

OLD "BREAKING NEWS"

NO EVIDENCE PETER THE APOSTLE EITHER LIVED IN OR EVEN VISITED ROME

EVIDENCE AND CLARITY OF NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY:

- 1) In c. A.D. 58, Paul the apostle wrote to Christ's followers living in Rome, and named 27 people among them, but did not mention Peter.
- 2) In c. A.D. 61, Paul is taken to Rome as a prisoner, where not long after, he summons the local Jewish leaders to explain to them why he was brought as a captive there. Later, the Jews sought another meeting with Paul to enquire why Christ's followers were "everywhere...spoken against". However, if Peter had been a leading figure in Rome, the Jews would have already presented such enquiry to him before the arrival of a prisoner named Paul. And although Paul remained in Rome for some five years (two of which were spent comfortably in his own hired house, and the rest waiting elsewhere to appear the second time before Nero), there is no known contemporary record of Peter having lived there, such immediately contradicting the papal teaching that Peter was a revered authority and bishop of Rome from c. A.D. 41 to 66.
- 3) Some years before he went to Rome, Paul wrote to the communities of Christ's followers in Galatia, and comments on his encounters with Peter in a number of regions of Asia (some 1,500 miles from Rome), but no connection of Peter with Rome is in any instance indicated.
- 4) In c. A.D. 66, Peter sent an open letter to Christ's followers in regions north of Jerusalem, where having mentioned his approaching death, he exhorted all to "be mindful of the words which were spoken by...us the apostles", Peter's grouping together of the apostles indicating that he himself knew he had no supremacy over the others. Also, when Peter does refer to Paul and certain of his writings from Rome, he makes no mention of wanting or expecting to travel there.
- 5) Paul wrote again from Rome to various individuals and communities of Christ's followers across Asia. While numerous people are listed as having sent messages to Paul in Rome, or as being associated with him there, again Peter is not mentioned.
- 6) Yet again from Rome in c. A.D. 66, Paul's last known letter was written (known as 'the second to Timothy') in which he mentions his being not just "sought out" in his confinement, but "very diligently" by a particular disciple, such immediately prohibiting the existence of an established institution in Rome, let alone being headed by Peter, one of his best friends. That is to say, if Peter had been in Rome, such disciple would not have needed to 'seek out' Paul, 'very diligently', and upon meeting him, report him "found". Thus when Paul, still waiting for his trial, adds with melancholy concerning his colleagues in the Roman region: "Only Luke is with me", no religious establishment there is indicated.

Summary: From the historical Biblical texts, Paul 1) had initially written to Rome but on that or other occasions he did not mention Peter, 2) had later lived in Rome but wrote nothing of Peter being there, and 3) while still in Rome, as late as c. A.D. 66, was essentially alone, his last writing also containing no mention of Peter.

FURTHER MATTERS

1) According to Roman Catholic Church authorities, Peter was a resident bishop in Rome for some 25 years. However, a strict examination of the historical record reveals Peter would not have had time to occupy a senior office in Rome, because his mentioned locations were all some distance from Rome, that is, at Jerusalem and in neighbouring regions. Nevertheless, to promote Peter as having been in Rome, it is universally taught that when Peter sent greetings from Babylon (some six years before his death) he did not mean Babylon itself but was using a common euphemism for Rome. But no indication that Peter feared to write the name "Rome" appears in the Biblical record, thus such teaching must have been borrowed from elsewhere.

However the disharmony raised by such teaching does not occur when the Babylon of Peter's reference is taken in its context, that is, as one of two first century places called Babylon, being either i) the Roman fortress city of Babylon in Egypt, some 1,250 miles from Rome (and from where the Coptic testimony of Christ's teachings originated), or ii) the province of Babylon in Mesopotamia, some 1,850 miles from Rome, where many Jews still lived (Acts 2:5,9) and among whom was an assembly of "elected" followers of Christ (1 Peter 5:13).

2) Concerning the central subject taught by Christ and the apostles, that is, the "kingdom of God", in which all apostles have equal prominence, the claim of Peter having a civil or spiritual supremacy contradicts such teachings, and is not found in any apostolic writings.

3) Although two individual passages in the first book of the New Testament present Peter as having been given a God-given supremacy and certain spiritual powers, nowhere else in the Bible is such acknowledged. That is, early in the transmission of the book of Matthew, and without being in any way corroborated elsewhere in the New Testament, the same two passages, Matthew chapters 16:18-19¹ and 18:17-19², when legally assessed (and on which largely rest the constitutional claims of popes), are found to be Bible-like compositions 'surgically' inserted into Matthew's record. Despite the parts of such verses relevant to supremacy having long been formally questioned, the same still remain adopted in all modern translations of the Bible.

4) In later generations, such teaching of Peter's special office became embraced as a tradition needing no evidence, the supporting claim by Roman church authorities being that for the benefit of all humanity, Peter the apostle had been also given a Rome-centred infallible 'holiness'. But such 'holiness' was only later deemed transmissible to appointed successors of that office, who also only later became called popes (or the like in other languages), after which such title was retrospectively applied to Peter, thus reckoning him to have been the first pope; and

5) Together with the teaching of Peter's supremacy are other theological concepts revered as 'Pillars of Faith' which, as with the 'holiness' attributed to Peter, form the foundation of the Roman Church, that is, together with its teaching of Peter having a ruling supremacy, such institution holds itself to be the world's superintending authority for interpreting the Bible, with no other institution or party being considered to have sufficient 'holiness' to understand it.

However the Biblical writings reveal that all apostles had an equal measure of spiritual power and authority imparted to them, with Peter at no time acting in supremacy over the others, despite his being "Blessed" by receiving special insight from God (Matthew 16:17), that is, although later Christ charged Peter to "strengthen" his fellow disciples after being "converted", such

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'strengthening' was for restoring stability after Peter's clash with Christ, he having an attitude which not only warranted his being abused as "Satan" by Christ, but which later drove him to thrice deny knowing Christ. Thus rather than exalting Peter to become God's shepherd on earth, Christ was acting to secure Peter's faith, which at that time was almost lost (Matthew 16:23; Luke 22:31-32; John 21:15-17³).

Thus the Biblical record contradicts any claim of a unique 'holiness' being attached to Peter, despite his being given special duties (he being the first to adjudicate over the conversion of non-Israelites (Acts 10) and later, specifically given the "apostleship" over the Jews (Galatians 2:7-8).

The existence of a papal 'holiness' has long been believed by millions of people to be Biblically based and resident in a spiritual leader who popularly inspires a fatherly reverence. However, such respect toward a 'holy' leader is not just absent in the Biblical teachings, but repeatedly denounced, including by Christ: with such reverential respect of men being prohibited via the many Biblical declarations against having "respect of persons", that is, holding people in high admiration because of potential advantage (cf. Jude 16).

Thus it is found that no such official fatherly spiritual or religious authority was imparted to any of the apostles, that is, neither Peter nor any of the others were given a 'papal' superiority, let alone one which could also grow into civil authority, and (without any sovereign or family lineage) be transmitted down through the ages via a succession of unrelated priests (institutional successions being unmentioned in the Bible).

Yet resting on traditional theological scholarship, the Church of Rome continues to teach that a Biblical connection exists between itself and a 'papal' characterisation of the apostle Peter, with a modern example of this connection being evidenced on 2nd May 2010, by the current pope (Benedict) in the words: "As the successor of Peter, I carry in my heart the entire (Christian) church, actually all of humanity".

Such pretended alignment with "all of humanity" was similarly declared at an international event in 2008 in Australia for example under the attractive title: "World Youth Day"; with such 'Day' having been inaugurated in 1986 after being instituted as an annual and semi-annual international function. Contrary to what the title conveys however, this event is not intended for the secular youth of humanity but predominantly for one religious denominational part of it, with each of the national groups proclaiming their own themes of Roman Catholicism (such "Youth Day" nonetheless being promoted as a civil event, with the hosting nation's taxpayers being called on to bear a significant proportion of the religion's costs).

Thus the institution of "World Youth Day" was largely intended to induce the participation of the young in a particular religion's 'celebration' under the guise of a civil event similar to United Nations' sponsored events. Therefore the fundamental intent of such "World Youth Day" was not to provide a world gathering for youth but rather to promote the papal leadership and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church to the public.

Further examining the claim of the Roman Church being founded on the apostle Peter, two separate 'foundings' of this Church have been claimed, such being 1) on the occasion of Peter recognising Christ's divinity, and 2) at the unique Pentecost event 50 days after Christ's death at which Peter, although equally involved as the others (Acts 2:1-3;14), acted as spokesman and gave the widely known Pentecost oration. However neither event concerned the founding of a church or Peter's receiving a unique measure of God's spirit.

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In the context of the passages inserted into Matthew chapters 16¹ and 18², the English word "church" (or the same word in other languages) conveys that institutionalised gatherings of Christ's followers had begun at least from that time. Again, Biblical history indicates no defined institution or "church" had been inaugurated since none of the groups of Christ's followers which became established before A.D. 70 were matchable with the organisation of modern church institutions, let alone any having an early allegiance to a person in Rome.

Many centuries later in England, and to prevent the Roman Church applying its religion as a civil authority, king Henry VIII imposed the English religious word "church" in the Bible as translating the Greek secular word "ekklesia", which denotes an assembly or group of like-minded persons, whether in a private house or public place or building, and for any reason or purpose, the same Greek word having been in common use before the first century.

However, the word "church" (such always denoting a building and/or a body of religious persons) has no linguistic connection to the Biblical word "ekklesia", which nowhere denotes a building or other housing structure. Instead, the word "church" is found to derive from a non-Biblical Greek word "kirkos", denoting a circle, and in which form pagan worshippers often gathered, whether inside a building or not. Also, the word "church" (or Scottish "kirk") was also used since early times to denote a meeting place and later, an edifice especially for such worshippers. And with the word "church" being intended and nationally secured by Henry VIII to include more than just a scriptural "ekklesia"/assembly, he was able to restore religion-associated lands and buildings, and hence congregations, to the civil realm, thus separating the Christians observing allegiance to the king from those remaining allegiant to the Roman pope (such expanding and overriding of scriptural meaning being considered necessary for national security at the time).

Thus with the word "church" being linguistically dissimilar to the denoted "ekklesia" or general "assemblies" of people, and thus having no formal connection to the word it replaced, such common Greek word "ekklesia", regardless of Henry VIII's alteration of meaning, has no sustainable connection to church buildings or religion.

Final matters:

- 1) Both of the inserted passages in Matthew intend that the "church" referred to implied an institutional-type religious body such as those which have proliferated in post-Biblical centuries. However, apart from these two isolated passages in Matthew, no mention or implication of a "church" institution or building occurs in any other gospel. Thus according to the record, not until long after Christ's resurrection do any of his followers form a group such as may tentatively be likened to a "church". And although appearing in such two passages in Matthew, the word "church" which has always denoted an established religious group, in this case stands outside the context as an intrusion: no other corresponding gospel writings either i) mentioning a church, or ii) containing a similar intrusion, or iii) ascribing to Peter unique superiority.
- 2) Other than in the insertion into Matthew 16, no words are found in any other part of the scriptures which suggest Peter was given a continuing leadership or superior authority to the other apostles (albeit his being one of Christ's closest friends and, having a strong disposition (cf. John 21:11), later capable of enlightening others -cf. Luke 22:31-32).

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3) Thus independent from the Matthew 16 insertion, the evidence advanced for claiming Peter was given a unique seniormost position is nowhere corroborated, with such papal claim being also dismissible in light of other material contradictions:-

(i) When Christ's disciples were arguing as to who of them might be the greatest, Christ intervened, addressing all in a manner which calculably showed Peter was equal to the others, that is, stating that they all "shall sit upon twelve thrones, (together) judging the twelve tribes of Israel".

(ii) On a later occasion, when ten of the 12 disciples were "moved with indignation" against the two others for their mothers' attempt to secure from Christ their senior appointment (Matthew 20:20-24), Peter's position was portrayed as being only one of the ten, with no indication of his either having a higher authority, or as having similar intent to the other two.

(iii) When Christ warned the disciples and others against the practice of reverently calling certain leaders "father", Peter was treated no differently than the other disciples. Christ had made clear to all at that time his condemnation of religious reverence toward humans, such reverence being included in the Biblical term: "respect of persons" and considered an insult to God. That is, and without relevance to family usage, Christ specifically commanded all to "call no man your father: for one is your Father, which is in heaven" (Matthew 23:9).

[In relation to the world's English speaking Roman Catholic peoples (such as are like spirited with the general populations of non-English Catholic nations), the word "father" as is commonly used by such people, and also reflected by the Catholic title "Pope" adopted some centuries after Peter, specifically denotes a seniormost paternal relationship (lesser priests also enjoying the title of "father", and likewise others of later denominational branches). Using such form of address in a non-familial situation breaches Christ's explicit command and hence acts to differentiate the spirit motivating papal authority from the Biblical spirit of Peter.]

(iv) In the first of the interpolated passages in Matthew, Peter is mentioned without ceremony as having been given superior authority and eminence (and associated with a "rock", although the meaning of such symbol remains unsettled among theologians). However with or without ceremony, since at this time Peter had not yet been 'converted' to have faith in Christ (cf. Matthew 26:69-72; Luke 22:31-32) he was not qualified for the office of a bishop, let alone for a "pope" (especially considering that later Peter revealed his tendency to do wrong -cf. Galatians 2:11-12).

(v) Shortly after his resurrection, Christ addressed a gathering of the main body of disciples in a closed room but gave no singular importance to Peter there, even after Christ imparted a new animating power to them, declaring to all equally, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22). Following such, Christ conveyed they had now become empowered apostles (though yet to receive a full measure of such power -Acts 1:8), with there being no distinction other than spokesman given to Peter at this revealing event (especially since he had required special attention from Christ before and after having emphatically denied knowing him). Further but with no reference to 'heaven' (a critical word of the Matthew 16 insertion), Christ declared equally to all present, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:23). Thus Christ showed no difference between Peter and the other apostles on such constitutional occasion, he also not mentioning any forming of a fledgling church group or institution. Therefore on the available evidence, no beginning of a religious Biblical "church" or Roman Catholic religion could have occurred either during that period or for some years after it.

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(vi) In c. A.D. 52 when the apostle Paul went to Jerusalem to meet the apostles there for the second time, he again met Peter (also called Cephas), who although established in the region for over a decade, was not acknowledged by any as an unique revered leader but only, as in Paul's report, the second of three mentioned "pillars" of Christ's followers (Galatians 2:9).

That is, and regardless of the two inserted passages in Matthew, there is no sustainable evidence in the Biblical record for either a Roman Catholic universal church or papal institution having been started in Biblical times, nor for the later claim of such church being 'built on' Peter, and neither for a (later instigated) 'succession of popes'. Thus despite appearances and theological declarations, the authority exercised by the Roman Catholic Church is alien to that reflected by the New Testament record. And as is currently the case with English speaking countries, the sovereignty claimed by the Roman Church still presumes itself to be a superintending sovereignty of such countries also, that is, as supreme over the fundamental common law of such countries (which provides the legal force of all valid statutes in those countries).

Thus despite Peter's selection as one of the main apostles, the narrative advanced for claiming he was given an unique and seniormost authoritative position over all the others differs substantially from the Biblical record.

Nonetheless, the Roman Church has long held that the spiritual authority possessed by popes superintends all countries' sovereigns, and that in civil as well as religious terms all countries are ultimately subservient to Rome. And such claim of Roman Catholic sovereignty has not diminished in modern times: it still remaining that all non-Catholic female dignitaries meeting with popes, including Queens, are required to wear a regality and/or country-subordinating fully black attire while Catholic female dignitaries are not so denigrated, they to the contrary, with the Pope, wearing white.

¹ In Matthew chapter sixteen, the narrative of verses 18-19 concerns the then establishing of a world-embracing "church". Although this passage appears to indicate Peter had been given an unique and divine power over Christ's followers, in the like worded verse of nearby chapter 18:18 and in other relevant passages, no indication of such supremacy is found. That is, spiritual authority had been equally imparted to all apostles, the same being later upgraded for all equally, enabling the completion of an apostolic commission prepared for them (John 20:22-23; Acts 1:8). However the text of verses 18-19 presents that earlier on, the same spiritual authority was imparted to Peter alone, with those same verses (together with a naturally based instruction from the apostle Paul for people to pass on their learning -2 Timothy 2:2) becoming interpreted so as to justify the Church's implementing an "apostolic succession".

On each side of verses 18-19 however, the context does not indicate that Peter was given a political or religious identity but that he was enlightened with a recognition of Christ's divine identity (which Christ then commanded those present not to reveal).

This same sequence of events, with the 2 inserted verses removed, is confirmed by the corresponding passages of both Mark 8:29-30 and Luke 9:20-21. Thus 1) the actual revelation to Peter, and 2) the ensuing command of Christ to all present, has no connection to either a civil institution or a religion. And since the natural sequence of verses 16-20 in Matthew 16 becomes apparent (and confirmed by two other gospel accounts) only when verses 18-19 are removed, then notwithstanding such verses being foundational to Roman Christianity, the evidence indicates verses 18-19 were not part of the original text.

² In Matthew chapter eighteen, the narrative of verses 17-19 similarly indicates a functioning "church" institution, and also advances that one or more of such church members may exercise divine authority, including if called for, dealing with alleged offenders by punishment; this passage also advising that when two such members ask the Deity for the same thing, the combined request ensures such will be granted (although elsewhere such requests are expressed as primarily an individual matter, as in John 15:7,16).

On each side of these 3 verses however, while the narrative expresses a reproofing and forgiving intent, and verse 20 naturally flows from verse 16, neither side contains a punitive element as do the verses inserted in between, such element in them being presented not as a private matter with the Deity, but as the business of a collective body or "church". Since the natural sequence of the verses 15-20 passage becomes apparent only when verses 17-19 are removed, then notwithstanding such 3 verses being foundational to Roman Christianity, the evidence indicates verses 17-19 were not part of the original text.

³ John 21:15-17(-22) contains the last recorded conversation between Christ and Peter, such being relied on by Roman Catholic scholars for confirming that a supreme spiritual authority was given to Peter separately from the other disciples. Christ's thrice repeated instruction of apostolic duty to Peter, that is, "Feed/tend my lambs/sheep", is widely considered to denote that soon after Christ had been resurrected, he gave his 'tending' or "chief Shepherd's" power to Peter, to whom all Christ's followers were to be necessarily obedient.

Yet a fine examination of the evidence reveals that Christ's instruction to "Feed my lambs/sheep" cannot be identified with the separating of one (at that time intolerant) disciple to a position of supremacy to 'feed' the other apostles, that is, although Peter is three times linked with sustaining Christ's 'sheep', such sheep must have included all Christ's followers, whether identifiable as 'lambs' or mature 'sheep', with neither of such terms including Peter and the other seven disciples who had been dining with him (John 21:2-3), since:

(i) each of those dining with him (also being individually chosen by Christ) would necessarily have had the same duty to maintain "the flock of God" (1 Peter 5:2), each of the disciples thus having the same measure of 'shepherd's' (or sheep-custody) authority as Peter (John 20:19-23),

(ii) Christ had not been limiting his 'sheep' to only those seven disciples dining with him, that is, and consistent with his earlier teachings he was referring to all who would follow him, including an unspecified number of "other sheep, which are not of this fold" (John 10:16), who had not yet been enlightened as had been the disciples (chapter 20:19-22), each of whom, and with no special mention of Peter, having been granted the same measure of enlightenment (despite Peter precipitating Christ's critical questioning of his affections),

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(iii) at the time Peter was approaching death, he made no mention of a personal successor, instructing the "elders which are among you" to "Feed the flock of God" until "the chief Shepherd shall appear" (1 Peter 5:1-4), he neither considering himself the 'chief shepherd', nor appointing new apostles or imparting spiritual power. Another similar command to "feed my sheep" concerns Paul but not Peter, Paul here advising certain "elders" (Acts 20:17) to preserve their spiritual wisdom, and exercise appropriate social welfare (verse 28).

Thus the prime intent of Christ's last conversation with Peter was not to elevate him to a ruling office but to repair his failed faith and status after his threefold public denial of him (Christ pre-knowing such and having given Peter special protection to prevent his being 'lost' -Luke 22:31-32).

That is,

- 1) Beginning with formalities, Christ asked Peter a profound question: "lovest thou me more than (the other disciples)?" However, instead of his being expressly apologetic as was needed, Peter reacted in a confrontational manner to Christ's word for "love" (agape - high regard/'spiritual' love, good or bad), that is, albeit seeming in full agreement, he attempted to correct Christ by high-handedly diminishing Christ's higher word for "love" to that of a lesser depth (philia -'brotherly'/familial/natural love or affection). He then deflected the question back to Christ with the intimation of his being irrational for asking such, and thus at fault, Peter being unwilling to accept the word Christ used. [Concerning the difference between the two Greek words used for "love" in this conversation, each generally conveys different human "love" experiences. However where extreme depth of meaning is not important, such two words are often used interchangeably.] Christ then re-instructed him to "Feed my sheep", after which Peter was apparently silent.
- 2) Again, Christ asked Peter the same question, to which he responded with the same words and in the same confrontational manner: he again being unwilling to accept Christ's word for "love", using instead his own choice (one of lesser depth) to again deflect Christ's question back to him, still calculably considering Christ to be irrational and at fault. Christ then gave a similar instruction as before, to "Feed my sheep", again Peter apparently remaining silent.
- 3) A third time Christ raised the same question (without Peter's open rejection of him being mentioned), and again beginning with formalities, Christ asked Peter "lovest thou me?", but in this instance Christ sought to appease him by using Peter's chosen word for "love". However Peter responded no differently than before. That is, with the same attitude, Peter again deflected Christ's question back to him, considering him to be irrational and further at fault, and also by causing him grief, patronisingly urged Christ: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that.." (John 21:17). Even after a third instruction to "Feed my sheep" Peter apparently remained silent, giving no indication of a change of attitude.
- 4) Without waiting further, Christ told a stubborn Peter that an unnatural (though not ungodly) death awaited him in his old age, though Christ immediately returned to Peter's present condition with his unarguable order to "Follow me", so intending to end the conversation he had initiated. But Peter showed no attitude of conforming, he bypassing Christ's statement with a more confrontational stand, that is, by urging a continued conversation with Christ and asking him a loaded question about whether another disciple nearby (who was close to Christ) would also die unnaturally, such being questioned to Christ in the provocative manner: 'If I am going to die unnaturally, what about him?'

Christ dismissed Peter's jibe by countering "what is that to thee?", thereby conveying that whatever would happen was none of his business, and then repeating his order to "follow me". So although Peter had experienced confusion from Christ's questioning, he remained uninfluenced by attempts to raise him to a level above his natural affections, Christ having both started and ended the conversation with such intention, the same being readily perceived as consequent to Peter's denials of Christ some days earlier (the lesser elements of 'feeding sheep' and shepherding/tending 'the flock' applying to natural duty).

Therefore concerning John 21:15-17f. which is claimed by Roman Catholic authorities to confirm a supremacy and authority for Peter the apostle, the final words of his conversation with Christ did not end amicably, with Peter and Christ expressing an authority over each other in the presence of other disciples (which for Peter would not be fully resolved until he received enlightenment at the Pentecost event). Thus with Peter displaying quarrelsomeness for his own reasons, and with Christ then sustaining disappointment of Peter's inability to accept Godly love, both reflect a situation incompatible with the instigation of a formal constitutional appointment at that time, especially when such appointment is held to involve a supremacy over the whole of mankind. That is, such mutually frustrating (last recorded) conversation between the two in the passage of John 21:15-22 is incompatible with the formalities required for a person's appointment to a sovereign office, such conversation mitigating against any suggested confirmation that at that time Peter received a divine office of supremacy, let alone one which ruled over the apostles, with he being the only apostle having displayed a conflict with Christ.

Constitutional note:

The above common law evidence and argument corroborates the Roman Catholic prohibition clauses of the (Imp.) Act of Settlement 1700.