

A NEW THEORY, THE ROCK WAS LITERAL

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). Peter was the rock. The pope is the rock today."

Karl Keating surmises that since Peter was told by Jesus in Matthew 16 about the rock near Caesarea Philippi which was built in honour of Caesar Augustus the ruler of Rome it shows that Jesus meant to ordain him as future earthly ruler of the Church (page 206, Catholicism and Fundamentalism). But there is no evidence that Jesus intended that. It could have been a coincidence. Jerusalem which was then the capital of God's true religion would have been a more sensible choice if the location was important. Looking for symbols and parallels has led many a scholar astray of the truth.

Jesus was overjoyed and surprised when Peter told him there that he believed Jesus was the Son of God. Does that sound like Jesus planned it all, that he wanted to go to Caesarea Philippi to ordain the first pope?

Pope Fiction repeats the same lame argument as Keating (page 40). But the book tells us that there is a massive rock there overlooking the ruins. What if Jesus and the apostles were standing on that rock and Jesus was saying, "You are rock and on this rock I will build my Church"? It would mean that Jesus was saying that Peter was his first rock with which to build his Church and the Church will be built literally on the rock they were standing on. The Church was founded on the rock with Peter's profession of Christianity making him the first Christian.

Jesus might not have used the word Church in Matthew 16 in the Catholic sense of the people of God. The word had other senses. Church translates the word ecclesia which means called out. God calls all into a community of believers. He wants all to believe even if they will not become his people in their hearts. So you can have the community of believers and another or distinct community of the people of God which is different and known only to God for God can see who is a hypocrite and who isn't. Peter could have been the rock of the community of believers without being the rock of the people of God or the true Church.

Since the heresies of Vatican II, some Catholics realising that the leaders of the Church were trying to create a new religion masquerading as Catholicism, the theory that a pope can be pope materially or formally has appeared. Recognising that some popes, Liberius, Honorius, John XXII were heretics and some didn't do their job at all the idea is that these popes at least at times were only popes in name only. If I become pope and do nothing at all then I am pope in name only. I am head of the Church but not acting it. So I am a material pope. A formal pope is a pope who tries to do his job as best as he can. A material pope has no right to obedience for he is sinful and dangerous and may teach heresy. Most Catholics prefer to pretend that God wouldn't choose a useless pope but when he let the Church split into three at the climax of the Western Schism when there were three men claiming to be pope and all presenting plausible evidence that they were pope so that nobody knew who the real pope was he might. Many Traditional Catholics believe that the current pope is the successor of Peter but has only potential authority not actual authority for he is so heretical and stubborn that he is not entitled to obedience so they obey his predecessors instead and have their Churches run according to their rules. Undeniably, even if Jesus did found the papacy it does not follow that he wants the papacy obeyed or promises that it will be useful. A Protestant can believe that Peter was the first pope and the pope is the head of the Church and still refuse to obey the pope and call him antichrist. The Jewish High Priest was the head of the Jewish religion and the successor of Aaron who God made the first high priest or head priest yet the Bible sometimes advised rebellion against him. Jesus for example gave no obedience to Annas or Caiaphas. The Bible says that God chose Aaron as High Priest though Aaron once led the people to adore the golden calf instead of God. Those Catholics say that the pope exists for the Church and not the Church for the pope so if the pope teaches heresy he has to be defied and corrected except in so far as he is right.