

The Impostor in the Vatican

FOREWORD

Let us refute the legitimacy of the pope. The Catholic Church holds that reason in the light of the Bible and Tradition of the Church gives us the truth from God. It irrationally excludes anybody who does not recognise the pope in Rome as being the head of the Church and as infallible when he puts certain conditions into effect. It claims that the sources of God's truth reveal that the pope has this lofty office. But we will see that it is not in these sources from God at all. The pope is an impostor and his position can only be defended by twisting the facts and by lying. Even if Jesus did establish the papacy it might have been only an administration post meaning that it is no serious matter to break away from the pope when the pope preaches heresy and leads a heretical Church like the Roman pontiff does. The semi-divine status of the pope is a status that was invented by the Church. Like all impostors, the pope will not step down until he is forced to.

The excommunication laws mean that anybody at all might be really a fake Catholic – you are automatically excommunicated for denying Church dogma - who thinks he or she is a Catholic so the claim of the pope to represent a visible Church is silly for the excommunications back up the Protestant claim that the Church is invisible and not visible (page 72, Handbook to the Controversy with Rome, Vol 1). A Church that is invisible cannot have a visible head.

Suppose the Catholic Church has merely two members. Say one of them was a convert who didn't really receive the sacraments he got though he did in appearance. Suppose he didn't want them but just went through the motions. The Church says he hasn't made the necessary intention to receive the sacraments so he hasn't in reality. That person is a fake Catholic. That means that at least half of the Church is only outwardly Catholic and not in reality. It makes nonsense of the visible Church idea.

JESUS DIDN'T FOUND PAPACY

The Catholic Church claims that the historical evidence in the Bible shows that the pope is the head of the Church and the papacy was started by Christ. Catholic Doctrine says, "Peter was the first pope for Christ said he was Peter and on this rock on whom he would build his Church and the gates of hell would never prevail against it (meaning the Church being the last thing mentioned) (Matthew 16:18). See also Luke 22:32; John 21. Jesus gave Peter the keys of the kingdom of Heaven – symbols of authority – and told him that whatever he bound or unbound on earth would be bound or unbound in Heaven. Peter's authority was to run and teach the Church. These promises were made to Peter alone at the time so they signify a special authority just for him. Like Peter, the pope, his successor, is the supreme head of the Church on earth – its chief shepherd and teacher and who takes the place of Christ on earth. The popes are the successors of Peter for the true Church needs a pope to mark it as the true religion and guide it – the early Church needed a pope so does the modern one. Commonsense shows the need for a pope".

Roman Catholicism imagines that Matthew 16 where Jesus tells Peter, "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church", is where Jesus promised to make Peter the pope, the rock on which he would build his Church. The Church says that Peter means rock so Jesus was in effect saying that Peter was Rock and on this Rock he would build. But Jesus tells him he is Peter and on this rock instead of saying you are rock and on you I will build. A distinction is obviously intended. Plus even if Jesus did say Peter was the rock there is no need to assume that he meant leader. Your mother can be the rock of the family without being its head or being in control. Nothing in the Bible supports the papacy. And Peter wasn't much of a rock for he failed many times. Jesus was telling Peter to be the rock. He called him Peter to remind him of that. He was predicting that Peter would be enough of a rock for him to build his Church on him. He wasn't saying Peter would be the rock all the time. The pope does claim to be the rock all the time, as long as he is pope he is rock. Peter was not that kind of Rock.

Also, Jesus called Peter rock because of Peter's assertion that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the Living God. This is actually a political title. Judaism was a religion based on God and his promised land of Israel and the Christ was to be the king of Israel like David was. Christ means anointed one or king. The king is referred to as son of God in the Psalms reflecting the notion that the king rules as God's vicar or representative in the kingdom. It can be argued that if Jesus made Peter the rock of his Church that Jesus was promising to make Peter his right hand man in his political Church. If so, Jesus has not built his political Church yet. So the verse does not support the papacy.

Passing over Luke 22:32 which shows how deceptive and desperate Rome can get when it tries to gather and manufacture evidence for the validity of the papacy, we move to John 21. Here Jesus tells Peter to feed his sheep after asking if he loved him three times. Rome asserts that this story's appearance in the gospel indicates that there must be something special about

Peter. But it may just be there for the sake of being inserted or because it reverses Peter's threefold rejection of Christ and his mission when Christ was on trial. The gossellers selected stories about Jesus and left other ones out which does not mean that there was anything special about the people in the stories they chose.

Rome interprets John to mean that Peter was made supreme shepherd of the Church but a person who leads the mission work and who is to feed the lambs and the sheep with the gospel is not the same as a pope. We must abide by the least complicated interpretation. And the fact that the anonymous gosseller in the next breath accused Peter of misleading the flock by misinterpreting something Jesus said despite claiming earlier that Jesus promised the apostles that they would be guided by God and protected from error shows that Peter was not regarded as the head of the Church or infallible or even prudent.

Following the resurrection, the first time Jesus asked Peter if he loved him he asked him if he loved him more than the rest. Peter said yes and told Jesus he knew it. Peter had boasted to Jesus that he loved him better than the rest which shows how little the rest must have loved him if Peter's love is anything to go by. And the too-human Jesus accepted his arrogant boast and rewarded him for it by telling him to feed his lambs and tend his flock. The passage is only saying that since Peter loves Jesus the best that Jesus is telling him to look after his flock because he is the best man for the job. This actually refutes the papacy for the papacy never seeks the man who loves God the most. Jesus asked him if he loved him and used the word *agapao* for love which means intellectually accepting that Jesus is lovable and submitting one's will to him entirely. Peter said, "You know that I love you", but used the word *phileo* for love. *Phileo* means emotional love. So Peter was unable to give Jesus the *agapao* love but gave him *phileo* instead (page 31, *How does God Love Me?*). Jesus obviously wanted the *agapao* but settled for this other love. What Jesus must have meant then was for Peter to feed the flock with emotional love for Jesus himself. In other words, the verses contradict the notion of Peter being pope.

The Church teaches that when Jesus was on earth, Peter could not be pope because there was no Church founded until the day of Pentecost after Jesus stopped appearing. But though there was no Church, Peter would still have been pope and in charge of the Jesus people and this would have started with the resurrection of Jesus. He would have been pope since the resurrection because Jesus was appearing only occasionally in visions then to the apostles meaning they were the Masters now. But John proves he was not. When Peter did not give his heart to Jesus in obedience and full surrender to his will Peter could not have been pope for the purpose of the pope is to teach the faithful what God wants them to do and believe and remind them to submit to God in all things. Jesus accepted Peter's inability thus he was saying Peter was not a pope.

John chapter 21 reads almost as if the apostles knew a papacy could develop and they wanted to forestall it.

The apostle Paul declared that the Church was the body of Christ. He said that all the parts of the body are necessary though they do different things so it wouldn't be any good if your entire body was an eye. He said the head of the body was Christ. So Christ does the thinking for the Church. He speaks of the Church members as being so close to Christ that they are as much members of his body as the physical components of his body would be. This forbids thinking. Some Catholics surmise that it means that since there is much disagreement about what the Holy Spirit guides us to do today and about what Christ is saying when Christ guides us that there must be an infallible visible head of the Church on earth, the pope to sort out the truth from the fantasy with the help of God. But most popes have not claimed that the only person in the Church with the right to think is the pope so that argument cannot be correct. But if the pope is the head of the Church then he should be the only thinker in the Church and should not consult other thinkers. That no pope does this shows that if they are right that the body of Christ doctrine requires a visible head on earth then Paul's mystical body Church doesn't exist anymore. There is no true Church and no true Christian religion only heresies that masquerade as Christianity. And it is all because there is no proper head.

Paul said that Christ was the head thus he didn't believe that a visible head was necessary. You can't have two heads doing the thinking for the Church. If Jesus meant that Peter was the rock of the Church and therefore the faith in the Catholic sense then Peter is the only thinker that counts in the Church. But Jesus expressly denied that. Why would you go to a thinker to learn truth when that thinker is not the rock of the faith?

Astonishingly, the Vatican even reads into the fact that Peter's name appears first in the list of the apostles in the Bible that he must have been the autocrat of the Church. Peter has a leading role to play in some things – which by no means proves that he was the leader of the Church - in the first chapters of Acts but after that Paul takes centre stage. Unlike Peter, Paul is presented as doing pretty much his own thing and did not consult them for every decision even though it ended with him being misunderstood by James who urged him to behave like a Jew (Acts 21). Paul acted more like a pope than Peter ever did.

Reasons for Hope maintains that since Peter spoke out and ended a debate in Acts 15 that he must have been head of the Church and infallible to boot! (page 144). One can't expect much better of a silly – or is it deceptive I should say? - book that ignores the fact that James was said to have made the ruling about how to be diplomatic towards Gentile converts and introduced it with, "I rule" (v19) AFTER Peter spoke as if Peter needed ratification. Peter only said what he thought but

James' statements were stronger and bore the stamp of authority. If Acts 15 says that anybody was the ruler of the Church it was James. This book admits that the medieval and modern style papacy with the reverence it demands and the influence it commands did not exist in the early centuries of the Church but says the basics were there at the back of the Church's mind (page 144-5). I could say that modern Mormonism existed in the early Church at the back of its mind. The logic really makes the Church look ridiculous.

The papacy is not authorised by the Bible so it is a later man-made institution. The Bible would not omit such an important doctrine. Jesus said he wanted his Church to be one and leaving it out of the Bible would mean he wanted the opposite for its absence from scripture has caused many bitter schisms and errors. Rome has never infallibly decreed that any of the texts used to prove Peter a pope really succeed. But since she decreed that Peter was a pope, I feel that it is correct to say that she infallibly put that interpretation on at least one of them, the Matthew one being the most likely candidate, indirectly. How can I be sure? For we can't have a Bible that neglects to tell us about the supreme authority and tradition is too easily disputed for it to be any help. Rome needs this to be said in the Bible for such a foundational doctrine has to be traced back to the apostles' very doorstep. But it is not in the Bible so Rome is not infallible.

If Peter was the head of the early Church he didn't need to be the Vicar of Christ in the Romish sense nor did he need infallibility for the Roman Pontiff is not claimed to be infallible all the time.

If Peter was a pope he might have been the only true pope and there was never meant to be another. Catholics may argue that if the early Church needed a pope the modern Church needs one as much if not more therefore the office must have been meant to have been continued. But it is arrogance to say we know what God's plans are (Romans 11:33, 34). The early Church had different needs to the modern Church. It needed to start off but the modern Church is here for good – unfortunately!

If Peter had been the head of the Church or even its figurehead then one would expect Paul to have written that we have one earthly head as well as one Lord, one faith and one baptism (Ephesians 4:5,6). In those times of bitter theological turbulence Paul needed an earthly head marking out the religious body in possession of the true theology but did not point to one for there was none.

Since the Church regards itself as the body of Christ with Christ as the head and Christians the body parts which is in accordance with Paul's doctrine of the Church, it is illegitimate to call any man the head of the Church. It would be different if the doctrine of the Church did not teach that the Church was the body of Christ. Jesus said that Christians must serve and not be served so there can be no head of the Church – but there can be a servant who makes all the final decisions for the sake of peace. The appropriation of the papacy of the title of head of the Church is totally blasphemous and is the pope taking the place of Christ. It forces the Church not to be the body of Christ but the body of the pope. In that case, it cannot be the Church of Jesus Christ.

The pope alleged functions as a marker for the true Church. If Catholicism is not the true Church it is our duty to throw out the rubbish and set up a reformed one. The Catholic Church is inebriated with error therefore the papacy is a hoax for it does not mark a true Church. Some hold that Jesus did not directly found the papacy but founded the Church and set in motion plans for its evolution. That is one way around the problem of there being no papacy in the early Church. The true Catholic cannot accept it for an infallible Church needs no pope. When Jesus is able to have an infallible Church that functioned without a clear marker what does he need the pope for now? The papacy would definitely be an addition to Christian dogma and therefore heretical and a mark of apostasy in the Church.

Even when you follow Catholic interpretations of what Jesus said, you see no reason to hold that Jesus promised that the papacy would never depart from the faith. He might allow enough popes so that his teaching might be solidified but it is possible that the current popes are fakes and we should follow the teachings of the older ones. Jesus would not be a failure if this was the case.

There is no reason to think that Peter was the head of the Church or a pope. There is no reason to imagine that Jesus created the papacy.

On the basis of spurious legends, the Catholic Church today says that Peter was the head of the Church and went to Rome and became its bishop and decreed that every bishop of Rome in future would be his successor and the head of the Church. Peter was never bishop of Rome and may never have died there at all. Even if the Church is right that he was bishop of Rome, it only guesses that he intended that future bishops of Rome would be his successors and the head of the Church.

Pope Damasus I in 382 made the Church take the idea that Jesus made the bishop of Rome the successor of Peter on the basis of Matthew 16 where Jesus seemingly declared Peter the rock on which he would build his Church seriously (page 238, The Early Church). This indicates that the real start of the papacy was with Damasus I. Nobody else had come up with such nonsense before - not even the Church historians who would have had an interest in promoting Rome. He put into

motion plans for Rome to control the Church while discipline was looser before and Rome was respected because of its unique theological competence which made this easy (page 239, The Early Church). Damasus I was the first to claim jurisdiction over the Church. The Church went along with it because it was practical and had just suffered raging division over the controversy with Arianism which denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. There is no reason to believe that the Church as a whole agreed with Damasus I saying the promises in Matthew 16 were applicable to him now as the successor of Peter. It is interesting how when Jesus was able to found the Church on twelve apostles as if he trusted them to be able to administer their duties without schism and conflict why we are asked to believe Peter alone was the rock!! Paul functionally was the bigger rock.

If Jesus commanded baptism and communion in the Bible he never said that only ordained clergy could do them. There were overseers in the early Church, and presbyters and bishops were on the same level and the two terms were interchangeable. They were not treated like a superior caste and there is nothing that says they had to be set apart by the laying on of hands. Jesus said that there are to be no leaders in his community, and those who wished to guide must be the humblest and lowest of all. Hebrews 7:24 says that Jesus' priesthood was unchangeable and uses a Greek word for that that also means untransferable. There are no priests in the New Testament Church only Jesus. The verse tells us that Christ holds his priesthood without altering anything BECAUSE HE LIVES FOREVER. So no other priests are needed for Jesus lives forever and can do it all himself. How could the Bible authorise the institution of the papacy when it doesn't even speak of clergy? Jesus picked on the Jewish clergy to the exclusion of others implying that he didn't like clergy.

CONCLUSION

The papacy is a late development in the Church and is not supernatural in origin. It is not supported by the Bible and is a blight on the world with many of its evil policies. To argue that the Catholic Church is the true Church because it is led by Peter's successor is simplistic. Yet it is the kind of thinking that the Catholic Church deceptively fosters in the naïve.