

DID PETER HAVE THE PRIMACY?

Was Peter the CHIEF APOSTLE, having absolute authority over all the other 11 apostles? The Catholic Church claims Peter was the designated LEADER of all other apostles; that there has been an unbroken "succession of popes" which has ruled the Catholic Church from that time—and that the pope (called the "vicar of Christ"), when speaking from his official seat in St. Peter's, is INFALLIBLE. But was Peter the "pope" over the other 11? Was he in complete autocratic authority over them? Did he, alone, RULE over God's church, with all other apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, under that ONE MAN in whom was vested absolute authority?

By Garner Ted Armstrong

"I will build my church," said Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18). Jesus described His church as "a *little flock*" (Luke 12:32), a group that would be *persecuted*, maligned and attacked by the world. He said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

In His final prayer, just before His crucifixion, He said of the apostles, "I have given them thy word and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am *not of the world*" (John 17:14).

His church would not be *of the world*.

Earlier, He had predicted, "They shall put you out of the synagogues [churches]: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think they doeth God service" (John 16:2).

Thus, Christ described the group of "called-out ones" (for that is the *meaning* of the word "church") who would form the "ekklezia" (church); He said they would be a *small, persecuted* group of individuals. Some would receive *martyrdom* for remaining faithful to the calling and commission Jesus placed before them.

Never did Jesus indicate His true church was to become a powerful, influential, *politically oriented organization* which would become *part of this world*; having concourse with this world's government and governmental leaders, becoming a large, *visible* church, capable of influencing legislation, wielding political power through numbers and financial resources!

True to Jesus' predictions, major *persecution* set in against the true Church of God from the very moment of its inception!

The first few chapters of the book of Acts show the furious attempts of the Jewish religious leadership to stamp out what they considered to be a dangerous new *religion*, and history is replete with examples of massive persecutions throughout the Middle East, and the Roman Empire, which, for all their ferocity and brutality, failed to stamp out the true Church of God.

Jesus had promised that "the gates of the grave [Greek: *hades*] shall not prevail against it!" (Matthew 16:18).

Did Jesus Put Peter in Charge?

When Jesus established His true church, did He intend to *relinquish control* of it—giving the total *headship* of the church into the hands of one of the apostles?

Let the Bible answer. Jesus said, "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter [Greek: *Petros*, meaning a 'pebble' or a small 'rock'] and upon this rock [Greek: *Petra*, meaning a whole mass of rock, like a craggy cliff or mountain] I will build my church; and the gates of hell [Greek: 'hades,' meaning the *grave*] shall not prevail

against it" (Matthew 16:18).

Peter had two "nicknames," one in Greek and the other in Aramaic. *Jesus* supplied Peter this name when He said, "Thou art Peter" (using the Greek, "*Petros*") and said He would make Peter a "fisher of men." The other is "*Cephas*" (pronounced KE-fus), which is the Aramaic *equivalent* to "a stone."

The fact that Jesus called Peter a "little pebble," or a small "stone," did not indicate He was placing a TITLE on Peter's name. *Names have meanings*. Titles are added to names. If Peter had been given a "title," it would have been obvious, for Jesus would have called him "Peter *Primus*" or "*Peter the First*."

Those who argue that Peter's name meant he had the "primacy" OVER the other apostles—that they had to be *subject* to him—are in error. Peter himself was to write that each minister—whether apostle, elder, or whatever—was to be "subject to the other"! (1 Peter 5:5).

This change of name is not uncommon, for God changed Abram to "Abraham," meaning a "father of many nations," Jacob to "*Israel*," Saul to "Paul," and so on.

Jesus said He would build His church "*upon this ROCK*"! Who did He mean?

When Jesus said, "Thou art *Petros*, and upon this 'PETRA' *I will build my church*," He used, first, the *masculine* ending of the root Greek word which means "a rock" When He said "upon this *rock*" [*Petra*] I will build my church, He used the feminine, which has a *different meaning*.

Those who are familiar with the "romance" languages (based upon Latin, such as French and Spanish, etc.) know that *articles, including physiological and topographical objects*, have "masculine" and "feminine" gender. Thus, in the Spanish language, a "mountain" is "*la montana*." Our western state, in the United States, of "Montana" means, literally, "mountain."

The "a" on the end of "montana" demands a "*la*" (feminine) at the beginning of the phrase. All *objects*, such as the house (*la casa*—feminine) or the automobile (*el automobile*—masculine), have feminine or masculine *gender*.

Jesus changed the *gender* of the root Greek word *deliberately*.

The first, the masculine *petros*, means "a rock," but it means a much smaller rock, like a chunk of rock or stone taken from a much larger piece of rock. When He used the *feminine gender* in the second case, "*PETRA*," He meant the craggy side of a *cliff*, a great monolith, or a *mountain* of rock!

To what—or to whom—did He refer? Let the Bible answer!

Notice: "...And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of the spiritual ROCK that followed them: and that ROCK [*Petra*, in the Greek] *WAS CHRIST!* (1 Corinthians 10:4).

This very important scripture refers directly to *Jesus Christ*, that member of the godhead who was continually with the Israelites during their wanderings in the wilderness.

Notice what David wrote, in the Psalms: "O come, let us sing unto the Eternal: Let us make a joyful noise to the ROCK of our salvation" (Psalm 95:1).

"But the Eternal is my defense; and my God is the ROCK of my refuge" (Psalm 94:22).

"He is my ROCK" (Psalm 92:15).

"You are my ROCK and my fortress" (Psalm 71:3).

"He only is my ROCK and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; The ROCK of my strength, and my refuge, is in God" (Psalm 62:6, 7).

"He *only* is my ROCK and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved" (Psalm 62:2).
Notice the important chapter of Deuteronomy 32!

"Because I will publish the name of the Eternal: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the ROCK, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" (Deuteronomy 32:4).

Later, God says, ". . . Then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the ROCK of his salvation ... of the ROCK that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hath forgotten God that formed thee" (Deuteronomy 32:15-18).

Five times in this chapter the God who is the *Creator* (who became Jesus Christ—Hebrews 1, John 1) is described as "the ROCK."

Notice! "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their ROCK had sold them, and the Eternal had shut them up? For their rock is not as our ROCK, even our enemies themselves being judges" (Deuteronomy 32:30, 31).

Jesus said, "Upon this ROCK I will build my church," NOT meaning *Peter (Petros)*, whom He called a "pebble" or a "stone," but upon *HIMSELF! He, CHRIST*, was to head it!

Did Jesus Give the "Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven" to Peter?

Some, in attempting to prove one-man RULE over the church, cite the remainder of the passage in Matthew 16: "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."

However, Jesus was speaking to all the disciples at this moment (read the entire chapter in context), and only two chapters later tells all *the disciples*, "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

"*Again* I say unto you [emphasizing that this is at least the *second* time He has given them this charge], that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

"For where TWO or THREE are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:18-20).

Jesus did NOT say where "Peter" is—there am *I with Peter*; that I only work through, in and by this ONE MAN!

No, He required *checks and balances* in His early church government, plainly saying it required at least *two* of the disciples (apostles) or *three* to be in complete *harmony and agreement* and THEN Jesus would be in the midst of them."

Notice He did not say He would be with ONE—but said "there am I in the midst of THEM"! (Matthew 18:20).

When Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always," He plainly revealed that HE would remain the active, *living* HEAD of His true church!

Millions are under the impression that "God has gone way off somewhere," and see the Eternal Creator God, Jesus Christ of Nazareth—the Head of His church and our High Priest in heaven—only in the vaguest, ethereal, unreal, dreamlike terms.

They are not aware of an *active*, LIVING, *dynamic* and all-POWERFUL Jesus Christ of Nazareth who makes daily intercession for His people, and who, through the power of His Holy Spirit, is fully capable of *leadership*. Through the centuries, *men* have tried to *usurp* the office of Jesus Christ!

MEN (or, in some cases, women) have become the leaders of various and sundry "churches," man-made religious organizations which, through the sheer numbers who willingly flock to some charismatic, dynamic leader, can become quite large. Some such religious organizations become politically powerful, and wealthy.

But all such churches are *churches of this world*, man-made, and are *not* a part of the true body of Jesus Christ! They were not founded by Christ, and they are not GOVERNED by Christ, but by their human founders. *Jesus Christ is the HEAD of His true church!*

"And He is the *Head of the body*, the church" (Colossians 1:18).

Notice how Paul, in speaking of marital relationships, said, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as *Christ is the head of the church*" (Ephesians 5:23).

He also wrote that the church must "...grow up into Him in all things, which is the HEAD, even Christ!" (Ephesians 4:15).

Oftentimes, men give "lip service" to the Headship of Christ, and claim merely to be the "second in command, *under* Christ," but, since they are the only *visible* head, and since there are no *other "checks and balances"* in the structure of their organizations, such men (or women) usually wield absolute and TOTAL power and authority over doctrine, policy, procedure and administration, as well as *total authority* and CONTROL over the lives of their members.

How Do Human Leaders Gain Control?

Once such an individual has achieved the *absolute pinnacle* of psychological, financial and legal *power* over such a church hierarchy, *none* in such an organization ever *dares* claim that the human leader of said church organization does not receive *every* thought, doctrine, teaching or administrative policy or procedure *directly from Christ!* Any who challenge such control or authority are quickly disposed of.

Subtly, gradually, men have managed to convince their followers in literally *hundreds* of organizations down through the centuries that to question *them*, the human *leader*, is to *question Christ!*

How do they deceive their followers?

It is all a very simple process, really.

There is much said about *church government* in the New Testament! Read Ephesians the 4th chapter, 1 Corinthians the 12th chapter, 1 Timothy 3, 1 Peter 5, and others. All deal with CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

The apostle Paul said a great deal about "those that have the rule over you," and spoke of settling church difficulties with "a rod."

By the simple process of continual preaching, teaching and repetitive emphasis on "authority"; by emphasizing the *inspiration of the Holy Spirit* in preaching, teaching and Bible study; a powerful, charismatic, persuasive religious leader is able to convince his followers that, when he *stands in the pulpit*, he is speaking "under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit," and is therefore BEYOND QUESTION! Gradually, his followers begin to believe they are hearing virtually firsthand, *directly from GOD*.

There is an outstanding example of human arrogance and vanity, and God's *terrible judgments* for such conduct, in God's Word.

"And when Herod sought for him [Peter], and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death.

"And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode. And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

"And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

"And the people gave a shout, saying, 'It is the *voice of a god*, and not of a *man*,' and immediately the angel of the Eternal *smote* him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost [expired, died—Greek]" (Acts 12:19-23).

Of course, Herod was not a religious leader, even though he exercised control over the religious leaders.

He was an arrogant, pompous, power-crazed human leader; a totally *corrupt* individual, who had the literal power of *life and death* over his people. The jail keepers could not prevent Peter's release, for an *angel* had performed a miracle to free Peter. Nevertheless, Herod had them killed!

He delighted in his exalted power; so, when the ignorant masses indulged him, by loudly shouting he was a "god" when he spoke to them, he *reveled* in their adoration!

People were beginning to WORSHIP A MAN! They were ascribing to a mere mortal godlike qualities; beginning to believe on his every pronouncement; to claim when he spoke they were hearing *directly from a divine source*.

But the Eternal Creator God of heaven *hates* this ridiculous, egotistical and empty vanity of pompous men—and God struck Herod dead! He was "eaten of worms"; dying a HORRIBLE DEATH for his vanity!

Today *millions* of humans, in MANY different nations, and in MANY different religions (think of the Ayatollah Khomeini, of Iran, as an example), *WORSHIP MEN!*

Jim Jones' followers came to WORSHIP the man—believing he was directly inspired of *God*. They so gave their own minds over into the hands of this mentally deranged, egotistical man that they became conditioned to do ANYTHING he said—NO MATTER WHAT!

How shocking that gullible human beings can literally so give themselves into the hands of a human religious leader that he can tell them to murder—or to *kill themselves*—and they immediately OBEY!

It is a false and ridiculous concept that a mere MAN can be so divinely inspired as to be answerable ONLY TO GOD, and NEVER answerable or accountable to ANY OTHER HUMAN SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES.

Carried to its ultimate extreme, this concept has led to the declaration of *papal infallibility* for the popes in Rome!

The Catholic Church teaches that, when a pope speaks from the "Holy See," in the Vatican, he is *infallible!*

The Catholic Church places at least Two sources of supposed "authority" on an *equal level* with the *Bible!* The first is the pope himself, when making official pronouncements from the "Holy See." Such pronouncements carry the weight of *Scripture* with Catholics, are said to be absolutely inspired, and are considered *infallible!*

Also, the *traditions* of the church—those procedures, doctrinal tenets, teachings and administrative and organizational systems which have been gradually established over centuries and centuries of historical development—are considered to be *inviolable*, "cast in concrete," and on an equal par with *Scripture!*

Monstrous *abuses* are cataloged, in literally scores of history books, concerning the wielding of such awesome power by a tiny handful of individuals, headed by only *one man* at the very pinnacle of power in a large, wealthy church organization.

The Protestant Reformation was as much a protest against hierarchical *abuses of power* as it was a protest against *doctrine*.

Strangely, as the centuries have passed, many organizations which sprang up *following* the Protestant Reformation have themselves drifted into a similar type of hierarchical structure as the organization they left, in protest.

But did Jesus Christ ever intend exalting *only one man* to the position of "No. 2" under Jesus Christ?

In short, was it Jesus Christ as the Head of the church in *heaven—but* PETER, having the "primacy," as the "No. 2" individual in the church hierarchy (meaning the No. 1 *on this earth*)—*who was* OVER all the other 11, over all the prophets, evangelists, pastors of churches, deacons and others?

Was it ONE MAN, plus 11 others who were *under* him?

Let the *Bible*, the sacred Word of God, which is going to JUDGE, us, answer!

***Peter Arrogated No
Unique Office to Himself***

First, remember Jesus warned, "You know that the princes of the gentiles exercise dominion over [lord it over] them, and they that are 'great' exercise authority upon them. But it *shall not be so* among you; but whosoever will be 'great' among you, let him be your minister [*servant*]; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant [minister]: even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-27).

Jesus told Peter "Feed MY *sheep*" *three times*, when He reminded Peter of his *denial* of Christ even as He was being beaten, tried and crucified!

Three times, demanding to know if Peter truly "loved" Jesus, He charged Peter, "Feed MY sheep!" He did not say, "Feed *your* sheep," but emphasized, clearly, they were *Christ's* flock—that Peter was merely *a shepherd*

caring for the flock that *belonged* to Jesus Christ!

Peter, himself, certainly never tried to assert himself as a "chief apostle."

NEVER did he claim to be "the one and only apostle," or "the leading apostle," or "the chief apostle," or even THE apostle!

Did he feel such a claim would be blasphemous? After all, it is *only Jesus Christ* who is called THE APOSTLE in the Bible!

Paul calls himself "an apostle," *as does Peter*. But notice what the Bible says of Jesus Christ: ". . .*THE* apostle and high priest of our profession. . ." (Hebrews 3:1). Christ, ONLY, is called "THE APOSTLE."
Peter never took such office to himself

He wrote, after describing himself as "an apostle" (which merely means "one sent"), "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am *also an elder*, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God ... neither as being *lords over God's heritage*, but being examples to the flock. And when the CHIEF SHEPHERD [referring to Jesus Christ, not himself!] shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away" (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Peter plainly referred to himself as an elder This merely meant an older, more mature and more experienced person *spiritually*—*usually* an older person in physical years—and was a term which found its way in the early New Testament church directly from the status of the "elders" in village and tribal society in the nations of Israel and Judah!

The "elders" of a village were the older, wiser men—"sages," to whom the younger generation sought for wisdom.

Often they formed a *body of elders*, not unlike a *town council* of today, and carried certain *authority* in the village and town structure.

When these "elders" were first converted in the early New Testament church, they *continued* to be "elders" so far as their physical age, maturity and experience were concerned, and, as they now grew in *spiritual* wisdom and knowledge, were looked upon as "elders" in the church!

It is nonsensical to "ordain" *young boys*, immature, young men perhaps below the age of 30 (and some churches have ordained "elders" in their 20s!) and call them "elders."

It is quite likely that, in the early New Testament church, the title "elder" was already attached to an older gentleman who, upon conversion and baptism, would continue to be viewed as "an elder" among members of the church.

By the time Peter wrote his letter (1 Peter 5), he may well have been in his 60s or 70s.

He was probably about Jesus' own age—perhaps in his 30s—at his calling. No doubt, with the passing years, Peter's physical appearance had changed markedly; no doubt his hair had grayed. Now he was not only one of the original 12 disciples; one of the original "foundation stones" which formed the underpinnings of the New Testament church, but he was an older, wiser, more mature, seasoned "veteran" in God's church; having suffered persecutions, traveled many hundreds of weary miles, preached, taught, counseled, prayed, spent himself—through year after year in the service of God's people—and could humbly refer to himself as "an elder."

This was not an exalted title—and Peter's statement to other older, mature leaders in the church, calling them "elders," shows he viewed himself as being *on an equal footing* with the other leaders he had addressed!

He said, "Likewise, you younger [elders—for he was writing to the 'elders of the church'], submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be *subject one to another*, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. . ." (1 Peter 5:5).

Peter urged absolute *equality* (each being *subject to* the other); unanimity, and Christian *humility*.

This letter, written from Babylon (1 Peter 5:13), was long after Peter had learned quite a bitter lesson himself!

God used *another apostle*, one who was "begotten out of due season," who came along *years* after the original 12 apostles, to *humble* Peter!

Read the first two chapters of Galatians!

Peter had allowed feelings of *racism* to creep into his heart. The confrontation you read of in the second chapter very probably occurred during the *Feast of Tabernacles*, or another annual Holy Day!

Quite a number of leaders were present; a number of *mixed* converts representing both *gentile* and *Jews* were also present. The area in the province of Galatia to which Paul writes included the congregations of converted Christians at Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.

In the important second chapter, you learn a *great deal* about God's *government* in the true church!

First, you notice the apostle Paul continually reinforcing his *absolute equality* with the other apostles! In the first chapter (please read it all!), he clearly shows that he did not "confer with flesh and blood" or "go up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before him" but that he was *directed by Jesus Christ* (see 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8).

In chapter 2, verses 1-9, you notice the apostle Paul encountered *party spirit* in Jerusalem; and also an obvious beginning of an ugly political "pecking order." He scathingly said, "But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in *conference* [*in concert*; as a *group*, plotting to usher *circumcision* back into the church!] added nothing to me" (Galatians 2:1-6).

Notice the *order* in which the apostle Paul lists the "chiefest apostles" (remember, that is a plural term; there were *several who were "chiefest"*): "And when James, Cephas [*Petros*], *Peter*] and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas [who was also an apostle!] the right hands of fellowship; that we should go to the heathen, and they to the circumcision" (Galatians 2:9).

Now read from verse 11 to the end of the chapter!

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, *I withstood him to the face*, because *he was to be blamed*.

"For before that certain *came from James*, he did eat with the gentiles: but when they were come, *he withdrew* and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

"And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation" (Galatians 2:11-13).

Several authorities urge the understanding that "those certain" who "came from James" does *not* apply to Peter, but certain *other men*. This is strengthened by the use of the pronouns: "But when they [these *other* men who came from James] were come, he [Peter] withdrew ...

Now notice how the apostle Paul, Peter's *absolute equal*, stood up to one of the "chiefest apostles."

"But when I saw that they walked uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, 'If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the gentiles to live as do the Jews?'" (Galatians 2:14).

Read the rest of the chapter, and you will see that the rest of the entire dissertation, including Paul's moving statement "I am crucified with Christ," continues with first-person quotation *as spoken to Peter* in the audience of a *large group*!

Notice that Peter did not "mark" Paul, rising up in arrogant wrath and saying, "How dare you embarrass me in front of these underlings?"

Neither did Peter embark on a *hate campaign* to "get" Paul; to assassinate character, or attempt to create a *division* in the church.

No doubt Peter was hurt by being soundly rebuked in front of others, including other apostles, elders, and laymen!

There is no "rank" at work here. No hierarchy; no pyramid form of government," in which Peter, on the top of a step-ladder, like a general of the army who had just been insulted by a colonel, takes out his wrath on Paul, who had affronted him!

Paul plainly says he was one of the "least" of the apostles, and claimed he was not "fit to be called an apostle" (1 Corinthians 15:9), yet ye said, later, ". . . For I suppose I was not a *whit behind* the very *chiefest* apostles"! (2 Corinthians 11:5).

Again, note the use of the plural.

There is no use, *ever*, in the Bible of "chief apostle," or "only apostle."

When Paul said he was not a whit behind the "chiefest apostles," he obviously meant those *same* "chiefest apostles" he clearly *identifies* in their *appropriate order* to the Galatian churches; namely, James, Peter and John.

Consider for a moment the book of Romans.

In this first epistle, and one of the lengthiest, following the book of Acts, the apostle Paul addresses the large church in Rome.

If tradition and Catholic claims are correct, WHY did this apostle to the *gentiles* dare address the large church in Rome, yet *never mention Peter's name*?

Not only does he not address Peter at the beginning of the letter, but in the lengthy 16th chapter, containing many personal salutations, including the mention of a woman *first*, one cannot find the name of Peter!

What? Surely, if Peter were the "chief apostle"; if he were the "first pope" in Rome—then this would have been a *colossal insult*; sufficient to have had Paul put *out of the church!*

But the truth is otherwise.

Peter was NOT a "chief apostle," he was NOT in Rome!

Paul was the apostle to the gentiles—Peter wrote from far in the *east* portion of the empire, from Babylon, where there was a large colony of *Jewish* converts.

All claims of the "primacy of Peter" by the Catholic Church or anyone else are FALSE! The hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church was many *centuries* in the building.

In the first two centuries, there was a *gradual* development from bishops in larger cities to "metropolitans" (bishops over the largest population centers), and, finally, the emergence of five "great patriarchs" in principal cities of the Middle East and Europe.

Finally, through attrition, largely as a result of *wars*, there were only *two* "great patriarchs." One was in Rome, and the other in Constantinople.

Study history carefully and you will find there were times when there were "two popes," each angrily "disfellowshipping" the other!

No, the claims of the great "universal" church of "Peter's primacy" are absolutely FAISE, and a blatant, blasphemous effrontery to the humble, spirit-led equal attitude Jesus Christ urged among the human *leadership* of His church!

Jesus Christ remains the *living Head* of His true church!

In times past, He has caused deacons and laymen (like Apollos) to become powerful speakers, *evangelists*, preaching the Word of God!

He has given the gifts of prophecy (including inspired speaking) and other spiritual gifts to individuals, regardless of so-called "rank" within the church!

That *same Jesus, the REAL JESUS*, guides, controls, inspires and corrects His true church TODAY!

As the *Great Shepherd*, who tenderly leaves the ninety and nine, earnestly and carefully seeking the restoration of "the one," Jesus Christ shows us He *hates* vanity, arrogance, police-state tactics, dictators, "spiritual policemen," and the pompous, egotistical human desire to exercise POWER over others' lives!

Jesus Christ seeks those who are willing to be the *servant* of all; who are willing to be *corrected, taught* from the Word of God, and who will *always* keep their eyes directly on *Jesus Christ!*

In the true Church of God, a statement from anyone that he or she will "follow a man, AS THEY FOLLOW CHRIST," is certainly always *good enough!*

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