



The Power and Primacy of the Pope

*A study of the papacy, church government, and the public ministry
from the history of the Lutheran Church*

REFUTATION OF ROMAN ARGUMENTS

²² They cite against us certain passages, namely, [Matthew 16:18–19,] “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church.” Also, “I will give you the keys.” Also, [John 21:15,] “Feed My lambs,” and some others. Since this entire controversy has been fully and accurately treated elsewhere in the books of our theologians and everything cannot be reviewed here, we refer to those writings and wish them to be considered repeated here. Yet we will briefly reply about the interpretation of the passages above.

²³ In all these passages, Peter is the representative of the entire assembly of apostles, as appears from the text itself. Christ does not ask Peter alone, when He says, “Who do you say that I am?” [Matthew 16:15]. What is said here to Peter alone in the singular number, “I will give you [singular] the keys; and whatever you [singular] bind” [16:19], is elsewhere expressed in the plural [e.g., Matthew 18:18,] “Whatever you [plural] bind”; [John 20:23,] “If you [plural] forgive the sins of anyone. These words show that the Keys are given to all the apostles alike and that all the apostles are sent forth alike.

²⁴ In addition, it must be recognized that the Keys belong not to the person of one particular man, but to the Church. Many most clear and firm arguments show this. For Christ, speaking about the Keys, adds, for example, “If two of you agree on earth” (Matthew 18:19). Therefore, He grants the Keys first and directly to the Church. This is why it is first the Church that has the right of calling.

Therefore, these passages demonstrate that Peter is the representative of the entire assembly of the apostles. They do not grant Peter any privilege or superiority or lordship.

²⁵ As for the declaration “on this rock I will build My church” [Matthew 16:18], certainly the

Church has not been built upon the authority of a man. Rather, it has been built upon the ministry of the confession Peter made, in which he proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God [Matthew 16:16]. Therefore, Christ addresses Peter as a minister, “On this rock,” that is, this ministry.

²⁶ Furthermore, the ministry of the New Testament is not bound to places and persons like the Levitical [Old Testament] ministry was. Rather, it is spread throughout the whole world. That is where God gives His gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers. Nor does this ministry work because of the authority of any person, but because of the Word given by Christ. Nor does the person add anything to this Word and office; it matters not who is preaching and teaching it; if there are hearts who receive and cling to it, to them it is done as they hear and believe. ²⁷ Most of the holy Church Fathers, such as Origen, Cyprian, Augustine, Hilary, and Bede, interpret the passage “on this rock” in this way, as not referring to the person of Peter. ²⁸ Chrysostom says this:

“Upon this rock,” not upon Peter. For He built His Church not upon man, but upon the faith of Peter. But what was his faith? “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

²⁹ Hilary says:

The Father revealed to Peter that he should say, “You are the Son of the living God” [Matthew 16:17]. Therefore, the building of the Church is upon this rock of confession. This faith is the foundation of the Church.

³⁰ As for what is said in John 21:15–19, “Feed My lambs,” and “Do you love Me more than these?” it does not follow from this passage that a peculiar superiority was given Peter. Christ tells him “feed” (i.e., teach and preach the Word, the Gospel, or rule the Church with the



Word, the Gospel), which task Peter has in common with the other apostles.

³¹ The second article is even clearer. Christ gave the apostles only spiritual power (i.e., the command to teach the Gospel, to announce the forgiveness of sins, to administer the Sacraments, to excommunicate the godless without bodily force). He did not give them the power of the sword (the right to establish, occupy, or bestow kingdoms of the world. For Christ says, “Go ... teaching them to observe all

that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20). Also, “As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21).

It is clear that Christ was not sent to bear the sword or possess a worldly kingdom, as He Himself says, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). And Paul says, “Not that we lord it over your faith” (2 Corinthians 1:24); and “The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh” (2 Corinthians 10:4), and so forth.

Spiritual Authority

Matthew 16:13–23

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵ “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷ Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

²⁰ Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

Matthew 18:18–20

¹⁸ “I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”



John 20:21-23

²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Luke 24:33-36

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

³⁶ While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

John 21:15-19

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

Ephesians 4:11

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

Romans 10:17

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.



Temporal Authority

Romans 13:1-4

¹ Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. ⁴ For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

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