

## GREGORY VII STYLE POPES UNKNOWN IN EARLY CHURCH

Have we much evidence that people in the early Church interpreted “You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church” from Matthew 16 to make Peter a Catholic style pope? The pope role became more and more autocratic and what became a honorific role turned into an authority one. The first functional pope was probably Gregory VII who died in 1085 who was the first to make it clear that no law was going to overrule him. The first pope to become a truly divinely chosen one was Pius IX. Now the pope had the power to speak Jesus' truth and was more than a God-appointed earthly head of the Church.

The fact that Mark has a similar story to Matthew and nothing about the rock stuff suggests that Peter was not the head of the Church. You don't omit stories like that. Plus Mark does all he can to portray Peter in a bad light - proving that the early Church claim that the gospel was based on Peter's teachings and reminiscences is false and that he didn't respect Peter. He certainly did not think Peter was anything like a pope! Luke wrote after Matthew and didn't put in the rock material either. Nobody would repeat what others say and then leave out something so important – unless it wasn't important. If it wasn't important then Jesus did not make Peter a pope and the succeeding popes the head of the Church.

If the gospel of Mark came from Peter's preaching as most Catholics believe then when the episode is in it but without the exaltation of Peter then this is a serious reason for asking if the words Matthew reported, “Thou art Peter etc” were said at all. It wouldn't make any sense for Mark to leave that out if he was a disciple of Peter and it was true.

The disciples disputed among themselves about which of them was the greatest or the leader some time after Jesus called Simon Peter and referred to the rock he would build his Church on proving that they knew Jesus did not make Peter head of the Church or was not planning on it either. In Luke, this dispute started after the last supper long after the Thou art Peter incident (22:24). Jesus replies that instead of a having a ruler among them the one that wants to be the greatest should do the most serving and act like the youngest and needing the most advice from the others. He meant that they should all strive for that – no one in particular. There was to be no infallible pope or papal monarch. If you wanted to be the rock the church was built on you had to lay such notions aside and become it by your serving of others and humility not by papal election. You were to draw no attention to yourself by advertising your goodness but were to work in humility. If Peter had been the rock, the way is now open for a new one among the disciples. It would be the one who seemed to be the least and the one who wanted his virtue seen only by God not man. He was to be an invisible rock.

Peter in Acts 10 met a devout believer in God called Cornelius. Cornelius made reverence to Peter and Peter forbade it saying he was a mere man. Peter had to account for accepting Cornelius into the Church to the circumcised Christians. He pleaded his case instead of saying, "Jesus made me head of the Church thus what I did was right." See Acts 11. Peter was not a very good prophet never mind pope! He thought he was dreaming when it turned out an angel was helping him escape from prison! See Acts 12. Some rock! How could a man like that be trusted when he said he had visions of Jesus? He didn't know how to distinguish between dreams and fantasy and visions! How could Peter's faith make him a rock for it was nothing to write home about!

The Epistle of James which demands that everybody be treated as equals at meetings whether they are rich or poor indicates that there were to be no popes in the early Church. If the pope came to a meeting he would be given a comfortable chair even if it meant the poor person has to sit on the floor. That is the very thing that James condemns severely (2:1-4).

Paul in Galatians 2 wrote that he challenged Peter for refusing to eat with Gentiles. The Jews did not eat with Gentiles and the early Church abandoned this bigotry as the faith was supposed to be for all nations. So Peter was doing something extremely serious. The Catholic Church says that the episode does not prove that popes can err in matters of faith and morals only that they can sin. They say Paul was not challenging Peter's doctrine but his lifestyle. But in fact, though it is true that the Church holds that popes can sin, it is not clear that it was just Peter's lifestyle that was the problem. A pope can use example to teach doctrine - it doesn't have to be verbally expressed. When Paul in that chapter referred to Peter as an alleged pillar of the Church there was more to it than a mere criticism of his lifestyle. And indeed Paul complains that Gentile believers were practically forced by Peter to discriminate against Gentiles and act like Jews implying that Peter must have taught that it was now Christian doctrine that Jewish racism be maintained. And in Paul's speech against Peter he never mentions Peter's sins but concentrates on doctrinal matters and on how the law of the Jews does not apply. It was a doctrinal problem.

If Peter had really been pope and the rock in the Catholic sense would Paul have publicly made a show of him and urged dissent from him in Galatians 2:11-14? The procedure with popes and kings is to have a word with them and try to win them over by peace and in private rather than just leap in and attack them. And especially when they are guilty of obvious stupidity - it is hard to believe that the Church would have taken what Peter did that seriously. Paul did not regard Peter as

the focus of unity in the Church when he engineered a revolt against him. Catholics say that Peter did not err in doctrine but he did for the Jewish practice of not eating with Gentiles which Peter supported was a doctrinal issue and the pope teaches by action as much as by speech. If Pope Benedict XVI would never teach any heresy in speech but nods approvingly when some heretic speaks would that mean Benedict was not teaching heresy just because he didn't open his mouth? So Paul opposed Peter in doctrine. Paul wrote that he saw that Peter was not being straight with the gospel (implying Peter spoke for heresy) and he told Peter in front of everybody that Peter was compelling Gentiles to live like Jews. Clearly then Peter was teaching heresy by speaking up for it and compelling people to become heretics.

Catholics argue that Paul wouldn't have mentioned the episode unless Peter was his superior and he was reprimanding him. They turn it into a proof that Peter was a pope or near-pope. But Paul said a few other things about Peter. And there is no hint anywhere in Paul's writings that he regarded Peter anything other than as an equal.

The Book of Revelation symbolises the apostles being the foundation of the Church as a whole by saying that there will be twelve foundations for the city of the saved and each foundation has the name of an apostle on it. If rock means foundation then there are twelve foundations and Peter was the first rock but not the superior one. Jesus made the others rocks later. Or you could say there is one rock if you group all the apostles together. Revelation means that they are the rocks by their testimony. Christ was the rock in the supreme sense and in the sense that he makes the Church and unites it. Jesus never indicated that if Peter was the rock he was to be the only rock!

Jesus said he would give the keys of the kingdom of Heaven to Peter. Papias wrote that Peter opened the gates of Heaven in Rome by his preaching and his keys (page 33, *Secrets of Romanism*). The keys have to do with saving by his preaching of the gospel like any minister could save not ruling. This may have been written in 140 AD.

The fathers who did believe Peter was the rock did not all make it clear that they thought Peter was the head and boss of the Church. Any that did, gave no evidence that they had researched their statements thoroughly so they have no weight (page 51, *St Peter and Rome*).

Seventeen early Fathers, including Jerome and Augustine and Origen declared that Peter was the rock which we must remember is still not enough to prove that they believed in the papacy and if they had then they would have excommunicated those other fathers who denied the papacy. Later in life, Jerome stated clearly that the bishop of Rome has no more authority than any other bishop in the Church (page 5, *The Primitive Faith and Roman Catholic Developments*). He also stated that Christ was the rock and that apostles were each rocks too (page 10, *The Primitive Faith and Roman Catholic Developments*). So Peter was declared the rock for he was the only one who saw that Jesus was the Son of God and the other eleven became rocks later as soon as they exercised holy faith. The apostle John was as much a rock as Peter was. So Jesus did not mean to make Peter the only rock. A house can be built on several rocks. Later in life, Augustine apologised for his previous view that Peter was the rock and started saying that the rock was Jesus alone (page 10, *The Primitive Faith and Roman Catholic Developments*). Eight claimed that the rock was all the apostles and Peter had spoken for them and represented them making them all the rock. Jesus would then have meant: "Because you all agree that I am the Christ you are Peter the Rock because you are all one rock and on this rock I will build my Church", or, "You Peter are called the rock because you represent the rock of the apostles, which is the apostles and yourself". Even Pope Leo the Great believed that Peter's faith was the rock. This position was the best supported. The Roman Catholic scholar Launoy found that seventeen claimed that Peter was the rock and forty-four claimed that it was Peter's faith and eight thought it was the apostles including Peter so that is eighty-five testimonies against seventeen (page 4, *The Petrine Claims of Rome*). It is true that none of the early fathers gave any hint of believing in the papacy (page 348, *Vicars of Christ*).

The Peter thing is the bedrock of Catholicism and its strange doctrines and practices for they try to prove it to prove that the teaching authority of the Church is divine and legitimate. The Church does not have good enough evidence for such a serious claim. If the Peter rock theory is wrong then Protestantism is the only alternative. Rome has to decide if it is totally blasphemous and antichrist to put so much at stake over honouring a man. That puts the Church in excessive danger of apostasy or of having done so. Now, think. Only Matthew 16 seems to prove the papacy. That tells us that there is only one testimony, Matthew's, if he means Jesus wanted a papacy. But the Bible says that religious doctrine regarding faith and morality are more important than people being unjustly punished by the law. The Bible says that at least two firsthand and reliable and independent witnesses are required before an accusation can be listened to. This means that Matthew 16 does not bear the authority of God if it institutes a papacy. It could be that the Bible teaches that only accounts that have the backing of at least one other testimony are divinely inspired for there is no point in God inspiring anything else. I don't think this view can be accepted by believers for only one testimony, Isaiah's, came for the prophecies in the book of that name and there are countless other examples of the rule being flouted and the result still being supposed to be the word of God. But at the same time the view is correct. The Bible does not want to be looked at as non-inspired when it is down to one witness accounts. The law of two witnesses could be telling us that whatever the right understanding of Matthew 16 is that it is not about the creation of a papacy for nothing else says that Peter was the head of the Church. It is either not about the papacy or the chapter has been changed and corrupted for it can't be inspired. The same can be said about the likes of John 6 that is supposed to prove that Jesus turns communion bread and wine into his literal flesh and blood and the verse in

John that seems to say Jesus gave the Church the power to forgive sins.

Jesus, as the Mormon Church has pointed out, says nothing at all about the Church built on the rock as being a Church on earth. The Mormons believe that Jesus when he said that the gates of Hell would never overcome his Church meant that even if the Church ceased to exist on earth it would exist in Heaven. Catholics assume that Jesus meant the Church would always exist on earth and be built on the rock of Peter and the papacy. Mormons say that Jesus spoke of the gates of Hell fighting his Church which means he was thinking primarily of the Church in the spirit world for Hell was part of the Spirit world. They say that Satan need not necessarily approve of every human effort to destroy the Church. They say there is no need to believe he is behind all such activity. They say Jesus mentioned only Hell fighting the Church and not people which implies he was not primarily thinking of the Church on earth. If so, then Peter was not the earthly rock that the Church was built on. Jesus talks about giving Peter the keys of the kingdom of Heaven - again seemingly thinking of the spirit world. The idea of Peter being pope in the spirit world is ridiculous.

If Peter was the head of the Church that means he was head apostle. An apostle was a missionary who saw the risen Jesus and Jesus supposedly appointed twelve official ones. Only a person who lived in the world at the time of Jesus and witnessed his miracles and his goodness could be an apostle. The Pope cannot be Peter's successor for the Pope is not an apostle.

All the evidence is for the Catholic understanding of You are Peter and on this Rock I will build my Church as being a fraud. That the Church uses the verse to prove the papacy was created by Christ though it has been refuted time and time again speaks volumes.

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