

Roman Catholic Apologetics 2025: Early Church Polity & the Origen & Rise of the Papacy



Papist Claims



Unam Sanctam: Pope Boniface VIII (11/18/1302:)
Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it
is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human
creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff.

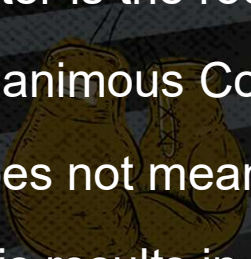


Vatican I. Session 4. 1st Dogmatic Constitution: Chpt 3.2-3 (7/18/1870): the Roman church possesses a pre-eminence of ordinary power over every other church, and that this jurisdictional power of the Roman pontiff is both episcopal and immediate. Both clergy and faithful, of whatever rite and dignity, both singly and collectively, are bound to submit to this power by the duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience, and this not only in matters concerning faith and morals, but also in those which regard the discipline and government of the church throughout the world. In this way, by unity with the Roman pontiff in communion and in profession of the same faith, the church of Christ becomes one flock under one supreme shepherd



Claims of Vatican I

- Necessary for salvation to believe in the authority of the bishop of Rome
- Teachings of the bishop of Rome are binding on believers, and no human can question the teachings
- Bishop of Rome cannot err
- Since many believe this presupposition, they follow and believe anything the Pope says
- Peter is the rock of Matthew 16.18
- Unanimous Consent of the early church fathers (claim of 2,000 years of unanimity)
- Does not mean everyone agrees on the interpretation but consensus
- This results in the RC church as the sole interpreter of scripture



882 The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful." "For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered



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2089 schism is the refusal of submission to the Roman Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him.”



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Conclusion:

This is a salvation issue, and you are bound to submit to Rome! You have placed yourselves in schism if you are unwilling.



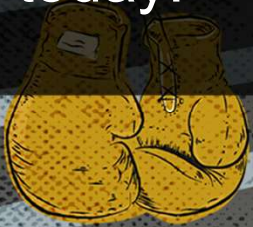
What Rome Believes



What we agree on:

1) The church of Rome has been and remains extremely important and influential throughout church history and today.

2) The bishop of Rome (Pope) has been and remains extremely important and influential in church matters throughout church history and today!



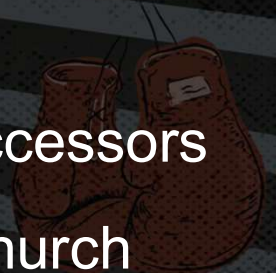
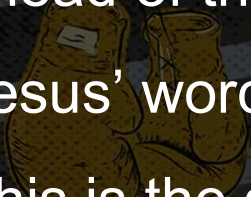
Burden of Proof is on Rome: BE FOCUSED!!

When Rome in Trent & Vatican I claim the “unanimous consent of the fathers”, the goal is to formulate the idea, in the mind of the reader, that the teachings of the church have not changed over time because there is a consensus of interpretation traceable back through the fathers to the apostles and ultimately to Christ himself.



Rome builds her claims on at least 5 pillars:

- 1) It is better to place your trust in the Pope over God's Word
- 2) Jesus was speaking directly to and only to Peter in Matthew 16.18 and was identifying Peter as the rock on which the church is built
- 3) Jesus established Peter as the "prince of the apostles", very first Pope, and head of the universal church
- 4) Jesus' words establish the office of Pope, as well as its successors
- 5) This is the ancient, constant, and unchanging faith of the church



We are going to make two arguments against the papacy:

Biblical & Historical



What we are going to see from this study is that neither the biblical nor historical evidence can support the weight Rome puts on her claims regarding the Pope and his authority!



Matthew 16:18



13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” 20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Matthew 16:13–20

ESV

68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” 70 Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.”

John 6:68–70

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881 The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the “rock” of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock. “The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head.”⁴⁰¹ This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church’s very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.



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Church Fathers on Matthew 16.18



Origen 225 ADish

And perhaps that which Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” if we say it as Peter, not by flesh and blood revealing it unto us, but by the light from the Father in heaven shining in our heart, we too become as Peter..... and to us there might be said by the Word, “Thou art Peter,” etc. For a rock is every disciple of Christ



Ante-Nicene Fathers 9: Origen's Commentary on John, Books I-X, and Commentary on Matthew, Books I, II, and X-XIV

Hilary of Poitiers (350 ADish)

This is My Son, had revealed to Peter that he must confess Thou art the Son of God, for in the words This is, God the Revealer points Him out, and the response, Thou art, is the believer's welcome to the truth. And this is the rock of confession whereon the Church is built.....This faith it is which is the foundation of the Church; through this faith the gates of hell cannot prevail against her



Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2.9: St. Hilary of Poitiers, John of Damascus

John Chrysostom: (400 ADish)

Having said to Peter, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonas, and of having promised to lay the foundation of the Church upon his confession; not long after He says, Get thee behind me, Satan. And elsewhere he said, Upon this rock. He did not say upon Peter for it is not upon the man, but upon his own faith that the church is built. And what is this faith? You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. (In pentecosten 52.806.75 – 52.807.1)



Augustine (425 ADish)

Then said the Lord to Him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjonas: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." Then He added, "and I say unto thee." As if He had said, "Because thou hast said unto Me, 'Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God;' I also say unto thee, 'Thou art Peter.'" For before he was called Simon. Now this name of Peter was given him by the Lord, and that in a figure, that he should signify the Church. For seeing that Christ is the rock (Petra), Peter is the Christian people. For the rock (Petra) is the original name. Therefore Peter is so called from the rock; not the rock from Peter; as Christ is not called Christ from the Christian, but the Christian from Christ. "Therefore," he saith, "Thou art Peter; and upon this Rock" which thou hast confessed, upon this Rock which thou hast acknowledged, saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, will I build My Church;" that is upon Myself, the Son of the living God, "will I build My Church." I will build thee upon Myself, not Myself upon thee

Theodoret (450 ADish)

Let us hear the words of the great Peter, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Let us hear the Lord Christ confirming this confession, for “On this rock,” He says, “I will build my church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.”¹² Wherefore too the wise Paul, most excellent master builder of the churches, fixed no other foundation than this. “I,” he says, “as a wise master builder have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” How then can they think of any other foundation, when they are bidden not to fix a foundation, but to build on that which is laid? The divine writer recognizes Christ as the foundation,

Pope Gregory the Great: 600 ADish

Certainly Peter, the first of the apostles, himself a member of the holy and universal Church, Paul, Andrew, John,—what were they but heads of particular communities? And yet all were members under one Head. And (to bind all together in a short girth of speech) the saints before the law, the saints under the law, the saints under grace, all these making up the Lord's Body, were constituted as members of the Church, and not one of them has wished himself to be called universal. Now let your Holiness acknowledge to what extent you swell within yourself in desiring to be called by that name by which no one presumed to be called who was truly holy.

Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2.12: Leo the Great, Gregory the Great

John 21.15



15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.”

John 21:15

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Luke 22.31-32



31 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

Luke 22:31–32

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Important Conclusions after all Patristic Evidence is examined regarding Rome's claims to the Papacy:



The consensus among the Fathers regarding Matthew 16.18 is that the rock and foundation of the church as Jesus himself or Peter's confession of faith.



When Peter was described as the rock it was
his example of true faith not some
authoritative office with successors, etc.



Peter figuratively represented the unity of the church



When Christ spoke to Peter he spoke to the church as a whole



What was given to Peter, was given to all the apostles and through them to the entire church



The keys are a declarative authority to teach truth,
preach the gospel, and exercise discipline in the
church



The fathers spoke about Peter in exalted terms



They saw bishops of Rome as successors of Peter
but not the exclusive successors of Peter nor the
rulers of the universal church



In the patristic interpretations of Matthew 16, Luke 22, or John 21, we find no affirmation of the teachings of Vatican I



Therefore, there is not theological evidence to support Roman claims to primacy and authority



Biblical Case Conclusions:

