

THE ROMAN BISHOP'S BENCHMARKS: PRIMACY → SUPREMACY → INFALLIBILITY

by **David Lee Burris**

Papacy: Did It Start With Peter?

- ✓ That a place of primacy was assigned to one of the apostles of Christ is a supposition that is contrary to the whole tenor of Christ's teaching. On more than one occasion the disciples fell into a discussion as to who would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven And each time they were taught by the Lord that such a question was unworthy of their consideration.

Papacy: Did It Start With Peter?

- ✓ A far better case could be made out for the Primacy of Paul than any Catholic can establish for Peter. Paul had the care of all churches upon him. (2 Cor. 11: 28) He labored more abundantly than the rest of the apostles. (1 Cor. 15: 9 - 11) He was not a whit behind the chiefest of the apostles. (2 Cor. 12: 11) He rebuked Peter to the face before them all when he did wrong. (Gal. 2: 11)

Papacy: Tracing Through Titles

- ✓ Bishop Of Rome
- ✓ Roman Province Metropolitan
- ✓ Primate Of Italy
- ✓ Patriarch of the West
- ✓ Successor of Prince of the Apostles
- ✓ Sovereign Pontiff Universal Church
- ✓ Vicar Of Christ

HOW DID WE GET TO THE PAPACY?

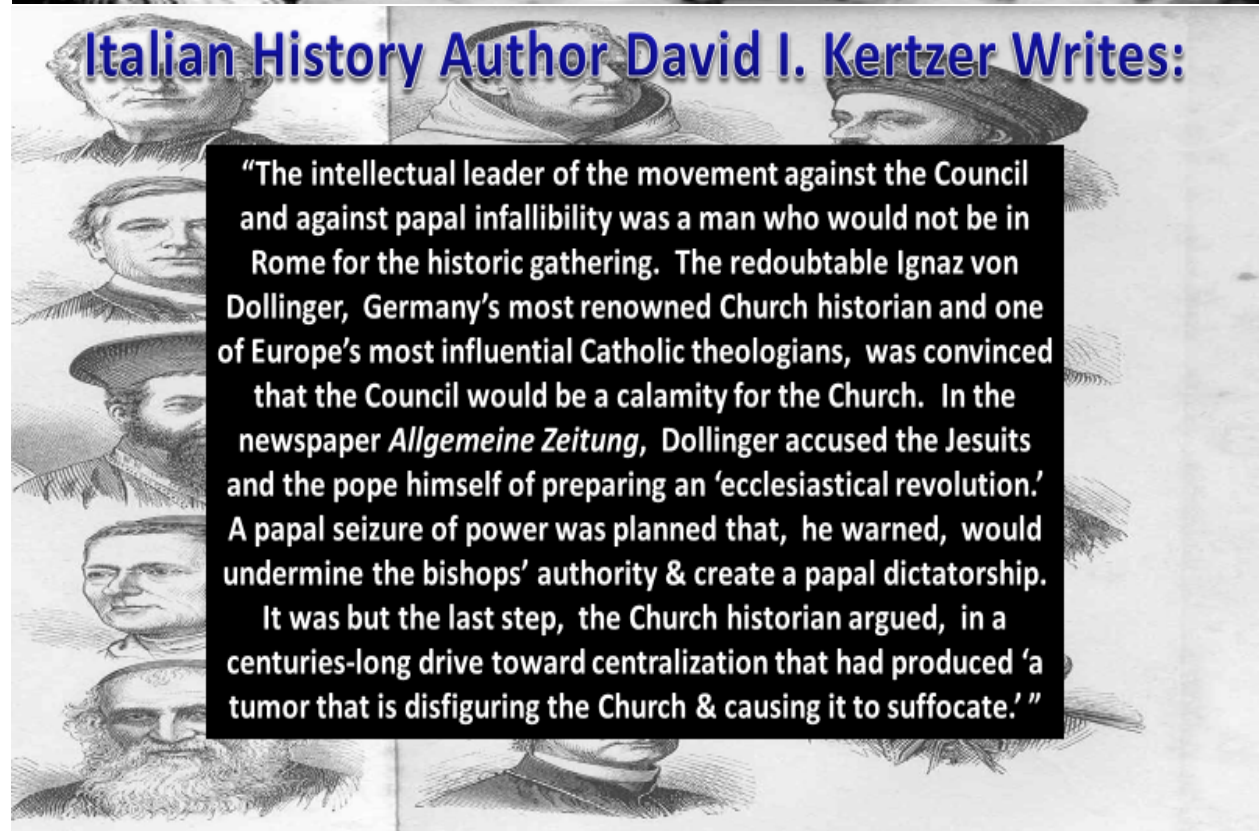
Gregory The Great Wrote John The Faster:

‘I pray you, therefore, reflect that by your bold presumption the peace of the whole Church is troubled, and that you are at enmity with that grace which was given to all in common. The more you grow in grace, the more humble you will be in your own eyes; you will be the greater in proportion as you are further removed from *usurping this extravagant and vainglorious title*. You will be the richer as you seek less to despoil your brethren to your profit. Therefore, dearly beloved brother, love humility with all your heart. It is that which insures peace among the brethren, and which preserves unity in the Holy Catholic Church.’



BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS WHO COME DISGUISED AS HARMLESS SHEEP BUT ARE REALLY VICIOUS WOLVES

THE PAPAL TRADITION OF CHOOSING A NEW NAME STARTS WITH MERCURIUS IN A.D. 533 RENAMING HIMSELF JOHN THE SECOND. THIS PRACTICE WAS PRIOR ASSOCIATED WITH ROYAL DYNASTY.



Italian History Author David I. Kertzer Writes:

"The intellectual leader of the movement against the Council and against papal infallibility was a man who would not be in Rome for the historic gathering. The redoubtable Ignaz von Dollinger, Germany's most renowned Church historian and one of Europe's most influential Catholic theologians, was convinced that the Council would be a calamity for the Church. In the newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Dollinger accused the Jesuits and the pope himself of preparing an 'ecclesiastical revolution.' A papal seizure of power was planned that, he warned, would undermine the bishops' authority & create a papal dictatorship. It was but the last step, the Church historian argued, in a centuries-long drive toward centralization that had produced 'a tumor that is disfiguring the Church & causing it to suffocate.'"

Italian History Author David I. Kertzer Writes:

"Hostility towards the Jesuits was evident among the American prelates attending the Council as well. A few days before the Council began, Bernard McQuaid, bishop of Rochester, New York, wrote to a colleague at home: 'Since coming to Europe, I have heard much of the question of the infallibility of the Pope, which with us in America was scarcely talked of. The feeling is very strong, pro and con. It seems that the Jesuits have been at the bottom of it, and have been preparing the public mind for it for the past two years. They have not made friends for themselves by the course they have followed, and if in any way the harmony of the Council is disturbed, it will be by the introduction of this most unnecessary question.' He concluded, 'There is no telling what the Jesuits will do, and from the manner in which they are sounding out the Bishops, I am inclined to think that they will succeed in having the question forced upon us. In my humble opinion, and almost every American Bishop whose opinion I have heard agrees with me, it will be a great calamity for the Church.' Or as the bishop of Pittsburgh lamented three months into the Council, 'It will kill us; we shall have to swallow what we have vomited up; In the past we have always denied accusations [that Catholics view the pope as a kind of deity], but if infallibility is pronounced, how will we be able to defend ourselves?'"



The Whig Lord Acton was aghast at the imprudence of declaring a new doctrine on papal infallibility during such unsettled times, coining his pithy aphorism "*Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely*" in an attempt to dissuade theologians from proceeding further down a now discredited, as he and many European political leaders saw it, path of absolutism.

I

On the Institution of the Apostolic Primacy in Blessed Peter

WE therefore teach and declare that, according to the testimony of the Gospel, the primacy of jurisdiction over the universal Church of GOD was immediately and directly promised and given to Blessed Peter the Apostle by CHRIST the LORD For it was to Simon alone, to whom He had already said: "Thou shalt be called Cephas,"* that the LORD, after the confession made by him, saying, "Thou art the CHRIST, the Son of the living GOD," addressed these solemn words, "Blessed art thou, Simon, Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee, but My Father, who is in heaven. And 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."† And it was upon Simon alone that JESUS after His resurrection bestowed the jurisdiction of Chief Pastor and Ruler over all His fold in the words, "Feed My lambs, feed My sheep."‡ At open variance with this clear doctrine of Holy Scripture, as it has ever been understood by the Catholic Church, are the perverse opinions of those who, while they distort the form of government established by CHRIST the LORD in His Church, deny that Peter in his simple person preferably to all the other Apostles, whether taken separately or together, was endowed by CHRIST with a true and proper primacy of jurisdiction; or of those who assert that the same primacy was not bestowed immediately and directly upon Blessed Peter himself, but upon the Church, and through the Church on Peter as her minister.

If anyone, therefore, shall say that Blessed Peter the Apostle was not appointed the Prince of the Apostles and the visible head of the whole Church militant, or that the same directly and immediately received from the same our LORD JESUS CHRIST a primacy of honour only, and not of true and proper jurisdiction; let him be anathema.

II

On the Perpetuity of the Primacy of Blessed Peter in the Roman Pontiffs

THAT which the Prince of Shepherds and great shepherd of the sheep, JESUS CHRIST our LORD, established in the person of the Blessed Apostle Peter to secure the perpetual welfare and lasting good of the Church, must, by the same institution, necessarily remain unceasingly in the Church, which, being founded upon the Rock, will stand firm to the end of the world. For none can doubt, and it is known to all ages, that the holy and Blessed Peter, the Prince and chief of the Apostles, the pillar of the faith and foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, and lives, presides, and judges to this day, always in his successors the Bishops of the Holy See of Rome, which was founded by Him and consecrated by His Blood.* Whence, whosoever succeeds to Peter in this See does by the institution of CHRIST Himself obtain the primacy of Peter over the whole Church. The disposition made by Incarnate Truth (*dispositio veritatis*) therefore remains, and Blessed Peter, abiding in the rock's strength which he received (*in accepta fortitudine petræ perseverans*), has not abandoned the direction of the Church.* Wherefore it has at all times been necessary that every particular Church—that is to say, the faithful throughout the world—should come to the Church of Rome on account of the greater principedom it has received; so that in this See, whence the rights of venerable communion spread to all, they might as members joined together in their head grow closely into one body.† If, then, anyone shall say that it is not by the institution of CHRIST the LORD, or by divine right, that Blessed Peter has a perpetual line of successors in the primacy over the universal Church; or that the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of Blessed Peter in this primacy; let him be anathema.

III

On the Power and Nature of the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff

WHEREFORE, resting on plain testimonies of the Sacred Writings, and adhering to the plain and express decrees both of Our predecessors the Roman Pontiffs, and of the General Councils, We renew the definition of the Œcumenical Council of Florence, by which all the faithful of CHRIST must believe that the Holy Apostolic

See and the Roman Pontiff possesses the primacy over the whole world; and that the Roman Pontiff is the successor of Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and is true Vicar of CHRIST, and Head of the whole Church, and Father and teacher of all Christians; and that full power was given to him in Blessed Peter, by JESUS CHRIST our LORD, to rule, feed and govern the universal Church: as is also contained in the Acts of the Œcumenical Councils and in the Sacred Canons.

Hence We teach and declare that by the appointment of our LORD the Roman Church possesses a sovereignty of ordinary power over all other Churches, and that this power of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, which is truly episcopal, is immediate; to which all, of whatsoever rite and dignity, both pastors and faithful, both individually and collectively, are bound, by their duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience, to submit, not only in matters which belong to faith and morals, but also in those that appertain to the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world; so that the Church of CHRIST may be one flock under one supreme Pastor, through the preservation of unity, both of communion and of profession of the same faith, with the Roman Pontiff. This is the teaching of Catholic truth, from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and of salvation.

But so far is this power of the Supreme Pontiff from being any prejudice to that ordinary and immediate power of episcopal jurisdiction, by which bishops, who have been set by the HOLY GHOST to succeed and hold the place of the Apostles,* feed and govern each his own flock, as true pastors, that this same power is really asserted, strengthened and protected by the supreme and universal Pastor; in accordance with the words of St Gregory the Great, “My honour is the honour of the whole Church. My honour is the firm strength of my brethren. Then am I truly honoured, when the honour due to each and all is not withheld.”†

Further, from this supreme power possessed by the Roman Pontiff of governing the universal Church, it follows that, in the exercise of this office, he has the right of free communication with the pastors of the whole Church, and with their flocks, that they may be taught and ruled by him in the way of salvation. Wherefore We condemn and reprobate the opinions of those who hold that the communication between the supreme Head and the pastors and their flocks can lawfully be impeded; or who make this communication subject to the will of the secular power, so as to maintain that whatever is done by the Apostolic See, or by its authority, for the government of the Church, cannot have force or value unless it be confirmed by the assent of the secular power.

And since, by the divine right of apostolic primacy, one Roman Pontiff is placed over the universal Church, We further teach and declare that he is the supreme judge of the faithful,* and that in all causes the decision of which belongs to the Church recourse may be had to his tribunal,† but that none may reopen the judgement of the Apostolic See, than whose authority there is no greater, nor can any lawfully review its judgement.‡ Wherefore they err from the right path of truth who assert that it is lawful to appeal from the judgements of the Roman Pontiffs to an Œcumenical Council, as to an authority higher than that of the Roman Pontiff.

If then any shall say that the Roman Pontiff has the office merely of inspection or direction, and not full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal Church, not only in things which belong to faith and morals, but also in those things which relate to the discipline and government of the Church spread throughout the world; or assert that he possesses merely the principal part, and not all the fullness of this supreme power; or that this power which he enjoys is not ordinary and immediate, both over each and all the Churches and over each and all the pastors of the faithful; let him be anathema.

IV

Concerning the Infallible Teaching of the Roman Pontiff

MOREOVER, that the supreme power of teaching (*magisterii*) is also included in the apostolic primacy, which the Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, Prince of the Apostles, possesses over the whole Church, this Holy See has always held, the perpetual practice of the Church confirms, and Œcumenical Councils also have declared, especially those in which the East with the West met in the union of faith and charity. For the Fathers of the Fourth Council of Constantinople, following in the footsteps of their predecessors, gave forth this solemn profession: “The first condition of salvation is to keep the rule of the true faith. And because the sentence of our LORD JESUS CHRIST cannot be passed by, who said, ‘Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church,’* these things which have been said are proved by events, because in the Apostolic See the Catholic religion has always been kept undefiled, and her well-known doctrine has been kept holy. Desiring, therefore, not to be in the least degree separated from the faith and doctrine of this See, we hope that we may deserve to be in the one communion, which the Apostolic See preaches, in which is the entire and true solidity of the Christian religion.”*

And, with the approval of the Second Council of Lyons, the Greeks professed that: “the holy Roman Church enjoys supreme and full primacy and principality over the whole Catholic Church, which it truly and humbly acknowledges that it has received with the plenitude of power from our LORD Himself in the person of Blessed Peter, Prince and Head of the Apostles, whose successor the Roman Pontiff is; and as the Apostolic See is bound before all others to defend the truth of faith, so also, if any questions regarding faith shall arise, they must be defined by its judgement.”†

Finally, the Council of Florence defined that:‡ “the Roman Pontiff is the true Vicar of CHRIST, and the head of the whole Church and the father and teacher of all Christians; and that to him in Blessed Peter was delivered by our LORD JESUS CHRIST the full power of feeding, ruling and governing the whole Church.”§

To satisfy this pastoral duty, our predecessors ever made unwearied efforts that the salutary doctrine of CHRIST might be propagated among all the nations of the earth, and with equal care watched that it might be preserved genuine and pure where it had been received. Therefore the bishops of the whole world, now singly, now assembled in synod, following the long established custom of Churches* and the form of the ancient rule,† sent word to this Apostolic See of those dangers especially which sprang up in matters of faith, that there the losses of faith might be most effectually repaired where the faith cannot fail.‡ And the Roman Pontiffs, according to the exigencies of times and circumstances, sometimes assembling Œcumenical Councils, or asking for the mind of the Church scattered throughout the world, sometimes by particular synods, sometimes using other helps which divine Providence supplied, deemed as to be held those things which with the help of GOD they had recognized as conformable with the sacred Scriptures and apostolic traditions. For the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter, that by His revelation they might make known new doctrine, but that by His assistance they might inviolably keep and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith delivered through the Apostles. And indeed all the venerable Fathers have embraced and the holy orthodox Doctors have venerated and followed their apostolic doctrine; knowing most fully that this See of Saint Peter remains ever free from all blemish of error, according to the divine promise of the LORD our SAVIOUR made to the Prince of His disciples: “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, confirm thy brethren.”*

This gift, then, of truth and never-failing faith was conferred by heaven upon Peter and his successors in this Chair, that they might perform their high office for the salvation of all; that the whole flock of CHRIST, kept away by them from the poisonous food of error, might be nourished with the pasture of heavenly doctrine; that, the occasion of schism being removed, the whole Church might be kept one, and resting in its foundation, might stand firm against the gates of hell.

But since in this very age, in which the salutary efficacy of the Apostolic office is most of all required, not a few are found who take away from its authority, We judge it altogether necessary solemnly to assert the prerogative which the Only-begotten Son of GOD vouchsafed to join with the supreme pastoral office.

Therefore, faithfully adhering to the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith, for the glory of GOD our SAVIOUR, the exaltation of the Catholic religion, and the salvation of Christian people, with the approval of the Sacred Council, We teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed: that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of Pastor and Teacher of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, is, by the divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals; and that, therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, irreformable.*

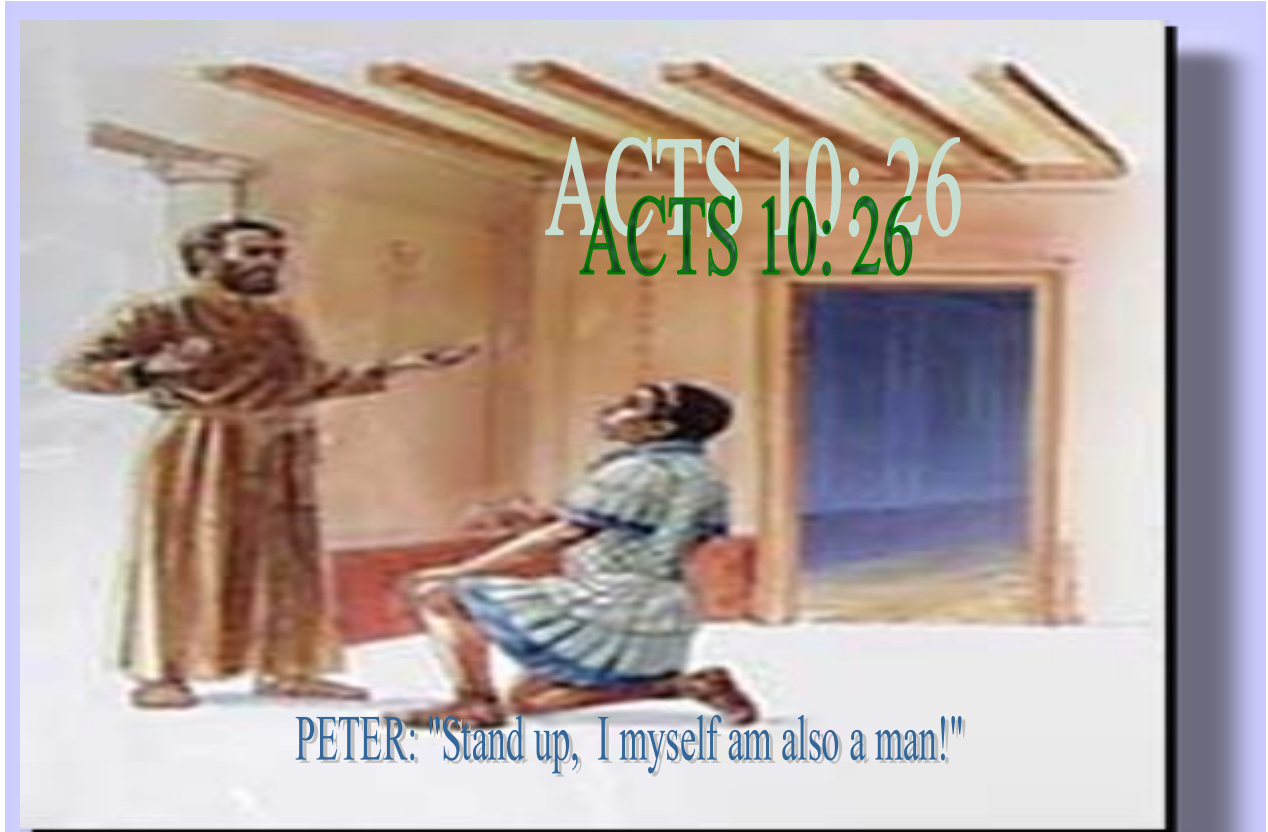
But if anyone—which may GOD avert!—presume to contradict this our definition, let him be anathema.

Given at Rome in public session, solemnly held in the Vatican Basilica in the year of our LORD one thousand eight hundred and seventy, on the eighteenth day of July, in the twenty-fifth year of our Pontificate.

In conformity with the original.

JOSEPH, BISHOP OF ST POLTEN,
*Secretary to the Vatican Council.*¹

¹ McNabb, V. (Ed.). (1907). [*The Decrees of the Vatican Council*](#) (pp. 36–47). New York: Benziger Brothers.



¹⁵ He saith unto them, **But whom say ye that I am?**

¹⁶ And Simon Peter answered and said, **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.**

¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said unto him, **Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.**

¹⁸ And I say also unto thee, **That thou art Peter, and upon this rock will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**



Matthew 16: 13 - 20

- Translated Greek: “Thou art *Petros*(single rock or small pebble) & on this *Petra* (large solid rock, foundation rock, or rock bed) I will build my church.”
- Greek Contextual: Peter’s Confession of Faith an Archtype
- Transliterated Aramaic: Pauline Letters Peter & Rock Same
- Original Spoken Aramaic Allowed Lesson Form Word Play
- In Summation, Building a Church upon a Pebble would be obviously ridiculous and therefore could not be Christ’s real meaning. When Peter acknowledges that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus showed His agreement that He (Jesus) is indeed the Son of God & the Rock of Ages. Peter compares himself as only a stone when referencing Christ’s Role as The Rock & Chief Cornerstone of the Church - 1st Peter 2: 5 & 6.
- In other words – Salvation is not based on an institutional connection with the Apostle Peter but by way of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ!



Peter

Simon, son of Jonah
Cephas (“rock” or stone)

“BINDING & LOOSING” CONTEXTED

- Matt 16:19 - An Apostle Audience Addressed:
“Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” [KJV]
- It does not at all indicate they had the freedom to bind (make laws) and loose (cancel laws) on earth and God would then bind and loose those same laws in heaven.
- Even Jesus himself didn’t have that power – John 12:49.



Peter

Simon, son of Jonah
Cephas (“rock” or stone)

“BINDING & LOOSING” CONTEXTED

- Even Jesus himself didn’t have that power – John 12:49
- As Jesus spoke only that which the Father commanded, the Spirit spake only what He was given – John 16: 13.
- Similarly, the apostles did not speak of their own wills but from that of God the Father. Refer – 1st Cor. 2: 13
- Early Greek Text of Matthew 16: 19 Clearly Indicates
- Contextual Greek: What the apostles “bound on earth” “had already been bound” in heaven & that which was “loosed” on earth “had already been loosed” in heaven.

Recent Issue Christian Research Journal:

Is the Pope Really Infallible?

Author: Robert Spencer



There are numerous indications that the Roman Catholic doctrines of papal universal jurisdiction and infallibility, as elaborated at the First and Second Vatican Councils, are not in harmony with how the church of the first millennium understood Scripture, the papacy, and itself. This included the popes themselves.

Roman Catholic apologists often tend to assume that papal primacy, infallibility, and universal jurisdiction were given by our Lord Jesus Christ to St. Peter. The evidence is very much to the contrary.

Primacy Not Supremacy

St. Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, who was martyred in AD 156, traveled to Rome and met with Pope Anicetus. The fourth-century church historian Eusebius notes that Polycarp and Anicetus could not come to an agreement over the date of Easter [the observance of which is for another discussion]. Anicetus could not persuade Polycarp of the rightness of his position. It does not seem to have occurred to the pope to order Polycarp simply to obey him, since, as Vatican II says, “religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff.”¹ Clearly Anicetus and Polycarp were meeting as equals, not as superior and subordinate. And Polycarp has no idea that he has any obligation to agree with the church of Rome.

The controversy over the date of Easter continued, but around 190, a new bishop of Rome resolved to settle it. Eusebius notes that “Victor, who presided over the church at Rome, immediately attempted to cut off from the common unity the parishes of all Asia, with the churches that agreed with them, as heterodox; and he wrote letters declaring all the brethren there wholly excommunicate.”² About this, Catholic author Patrick Madrid writes: “The fact that no bishop in the world — *not a single one* — disputed [Victor’s] authority as bishop of Rome to carry out such an excommunication is a powerful piece of evidence that the early Church recognized the unique authority of the bishop of Rome”³ (emphasis in original). **That isn’t, however, necessarily so.** Eusebius goes on to say that Victor’s decision “did not please all the bishops. And they besought him to consider the things of peace, and of neighborly unity and love. Words of theirs are extant, sharply rebuking Victor.”⁴

It’s true that Eusebius doesn’t record the bishops saying that Victor had no right to excommunicate the Asian churches. Nonetheless, their rejection of that right may be contained in the fact that the excommunications “did not please” them and that they “sharply rebuked Victor.”

To see this more clearly, simply imagine a group of Roman Catholic bishops having opposed Pope Pius IX's definition of the Immaculate Conception as a divinely revealed dogma of the Faith in 1854. Can you envision these bishops writing to Pius and explaining that they were "not pleased" with his definition, and "sharply rebuking" him? The scenario is inconceivable. **When papal infallibility was voted on among the bishops of the First Vatican Council in 1870, eighty-eight bishops voted against it, although many assured the pope that they simply thought it was inopportune to define it at that time.**

Ultimately, sixty left Rome to avoid being compelled to approve the final document. None, however, dared to declare that they were not pleased with the doctrine or to rebuke Pope Pius IX. And it was an ecumenical council, not a papal decree, that finally laid the matter of the date of Easter to rest.

Councils Not Papal Decrees

The Third Ecumenical Council Ephesus 431, condemned Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, for teaching that Mary was more properly called "Mother of Christ" (*Christotokos*) than "Mother of God" (*Theotokos*). [The factuality of which is another discussion.] Pope Celestine had condemned Nestorius in 430 and affirmed the orthodoxy of the term *Theotokos*; if he had been recognized as having the authority the pope has today, why was not that the end of the matter? The Fathers of the Council of Ephesus acknowledged that Celestine already judged the matter, but that didn't stop them from examining it themselves. If it had been understood that the "definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, irreformable," as Vatican I says,⁵ why did they even bother? But they did.

At the Fourth Ecumenical Council, in Chalcedon in 451, the Fathers again examined a papal document and pronounced it orthodox; they did not simply accept it as the infallible judgment of Christ's Vicar.

Before the council, Pope Leo wrote a document, known as the Tome, which set forth the orthodox position on the question of Christ's natures.

Anatolius, patriarch of Constantinople, declared: "The letter of the most holy and religious Archbishop Leo agrees with the creed of our 318 Fathers at Nice, and of the 150 who afterwards assembled at Constantinople, and confirmed the same faith...I therefore agree to it, and willingly subscribe to it."⁶ These words indicate Anatolius studied the Tome carefully before declaring it as orthodox, instead of simply receiving it as the final judgment of the one who was the final arbiter of what constituted orthodoxy; otherwise he would not have known whether or not the Tome agreed with the earlier statements. When the Tome was read out, the Fathers exclaimed:

This is the faith of the fathers, this is the faith of the Apostles. So, we all believe, thus the orthodox believe. Anathema to him who does not thus believe. Peter has spoken thus through Leo. So taught the Apostles.

Piously and truly did Leo teach, so taught Cyril. Leo and Cyril both taught the same thing, anathema to him who doesn't so believe. This is the true faith. Those of us who are orthodox thus believe. This is the faith of the fathers.⁷

Similar exclamations were made at Ephesus. But again, why was the Fathers' approval necessary? Why did they need to affirm that Leo's letter was orthodox? Why did they affirm that Leo's teaching was the same as that of St. Cyril, the patriarch of Alexandria, who had died several years before? Imagine if you will - any of the bishops of Vatican II - exclaiming that the teaching of John XXIII or Paul VI coincided with that of the Archbishop of Paris or Milan: it would have been seen as incongruous, an unnecessary affirmation.

Not Universal Jurisdiction

In 586, Byzantine Emperor Maurice conferred the title "Ecumenical" on Patriarch St. John the Faster of Constantinople, and Pope Gregory the Great was alarmed. The title simply meant that John was patriarch of the imperial city, but Gregory took it as meaning that John was proclaiming himself to be the universal bishop of the entire church.

Modern-day Roman Catholics might have expected Gregory to write to John and say that the pope alone was the universal bishop and that there was no room in the church for another. Instead, **Gregory told John that the title was illegitimate because there wasn't any universal bishop: "Whoever calls himself universal bishop, or desires this title, is, by his pride, the precursor to the Antichrist."**⁸

How could Gregory possibly have written this as pope if he believed that, as Vatican I says, "the Roman Church possesses a superiority of ordinary power over all other Churches, and this power of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, which is truly episcopal, is immediate," and the Roman Pontiff possesses the "supreme power" in the "governing of the Universal Church"?⁹ Clearly, Gregory the Great disagreed with his eleventh-century successor, Pope Gregory VII, who in writing: "The Roman Pontiff alone can with right be called 'Universal.'"¹⁰

Defenders of the idea that the pope has universal jurisdiction have pointed out that Gregory the Great also wrote: "As to what they say about the church of Constantinople, who can doubt that it is subject to the Apostolic See, as both the most pious lord the emperor and our brother the bishop of that city continually acknowledge?"¹¹ And also: "If any fault is found in bishops, I know not what bishop is not subject to it [the Apostolic See]. But when no fault requires it to be otherwise, all according to the principle of humility are equal."¹²

However, the primacy of the pope, as being the first bishop in the church **at that time**, is not what is at issue. [*Clement* had assumed an inheritance.] The question is whether that primacy conferred ordinary and universal jurisdiction over the entire church, as well as infallibility when defining doctrines of faith and morals. Often, Roman Catholic apologists produce evidence that the pope had the primacy in the first millennium as if that established his universal jurisdiction and infallibility, **but it's clear that no one — not anyone — during the first millennium believed that universal jurisdiction and infallibility were components of papal primacy.**

Not Papal Infallibility

Nor did the church of the first millennium believe in any form of papal infallibility. In the seventh century, Pope Honorius wrote: “We confess one will of our Lord Jesus Christ,” agreeing with the heretical Monothelites, who held Christ had no human will.¹³

Honorius clearly meant to define a doctrine of faith to be held by the whole church, as his statement comes in a letter to Sergius, who was ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople, in response to the ecumenical patriarch’s doctrinal question. It was not, therefore, simply Honorius’ private opinion.

Honorius was condemned after his death by the Sixth Ecumenical Council, the Third Council of Constantinople in 680. The seventeenth-century French bishop and theologian Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet held this condemnation to be “a certain proof” the Fathers didn’t believe it was “necessary to receive without discussion every decree of Roman Pontiffs even *de fide* [‘of the faith’ — an essential teaching of the Roman Catholic Church], inasmuch as they are subjected to the supreme and final examination of a General Council.”¹⁴ Papal legates who were present at the Council raised not a single word of protest against all this.

Honorius was subsequently condemned by the Seventh Ecumenical Council held in 787; Rome did not protest. **There is a great deal of controversy among opponents and among defenders of the doctrine of papal infallibility over whether Honorius was condemned by the popes for heresy or simply for neglecting to defend the Orthodox Faith, and over whether he was speaking *ex cathedra* — defining a dogma binding on the universal church. The most important aspect of the condemnation of Honorius, however, is that two ecumenical councils and numerous popes for several centuries would dare condemn the pope at all.**

If a pope today approved of a heretical formula that had not yet explicitly been defined as a heresy by an ecumenical council or previous popes, it would become the new orthodoxy among all Roman Catholics; no subsequent Roman Catholic council would dare to condemn it or the pope who endorsed it. The very fact Honorius was condemned by the Third Council of Constantinople and that popes accepted that condemnation even with reservations indicates that **no one in the church in those days thought *Roma locuta, causa finite est* (Rome has spoken, the matter is finished).**

When one looks at the church of the first millennium, one sees an assembly of local churches under the unifying authority of bishops, who were themselves under the authority of metropolitans and ultimately the five patriarchates of the early church — Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. None of these patriarchs was considered infallible or to have universal jurisdiction.

Great doctrinal issues were settled in ecumenical councils, which the Orthodox Church and, in principle, the Roman Catholic Church regard as infallible. When one looks at what is presented as being Christianity today, the Orthodox Church alone operates that way.

Robert Spencer is the author of the forthcoming *The Pope and the Church: The Case for Orthodoxy* (Uncut Mountain Press).

NOTES

1. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumengentium_en.html.

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The Catholic Dogma of Infallibility



MOISES PINEDO

DOCTRINAL MATTERS CATHOLICISM

When the Roman Pontiff speaks EX CATHEDRA...he possesses, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his Church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals. Therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not by the consent of the Church, irreformable (Vatican I, 1869b, chap. 4, s. 9).

This is the dogma declared by Pope Pius IX, and approved by the Vatican I Council, in regard to the alleged infallible teaching authority of the Roman pontiff.

For more than a century, this dogma has pressed greatly upon the shoulders of Catholics, who have worked feverishly to try to harmonize the nature of the infallible dogma with the declarations, teachings, and revelations of the popes who lived before and after the establishment of such a dogma. The truth is that the faithful Catholic doesn't have the option of rejecting the doctrine firmly imposed by Vatican I, because the canonical condemnation concerning its rejection is also firm. The canon warns:

So then, should **anyone**, which God forbid, **have the temerity to reject this definition of ours: let him be anathema** [condemned—MP] (Vatican I, 1869b, chap. 4, s. 9, emp. added).

Thus, the curse is set upon those who reject the dogma, and the dogma has the approval of the Vatican I Council; thus, the pope is deemed infallible.

However, the definitions, implications, and applications of the dogma are questionable to the point that even within the whole hierarchy and ordinary body of the Catholic Church, consensus does not exist.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE DOGMA

In order to speak of this dogma, we first need to understand certain related subjects. And, since many antagonists of infallibility have been accused of ignorance and manipulation of both the concept and its implications, it is my purpose here to use only those definitions and explanations suggested by the same supporters of the doctrine postulated by Pius IX.

Unlike the commonly publicized idea that only the pope possesses infallibility, Catholicism teaches that the Catholic Church, completely represented by its body of bishops, also is infallible. Therefore, Vatican II declared:

Although individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, **they nevertheless proclaim Christ's doctrine infallibly** whenever, even though dispersed through the world, but still maintaining the bond of communion among themselves and with Peter's successor, and authentically teaching matters of faith and morals, they are in agreement on one position as definitively to be held (Lumen Gentium, 1964, chap. 3, s. 25, emp. added).

It must be noted here that, according to Catholicism, the infallibility of the bishops is subordinated to the infallibility of the bishop of Rome, and it is he who gives the final sentence. Consequently, the thesis of the dogma of infallibility may be summarized in this way:

Infallibility is divine assistance for the Church that protects the Pope of any error in matters of faith and moral.... Infallibility only applies to acts in which the Pope uses his apostolic duty completely; when he defines a dogma in virtue of his supreme authority and in his capacity as pastor of the universal Church. In these cases he speaks *ex cathedra* (see SCTJM, 1999b, emp. added).

Since the proclamation of the dogma has left many religious people (including Catholics themselves) with a dissatisfied feeling of not being able to conclude rationally by themselves when the pope is fallible and when not, Catholicism has found it necessary to set up these conditions under which infallibility may "work." According to Catechism of the Catholic Church, three conditions must be filled:

(1) The Pope must speak “**as supreme Pastor and Teacher of all the faithful that he confirms** [strengthens] **his brethren**”... (2) The Pope “**proclaims the doctrine through a definitive act**”... (3) The Pope speaks “**in matters of faith and morals**” (SCTJM, 1999a, emp. in orig.).

Therefore, with this more “systematized” explanation, Catholicism has “stopped” (or, more accurately, ignored) the endless charges against the popes of both past and modern times. However, is the Catholic doctrine of papal infallibility true? Are its “structured” explanations coherent and valid? Should the faithful Christian agree with, or oppose, this doctrine?

REASONS WHY THE DOGMA OF INFALLIBILITY SHOULD BE REJECTED

It is Inconsistent with Biblical Truth

The Vatican I Council, in its *Pastor Aeternus*, declares about the basis of infallibility:

For the Holy Spirit was promised to the successors of Peter.... This See of St. Peter always remains unblemished by any error, in accordance with the divine promise of our Lord and Savior to the prince of his disciples: **I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren** (Vatican I, 1869b, chap. 4, s. 6, emp. added).

So then, according to Catholic doctrine, papal infallibility is based on the fact that in Luke 22:32 Jesus promised Peter that his “faith” (i.e., his declarations of divine truths concerning “faith and morals”) wouldn’t fail. But brief analysis of the biblical passage and its context reveals a completely different conclusion. Consider the following.

First, the contextual disposition of Luke 22:32 does not establish the basis for the dogma of infallibility. That is to say, there is no indication in the biblical text that suggests a papal primacy or a type of special “petrine prerogative.” The subject under consideration is the coming temptation of the disciples—and, more specifically, Peter’s impending denial of Jesus.

Second, the expression, “I have prayed for you,” does not impose a special dignity upon Peter; nor does it exclude some prayer in favor of the rest of the disciples. John 17:9-19 clarifies that Jesus had prayed, not only for Peter, but also for His other disciples. The reason why Jesus mentioned (in Luke 22) the prayer in favor of Peter finds its logical explanation in the fact that Peter would be one of the disciples who would confront a major “sifting” at the hand of Satan (Luke 22:31; cf. 22:34,54-62). Jesus, in telling Peter that He had prayed for him, showed him that a speedy recovery after the fall was His desire.

Third, when Jesus spoke of the **faith** of Peter, He used the Greek term *pistis*, which means “principally, firm persuasion, conviction based on hearing” (Vine, 1999, p. 374). There is no biblical sign in the text of Luke to suggest Peter’s faith should be interpreted as his “future declarations of divine truths about faith and morals.” Rather, Peter’s faith could be contrasted with the fear of his own physical death—which ultimately would lead him to actually deny his Lord (Luke 22:54-61; cf. Mark 4:35-40). Here, the word “faith” emphasizes Peter’s faith as indicated by his trust in God, not his faith in the sense of “revelations of the truth.”

Fourth, when Jesus told Peter that He had prayed that his faith might not **fail**, He used the Greek term *ekleipo*, which can be translated as “leave,” “fail,” or “lack” (Vine, p. 371). A more exact translation would indicate that Peter’s faith would neither dim nor fade. While the faith (trust) that Peter had in Jesus might have failed (since he denied Him, Luke 22:54-61), it did not dim or fade, as evinced by the fact that Peter repented of his failure (Luke 22:62). Those in Catholicism who interpret Peter’s faith as his “infallible testimony of faith and moral dogmas,” fail to realize that Peter’s faith failed him at Annas’ courtyard. Therefore, this faith cannot account for any kind of alleged infallibility given to Peter, much less to Roman bishops.

Fifth, the phrase “when you have turned again” (Luke 22:32) denotes the tragic reality that Peter’s faith was going to fail. The Greek term for “turn” is *epistrepho*, which expresses the idea of being converted. Peter needed to turn back from his way of denial, repent, and confess Jesus (see Lacueva, 1984, p. 339). In fact, Peter’s personal disloyalty to his Master certainly does not offer any proof for “petrine infallibility”—but quite the opposite.

Finally, Catholicism also affirms that part of the evidence for the dogma of infallibility lies inherently in the text of Matthew 16:18-19, although, a correct exegesis of the text of Matthew shows that such a claim is untenable. The truth is that there’s nothing in the whole of the bible text that would establish the dogma of papal infallibility.

It is Inconsistent with Itself

Papal infallibility also should be rejected because it cannot remain consistent with its own dogmatic presentation. By this, I mean the dogma of infallibility is self-contradictory. A few examples will be enough to document this fact. For example, the following statement may be found in an explanatory article about papal infallibility:

[T]he Vatican I Council **does not directly** say that the Pope, when addressing matters *ex cathedra* of faith and moral, is infallible. **It restricts itself to say that, in those cases (only in those), the Pope enjoys the same infallibility which the Church is endowed with.** Therefore, the Church's infallibility is not defined by the one of the Pope, but the last by the first. And **it seems to us to have a profound theological sense** (Logos, 1996, emp. added).

Perhaps after reading this quotation it will seem to you that declarations with "profound theological sense" are so very "profound" that they almost become incomprehensible. Catholicism states as a defense that Vatican I (the council that established papal infallibility) **does not** declare directly that the pope is infallible in matters of faith and morals. But if that is the case, the question becomes, why, for more than a century, has Catholicism insisted on imposing a doctrine that was not even declared directly? If it is said that the Catholic Church is infallible, and that this infallibility also is enjoyed by the pope, is it not an equivalent operation of: if A is equal to B, and if B is equal to C, then A is equal to C? And if it is a dogmatic implication, what kind of "theologically profound" defense is this?

I will let Catholicism continue explaining its own dogmas. In an article titled, "¿Puede el Papa Caer en Error o Herejía?" ("Can the Pope Fall Into Error and Heresy?"), the following declaration can be found:

Therefore, the Pope can err when he speaks about politics, medicine, physics, economy, history, etc. **In anything except in religious matters. But he can also err in religious matters**, if he speaks in table talk, or in a walk with friends, or a private discussion about religion. **And also when he speaks as Mr. So-and-so** and states his own personal theories, even in a publicly sold book, he can err (see Cristiandad, 2005, emp. added).

It is interesting to note the concept that this particular supporter of Catholicism has about "in anything except." If the pope "**also**" can err in religious matters, can it be said that he can err "**in anything except**" in religious matters?

If the Holy Spirit assists the pope as He assisted Peter and the other apostles of the first century, why, since the Holy Spirit never abandoned them, would the Spirit abandon the pope when he is not on his throne, in his council, or using his title of pontiff? Actually, there is no biblical analogy for the dogma of infallibility as presented by Catholicism. Jesus not only spoke infallibly when He appealed to His Father's authority (John 7:16-18), but also in His private conversations (John 4) or in His walk with friends (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit led the disciples to **all** the truth, not just **part** of it (John 16:13). The Bible is inerrant in religious and secular matters; it does not contain wheat and weed. Rather, **all** Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16).

Addressing the unavoidable reality of pontifical heresy, a Catholic Web page declares about the pope:

And if he is a heretic, at least he is not going to declare his heresies as part of the doctrine of the profession, that is, things **which we are required to believe and observe**. It was never permitted by the Holy Spirit (see Apologética, n.d., emp. added).

That is to say, the pope can fall into heresy and even teach it, but in his heresy (since according to Catholicism he does not declare it *ex cathedra*), he **must not** be obeyed. This, of course, gives rise to a tedious problem of investigating whether or not the pope is speaking infallibly, and whether or not he must be obeyed. Ironically it also is declared:

Obedience to the Sumo Pontiff should not be limited to when he speaks ex cathedra. Neither should the disciplinary decree of the Pope be rejected with the pretext that they were not promulgated *ex cathedra* (SCTJM, 1999b, emp. added).

However, if the pope is both **infallible and fallible** in religious matters, and if Catholics are called to obey him in both areas, does that not represent a danger to the heart of many Catholic doctrines? The truth is that Catholicism cannot teach and defend papal infallibility as it does, and remain consistent.

It is Inconsistent in Its Application

Catholicism declares:

The possessors of infallibility are: (a) the Pope (the Pope is infallible when speaking *ex cathedra*), (b) the complete Episcopacy (the totality of bishops is infallible when proposing a teaching of faith and moral as belief for all the faithful, **either assembled together in a general council** or as scattered around the earth) [see Pivarunas, 1996, parenthetical items in orig., emp. added].

Therefore, it can be said that “infallibility” reaches its highest degree in the ecumenical councils, where the pope, along with the body of bishops, offer up a seal of approval to dogmas of faith Catholics must obey. Additionally, Catholicism confirms:

Yes, it is truth that certain popes have contradicted other popes, in their private opinions or concerning disciplinary dogmas; but there was never a Pope who would officially contradict what a previous Pope officially taught about faith and moral matters. The same could be said about ecumenical councils, which also teach with **infallibility. There was not an ecumenical council that would contradict the teaching of a previous ecumenical council concerning faith and morals** (Keating, n.d., emp. added).

The Catholic defense can be summarized as follows: Yes, the pope can be a heretic, but he will **not** officially teach heresy; and councils, which allegedly use infallibility, **never** contradict each other. But is such a concept true? What do the councils, which teach “infallibly,” say? A few examples will be enough to arrive at the conclusion that ecumenical councils, in application of their so-called infallibility, fail completely.

Vatican I Council, in its dogmatic constitution *Filius-Dei* on the Catholic faith, expressed the following:

The abandonment and rejection of the Christian religion, and the **denial of God and his Christ**, has plunged the minds of many into the abyss of pantheism, materialism and atheism, and the consequence is that they strive to destroy rational nature itself, to deny any criterion of what is right and just.... And so we, following in the footsteps of our predecessors, in accordance with our supreme apostolic office, have never left teaching and defending Catholic truth and **condemning** erroneous doctrines (Vatican I, 1869b, s. 7-10, emp. added).

However, while Vatican I condemns erroneous doctrines such as the denial of Christ, Vatican II declares:

The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth.... **Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God,** they revere Him as a prophet”(Nostra Aetate, 1965, s. 3, emp. added).

But since Muslims do not acknowledge Jesus as the prophesied Messiah (that is, the Christ), would that not be a denial of Christ, and thus the heresy condemned by Vatican I? Most assuredly!

Vatican I, in its canonic sentence on written revelation, states:

If anyone does not receive as sacred and canonical the **complete** books of Sacred Scripture with **all their parts**, as the holy Council of Trent listed them, or denies that they were divinely inspired: **let him be anathema** (Vatican I, 1869a, Can. 2, s. 4, emp. added).

However, Vatican II, in speaking about Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religions that discard much of canonical Scripture, declared that these religions. . .

[t]ry to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing “ways,” comprising teachings, rules of life, and **sacred** rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, **though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men** (Nostra Aetate 1965, s. 2, emp. added).

On the permanence of the petrine primacy of the roman pontiffs, Vatican I, in its *Pastor Aeternus*, condemns.

Therefore, if anyone says that it is not by the institution of Christ the lord himself (that’s to say, by divine law) that blessed Peter should have perpetual successors in the primacy over the whole Church; or that the Roman Pontiff’s not the successor of blessed Peter in this primacy: **let him be anathema** (Vatican I, 1969b, chap. 2, s. 5, parenthetical item in orig., emp. added).

However, Vatican II beatifies:

The Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honored with the name of Christian, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or don't preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter [that is to say, they don't accept the proposed papal hierarchy]. For there are many who honor Sacred Scripture, taking it as a norm of belief and a pattern of life, and who show a sincere zeal. They lovingly believe in God the Father Almighty and in Christ, the Son of God and Saviour. **They are consecrated by baptism, in which they are united with Christ** (Lumen Gentium, 1964, chap. 2, s. 15, emp. added).

Now Vatican II has united to Christ the same people who, for not accepting petrine hierarchy, were condemned by Vatican I as anathema. Truth be told, the Vatican I Council, which allegedly taught with infallibility, cannot coexist with the Vatican II Council that allegedly employed the same infallibility.

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Against Papal Infallibility

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On Monday, July 18, 1870 the Vatican Council voted the decree "Pastor Aeternus" into effect as Roman Catholic law & binding upon all Roman Catholics. This law was passed, despite heated discussion and much opposition, by this definitive ballot of the 85th general congregation. The decree, generally known as papal infallibility, states: "we teach and define as a divinely revealed dogma, that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks ex cathedra - i.e., when, in his character as Pastor and Doctor of all Christians, and in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he lays down that a certain doctrine concerning faith or morals is binding upon the Universal Church-possesses, by the Divine assistance which was promised to him in the person of blessed Saint Peter, that same infallibility with which the Redeemer thought fit to endow His Church, to define its doctrine with regard to faith and morals and consequently, these definitions of the Roman pontiff are irreformable in themselves, and not in consequence of the consent of the Church." (Encyclopaedia Britannica "Infallibility." Vol. 12, p. 318).

The claim to papal infallibility is based upon four assumptions:

1. That Peter had a primacy over the other apostles: the first pope. That Peter was prominent in the early days of the church no one can deny, but that he had any authority over the other apostles cannot be proven. 2. That Peter was bishop of Rome. There is no reliable historical proof that Peter was ever in Rome. 3. That Peter passed on to the bishops of Rome his "powers". 4. That we have a, true line of succession from

Peter to the present Roman bishop. There have been countless anti-popes. At one time there were three men simultaneously claiming to be the head of the church.

Among the Roman Catholic Fathers at the Vatican Council was Bishop Jose Strossmayer, who was one of the most notable opponents of papal infallibility. The January, 1954, issue of The Converted Catholic carries a reprint of Strossmayer's speech before the council. This writer has made the following outline from Strossmayer's speech, faithfully following the bishop's forceful line of argumentation, and has used it effectively in preaching upon papal infallibility.

I. THE SCRIPTURE SILENCE CONCERNING THE PAPACY.

A. Jesus is silent concerning any primacy of Peter's.

- Mt. 19:28. 12 thrones mentioned. Why not some mention of Peter's authority over the other apostles?**
- When Christ sent the apostles out he made no mention of Peter's authority over them. Why no statement: "Peter, you are the vicar of Christ, all men shall obey you and your successors. Your word shall be law"?**
- Jesus forbade apostles to exercise authority over other Christians (Lk. 22:25), but according to the "Church" the papacy holds in its hands two swords, symbols of spiritual and temporal power.**

B. The early church did Peter as pope.

- Sent him with John to Samaria (Acts 8:14) . Today the Pope does the sending, not the being sent.**
- At the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 Peter was not looked to as the head of the Church.**

- **Paul is silent concerning the primacy of Peter.**
 - **Paul said the church was built upon all the apostles, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone, Eph. 2:20.**
 - **Paul rebuked the Corinthians for saying, "I am of Peter". If Peter had been pope, he would have shown care in such condemnation.**
 - **1 Cor. 12:28. Paul mentions no pope.**
 - **No mention in any of Paul's letters of the primacy of Peter. Such an important doctrine would surely have merited an entire letter.**
- **None of the other New Testament writers mentions the primacy of Peter.**
- **Peter's silence concerning his "primacy".**

1. Should have made mention on Pentecost.

2. No mention in 1 and 2 Peter.

3. That Peter was ever in Rome rests only in tradition. Even if he were bishop, it would not prove his supremacy. (Scaliger, learned R. C. said Peter's episcopate and residence at Rome ought to be classed with ridiculous legends.)

II. TESTIMONY OF HISTORY OPPOSES THE PAPACY.

- **The Council of Melvie, composed of the bishops of Africa, one of whom was Augustine, bishop of Hippo, threatened excommunication upon any who appealed "to those beyond the sea". ("Whosoever will to appeal to those beyond the sea shall not be received by any one in Africa to the communion".)**

- **The same bishops, in the Sixth Council of Carthage, wrote to Celestinus, bishop of Rome, to warn him not to receive appeals from the bishops, priests or clerics of Africa; and that he should send no more legates or commissaries; and that he should not introduce human pride into the church.**
- **Emperor Theodosius II made a law establishing the patriarch of Constantinople as having equal authority as the Roman patriarch.**
- **The fathers of the Council of Chalcedon put the bishops of the new Rome (Constantinople) and Old Rome in the same order on all things, even ecclesiastical (Can. 28) .**
- **Sixth Council of Carthage forbade all bishops to take the title of prince of the bishops, or sovereign bishop.**
- **Gregory I (counted as a pope) said concerning the taking of this title: "None of my predecessors has consented to take thus profane name; for when a patriarch gives himself the name of Universal, the title of patriarch suffers discredit. Far be it from Christians to desire to give themselves a title which brings discredit upon their brethren! "**
- **Pelagius II, bishop of Rome, said concerning John, bishop of Constantinople, taking the title of Universal Father: "Do not care for the title of universal, which John has usurped illegally. Let none of the patriarchs take this profane name; for what misfortune may we not expect, if among the priests such elements arise? They would get what has been foretold for them - He is the king of the sons of Pride". (Pelagius II, Lett. 13) .**
- **Of the 1,109 bishops who assisted in the first six general councils (325-580 A. D.) not more than 19 were Western bishops.**

- **Councils were convoked by the Emperors often without informing and sometimes against the wishes of the bishop of Rome.**
- **Hosius, bishop of Cordova. Presided at first council of Nice, and edited the canons of it. Presided afterwards at the Council of Sardica, and excluded the legates of Julius, bishop of Rome.**

III. THE CHURCH FATHERS AND MATTHEW 16:18-19.

- **Cyril, 4th book on the Trinity, stated: "I believe that by the rock you must understand the unshaken faith of the apostles".**
- **Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, 2nd book on the Trinity, stated: "The rock (Petra) is the blessed and only rock of the faith confessed by the mouth of St. Peter;". 6th book of the Trinity: "It is on this rock of the confession of faith that the church is built".**
- **Jerome, 6th book on Matthew, stated: "God has founded His church on this rock, and it is from this rock that the apostle Peter has been named."**
- **Chrysostom, 53rd homily on Matthew, stated: "On this rock I will build my church - that is, on the faith of the confession".**
- **Ambrose (2nd chapter of Ephesians), Basil of Seleucia, and the fathers of the Council of Chalcedon, teach exactly the same thing.**
- **Augustine, 2nd treatise on the first epistle of John, stated: "What do the words mean, I will build my church on this rock? On this faith, on that which said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God". Treatise on John:**

"On this rock which thou hast confessed I will build my church, since Christ was the rock".

13th Sermon: "Thou art Peter, and on this rock (petra) which thou hast confessed, on this rock thou hast known, saying, Thou art Christ the Son of the living God, I will build my church upon Myself, who am the Son of the living God: I will build it on Me, and not Me on thee."

IV. THE TESTIMONY OF PAPAL CONTRADICTIONS.

- Victor (192) first approved of Montanism, then condemned it.**
- Marcellinus (296-303) was an idolater. He entered the temple of Vesta and offered incense to the goddess.**
- Gregory I calls any one antichrist who takes the name of Universal Bishop, and contrarywise Boniface III made the parricide Emperor Phocas confer that title upon him.**
- Hadrian II (867-872) declared civil marriages to be valid. Pius VII (1800-23) condemned them.**
- Sixtus V (1585-90) published an edition of the Bible, and by a bull recommended it to be read. Pius VII condemned the reading of it.**
- J. Clement XIV (1769-1774) abolished the Jesuit order, permitted by Paul III, and Pius VII re-established it.**
- Stephen XI caused the body of Formosus to be exhumed and dressed in pontifical robes. He had his fingers cut off which had been used for giving the benediction, and then had his body thrown into the Tiber, declaring him to be a perjurer and illegitimate. Romanus, successor to Stephen, and after him, John X, rehabilitated the memory of Formosus.**

Bishop Strossmayer still speaking, says: "But why look for such remote proofs? Has not our holy Father here present, in his bull which gave the rules for this this Council, in the event of his dying while it was sitting, revoked all that in past times may be contrary to it, even when that proceeds from the decisions of his predecessors?"

(Strossmayer mentions the wickedness in the lives of various popes, specific John XI (931), John XII (956), Alexander VI).

- **John XXIII (1410) because of simony and immorality was deposed by Ecumenical Council of Constance. "Some will maintain that this Council was only a private one; let it be so; but if you refuse any authority to it, as a logical sequence you must hold the nomination of Martin the 5th (1417) to be illegal. What, then, will become of the papal succession? Can you find the thread of it?" (Strossmayer).**

No, my friend, this speech isn't the work of a Protestant. This speech, with its forceful arguments, was made by a Roman Catholic-A Roman Catholic Bishop-A Roman Catholic Bishop who attended the Vatican Council and voted against papal infallibility.

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The Catholic Church 150 Years After Pope Infallible

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- A Catholic priest can bless a gay or other unmarried couple as long as it is not a formal liturgical blessing and does not give the impression that the Catholic Church is blessing the union as if it were a marriage, the Vatican doctrinal office said.

The request for a blessing can express and nurture "openness to the transcendence, mercy and closeness to God in a thousand concrete circumstances of life, which is no small thing in the world in which we live. It is a seed of the Holy Spirit that must be nurtured, not hindered," the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith said in a formal declaration published Dec. 18.

The document entitled, "[Fiducia Supplicans](#)" ("[Supplicating Trust](#)") was subtitled, "On the pastoral meaning of blessings," and was approved by Pope Francis during an audience with Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, dicastery prefect, Dec. 18. In his introductory note, Cardinal Fernández said questions about a priest blessing a LGBTQ+ or other unmarried couple had been sent to the doctrinal office repeatedly over the past few years.

The need for a fuller explanation of blessings became clear, he wrote, after Pope Francis responded to the "dubia" or questions of several cardinals in a letter released in early October.

Cardinal Fernández said the declaration "remains firm on the traditional doctrine of the Church about marriage, not allowing any type of liturgical rite or blessing similar to a liturgical rite that can create confusion," but it also explores the "pastoral meaning of blessings" in a way that opens "the possibility of blessing couples in irregular situations and same-sex couples without officially validating their status or changing in any way the Church's perennial teaching on marriage."

"From a strictly liturgical point of view," the declaration said, "a blessing requires that what is blessed be conformed to God's will, as expressed in the teachings of the Church," which is why the then-doctrinal congregation in 2021 excluded the possibility of blessing gay couples.

But, the new document said, Catholics should "avoid the risk of reducing the meaning of blessings" to their formal, liturgical use because that "would lead us to expect the same moral conditions for a simple blessing that are called for in the reception of the sacraments."

"Indeed, there is the danger that a pastoral gesture that is so beloved and widespread will be subjected to too many moral prerequisites," it said.

The church, it said, should be grateful when people ask for a blessing and should see it as a sign that they know they need God's help.

"When people ask for a blessing, an exhaustive moral analysis should not be placed as a precondition for conferring it. For, those seeking a blessing should not be required to have prior moral perfection," it said.

At the same time, the declaration insisted that the Mass is not the proper setting for the less formal forms of blessing that could include the blessing of a gay couple, and it repeated that "it is not appropriate for a diocese, a bishops' conference" or other church structure to issue a formal blessing prayer or ritual for unwed couples. The blessing also should not be given "in concurrence" with a civil marriage ceremony to avoid appearing as a sort of church blessing of the civil union.

However, it said, a priest or deacon could "join in the prayer of those persons who, although in a union that cannot be compared in any way to a marriage, desire to entrust . . ."

