



The Primacy of Rome and the Apostle Paul¹

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It is well known that even during the lifetime of the Holy Apostle Paul, certain persons attempted to cast doubt on the existence, equality, and fullness of his Apostolic dignity. The existence, fullness, and equality of his Apostolic authority is demonstrated and defended by St. Paul *par excellence* in II Corinthians 10-12 and Galatians 1:11-2:21.²

In these texts, he stirringly states and describes how he understands his Apostolic dignity and, at the same time, defends the fullness and equality of his Apostolic dignity and authority. He emphasizes, with absolute serenity of conscience: “For I suppose I am not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles.”³

However, this doubt as to the fullness and equality of the Holy Apostle Paul’s Apostolic authority and standing was repeated in a disdainful manner, contrary to Holy Scripture and historical truth, by three Popes. The sole purpose and motive of these Popes was their desire to impose,

¹ *Εκκλησιαστική Ἀλήθεια*, No. 476 (October 16, 1999), p. 7; reprinted in Archimandrite Cyprian and Archimandrite Glykerios Agiokyprianitai, *Ὁ Παποκεντρικὸς Οἰκουμενισμὸς—Ἀνησυχητικὲς Ἐξελίξεις* (Papocentric ecumenism: disquieting developments), Vol. VIII in Series B, *Συμβολὴ στὴν Ἀντι-οικουμενιστικὴ Θεολογία* (Athens: Hiera Synodos ton Enistamenon, 2002), pp. 125-127.

² Horst Dietrich Preuss and Klaus Berger, *Bibelkunde des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, 4th ed. (Wiesbaden: 1991), Vol. II, pp. 387-389, 392-393.

³ II Corinthians 11:5

through procrustean methods, the non-existent primacy of authority that the Bishops of Rome claimed for themselves.

The most glaring instance of this is the decree of Pope Innocent X, “Sancti Officii,” dated January 24, 1647.⁴ Through this decree, he anathematized as heretical any Christian who would believe, and propagate the idea, that the Apostle Paul possessed personal Apostolic standing and authority. He also stipulated that every believer, under pain of posthumous punishment, was obligated to believe and confess that, throughout his life, from the moment of his conversion to Christ, the Apostle Paul was under the monarchical authority of St. Peter—an absolute authority inherited by the Bishops of Rome.

In this regard, Innocent X was not original in such unprecedented and blasphemous ideas. Similar ideas had previously been expressed by two other Popes:

John XXII, in his bull “Licet iuxta doctrinam,” of October 23, 1327,⁵ and Clement VI, in his epistle “Super quibusdam” to the *Catholicos* of the Armenians, dated September 29, 1351.⁶

It is a distressing fact that, while St. Paul characterized his detractors as “false apostles, deceitful workers,”⁷ centuries later three Roman Pontiffs, in the name of an historically, Scripturally, and theologically non-existent primacy of authority, preferred to align themselves not with the Holy Apostle, but with these same detractors.

The truth, however, is different. It is expressed by St. Paul himself when he states: “Paul, an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ...”⁸ For this reason, St. John Chrysostomos, his greatest emulator, admirer, and interpreter throughout the centuries, will exclaim with wonderment: “I do not know what to say; for, whatever I say, it does not do justice to Paul’s worth.”⁹ At least as a minimal token of apology, today’s Bishop of Rome ought to ask forgiveness for the views of his predecessors, as he has done in other cases.

⁴ See Charles du Plessis d’Argentré, *Collectio judiciorum de novis erroribus qui ab initio duodecimi sæculi post Incarnationem Verbi, usque ad annum 1713 in Ecclesia proscripti sunt et notati* (Paris: 1775), Vol. III.2, p. 248.

⁵ du Plessis d’Argentré, *Collectio judiciorum*, Vol. I.1, p. 305, 365. Cf. *Monumenta Germaniæ Historica, Fontes Juris Germanici*, ed. R. Scholz (Hanover: 1932), pp. 327-329, 340-346, 528-565.

⁶ Cesare Baronius, *Annales ecclesiastici denuo excusi et ad nostra usque tempora perducti*, ed. Augustin Theiner (Paris: Barri-Ducis, 1864), Vol. XXV, pp. 502ff.

⁷ II Corinthians 11:13.

⁸ Galatians 1:1.

⁹ St. John Chrysostomos, “Homily XXV on Acts,” §1, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LX, col. 192.

The most unerring witness for the defense of the great Apostle of the Nations is his own consciousness that he is “not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles.”¹⁰ This confession of his is also the conscience of the Church regarding his Apostolic dignity and authority, which were equal and complete, and were bestowed upon him by the Lord.



¹⁰ See note 3.