WHO WAS THE FIRST REAL POPE?

The intent of this study is to present opinions of various authors and scholars regarding when the first real pope came to power. Even opinions within the Catholic Church are provided.

Even though the Roman Catholic Church claims that the first Pope was Peter, many scholars argue that the actual first Pope was Gregory the Great. This is because the power of the papacy (papal supremacy) did not fully develop until around the time of Gregory the Great. Gregory the Great was born around the year 540 A.D. and died in 604 A.D. Gregory the Great became pope in the year 590 A.D.

<u>570 A.D. TO 1830 A.D.</u>

Just prior to Gregory's reign, the Lombards invaded Italy (568 A.D.). This conquest of Italy by the Lombards came to its completion in 570 A.D. and then the Lombard king was declared king of Italy. With this event, the last remains of the ancient Roman Empire were conquered (many sources are cited that point to the year 570 A.D. in *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*). The papacy / Roman Catholic Church would then take over as the dominant power that Gregory the Great would first fully grasp.

In 570 A.D., the Church of Christ was forced into exile as stated in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 12:6 – "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days."

It's also interesting to note that Mohammad, the founder of the Muslim religion, was born in 570 A.D. in Mecca. Mohammad is said to be a prophet of God by Muslims.

Note that 1830 A.D. is 1260 years after 570 A.D. Revelation 12:6 notes this time period as "a thousand two hundred and threescore days." This is 1260 years using the year-for-a-day principle:

Numbers 14:34 – "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, **each day for a year**, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise."

Ezekiel 4:5-6 – "For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: **I have appointed thee each day for a year**."

Therefore, according to Revelation 12:6, the true church fled into the "wilderness" for 1260 years. On April 6, 1830, the Church of Christ was restored.

THE POPE ACCORDING TO THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

According to catholic.org (http://www.catholic.org/pope/):

> According to Catholic tradition, Jesus founded the papacy in the first century, when he chose St. Peter, the leader of the apostles, to be his earthly representative. "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church," he states in chapter 16 of Matthew. "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Those words, which now circle the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, serve as the biblical mandate for the papacy. All popes are considered symbolic descendants of Peter and are thought to hold "Peter's Chair".

"This rock" is a reference to Christ, not Peter (Psalm 18:31; Romans 9:33; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:8). The apostles of Jesus Christ as a whole would be given the keys (authority) (Matthew 18:18). Peter being one of the apostles, would be given the same authority.

According to the catechism of the Roman Catholic Church (http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p123a9p4.htm):

> 880 When Christ instituted the Twelve, "he constituted [them] in the form of a college or permanent assembly, **at the head of which** he placed Peter, chosen from among them." Just as "by the Lord's institution, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another."

> 881 **The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the "rock" of his Church.** He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock. "The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head." This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church's very foundation and is continued by the bishops **under the primacy of the Pope**.

> 882 The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful." "For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, **and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered**."

> 937 The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, "**supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls**" (CD 2).

OPINIONS

From: *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 24th Edition, Henry H. Halley, Zondervan, 1965

"The Papacy is an Italian Institution. **It arose on the ruins of the Roman Empire**, in the name of Christ occupying the throne of the Caesars; a Revival of the Image of the Roman Empire inheriting the Spirit thereof" (Page 783)

"**The Papacy was a Gradual Development, First appearing as a World Power in the 6th century A.D.**" (Page 767)

"The word "Pope" means "Papa," "Father." At first it was applied to all Western Bishops. About A.D. 500 it began to be restricted to the Bishop of Rome, and soon, in common use, came to mean Universal Bishop. The Roman Catholic list of Popes includes the Bishops of Rome from the 1st century onward. **But for 500 years Bishops of Rome were NOT Popes.** The idea that the Bishop of Rome should have authority over the Whole Church was a slow growth, bitterly contested at every step, and Never Has, at any time, Been Universally Recognized. **The Roman Catholic tradition that Peter was the First Pope is Fiction pure and simple. There is no New Testament hint, and no historical evidence whatever, that Peter was at any time Bishop of Rome. Nor did he ever claim for himself such Authority as the Popes have claimed for themselves.**" (Page 768)

"The Western Empire was now rapidly dissolving amid the storms of the Barbarian Migration and, in the distress and anxiety of the times, Augustine wrote his monumental work, "The City of God," in which he envisioned a Universal Christian Empire. This book had a vast influence in molding opinion favorable to a Universal Church Hierarchy under One Head. This promoted Rome's claim for Lordship." (Page 770)

"**Gregory I (A.D. 590-604), generally regarded as the First Pope.** He appeared at a time of Political Anarchy and great Public Distress throughout Europe. Italy, after the Fall of Rome (A.D. 476), had become a Gothic kingdom; later a Byzantine Province under control of the Eastern Emperor; and now being pillaged by the Lombards. Gregory's influence over the various kings had a stabilizing effect. **He established for himself complete control over the churches of Italy, Spain, Gaul, and England whose Conversion to Christianity was the great event of Gregory's times.**" (Page 771)

From: http://books.google.com/books/download/The_History_of_Florence.pdf

The History of Florence, Niccolò Machiavelli, page 47

fast. Nevertheless, until the coming in of the Lombards, all Italy being under the dominion either of Emperors or Kings, the Bishops assumed no more power than what was due to their Doctrine and Manners. In Civil Affairs they were subject to the Civil Power, employed many times by the Emperors and Kings, as their Ministers; and many times executed for their ill Administration. But Theodoric King of the Gothi fixing his Seat at Ravenna, was that which advanced their interest and made them more considerable in Italy; for there being no other Prince left in Rome, the Romans were forced for Protection to pay greater Allegiance to the Pope. And yet their Authority advanced no farther at that time, than to obtain the Preference before the Church of Ravenna. But the Lombards having invaded and reduced Italy into several Cantons, the Pope took the opportunity, and began to hold up his head. For being as it were Governor and Principal at Rome, the Emperor of Constantinople and the Lombards bare him a respect, so that the Romans (by mediation of their Pope) began to treat and confederate with Longinus and the Lombards, not as Subjects, but as Equals and Companions; which said Custom continuing, and the Popes entering into Alliance sometimes with the Lombards, and sometimes with the Greeks, contracted great reputation to their dignity. But the destruction of the Eastern Empire follow-

From: http://www.ankerberg.com/Articles/_PDFArchives/roman-catholicism/RC3W1104.pdf

How Convincing Is the Roman Catholic View That Peter Was the First Pope?—Part 2,
Dr. John Ankerberg, Dr. John Weldon

"**Gregory may be considered the first pope.**"

"Although the concept of a universal rule of the Church was repugnant to him [Gregory] when it was first mentioned by an Eastern Constantinople bishop (he called it "anti-Christ"), **his term and the offices he held greatly under girded the concept of a papacy. In essence, Gregory was the first to be 1) a Bishop of Rome, 2) a Metropolitan (over Roman territory) and 3) a Patriarch (of Italy, for all the West).**"

"**The mere fact that one man held all three offices clearly laid the foundation for the papacy while it also greatly increased Roman power. If the Roman Catholic Church begins to emerge anywhere, it is here.**"

From: http://christianityforthinkers.com/pdfFormat/Gregory-footnotes.pdf

POPE GREGORY THE GREAT (ca. 540 - 604 A.D.), Don Davidson, 2006

"Gregory scrupulously protected the rights and titles claimed by or for the papacy, **and insisted that the Pope held supreme authority over all Christians in the world—including those of the eastern Roman Empire. In Gregory's view, the pronouncements of a church council or synod were of no effect until, and unless, approved by the Pope.**"

From: http://www.faithandreasonforum.com/index.asp?PageID=43&ArticleID=209

Gregory the Great–the First Pope (590-604), Donna Morley, 2003

"Gregory reluctantly accepted his position but once he took over he made some swift changes. **He felt his position in the church needed to have the leadership and control over the entire church hierarchy around the world, not just in Italy. As well, he needed to have religious authority over all the Catholic people--world-wide.** Gregory most assuredly recalled the "Petrine Theory" from Leo I. Yet, Leo's theory wasn't approved at the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). So, how would Gregory implement universal papal leadership when it had been denied in the past?"

"**First, he would set the pattern for the Church government, which would give him power over the church hierarchy. The bishops would be supervised by archbishops, and the archbishops by the "pope"–an ecclesiastical title which was frequently used by any bishop, but under Gregory the Great, it came to be reserved for official use solely to the bishop of Rome.**"

From: http://www.christianchronicler.com/history1/medieval_papacy.html

THE MEDIEVAL PAPACY, Church History for the Masses

"**Rome's first true pope is Gregory I (590-604).** Very little of Rome's glory remained during his papacy. Even the imperial palaces were in sad disrepair. Most of the city's elite left Rome a cultural and urban slum. Gregory still distributed the dole and administered the city. Arian Lombards threatened the city. Gregory raised armies to fight the Lombards and raised funds to repair the city. Still, he did not have the power or prestige later popes would hold."

From: **http://www.biblestudy.org/basicart/origin-of-the-title-of-pope-as-head-of-catholic-church.html**

What is the origin of the title of POPE?, Bible Study Website

"Today, Pontifex Maximus is one of the titles of the Bishop of Rome as Roman Catholic Pope. As a papal title, the translation **Supreme Pontiff** is customary when writing in English, in which the Latin term Pontifex Maximus refers to the former pagan Roman post. But Latin is still the official Vatican language, and the Latin form Pontifex Maximus is still used in reference to the Pope when writing or speaking in that language."

"In the Roman Republic, the Pontifex Maximus was the highest office in the polytheistic Roman religion, which was very much a state cult. His was the most important of the Pontifices (plural of Pontifex), positions in the main sacred college (Collegium Pontificum), which he directed."

"**At the end of the 6th century Gregory I was the first Pope to employ *Pontifex Maximus* in a formal sense, in a broader program of asserting Roman primacy.** It has remained one of the titles of the popes to this day."

From: **http://www.instituteofcatholicculture.org/the-medieval-papacy/**

Dr. Brendan McGuire (Catholic Historian & Christendom College History Professor)
The Medieval Papacy
September 14, 21, and 28, 2010 (presentation)
St. Michael Catholic Church, Annandale, VA
Presentation provided by the Institute of Catholic Culture

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THE MEDIEVAL PAPACY

"This authority [of the popes] is not human but rather divine, granted to Peter by a divine word and reaffirmed to him and his successors by the One Whom Peter confessed, the Lord saying to Peter himself, 'Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in Heaven.' Therefore whoever resists this power thus ordained by God, resists the ordinance of God." "Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff."

~ Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam* (1302)

~ with ~

Brendon McGuire, PhD (cand)

Professor Brendon McGuire, PhD, is a Catholic historian, specializing in the classical and medieval periods. He received his doctoral degree in medieval history from Saint Louis University, and in recent years has presented scholarly research on various historical topics at prestigious regional, national, and international conferences. He has taught both history and classical languages at the undergraduate level, and he is currently a professor of history at Christendom College, his *alma mater*.

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Part One, 01:30-04:50: Introduction

Part One, 07:22-08:14: "In terms of giving a general background of the fall of Rome in the west, everybody knows Roman control in the west fades gradually throughout the fourth and fifth centuries, right? By the end of fifth century it's pretty clear that the Roman Empire no longer really has control of anything in what we call the west. … **Into that vacuum is going to step the papacy**. The papacy as an institution is able to define itself in response to the decline of Roman authority in the west."

Part One, 08:48-09:04: "For the papacy to really emerge as an institution that can guide, that can direct, that can authoritatively govern the Christian world, it's going to have to fend off a challenge from these eastern emperors. **That battle begins to be fought really in the sixth century.**"

Part One, 18:55-20:10: "**Another event that would strike and would actually in some sense work in favor of the Papacy was the arrival of a new group of Barbarians in Italy called the Lombards. The Lombards arrive in Italy in 568.** … So what happens is, as the Lombards enter Italy, it becomes incumbent upon someone to deal with the Lombards, **it basically falls into the lap of the papacy. The papacy becomes a virtually independent viceroy of the Byzantine Emperor after the advent of the Lombards.** The papacy is forced to make decisions on the fly in making treaties with Lombard governors, in deciding whether to recognize a Lombard presence and a Lombard administration in parts of Italy, in deciding the terms in which a Roman population could live under Lombard rule, etc."

Part One, 24:23-24:38: "**The true father of the medieval papacy, the man who really laid the groundwork for an independent papacy that could take directive authoritative action within Western Europe was of course the famous figure of Gregory the Great.**"

Part One, 32:16-32:46: "**Administratively, socially, politically, who's in charge in Rome then under Gregory the Great? Is there a Byzantine viceroy, a Byzantine governor, a Byzantine emperor, a Byzantine official, any kind of Roman imperial official there at all? No! It's the pope! It's the papacy! So Gregory the Great is laying the foundations for what the medieval papacy would become: an institution that could act independently and authoritatively in the interest of the welfare of the Christian west.**"

Part One, 39:22-39:29: "But what Gregory does is he lays the groundwork for the potent influence of the papacy in the west."

Part One, 40:18-40:24: "The pope in Gregory's mind rightfully and theoretically is the ruler of all Europe."