4-23-03

THE EARLY PAPACY

A. SCRIPTURE

In the NT, primacy of geographical place belongs to Jerusalem, although primacy of person (after JC and Mary) belongs to Peter. Jerusalem was the earliest seat of apostolic authority, the place of the Lord's death and resurrection, and it held the earliest primacy of honor. Even Paul's letter to the Romans does not ascribe any special prerogatives to Rome (although it commends their faith). Peter, however, is the first of the apostles, and in the first part of the book of Acts, which describes the life of the early church before Paul, Peter is the dominant figure and the speaker for the church. This pre-eminent role of Peter has even led many NT scholars of different churches today to discern a "Petrine function" in the NT, a special ministry of leadership, unity, and service among the apostles. Nonetheless, the key texts need also to be examined for their influence in Latin translation over nearly a thousand years.

Petrine Texts: Matthew 16:18-19, John 21:15-17; and cf. Psalm 95.
[Now generally regarded as post-Resurrection in origin]

σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ ...

Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam.
"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church."
Venite exsultemus Domino, acclamemus petrae salutis nostrae.
"O come let us sing to the Lord, let us acclaim the rock of our salvation." In each case, is the rock Peter, or Peter's faith? Does it include Peter's successors?

B. EARLY FATHERS

1) I Clement, 96 AD: Prologue (Richardson p. 43): "The Church of God, living in exile (= paroikousa = "parishing" = temporary residence = earlier, non-territorial meaning of the word "parish") in Rome, to the Church of God exiled in Corinth." = Anonymous, written in the name of the entire congregation or assembly (ekklesia), of which Clement may have been the corresponding secretary, or president of a college of presbyters. Para. 63 (Richardson 73): "You will make us exceedingly happy if you prove obedient to what we, prompted by the Holy Spirit, have written." = Indication that the Roman Church regards it as her duty to intervene at Corinth, and expects to be obeyed. NB No mention of any bishop at Rome, may indicate that Rome did not regularly have a resident bishop this early.

2) St. Ignatius of Antioch, c. 107 AD: Letter to the Romans (Richardson 103): Addresses the Church at Rome as "prokathemene tes agapes" = either "presiding in love" (indicates some presidential status) or "pre-eminent in charity" (indicates social service). This is the only one of Ignatius' seven letters in which he refers to himself as a bishop, yet Rome is the only place (of six to whom he writes) where he makes no mention of a bishop. (Explanation of RPC Hanson: the conservative Roman Church had not yet adopted monarchical episcopacy, a regular resident bishop, this early). No mention of bishop at Rome in I Clement, above.

3) The Shepherd of Hermas, written during the second fourth of the second century, describes the leadership of the Roman Church then as held by a committee of presbyters.

4) St. Irenaeus of Lyons, c. 185: Writing in the context of the tradition of doctrine through succession of bishops in teaching office (Richardson 372-3), Irenaeus singles out "the tradition which that very great, oldest, and well-known church, founded and established at Rome by those two most glorious apostles Peter and Paul, received from the apostles, and its faith known among men, which comes down to us through the successions of bishops.... For every church must be in harmony with this church because of its outstanding pre-eminence... since the apostolic tradition is preserved in it." The text for "be in harmony" reads convenire (only the Latin survives at this point), and while Baus, McCue, and Ohlig tend towards Richardson's translation, Barry makes it read "of necessity agree" - which is quite possible and gives it a much higher meaning. Still another possibility is Barraclough: "of needs resort to."

Also, quoting I Clement as an authority (p. 373), Irenaeus thus provides the earliest explicit evidence of any post-NT writing quoted as an authority by one of the early church fathers, and it is the letter of the Church in Rome which he quotes.

NB Irenaeus attributes the foundation of the Roman Church to both Peter and Paul. He says they are apostles, whereas the first bishop of Rome is Linus (p. 372). Eusebius of Caesarea is similar.

NB The great Anglican reformer John Jewel in the 16th century held that the English Church "would be willing to yield to Rome all the honour Irenaeus gave her if she would return to the doctrine and traditions of the apostles." (Parker Society vol. 1, p. 365).

5) Tertullian, c. 200: The first to use Matthew 16:18-19 as proof that the church was founded upon Peter as the Rock: Prescriptions against Heretics, 22.4f: "Was anything hidden from Peter, the rock upon whom the Church was to be built, Peter who was given the keys of the kingdom of heaven and authority to bind and loose in heaven and on earth?" Para. 36, speaking to the church of Rome: "How fortunate is that Church upon which the apostles poured their whole teaching together with their blood, where Peter suffered like his Lord, where Paul...". Also cf. Tertullian, de Pudicitia 21.9: "Upon this rock" means "personally upon Peter."

6) St. Cyprian of Carthage, mid third century: Roman Church, indeed the entire Church, is founded upon Peter, who was one of the apostles. The church's unity is to be found in the conciliar consensus of the collective episcopate, each bishop being a successor to Peter in each local church. In Cyprian's On the Unity of the Catholic Church (c. 251 AD), ch.4, after quoting the Petrine text from Matthew (I say unto thee, Thou art Peter...), Cyprian comments: "The Lord builds the Church upon one man. True, after the resurrection he assigned the like power to all the apostles, saying... (As the Father hath sent me... Receive the Holy Ghost), (but) despite that, in order to make unity manifest, the Lord arranged by his own authority that this unity should, from the start, take its beginning from one man. Certainly the rest of the apostles

were exactly what Peter was; they were endowed with an equal share of office and power. But there was unity at the beginning before there was any development, to demonstrate that the Church of Christ is one."
Also, there is an alternate text of this passage from Cyprian, generally dated later, 256 AD (but by Kelly earlier than the main text of c. 251). It is known as the Petrine text, Papal text, or Primacy text, and is the origin of the terms "chair of Peter" (cathedra Petri) (implying teaching function) and "primacy" applied to the Bishop of Rome. In this Petrine version, after quoting the same Matthean text, Cyprian states that Christ by his own authority established the "origin and principle" of the church's unity in the "chair" (cathedra) of Peter, to whom "primacy" was thus given. And Cyprian rhetorically concludes: "He who does not hold this unity of Peter, does he believe he holds the faith? He who deserts the chair of Peter on whom the Church was founded, does he trust that he is in the Church ?"
Also, Cyprian, in his Letter 55 (p. 139): the Bishop of Rome occupies the "place of Peter."

7) Origen, mid-third century: "But the rock is every disciple of Christ, who drinks out of the spiritual rock, who is Christ" (in his commentary on Matthew 12.10)).

8) St. John Chrysostom, d. 407: the rock is "the faith which you have confessed" (Homily 54 on Matthew).

9) St. Augustine of Hippo, 354-430: did not say the famous words attributed to him, "Roma locuta est, causa finita est" (= Rome has spoken, the case is closed). Rather, he said only the second half of this, in his sermon 131:10, commenting upon one limited case of appeal, which was clearly not intended as a general principle. The first half was added later. And in his sermon 295, Augustine says that "Peter" came from "rock," not vice versa, and that the entire church, not just Peter, received the keys.

10) Eusebius of Caesarea, early 4th century: E.H. III.2 & 21: Like Irenaeus, attributes the foundation of the Roman Church to both Peter and Paul, whom he regards as apostles; first Roman bishop was Linus.

C. CANONS OF THE EARLY ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

1) Nicaea I, 325: Canon 6, "Let the ancient custom which is followed in Egypt and Lybia and the Pentapolis remain in force, by which the Bp. of Alexandria has the supervision of all those places, since this is also the custom of the Bishop of Rome. Similarly in regard to Antioch and the other provinces, let the inherited rights [= presbeia = privileges = seniority = ?primacy?] of the Church be preserved." What is the custom of the Bishop of Rome, and what is this seniority? 1) to have jurisdiction over others? (i.e., regional seniority over the bishops of adjacent territories, as do the patriarchal sees of Alexandria and Antioch)? (The great 16th century Anglican Bishop John Jewell held this interpretation in his Apology of the Church of England); or 2) to

recognize authoritatively the metropolitical authority of Alexandria and Antioch--and because Rome has done this so also will the council?

2) Constantinople I, 381: Canon 3, "The Bishop of Constantinople shall have the primacy [= presbeia = privileges = seniority] of honor after the Bishop of Rome, because Constantinople is the new Rome." Not directed against Rome, but rather "principle of accommodation to political re-organization of the Empire" (C was founded in 330). Rome however delays recognition of this council until 519, even after it had recognized Ephesus & Chalcedon!

3) Chalcedon, 451: Canon 28, "As the Fathers properly gave the primacy to the throne of the older Rome, because that was the imperial city," so Chalcedon gives "equal privileges to the most holy Throne of New Rome (Constantinople = formerly Byzantium and now today Istanbul), judging with reason that the city which was honored with the sovereignty and senate, and which enjoyed equal privileges with the elder Rome, should also be magnified like her in ecclesiastical matters, being the second after her." This accompanies Chalcedon's reaffirmation of Constantinople canon 3. Again, principle of accommodation; effect is to confer not only primacy of honor, second to Rome, but also primacy of jurisdiction in the East, to Constantinople. Chalcedon thus establishes the five ancient patriarchal sees in their classical order: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem. NB: 4 in East, 1 in West. But Rome protests this canon also, delaying recognition until very early 6th century.

D. MAJOR POPES OF THE FOURTH, FIFTH, AND SIXTH CENTURIES

1) St. Stephen I, 254-257: a Roman, and the first Bishop of Rome to claim that he possessed special privileges as successor to the chair of Peter (cf. Cyprian of Carthage, papal text), and the first Roman bishop to cite Matthew 16:18 in support of Roman primacy in succession to Peter (cf. Tertullian & Cyprian, earlier). Pope Stephen intervened in various disputes, and made the famous assertion (vs Cyprian), "Nihil innovetur nisi quod traditum est" ("Let nothing be introduced that has not already been handed down"), to which Cyprian replied, "Consuetudo sine veritate, vetustas erroris est" ("Custom without truth is but the longevity of error")!

2) Liberius 352-366/Liberian Catalogue: compiler unknown; the major early list of popes, compiled c 354; goes down to Pope Liberius, attributes the foundation of Roman Church to Peter alone, and places him at head of its lists of bishops. Hence, Rome now becomes simply the see of Peter, the apostolic see, and Peter the apostle its first bishop. Foundation is now clearly laid, anticipated in Tertullian and Cyprian, for the "principle of apostolicity" (Dvornik).

3) Damasus I, 366-384: "From Damasus onwards there is a marked crescendo in the expression of the claims made by the Bishop of Rome" (= H. Chadwick). Damasus proceeds to suppress heresies: Arianism,

Donatism, Macedonianism. During his pontificate emperor issues Edict of Thessalonika 380 (cf. post-Constantinian class handout): Catholic Religion = that followed by the Pope of Rome and the bishop of Alexandria, and all who dissent are demented and insane and subject to punishment! Damasus in 382 enunciates/affirms the "principle of apostolicity" in commenting on Matt. 16: "The Roman Church is the see of the Apostle Peter." Hence D asserts foundation of Roman Primacy both upon Constantinople canon 3 (= principle of accommodation to historical reality) and also upon a supposed doctrinal commission of Christ to the apostle Peter (principle of apostolicity). Following upon this, D becomes the first Roman bishop to appropriate title "apostolic" to the Roman see ("apostolic see"), first Rb to use the "majestic plural", "we", and first Rb to address other bishops as "sons" (all based primarily upon the principle of apostolicity and in reaction against expanding claims of Constantinople). D gathers papal archives, adorns martyrs' tombs in the catacombs, and promulgates canon of NT (cf. Gnosticism lecture), also commissions Jerome to produce a new version of the Latin Bible = Vulgate c. 405 AD. NB general feeling that the clear lesson of the Arian controversy and the apostasy of the emperor Julian was the need for the whole church to pull together with stricter discipline and more centralized control. Damasus profits from this feeling, as more and more requests for opinion and guidance and even judgement come his way. He and his successors begin to treat such requests for their advice as analogous to the questions sent by provincial governors to the Roman emperors, and compose their replies in a formal chancery style modeled on that of the imperial chancery.

4) St. Leo the Great, 440-461: Greatest of the 5th century popes. Enormous advance and consolidation, after sack of Rome 410 by Alaric the Visigoth. Leo emphasizes Petrine claims from Scripture, greatness of Roman past; Romulus & Remus are replaced by Peter and Paul. Leo a magnificent preacher; outstanding collection of sermons survives. Tome of Leo, 449, clear and forceful even if not controversial or profound, is accepted -- with the cry "Peter has spoken through Leo!" -- as a standard of orthodoxy at Chalcedon. Right to trial of other bishops is granted by the emperor to him in 455. Developing legal conception of papal primacy: Pope Leo as the living embodiment of "Peter, whose authority he wields," inaugurates term "plenitudo potestatis" (= "fullness of power") to describe his office, assumes the title of "pontifex maximus" (= "supreme pontiff," title earlier held by the Roman emperor as high priest of the Roman state religion until it was refused by the Christian emperor Valentinian II; cf Post-Con handout). Thus the mantle of the emperor, who since 330 has been removed to Constantinople, now descends upon the papal shoulders. > > Thomas Hobbes, 17th century, description of the pope as "the ghost of the deceased Roman emperor, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof."

5) Gelasius I, 492-496: High doctrine of the relation of ecclesiastical to civil authority, of church to state. Letter to the emperor Anastasius 494 is classical origin of the "two swords" doctrine (Luke 22:38 "They said, 'Lord, behold here are two swords.' and Jesus said to them, 'It is enough'."). Gelasius expands: "Two there are, August emperor, by which this world is chiefly ruled, the sacred authority of

the priesthood, and the royal power. Of these the responsibility of the priests is more weighty because they will answer for the kings of men at the divine judgement. You know, most Clement son, that although you take precedence over all mankind in dignity, nevertheless you piously bow the neck to those who have charge of divine affairs and seek from them the means of your salvation.... And if the hearts of the faithful should be submitted to all priests in general who rightly administer divine things, how much more should assent be given to the bishop of that see which the Most High wished to be preeminent over all priests, and which the devotion of the whole church has honored ever since." Problems of interpretation!

6) St. Hormisdas, 514-523: Known best for his Formula of Hormisdas, 517, to which he secured the signatures of the Patriarch of Constantinople and 250 Eastern bishops (with the assistance of the emperor), affirming the Chalcedonian definition and the Tome of Leo, and on the basis of Matt. 16:18 asserting the authority of the Roman See, in which "the Catholic religion has always been preserved immaculate", "in which the whole, true, and perfect security of the Christian religion resides," and further stipulating that "those who are not in agreement with the Apostolic See will not have their names read during the sacred mysteries" (by the Deacon, from the Diptychs).

7) St. Gregory I the Great, 590-604: (not to be confused with Gregory VII, 11th century who was probably "greater" in history but not "the great"). Last patristic/first medieval pope. Great monk, statesman, administrator, author (Book of Pastoral Care, Dialogues (bk II = St. Benedict; IV = Requiem Mass), Commentary on Job (deeper, spiritual meaning = allegorical). Founder of Roman mission to England (597: St. Augustine of Canterbury; eventual triumph in 664 Synod of Whitby, demise of Celtic Christianity). Gregory responsible for major early development of the papal states, building upon temporal endowment of land from the time of Constantine; hence, every pope after his reign on into the 19th century has also been a petty Italian prince! Adopted title Servus Servorum Dei (= "servant of the servants of God"), and took as his motto "prodesse magis quam praeesse" ("to be on behalf of rather than to be in front of"). He even refused title of "ecumenical" (= "worldwide" or "universal") and protested its assumption by the patriarch of Constantinople (still today: "ecumenical patriarch" is the title claimed by Constantinople). Later, ironically, this title "ecumenical" would be claimed, exclusively, by his successor Pope Gregory VII (1075, Dictatus Papae, ii).

E. FACTORS IN EVOLUTION OF ROMAN PRIMACY

1) Principle of accommodation to historical reality, as Rome was already the first and venerable seat (= see = sedes) of the Roman empire for three-quarters of a millennium before Christ. This same practical principle would later elevate Constantinople to second place. Important here also was tradition of Constantine's temporal endowment of the Roman see: erection of the shrine and basilica of St. Peter, donation of the

Lateran Palace to Roman bishop as an episcopal residence (early 4th century, possibly to Pope Miltiades in 312).

2) Principle of apostolicity, based upon developing doctrinal explication of Petrine texts as well as upon probability of double apostolic foundation (by both Peter and Paul; not clearly attested in Scripture, but considerable evidence in early tradition). Principle of apostolicity looms more important as doctrinal rationale for Roman primacy in later 4th and succeeding centuries, especially in West, but not earlier and not in the East.

3) Rome the only patriarchal, or even apostolic, see of the West, and thus quite active in missionary foundations (cf. England, 597) and in settlement of disputes, while the 4 Eastern patriarchates were quarreling among themselves. Also, Constantinople canon 3 and Chalcedon 28 ensured that Rome would remain the primal see of the Church, above all the other four of the East.

4) No one school of theology predominated at Rome. Papal statements tended to be clear and forceful, even if not profound or controversial (cf. Leo's Tome), whereas Eastern sees were always competing with each other especially on issues of more speculative theology. Rome seemed always to pick the winning side in doctrinal disputes.

5) Remarkable series of outstandingly capable, personally attractive bishops at Rome. The see was well organized and financially viable.

6) Increasing willingness of other major sees, especially in West, to appeal to Rome for guidance and settlement of disputes.

F. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

1) The word POPE (Greek or Latin = papa = father) in patristic usage could be applied to any bishop, and was not used of the Roman bishop until 303. In the East it was less common, but was regularly (and even earlier) used of the bishop/ patriarch of Alexandria. (Still today, the Coptic, non-Chalcedonian, Patriarch of Alexandria is Pope Shenouda III). In the West the title "pope" was finally restricted to the Roman bishop by Gregory VII in the 11th century.

2) Whereas the East came to accord the Roman see a primacy or seniority (of honor, "presiding in love") on the basis of the principle of accommodation (to ancient tradition and historical/political /ecclesiastical reality), by the later 4th and 5th centuries the West increasingly came to understand the reasons for the Roman primacy as based on the principle of apostolicity (doctrinal rationale, apostolic foundation, Scriptural texts etc).

3) Hence, increasingly, Rome and the West generally come to understand the Roman primacy as involving doctrinal authority and jurisdictional implications, whereas the East continues to see the Roman primacy as

principally a leadership of honor, first among equals, a "presiding in love" (Ignatius of Antioch). The Western views, however, set the stage for later claims to papal universal ordinary jurisdiction and infallibility.

4) Not until later 11th century with Gregorian Reforms are all the above factors in the evolution of the Roman primacy seen as constituting a single, carefully planned, pre-existing doctrinal scheme which successive popes simply played out irrespective of chance and accident. [Note the changes in the collect for St. Peter at this time!] Still later polemic, East vs West and Prot vs Catholic, however, has led all sides to think that this was so, planned either by God or by the devil! Yet such a reading of the early evidence before the 11th century is historically untrue, as shown above.

5. ARCIC Final Report: Anglicans should recognize the Roman Primacy as being "By Divine Providence" (?Divine Right?).

Comment by Bishop Arthur Vogel (retired of West Missouri, for many years the senior representative of the Episcopal Church for relations with the Roman Church):

"There is an increasing consensus being achieved through the dialogues, I believe (although this view is not universally accepted), that the visible unity of the church (the latter conceived as a communion of communities) is most adequately revealed to the world if the unity is visibly focused in a primate who is a servant of the unity within the koinonia. A growing number of people, I also believe, are now prepared to say that the most logical person to be such a primate and servant of unity is the Bishop of Rome. Even in the divided church, no one has wider acceptance as the spokesman for all Christian people than the Bishop of Rome.

"Historical development alone offers the pope as the most logical person to serve as primate of the universal church. Those non-Catholics who are willing to accept the pope in such a role are those that read the historical development of the primacy of the see of Rome as a mark of providence. Roman Catholic theology has traditionally argued for papal primacy on the basis of 'divine right.' A major theological problem still to be resolved in the future is to determine, if there is to be a universal primate of the church, whether that ministry is jure divino, divina providentia, or ordinatio divina. Do the terms convey irreconcilable theological differences, or, for the sake of the unity and mission of the church, can a common mind be found among them? ...

"Several bilateral dialogues have agreed that Peter held a special position among the twelve apostles, but there is no necessary admission in that fact that Peter held a primacy that was to be transmitted to successors. There has, nevertheless, been growth in the acceptance of the need for a ministry in the church today that is analogous to the role of Peter in the band of twelve. There is a special challenge to the Bishop of Rome, therefore, so to exercise a Petrine ministry within the Roman Catholic Church that other churches will see its necessity and desire its benefits."

- "The Decree on Ecumenism and the Future," pp. 6-8.

6) JRW: In view of the testimony of scripture, early writers, and early councils, I believe a good case can be made for Anglican recognition of a Roman primacy of honor and even of constitutionally limited jurisdiction (but not of infallibility, which is a different matter!) on the principle of accommodation to developing historical reality, much as do the Orthodox, and there is considerable Anglican precedent for asserting this. But limits would have to be firmly set, such as was done by the great Anglican ecclesiologist Richard Field in the early 17th century, who was willing to grant the pope the presidency of general councils, but not the power of veto or direction (IV, p. 33).

Cf. JRW essay in A Pope for All Christians, ed. Peter McCord; Peter in the New Testament (on Petrine function), ed. R.E. Brown; Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue vol. 5: Papal Primacy and the Universal Church, ed P.C. Empie & T.A. Murphy; JRW essay on "An Anglican View of Papal Authority" in Stephen Sykes, ed., Authority in the Anglican Communion.

THE EARLY PAPACY

Petrine texts/Petrine function

Primacy

Damasus I

St. Leo the Great

Gelasius I

St. Gregory the Great

Pope

"Principle of accommodation"

"Principle of apostolicity"