

Ep. 13 – The Papacy (1)

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1. The primacy of Peter
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 - b. Proof from scripture
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2. This primacy is perpetuated in his successor, the Pope, bishop of Rome
 - a. Arguments *a priori* that it must have been perpetuated
 - b. Historical proof:
 - i. Peter established his See at Rome and died there
 - ii. The bishops of Rome always claimed to be Peter's successors in the primacy
 - iii. Acknowledgment of this primacy by the Church (by appealing to Rome to adjudicate conflicts and condemn heresies; by the universal adoption of papal decisions; by the submission of ecumenical councils to the directives of the Pope; etc.)

1. The Primacy of Peter

A. FITTINGNESS

Summary: the Church has a government; it is not democratic; it must be either a pure aristocracy (a college of bishops all equal to one another), or a monarchy (albeit tempered with elements of aristocracy, since the bishops are not mere representatives or delegates of the pope); a monarchy is more fitting, both for metaphysical reasons (a monarch better represents Christ and can therefore better mediate between God and man than, say, a collegiate body) and practical reasons (a monarch is more apt to govern effectively, to maintain doctrinal and disciplinary unity) and because a monarchical form of government conforms better to the overall plan of God as manifested in both the Old Testament and the New.

1. If the Church founded by Christ is a true society, it must have a **system of government**.
 - a. No society can exist without an authority or governing body that coordinates the activity of the members and directs their activity to attain the end for which the society exists. The purpose of the Church is to continue until the end of time the threefold mission of Christ on this earth: to teach, to rule, to sanctify her members, and thus to prepare them for eternal life.
 - b. We find this in the Great Commission given to the Apostles by our Lord just before his ascension : « Going therefore, teach ye all nations (*the power of*

teaching) : baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost (*the power of sanctifying*). Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you (*the power of governing*). And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world. »

2. It is evident that the Church is **not a democracy**.
 - a. The apostles have been chosen from among the other disciples and have been entrusted with powers that the others do not have: the power to teach authoritatively (« He who hears you, hears Me »), the power to consecrate the Eucharist (« Do this in memory of Me ») the power to forgive sins (« Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them »), the power to impose and lift moral obligations (« Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven... ») and even the power to discipline and expel from the Christian community (« If he does not hear the Church, let him be to you as the heathen and publican »; and we see this power of excommunication used by St. Paul who « delivers up to Satan » Hymeneus and Alexander for their heresy [1 Tim. 1,20] and does the same to a certain believer in Corinth for his unrepentant sin of incest [1 Cor. 5,5]).
 - b. This is **not a temporary disposition**, intended to expire at the death of the last Apostle. No, we see the Apostles conferring on others their own sacramental powers by the laying on of hands, and jurisdictional or governing powers by committing to them the care of this or that church.
 - i. St. Paul writes to Timothy : « Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with imposition of the hands of the priesthood ; » and it is evident that Timothy is able to confer the same spiritual power on others, since Paul warns him, « Impose not hands lightly upon any man, neither be partaker of other men's sins » (by imprudently ordaining men who are unworthy).
 - ii. It is moreover evident that Timothy has received a true power of governance, since he is advised by St. Paul on how to reward, to judge and to punish: « Let the priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honour: especially they who labour in the word and doctrine... Against a priest receive not an accusation, but under two or three witnesses. Them that sin, reprove before all, that the rest also may have fear. »

- iii. Just as Timothy was put by Paul in charge of Ephesus, so Titus is put in charge of Crete : « For this cause I left thee in Crete: that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting and shouldest ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee. »
 - iv. We see clearly from these examples that the ministers of the Church are not elected by the people to be their representatives; they are rather the representatives of Christ, selected by the successors of the Apostles, who themselves were selected by Christ and received their mission from Him.
3. The question remains, however: **is the Church an aristocracy?** A rule of elites who are, however, all equal to one another, as the Eastern Orthodox imagine? Or can we discern among the Apostles themselves an order, a subordination to one who is their leader?
- a. We would naturally expect, from what we know of the Providence of God as manifested in the **Old Testament**, that there would be one among the Apostles who is supreme; for we see that:
 - i. God prefers to govern his people through the agency of one man, as He led the Israelites under the guidance of Moses, and then Josue, and the judges, and later the kings of Israel, and the Maccabees.
 - ii. And among the descendants of Aaron there was always one who was the high priest, and who remained such until his death, at which point another (the oldest surviving priest) would succeed him.
 - iii. When God speaks through the prophets he does so « one at a time, » so to speak. Thus, Elias (Elijah) is succeeded by Eliseus (Elisha) only after the former has gone up into heaven in a fiery chariot. There is no « college of prophets » that determines by a majority vote what is the authentic message of God.
 - iv. We see this preference for the rule of one **even among the angels**, since Michael is regarded as the chief of the angels; he is called by the prophet Daniel « the great prince, » and by Jude he is called « the archangel, » and St. John describes in the Apocalypse how « there was a great battle in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought, and his angels. »

- v. Finally, **even in natural institutions** like the family there is the rule of one. Even if the wife has a share in the government of the family, it is the husband who is the head. And among the children it is the oldest boy who traditionally was recognized as being preferred to the rest of his siblings and having authority over them, as for example among the Hebrews the firstborn received a double portion of the family inheritance and, before the institution of the Aaronic priesthood, it was the firstborn who succeeded to his father as the priest of the family.
- b. **Why** this preference of God for the rule of one?
- i. Probably because his divine majesty, the source of all authority, is better represented through the rule of one than through the rule of a college or governing body. An assembly represents the people, whereas a single ruler better represents the one God and can act as a mediator, like Moses who went up Mt. Sinai alone to receive the law, or the high priest who alone could enter the Holy of Holies.
 1. Our Lord himself says: « There shall be one fold and one shepherd. » Even if the « one shepherd » is chiefly Christ himself, he nevertheless needs a visible representative here on earth. If here on earth He was represented by a college of apostles who were all equal, or a « pentarchy » (a rule of five equal patriarchs), how could one recognize here on earth the « one shepherd » that Christ speaks of?
 - ii. Add to this: the unity of the Church is both better represented and more efficaciously maintained by the rule of one, who is able to give a final decision without manifesting any hesitancy or internal division as we see in legislative bodies. — St. Thomas Aquinas, a great medieval theologian, writes: « the best government of a multitude is rule by one... for peace and the unity of his subjects are the purpose of the one who rules, and *one is a better constituted cause of unity than many* » ([Summa Contra Gentiles IV, 76](#)).
1. (We see this even in the American government, which, not unlike the Catholic Church, has elements of monarchy [the president] and aristocracy [congress, the supreme court]; and in the Canadian government, which has a prime minister. When it

is time to mobilize for war or respond to an emergency situation, there is not time for long deliberation and voting; so naturally the rule of one is preferred.)

2. We see in all non-Catholic confessions that do not have a single head capable of pronouncing definitive judgment on doctrinal questions one or another of two tendencies: either to insist on the beliefs that one has arrived at by private judgment, and that results in interminable divisions; or else to prefer to remain in communion but at the expense of doctrinal clarity, as we see in the Eastern Orthodox who are unable to make doctrinal progress by resolving disputes; and so, on many dogmatic issues (original sin, justification, the Immaculate Conception) their teaching remains very vague; and on moral issues like contraception, divorce and remarriage, etc., and even the manner of administering the sacrament of confession, the discipline will vary wildly from one place to another.
 3. This is what St. Thomas says: « about matters of faith it happens that questions arise. A diversity of pronouncements, of course, would divide the Church, if it were not preserved in unity by the pronouncement of one. Therefore, the unity of the Church demands that there be one who is at the head of the entire Church. But, manifestly, in its necessities Christ has not failed the Church which He loved and for which He shed His blood, since even of the synagogue the Lord says: ‘What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard that I have not done to it?’ (Isa. 5:4). Therefore, one must not doubt that by Christ’s ordering there is one who is at the head of the entire Church. » (*Ibid.*)
 4. If Christ *had* willed the Apostles to rule the Church as a body of equals, he would not have chosen an even number (12) which is easily divided in half and therefore unable to come to a decision!
- iii. Final point: we see that in each diocese or « particular church » there is by divine institution a single ruler, the bishop, as Timothy was set over Ephesus and Titus over Crete, even if the bishop shares the

burden of his responsibility for the diocese with priests who work under his authority.

1. The letters of Ignatius of Antioch, a Church Father who was martyred at the start of the early second century, insist on this : « 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 » ([to the Philadelphians](#)). « Your justly renowned presbytery, worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to the bishop as the strings are to the harp » ([Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians](#)). « Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it » ([to the Smyrnaeans](#)).
 2. Now, even as each particular church is ruled by a presbyterate subject to the bishop, why should not the universal Church be ruled by an *episcopal* body subject to one man in particular who is Christ's vicar, that there may be one fold and one shepherd? Why should the divinely established model of governance for the diocese or particular church not apply, albeit on a grander scale, to the universal Church?
 3. Thus St. Thomas: « As for the specific congregation of one Church one bishop is called for who is the head of that Church; so for the entire Christian people there must be one who is head of the entire Church. » (*Ibid.*)
 4. Contrast this to the ecclesiology of the Orthodox: there is no primacy, and so each of their particular churches (used to be 16, not sure now) is considered « autocephalous. » One fold?
4. **Delayed emergence** — Of course, if there was an apostle who was placed above the others as the chief representative of Jesus Christ, this would not necessarily appear evident during the sojourn of Christ on this earth, since even the head of the apostles would be nothing in comparison to Christ, and could hardly represent Him while there was not yet need to do so, since Christ was still on earth. This preeminence of one apostle over the others would naturally be limited in its exercise

until Christ had ascended into heaven, leaving room for this apostle to begin to fulfil his role as *the* Vicar of Christ on earth.

5. **Expected Indications** — Even so, we would expect to see some indication in the Gospels that Christ has chosen one of the Apostles, singled him out and conferred on him a special role:
 - a. We might expect him to receive a special title, perhaps even a special name that he would be called by.
 - b. We would expect to see the flock of Christ confided to him in a special way.
 - c. We would expect to see him given special jurisdictional powers beyond those possessed by the other Apostles.
 - d. We would expect him to be given special promises, even perhaps the grace of an indefectible faith so that he could confirm his brethren, the other Apostles in their faith.
6. Of course, all of these we *do* find in one of the Apostles, Simon Peter, who fits this description to a « T. »

SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE

Peter is given preferential treatment by the evangelists (mentioned more times, listed before the other apostles); Christ signals him out in many ways, for example, by preaching from his boat, and by appearing to him first of all the Apostles after his resurrection; he prays for Peter in particular that his faith may not fail and gives him the role of confirming the other apostles in the faith. He calls Peter the rock on which he will build his Church and promises Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, symbolizing supreme power in his Church; a power that he confers on Peter before his Ascension by the triple command to feed his flock. After the Ascension, Peter consistently takes the leading role among the Apostles; at Peter's initiative a replacement is appointed for Judas, uncircumcised Gentiles are admitted into the Church, and a council is held at Jerusalem that decrees that Gentiles converts are not obliged to observe the Mosaic law.

1. Process of elimination: who among the apostles might be first?
 - a. Not all equal: Christ shows a marked preference for « the three » : Peter, James and John.
 - i. James and John were with Peter for the first miraculous draft of fishes (Lk. 5,10). Only these three seem to have been special names or titles by our Lord (Mk. 3,16-17). Only these three were admitted to witness the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus (Mk. 5,37), the transfiguration on Mt. Thabor, and to be close to our Lord during his agony in the garden of olives.

- ii. (It is true that sometimes Andrew, Peter's brother, is admitted to the inner circle, as for example when Jesus cures Peter's mother-in-law, and when the four of them question our Lord about the end times [cf. Mk. 13,3]).
 - iii. James and John show signs of rashness and ambition. They want to command fire to come down from heaven and consume the inhospitable Samaritans (Lk. 9,54). They try to extort from our Lord the first two places in his kingdom (Mk. 10,35), meriting the resentment of the other ten apostles and a rebuke from our Lord—in fact, he tells them: « to sit on my right hand or on my left is not mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared » (Mk. 10,40), which clearly implies that the highest places in his kingdom are *not* destined for them, perhaps for the very reason of their ambition: « whosoever will be first among you shall be the servant of all » (Mk. 10,44). The Boanerges, or « sons of thunder » as our Lord calls them (Mk. 3,17), may perhaps merit a special placement because of their fiery zeal and devotion, but they do not seem apt to rule.
- b. Here, Peter emerges clearly from the other apostles (and even from James and John) as the leader of them all.
- i. He is the only one to receive from our Lord, not just a special title or « nickname » like « Sons of thunder, » but a proper name that will henceforth replace the name he was given at birth.
 1. We read in John chapter 1: « Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who had heard [about Jesus from] John [the Baptist] and followed him. He findeth first his brother Simon and saith to him: We have found the Messias... And he brought him to Jesus. And Jesus looking upon him, said: Thou art Simon the son of Jona. Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter. » (Cephas is Aramaic for rock; Peter is the Greek work which is masculinized [πέτρα, feminine, becomes πέτρος]).
 2. A name change given by God is always indicative of a providential role or responsibility; as Abram was called Abraham (father of many nations), Jacob was called Israel (strong against God) and Osee was called Josue (savior).

3. Jesus will later confirm this title of Peter (rock) and explain its significance, as we will see in Mt. 16,18.
- ii. Peter is always listed before the other apostles, even though Andrew was the first chronologically to follow Jesus.
1. There is no particular order for the other apostles (sometimes Andrew is listed after Peter, sometimes James and John), but Peter invariably comes first. St. Matthew in his list of Apostles says: « The names of the twelve apostles are as follows: First, Simon, surnamed Peter; then Andrew, his brother; James, the son of Zebedee, etc. »
 2. Sometimes only Peter's name is mentioned distinctly while all the other Apostles are lumped together, for example, Mk. 1,36: « Simon and they that were with him followed after [Jesus], »; after Christ's resurrection the Angel tells the holy women: « Go, tell his disciples *and Peter* that he goeth before you into Galilee » (Mk 16,7); – the same is true in the Acts of the Apostles, e.g., Acts 5,29: « Peter and the apostles answering, said: We ought to obey God rather than men, etc. »
 3. Peter's name is mentioned 171 times in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. The closest to him is John at 46 mentions (cf. Fr. William Most, *Catholic Apologetics*, p. 95).
- iii. Christ himself often singles Peter out:
1. He directs Peter to use the stater found in the fish's mouth to pay the temple tax for himself and for Peter together: « give it to them for me and thee » (Mt. 17,26).
 2. He predicts to Peter his future martyrdom: « when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not » (Jn. 21,18) and adds: « Follow me » (Jn. 21,19).
 3. He preaches from Peter's boat (Lk. 5,3) and it is to Peter that he says, « let down your nets for a draft » (ibid.) and Peter again who, at the second miraculous catch of fishes which occurs after the Resurrection, draws the net to land (Jn. 21:11)–

obviously as leader of the other disciples, since one man would not be able to drag the net of 153 large fishes alone.

4. Jesus says to Peter in particular (even though James and John are present): « Fear not: from henceforth thou (singular) shalt catch men » (Lk. 5,10), indicating that this task belongs preeminently to Peter, although the other apostles also share in it (cf. Mk. 1,17 and Mt. 4,19).
5. Jesus gives to Peter in particular the power of binding and loosing (Mt. 16,19) before giving it to the other apostles in common (Mt. 18,18).

iv. Peter has the role of confirming the other apostles in the faith:

1. Jesus singles out Peter, not only to warn him of his coming fall: « Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat » (Lk. 22,31), but also to promise him the grace of an unfailing faith; and he charges him with the task of strengthening his fellow apostles: « I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren » (Lk. 22,32).
 2. Effectively, Christ appears to Peter first before any of the other apostles. St. Paul acknowledges this in 1 Cor. 15,5: « After that [i.e., his resurrection] he [Jesus] was seen by Cephas, and after that by the eleven. » (He does not mention the holy women as the testimony of women was not considered to have juridical value.)
 3. We see that when the holy women announced the resurrection to the Apostles, they were incredulous (Lk. 24,11); but once Peter himself had seen the risen Christ, the others believed on his word: they said to the disciples returning from Emmaus: « The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon » (Lk 24,34).
2. Direct proof of the primacy: it is promised to Peter in Mt. 16,18-20 and conferred after the Resurrection in John 21,15-17.
 - a. Even before the promise, Peter had distinguished himself for his faith: when many of Christ's disciples abandoned him because they could not accept the

- idea of eating his flesh and drinking his blood (the holy Eucharist), Christ turned to the twelve and said, « Will you also go away? » and Peter answered on their behalf, « Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that thou art the Christ, the Son of God » (Jn. 6,68-70).
- b. Now again, there comes another test of the disciples' faith: Who do men say that I am? (Various disciples recount various opinions) then, Who do you say that I am? Once again, it is Peter who has the answer: « Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. »
- i. It's not a democratic process: Christ doesn't say, why don't you consult among yourselves, take a vote, and give me the majority opinion.
 - ii. Peter's answer is not simply a shrewd guess or a kind of « private interpretation »; he answers with conviction; he does so on behalf of all the disciples; and his answer comes from divine inspiration: « flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. »
 - iii. Thus, if the apostles are able to give a unified, certain and accurate confession of faith, it is thanks to Peter who sets the tone.
 - iv. This is what Peter himself affirms in his second epistle: « And we have the more firm prophetic word: whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place... Understanding this first: That no prophecy of scripture is made by private interpretation. For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost » (2 Pet. 1,21).
- c. Peter is rewarded with the promise of the primacy: « I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven. »
- i. **Authenticity of this text:** some rationalist biblical scholars, such as Harnack, have claimed that this passage is an interpolation, meaning that it was inserted into the gospel of St. Matthew later on and it is not

authentic. Why? because for them the idea of papal primacy (and indeed of the Church itself as a stable institution, as opposed to an imminent messianic kingdom) could only be a product of the gradual evolution of the religious consciousness of the Christian community. *A priori*, the rationalists find it impossible to believe that there could be so clear a testimony to the primacy of Peter in the gospels themselves. But:

1. This is not based on *any* textual evidence. This passage is found in *all* the Greek manuscripts and early translations (such as a 2nd-century Syriac translation, cf. *Codex Syro-Curetonianus*). So, they remove it for the same reason that they remove or explain away all the miracles and prophecies attributed to Christ: it does not fit with their philosophical preconceptions.
2. The passage is clearly Semitic in origin: phrases like « Blessed are you, » « Son of Jona, » « flesh and blood, » and the notion of « binding and loosing » are all Semitic; as well as the circumlocution « bound in heaven, loosed in heaven » to mean « bound by God, loosed by God » (whose ineffable name could not be pronounced); and moreover the play on words between « Peter » and « rock » (Thou art Peter [Kepha], and upon this rock [kepha] I will build my Church) does not work nearly as well in Greek and Latin when the gender of « Peter » and « rock » differ.
3. Moreover, the passage is cited or alluded to other early documents: the apocryphal « Gospel of the Hebrews » (1st century), Pastor Hermas (150 a.d.), St. Justin Martyr (150 a.d.), St. Irenaeus (180 a.d.), Tertullian and Origen (200 a.d.). Origen was the most important biblical scholar of the early Greek church and could have no bias in favor of Rome.
4. But an interpolation done within living memory of the Apostles and universally accepted is simply implausible. The passage and its claims are of too much importance to pass unnoticed. It concerns Christ's messianic title and divinity; the foundation of the Church; and Peter's primacy vis-à-vis the other Apostles. These words of Christ to Peter were spoken publicly in the

presence of the other Apostles. If false claims about the event were spread about in their lifetime or living memory, they would have met with fierce resistance.

5. Besides, this is the only place where the reason for Peter's new name is explained. Without it the attribution of the name Peter (recounted in all the other gospels) would remain a mystery! Explaining the name Peter (rock) without this incident (Christ choosing Peter as the rock or foundation-stone of his Church) would be somewhat like explaining the Lord of the Rings without a ring. One is left only with incoherence. — Besides, the name Peter was not even in existence; it is our Lord who invented the name « Peter » by calling a man a rock (Kepha, translated into Greek as Petros). Mt. 16,18 is the only plausible explanation of the origin of this name. ([Source](#), [Source](#))
6. It's not surprising that Christ would use the metaphor of building his Church on a rock, since he had already used the same image in his sermon on the Mount: « Everyone therefore that heareth these my words, and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock, 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 » (Mt. 7,24-25). So, of course Christ, in founding the Church, would build it on a rock, so that the gates of hell would not prevail against it. The rock he chose was Peter.
7. Harnack's position was eventually abandoned and even he himself seems to have relinquished it before his death (cf. Salaverri, *De Ecclesia Christi*, p. 559).

ii. Meaning of the text:

1. Although the Protestant « reformers » were not above modifying or rejecting texts of scripture as it served their purpose (Luther famously added the word « alone » to make St. Paul say that we are saved by faith *alone*; and he claimed that he was able to discern canonical from apocryphal books of scripture *ex gustu*, by how they tasted to him); nevertheless, they did not dare to reject the authenticity of Mt. 16,18-20.

Instead, their tactic was to force an interpretation on the text which was far from the obvious and natural meaning, but which would save them from having to acknowledge Peter's primacy.

2. Thus, they interpreted the word « rock » (Petra, Kephias) as referring to anything but Peter: either to believers in general (Erasmus), or to faith itself (Luther), or to Christ himself (Calvin). Likewise, they all unanimously denied that Christ gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter in particular, but only Peter insofar as he represented the whole Church, in whom authority resides (and not in any individual).
 3. It is obvious, however, what specificity Christ uses in referring to Peter: « Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah...and I say to *you* that you are Peter...and to *you* I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven. » Christ uses first and last name, so to speak: all the precision that would be required in a legal document or in a deposition made before a public notary. And it is obvious that these things are said to Peter *in reward* for his confession of faith (by which he distinguished himself from the rest of the apostles): but how do you reward someone unless you give something to them *in particular* ?
 4. Finally, Peter's confession of faith was a declaration of Christ's true identity (son of the living God) and his role (the Christ = anointed one, Messiah). Jesus rewards Peter by declaring to him *his* true identity (the rock or foundation-stone of the Church) and role (the bearer of the keys, which signify supreme governing power).
- iii. Metaphor of the rock: the rock or foundation-stone is what keeps a building together and provides it strength. That is precisely the role of authority in society. Peter is the rock because he is central authority that gives cohesion to the whole Church.
1. As for Luther's contention that the rock is Peter's faith, it is true that his faith was the meritorious cause or reason that he was made the rock; and it is also true that Peter acts as the foundation of the Church precisely by confirming his brethren in the faith. So, this interpretation is correct precisely insofar as

it makes *Peter's* faith the foundation (not just faith in general); but it is false to the extent that it disassociates Peter and excludes him. He is himself personally the rock upon which the Church is built since he personally is tasked with the charge of confirming his brethren in the faith, and Christ has obtained by prayer that Peter's faith fail not (Lk. 22,32).

iv. Metaphor of the keys:

1. This would seem, at first glance, to be the power to admit souls to heaven, presumably by the forgiveness of sins (a power that our Lord will later give to all his apostles). In this sense the keys would signify basically the same thing as the power of binding and loosing.
2. However, such an explanation is not wholly satisfactory. While the power of binding and loosing will be given to the other apostles in Mt. 18, this is not true of the keys; they are given only to Peter. (In archaeological monuments dating from the end of the 2nd century onward Peter is represented with the keys as his distinctive sign; he is also often represented under the image of Moses, the leader and lawgiver of God's people—cf. Salaverri, p. 580).
3. Moreover it is important to remember that « the kingdom of heaven » can refer to the Church here on earth, as it manifestly does in many of Christ's parables. Understood in this sense, the « keys of the kingdom of heaven » signify supreme power over Christ's Church; since one who becomes the owner or master of something receives the keys to it.
 - a. Historically, when a king conquered a foreign city, the city would show its submission by handing over the keys of the city to the conqueror.
 - b. This metaphor is used in scripture: for example, God says to the prophet Isaias: « Thus saith the Lord God of hosts: Go, get thee in... to Sobna who is over the temple: and thou shalt say to him... I will call my servant Eliacim the son of Helcias, and I... will give thy power into his

hand... And I will lay the key of the house of David upon his shoulder: and he shall open, and none shall shut: and he shall shut, and none shall open » (Is. 22).

- c. Likewise, it is said of Christ, « a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder » (Is. 9)—upon his shoulder, because that is where the keys of the city would be carried (being quite large). And in the Apocalypse Christ himself is referred to as « he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, shutteth and no man openeth » (Apoc. 3,7).
- v. Binding and loosing: the power to interpret laws and impose or lift moral obligations. This is the one prerogative that Peter will share with the other Apostles, but notably they receive it after him, as if to indicate that their power is derived from his and must be exercised in subordination to his.
- d. The primacy is conferred on Peter after Christ's resurrection by the words, « Feed my lambs, feed my sheep » (Jn 21,15-17).
 - i. Authenticity of the text: it appears in all manuscripts and translations (Salaverri, p. 571).
 - 1. Chapter 21 of the Gospel of St. John may have been added as a kind of appendix sometime after the original publication of St. John's Gospel, since the Gospel seems to conclude naturally at the end of chapter 20: « Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing, you may have life in his name. »
 - 2. Nevertheless, the style of this chapter is consistent with that of St. John and the chapter has always been accepted by the Church as an integral part of St. John's Gospel.
 - ii. Once again, we have great specificity: « Simon, son of Jonah. » Once again, a test, not this time of faith, but of love: « Lovest thou me? »

- iii. And Peter is being singled out from the rest of the Apostles: « Lovest thou me more than these do (ἀγαπᾷς με πλέον τούτων)? » Christ again wants Peter to prove himself worthy of the primacy, of being set above the other Apostles as the leader of them all.
- iv. Incredibly the Protestants wanted Christ's words, « Feed my sheep, » to be addressed to all the Apostles and not to Peter in particular! The question obviously concerns Peter in particular (« Do you love me more than these »; how could the command not? And Christ repeats the question and the command three times, to correspond to (and, as it were, cancel out) Peter's triple denial. Obviously it is Peter alone that he is speaking to.
- v. All the Apostles are fisherman; only Peter is made a shepherd. He is made a shepherd, not of his own flock (which would be, « feed your sheep »), but of Christ's flock: « feed my sheep. » Christ is the rock, but he makes Peter a rock; and Christ is the good shepherd, but he makes Peter a shepherd, since Peter will be his vicar on earth, ensuring that even after Christ's ascension into heaven there remains « one fold and one shepherd. »
- vi. The term « feed » is alternately βόσκει, ποιμαίνει. The latter derives from ποίμνη, flock. It means to take care of a flock as a shepherd does, protecting it, herding it, leading it out to pasture. It is in fact synonymous for « to rule. » We find the same verb employed in Mt. 2,6: « Thou Bethlehem the land of Juda art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come forth the captain that shall rule (ποιμανεῖ) my people Israel. » And in the Apocalypse: « He shall rule (ποιμανεῖ) them (the nations) with a rod of iron » (Ap. 19,15). We find the same metaphor used everywhere in the Old Testament: the rulers are called shepherds of their people.
- vii. Some commentators also highlight the distinction between αρνία (lambs), προβάτια (little sheep) and πρόβατα (sheep). Christ employs these three words successively, as if to indicate that he is entrusting to Peter the care of all of his flock, little and big: lay persons, priests and bishops.

3. Exercise of the Primacy after the Ascension:

- a. We have to remember that the other Apostles besides Peter had certain extraordinary gifts that were not passed down to their successors, such as personal infallibility and extraordinary sanctity; so Peter's intervention would not be needed in their affairs in quite the same way as would become necessary later in Church history, where there would be heresies to refute and misconduct to punish.
- b. Nevertheless, we see Peter clearly emerge as the leader of the Apostles:
 - i. Peter takes the leading role in the election of Judas' replacement. (Acts 1:15)
 - ii. Peter preaches the first public sermon of the Church on Pentecost (Acts 2:14).
 - iii. Peter works the first public miracle in Jesus's name after the Ascension, healing the crippled beggar who sat at the entrance to the temple (Acts 3,6-7)
 - iv. Peter is the spokesman for the rest of the apostles before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:29).
 - v. Peter baptizes Cornelius, the centurion, thereby setting the precedent to receive Gentiles into the Church without circumcision (Acts 10:34).
 - vi. Peter definitively settles this same question at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:7).
- c. Even what might seem to go against Peter's primacy is actually supportive of it, e.g., the incident recounted by St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians, where he recounts having « withstood Cephas [Peter] to the face. »
 - i. Resistance to a legitimate superior does not equate to a denial of his authority.
 - ii. St. Paul found it necessary to stand up to Peter precisely because Peter, on account of his preeminence, was likely to sow enormous confusion by his bad example (he was withdrawing from the Gentile converts and eating only with the Jewish Christians who still observed the Mosaic law, which gave the impression that observance of the Mosaic law was still necessary for salvation, or at least that there were two tiers of membership in the Church).
 - iii. In fact, Peter's influence was so great that he drew Barnabas, Paul's companion, to follow his example.

- iv. This is a helpful reminder for Catholics to remember the limits of papal power: it is at the service of the faith, and whenever the imprudence or misconduct of the pope puts the faith in danger, he can be resisted openly.
- v. St. Cyprian (bishop of Carthage in N. Africa, c. 250 a.d.) comments: « Although St. Paul was in conflict with him on the subject of the circumcision, St. Peter, whom the Lord chose the first of them, and upon whom He built His Church, did not...show any arrogance, keeping himself from saying that he was possessing the primacy and that the new converts coming after him to Christianity, must obey him » (Letter 71 to Quintus, ch. 3). — St. Thomas comments, quoting St. Augustine: « Peter gave an example to superiors, that if at any time they should happen to stray from the straight path, they should not disdain to be reproved by their subjects » (ST 2-2, 33, 4 ad 2).
- d. As for the respect that St. Paul had for St. Peter, we see it in that fact that he went up to Jerusalem for the express purpose of seeing him: « Then after three years, I went to Jerusalem to see Peter, and I tarried with him fifteen days. But other Apostles I saw none saving James the brother of the Lord » (Gal. 1,18-19).

TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH FATHERS & ANCIENT LITURGIES

1. The Fathers:
 - a. **Tertullian c.220** « Was anything hidden from Peter, from him who was called the rock on which the Church would be built, from him who received the keys of the kingdom of heaven? » (*De praescriptione*, 22)
 - b. **Origen c. 225** « When Peter was given full charge of feeding the sheep, and when the Church was founded upon him as on solid ground, he was required to admit of just one virtue – charity » (*Commentarium in epistulam ad Romanos* 6:5, toward the end); and « See what the Lord said to that great foundation of the Church; that most solid rock upon which Christ founded his Church (*Homil. In Exodum*, v. 4).
 - c. **St. Ephrem c. 360** « Simon, my disciple, I have made you the foundation of the holy Church. I have already called you Peter, because you will support the entire edifice; you are the overseer of those who build up my Church in this world; if they want to build anything awry, you, the foundation, shall

prevent them; you are the head of the font from which my doctrine is drawn, you are the head of my disciples; through you I will give drink to all the nations; yours is that vivifying sweetness that I bestow; I have chosen you to be like the firstborn in my institution and to be made the heir of my treasures; I have given the keys of my kingdom to you. Behold I have established you as a prince over all my treasures » (*Sermones in hebdomadam sanctam* 4,1).

- d. **St. John Chrysostom c. 400** « Peter, then, was the director of that choir, the mouth of the apostles, the head of that family, the governor of the whole world, the foundation of the Church » (*Adversus Jovinianum* 1:26)

2. Ancient liturgies:

- a. **St. Ambrose** introduces into the Latin liturgy a hymn for Laudes which refers to Peter as « the rock itself of the Church, » (*ipsa petra ecclesiae*) and which was sung « in the mouth of the multitude » as St. Augustine relates (*Retractationes*, I, 22, c. 426/7).
- b. **The Greek Liturgy** calls St. Peter « the foundation of the Church and the rock of faith » (ἡ κρηπίς τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ ἡ πέτρα τῆς πίστεως—cf. Nilles, *Kalendarium Manuale*, quoted in Berry, *The Church of Christ*, p. 306)