

PETER AND THE KEYS OF THE CHURCH

Irenaeus of Lyons Adversus Haereses Book III Ch 3.2 [120-180 A.D.]

"But since it would be too long to enumerate in such a volume as this the succession of all the churches, we shall confound all those who, in whatever manner, whether through self-satisfaction or vainglory, or through blindness and wicked opinion, assemble other than where it is proper, by pointing out here the successions of the bishops of the greatest and most ancient church known to all, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul, that church which has the tradition and the faith which comes down to us after having been announced to men by the apostles. With that church, because of its superior origin, all the churches must agree, that is, all the faithful in the whole world, and it is in her that the faithful everywhere have maintained the apostolic tradition"

Irenaeus of Lyons Adversus Haereses book 3 ch 3.3 [120-180 A.D.]

...Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its preeminent authority -- that is, the faithful everywhere -- inasmuch as the Apostolic Tradition has been preserved continuously by those who are everywhere. The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate. Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy. To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric....

To this Clement there succeeded Evaristus. Alexander followed Evaristus; then, sixth from the apostles, Sixtus was appointed; after him, Telephorus, who was gloriously martyred; then Hyginus; after him, Pius; then after him, Anicetus. Sorer having succeeded Anicetus, Eleutherius does now, in the twelfth place from the apostles, hold the inheritance of the episcopate. In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us.

Jerome Against Jovinianus book 1 par 26 (347-420 A.D.)

But you say,[1] the Church was rounded upon Peter: although[2] elsewhere the same is attributed to all the Apostles, and they all receive the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the strength of the Church depends upon them all alike, yet one among the twelve is chosen so that when a head has been appointed, there may be no occasion for schism.

The disciple of Patriarch Sophronius,

"And for this cause, sometimes we ask for water to our head and to our eyes a fountain of tears, sometimes the wings of a dove, according to holy Hugh, that we might fly away and announce these things to the Chair (the Chair of Peter at Rome) which rules and presides over all, I mean to yours, the head and highest, for the healing of the whole wound. For this it has been accustomed to do from old and from the beginning with power by its canonical or apostolic authority, because the truly great Peter, head of the Apostles, was clearly thought worthy not only to be trusted with the keys of heaven, alone apart from the rest, to open it worthily to believers, or to close it justly to those who disbelieve the Gospel of grace, but because he was also commissioned to feed the sheep of the whole Catholic Church; for 'Peter,' saith He, 'lovest thou Me? Feed My sheep.' And again, because he had in a manner peculiar and special, a faith in the Lord stronger than all and unchangeable, to be converted and to confirm his fellows and spiritual brethren when tossed about, as having been adorned by God Himself incarnate for us with power and sacerdotal authorityAnd Sophronius of blessed memory, who was Patriarch of the holy city of Christ our God, and under whom I was bishop, conferring not with flesh and blood, but caring only for the things of Christ with respect to your Holiness, hastened to send my nothingness without delay about this matter alone to this Apostolic see, where are the foundations of holy doctrine." (Sophronius, to Pope Martin I at the Lateran Council, Mansi, x., 893)

Sergius, Metropolitan of Cyprus (649 A.D.)

He writes to Pope Theodore,

"O Holy Head, Christ our God hath destined thy Apostolic See to be an immovable foundation and a pillar of the Faith. For thou art, as the Divine Word truly saith, Peter, and on thee as a foundation-stone have the pillars of the Church been fixed." (Sergius Ep. ad Theod. lecta in Sess. ii. Concil. Lat. anno 649)

St. John Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople (387 A.D.)

"For this is the one great privilege of our city, Antioch, that it received the leader of the Apostles (Peter) as its teacher in the beginning. For it was right that she who was first adorned with the name of Christians, before the whole world, should receive the first of the apostles as her pastor. But though we received him as teacher, we did not retain him to the end, but gave him up to royal Rome." (Chrysostom, On the Inscription of the Acts, II. Taken from Documents Illustrating Papal Authority (London: SPCK, 1952), E. Giles, Ed., p. 168. Cf. Chapman, Studies on the Early Papacy, p. 96).

"And why, then, passing by the others, does He converse with Peter on these things? (John 21:15). He was the chosen one of the Apostles, and the mouth of the disciples, and the leader of the choir. On this account, Paul also went up on a time to see him rather than the others (Galatians 1:18). And withal, to show him that he must thenceforward have confidence, as the

denial was done away with, He puts into his hands the presidency over the brethren. And He brings not forward the denial, nor reproches him with what had past, but says, 'If you love me, preside over the brethren, ...and the third time He gives him the same injunction, showing what a price He sets the presidency over His own sheep. And if one should say, 'How then did James receive the throne of Jerusalem?', this I would answer that He appointed this man (Peter) teacher, not of that throne, but of the whole world." (Chrysostom, In Joan. Hom. 1xxxviii. n. 1, tom. viii)

Flavian, Patriarch of Constantinople (449 A.D.): ...writing to Pope Leo

"When I began to appeal to the throne of the Apostolic See of Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and to the whole sacred synod, which is obedient to Your Holiness, at once a crowd of soldiers surrounded me and barred my way when I wished to take refuge at the holy altar. ...Therefore, I beseech Your Holiness not to permit these things to be treated with indifference ...but to rise up first on behalf of the cause of our orthodox Faith, now destroyed by unlawful acts. ...Further to issue an authoritative instruction ...so that a like faith may everywhere be preached by the assembly of an united synod of fathers, both Eastern and Western. Thus the laws of the fathers may prevail and all that has been done amiss be rendered null and void. Bring healing to this ghastly wound. (Patriarch Flavian of Constantinople to Pope Leo, 449).

The Emperor Justinian (520-533 A.D.)

Writing to the Pope, ...

"Yielding honor to the Apostolic See and to Your Holiness, and honoring your Holiness, as one ought to honor a father, we have hastened to subject all the priests of the whole Eastern district, and to unite them to the See of your Holiness, for we do not allow of any point, however manifest and indisputable it be, which relates to the state of the Churches, not being brought to the cognizance of your Holiness, since you are the Head of all the holy Churches." (Justinian Epist. ad. Pap. Joan. ii. Cod. Justin. lib. I. tit. 1).

"Let your Apostleship show that you have worthily succeeded to the Apostle Peter, since the Lord will work through you, as Supreme Pastor, the salvation of all." (Coll. Avell. Ep. 196, July 9th, 520, Justinian to Pope Hormisdas).

St. Maximus the Confessor (650 A.D.)

A celebrated theologian and a native of Constantinople, ...

"The extremities of the earth, and everyone in every part of it who purely and rightly confess the Lord, look directly towards the Most Holy Roman Church and her confession and faith, as to a sun of unfailling light awaiting from her the brilliant radiance of the sacred dogmas of our Fathers, according to that which the inspired and holy Councils have stainlessly and piously decreed. For, from the descent of the Incarnate Word amongst us, all the churches in every

part of the world have held the greatest Church alone to be their base and foundation, seeing that, according to the promise of Christ Our Savior, the gates of hell will never prevail against her, that she has the keys of the orthodox confession and right faith in Him, that she opens the true and exclusive religion to such men as approach with piety, and she shuts up and locks every heretical mouth which speaks against the Most High." (Maximus, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, Migne, *Patr. Graec.* vol. 90)

"How much more in the case of the clergy and Church of the Romans, which from old until now presides over all the churches which are under the sun? Having surely received this canonically, as well as from councils and the apostles, as from the princes of the latter (Peter & Paul), and being numbered in their company, she is subject to no writings or issues in synodical documents, on account of the eminence of her pontificateeven as in all these things all are equally subject to her (the Church of Rome) according to sacerodotal law. And so when, without fear, but with all holy and becoming confidence, those ministers (the Popes) are of the truly firm and immovable rock, that is of the most great and Apostolic Church of Rome." (Maximus, in J.B. Mansi, ed. *Amplissima Collectio Conciliorum*, vol. 10)

"If the Roman See recognizes Pyrrhus to be not only a reprobate but a heretic, it is certainly plain that everyone who anathematizes those who have rejected Pyrrhus also anathematizes the See of Rome, that is, he anathematizes the Catholic Church. I need hardly add that he excommunicates himself also, if indeed he is in communion with the Roman See and the Catholic Church of God ...Let him hasten before all things to satisfy the Roman See, for if it is satisfied, all will agree in calling him pious and orthodox. For he only speaks in vain who thinks he ought to persuade or entrap persons like myself, and does not satisfy and implore the blessed Pope of the most holy Catholic Church of the Romans, that is, the Apostolic See, which is from the incarnate of the Son of God Himself, and also all the holy synods, according to the holy canons and definitions has received universal and supreme dominion, authority, and power of binding and loosing over all the holy churches of God throughout the whole world." (Maximus, *Letter to Peter*, in Mansi x, 692).

St. Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople (758-828 A.D.)

"Without whom (the Romans presiding in the seventh Council) a doctrine brought forward in the Church could not, even though confirmed by canonical decrees and by ecclesiastical usage, ever obtain full approval or currency. For it is they (the Popes of Rome) who have had assigned to them the rule in sacred things, and who have received into their hands the dignity of headship among the Apostles." (Nicephorus, *Niceph. Cpl. pro. s. imag.* c 25 [Mai N. *Bibl.* pp. ii. 30]).

St. Theodore the Studite of Constantinople (759-826 A.D.)

Writing to Pope Leo III

Since to great Peter Christ our Lord gave the office of Chief Shepherd after entrusting him with the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, to Peter or his successor must of necessity every novelty in the Catholic Church be referred. [Therefore], save us, oh most divine Head of Heads, Chief Shepherd of the Church of Heaven." (Theodore, Bk. I. Ep. 23)

Writing to Pope Paschal, ...

"Hear, O Apostolic Head, divinely-appointed Shepherd of Christ's sheep, keybearer of the Kingdom of Heaven, Rock of the Faith upon whom the Catholic Church is built. For Peter art thou, who adornest and governest the Chair of Peter. Hither, then, from the West, imitator of Christ, arise and repel not for ever (Ps. xliii. 23). To thee spake Christ our Lord: 'And thou being one day converted, shalt strengthen thy brethren.' Behold the hour and the place. Help us, thou that art set by God for this. Stretch forth thy hand so far as thou canst. Thou hast strength with God, through being the first of all. (Letter of St. Theodore and four other Abbots to Pope Paschal, Bk. ii Ep. 12, Patr. Graec. 99, 1152-3)

Writing to Emperor Michael, ...

"Order that the declaration from old Rome be received, as was the custom by Tradition of our Fathers from of old and from the beginning. For this, O Emperor, is the highests of the Churches of God, in which first Peter held the Chair, to whom the Lord said: "Thou art Peter ...and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Theodore, Bk. II. Ep. 86)

"I witness now before God and men, they have torn themselves away from the Body of Christ, from the Supreme See (Rome), in which Christ placed the keys of the Faith, against which the gates of hell (I mean the mouth of heretics) have not prevailed, and never will until the Consummation, according to the promise of Him Who cannot lie. Let the blessed and Apostolic Paschal (Pope St. Paschal I) rejoice therefore, for he has fulfilled the work of Peter." (Theodore Bk. II. Ep. 63).

"In truth we have seen that a manifest successor of the prince of the Apostles presides over the Roman Church. We truly believe that Christ has not deserted the Church here (Constantinople), for assistance from you has been our one and only aid from of old and from the beginning by the providence of God in the critical times. You are, indeed the untroubled and pure fount of orthodoxy from the beginning, you the calm harbor of the whole Church, far removed from the waves of heresy, you the God-chosen city of refuge." (Letter of St. Theodor & Four Abbots to Pope Paschal).

"Let him (Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople) assemble a synod of those with whom he has been at variance, if it is impossible that representatives of the other Patriarchs should be present, a thing which might certainly be if the Emperor should wish the Western Patriarch (the Roman Pope) to be present, to whom is given authority over an ecumenical synod; but let

him make peace and union by sending his synodical letters to the prelate of the First See." (Theodore the Studite, Patr. Graec. 99, 1420)

St Cyril & St Methodius (865 A.D.)

"It is not true, as this Canon states, that the holy Fathers gave the primacy to old Rome because it was the capital of the Empire; it is from on high, from divine grace, that this primacy drew its origin. Because of the intensity of his faith Peter, the first of the Apostles, was addressed in these words by our Lord Jesus Christ himself 'Peter, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep'. That is why in hierarchical order Rome holds the pre-eminent place and is the first See. That is why the leges of old Rome are eternally immovable, and that is the view of all the Churches" (Methodius ---N. Brianchaninov, The Russian Church (1931), 46; cited by Butler, Church and Infallibility, 210) (Upon This Rock (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999), p. 177).

"Because of his primacy, the Pontiff of Rome is not required to attend an Ecumenical Council; but without his participation, manifested by sending some subordinates, every Ecumenical Council is as non-existent, for it is he who presides over the Council." (Ibid.)

St. Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022): "One should not contradict the Latins when they say that the Bishop of Rome is the first. This primacy is not harmful to the Church. Let them only prove his faithfulness to the faith of Peter and to that of the successors of Peter. If it is so, let him enjoy all the privileges of Pontiff. Let the Bishop of Rome be successor of the orthodoxy of Sylvester and Agatho, of Leo, Liberius, Martin and Gregory, then we also will call him Apostolic and the first among the other bishops; then we also will obey him, not only as Peter, but as the Savior Himself." (Symeon the New Theologian, Dialogue Against Heresies 23, PG 155:120 AC; cited in Meyendorff, The Primacy of Peter).

Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.)

"Philip the presbyter and legate of the Apostolic See said: 'There is no doubt, and in fact it has been known in all ages, that the holy and most blessed Peter, prince and head of the apostles, pillar of the faith, and foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the human race, and that to him was given the power of loosing and binding sins: who down even to today and forever both lives and judges in his successors. The holy and most blessed Pope Celestine, according to due order, is his successor and holds his place, and us he sent to supply his place in this holy synod'" (Acts of the Council, session 3 [A.D. 431])

Peter Chrysologus (449 A.D.)

"We exhort you in every respect, honorable brother, to heed obediently what has been written by the most blessed pope of the city of Rome, for blessed Peter, who lives and presides in his own see, provides the truth of faith to those who seek it. For we, by reason of our pursuit of peace and faith, cannot try cases on the faith without the consent of the bishop of Rome" (Letters 25:2 [A.D. 449]).

Pope Leo I (445 A.D.)

"As for the resolution of the bishops which is contrary to the Nicene decree, in union with your faithful piety, I declare it to be invalid and annul it by the authority of the holy apostle Peter" (Letters 110 [A.D. 445]).

"Whereupon the blessed Peter, as inspired by God, and about to benefit all nations by his confession, said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Not undeservedly, therefore, was he pronounced blessed by the Lord, and derived from the original Rock that solidity which belonged both to his virtue and to his name [Peter]" (The Tome of Leo [A.D. 449])

Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.)

"After the reading of the foregoing epistle [The Tome of Leo], the most reverend bishops cried out: 'This is the faith of the fathers! This is the faith of the apostles! So we all believe! Thus the orthodox believe! Anathema to him who does not thus believe! Peter has spoken thus through Leo! . . . This is the true faith! Those of us who are orthodox thus believe! This is the faith of the Fathers!'" (Acts of the Council, session 2 [A.D. 451]).

Pope Damasus I (382 A.D.)

"Likewise it is decreed: . . . [W]e have considered that it ought to be announced that . . . the holy Roman Church has been placed at the forefront not by the conciliar decisions of other churches, but has received the primacy by the evangelic voice of our Lord and Savior, who says: 'You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it; and I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you shall have bound on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall have loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven' [Matt. 16:18–19]. The first see [today], therefore, is that of Peter the apostle, that of the Roman Church, which has neither stain nor blemish nor anything like it" (Decree of Damasus 3 [A.D. 382])