

MARTYRDOMS OF PETER AND PAUL – MERE LEGENDS

Jesus supposedly authorised Peter and Paul to deliver his teaching and witness that he rose from the dead.

The Catholic Church would have you believe that the apostle Peter died in Rome by being crucified upside down and that the apostle Paul was beheaded there. It makes out that they sealed their testimony for the truth of Christianity in their own blood.

The earliest account of the violent death of Peter that we have says that he was killed for political reasons (from internet's Why I Don't Buy the Resurrection Story).

“The martyrdom of St Peter is alluded to in St John's Gospel (xii, 36: xxi, 18). That it took place at Rome is highly probable from the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, Ignatius' letter to the Romans and the unanimous tradition of second century writers, besides the memorial monument at the cemetery on the Vatican hill, built around AD 160-70 and recently excavated” (page 18, The Early Church).

This is wrong. All the John gospel says is that Peter will stretch out his arms and be taken where he does not want to go. There is no evidence that Peter was ever in Rome. He wrote a letter from Babylon but there is no reason to deny that this was the real Babylon, the village near the infamous city. Take the simplest meaning please, you have to. Yet some understand Babylon as a code for Rome. Read my book, The Impostor in the Vatican. This refutes the lies of the Roman Catholic Church through which the pope, the pretended successor of Peter who was supposedly the first bishop of Rome and first earthly head of the Church, gains his incredible power. However, it is clear that the New Testament is easily misinterpreted and could have suggested to many that Peter was martyred. The result was, Peter died an obscure death and because the Bible was thought to say so many were convinced that he was martyred like Jesus. The Bible could have started the legend about the martyrdom.

The alleged predictions of martyrdom from Jesus don't necessarily have to mean blood martyrdom but may have caused the legend through people misunderstanding. Evangelicals though claiming to support the Bible only still believe the martyrdom stories though they come from legendary material that is full of wildly over the top stories which is dishonest. means their faith in the apostles' testimony does not come from the Bible but from outside it though the Bible claims to provide evidence. Their faith in the Bible is so great that they have prefer secular evidence though they claim it is full of evidence that it is the voice of God!

Clement of Rome in his first century Epistle to the Corinthians was supposed to be a pope according to the speculations of the Roman Church. The Catholic Church lies that he wrote that Peter and Paul were martyred together in Rome. He never wrote that these individuals perished to testify to Christ by their blood or that they died by execution at all. The Greek word *martyria* means testimony. It is the word the debate is about but Jesus in John 18:37 uses it for witness without any connotations of bloodshed.

About 96 AD or before 70AD, the epistle of Clement of Rome to Corinth stated that Peter was the victim of abuse until death and was a martyr. But it does not say the abuse was what killed Peter. Peter is believed to have been killed about 64AD which would mean that Clement might have written just a few years later. If he wrote that soon, we will see he is proof that Peter never was martyred or Paul either.

Here is what Clement wrote: “Because of jealous people and those bitten with envy the best and most just pillars of the Church were persecuted and persecuted even to death. Let us remember the holy apostles Peter who because of jealousy that was unfair suffered not a few but many trials and thus haven given his testimony went to the glorious place of his reward. Because of jealous trouble-makers Paul showed how to win the prize for those who endure, seven times he was in bonds, he was exiled, stoned, a bringer of the message to east and to the west, he became famous as was due to him because of his faith, he preached the right way to live to the world, and when he had reached the limits of the west he witnessed before the rulers, and this way passed away from the world and was taken up to the holy place - one of the greatest examples of loyalty and endurance” (1 Clement 5).

Where we have references to giving testimony or witness many translate martyr. The word martyr means witness and did not come to mean a person who witnessed by shedding blood in death until decades later. In Acts 7:58 the people who testified against Stephen are called martyrs and they did not die. (Check all this out in Putting Away Childish Things, pages 182-183). Yet many say Clement stated that the apostles except John died for their faith (page 304, Lectures and Replies). Clement says nothing about the time Peter died or how he died. His silence is proof that Peter never died for the faith for he would say so if he had. Even the Roman Catholic apologetic book, Lectures and Replies (page 304), admits that Clement

never said that Peter or Paul lived or died in Rome.

In my Skeptical Dictionary I wrote, “Clement of Rome is misinterpreted as saying Peter and Paul were martyrs in Rome but the word he used does not mean blood martyrs but just witnesses and he never says how they died but that they were pestered to death like Joseph of the Bible (1 Clement 4 – “Jealousy persecuted Joseph to death”) who was not pestered to death for he lived a happy life after the pestering (so the expression is very loose and poetic and not literal) or even where they died. Like Joseph, Peter and Paul were persecuted but ended their days in peace. The early Church father Hippolytus was one of the best earliest sources that denied the martyrdom that Christians alleged visited most of the apostles. The account may contain some legend but there is no doubt that the sources that say that most of the apostles died natural deaths must be right for Christians wouldn’t have wanted that to be true and it is easier to remember martyrdoms than the more boring natural deaths. Martyrdoms make more impact.”

(Hippolytus specifically stated that the apostle John died an old man and the apostle Matthew died peacefully in Parthia. Two alleged gospel writers and they were not even martyrs.)

Read what Clement wrote again. You will read that the two apostles were persecuted because of jealousy and envy. This is impossible to believe. The enemies of the Church feared the corruption of Jewish doctrine and also that the Christians were up to no good and hated humanity. The latter was the fear of the Gentiles as many sources attest. So Clement only makes sense if you hold that CHRISTIANS persecuted the apostles. They were jealous of them and so gave them a hard time. It would be foolish to imagine that Gentiles or Jews were that petty and easily provoked to jealousy. This means that the stories which blame the pagan Romans for killing them are lies. However, there can be no doubt that Clement believed that Peter testified that his witness was true when went through so much bother. Jealousy was blamed for Paul’s problems too though the epistles show that the chief and real reason was that the Jews did not like him saying that Christians could be saved without the law of Moses. Paul’s example of patient suffering is singled out for exuberant praise indicating that the story of Peter’s crucifixion is untrue. Paul was allegedly beheaded and Peter went through what was a thousand times worse and Clement implicitly denies that this happened to Peter. Peter would have got the praise had he been crucified and Paul would not have been glorified as one of the best examples of unflappable devotion to Jesus Christ. Only Paul’s suffering is glorified. His death isn’t mentioned. Clement talks as if Peter had a hard life but died naturally for nobody focusing on how apostles suffer for the gospel will leave it out if they died a cruel death for the faith as if it were just a minor detail. Clement does not encourage going forward to martyrdom in blood. Would he mean that when Paul testified to the rulers and then went to the holy place in Heaven that the rulers killed him? Of course not. That would suggest that Paul was a suicide and provoked the rulers into slaying him. Paul died after preaching to the limits of the West suggesting he died not in Rome but perhaps in Gaul or France or Spain. Clement would have spelled it out clearly if he thought Peter and Paul were killed for their faith. That he didn’t shows they were not.

Clement of Rome would have known if Peter and Paul were blood martyrs in Rome. That he indicated that it never happened to them shows that the current claims of the Vatican that Peter has been found below St Peter’s Basilica in Rome are yet another of Rome’s self-publicising distortions.

Clement focused mostly on Paul which would testify against Peter being what Catholics say he was, infallible head of the Church, for then he would have focused mostly on Peter. It is as if he had only the vaguest knowledge of Peter (page 11, St Peter and Rome).

If Peter had really been martyred by death, Clement would have highlighted this for that is more important than just suffering for the gospel which Clement brought up to make their testimony more convincing.

Peter was supposed in a fanciful legend to have been nailed to a cross upside down in Rome. Eusebius who was born in 260 AD was the first person worth listening to allege this. The story first came in the forged Acts of Peter which date from the second last decade of the second century (page 185, Putting Away Childish Things). The Catholic Church revised the Acts of Peter and the rewritten version was The Acts of Peter and Paul and this is all we have left of the Acts of Peter (page 49, St Peter and Rome). It is no good for there is no way of checking out its allegations or even knowing what belonged to the original Acts. The bastardised Acts reckoned that Peter chose the head downwards crucifixion position in honour of the crucifixion of Christ who was nailed the right way up. This would have been a slower and crueller way to die. Peter must have wanted to punish himself for something terrible when he wanted to die so cruelly. Perhaps it was guilt over imposing such a system as Christianity upon the world.

Tertullian was the first ever to state that Peter was crucified but he gives us no reason to believe him or any evidence. He wrote too long after the event, about 140 years, to be worth paying attention to. The absurdity about John miraculously surviving a boiling in oil is in the same account in Against Marcion which further undermines what Tertullian wrote for it shows he was ignoring evidence and focusing on legend.

The story of Paul’s Roman martyrdom when he was beheaded first came from the late second century Acts of Paul which

was notorious for tall stories (page 204, Putting Away Childish Things). We cannot even hope that there is a kernel of truth in it and that Paul was decapitated in Rome. Clement says that Paul gave his witness while passing from the world to Heaven which is a lot different from saying he gave his witness by dying. Clement would have said that if Paul died for his faith. He would have said he was decapitated for his faith for a person who is said to die for their faith could be killed by ill-health because of their faith which wouldn't be very impressive for lots of people needlessly harm their health and seem to enjoy doing so.

Paul was allegedly beheaded in Rome. In his epistles, he says that he has risked his life for Jesus but no indication is given that these risks were that grave. A person would take risks for lies within reason. When the story goes that his head made a miraculous fountain wherever it hit the ground the three times it bounced that makes it questionable.

The Second Letter of Timothy has Paul saying in chapter 4 that his life is nearly over. He says it is already being poured away like a libation. You don't really talk that way if you are in jail awaiting execution. You talk that way if you are dying of some sickness or old age. He went on to say that the first time he had to present his defence nobody came to witness in his favour. He said that because of his message he was rescued by God from the lion's mouth for God inspired him what to say. So he escaped execution then. Then armed with this evidence he confidently says, "The Lord will save me from all evil attempts on me and bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom." The letter shows that Paul was confident he would never undergo a blood martyrdom and was living in such a way that it couldn't happen or too close to death for it to happen. The letter is suspected by most of having been written after Paul's death. If so, Paul was never a blood martyr.

The argument that Rome was the only place to claim that it was the scene of Peter's martyrdom proves nothing because Peter could have had an obscure martyrdom elsewhere and the Rome claim was late in origin. It was made up by the papacy which wanted to claim to be the leader of the Church and successor to Peter.

"Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, remarks in a letter to the Church in Rome soon after the middle of the second century that Peter and Paul had planted the Church at Corinth and had taught there in like manner, but that they had also in like manner gone to Italy and taught there, and had died as martyrs at the same time" (page 209, Handbook to the Controversy With Rome, Vol 1). But again the word martyr has been misinterpreted. Dionysius simply wrote that the pair preached together and bore witness (his word for testified is rendered martyred) in Italy at the same time (page 16, St Peter and Rome).

Irenaeus said that Peter and Paul were ministering in Rome when St Matthew's gospel was published and then he says that the year of publication was 41 AD at the most. But it is proven and accepted by all that Peter and Paul did not do this. Irenaeus believed that Jesus had his public ministry for almost twenty years and that Jesus was an old man when he was put to death (page 24, St Peter and Rome). All this confusion tells us not to listen too much to him.

Ignatius in 115 AD pleads not to be saved from martyrdom and says this is in imitation of Peter and Paul (page 208, Handbook to the Controversy with Rome, Volume 1). Ignatius certainly means a painful witness by this. Ignatius does not hint that it is a witness by dying that he wants to emulate in them. The translators always rendered a word meaning good person to be martyr in the sense of a person who died to testify in Ignatius except when the context wouldn't let them (Putting Away Childish Things, page 208). That is terribly dishonest. If we want to pretend he meant blood martyrs then he only says that Peter and Paul pleaded not to be saved if they could be martyred. But that does not make them martyrs but suicides.

If Peter and Paul committed suicide by refusing to try and get out of a death-sentence then they did not die for Jesus but because they were suicidal. What was wrong with them - a guilty conscience for creating a lying religion perhaps? If Peter really asked to be crucified upside down so that his crucifixion would not mirror Christ's then this was not a holy martyrdom but a masochistic sickness and showed he was mentally ill and not a true martyr.

The story of Peter and Paul dying as blood martyrs is mere legend. Local gossip would be more reliable.

It is worth mentioning that the early traditions of the Ebionites insisted that Peter and Paul were in serious doctrinal opposition. One was a heretic to the other. Catholics just pick the legends they want to believe and ignore theirs. If the Ebionites were right then the legends that say Peter and Paul were martyred together in Rome are false for they could not stand one another. What else have the Peter and Paul legends been lying about? The Elkasites were a branch of the Ebionites which flourished at Rome and seem to have had their origin at the time Jerusalem was destroyed. They loathed Paul who they condemned under the name of Simon Magus as a cover (see St Peter and Rome) and presented Peter and Magus as enemies. Or did Simon change his name and start pretending to be an apostle of Jesus? Paul had his opponents even in his own time who were like these sects so what the sects say comes before anything Justin Martyr said about the apostles being a good team or whatever.

We know too little about the apostles. We have no right to say they were honest men for men we know more about and trust have been found dishonest.

We don't know enough about the apostles and the martyrdom stories are unreliable and can be refuted. Accordingly, we cannot say their visions of Jesus raised from the dead really took place on the basis that they died for them.