

—men with the most diverse backgrounds were brought together by Jesus Christ.

(William P. Barker, *As Matthew Saw the Master*, 35)

That Jesus could unite such men to labor side-by-side, gives tremendous witness to Jesus' power to convert men! If the Master can make such eternally good use of such common men, what extraordinary encouragement to put ourselves at His disposal!

FACT QUESTIONS

1. When and where did Jesus first acquire disciples?
2. When and where did He first call men to leave home and follow Him constantly, to become His companions in travel and labor?
3. When and where did He first name the twelve disciples to be apostles?
4. When and where did He first send forth to preach with power and authority?
5. When and where did He question them about their faith in His identity?
6. When and where did He promise them the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth?
7. Name the twelve Apostles, and tell what you know about each one.
8. Distinguish between the words "disciple" and "apostle," showing the stages of relationship to Jesus and His work through which the Twelve passed from one to the other.
9. Although Jesus chose Judas to become an Apostle, what did He already know about the man? (See John 6:70, 71; 17:12)
10. Describe the sermon that was preached by Jesus at the time of the choosing of the Twelve to become Apostles and show its particular fitness for that occasion.
11. Describe the sermon that was preached by Jesus at the time of the official commissioning of the Apostles, and show its particular fitness and importance for that occasion.

SPECIAL STUDY

THE SUPREMACY OF PETER

The fact that the Apostle Peter is personally mentioned first in every list of the Apostles, and in Matthew's list is marked for special preeminence by the expression: "The first, Simon, who is called

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Peter," has certainly been misinterpreted by many as expressing the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Lord's fisherman-Apostle.

For the following basic outline, which brings together important evidences to the contrary, we are indebted to McGarvey (*Four-fold Gospel*, 221f), to which is added a note here and there:

1. Peter's natural talents gave a personal, but not an ecclesiastical, preeminence over his fellows. This explains not only the Lord's natural preference for this boisterous ex-fisherman over the other less expressive, though nonetheless sensitive, Apostles.
2. That Peter had supremacy or authority over his brethren is
 - a. nowhere stated by Christ, (Mt. 16:18, 19 notwithstanding, see Notes)
 - b. nor claimed by Peter himself; (see below under 4)
 - c. nor stated by the rest of the Twelve.

The total blackout in the New Testament on this subject, so important to the development of the Biblical doctrines of the Church, is incomprehensible in light of the papal claims made for him. For, if this primate position were essential to the nature of the Church, the Apostles could hardly be thought to have omitted reference to it, even if only in passing. But this total silence is most significant: it cannot mean that the other Apostles had no opportunity to mention it, since many Pauline discussions, for example, describe the fundamental unity and nature of the Church without ever once touching the (reputed) primacy of Peter as unitary head of the Church on earth.

3. The clear declarations of Christ place the Apostles upon the same level with each other. (Cf. Mt. 23:8-11; 18:18; 19:27, 28; 20:20-27; Jn. 20:21-23; Ac. 1:8; Lk. 22:24-27) As will be seen in the study of Mt. 18, in its entirety, had Jesus wanted to clarify the burning question of hierarchy in favor of any one of the Apostles, the opportunity offered Him in that context could not have been better. In that case, had He needed to clarify the proper spirit in which to serve Him, while explaining the structure of ecclesiastical hierarchy, which was the practical import of the disciples' question (Mt. 18:1; cf. Mk. 9:33, 34; Lk. 9:46-48), He missed His chance. Evidence that the supposed primacy of Peter was not settled in his favor by the declarations in Mt. 16:18, 19 is to be found in the fact that long after Jesus' promises and predictions about Peter, the disciples dispute

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about which of them was to be regarded as the greatest (Lk. 22:24ff.). In both of these situations, just a word from Jesus explaining that, despite His demands for humility of spirit and a willingness to serve others, yet Peter was to take command of the Church, would have sufficed for all ages to establish Peter's ecclesiastical primacy.

4. Peter's own declaration, rather than assert his supposed primacy, claims no more than a position equal to that of other officers in the Church under Christ (I Pet. 5:1, 4). That any of his supposed successors do not follow in the footsteps of Peter is revealed in the chasm that separates his doctrine from theirs. Peter himself shows that the Church was not established upon him as *petra* (cf. I Pet. 2:4-9, especially in Greek).
5. Paul's attitude toward Peter is incredible in light of the latter's supposed supremacy:
 - a. Paul withstood Peter to his face, a fact that is unbelievable in light of the theory of practically total infallibility (Gal. 2:11-14). Practical total infallibility, not merely when the Roman pontiff speaks "ex cathedra", is fundamental to modern Catholic belief:

The bishops when they teach in communion with the Roman Pontiff, must be heard by all with veneration, as witnesses of the divine and catholic truth; and the faithful must accept the judgment of their Bishop given in the name of Christ in matters of faith and morals, and adhere to it with religious respect. But this religious respect of will and intelligence is in a special manner due to be given to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking "ex cathedra," with the result that his supreme teaching authority be accepted with reverence, and that the pronouncements given by him be adhered to with sincerity, according to the mind and will manifested by him, which is made clear especially either by the nature of the documents or by the frequent riproposing of the same doctrine, or by the tenor of the verbal expression.

(Documents of the Vatican II Council, *Lumen Gentium*, on the "Dogmatic Constitution of the

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Church", paragraph 25, my translation from the Italian text.)

- b. If lists in themselves are important, Paul lists Peter as second in importance to James the Lord's brother (Gal. 2:9). Although this is no complete list of the leading figures in the Jerusalem Church, it shows Paul did not consider the order of names in his sentence of great importance, as might be supposed to be the case in a tightly organized hierarchy of which the Roman system is the best example.
- c. Paul did not despise Peter, but sought him out especially (Gal. 1:18, 19), but this is stated in a context where Paul vigorously denies any dependence upon other Apostles for the authority of his own apostolic mission. (Gal. 1:11, 12, 16b, 17; cf. 2:6-9)
6. The attitude of James at the Jerusalem council is incredible, since after the speech of the "infallible" Peter, James requires, "Brethren, hearken unto me . . . my judgment is . . ." These words of James would be rendered utterly superfluous after the declarations of Peter, were he really supreme. Further, it is the decision of the assembled Apostles and elders to follow the advice of James. (Cf. Ac. 15:7-11 with 13-21).

McGarvey concludes that, were it possible even to establish beyond a reasonable doubt that Peter were actually primate in the ecclesiastical sense among the Apostles, the papacy would still be left without a valid claim to its pretended honors, since it would still have to prove that it was heir to the rights and honors of Peter, which is something it has never yet done. The papal claim rests not upon facts, but upon several assumptions:

1. That Peter had supreme authority among the Apostles and evident infallibility;
2. That he was the first bishop of Rome (important, because all successive bishops of Rome are thought to be his lineal successors.)
3. That the peculiar powers and privileges of Peter (if he had any) passed at the time of his death from his own person, to which they belonged, to the chair of office which he thus vacated.
4. That ANY Apostle had a successor.
5. That the bishop of Rome is Peter's direct and personal successor.

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6. That any successor of the bishop of Rome possesses the infallibility invested in him as the supreme teaching authority of the Church.

It might be getting too far afield from our principle theme, the supremacy of Peter, but in connection with the misuse of any evidence of Peter's preeminence, it would be well to remember that the so-called lineal successors of the Apostles do not at all qualify for the office to which they lay claim, inasmuch as the following qualifications identify an apostle:

1. They must have seen the risen Lord. (Ac. 1:21, 22; I Cor. 9:1)
2. They must have been called to Apostleship by the Lord to fulfil that mission assigned to them particularly by the Lord who sent them. (Jn. 20:21) In the absence of positive proof that the Apostles left behind specific directions for their own succession, we are obligated to believe that they left none, hence did not pass on their unique mission.
3. They must perform the signs of an Apostle:
 - a. In miraculous gifts (2 Co. 12:12) that authenticate their message and their doctrines as from God;
 - b. In the conversion of souls to the Lord (I Co. 9:2), not in drawing away disciples after them (Ac. 20:30)
 - c. In the establishment of churches in all the world (Gal. 2:8)
 - d. In divine revelations (I Co. 11:2; 15:1, 2, 3; I Th. 2:13; 2 Th. 2:15; 3:6; Ro. 6:17; Gal. 1:9-12; Phil. 4:9; Col. 2:6-8) not in the imposition of human traditions that contradict God's revelation.
4. They must serve as the foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:20), i.e. their word given under the direct supervision of the Holy Spirit must serve as direction and support for the Church throughout all ages of its existence (Jude 3; 2 Pe. 1:3, 4; Rev. 22:18, 19; I Jn. 4:6; Heb. 2:1-4; 13:7, etc.)

For a discussion of Peter's peculiar responsibility to use the "keys of the kingdom," see notes on Matthew 16:18, 19.

Section 23

JESUS COMMISSIONS TWELVE APOSTLES TO EVANGELIZE GALILEE