

Adult Bible Study | Christ the King

The Power and Primacy of the Pope

History

- 1521: Luther Excommunicated, refused to recant at the Diet of Worms
- 1529: Small and Large Catechisms published (Luther)
- 1530: Augsburg Confession presented (Melanchthon, published 1531)
- 1531: Smalcaldic League formed
- 1537: Pope declares General Council to be held in Mantua (N. Italy)
- 1538: Smalcald Articles published (Luther)
- 1540: Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope published (Melanchthon)

Content

Rome's Claims - "The Roman pontiff claims for himself that he is supreme above all bishops and pastors by divine right.

Second, he adds that by divine right he has both swords, that is, the authority also to enthrone and depose kings...

Third, he says that to believe this is necessary for salvation...

These three articles we hold to be false, godless, tyrannical, and destructive to the Church." (1-4)

Arguments from Scripture - Luke 22:24-27 - "Christ clearly bans lordship among the apostles." (8)

Matthew 18:2 - "Just as a child neither takes nor seeks sovereignty for himself, so this shows that there is not to be sovereignty among ministers." (8)

John 20:21 - "Christ sends forth his disciples in equality, without any distinction..." (9)

Galatians 2:7-10 - "[Paul] teaches that the authority of the ministry depends upon God's Word, and that Peter was not superior to the other apostles." (10)

1 Corinthians 3 - "The Church is superior to the ministers." (11)

Arguments from Church History (quick review of earliest church refutations...)

Refutation of Roman Arguments

[Refuting the First Article] Matthew 16:19 is singular, but Matthew 18:19 and John 20:23 are plural. (23)

"As for the declaration, 'on this rock I will build My church' [Mt. 16:18], certainly the Church has not been built upon the authority of a man. Rather, it has been built upon the ministry of the confession Peter made, in which he proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." (25)

[Refuting the Second Article] "Christ gave the apostles only spiritual power (i.e. the command to teach the Gospel, to announce the forgiveness of sins, to administer the Sacraments, to excommunicate the godless without bodily force). He did not give them the power of the sword (the right to establish, occupy, or bestow kingdoms of the world)." (31)

"Even if the bishop of Rome did have the primacy and superiority by divine right, nevertheless, obedience would not be due those pontiffs who defend godless services, idolatry, and doctrine conflicting with the Gospel... Galatians 1:8... Acts 5:29..." (38)

Marks of the Antichrist

“The marks of the antichrist plainly agree with the kingdom of the pope and his followers. For Paul, in describing Antichrist to the Thessalonians, calls him an enemy of Christ, ‘Who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God’ 2 Thess. 2:4.” (39)

“It is clear, in the first place, that the pope rules in the Church...

Second, the doctrine of the pope conflicts in many ways with the Gospel.

Third, the pope claims for himself divine authority in a threefold manner: (a) He takes for himself the right to change Christ’s doctrine...(b) He takes to himself the power not only of binding and loosing in this life, but also jurisdiction over souls after this life. (c) He does not want to be judged by the Church or by anyone and puts his own authority ahead of the decision of councils and the entire Church.” (40)

“This being the case, all Christians should beware of participating in the godless doctrine, blasphemies, and unjust cruelty of the pope. They should desert and condemn the pope with his followers as the kingdom of Antichrist...” (41)

“To dissent from the agreement of so many nations and to be called schismatics is a serious matter. But divine authority commands everyone not to be allies and defenders of impiety and unjust cruelty.” (42)

“Therefore, even if the bishop of Rome did have the primacy by divine right, since he defends godless services and doctrine conflicting with the Gospel, obedience is not due him. Indeed, it is necessary to resist him as Antichrist. The pope’s errors are clear, and they are not small.” (57)

Proper Role of Bishops – “The Gospel assigns those who preside over Church the command to teach the Gospel [Mt. 28:19], to forgive sins [Jn. 20:23], to administer the Sacraments and also to exercise jurisdiction (i.e. the command to excommunicate those whose crimes are known and to absolve those who repent).” (60)

“It is by human authority that the grades of bishop and elder or pastor are distinct.” (63)

“Wherever the church is, there is the authority to administer the Gospel.” (67)

Significance Today

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- 882: “The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, ‘is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.’ ‘For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.’” (*Lumen Gentium* 23 and 24, Vatican II, 1964)
- 1369: “Since he has the ministry of Peter in the Church, the Pope is associated with every celebration of the Eucharist, wherein he is named as the sign and servant of the unity of the universal Church.”
- 834: “Indeed, ‘from the incarnate Word's descent to us, all Christian churches everywhere have held and hold the great Church that is here [at Rome] to be their only basis and foundation since, according to the Savior's promise, the gates of hell have never prevailed against her.’” (Maximus the Confessor – d.662)

Lumen Gentium 22: “The pope's power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains whole and intact. In virtue of his office, that is as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church. And he is always free to exercise this power.”