

Latin literary evidence for roman religious change in the early roman empire rese...

[History](#), [Empires](#)



The first centuries of the Roman Empire were a time of unparalleled prosperity and stability. The Empire was also called Roman Peace (Pax Romana) due to its successful existence. Between (98-117AD) when Trajan was in charge the Empire attained its biggest expanse. When the Empire was in its third century, it underwent a life threatening existence. It was later stabilized and reunited by Diocletian and Aurelian who by then were emperors. In its fourth term in existence, Christians were rising to power and it was during this time when the dual rule system started developing in the Greek East and Latin West.

During the 5th century, the West of the central government collapsed and the remaining half in the Eastern proceeded to be what was later known as the Byzantine Empire. Following the long endurance and the vast extent of the Empire, Roman institutions and culture was gaining a lasting and profound influence in fundamental sections like architecture, religion, Law, language development and in other territorial forms of government that the Empire was governing. During the third century BC, Rome had started to annex other provinces (Banson, 45).

According to Salzman, it was four centuries before the Empire had reached its utmost territorial coverage. By that time, the Empire was still under the governorship of the republic. Former praetors and consuls were in charge of administering the republican provinces. The praetors and consuls had the right of command, also known as imperium and they had been elected to serve a one year term. Military power by some few individuals via their provincial command, and the stockpile of disproportionate wealth were among the principle factors that triggered the transition to imperial

autocracy from that of republic (Salzman, 56).

North recalls how the position of power that was originally held by emperors was later known as the imperium. Rome is known to be the city of gladiators and brave hearts. The Roman Empire has a history that encompasses exploits of intelligent persons and their conquests. Its culture was greatly influenced by Greek values, traditions and culture. However, the legendary story concerning the creation of Rome, Italy has been narrated. The political system during the Roman Empire existed for almost five centuries. According to historians, the Roman Empire began way back in 17 BC after Octavius was given the name Augustus by the senate.

This made him an undisputed empire during the post era of the bitter civil war. Another Roman leader who is renowned up to date is Julius Caesar in 44 BC. Caesar was ruling as a dictator and Rome was rendered unsafe because of the civil unrest and political upheaval that exceeded ten years.

Immediately after conquering his rivals, the Senate proclaimed Octavius Augustus in 27 BC. Augustus means that one is the holy one or the exalted one (North, 15).

After that, Augustus was able to establish the Monarchy which could later be known as the Roman Empire. After lasting for almost four hundred years, the Roman Republic collapsed, and efforts to revive it were an exercise in futility. The empire endured for an additional five hundred years up to AD 476. 27 BC to AD 14 was the period in which the empire Augustus was in charge as an empire. Augustus was able to reestablish both social and political stability in the Roman Empire.

Augustus saw the inception of two centuries of hope and prosperity as he

called upon Pax (Romana Roman Peace). The Roman Empire started to transform into being one of the most influential, powerful and greatest political establishment in the history of Europeans. At the infancy of its initial 2 centuries AD, the empire added and flourished a couple of new territories, particularly Dacia also known as Romania presently, Arabia and the ancient Britain (Rupke, 78).

Ferguson reminds that Persons from the Roman provinces made efforts of streaming to Rome so as to serve as senators, bureaucrats, soldiers and also emperors. Rome's economy drastically grew to be a cultural, economic and social center for of the Mediterranean. Despite all the attention and efforts by some vicious leaders or tyrants like Nero and Caligula who were both emperors, majority of emperors the present day empires made sensible and competent decisions until economic and military disasters ushered in instability in politics during the third century AD.

The Roman Empire had a huge chunk of territories and in spite of that, it permitted individuals from different cultures to maintain and practice their cultures freely. Literature, the ethical and cultural system of the Jews, Greek philosophy, the newly upcoming Christian religions and art were highly perpetuated with the help of the empire. Babylonian astrology and astronomy, and Persia's cultural elements, eastern civilization and Egypt were accommodated as well (Ferguson, 87).

The Roman Empire provided their own unique talents to work for the government. Some of the talents that were supplied by the Romans were architectures and lawyers. It was also keen on spreading its Latin language. Because of that, the Western tradition and cultural elements have been

shaped. The Natives of Rome had created the synthesis at the longest and unending era of peaceful prosperity that has always been known by the Mediterranean world (Everett, 156).

Religion during the Ancient Roman

The history of religion in Ancient Rome has a number of beliefs and cultural practices. These ancient practices and cultural beliefs are what the Romans call their own. In addition, there were lots of cults that were imported to Rome during the Roman Empire. Some of these cults were practiced by the ancient Romans under the Roman Empire. The Romans regarded themselves as distinguished faithful who believed in religion. They went to an extent of attributing the successful fruits of their labor as a world superpower. This was in regard to their piety collectively so as to maintain a positive relationship between them and their gods.

History indicates that majority of institutions in Rome have their roots in Numa Pompilius, Roman King Sabine the Second who had the powers to bargain to the gods directly. Therefore this type of archaic movement or religion was the basis of *mos maiorum* which in other words was “ the wishes of the ancestors” or in simple words, the ‘ tradition” as was also believed as main to Roman identity. During the Roman Empire, only members from the elite classes were permitted to be priests in public religions (Price, 87).

Boundaries were marked as a symbol of reflecting universal orders and the reading of God’s will was a routine. All these were done by the augurs with the main agenda being to sanction the expansionism of the Roman Empire as a course of a divine destiny. The Roman religion was actually contractual and also practical and it was founded on *do ut des*, meaning that one had to

give so as to pave way for another to give (Novak, 234).

According to the Roman religion and belief, knowledge was the catalyst between people and religion, ethical practice of praying, rituals, and sacrifices but not built on dogma faith. However, learned speculations concerning the divine nature and its connection to human affairs are preserved by Latin literature. During the Roman Empire, religion was perceived to be a social order source even by the skeptical Roman intellectuals like Cicero who by then, was serving as an augur. To others, especially the ordinary Roman citizens, they considered religion to be part of their daily lives. Shrines were readily available in at least every home of the Romans.

Shrines were useful to because through them, libations and prayers to the household's deities could be offered. The city was also dotted by sacred positions, springs, groves and neighboring shrines. According to Apuleius, the daily excellence of religion when assessing how people who had gone through cults could make a fruit or vow offering or just seat and meditate for a while. During the Roman Empire, the calendar was designed to center on religious adherences.

During the imperial era, more than one hundred and thirty five days of the year were dedicated to religious activities and festivals. Everyone including women, children and even slaves, were allowed to participate in a variety of religious activities. There were some rituals that could only be performed by women and their children. The Roman Empire promoted Vestal Virgins who used to tend the sacred heart of Rome for many centuries until it was dissolved later by the domination of Christian (Garnsey, 88).

The Romans are famously recognized by their multiple of deities they used to believe in and honor. During those times, the capacity of their deities rendered them into a mockery state by pioneer Christian polemicists. The Roman culture was greatly influenced by the availability of the Greeks on the Italian peninsula. They also went ahead to introduce some religious beliefs and practices that later on turned out to be as significant as Apollo's cult. The Romans were looking for mutual ground between the Greek's gods and their own major gods. They also adapted the Latin iconographic literature and myths. Another major influential factor was the Etruscan religion more so on the augury practice, given the fact that Rome was at one time under the rule of Etruscan kings.

As the Roman Empire broadened its territory all over the Mediterranean world, its policy was generally to absorb the cults and deities that were practiced by others, rather than just eradicating them.

This was due to the fact that the Emperor insisted that the preservation of a tradition was fundamental because it boosted social stability. The Roman regime acknowledged other people by incorporating their religious activities to the deities that made their theological factors within its hierarchy (Hekster, 144).

The availability of inscriptions all over the records in the Empire, the Roman deities and dedication by Romans to their gods, showed how welcoming the Romans were. There was a cultivation of various deities of international heritage by the very height of the Empire. These deities were even spread to the remotest provinces like Isis and Cybele. Therefore, the gods of solar monism for instance the Sol Invictus could be found as far as to the north of

Roman Britain.

The fact with Romans is that they were never obligated to serve a single god or a single cult. To them, tolerance in religion was never an issue only if it was not meant to compete with monotheistic values. At times, the Roman policy was compelled by the difficulties posed by Judaism's monotheistic rigors to grant some special exemptions, and at times, to intractable disagreement. Just as the Republic was at the verge of collapsing, the nation had resolved to rally its support behind the fresh regime of emperors. One man rule was a novelty that was justified by the first Roman Empire, Augustus.

This was done with a large course of reform and revivalism. Initially, public vows were made for the purpose of the republic's security but they were later on intended for the welfare of the emperor. It is also believed that it was during the reign of Tiberius when Jesus Christ was executed.

The authority to execute Jesus was given by Pontius Pilate who by then was the governor in the Roman government.

During the initial stage of Tiberius reign in Rome, the Jews were getting prominent and as a result, the followers of Christ including the gentiles and Jews started to proselytize the Roman citizens, enlarging long simmering resentments. In 19 AD, Tiberius gave directions that all Jews that had attained the ages of military to join the Roman army. The remaining Jews were banished by Tiberius and they had to leave Rome or be enslaved forever by Tiberius.

However, there is a significant argument among historians and scholars as to when exactly the Jewish religion was differentiated from Christianity.

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Tertullian attests that Tiberius made a request to the senate just a few years after Christ was crucified, to legally recognize Christianity as a religion.

However, philosophers and other scholars are of the opinion that the Roman distinction of the Christians and the Jews came to effect at around 70 AD.

Tiberius considered Christians to be a sect that was born by the Jews and not an independent distinct faith.

The first to be converted to Christianity was Constantine in the early 4th century. He therefore went ahead to inaugurate the regime of Christian hegemony. Emperor Julian attempted to short-live and revive some Hellenistic and traditional religion, and to authenticate the special status in favor of Judaism. In 391 under the rule of Theodosius, Christianity was officially confirmed as a state religion of the Romans, and all others were excluded.

Conclusion

The journey of Christianity has been an eventful one. From the Ever since the Roman Empire up to date, a lot has transpired. The Roman Empire has always been dominated by male, educated and military aristocrats. Almost half of the population in Rome was either slaves or free but non citizens. Rome also had the plebeians who also doubled as the poorest class of Romans. During the Roman Empire, women had no right to speak in public and in front of men. They also had no rights to vote until recently, thanks to the Great Awakening. Religion is changing by the day. With the advancement in technology, people are changing the way they conduct affairs. Unlike during the Roman Empire era, nowadays women can preach in

front of men and she can be respected. The journey of religion has encompassed so many key figures since its inception. Whether they influenced is positively or negatively, all of them cannot be wished away due to their contributions.

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