

The Doctrine of Succession of the Apostles

The Apostolic Roman Catholic Church teaches that the office of the apostles has continued through Peter until our days passing from generation to generation through the Catholic popes. According to them, this gives validity and authority to the Roman Catholic Church, and **according to them, the Catholic Church is the only legitimate church in the entire world.**

Mat 16:15 *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 Barjona: 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 I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

What we see here is simply Jesus telling Peter that he will build his church upon the rock of Peter's confession ("Jesus is the Christ") and not on the person of Peter. John in **1 John 4:1-2** advises us that the false prophet does not confess Jesus is the Christ, God in flesh, and we see this come up in many places as the element that determines orthodoxy. The authority of God abides in correct doctrine (confessing Jesus as your personal Saviour), and not in being a part of the church of Peter.

Mat 10:32 *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. (One is saved by his relationship with Jesus, not by church membership.)*

Peter as the First Pope

Mat 16:23 *But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto*

me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Further down in Matthew 16, Jesus himself had to rebuke Peter for not putting his sight upon the things of God but upon the things of men. Peter did not understand the plan of God. He wanted human glory as in the kingdom of Solomon. Really, Catholics ARE FOLLOWERS of Peter and not Christ because the Roman Catholic Church, like Peter here, seeks human glory and not what is spiritual. Why do all Catholic Churches have to be adorned, huge monuments to human glory when the primitive church used people's houses (Rom 16:15; 1Cor 16:19)?

The Authority of Tradition and the Fathers

The reasoning of the Catholics is that those closest in time to the apostles are those who understood best their teachings and have the authority. They propose that Catholics alone have the doctrine of the authority of the church fathers. But many in those same apostolic days did not understand Bible doctrine correctly as in passages like **Acts 20:29-30** (these erroneous people will "draw away the disciples after themselves"). Here we should note that the Bible teaches Christian liberty (**Gal 2:4; 5:1, 13**), and the false brethren seek to enslave us making us lose our liberty in Christ, so that we will be their slaves, enslaved under their false doctrines.

Col 2:8 *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

Paul focused on these false teachers that are astute and use deception to drag away the disciples after them.

Gal 1:6 *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be*

accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. 2Cor 11:4

The Bible teaches that salvation is by grace through faith (**Eph 2:8-9**) and that it is not works that we have done (**Titus 3:5**). But the Catholic Church teaches that we are saved by water baptism, mass, and being a part of their church, and many other human works. This is exactly the other gospel that Paul warned us to **NOT FOLLOW!**

For example, God prohibits us "from not calling anybody on this earth father, because one is our Father, that which is in heaven," **Matthew 23:9**. So why does the Catholic Church teach and insist that their priests, bishops, and popes are to be called "father"? By their tradition, they ignore and disobey the clear teaching of the Bible.

What God has given us with authority is in the Holy Scriptures (the Bible), not in interpretations and human traditions around the Bible which are many times twisted and wrongly interpret the clear and obvious of the Bible. To exalt human tradition is the same as what the Jews did before the time of Christ, and Jesus had to confront this same error in his day.

Mat 15:3 *But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? 8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

The authority of God does not reside in a church or a chain of popes but in the inspired word of God (doctrine) that gives us eternal life (**John 5:39**). God recommended to those in his day to investigate Scripture in order to verify and establish the true of everything (**Acts 17:11**).

Mar 7:9 *And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. 13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition*

Jesus clearly rebuked them for substituting tradition as the maximum authority in place of Scriptures. Peter himself identified the error of basing the spiritual life upon “*a vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers.*” (1 Peter 1:18) Peter himself rejected the very things that the Catholic Church of today promotes.

The Apostolic Teaching

2Th 3:6 *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*

But this is the exact point; orthodoxy has to do with doctrine, not identification with a line of apostolic successors. This biblical authority we have received is in the Bible, in the Scriptures, and not in a particular earthly church. What Christians have passed from generation to generation is a body of doctrine: Eph 2:20; 1 Tim. 1:3, 18; 2:14-15; 4:6, 11, 16; 5:21; 6:13-14, 20-21; 2 Tim 1:13-14; 2:1-2; 3:14-17; Tit 1:5, 9; 2:1, 15.

The Office of Apostle

We should clarify here something about the office of “Apostle”. The Greek word means “*one sent with authority and representation in a mission.*” But there are two different types of apostles that we see in the Bible, the 12 that were eye witnesses of the life, events, and teachings of Jesus, and then there are those apostles that started churches in new areas (missionaries essentially). Peter gave the requirements to be one of the 12 apostles in **Acts 1:21-22** “*of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.*” So then there simply cannot be an apostle today like one of the 12, only apostles that are like missionaries to establish new churches. The authority of the 12 is not the same as a missionary, and it is not

possible that there is an apostolic succession from generation to generation, because there are no eye witnesses alive of the life of Jesus as Peter imposed by inspiration of God as the requirement to be an apostle like the 12.

Even the 12 were not without error in the conduct and doctrine outside of the books they wrote that became part of the Bible. They were humans as everybody is. In **Gal 2:11**, Paul says he had to confront Peter because of his error to fall under the false teaching of the Judiazers. The fact is that he was an apostle, one of the 12 apostles, and this didn’t impose an authority upon the rest as the Catholic Church wants it be today. Peter was walking in false doctrine and erroneous conduct (despite the fact that the Roman Catholic church demands that at this time he was the Vicar of Christ on earth, the first pope). Paul had to rebuke his error and false doctrine with Scripture (which is the authority). In the end analysis of things, Peter had to repent before Paul. Peter did not presume to exalt himself or his position over the church, but he admitted his humanity and error, and exalted the Scriptures as the only true and faithful authority.

2Pe 3:15 *And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul... 16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*

Do not place your confidence in any church, but in Holy Scripture!

Is the Pope the Vicar of Christ? Is the authority of the popes biblical? NO!

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In Mat 16:18 Jesus promised to build his Church. Today many churches pretend to be the only true church of Jesus Christ. This tract will examine the claims of the Roman Catholic Church concerning the authority and succession of the apostles in the popes.