 Thessalonians 2:2), signs & wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12), and political compromise (Revelation 17:1-3) were factors.

Part of the reasons for change, according to then Pope Benedict XVI, were innovations from the 2nd and 3rd century Alexandrian allegorists Clement and Origen:

Origen of Alexandria is one of the key people for the development of Christian thought. He draws on the teachings he inherited from Clement of Alexandria, whom we reflected upon last Wednesday, and brings them forward in a totally innovative way, creating an irreversible turn in

Christian thought. He was a true teacher; ... this "allegoristic" approach ... (Benedict XVI. Homily On Origen of Alexandria. Vatican City. Zenit - April 25, 2007).

This "totally innovative way" means they were NOT beliefs of the original catholic church. Making "an irreversible turn in Christian thought" means to no longer contend for the original faith or the literal meaning of scripture. Like Origen, Satan preferred to misinterpret the word of God (see Genesis 3:1-5)—following Origen over scripture does not lead to true doctrine.

Consider that *The Catholic Encyclopedia* condemns Gnosticism and states that Clement of Alexandria was "infected with Gnosticism" (Arendzen, Marcus). Consider also that *The Catholic Encyclopedia* states, "St. Eustathius of Antioch ... criticized his {Origen's} allegorism ... Origen, frankly recognizing the contradiction of the incompatible elements that he is trying to unify, recoils from the consequences, protests against the logical conclusions" (Ptar F, Origen). It is therefore not contradictory, to exalt Clement and Origen as reliable teachers for changing doctrine?

Jesus did prophesy that blasphemous "a synagogue of Satan" would become a problem during the time of Smyrna, and sadly we see that many in the 2nd and 3rd centuries accepted the allegorical method of biblical interpretation that seems to have had much of its origins in Alexandria.

Furthermore, notice an additional explanation for why there were changes to the original faith given by the late Roman Catholic Cardinal Newman:

Confiding then in the power of Christianity to resist the infection of evil, and to transmute the very instruments and appendages of demon-worship to evangelical use, ... the rulers of the Church from early times were prepared, should the occasion arise, to adopt, to imitate, or to sanctify the existing rites and customs of the population, as well as the philosophy of the educated class.

St. Gregory Thaumaturgus supplies the first instance of this economy. ... The bodies of the Martyrs were distributed in different places, and the people assembled and made merry, as the year came round, holding festival in their honour. This indeed was a proof of his great wisdom ... for, perceiving that the childish and untrained populace were retained in their idolatrous error by creature comforts, in order that what was of first importance should at any rate be secured to them, viz. that they should look to God in place of their vain rites, he allowed them to be merry, jovial, and gay at the monuments of the holy Martyrs, as if their behaviour would in time undergo a spontaneous change into greater seriousness and strictness, since faith would lead them to it; which has actually been the happy issue in that population, all carnal gratification having turned into a spiritual form of rejoicing."

There is no reason to suppose that the licence here spoken of passed the limits of harmless though rude festivity; for it is observable that the same reason, the need of holydays for the multitude, is assigned by Origen, St. Gregory's master, to explain the establishment of the Lord's Day also, and the Paschal and the Pentecostal festivals, which have never been viewed as unlawful compliances; and, moreover, the people were in fact eventually reclaimed from their gross habits by his indulgent policy, a successful issue which could not have followed an accommodation to what

was sinful. (Newman JH, Cardinal. An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine. J. Toovey, 1845, p. 358).

Cardinal Newman explained pagan items were considered to be an evangelical tool (ibid, p. 358). Please understand that the appeal to “the philosophy of the educated class” means that pagan philosophy (as taught by the ancient Greeks and Romans, and expanded by people like Clement and Origen) was to be accepted.

Furthermore, we see that Gregory Thaumaturgus decided that it would be a good evangelizing tool to be a friend of the world allow pagan and other demonic worship practices. Gregory was a major compromiser whose actions later provided support for others to compromise and change even more from the original catholic faith.

The Apostles James and Paul warned against such:

⁴ Adulterers, know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God.

⁵ Or do you think that the scripture saith in vain: To envy doth the spirit covet which dwelleth in you? (James 4:4-5, DRB)

²⁰ But the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God. And I would not that you should be made partakers with devils. ²¹ You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord, and the chalice of devils: you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils. (1 Corinthians 10:20-21, DRB)

²⁰ [No], but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. ²¹ You cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and also from the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons as well. (1 Corinthians 10:20-21, EOB)

Should you heed the Apostles James and Paul or someone who took steps in opposition to the Bible’s teachings?

Gregory of Neocæsarea was a student of Origen. He also claimed that it was an angel who had been with him since his youth and had him study under Origen (Gregory of Neocæsarea. Oration and Panegyric Addressed to Origen. Translated by S.D.F. Salmond. From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 6. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886).

Gregory promoted many changed doctrines. He did not stand for the original faith, nor the teachings of the many of the faithful that the Greco-Romans have called “church fathers.” His was NOT the true “Holy Mother Church.”

If those who promulgated the Council of Trent, as well as those who claim to believe it to this day would accept the teachings of the early faithful church leaders, which they call "fathers," they would be supporting the original catholic faith, such as is taught by the *Continuing* Church of God. The group that best represents the true Holy Mother Church.

Signs and Lying Wonders

Gregory of Neocæsarea was also known as Gregory Thaumaturgus (thaumaturgus means "wonder-worker").

Around 238-244 A.D., Gregory (died roughly 270 A.D.) seems to have been the first to have claimed to have seen an apparition of Mary (the possible apparition associated with the *Protoevangelicum of James*, also called the *Gospel of James*, is not considered to have really happened according to most Roman Catholic scholars).

This Marian and another apparition (supposedly the Apostle John) allegedly appeared to Gregory before he became a bishop.

Related to Gregory, Roberts and Donaldson reported:

He was believed to have been gifted with a power of working miracles, which he was constantly exercising ... the demons were subject to him ... he could cast his cloak over a man, and cause his death ... he could bring the presiding demons back to their shrine. (Roberts A, Donaldson J. Ante-Nicene Christian Library. Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325. Edited by Alexander Roberts, and James Donaldson. Volume 20: The Works of Gregory Thaumaturgus, Dionysius of Alexandria, and Archelaus. Syriac documents attribute. Originally 1871, modern printing by Elibron.com, 2006, p. 3)

Because Gregory's power over demons and other "wonders" were improperly accepted by many as divine, he had a lot of influence. It seems that Gregory's enchantments and/or sorceries (cf. Isaiah 47:5-12; Nahum 3:4), along with Imperial persecutions, may have greatly assisted the Greco-Roman faction essentially eliminating the organized faithful dominating in Asia Minor.

Gregory was also a factor in the Marian cults that began to rise up around that time. His writings teach praise and excessive devotion to the "Holy Virgin," including the blasphemous teaching that Mary "blotted out" Eve's "transgressions." He was amongst the earliest Greco-Roman Catholics to promote the expression the "Holy Trinity" and the pagan idea that humans had an immortal soul.

Here are some comments from a Sabbatarian publication in the 19th century about him:

Gregory Thaumaturgus ... proclaimed that the queen of heaven had appeared to him and miraculously instructed him to go forth and preach her worship. He did so with all signs, lying wonders, and magical performances. He used reserve, he spake mysteriously and eloquently; this

plan succeeded, all the world went after him; (Babylonianism. Hope of Israel, August 25, 1868, p. 42)

Notice the following from Gregory:

Here, where the mystery of the Holy Trinity was revealed by the archangel to the Holy Virgin according to the gospel (Gregory Thaumaturgus, Homily concerning the Holy Mother of God, Section 35. Translated from the Armenian by F. C. CONYBEARE. The Expositor 5th series vol.3, 1896, p. 173).

We prove, then, that the soul is simple ... that what is simple is immortal ... If, therefore, the soul is not corrupted by the evil proper to itself, and the evil of the soul is cowardice, intemperance, envy, and the like, and all these things do not despoil it of its powers of life and action, it follows that it is immortal. (Gregory Thaumaturgus. On the Soul, Chapters 5, 6. In. From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 6. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886)

The gospel never uses the expression trinity, much less “Holy Trinity” nor does it teach that the soul is immortal. To the contrary, in Ezekiel 18:4 the Roman Catholic *Douay-Rheims Bible* teaches “the soul that sinneth, the same shall die” and again, in Ezekiel 18:20, “The soul that sinneth, the same shall die.” Yet, Gregory put his own interpretation on scripture (in the trinity case, he was referring to Luke 1:35 which was not proof; and for the immortality of the soul case, he did not cite scripture).

Although Tertullian of Carthage and Origen of Alexandria were promoting some type of trinity in the early 3rd century, Gregory was a major reason that the trinity started to get accepted much outside of Valentian and Montanist circles (Tertullian was a Montanist).

Gregory claimed he was given the following from an apparition of the Apostle John:

There is a perfect Trinity, in glory and eternity and sovereignty, neither divided nor estranged. ... the same Trinity abideth ever. (St. Gregory of Pontus, the Wonder-Worker: A DECLARATION OF FAITH. Translated by S. Salmond, 1871, p. 6)

Understand that the Apostle John penned five books of the Bible. If GOD wanted him to teach the trinity, would it not have made sense for that to be in any of those writings? The fact that it is not, should cast immediate doubt that this apostle gave the trinitarian message to Gregory.

Additionally, claiming that the Trinity abides forever is a false gospel—a closed Godhead is in conflict with God’s plan according to what early men like Ignatius and Theophilus of Antioch wrote. Additionally, neither the Apostle John nor his successors in Asia Minor had been trinitarians. Furthermore, at the time that Gregory wrote this statement, even most of the Greco-Romans did NOT hold to a trinitarian view of the Godhead.

Now consider that this type of change differs with the original teachings. Such changes were condemned by the Apostle Paul:

⁸ But even if we ourselves or an angel from heaven preaches to you a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let God's curse be on him. (Galatians 1:8, NJB)

Just because Gregory claimed to have been guided by an angel to see Origen, plus claimed to have seen and heard Jesus' mother Mary and the Apostle John, that is not a reason to accept something in conflict with the original faith. Gregory seems to have led a demonically-influenced and/or demonically-possessed life. Many "changes" that the Greco-Romans endorsed allegedly came from angels and apparitions—and most certainly NOT from sacred scripture.

Here is something Gregory wrote related to Mary:

O holy virgin ... She is the ever-blooming paradise of incorruptibility, wherein is planted the tree that giveth life, and that furnisheth to all the fruits of immortality ... Thus the holy Virgin, while still in the flesh, maintained the incorruptible life ... the holy Virgin has surpassed even the perfection of the patriarchs. (Gregory Thaumaturgus. The Second Homily on the Annunciation to the Holy Virgin Mary)

The claim Mary "maintained the incorruptible life" is in conflict with sacred scripture. The Bible teaches that all, except Jesus (Hebrews 4:15), sinned (Romans 3:23).

Gregory Thaumaturgus greatly influenced theological thought and several widely accepted false doctrines were originated and/or promoted by him. The fact that he reportedly caused the death of enemies by throwing his cloak upon them has not sufficiently diminished his influence—but should have.

Mary Blessed, But ...

Perhaps it should be added that Dr. Ludwig Ott's 20th century book *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* teaches:

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary is not explicitly revealed in scripture ... Neither the Greek nor the Latin Fathers explicitly (explicite) teach the Immaculate Conception of Mary. (Ott L. *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 4th ed. Nihil Obstat: Jeremiah J. O' Sullivan. Imprimatur: + Cornelius, 7 October 1954. TAN Books, Rockford (IL), Printed 1974, pp. 200-201)

While Christians consider Mary to be blessed (Luke 1:28,42-48), the "immaculate conception" and certain other Marian teachings clearly were not original catholic beliefs. Aspects of Marianism were adopted by the Greco-Romans at their Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. (Michael M, brother. Council of Ephesus. Catholic.org, August 1, 2005) and expanded to specifically include "perpetual virginity" at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 (Barrett DB, et al. *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Volume 3. Brill, 2003,

p. 404). On December 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX declared the “immaculate conception” of Mary as Roman Catholic dogma (Ott, p. 202).

As far as the Bible goes, notice:

⁵⁶ Among whom was Mary Magdalen, and **Mary the mother of James and Joseph**, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. (Matthew 27:56, DRB)

The above clearly states that Mary was the mother of James and Joseph. And this is the Mary, mother of Jesus (Mark 6:3; John 2:1)--the Greek term for mother, *meéteer*, is the same as the one in John 2:1 where Mary is referred to as Jesus' mother. James and Joseph were not Jesus' relatives from a sometimes claimed prior marriage for Joseph, Mary's husband. This is not just my opinion. Notice what Roman Catholic priest and scholar Bagatti has published:

Of the relatives of the Lord mention is made in the Gospels; four are called "brothers of Jesus", namely James, Joseph (Josuah), Simon and Jude. The first two have Mary as their mother Matt. 27, 56). (Bagatti, Bellarmino, p.52)

Hence, since the Bible does not say Mary would remain a virgin and it shows that Mary was the mother of at least two of Jesus' brothers, there is no biblical reason to accept the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity (but many still do).

Roman Catholic scholar, Mark Shea, wrote about “perpetual virginity”:

Take, for instance, the Perpetual Virginity of Mary ... no matter how you slice Scripture (from a Bible-only perspective), you have a dogma which is at best weakly attested by Scripture or at worst flatly contradicted by it. (Sungenis, p. 185)

Traditions are improper if they contradict scripture. The Bible did not change. The Bible teaches that Mary had multiple children (e.g. Mark 3:32; Matthew 27:56).

Origen of Alexandria basically stated that the ‘perpetual virginity’ teaching was originally based upon two false gospels the false *Gospel of Peter* and the *Protoevangelium of James* (Origen. Commentary on Matthew, Book X, 17).

Sadly, many do not realize that some of their cherished, and false, religious doctrines came from one who was either demon possessed or at least influenced by demons. As well as compromises with various pagan beliefs.

Such deception builds upon itself, becomes persecuting, and will worsen:

¹ Know also this, that, in the last days, shall come dangerous times. ² Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, ... ¹² And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. ¹³ But evil men and seducers shall grow worse and worse: erring, and driving into error. (2 Timothy 3:1-2,12-13, DRB)

Gregory erred and led others to err with his false teachings, signs, and lying wonders.

Further understand that the Bible warns that in the end times, the loosening of restraints against false signs and lying wonders will deceive all who fail to have the proper love of the truth:

¹ The Spirit clearly says that in the last times, some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons ² through the hypocrisy of men who speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron. (1 Timothy 4:1, EOB)

⁷ For the mystery of iniquity already worketh; only that he who now holdeth, do hold, until he be taken out of the way. ⁸ And then that wicked one shall be revealed whom the Lord Jesus shall kill with the spirit of his mouth; and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming, him, ⁹ Whose coming is according to the working of Satan, in all power, and signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ And in all seduction of iniquity to them that perish; because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Therefore God shall send them the operation of error, to believe lying: ¹¹ That all may be judged who have not believed the truth, but have consented to iniquity. (2 Thessalonians 2:7-11, DRB)

Yes, there will be worse deception and lying wonders.

The Great Monarch, Books, & the King of the North Beast

Before going further, it should be pointed out that Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox private prophecies (which neither faith says needs to be believed) look forward to a time when a leader (sometimes called the “king” or the “Great Monarch”) that sounds eerily like the above “wicked one” will arrive with signs and wonders. Here is one example of each, from writers in their churches, respectively:

St. Thomas a’Becket (12th century). St. Thomas says: “A knight shall come from the West. He shall capture Milan, Lombardy, and the three Crowns. He shall then sail to Cyprus and Famagoste and land at Jaffa, and reach Christ’s grave where he will fight. Wars and wonders shall befall till the people believe in Christ toward the end of the world.” (Birch, DA. Trial, Tribulation & Triumph: Before During and After Antichrist. Queenship Publishing Company, Goleta (CA), 1996, p. 255)

Anonymou Paraphrasis (10th century): The one true King ... is destined to become manifest [be revealed] ... by means ... of signs ... The King will hear the voice and instructions by an Angel appearing to him ... (Tzima Otto H. The Great Monarch and WWIII in Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Scriptural Prophecies, H. The Great Monarch and WWIII in Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Scriptural Prophecies. Verenika Press, Rock City (SC), 2000, pp. 30- 32)

The Great Monarch ... will be made manifest through *Signs and Wonders from Heaven*. (Tzima Otto H. They'll have no King but Caesar: King Henry of the Cross: the prophesied royal messiah from the tribe of Judah. Veronikia Press, 2005, p. 119)

The Bible warns about lying signs and wonders associated with false leaders in the end time. Do not let them or apparitions or doctrines of demons deceive you.

Roman Catholic prophecy indicates that a pontiff who does miracles will crown the "Great King" as the final 'Holy Roman Emperor':

Bl. Anna-Maria Taigi (19th century) ... St. Peter and St. Paul, having come down from Heaven, will preach in the whole world and designate a new Pope ... At the end, he will have the gift of miracles (Birch, pp. 362-363)

... there will be a latter restoration of the Holy Roman Empire and that there will be at least one last Holy Roman Emperor ... The Great King will be crowned Holy Roman Emperor by the reigning Pope. (Birch, pp. 281, 555)

The Bible tells of one Beast who is supported by a miracle-performing Beast:

¹¹ Then I saw a second beast, emerging from the ground; it had two horns like a lamb, but made a noise like a dragon. ¹² This second beast exercised all the power of the first beast, on its behalf making the world and all its people worship the first beast, whose deadly injury had healed. ¹³ And it worked great miracles, even to calling down fire from heaven onto the earth while people watched. ¹⁴ Through the miracles which it was allowed to do on behalf of the first beast, it was able to lead astray the people of the world and persuade them to put up a statue in honour of the beast that had been wounded by the sword and still lived. (Revelation 13:11-14, NJB)

Signs and lying wonders will affect many. A religious leader doing miracles (the "second beast" above) who supports a political leader (called the "first beast" above) is warned against in the Bible. Yet one sounding just like him is looked forward to in several Greco-Roman private prophecies.

Furthermore, notice the following that was written between 1810 and 1830:

Nursing Nun of Bellay ... Once again, the madmen seem to gain the upper hand! ... their books and their doctrines are swamping the world. But the day of justice will come. ... the Great Monarch ascends the throne of his ancestors. ... All these things shall come to pass once the wicked have succeeded in circulating large numbers of bad books. (Dupont Y. Catholic Prophecy: The Coming Chastisement. TAN Books, Rockford (IL), 1973, p. 51)

Recall, that "madmen" was a term used by Emperor Theodosius for those who refused to accept his trinitarian position. Hence, the above seems to be saying that when books come out that his doctrinal supporters do not like, this will cause the Church of Rome problems, but lead to the rise of the Great Monarch. As far as the "throne of his ancestors" goes, may be a reference to the Hapsburgs (Culleton, The

Prophets and Our Times, p. 195) and a resurrected final “Holy Roman Empire” (cf. Revelation 13:1-4) that other Greco-Roman Catholic private prophecies have pointed to.

Regarding “bad books,” documents that put forward scriptures and historical proof should not be considered bad, yet they often are for those who prefer tradition over truth.

Several Greco-Roman Catholic private prophecies point to their churches having problems in the end times because of a secret sect or group that holds to doctrines of the original Christian faith. Notice:

Anne Catherine Emmerich, Nun January 27, 1822: [T]his counterfeit church; I saw it increase ... Again I saw in vision St. Peter's undermined according to a plan devised by the secret sect ... I saw the secret society relentlessly undermining the great church. ... Then my guide ... said. 'The non-Catholics will mislead many. They will use every possible means to entice them from the Church, and great disturbances will follow.' (Emmerich AC. *The Life and Revelations of Anne Catherine Emmerich*. Schmöger edition, Vol. II. Approbation: Bishop of Limbourg Peter Joseph. Reprint TAN Books, Rockford (IL), 1976, pp. 281, 290, 348)

Abbe Voclin: Horrible books will be freely available. Intellectuals will argue fiercely among themselves. Then war will break out that will see the rise of the Great Monarch. (Dupont, p. 114).

Nun Emmerich's “guide” sounds like it was a “lying wonder.” If intellectuals really do argue fiercely about early catholicism, this would be expected to cause the Church of Rome “great disturbances.” Nun Emmerich's pronouncements also stated (Emmerich, pp. 290-292) that warring followers of the white horse (cf. false prophet is the rider per Revelation 6:1-2) will wear a red cross on their foreheads (cf. Revelation 14:9) to publicly execute and burn (cf. Daniel 11:33) those of the secret society who do not wear crosses (cf. Revelation 13:15) and that her version of Jesus' mother Mary approved this (cf. Isaiah 47:1-6). There is an 11th century Greco-Orthodox leader said a voice said seventh-day Sabbath keeping, which is endorsed throughout the Bible (cf. Genesis 2:1-3, Exodus 20:9-10; Hebrews 4:9) “is against the Divine law” and that there will be a public executioner of the Sabbath keepers during the time of the Great Monarch, because the Sabbath keepers supposedly are “pretending to be Christians” (Tzima Otto H. *The Great Monarch and WWII in Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Scriptural Prophecies*, pp. 127, 132-135).

Notice also:

Elizabeth Canori-Mora (died 1825): God will make use **of the powers of darkness in order to root out followers of the Sects** and godless who want to shake and destroy the foundations of the Church . . . They **will be punished by the cruelty of demons** and die a tragic and barbarous death. (Culleton, *The Reign of Antichrist*, p. 160)

This book could be considered as one that shakes the foundations of the traditionally Greco-Roman churches as it provides scriptural proof and early Christian writings to prove that the *Continuing Church* of God better holds to the beliefs and practices of the original catholic church.

Elizabeth Canori-Mora also stated that “impious and heretical persons” would “desire to overthrow the Church and destroy its very foundations” and that “infernal spirits” (demons) would strike such people “with death” (Connor, pp. 22-23).

Now consider that if demons are going to punish the sects and people that shake the very foundations of a church, would it not be logical to conclude that at least one of such sects are not on Satan’s side? Such demonic spirits are prophesied to come out of the mouth of Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet (Revelation 16:13), not from God.

Furthermore, notice:

Jane Le Royer, Sister of the Nativity, (died 1798): **“When the time of the reign of Antichrist is near, a false religion will appear which be opposed to the unity of God and His Church.** This will cause the greatest schism the world has ever known. (Culligan, pp.127,128)

It should be understood that although we in the CCOG accept “the unity of God” (deification) that early writers like Ignatius referred to (Ignatius, Letter to the Romans, Chapter 9), *The Catholic Encyclopedia* asserts the trinity is the “unity of God” (Lebreton J. The Logos; Joyce G. The Blessed Trinity).

One of the reasons, the original catholics who were called Paulicians by the Romans were persecuted was because they denied the “unity of God” (Gibbon E. The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume 4. BF French, 1830, pp. 5,28,29). This looks to be a reason some may cite for future persecution.

Despite our long history traced to the original apostles, some assert that we are new and not a continuation of the original faith—hence a religion that supposedly has just appeared. Certain Greco-Roman Catholic sources have long claimed those with original biblical beliefs were “secret Jews ... such as those of the Iconoclasts, the Cathars, the Patarines, the Albigensians, the Hussites, the Alumbrados and others” who opposed their church and should be punished (e.g. Pinay M. The Plot Against the Church, Part Four Chapter One. Translated from the German and Spanish editions of the same work. 1962).

The Greco-Roman Great Monarch is expected to severely persecute and have a great army:

St. Francis of Paola (Born in Italy, 15th century): **the Great Monarch will annihilate heretics and unbelievers. He will have a great army,** (Dupont, p. 38)

Consider that the Great Monarch is going to annihilate those his side *considers* to be heretics and unbelievers. Certainly, holding to the original catholic belief on the Godhead is NOT heretical, yet many will think so. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that at “the time of the End” (Daniel 11:35, NJB), the Bible shows that the Beast (Daniel 7:23-25; Revelation 13:1-10), also called the “King of North,” is prophesied to have “a great army” (Daniel 11:25 NJB) as well as to persecute those who are faithful to God (Daniel 11:29-35; Revelation 13:4,7).

The Bible warns this leader will persecute for nearly four years (cf. Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:5-7). According to the Roman Catholic monk Hilarion (died 1476), his reign will be four years. This is also consistent with the prediction from the Roman Catholic Werdin 'd Orante (13th century) who pointed to a four year destructive and warring reign by the Great Monarch (Birch, p. 260).

As far as the Great Monarch goes, Roman Catholic writer Dr. Paul Thigpen put out the following warning:

A more serious problem appears when we look further back in time to discover the circumstances surrounding the earliest known occasions of the "Great Monarch" message. ... It does draw from a fourth-century book that describes in some detail the "Emperor of the Last Days."

As it turns out, both of these early texts are among the so-called Sibylline oracles. These oracles are a collection of utterances that claim to be inspired messages from the Greek Sibyls (ancient pagan prophetesses) in earlier historical periods. But historians have concluded that they were actually written by Jewish and Christian authors in imitation of pagan Sibylline books.

In the Tiburtina Sibyl, the earlier of the two texts, the main outlines of the "Great Monarch" legend (for a legend is what it seems to be) are already apparent. ...

Revelation says nothing of a "Great Monarch"--nor do any biblical references to the last days or the close of the age.

Could looking for the Great Monarch, then, lead believers to overlook the Antichrist, or even to mistake the one for the other? After all, lesser antichrists of the past such as Hitler and Stalin have seduced followers with visions of grand and glorious earthly kingdoms. (Thigpen P. The Rapture Trap, 2nd edition. Nihil obstat Joseph C. Price, June 14, 2002. Imprimatur Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua, Archbishop of Philadelphia, June 18, 2002. Ascension Press, 2002, pp. 222-225)

Relying on the utterances of pagan-related prophetesses as a foundation is not wise. And yes, as Dr. Thigpen suggested, looking forward to a Great Monarch will lead many people to overlook the Beast and the Antichrist! Satan has long used pagan and demonic sources to foist parts of his deceptive plan onto humanity.

Perhaps it should be mentioned that biblical prophecies point to the Beast destroying the USA and its English-speaking allies (Daniel 11:39; cf. 8:24-25; Isaiah 10:5-12) and then a confederation of North Africa and the Middle East lands (Daniel 11:40-43). As it turns out, Greco-Roman private prophecies point to the Great Monarch conquering England and other islands (Connor, p. 30), conquering the capital of the world (ibid, p. 33), whereas one Roman Catholic stated, that essentially the same time, "North America will be fall and be conquered" (Kramer P. What are the missing contents of the third secret? Fatima Crusader, 95, Summer 2010, pp. 45-46). Furthermore, the Great Monarch, "a great prince of the North" is prophesied to destroy an Islamic confederation (Connor, p. 36). So, there are many prophetic similarities.

Additionally, accompanying signs and lying wonders will get people to accept a leader the Bible prophesies that sounds just like the Great Monarch (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-11; Daniel 11:29-43). Those that do accept

him will “be judged who have not believed the truth, but have consented to iniquity” (2 Thessalonians 2:11, DRB).

A Russian Orthodox promoter warned in relation to Revelation 17:12-13:

Therefore perhaps we should see in the ten kingdoms *ten provinces of the future world government*, “the New World Order,” which is to be ruled by the Antichrist. (Moss V. APOCALYPSE -THE BOOK OF THE END. 2018, p. 172)

The Great Monarch is a political figure who is expected to use deceitful religion as part of his agenda—one who sounds like him will be installed by the assent of “ten kings” (Revelation 17:12-13).

From the time of Emperors Hadrian and Constantine, political considerations and at least one lying wonder (Constantine’s vision) changed the Greco-Roman (and later Protestant) faiths.

Lying wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10), deceiving sorcery (Revelation 18:23), and compromise with political rulers (cf. Revelation 17:1-3) are all something that the New Testament warns against.

Rosaries, Brown Scalpulars, Exorcisms

Early Christians did not have brown scapulars or rosaries.

Some feel that the rosary came from the 12th or 15th century:

Some histories of the rosary claim this tradition, too, originated with Saint Dominic. One legend holds that the Virgin Mary appeared to Saint Dominic in the church of Prouille, in 1208, and gave the rosary to him. However, other sources dispute this attribution and suggest that its roots were in the preaching of Alan de Rupe between 1470-1475. (Saint Dominic. New World Encyclopedia. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Saint_Dominic viewed 06/29/11)

Here is information from *The Catholic Encyclopedia* on the development of the rosary:

“The Rosary”, says the Roman Breviary, “is a certain form of prayer wherein we say fifteen decades or tens of Hail Marys with an Our Father between each ten, while at each of these fifteen decades we recall successively in pious meditation one of the mysteries of our Redemption.” ... Impressed by this conspiracy of silence, the Bollandists, on trying to trace to its source the origin of the current tradition, found that all the clues converged upon one point, the preaching of the Dominican Alan de Rupe about the years 1470-75. He undoubtedly was the one who first suggested the idea that the devotion of “Our Lady’s Psalter” (a hundred and fifty Hail Mary’s) was instituted or revived by St. Dominic. **Alan was a very earnest and devout man, but, as the highest authorities admit, he was full of delusions, and based his revelations on the imaginary testimony of writers that never existed** (see Quétif and Echard, “Scriptores O.P.”, 1, 849). (Thurston H. The Rosary)

So, the one who claimed that Dominic came up with the rosary was considered to be delusional by top Roman Catholic authorities.

Greco-Roman saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Monfort essentially wrote that Alan de la Roche claimed that he saw Dominic in a dream, that in 1214 Dominic had seen a “Lady” after he had beat himself into a coma, that the use of the rosary was sort of lost, but that Alan de la Roche later reintroduced it (Montfort L. The Secrets of the Rosary. Translated by Mary Barbour. Nihil Obstat: Gulielmus F. Hughes, Imprimatur: Thomas E. Molloy, 1954. Montfort Publications, 1965).

Even presuming Monfort was correct, it should be abundantly clear that the rosary was NEITHER from the Bible nor an apostolic tradition. The rosary and the current “Hail Mary” were late innovations (Duffner PA, Priest. IN DEFENSE OF A TRADITION. The Rosary Light & Life - Vol 49, No 5, Sep-Oct 1996).

Furthermore, the idea of repeating prayers for a long time was condemned by Jesus Himself:

⁷ And when you are praying, speak not much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard. (Matthew 6:7, DRB)

⁷ In your prayers do not babble as the gentiles do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. (Matthew 6:7, NJB)

And what about brown scapulars?

An apparition the Roman Catholic “saint” Simon Stock thought was Mary in the 13th century allegedly told him the following about the brown scapular:

“Whosoever dies clothed in this shall never suffer eternal fire.” (Madigan L. A pilgrim's handbook to Fatima. Gracewing Publishing, 2001, p. 23)

It is important to realize that this is absolutely contrary to scripture. There is nothing in the Bible that hints that being clothed in some physical way pays the penalty for sin or in any way provides salvation.

Should one who eliminates any part of catholic dogma be considered as a Roman Catholic saint? Specifically, Simon Stock’s apparition (which could not have been Mary) indicates that one can sin and not suffer the flames of eternal torment simply if they die wearing a scapular. Obviously, any who believe his claims about the scapular must accept that repentance (which the Bible requires for salvation, Acts 2:38) or confession (as understood by the Church of Rome) is not necessary.

Roman Catholics who accept Simon Stock as a saint should ask themselves if he was correct, why Roman Catholic dogma would teach the following (**bolding** and *italics* in original):

The Sacramental confession of sins is ordained by God and is necessary for salvation. (*De fide.*)
(Ott, p. 431)

The fact that Simon Stock stated that all one had to do was to die while wearing a scapular, to avoid the punishment for “capital sins” is opposed to Roman Catholic dogma (Ibid, pp. 431-433).

Some may ask, don’t Roman Catholic exorcists repeat ‘Hail Mary’ prayers, and use things like rosaries, crosses, scapulars, crucifixes, relics, and holy water to cast out demons while also saying the name of Jesus?

Yes.

Does this mean that they are approved of God?

No.

Jesus said:

²² Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and done many miracles in thy name?

²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.

²⁴ Every one therefore that heareth these my words, and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock, ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock. ²⁶ And every one that heareth these my words, and doth them not, shall be like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand, ²⁷ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof. (Matthew 7:22-27, DRB)

True Christians “walk by faith, and not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7, DRB), which mean we put the words of the Bible over traditions, signs, objects, and emotions.

Sadly, most do not, and it will get worse (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2).

Roman Catholic scholars have repeatedly declared that rosaries, crosses, scapulars, holy water, crucifixes, etc. were not used by original catholics.

Future Marian Concerns

Furthermore, consider that apparitions look to be warned against in the Bible from one called a “virgin” (Isaiah 47:1, DRB) and “the lady of the kingdoms” (Isaiah 47:5, DRB).

Notice a warning from an Eastern Orthodox catholic:

When Roman Catholics missionaries attempted to evangelize the Kogi in the last century, they used a not-uncommon strategy for drawing pagan peoples into Rome's fold: rather than explaining the differences between the pagan mythology and Christian truth, they found "equivalences," Christ, under this syncretistic view, corresponds to the Kogi Sejukukui (a trickster god who faked his own death by hiding in a cave), while Nabuba is said to be the Virgin Mary. This confusion has led the Kogis to call their pagan temples "cansamaria," a corruption of "casa de Maria" (house of Mary).

... contemporary "apparitions" of Mary are invariably accompanied by ecumenistic messages promoting the idea that all religions are equally valid and Orthodox Christianity is but one "path" among many. ... To which Mary are Muslims and Protestants being drawn? The Protestant Reformation rejected the distorted view of Mary which had developed in the West since the Schism of 1054, and which would ultimately result in the Roman Church's proclamation of their dogma of the Immaculate Conception. ... Rome began to see her more and more as a "goddess," a fourth Hypostasis of the Trinity, as it were, ...

Today, as heterodox Christians become more and more ecumenist and work toward creating a "One World Church," the search has begun for a Mary of universal recognition, one who will appeal not only to those who bear the name Christian, but apparently to Muslims and others as well, just as attempts are likewise being made to identify the "new Christ" with the Muslim concept of their coming Mahdi and with the Messiah still awaited by the Jews. **This, of course, will be no Christ at all but the antichrist.** (Jackson P. ORTHODOX LIFE., No. I, 1997., Brotherhood of Saint Job of Pochaev at Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, NY, pp. 18-22. <http://fr-d-serfes.org/orthodox/theotokos.htm> viewed 05/11/09)

Notice what Bishop Kennedy of the Celtic Orthodox Church wrote:

The great deceiver of Fatima promises salvation to those who embrace devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary ... We can be very certain that God did not send Mary to earth to change God's eternal plan of salvation. It is just this kind of deceit that leads to other false statements about Mary; Mediatrix of all graces etc. The devil's deceit is felt far and wide within the Church as is evidenced in the number of well meaning but deceived souls proclaiming Mary is Mediatrix of all graces. How would have such a statement sounded to the Apostles? This salvation we enjoy is from God in Christ; ... We should STOP THE DEVIL in his tracks and proclaim the vision of Fatima to be a fraud, a work of the devil and an abomination to God, Mary and to the Church. (Kennedy BJ, Bishop. The Fatima Affair. HOLY TRINITY CELTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH / MONASTERY. Toledo, OH. [http:// www.celticorthodoxchurch.com/fatima.html](http://www.celticorthodoxchurch.com/fatima.html) viewed 05/17/12)

As far as Fatima goes, let it be noted that the apparition which appeared there never referred to herself as Mary, was dressed immodestly according to all of the three young children who saw her, and put forth several messages in conflict with original catholic beliefs (that and more is documented in: Thiel B. Fatima Shock! Nazarene Books, 2017 edition).

In the 21st century, various Greco-Roman Catholics hope that Marian apparitions, etc. will be factors that will lead to ecumenical unity, sometimes preceded by what is called 'inter-religious dialogue.'

Do not fall for them. Many Greco-Roman Catholics have relied on lying wonders such as apparitions, bleeding Eucharistic hosts, crying statues, and other such things Jesus did not endorse (cf. Mark 16) as proof their faith is right.

Marian and other apparitions look to be likely to be among the signs and lying wonders in the end times (cf. Isaiah 47:7-9; Revelation 18:7-8,23).

Walk by Faith, Not By Sight

Please also consider that since the original catholic 'eucharist' did NOT involve a rounded host and original Christians did NOT use them, crosses, or statues, any claimed miracles associated with them should NOT be attributed to the God of the Bible.

Jesus said God's "word is truth" (John 17:17). To truly have the "love of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:10, DRB), do not accept doctrinal changes that go against the word of God. Even if they come from a spirit from heaven (Galatians 1:8) or are part of long-standing traditions.

In 2021, then Pope Francis suggested that hypocrisy could be defined as "fear of the truth" (Pope Francis: 'Hypocrisy in the Church is Particularly Detestable.' National Catholic Register, August 25, 2021). While hypocrites fear that the truth be known, basically hypocrites are phoney—they are not what they pretend to be.

The scriptural reality is that many Greco-Roman-Protestant traditions, like many of those of the Jews, are in conflict with the truth.

Jesus warned:

⁶ ... you have made God's word ineffective by means of your tradition. ⁷ Hypocrites! How rightly Isaiah prophesied about you when he said:

⁸ This people honours me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. ⁹ Their reverence of me is worthless; the lessons they teach are nothing but human commandments. (Matthew 15:6-9, OSB)

Councils of men do NOT change scripture. Nor do signs and wonders—even from apparitions.

Acceptable doctrines from church leaders, councils, and apparitions must be in harmony with scripture in order to be valid.

The Apostle Paul warned that there would be people who claimed Jesus, but were not faithful Christian:

¹⁶ They profess that they know God: but in their works they deny him; (Titus 1:16, DRB)

Notice that the Apostle Paul wrote:

¹ Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1, OSB)

Like Jesus, the Apostle Paul also kept the commandments (cf. Philippians 3:5-6).

The *Continuing* Church of God believes:

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. (Psalm 119:105, NJB)

Yet, because of distortions from religious leaders and sorcerers, the Apostle Paul was inspired to write about the “mystery of lawlessness” (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matthew 23:28, NRSV)—so yes, even religious ones who claim to keep the laws can be lawless and that has been a mystery to many. For more on that and the Ten Commandments, check out the free online booklet: *The Ten Commandments: The Decalogue, Christianity, and the Beast*.

According to Jesus, in these end times, lawlessness would increase and cause the love of many to go cold (Matthew 24:12). Sadly, this will help lead to the final end time “Mystery Babylon the Great” (Revelation 17:5)—a religious power sitting on the ruling city of seven hills (Revelation 17:9,18). Hippolytus (On The Antichrist) and other Roman Catholic writers (e.g. Van den Biesen C. Apocalypse. The Catholic Encyclopedia) identified “Mystery Babylon” as Rome.

That power will have apparent miracles, signs from heaven, lawlessness, and lying wonders per 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 13.

Seeing with your own eyes does NOT mean something is of God—even seemingly right prophecies (cf. Deuteronomy 13:2-4). Having millions or even billions of people believing something is true, does not make it so.

Remember, the Apostle Paul wrote of Christians:

⁷ For we walk by faith, and not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7, DRB & EOB)

15. Beliefs Summary

Throughout the entire church age, people with Church of God doctrines asserted that they had unbroken laying on of hands succession from the original apostles.

These assertions preceded Protestantism.

The *Continuing* Church of God has unbroken laying on of hands succession from the apostles. And while the names of some of the top leaders are not in the known records we have access to, the reality is that there were always those who held to the true faith throughout history.

Those in the COG have held to the original catholic Christian faith and did not accept many changed doctrines that the Protestants and/or the Greco-Roman Catholics adopted.

Although some propose slick arguments to the contrary, the biblical and historical facts show that those of the original catholic church:

- Taught the millennium
- Kept Passover on the 14th of Nisan with broken bread like the John and the other apostles
- Believed they had the full New Testament canon
- Did not keep Easter or Christmas
- Did not eat biblically unclean animals
- Were not trinitarian per the definition adopted by the Council of Constantinople in 381
- Kept the Ten Commandments
- Did not have a clergy with massively distinctive dress
- Did not insist on clerical celibacy
- Rested and worshiped on the seventh-day Sabbath
- Did not believe humans possessed an immortal soul
- Did not use crosses
- Taught deification after the resurrection
- Were not militaristic
- Believed God had a plan to offer salvation to all
- Considered the Kingdom of God, not the Beatific Vision, as the reward of the saved.

Doctrine	Original Christian Belief and/or Change
Apocatastasis	Early Christians understood that God was only calling some remnant now, but would call the rest in the age to come. The rise of anti-Origenism resulted in Greco-Romans to change, and most Protestants accepted that change.
Baptism	Early Christians taught that baptism was by immersion for those that repented and accepted Jesus. In time, Greco-Romans implemented sprinkling, even for those incapable of repentance. Some Protestants accepted this change.

Beatific Vision	Early Christians did not teach what is called the Beatific Vision. In time, the Greco-Romans adopted it and many Protestants hold to that teaching. Early Christians believed that they would, instead, be part of God's kingdom making eternity better.
Biblical Holy Days	Early Christians kept biblical holy days, sometimes now called Jewish holy days. Greco-Romans formally condemned most of them in the 4 th century, and Protestants generally do not keep them.
Christmas	Early Christians did not celebrate birthdays nor Christmas. In the 4 th century, Greco-Romans adopted the 25 th of December as Christ's birthday, as it was long celebrated as the birthday of the sun god Mithras, whose worship had been promoted by Emperor Constantine.
Crosses and Icons	Early Christians did not have crosses or icons. This started to change by some of the Greeks in the late 2 nd /early 3 rd century and crosses were adopted by the Greco-Romans in the 4 th century after being influenced by Emperor Constantine. Icons were jointly formally accepted in 843 A.D. by the Greco-Romans.
Ecumenism	Early Christians were not ecumenical. In the 21 st century, many Greco-Roman-Protestants are in favor of ecumenism, though some see dangers in it.
Godhead	The original catholic view of the Godhead was binitarian. The trinitarian view of the Godhead that was formally adopted in 381 A.D. by the Greco-Romans was enforced by imperial edict.
Gospel of the Kingdom	Early Christians believed that Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God was a reference to a future literal kingdom. The Greco-Roman churches do not formally teach that, but some Protestants do.
Heaven	Early Christians did not teach that heaven was the reward of the saved. They taught that the reward of the saved was to be part of the Kingdom of God on earth which came after the first resurrection.
History	We do not see proof of any leaders called bishops/pastors in Rome until around the middle of the 2 nd century. But we do earlier in Jerusalem, Antioch, and Asia Minor.
Holy Spirit	Early Christians believed that the Holy Spirit was the power of God given to baptized Christians who obeyed God. The personhood of the Holy Spirit was declared by Greco-Roman councils in the mid-late 4 th century.
Infant Baptism	Early catholics did not baptize infants. In time, Greco-Romans did, as do some Protestants.
Immortality	Early Christians did not teach that souls were immortal. They taught annihilation for those who would reject God's offer of salvation. Like most Protestants, Roman Catholics do not teach annihilation and do teach souls are immortal.
Jesus	Early Christians accepted Jesus emptied Himself of His divinity (Philippians 2:7) and was fully human on earth (Hebrews 4:15), but now is the Divine Savior (2 Peter 1:1-3), and they strove to imitate Him (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1).
Jews	Jesus was a Jew. Initially, most Christians were Jews. Antisemitism began to be a major factor under Emperor Hadrian. It was later officially put forth by Emperor Constantine, John Chrysostom, and others (including Martin Luther).

Lent and Ash Wednesday	Early Christians fasted on the Day of Atonement and ate unleavened bread for seven days during the Spring (Leviticus 23:6). Neither Lent nor Ash Wednesday were kept by the apostles or their faithful successors.
Marcion	Marcion was an apostate denounced by Polycarp of Smyrna, but tolerated by the Church of Rome for decades. He denied Jesus. Some scholars have referred to Marcion as the first Protestant.
Mary	Jesus' mother Mary was considered blessed, but she was not venerated or prayed to. Nor was it believed she was immaculately conceived or that she had never sinned. In the 3 rd century, the compromiser Gregory Thaumaturgus was a factor in changing this, which Pope Pius IX formalized in 1854.
Matthew 24:14	Many Greco-Romans and Protestants believe that the gospel of the kingdom has been sufficiently preached to the world as a witness. 2 nd century Christians did not believe this had been fulfilled. Since the end (meaning the Great Tribulation per Matthew 24:21) has not come, Matthew 24:14 has not yet been fulfilled, but is expected to be fulfilled to God's standard in the 21 st century.
Meat Consumption	Early catholics avoided biblically unclean meats. The Church of Rome claims that Eleutherius, bishop of Rome from 175-189 AD., changed that position. But in the middle of the fourth century, Nazarenes still avoided it.
Military Service	Early Christians did not voluntarily participate in military service nor watch intentionally violent sports. The Greco-Romans changed in the 4 th century after being highly influenced by Emperor Constantine.
Millennium	Original catholic Christians taught a literal millennial reign. During the Council of Constantinople in 381, Greco-Romans ruled against that teaching.
New Testament Canon	Early catholics believed that the Apostle John did, in essence, canonize the New Testament. Because of confusion among the Greco-Romans, it took centuries for them to come up with their canon (which ended up being the same as the original catholic church for the New Testament).
Old Testament Canon	Early catholics accepted the same Old Testament books as the Palestinian Jews did in the 2 nd century, which did not include what have been called the deuterocanonical books. Into the late 4 th century, Jerome argued against the deuterocanonical books, but was overruled by Pope Damasus. The Roman Catholics did not truly finalize their canon until the Council of Trent in 1546. And the Eastern Orthodox in 1672.
Passover	Early Christians kept Passover on the 14 th of Nisan. Greco-Romans began to change that to Sunday in the 2 nd century and formally accepted that change at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. The Greco-Romans, also, basically dropped the vestiges of Passover from their observance and changed it to a resurrection holiday, later called Easter in English.
Passover Bread	Early Christians used regular unleavened bread that was broken. The Roman and Armenian churches use an unleavened rounded host instead, whereas the Greeks use leavened bread.
Penance and Auricular Confession	While early Christians taught repentance, auricular confession of sins to a priest who then prescribed penance was not an original catholic practice. Penance was proclaimed by the corrupt Roman Callistus in the 3 rd century and private confession with a Roman Catholic priest looks to have been implemented in the 7 th century.

Persecution	Early catholics were often persecuted, but were never the persecutors. Starting in the 4 th century, Greco-Romans began official persecutions with the cooperation and encouragement of Emperors Constantine and Theodosius.
Rapture	Early Christians understood that they were to flee for 3 ½ years in the end times (cf. Revelation 12:14-16). They believed that Jesus would come after the tribulation (Matthew 24:30), not before like Protestant rapturists tend to teach.
Sabbath	Early catholics kept the Sabbath on Saturday. The Greco-Roman churches formally accepted Sunday at the Council of Nicea, 325 A.D. (though Sunday was widely accepted in Rome and Alexandria in the 2 nd century).
Salvation	Early Christians believed that God had a plan to offer salvation to all and most would ultimately accept that offer. Apostates, like Marcion, taught most people would be lost.
Ten Commandments	Early catholics taught the Ten Commandments. However, after writings from Augustine of Hippo, Rome changed the numbering. The Eastern Orthodox and the CCOG still teach the original order.
Three Days and Three Nights	Early catholics believed that Jesus was in the grave for a full three days and three nights. In the early 5 th century, Augustine of Hippo tried to claim a lessor time to justify a Good Friday to Easter Sunday tradition. The Greco-Romans and most Protestants have accepted that change.
Three Resurrections	Original Christians taught three resurrections. The Greco-Roman-Protestant churches teach about one of more resurrections, but without how they truly align with God's plan of salvation.
Worldly Politics	Early catholics generally stayed separate from worldly politics unless legally required to do so (and even then only as long as it did not conflict with God's law).

Consider the fact that the *Continuing* Church of God holds to the original catholic teaching on all the above doctrines. The CCOG continues to hold to, teach, guard, and promote the original deposit of faith (Jude 3; 1 Timothy 4:16).

Was the true Christian church supposed to change basic doctrine?

No.

Yet, the Greco-Roman Catholics and Protestants have. Notice scriptures from their translations of the Bible:

⁶ For I am the Lord, and I change not: (Malachi 3:1, DRB)

⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8, EOB)

³ ... contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3, OSB/NKJV)

If you believe the word of God, consider the following:

³ If the foundations fall to ruin, what can the upright do? (Psalm 11:3, NJB)

The Apostle Paul wrote to “withdraw yourselves from every brother walking disorderly” (2 Thessalonians 3:6, DRB) and “Go out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing” (2 Corinthians 6:17, DRB).

Are not those who significantly changed practices and doctrines from the original faith “walking disorderly” and spiritually “unclean”?

Furthermore, consider something from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*:

Apostolicity of doctrine and mission is necessary. Apostolicity of doctrine requires that the deposit of faith committed to the Apostles shall remain unchanged. ... it follows that if the Church of Christ still exists it must be teaching His doctrine. (O'Reilly TC. Apostolicity)

We in the *Continuing* Church of God continue to teach the apostles' original doctrines and are separate from those that do not.

Which Church Best Holds to the Original Catholic Faith?

Here is something that the Apostle John wrote with a Roman Catholic and Protestant translation:

²⁴ As for you, let that which you have heard from the beginning, abide in you. If that abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning, you also shall abide in the Son, and in the Father. (1 John 2:24, DRB)

²⁴ I beg you to stick to the original teaching, if you do so, you will be living in fellowship with both the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:24, Philips Translation)

The original faith is the one from the beginning. The one the faithful church would still be teaching today.

Please think about the following from the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

GUARDING THE DEPOSIT OF FAITH IS THE MISSION WHICH THE LORD ENTRUSTED TO HIS CHURCH
.... (Catechism of the Catholic Church, p. 1).

Which church clearly does this best in the 21st century?

Pope Benedict XVI publicly stated:

Truth, and not what is “merely fashionable,” must guide Christians as they enter into dialogue with those who hold different philosophies or religious beliefs, Pope Benedict XVI said ... “People were created by God, who is truth, in order to find truth and not to settle for “the myths of custom, cultural habits or the fashion of the moment,” he said. (Pope: Truth, not trend, must guide Christians in dialogue with others. Catholic News Service. March 21, 2007).

Jesus taught:

³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32, DRB)

Can you handle the truth? Even if it goes against customs or cultural trends?

The Old Testament teaches:

¹⁶ The idler thinks himself wiser than seven people who answer with discretion. (Proverbs 26:16, NJB)

¹⁶ The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can give a reason. (Proverbs 26:16, AFV)

Do not be like an idler/sluggard and be dismissive of the facts, scriptures, and proofs in this book. More “than seven people who answer with discretion” from ancient times are quoted in this book.

Remember, also, that the Apostle Paul taught:

²¹ But prove all things; hold fast that which is good. (1 Thessalonians 5:21, DRB).

Do not hold fast to erroneous changes from the original faith.

The *Continuing* Church of God still holds to the original biblical catholic faith and teaches others to do so.

Jesus taught:

²¹ My mother and my brethren are they who hear the word of God, and do it. (Luke 8:21, DRB)

Jesus did NOT teach that those who accept teachings of an organization that claims to be the original church, but has changed them, are brethren.

God tells His people:

¹⁶ These are the things that you must do. Speak the truth to one another ... ¹⁹ So love truth and peace! (Zechariah 8:16,19, NJB)

The truth is that the doctrines and practices of the CCOG are consistent with the teachings of the original catholic church in Asia Minor.

Notice the difference between those of Thessalonica and those of Berea related to the teachings from the Apostle Paul:

¹⁰ But the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea. Who, when they were come thither, went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, who received the word with all eagerness, daily searching the scriptures, whether these things were so. ¹² And many indeed of them believed, and of honourable women that were Gentiles, and of men not a few. ¹³ And when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was also preached by Paul at Berea, they came thither also, stirring up and troubling the multitude. (Acts 17:10-13, DRB)

Are you like the noble Bereans who proved from the scriptures the truth or like those of Thessalonica that scoffed and opposed it because of their traditions? The Bereans were interested enough in knowing the truth to do the research and then believe it.

The Bible warns of those who will not do so:

¹⁶ A lazy person says, "I am smarter than everyone else." (Proverbs 26:16, OSB)

¹⁶ In their own eyes sluggards are wiser than seven who answer with good judgment. (Proverbs 26:16, NABRE)

Please do not be dismissive of scriptures and historical early proofs. Do not accept that those churches highly influenced by Constantine and others with proper regard for scripture represent the original catholic faith.

Can you believe that a small remnant church at this time could represent the true faith?

The Apostle Paul confirmed that would be the case when he wrote, "in our own time, there is a remnant, set aside by grace" (Romans 11:5, NJB).

Jesus called His church a "little flock" (Luke 11:32).

The original catholic church believed the word of God and practiced what it taught. This was confirmed by Polycarp (who warned of the "vanity of many") as well as numerous others called "early fathers." In the 21st century, the *Continuing* Church of God has the same biblical beliefs and practices that the original Catholic Church of God in Smyrna held to.

The New Testament teaches:

⁷ If only you would listen to him today; do not harden your hearts. (Hebrews 4:7, NJB)

That is my prayer for all who read this book. Believe the word of God and be willing to follow the true original faith, today, if you will listen to God.

In one of the last books of the Bible, the Apostle Jude was inspired to tell Christians to:

³ ... contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3, DRB)

³ ... fight hard for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3, EOB)

Do you accept the word of God on that matter?

Will you truly contend for the original catholic Church of God faith?

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Continuing Church of God (CCOG) Websites

CCOG.AFRICA This site is targeted towards those in Africa.

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CCOG.ORG This is the main website of the *Continuing Church of God*. It serves people on all continents with literature and sermon videos.

CCOGCANADA.CA This site is targeted towards those in Canada.

CDLIDD.ES La Continuación de la Iglesia de Dios. This is the Spanish language website for the *Continuing Church of God*.

CG7.ORG This is a website for those interested in the Sabbath and churches that observe the seventh day Sabbath.

PNIND.PH Patuloy na Iglesia ng Diyos. This is the Philippines website with information in English and Tagalog.

News and History Websites

COGWRITER.COM This website is a major proclamation tool and has news, doctrine, historical articles, videos, and prophetic updates.

CHURCHHISTORYBOOK.COM Has articles and books on church history.

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(Back cover)



Amphitheatre in Ancient Ephesus

The original Catholic Church of God believed:

- ²⁰ This God of ours is a God who saves ... (Psalm 68:20, NJB)
- ⁵ Likewise, at this present time, there is also a remnant according to the election of grace. (Romans 11:5, EOB) ³⁸ 'You must repent,' Peter answered, 'and every one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38, NJB) ¹⁶ All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, DRB) ⁹ There must still be, therefore, a seventh-day rest reserved for God's people, ¹⁰ since to enter the place of rest is to rest after your work, as God did after his. ¹¹ Let us, then, press forward to enter this place of rest, or some of you might copy this example of refusal to believe and be lost. (Hebrews 4:9-11, NJB) ¹ Let Philadelphia continue (Hebrews 13:1, literal) ¹⁴ ... I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named ... ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14-15,19, OSB).
- ⁷ There are many deceivers at large in the world, refusing to acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in human nature. They are the Deceiver; they are the Antichrist. (2 John 7, NJB) ¹⁷ Wherefore, Go out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: (2 Corinthians 6:17, DRB)
- ³⁶ Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought ... As it is, my kingdom does not belong here. (John 18:36, NJB)

- ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom, shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come. (Matthew 24:14, DRB) ⁶ Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. In these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ; and shall reign with him a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6, DRB)