

## A UNIQUE RULER

---

One of the subsequent events of the World's War has been the repudiation of the theory of the divine right of kings. The theory of self-determination of nations has been substituted in its place and today the people may by ballot designate those in whom they desire authority to reside, and also the extent of the authority invested in each official. It is the duty of these officials to preserve the nation's integrity, to advance civilization, to keep their nation at peace and concord with the world. But the authority of the state extends merely to the material and temporal interests of its subjects.

There is however another kind of authority in the world,—there is a ruler whose position is not and never will be hampered by the theory of self-determination, for his election is not by popular acclaim, his responsibility is limited by no mere national interests, his jurisdiction extends further than man's temporal peace and welfare and his laws are obligatory the world over on all who profess their faith in the one true Church founded by Christ. This ruler is the Vicar of Christ, the Pope of Rome. In this paper we will examine the claims of the Pope, and endeavor to show the soundness of his contentions.

The Pope claims the primacy of authority in the Church. By primacy is to be understood a certain pre-eminence: now primacy is threefold, namely, primacy of honor, which is a mere right of precedence; the second kind is that of direction, such primacy is conceded to an individual so that an assembled society will carry out its program in an orderly manner. The third and ultimate degree of primacy, called jurisdiction, is a real right confided in an individual to govern a society; the legislative, judicial and executive powers are essential elements constituting the primacy of jurisdiction.

To prove that the primacy of jurisdiction over the universal Church was conferred upon Peter by Christ, that it was the Saviour's intention that this office should be perpetual, and that the Catholic Church alone in the person of the Bishop of Rome possesses the same authority to govern, as was bestowed upon Peter by the God-Man, is the aim of this paper.

The Gospel tells us that when Jesus was on the eastern coast of Galilee shortly before His triumphal entry into Jeru-

salem, the Pharsees and Sadducees came to Him and asked for a sign from heaven proving His authority. Christ condemned them for being unable to interpret the many miracles he worked prior to this time and then refused to give a sign except the "sign of Jonas the prophet." He crossed the sea with His disciples and then tested their faith by asking, "Whom do men say that the Son of man is?" (Matt. XVI 13-16). They answered, "some John the Baptist, and other some Elias, etc." Then Jesus asked them, "But whom do you say I am?" The Apostles hesitated to reply, and Peter made answer, saying: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God." Thus Peter made an open profession of his faith, and showed that he believed Jesus to be the long looked for Messiah.

As a reward for this open manifestation of faith the Saviour said to him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. XVI 17-18). What are to gather from these words? Surely nothing of ambiguity is contained therein. For Jesus clearly makes manifest His intention of building a Church in the future, by His words "I will build"; it is also evident from such a statement that up to the present time no Church was organized by the Master. The "building of My Church" is to be taken in its metaphorical sense, typifying a religious society. Now the foundation of society is authority. For authority is the force holding a society together, and when this force is despised or disregarded, the foundation of society shakes and the organization soon totters and falls. As authority is never found subsisting by itself but always existing in some person we must now determine the person in whom Christ confided the authority of His Church, and upon whom He raised the edifice.

In His early ministry we know that the Lord changed Simon's name to Peter. And now when designating the person upon whom the Church is to rest, He chooses one of the Apostles named Simon Bar-Jona, and for fear of any mistake arising as to the identity of that personage, the Lord in the same discourse also employs the name which He Himself imposed upon Simon, that of Peter. A lawyer establishing the identity of an individual, in our day of exactitude, could do no better.

Peter alone is to be the foundation, for in the early part of the address, the Lord questioning all the Apostles, "Whom do you (vos)," here is found the word "you" in the plural, thus indicating His question was meant for all present. But now when replying to Peter's answer, Jesus changes the plural form of "you" into the singular "tu," thereby showing that His words were addressed solely to Peter. Also in choosing a rock for the foundation Jesus explicitly promises to build His Church upon Peter, for in the language which the Lord spoke, the Syro-Chaldaic, the words Peter and rock are one and the same, and this passage in the original tongue would read as follows, "Thou art Cephas and upon this cephas, I will build my Church."

As we have established the fact that Christ promised to found a Church and the foundation of the same was to be Peter, we will now proceed to prove that this promise was fulfilled in every detail.

After the resurrection the Lord appeared to the Apostles on the bank of the Lake Tiberias, and there tested Peter's love by asking him, Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?" Peter replied, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." The Master then said to him, "Feed My lambs!" Once again the same question was put to Peter by the Master, and He received the same reply from Peter, after which a second time the Redeemer commanded the Prince of the Apostles to "Feed My lambs." And now a third time He saith to him: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" Peter was grieved, because He had said to him the third time: "Lovest thou Me?" And he said to Him: "Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love thee." After this reply the Lord gave the command to Simon to "Feed My sheep" (John XXI 15-17).

Here again the Lord makes use of Peter's natal name and once more signals him out from the other Apostles. The word feed in the Greek language (that used by St. John in writing this Gospel) means "rule or govern." Here we see that Christ establishes a fold and appoints Peter and him alone shepherd, with unlimited authority over the entire flock. Furthermore Christ Himself in this discourse makes the distinction in the flock between the lambs, the sheep, and the shepherd. That is, He indicates the members of the flock as lambs; those who are to guide them in their spiritual life as sheep, namely, the priests and bishops; and He commands Peter to feed both the lambs and

sheep without exception, thus fulfilling the promise He made before His death, of building a Church and of using Peter as the foundation.

The Gospel and the Acts sustain our contention for Peter's primacy, for his name appears first, thereby indicating that he was looked upon as the leader. We know he was not the Beloved Disciple, and that he was not the first called to the apostolate, no matter how we try to explain this fact all our reasons remain insufficient, and we are forced to admit that he must have received some great distinguishing mark from the Master. After the Ascension, St. Peter is the first to preach the Gospel, he presides over the election of Matthias to the apostolate, he is the first to perform a miracle in confirmation of the new religion, and to him is given the principal portion of the world to govern. All this internal evidence clearly shows that Peter was regarded not merely as an Apostle, but as the head of the society of which the Apostles were members.

The Fathers of the Church in interpreting the above quoted text of St. John all agree in saying that it refers to the bestowal of primacy of jurisdiction. Tertullian says, "Nothing could be hidden from Peter, called the rock, as it was upon him as upon a foundation stone that the Church was built." In another place he says that "The Lord gave the keys to Peter, and by Peter to the Church." Origen declares that, "though the Church is built upon all the Apostles, Peter nevertheless is her principal foundation and the very solid rock upon which Christ has built her." Again "Peter received the supreme power to feed the sheep." "Though our Lord gave to all the Apostles the power to bind and to loosen, yet, in order that unity should come from the authority of one person alone, He spoke to Peter and to him alone, when he said: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This is indeed testimony of great value, for these men were well able to relate in what light St. Peter was regarded by the Church of Apostolic times. The final word with regard to the meaning of the text of St. John, XXI, 15-17, has been spoken by the Fathers of the Vatican Council in saying "that they express the bestowal on St. Peter of the primacy of honor and jurisdiction in the whole Church" (Cap. i., De Apost. Prim. Instit.) Hence no Catholic may give any other sense to these verses.

Granted that Christ bestowed the primacy of jurisdiction it necessarily follows that this power still remains, for we read in the Holy Gospel that the Lord after His resurrection spoke to the eleven Apostles assembled saying, "Going therefore teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I will be with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. XXVIII, 19-20). It is most reasonable to explain this text as follows. Christ speaking to His Apostles who were the representatives of His Church gives the command to teach all nations. But at the death of the last Apostle all nations had not heard of the redemption, and the command of Christ was not fulfilled. Therefore the work of teaching devolved upon the Church built upon Peter, which is the Roman Catholic Church, in which alone is to be found the successor of Peter and the other Apostles.

The words of the above text, "I will be with you all days, even to the consummation of the world," can mean only one thing and that is, as Peter cannot live forever, I Christ, intend that his successor should have the same power of primacy, so that the unity, in government, in doctrine, and in morals of "My Church" might be maintained till the day of final reckoning.

As the Lord bestowed the primacy of jurisdiction upon Peter we must admit that this power remains to this day in the Bishop of Rome. For Jesus always taught that He came to save all nations, and as the Apostles did not preach the redemption to all nations, we logically conclude that the Master's teachings are to be propagated by the Church He raised upon Peter, for it was to this Church alone He promised and conferred the power against which the gates of hell would not prevail at all.

History testifies to the fact that the Bishop of Rome was always looked upon as the successor of Peter, in whom resided the primacy of jurisdiction. For otherwise why should appeals be made to the Bishop of Rome from both the East and the West, either to seek the assistance of the Pope in refuting error or in settling disputes arising from the interpretation of dogmas pertaining to faith and morals. History also tells us that when Bishops were gathered in councils matters decided by them were not looked upon as binding and final unless the Pope confirmed their work. As the concurrence of the Pope was always considered essential by the Church, the whole Church

acknowledged, by this very fact, the Papal primacy of power and jurisdiction.

Thus we have seen that Christ promised to build a Church; which promise He fulfilled; that He selected Peter to be the head of the society and conferred upon him unlimited authority to teach whatsoever He Himself had taught; that the Lord further promised to be with that society until the consummation of the world and to preserve it from all attacks. Historical facts are not wanting to sustain our contentions that this promise has been fulfilled whenever errors assailed the Church, for the successor of Peter, the Primate of the Universal Church, and the Bishop of Rome has at all times taught all nations whatsoever Christ had commanded. —Bro. Francis McCadden, O. P.

