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HISTORICAL PERSECUTION OF BELIEVERS – LESSON 7

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IS FORMED – PART 2

THE NICENE COUNCIL

Constantine ruled as Roman Emperor from 306-337 A.D. After becoming a Christian, he issued the Edict of Milan that set Christianity as the legitimate religion of the empire, ending persecution from the Roman government. It brought tolerance of all religion, whether Christian or otherwise.

Christianity was in disarray with many different doctrines being taught. He sought to bring uniformity in doctrine so as to unite the various factions. He called for all the top Christian leaders from the empire to meet in Nicaea (present-day Turkey) in 325 A.D. to discuss what doctrines should be uniformly established.

Interestingly enough, the “supposed Pope” Sylvester of Rome did not even bother to attend. He only sent delegates. This affirms to me that he was no Pope at all and destroys the myth of an unbroken line of Popes from 29 A.D. to 325 A.D. Starting from the Nicene Council of 325 A.D. the Papal line was therefore established as the Church of Rome and made the official church by the Emperor of Rome, the civil ruler.

The central controversy related to the origin of Jesus, the only begotten son of God the Father. Arius of Alexandria claimed that God created Jesus out of nothingness, a created being like Adam, who was created out of dust, not from the eternal God.

Athanasius said that Jesus came from God’s own being, not as a created being, therefore is co-eternal with God the Father.

The Nicene Council sided with Athanasius, and we still hold the essence of that view today as it matches up with the Bible.

The Nicene Council condemned Arius a heretic and his millions of followers called Arians who had spread widely across the empire. Constantine formally exiled Arius.

Doctrines familiar to Catholic and many Protestant churches of today were established, then further refined to today’s form in the Second Nicene Council held in Constantinople in 381A.D.

Affects of the Nicene Council:

1. It set precedent for political rulers to be patrons of the church.
2. It condemned as heretics anybody who did not agree, and established precedents to deal harshly with them.

This led to much conflict in Christianity throughout the fourth and fifth centuries. Roman Catholics persecuted Arians and Arians persecuted Roman Catholics. From the fourth century through the sixteenth century the Catholic church harshly dealt with those they branded as heretics for departing from Catholic doctrine and from the created traditions of the Catholic Church. Many were ex-communicated, meaning they were irrevocably condemned to hell since they taught the Catholic Church was the “only” way to heaven. Many were executed, burned at the stake, drawn and quartered, beheaded, or put to death in various ways.

This oppression opened the gate to the Dark Ages for over 1,300 years of Catholic domination of religion and politics. During this time, the church became exceedingly wealthy in its greed for power and money.

Persecution of Christians now came from the established Christian Church itself.