

DRAFT CONTINUATION OF VENICE 24

24(a)

1 I If, as has already been noted (para. 12), the importance of the bishop of Rome among his brother bishops has been explained by analogy with the position of Peter among the other apostles, then it is important to discover what that position really involved. Concentration on Peter's leadership must not obscure the fact that pastoral responsibility was not restricted solely to Peter. It is significant that words used for the explicit commission to Peter in St. Matthew's gospel are also used for a wider charge to the Church as a whole (compare Matt. 16:19 with Matt. 18:18). Similarly the apostolic foundation upon which the church is built is related to Peter in Matt. 16:18 and to the whole apostolic body elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g. Eph. 2:20). Even if Peter is the spokesman at Pentecost, already the charge to proclaim the gospel to all the world had been given by the risen Christ to the Eleven (Acts 1: 2-8). Paul also, although he was not among the Eleven, was conspicuous for the leadership which he exercised with the authority received from the Lord himself, claiming to share with Peter parallel responsibilities and the same authority as the Eleven (Gal. 2: 7, 8: 1 Cor. 9:1).

2 While explicitly stressing Christ's will to root the Church in the apostolic witness and mandate, the New Testament also recognized that Peter held a special position among the Twelve. Whether the Petrine texts come directly from Jesus or from the early Christian community, they witness to an early tradition that Peter already held this place during Jesus' ministry. Individually the indications may seem inconclusive, but taken

together they provide an overall picture of his prominence which is inescapable. The most important are: the change of the name Simon to Cephas, his being named first among the Twelve and in the smaller circle of the three (Peter, James and John), the confession of Jesus' Messiahship in Matthew and John (Jn. 6 :69), the charge to strengthen his brethren (Luke 22:31, 32) and to feed the sheep (John 21: 16-18) and the special appearance to him of the risen Lord (e.g. Luke 24:34, I Cor. 15:5). Although it may have been the intention of Luke to underline the parallel apostolic authority of Paul in the latter part of the Acts, yet the first half of the book focusses on Peter's leadership. For instance it is Peter who frequently speaks in the name of the apostolic community, he is the first to proclaim the gospel to the Jews and the first to open the Christian community to the Gentiles. Paul seems to have recognized this prominence of Peter among the apostles (e.g. Gal. 1:18) and accepted the lead given by him at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), yet was prepared to argue strongly with him when he held him to be at fault.

3. In the eyes of the New Testament writers Peter already holds a position of special importance, not simply because of his own gifts and character but because of his particular calling by Christ. However, the traditions of the New Testament give no precise indication how this role of Peter is exercised differently from that of the other apostles. Indeed their similarity of roles leads us to conclude that, even when stressing the distinctive features of Peter's ministry, this ministry can never be isolated from that of the other apostles. This strong similarity leads us to conclude that, even when stressing the distinctive features of Peter's ministry, it can never be isolated from that of the other apostles.

4 As in the teaching of Jesus true leadership is that of service, not of domination over others (Luke 22:24-27), so Peter's role in strengthening the brethren is also a leadership of service (Luke 22: 31, 32). He serves his fellow apostles by helping them to be what they are supposed to be, even if at the same time in his weakness he may require their help or correction, as is clear in his dispute with Paul. If the traditional analogy be accepted that is drawn between the function of the Bishop of Rome among his fellow bishops and the role of Peter among his fellow apostles, this clarifies its significance.

Whatever interpretation may be placed upon the New Testament texts concerning Peter, there is in the New Testament no record of any explicit transmission of Petrine primacy. Nor for that matter is there any record of the transmission of a more general apostolic authority. Yet in course of time the church in the city of Rome came to be recognised as possessing special prerogatives among the other churches; its bishop was seen to bear a special responsibility for keeping the church faithful to the apostolic inheritance and to exercise among his fellow bishops functions analagous to those ascribed in the New Testament to Peter.

^{4. Athanasius & others.}
Theologians gradually came to interpret the New Testament evidence as pointing in the same direction. Many would feel that this interpretation was more an endorsement of a ^{what has happened} fait accompli than a legitimate exegesis of the New Testament. Similarly what has happened in history will appear to some to be the providential fulfilment of Christ's will, to others an event that cannot be assumed as in some way normative for the whole Church of the future.

1.9.79. 9.20 pm.

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Whatever interpretation may be placed upon the New Testament texts concerning Peter, there is in the New Testament no record of any explicit transmission of Petrine primacy. Nor for that matter is there any record of the transmission of a more general apostolic authority, yet the Church in Rome, the city in which Peter and Paul taught and were martyred, came to be recognised as possessing special prerogatives among the other churches; its bishop was seen to bear a special responsibility for the unity of the church and for keeping it faithful to the apostolic inheritance, and for exercising among his fellow bishops functions analogous to those ascribed in the New Testament to Peter.

Fathers and doctors of the Church gradually come to interpret the New Testament evidence as pointing in the same direction, but this interpretation is not accepted by those who regard it rather as an endorsement of a development which had actually taken place. In either case, while bearing in mind that it is dangerous to argue from what has happened to what ought to have happened, it would be possible to regard the primacy of the Bishop of Rome as part of God's purpose for his Church.

2.9.79: 10.40 a.m.

The church in Rome exercises leadership among the second-century churches before the Christians had a New Testament to provide texts in endorsement of its authority. The weight to be placed on the support of these texts has been variously estimated (from a Roman Catholic maximum to a protestant minimum). Christians are not committed to the view that every development in church history is right, but a development necessary for the realisation of the Church's unity and catholicity is one that we agree to be part of God's purpose for his Church, as we also agree that in the subsequent historical process this Roman leadership became obscured by ambition and corruption and ceased to be generally seen to ensure the truth of the Gospel.