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Monday, 19 July 2010

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Panagiotis Boumis

The Rock of Apostle Peter

A Contribution to the Interpretation of the Passage Matt. 16.18

Introduction

The passages of Holy Scripture with which Roman Catholic theologians usually support the Pope's primacy as heir to the Apostle Peter are the following: Matthew 16. 13-19 ; Luke 22. 32 and John 21. 15-17 (1). In this present short study we shall deal mainly with the verse 16. 18 (2) from the section of St Matthew's Gospel (I 6. 13-19) mentioned above, following the synoptic process of canonical methodology (3).

It is this verse, after all, which is provided as the basis of the Roman Catholic Church's governing system and its claims to Papal primacy.

The Westerners, using this passage as a basis of primary and major import, found their view concerning the special position and authority of St Peter within the Church. In this verse the Lord addresses Peter saying : «Καὶ ἐγὼ δέ σοι λέγω ὅτι σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, καὶ πύλαι ἄδου οὐ κατισχύσουσιν αὐτῆς».

The objector to the views concerning Roman primacy contend, however, that the Lord in this verse does not mean Peter as the rock (πέτρα) of the Church's entire structure, but rather his confession, or otherwise the contents of his confession (that is Jesus Christ) which he had given shortly before on answering the question which

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the Lord posed to his disciples, «Υμείς δε τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι;» (Matt. 16. 15). Peter's confession was the following: «Σύ εἰ ὁ Χριστός, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ζώντος» (vs. 16).

So the contention between the opposing factions is thus summarised(4). We shall endeavour here to view the above verse in a new light with the help of other passages of Holy Scripture; to examine, that is to say, whether both sides possibly are right, or at least meet each other at a certain point. We think that this will help in the revelation of the actual, or at least the more precise, meaning of the verse in question.

I. The Rock (πέτρα) : Jesus Christ.

At first, we cannot exclude the interpretation that the "Πέτρα" named by the Lord is the confession about Christ «ὡς Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ζώντος», or rather Jesus Christ Himself. This very formulation of the passage allows for just such an interpretation. The passage, as is known, runs, «Καγὼ δε σοι λέγω ὅτι σύ εἰ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτη τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν» and not «σύ εἰ Πέτρος καὶ ἐπὶ σε οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν». Thus we can say that this change in the term (Πέτρος - Πέτρα) in the two sentences, in conjunction with the existence of the preceding confession «Σύ εἰ ὁ Χριστός, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ζώντος», not only provides us with a possibility but also a reason to render this passage in the above mentioned interpretation.

Let us, however, look at the matter more analytically. We claim that it is possible to impart this interpretation to the passage in question because apart from the above reason something more supports the fact. This is that the God-inspired writer used the conjunction "καὶ" and not the opposite particle "δέ". That is to say, he says with great care and not without sufficient reason, «Συ εἰ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτη τῇ πέτρᾳ, οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν» and not, «Συ εἰ Πέτρος, ἐπὶ ταύτη δέ τῇ Πέτρᾳ, οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν». This specific use of "καὶ" (5) does not oblige us to confine ourselves to one single interpretation, to one single actual "rock" (Πέτρα). Only if it was written «ἐπὶ ταύτη δε τῇ Πέτρᾳ, οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν» would we be obliged to comprehend one explicit Πέτρα and consequently accept one definition. As things stand, however, nobody and nothing compels us to emphasize the «ταύτη τῇ πέτρᾳ» thus obliging us to bind ourselves to one exclusive definition. On the contrary, we are free to restore the suitable position and strength to the "καὶ" of the clause.

This means that even if we adopted another view, for example, that "Πέτρα" refers to Peter, the above interpretation would still not be excluded. Indeed, even if the text read «καὶ ἐπὶ σε (Πέτρε) οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν», it still would not detract from the interpretation in question; for it would simply mean that besides from the others «I will also build on you, Peter, as a rock». The conjunction "καὶ" does not give exclusivity to the rock of Peter (Πέτρα τοῦ Πέτρου) and even if Peter were the rock the existence of other rocks would not be excluded.

This possibility, or in other words the use of "καὶ" (6) is reinforced by the passage's following clause, «καὶ πύλαι ἄδου οὐ κατισχύσουσιν αὐτῆς (= the Church)». Our argument is strengthened here because nobody, we think, would contend this clause discerns that only the gates of Hades would not prevail against the Church. On the contrary, it evidently means that apart from all other likely enemies of the Church, even the gates of Hades (i.e. «the mortal dangers»(7) or «death and organised power of evil»(8) in addition would not prevail against it. Consequently the possibility exists for us to accept the above interpretation.

Now we must come to the heart of the matter which impels us to accept the view that the rock (Πέτρα) is the confession of faith in Christ, or rather Christ himself. Apart from the play on words (Petros-Petra) other passages of Holy Scripture give us the opportunity to characterize Christ in this manner. Thus the interpretation given above of the passage Matt.16. 18 harmonizes with these other passages.

For instance in Romans 9.33 we have the prophetic passage from Isaiah (28.16 and 8.14) which says of Jesus Christ, «Ἰδοὺ τίθημι ἐν Σιών λίθον προσκόμματος καὶ πέτραν σκανδάλου, καὶ ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ κατασχυθήσεται». A passage in Corinthians I of St Paul supports this view to a greater extent, saying, «οὐ θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν ἀδελφοί, ὅτι οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν . . . ἐπὶ οὐκ ἐκ πνευματικῆς ἀκολουθούσης πέτρας, ἡ Πέτρα δὲ ἦν ὁ Χρῖστος» (10. 1-4). This passage explicitly states that Christ is the spiritual rock (ἡ Πέτρα ἡ πνευματικὴ). Thus, the term Πέτρα is clearly used in conjunction with Christ in Holy Scripture. Likewise, St. Peter repeats in his First Epistle General, «Διότι περιέχει ἐν γραφῇ. ἰδοὺ τίθημι ἐν Σιών (9) λίθον ἐκλεκτόν, ἀκρογωνιαίον, ἐντιμον, καὶ ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ κατασχυθή. Ὑμῖν οὖν ἡ τιμὴ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν. ἀπιστοῦσιν δὲ λίθος οὐ ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες, οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας καὶ λίθος προσκόμματος καὶ πέτρα σκανδάλου» (Peter I, 2. 6-8). Elsewhere, St Paul, addressing the Christians, speaks of Christ as the pre-eminent foundation or corner-stone : « ... Θεοῦ οἰκοδομὴ ἐστε. Κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὴν δοθείσάν μοι ὡς σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων θεμέλιον ἔθηκα, ἄλλος δὲ ἐποικοδομεῖ. Ἐκαστος δὲ βλεπέτω πῶς ἐποικοδομεῖ. Θεμέλιον γὰρ ἄλλον οὐδεὶς δύναται θεῖναι παρά του κείμενον, ὅς ἐστιν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός» (Cor.I, 3.9-11).[\(10\)](#)

Other passages of Holy Scripture indirectly support the view that Jesus Christ is the foundation stone by characterising the words of the Lord, i.e. the Gospels, as a rock. When we speak of the word of the Lord, we mean the word of God which also means Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, and vice-versa.[\(11\)](#) In this way our argument is reinforced as the Gospels can represent Christ. This principle is confirmed by other passages as well, foremost amongst which is, in our opinion, John 8.25 where the Lord, answering the Jews' question «σὺ τίς εἶ ;», spoke the renown phrase, «Τὴν ἀρχὴν ὅτι καὶ λαλῶ ὑμῖν», which is explained: «That which I have said unto you from the beginning (or generally, already)[\(12\)](#)». To wit, «I am that which I tell you, that which I teach you». We have used this passage from John here not only because we consider it a foundational principle of the first rank concerning the nature of Christ, but also because the problems and subjects of the passage are almost the same with Matt. 16. 13ff from whence comes the passage under study here. In both cases questions and answers revolve around the same person and problem of Christ, with the difference that in the first case he is asking while in the second he is answering.

But the importance of John 8.25, which gives particular weight to the confession therein, is the fact that He who is answering is the person (Christ) about whom the problem is posed «Who are you ?» (σὺ τίς εἶ;). Consequently, we have an authentic self-confession and at the same time confirmation of what we have said above, that by the word of the Lord we mean Jesus Christ.

With the above observation we may now indicate the passages of Holy Scripture which liken the Word of God, the words of the Lord (i.e. Christ) with a rock (Πέτρα). Thus we have an excerpt from the Gospel according to St Matthew with the Lord's distinctive words : «Πᾶς οὖν ὅστις ἀκούει μου τοὺς λόγους τούτους καὶ ποιεῖ αὐτούς, ὁμοιωθήσεται ἀνδρὶ φρονίμῳ, ὅστις ὠκοδόμησεν αὐτοῦ τὴν οἰκίαν ἐπὶ τὴν πέτραν. Καὶ κατέβη ἡ βροχὴ καὶ ἦλθον οἱ ποταμοὶ καὶ ἐπνευσαν οἱ ἄνεμοι καὶ προσέπεσαν τὴν οἰκίαν ἐκεῖνη, καὶ οὐκ ἔπεσεν

τεθεμελίωτο γαρ επί την πέτραν» (Matt. 7. 24-25). A similar passage is recognisable in St Luke's Gospel: «Πας ο ερχόμενος προς με και ακούων μου των λόγων και ποιών αυτοίς ... ὁμοίός ἐστιν ἀνθρώπῳ οἰκοδομούντι οἰκίαν, ὃς ἐσκαψεν καὶ ἐβάθυνεν καὶ ἐθήκεν θεμέλιον ἐπὶ τὴν Πέτραν» (Luke 6.47-48). In these passages, then, we have the testimony that Christ, the Son and Word Λόγος of God, is the rock (Πέτρα) upon which it is possible to build His house safely, so as it stands unshaken.

The passages contemplated above not only call to mind but also reinforce the given interpretation of Matt. 16. 18 that the rock (Πέτρα) upon which the Church of God would be built so as to withstand Hell, is Christ, the Son and Word of God.[\(13\)](#)

II. The Rock: Peter and the other Disciples of Christ.

One may come to the acceptance of the view that the passage in question represents the confession in Christ, or rather Christ, the Word of God, Himself, but this does not mean that it is impossible for it to mean St Peter as well.[\(14\)](#)

From the beginning the expression of this passage presents the possibility of this interpretation, the reasons for which we shall state here as before: on one side the alliterative form of Πέτρα-Πέτρος while on the other the existence, as we noted above, of the manifold uses and functions of "καί" in the Greek language. It is possible, then, for the Lord to build His Church on other rocks besides His Own, and explicitly also on the rock of St Peter.

The above view is significantly strengthened by the fact that we have other passages of Holy Scripture which liken the Apostles (and consequently St Peter) to a foundation stone/ rock (λίθου-πέτραν)[\(15\)](#). Thus our previously mentioned interpretation satisfactorily harmonizes with biblical teaching. Firstly, we have the passage in Ephesians 2. 19-22 where St Paul says to the Christians : «Ἐστὲ συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκῆοι τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν, οὗτος ἀκρογωνιαίῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἐν ᾧ πάσα οἰκοδομὴ συναρμολογουμένη ἀύξει εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν Κυρίῳ, ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς συνοικοδομεῖσθε εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι».

Yet again we ascertain here that Jesus Christ is the corner-stone upon which «every structure» (πάσα οἰκοδομή) of the Church is assembled, thus producing an «augmentation» (ἀύξησις) in the Lord. At the same time, however, we are informed that the Christian community is also built upon «the foundation of the Apostles» (ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων), in other words, the Apostles, including, of course, St Peter, constitute the foundation stones of the Church. This is more explicitly formulated and phrased in another section of Holy Scripture, Revelation 21.14, where we read :

«Καὶ τὸ τεῖχος τῆς πόλεως (Holy Jerusalem; i.e. the Church)[\(16\)](#) ἔχον θεμελίους δώδεκα, καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῶν δώδεκα οὐμάτα τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων τοῦ ἀρνίου».[\(17\)](#)

Following from this, we may accept the Roman Catholic view that the rock (πέτρα) is not only the confession in Christ but also the origin of the confession, St Peter. At the same time, however, we are obliged -as they are- to accept the fact that the Church has as its foundation stone not only St Peter but the other Apostles as well.

It is important to note that the disputed passage (Matt. 16.18) under examination

does not exclude the other Apostles. Indeed, the use of the multi-meaning "καί" makes it possible for us to understand that the Lord was able to use other "rocks" as well as Peter's earlier or later. Because the Lord said He would build His Church «και επί τη Πέτρα του Πέτρου» it does not follow that it is not possible to build it «και επί ταις πέτραις των άλλων αποστόλων»[\(18\)](#) (On the stones of the other Apostles as well).

Not only the Lord's disciples but also all the believers in Christ and confessors in His word and work constitute the rock of the Church's structure. Peter's words take on particular importance in this respect when he says: «Ει εγεύσασθε οτι χρηστός ο Κύριος προς ον προσερχόμενοι, λίθον ζώντα, ... και αυτοί ως λίθοι ζώντες οικοδομείσθε οίκος πνευματικός» (Peter, I, 2. 4-5). Worthy of note in this respect is that which Origen says:

«If we also, like Peter, say "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God", ... we become Peter to the extent that the Word says to us "You are Peter" (Συ ει Πέτρος) etc. For every disciple of Christ is a rock after drinking of "that spiritual rock which followed", and on each such rock is built every ecclesiastical "λόγος" (principle), and in agreement with this the life of the Church.[\(19\)](#)

The "Shepherd of Hermas" also speaks revealingly about the Apostles and other true Christians as "square stones", saying, «The square, white stones fitting at their joints ; these are the apostles, bishops, teachers and deacons marching in accordance with the holiness of God, having acted virtuously and decently as bishops, teachers, and ministers on behalf of the chosen of God».[\(20\)](#)

Since the passage Matt. 16. 18 has the conjunction "και" («και επί ταύτη τη πέτρα») we are able to apply both the first and the second interpretations. That is to say that both our Lord and St Peter can be rocks. If the opposite particle "δε" were used («επί ταύτη δε τη πέτρα») then we would be obliged, as was said above, to choose between the two, either the one or the other. Now we can freely accept both of them, the one and the other.

Upon this conclusion the following arguments are vindicated:

1) Since we accept that the divine guidance accorded the writing of Holy Scripture, it is reasonable to ask ourselves whether, if only one interpretation were right, God would have allowed the passage to read thus so as to appear ambiguous and cause discord? St Paul proclaims: «Πιστός ο Θεός ότι ο λόγος ημών ο προς υμάς ουκ έστιν ναι και ου. Ο του Θεού γάρ υιός Χριστός Ιησούς ο εν υμίν δι' υμών κηρυχθείς ... ουκ εγένετο ναι και ου» (Corinthians II, 1. 18-19). Should not, then, the writer- Evangelist inspired by the Holy Spirit [\(21\)](#) render himself most explicitly and not place his readers in confusion?

2) The very existence of two views, both with their host of supporters, makes us ask ourselves whether both sides have a right to insist in the validity of their views.

3) We are able to add to the above observation the fact that Origen, one of the men most involved in the interpretation of Holy Scripture intertwines the two interpretations, as is clear in his extended commentary above on the passage in question.[\(22\)](#)

All this prompts us to the conclusion that both interpretations have their own reasons and supports.

III. A Combination of Both Interpretations.

Let us dwell for a little while yet on these two views, firstly, that the "rock" is Jesus Christ and secondly, that it represents St Peter and the other Apostles. In this way we may get to the core of the passage's meaning and thus complete the picture of the Church's structure.⁽²³⁾ As we saw above, it is possible for both interpreted views to be valid. The validity of these views, however, is not the only thing which must be proved; we must also show that it is possible for them to co-exist and harmonize with each other, to complete the full meaning of what is said. In other words, it is possible on the one hand for the Apostles to constitute the foundation stones (λίθοι) upon which the whole structure of the Church is built, while on the other the Lord may constitute the rock-ground (Πέτρα-έδαφος) upon which the Church's structure rests. We are able to have the Apostles as foundation-stones, but at the same time we are also able to have the rock, Christ, as the base of the whole structure. The one does not cancel the other. On the contrary the above double interpretation enables us to derive a more complete picture of the structure of the Church.

As we move towards the consolidation of this picture it is possible to observe the following: It is possible for the foundation stones to co-exist, or rather exist, as there also exists the rock upon which they are placed, such as those found in a rocky terrain on a large rock (βράχος). Otherwise they are not able to constitute the foundation -the foundation stones- of the structure. For the foundation stones, to exist and constitute the actual foundation, however, there must exist first and foremost the rock (Πέτρα). This rock, the rocky ground, is the presupposition of the foundation-stones, existence.

We consider that this view is expressed or otherwise that this observation is strengthened by the following excerpt from St Luke's Gospel : «Πας ο ερχόμενος προς με και ακούων μου των λόγων και ποιών αυτούς ... όμοίός εστιν ανθρώπω οικοδομούντι οικίαν, ος έσκαψεν και εβάθυνεν και έθηκεν θεμέλιον επί την πέτραν. πλημύρης δε γενομένης προσέρρηξεν ο ποταμός τη οικία εκείνη, και ουκ ίσχυσεν σαλεύσαι αυτήν, τεθεμελίωτο γαρ επί την πέτραν. Ο δέ ακούσας και μη ποιήσας όμοίός εστιν ανθρώπω οικοδομήσαντι οικίαν επί την γην χωρίς θεμελίου, η προσέρρηξεν ο ποταμός, και ευθύς συνέπεσεν, και εγένετο το ρήγμα της οικίας εκείνης μέγα» (Luke, 6. 47-49).

It is worthy of note that while Luke in the first case states that the foundation (θεμέλιον) was placed on the rock (Πέτρα), in other words, he refers to and uses both elements, in the second case, where he does not refer to the rock, he distinctly says that the non-believer builds absolutely without («χωρίς») a foundation. He does not state that he at least placed a foundation on rocky ground but emphasises that he built without foundation, evidently because he did not build on solid ground, but on un-sound, sandy ground. We can confirm this idea better if we correlate the above passage from Luke with its counterpart in Matthew.7. 26 which says: «Και πας ο ακούων μου τους λόγους τούτους και μη ποιών αυτούς ομοιωθήσεται ανδρί μωρώ, όστις ωκοδόμησεν αυτού την οικίαν επί την άμμον».

If one does not place the foundation on solid ground, on rocks, but places it on sandy ground, it is as if he does not place a foundation at all, even if he did place foundation stones. In other words, wherever the rock exists, there also exists the foundation. Where the rock does not exist, there will be no foundation. We confirm this view from a corresponding verse in Matthew (7. 24ff). In this passage we indirectly ascertain the main role of the rock in relation with the foundation stones. We see that the main weight rests on the rock, on the rocky ground, upon which the

structure is built, whereas the foundation stones play the secondary role. Thus the word foundation is not mentioned explicitly. These verses run as follows: «Πας ουν ὅστις ἀκούει μου τοὺς λόγους τούτους καὶ ποιεῖ αὐτοῦς, ὁμοιωθήσεται ἀνδρὶ φρονίμῳ, ὅστις ὠκοδόμησεν αὐτοῦ τὴν οἰκίαν ἐπὶ τῆν πέτραν. Καὶ κατέβη ἡ βροχὴ καὶ ἦλθον οἱ ποταμοὶ καὶ ἐπνευσαν οἱ ἄνεμοι καὶ προσέπεσαν τὴν οἰκίαν ἐκεῖνη, καὶ οὐκ ἐπέσεν. τεθεμελίωτο γὰρ ἐπὶ τῆν πέτραν».

We said that a foundation (θεμέλιον) is not explicitly written here as in Luke, not, however, that it is not at all mentioned therefore cannot exist. On the contrary, we discern its existence in the word "τεθεμελίωτο".⁽²⁴⁾ Consequently, the foundation exists, but its existence is obscured by the existence of the rock (Πέτρα) and thus we verify the main and decisive role of the rock, that of a rocky ground.

The rock, then, is the indispensable presupposition of the foundation stones' existence. In this way the Apostles (including St Peter, of course) are not a foundation without the rock, without Christ; it would not be possible to use them as foundation stones upon which would be built the structure of the Church.

Even if the role of foundation stone is secondary, however, it does not cease to be essential. It is easily understood that even should we wish to build a house on rocks, upon βράχοι, but without foundations, without foundation stones, then the whole structure would still have flaws. With the first flood and gales it would be in danger of falling. The role of the Apostles is, then, a necessary, decisive foundation in the structure of the Church of Christ.⁽²⁵⁾

All this concerns the combination of the two interpretations.

Concluding, then, at the end of this section and after the presentation of all the above verses, we venture to say that it is not only possible to accept both of the above mentioned interpretations, but it is also obligatory to do so.

CONCLUSION

In retrospect, one may say that the clearest interpretation of «καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτην τὴν πέτραν ὠκοδομήσω μου τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν» is the following: «I will build my Church also on this rock, in which you confessed, that Jesus Christ, as upon solid ground and on you, Peter, as confessing in Him and constituting thus a foundation stone on this ground, without excluding but rather understanding that I will also build on other foundation stones, namely the rest of the Apostles, who will proclaim the same truth in Christ upon whom will rest the teachings of the Church concerning me».⁽²⁶⁾

It is therefore possible for all the above mentioned interpretations to co-exist and, indeed, to harmonize and complete the meaning of the verse. Since we place these things on solid ground, on rock, as it were, we can thrust aside the incidental dissensions which are rarely absent from personal or dogmatic suppositions and presuppositions.⁽²⁷⁾

FOOTNOTES

1. See, Ed. Eichmann-Kl. Morsdort, Lehrbuch des Kirchenrechts (auf Grund des Codex Juris Canonici), 1. Band, 11. Aufl., Munchen-Paderborn-Wien 1964, p. 343 ; M. Schmaus, Katholische Dogmatik, Band III, 1: Die Lehre von der Kirche, 5 Aufl., Munchen 1958, p. 156 ff.; M. Kaiser, Die Einheit der Kirchengewalt nach dem Zeugnis des Neuen Testaments und der Apostolischen Vater, Munchen 1956, p. 45 ff.; Ιω. Καρμίρη, Ορθόδοξος Εκκλησιολογία, Δογματικής Τμήμα Ε', Athens 1973, p. 555 ff and O. Gullmann, Petrus, Jung e r- Apostel-Martyrer, 2. Aufl., Zurich-Stuttgart 1960.

2. Furthermore, we think it neither advisable nor advantageous to deal with this passage by scrutinizing the interpretation given from time to time by the supporters of Papal Primacy or their opponents, and to align ourselves either with one or the other factions and interpretations. On the related "options" and refutations it is possible to find a rich bibliography in the following studies: Χρυσοστόμου Παπαδοπούλου, Το Πρωτεῖον του Επισκόπου Ρώμης, Athens 1930; second ed. Athens 1964; M. Schmaus, op. cit., p. 157ff. and 852ff; Λεων. Φιλιππίδου, Πέτρα-Πέτρος (= λίθος) και η Πέτρα (= ο βράχος), Athens, Archim. Σπ. Μπιλάλη, Ορθοδοξία και Παπισμός, 2 vols., Athens 1969 and Ιω. Καρμίρη, op.cit., p. 548 ff., 555ff. With the help of the above works a host of other works can be found.

3. We dealt with the interpretation of John 21. 15-17 in an earlier work : Συνέπειαι της άρσεως των αναθεμάτων Ρώμης-Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, Athens 1976, p.176 ff. In this present work we shall deal, God willing, with other relevant passages of Holy Scripture and the Holy Law of our Church which are relevant to the topic in question.

4. Λεων. Φιλιππίδης (op cit., p. 57) speaks of the "many intricate and much seasoned antibiblical, wrongly-interpreted babble".

5. As is well known, the use and function of "και" in the Greek language is extremely broad. See J. Humbert-Γ. Κουρμούλη, Συντακτικόν της αρχαίας Ελληνικής Γλώσσης, Athens, p. 354 ff. and 394 ff.

6. See footnote 5 above.

7. See John Chrysostom, PG. 51.77 and Λεων. Φιλιππίδου, op. cit., p. 63.

8. See Παν.Τρεμπέλα, Υπόμνημα εις το κατά, Ματθαίον Ευαγγέλιον, Athens 1951, p. 315.

9. From this passage, in combination, of course, with the above confession of St Peter concerning Jesus, it is possible for one to say that the episcopate of Jerusalem, where on one hand «this stone was dissalowed by all men» (απεδοκιμάσθη υπό των ανθρώπων) (1. Peter, 2.4), while on the other hand it «was made the head of the corner (εγενήθη εις κεφαλήν γωνίας) (1. Peter, 2.7), can claim also the primacy of the Church.

10. See John 1. 1 : «Εν αρχη ην ο Λόγος και ο Λόγος ην προς τον Θεόν και Θεός ην ο λόγος» and John 1.14 : «Και ο λόγος σαρχ εγένετο».

11. As concerns the above excerpt (Corinthians I, 3. 9-11). Prof. Trebelas remarks are worthy of note : «Christ is the stone, the corner-stone (the one that is rejected as being impossible to build into the structure of Israel) upon which we are called to be built. When we speak of Jesus Christ as the foundation we mean all the dogmatical teachings of the Gospels» (Παν. Τρεμπέλα, Υπόμνημα εις τας επιστολάς της

Καινής Διαθήκης, vol. 1, 2nd ed., Athens 1954, p. 261).

12. The varied views on the meaning of the term «Την αρχήν» are well known, See Παν. Τρεμπέλα, Υπόμνημα εις το κατά Ιωάννην Ευαγγέλιον, Athens 1954, p. 301. More generally concerning the interpretation of the passage in question, see Στ. Σάκκου, Ιωάννου 8.25. Συμβολή εις την γλωσσικήν εξέτασιν της Καινής Διαθήκης, Thessalonica 1969.

13. Certainly this implication is given especially by the above passage of Matthew 7.24-25 since it is of the same author (the same who wrote the contested passage, Matt. 16.18). Thus one has right, after analysis, to say that the author speaks about this rock.

14. In an earlier work of ours (Τα εκκλησιαστικά οφίκια ως τα κατά κόσμον αξιώματα - Συμβολή εις την ερμηνείαν τού ζ' καν. της Πενθέκτης Οικ. Συν. Athens 1970, p.20) stimulated by other motives, we wrote «In this passage it is possible to accept two or more interpretations, since the formulation permits it». We followed this principle in another explanatory work of ours : «Περί την επικοινωνίαν ημών μετά των ετεροδόξων» - Συμβολή εις την ερμηνείαν του χωρίου Β' Ιω.10, Athens 1972, p. 22, where we wrote, «From all that we have studied we come to the conclusion... that we are not obliged to confine ourselves to one interpretation, so much so that the Holy Scripture helps us and encourages us to do so». As is logical, the two interpretations should not collide, but neither should they come into conflict with other passages of Holy Scripture.

15. Concerning the alteration of the terms "λίθος-πέτρα" see the passages in Romans 9.33 and I. Peter 2.7.

16. See Παν. Μπρατσιώτου, Η Αποκάλυψις του Ιωάννου, Athens 1949, p. 300 : «The new and eternal city, holy Jerusalem, the symbol of the kingdom of God, His true Church». Also p. 308 : «The introductory verse nine shows the topic of the "holy city" Jerusalem, i.e. the Church».

17. See Hebrews 11.10 : «Ἐξεδέχετο γάρ (Αβραάμ) την τούς θεμελίους ἔχουσαν πόλιν, ης τεχνίτης και δημιουργός ο Θεός».

18. The Apostle Peter speaks (confesses) at that time and for that reason Christ addresses Himself to him. If another Apostle had been speaking (confessing) then would not the Lord have addressed him?

19. Origen, The Explanation of St Matthew's Gospel, PG 13. 997.

20. Vision 3 (V,1) Publish. Ministry of the Apostolic Library of the Hellenic fathers and Church authors, 3rd Vol., p. 45. col. 5ff. See Παν. Μπούμη, Η οικοδομή της αιωνίας πόλεως, ή ο τετραγωνισμός του κύκλου (offprint from «Κοινωνία»), 2nd Ed., Athens 1976, p. 14.

21. See Peter II, 1. 21.

22. Likewise it is also worth adding this: Prof. Λεων. Φιλιππίδης (op. cit. p. 51ff) having previously supplied various extracts from Origen's interpretations and scholia dealing with the above passage, says «The interpretive fluctuations leading even to contradictions on this subject are obvious in the above passages». Continuing, on the other hand, after having added other passages from different interpretations, he says «that these as a sampling of the oldest most distinguished clarifications, throw light upon the fluctuations concerning the subject of

Hermeneutics» (p. 56). See the observations of Arch. Σπυρ. Μπιλλάλη (op. cit., Vol. I, p. 100) concerning the holy Augustin.

23. That the term πέτρα can take on the meaning of rocky ground or of a large rock (βράχος) which can hold other stones (λίθοι), can be seen from the following Scriptural passages: A) «Εξήλθεν ο σπείρων του σπείραι τον σπόρον αυτού, και εν τω σπείρειν...έτερον κατέπεσεν επί την πέτραν και φυέν εξηράνθη δια το μη έχειν ικμάδα» (Luke 8: 5-6). See Matt. 13:15 and 13:20 and Mark 4-5 and 4.16 : «επί τα πετρώδη». B) «Και λαβών το σώμα ο Ιωσήφ...έθηκεν αυτό εν τω καινώ αυτού μνημείω ο ελατόμησεν εν τη πέτρα» (Matt. 27:59-60) and See Mark 15.46 and Revelation 6:15-16.

24. If this did not exist, at all one might perhaps yield to the temptation to say that there exists a contradiction between Matthew and Luke and thus a refutation of the above conclusion. Everything in Holy Scripture, however, is written in wisdom.

25. Suffice it here to note that the role of the Apostolic tradition and succession («αποστολικών διαδοχών» according to Prof. Γερ. Κοιδάρη, Περί το πρόβλημα της ενώσεως των Εκκλησιών, Athens 1978. P. 9, 15ff. is basic and most important.

26. For that reason this is named «αποστολική παράδοσις» (apostolic tradition) and not «Πέτρειος παράδοσις» (Peter's tradition).

27. On the other hand, however, a disagreement may lead us to search better and interpret things in a clearer light, that is to re-examine the relevant passage for better comprehension. We think that necessary when the proposed interpretation agrees with Holy Scripture and the whole spirit harmonises with the holy canons and best responds to the demands of modern times. This improvement is (or, at least, should be) a side of a certain part in the Church congregation's search for and pursual of renewal. See the contents of another work of ours: «Περί την επικοινωνίαν ημών μετά των ετεροδόξων», p. 22-3.

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