

# ***Thrasher-Martignoni Debate***

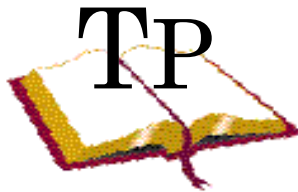
*Was Peter  
the First Pope?*

**John Martignoni**  
(Roman Catholic Church)  
&  
**Thomas N. Thrasher**  
(Church of Christ)

Thrasher-Martignoni Debate  
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# Introduction

Practically from the beginning of the church, there have been controversies (e.g., Acts 6 and Acts 15). At one time, most religious groups had representatives who participated in public debates defending their various viewpoints. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case. Thousands of books have been published on the various issues dividing those who claim to be the followers of Jesus Christ, including numerous published debates. This book preserves the record of such a debate. The publisher recommends that the reader study this material by “searching the Scriptures” to determine whether these things presented by John Martignoni and Thomas N. Thrasher are so (Acts 17:11).

John Martignoni lives in Birmingham, Alabama with his wife and four children. He is founder and president of the Bible Christian Society, an apostolate dedicated to explaining and defending the Scriptural foundations of the Catholic faith. He lectures throughout the United States and hosts EWTN’s “Open Line” program. He has participated in at least 10 formal debates defending the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Thomas N. Thrasher and his wife, Jerretta, have one son and two grandsons. Since first preaching the gospel in March 1966, he has preached in 20 states and Australia, authored or co-authored 19 books, and participated in more than 100 formal debates. In addition to evangelistic labors, he has worked as a mathematics teacher, school administrator, or university professor for 39 years, earning B.S., M.Ed., Ed.S., and Ed.D. degrees in the field of education. He is currently professor of mathematics education in the Department of Leadership and Applied Instruction at the University of West Georgia.

“You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

# Agreement

1. Proposition: “The apostle Peter was the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.”

Affirm: John Martignoni

Deny: Thomas N. Thrasher

2. Each of the participants will write five articles on the proposition. The participants will alternate articles, beginning with the affirmative.

3. No article will exceed 2000 words, as counted by standard word processing software. No new arguments may be introduced in the final negative article.

4. Either participant will have the right to publish the debate in book form or on the internet, as long as it is published in its entirety.

5. The participants will conduct themselves as gentlemen.



John Martignoni



Thomas N. Thrasher

# Proposition

“The apostle Peter was the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.”

Affirm: John Martignoni

Deny: Thomas N. Thrasher

## Martignoni’s First Affirmative

My task is to argue the affirmative of the proposition: “The apostle Peter was the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.” I am not going to try to “prove” that Peter was the first pope, because I obviously cannot offer a piece of definitive evidence that would be accepted by all that “proves,” beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Peter was the first pope. After all, we have ample photographic evidence and multitudes of firsthand accounts of the Holocaust, yet there are still those that do not believe the Holocaust occurred.

So, no “proof” is offered that Peter was the first pope, merely evidence for that fact. And, the fact of the matter is, we do have evidence Peter was indeed the first pope, the first head of the Church, while we have little to no evidence that he was not.

Before presenting the evidence that Peter was the first pope, however, I should explain exactly what is meant by the word, “pope.” “Pope” is the title given to the leader of the Catholic Church. The word “pope” is the English version of the Latin “papa” from Greek “pappas,” which means “father.” The title pope (papa) was once used in a broader way than we use it now. In the Eastern Church it was generally used for all priests, while in the Western Church the term seems to have been generally restricted to bishops. It apparently became a distinctive title for the Bishop of Rome (the leader of the Catholic Church) at sometime in the third or fourth century.

So, was Peter called, “Pope Peter?” Maybe, but at that time other bishops were probably called “pope,” or “papa,” as well. So,

this is not a debate as to whether or not Peter was called by the title of “pope,” but rather a debate on whether or not Peter was the first head of the Catholic Church.

The arguments that I have previously seen from various quarters against Peter being the first head of the Church generally follow two main themes, either: 1) They deny that Peter was the chief of the Apostles and, therefore, was never head of the Church in Rome or anywhere else; or 2) They deny that Peter was ever in Rome, thus he was never the Bishop of Rome, thus he was never the “Pope,” and thus he did not pass on his authority to the next Bishop of Rome. So, I will argue in the affirmative with these two lines of dissent in mind, and I will use both Scripture and historical documents in my arguments.

Peter as the head of the Apostles. Does the Bible present any evidence to support the Catholic Church’s claim to this effect? Indeed it does. Let’s start with the simple fact that any time the 12 Apostles are listed, Peter’s name tops the list (Matt. 10:1-4, Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:14-16, and Acts 1:13). Also, Peter’s name is mentioned some 160-170 times in the New Testament. All the other Apostles combined are only mentioned about 95 times. If Peter does not hold primacy amongst the Apostles, why is he listed first and why is he getting so much press?

But, beyond that, who was the only Apostle to receive the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven from Jesus Christ Himself? Was it Paul? No. Was it John? No. Andrew? No. It was Peter and Peter alone to whom Christ gave the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: “I will give you [Peter] the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven...” (Matt 16:19).

Why is this significant? It’s significant because keys are the symbol of authority and power. Peter alone is given this symbol of authority. And it is also significant in light of Isaiah 22:20-22. We see that Jesus was using the identical language in Matthew 16 that Isaiah uses. In this passage from Isaiah, the Lord is talking to Shebna, who is the king’s prime minister, he is over the king’s household, “In that day I will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your

girdle on him, and will commit your authority to his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”

The passing on of authority is symbolized by the key of the house of David. Eliakim will be over the house of David: he shall open and none shall shut; he shall shut and none shall open. In Matt 16:19, Peter, and Peter alone, is given the keys. Peter, and Peter alone, is tapped, by God, as the prime minister of the new house of David, which is the Church. Whatever he binds (shuts) on earth shall be bound in Heaven and whatever he looses (opens) on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.

Also, Peter has his named changed from Simon to Peter (which means rock). Peter is the only one of the Twelve to have his name changed, which is always a significant event in Scripture. Then, in John 21:15-17, Jesus tells Peter to, “Feed My lambs,” “Tend My sheep,” and “Feed My sheep.” Who is it that feeds the lambs, tends the sheep, and feeds the sheep? The shepherd! Jesus, knowing that He is to soon ascend into Heaven, is appointing Peter as shepherd of the flock in His absence. Did Christ say these words to any other Apostle? No.

What else in Scripture points to the fact that Peter was indeed the head of the Apostles? Well, Peter received a special revelation from the Father to know that Jesus was the Christ (Matt 16:16-17); Peter walked on water (Matt 14:28-29); Peter generally spoke for the Apostles as a whole (Matt 16:16, Matt. 18:21, Luke 12:41, John 6:68-69), and when it came time to pay the temple tax, who was it that Jesus, through a miracle, paid the temple tax for? He paid it for Himself and Peter (Matt 17:24-27), but not for any other Apostle.

In the Acts of the Apostles, Peter is always the first to act. The 1st half of the Acts of the Apostles is all about Peter. Peter was the one who commanded that Judas be replaced (Acts 1:15); it was Peter who spoke to the crowds on Pentecost (Acts 2:14); it was Peter to whom God told Cornelius to send men (Acts 10:5); it

was Peter to whom God gave the revelation to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10:9-21); it was Peter who meted out the judgment to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11); and it was Peter who settled the debate at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:7-12).

In Luke 22:31-32, Jesus says, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you [the Apostles] that he might sift you [the Apostles] like wheat, but I have prayed for you [Peter] that your faith may not fail; and when you [Peter] have turned again, strengthen your brethren.” Jesus prays that Peter’s faith may not fail so that he may strengthen his brethren. Jesus did not pray that John’s faith or James’ faith or Bartholomew’s faith may not fail and for them to strengthen their brethren, it was for Peter alone that Jesus prayed. Why did Jesus just pray for Peter here?

Over and over again, we see Peter in a position of primacy. Peter, because of the power of the keys, was indeed put into a position of primacy over the other Apostles and over the Church as a whole. He was made the Prime Minister of God’s kingdom.

In other words, there is ample evidence, from Scripture, for the primacy of Peter among the Apostles and in the Church. Now, what about historical evidence for the primacy of Peter?

Tertullian (ca 213 A.D.), “Peter alone [among the Apostles] do I find married, and through mention of his mother-in-law. I presume he was a monogamist; for the Church, built upon him...” The Church is built upon Peter.

St. Clement of Alexandria (ca 200 A.D.), “On hearing these words, the blessed Peter, the chosen, the pre-eminent, the first among the disciples, for whom alone with Himself the Savior paid the tribute...”

Origen (ca 230 A.D.), “Peter, upon whom is built the Church of Christ, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail...”

St. Cyprian of Carthage (ca 251 A.D.), “On him [Peter] He builds the Church and to him He gives the command to feed the sheep; and although He assigns a like power to all the Apostles, yet He founded a single chair, and He established by His own



authority a source and an intrinsic reason for that unity. Indeed, the others were that also which Peter was, but a primacy is given to Peter, whereby it is made clear that there is but one Church and one chair. So, too, all are shepherds, and the flock is shown to be one, fed by all the Apostles in single-minded accord. If someone does not hold fast to this unity of Peter, can he imagine that he still holds the faith? If he deserts the chair of Peter upon whom the Church was built, can he still be confident that he is in the Church?"

These are just a few quotes from early Christian writers that attest to the primacy of Peter in the Church...that Peter was indeed the first head of the early Church.

Now, what about the question of whether Peter was ever in Rome or not? First, what does Scripture say? Well, not much. However, there is one verse in Scripture that seems to suggest he was indeed in Rome. That verse is 1 Peter 5:13, "She [the Church] who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark." Babylon is considered by many to be a code-word for Rome. So, there is evidence, from the Bible, that Peter was indeed in Rome. Now, that is not by any means conclusive evidence from Scripture, but nowhere does Scripture say, "Peter was never in Rome." So, using Scripture alone, there is one verse that seems to indicate Peter was in Rome, and none that say Peter was never in Rome.

Now, let's turn to the historical record. Do we have any historical accounts of Peter being in Rome? Indeed we do.

Ignatius of Antioch (110 A.D.), "Not as Peter and Paul did, do I command you. They were apostles, and I am a convict," (Letter to the Romans).

Caius, Presbyter of Rome, (ca. 205 A.D.), "It is recorded that Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and Peter, likewise, was crucified, during the reign [of Nero]. The account is confirmed by the names of Peter and Paul over the cemeteries there, which remain to the present time."

St. Dionysius of Corinth (ca. 170 A.D.), "You have also, by

your very admonition, brought together the planting that was made by Peter and Paul at Rome and at Corinth...”

St. Irenaeus (ca. 190 A.D.), “Matthew also issued among the Hebrews a written Gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were evangelizing in Rome and laying the foundation of the Church.”

Tertullian (ca. 200 A.D.), “But if you are near to Italy, you have Rome, whence also our authority derives. How happy is that Church, on which Apostles poured out their whole doctrine along with their blood, where Peter endured a passion like that of the Lord...”

St. Clement of Alexandria (ca. 200 A.D.), “When Peter preached the Word publicly at Rome, and declared the Gospel by the Spirit...”

To summarize, I have given evidence from Scripture and from history for both the primacy of Peter in the Church and among the Apostles, and for the presence of Peter in Rome. Peter was indeed the first head (pope) of the Catholic Church.

# Proposition

“The apostle Peter was the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.”

Affirm: John Martignoni

Deny: Thomas N. Thrasher

## Thrasher’s First Negative

It is always a privilege, and also a grave responsibility, to participate in a discussion of God’s word. My pleasure is increased because I consider Mr. Martignoni to be a knowledgeable and honest man. Nevertheless, I am convinced he is mistaken on the subject we have agreed to discuss. Rather than spending additional time on introductory matters, however, I will proceed immediately to my response to his affirmation. Since I consider Mr. Martignoni a friend, and also for conciseness, I will refer to him as “John” in my articles.

John confesses, “I obviously cannot offer a piece of definitive evidence” **proving** “that Peter was the first pope.” This is quite an admission! Therefore, it is “obvious” that whatever “evidence” he introduced in his affirmative is not *definitive* and *does not prove* his proposition!

John said, “We do have evidence **Peter** was indeed the **first pope**, the first head of the Church” (Note: Bold print in this article is my emphasis, TNT). However, he admits that *pope* “apparently became a distinctive title for the Bishop of Rome ... sometime in the **third or fourth century**.” The truth is that the Scriptures **never** state that Peter (or anyone else) was the pope! If my friend had a Bible verse supporting his claim, I’m sure he would have produced it.

Furthermore, John’s assertion that “**Peter** was ... the **first head** of the Church” is absolutely false! The Bible tells us that **Jesus** “is the **head** of his body, the Church” (Colossians 1:18.

Scripture quotations are from *The New Testament, Authorized Catholic Edition*, 1963, unless otherwise stated). **Jesus** is “**head** over all the Church, which indeed is his body” (Ephesians 1:23). “**Christ** is the **head** of the Church” (Ephesians 5:23). The Bible declares **Jesus** as head, yet my friend says, “Peter was ... the first head”!

Questions: What **Bible verse** states that Peter was the **first head** of the church and **what year** did he officially become “the first pope” and “the first head”? If Peter was “the first pope,” what men (or women) succeeded Peter? Since the entire list is probably quite long, please list the names and dates for the 2<sup>nd</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> popes.

John said, “I will use both Scripture and historical documents in my arguments.” However, the **Scriptures** do not teach his proposition that “the apostle Peter was the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church,” for they never mention a “Pope” or “the Roman Catholic Church”! In fact, the Scriptures never mention many things associated with the Roman Catholic Church: Pope, Cardinal, Archbishop, Mass, Lent, Rosary, Purgatory, Extreme Unction, Holy Water, Limbo, Immaculate Conception, Assumption of Mary, and many other concepts.

Let’s review John’s efforts to support his proposition from the Bible. He said, “Any time the 12 Apostles are listed, Peter’s name tops the list.” Does Peter’s name being listed first prove that Peter was “the first Pope”? If so, what about Galatians 2:9?—“James and **Cephas** and John, who were considered the pillars.” Does this verse show that by this time James had become the Pope, since his name is listed before Peter’s? 1 Corinthians 1:12 states, “Each of you says, I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of **Cephas**, or I am of Christ.” Cephas (Peter) is mentioned, but he is mentioned **after** Paul and Apollos! 1 Corinthians 3:22 states: “For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or **Cephas**.” Since Cephas’ name does not “top the list,” I suppose he was no longer the Pope! 1 Corinthians 9:5 states: “Have we not a right to take about with us a woman, a sister, as do the other apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and **Cephas**?” Peter is mentioned last! Obviously, John’s argument is without merit.

Furthermore, John said, “Peter’s name is mentioned some 160-170 times in the New Testament.... If Peter does not hold primacy amongst the Apostles, ... why is he getting so much press?” If the number of times an apostle’s name is mentioned proves he is Pope, then it seems the apostle Paul was Pope instead of Peter. According to my count, the apostle Paul (or Saul, Acts 13:9) is mentioned by name more than 190 times in the New Testament—more times than Peter (assuming John’s count is accurate). Paul’s name is mentioned **many more times** than Peter’s after the beginning of the church on Pentecost (Acts 2).

John argues, “It was Peter and Peter alone to whom Christ gave the keys of the Kingdom.” All of the apostles were given the same commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). However, Matthew 16:19 refers to Peter’s role in being the first to preach to the Jews (Acts 2) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10). The other apostles had the same authority to bind and loose as Peter did: “Whatever you [**plural**] bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatever you [**plural**] loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven” (Matthew 18:18). The context of Matthew 16:13-20 is not discussing who *Peter* is nor his position, but who *Jesus* is and His position. It does not exalt *Peter*, but *Jesus*. Jesus does not confess *Peter*; **Peter confesses Jesus**. The verse is not saying Peter is the rock on which the church is built, but rather it *contrasts* Peter’s name (*petros*, masculine—“a detached stone or boulder”) to the rock on which the church would be built (*petra*, feminine—“a mass of rock”). The church was **not** built on Peter: “For other foundation no one can lay, but that which has been laid, which is **Christ Jesus**” (1 Corinthians 3:11). Remember that **Jesus** is referred to using the term “Rock” (1 Corinthians 10:4; Romans 9:33; 1 Peter 2:8).

My friend observes that Peter’s name was changed. How does he know that? Because he can read that in the Bible (John 1:42). However, he cannot read in the Bible that Simon was called Cephas (“a stone”) **because** he was to be the first Pope! Incidentally, was John aware of the fact that Jesus gave James and John the surname “Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17)?

John notes that Jesus told Peter to “feed my sheep.” True. However, several others were also instructed “to feed the church of God” (Acts 20:28, KJV) and “feed the flock of God” (1 Peter 5:2, KJV). Does John think those people were also **popes**?

John alleges that Jesus appointed “Peter as shepherd of the flock in His absence.” However, Jesus Himself said, “There shall be **one fold** and **one shepherd**” (John 10:16). Jesus is the only shepherd over the whole church—no provision for a Pope over the “one fold”! Furthermore, the Lord said, “I am **the good shepherd**” (John 10:11). If the Pope is a shepherd over the whole church, then he is not a “good” one, because Jesus Christ is **the** good shepherd! The apostle Peter identified **Jesus** as “the chief Shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4, ASV).

My friend wrote: “The 1st half of the Acts of the Apostles is **all about Peter**.” This is inaccurate at best. For example, Acts 6 is about the selection of seven men, including Stephen and Philip. Chapter 7 records Stephen’s defense before the Jewish council. Chapter 8 focuses on Philip’s preaching. Chapter 9 focuses on the conversion of Saul. Chapters 13 and 14 describe the preaching journey of Paul and Barnabas. The first half of Acts tells us about much of Peter’s work; however, it is quite an exaggeration to contend that it “is all about Peter”! Even if it were, that wouldn’t prove he was Pope!

According to my count, Paul is named 121 times in the last half of Acts, while Peter is named only twice! Does this prove that Paul became Pope in the second half of Acts? If Peter’s frequent mention in the first half argues that he was Pope, then why doesn’t Paul’s vastly more frequent mention in the second half argue for his being Pope during that time?

John alleged that “Peter ... was made the Prime Minister of God’s kingdom.” Where does God’s word say that? Just another pure assertion.

John listed several things “in Scripture” that he claims point “to the fact that Peter was indeed the head of the Apostles”; however, not one of them confirms that Peter was “the first Pope” or “the first head” of the church! Additionally, my friend failed to

include several interesting incidents from the life of Peter in his list: Jesus rebuked Peter's lack of faith (Matthew 14:25-31); Peter contradicted the Lord (Matthew 16:21-22); Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal to me; for thou dost not mind the things of God, but those of men" (Matthew 16:21-23); Peter denied Jesus three times, even with curses and swearing (Matthew 26:69-75); Peter was hypocritical, "not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" (Galatians 2:11-14). The various recorded events from Peter's life are not evidence that he was ever a Pope!

My friend asks, "What about **historical evidence** for the primacy of Peter?" He then offers quotations from Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Cyprian of Carthage, concluding, "These are just a few quotes from early Christian writers that attest to the primacy of Peter in the Church ... that Peter was indeed the first head of the early Church."

Personally, I must reject anyone's opinion when that opinion conflicts with the Scriptures. For example, if they alleged that "Peter was indeed the first head of the early Church," then they were wrong! As already proven from the Bible, **Jesus** was the head of the church, **not Peter** (Ephesians 1:23; 5:23; Colossians 1:18). Remember, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Questions: Do you agree with **everything** written by "early Christian writers"? Did each of the four men you quoted write by inspiration, guided by the Holy Spirit **as Bible writers were**?

John devoted considerable attention to "whether Peter was ever in Rome or not?" This may be a matter of concern for some people; however, it matters little to me. The simple truth is that, if he was in Rome at some point, such would not make him Pope! The apostle Paul was in Rome for two years (Acts 28:16, 30). Does that prove he was Pope?

John claims "there is **one verse** in Scripture that **seems** to **suggest** he was indeed in Rome... 1 Peter 5:13." This verse mentions Babylon, not Rome, but John says, "Babylon is **considered by many** to be a code-word for Rome." Not very

compelling evidence, is it? My friend even confesses, “That is **not** by any means conclusive evidence from Scripture.”

Consequently, in the absence of **any** Biblical evidence, John appeals “to the historical record.” He cites statements from Ignatius of Antioch, Caius, Dionysius of Corinth, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria. Suppose these uninspired writers were correct and that Peter spent some time in Rome. Does that prove that Peter was Pope? Several of the quotations given also mention Paul’s presence in Rome (of course, that fact is confirmed by the inspired Scriptures). Since Paul was in Rome, that proves he was Pope, according to my opponent’s line of argumentation!

Finally, the primacy of Peter, that he was the first pope, and that he was the first head of the church were ideas unknown to the apostles themselves. At the so-called Last Supper, “there arose also a dispute among them, which of them was reputed to be the greatest” (Luke 22:24). The Lord could have put that to rest quickly by telling them it was Peter, but He didn’t. In fact, He taught them it was “not so” among them that one would “exercise authority” over the others (:25-26). The Lord missed an excellent opportunity to identify Peter as “the head” of the church!

To summarize, my friend has not given **any evidence** to confirm that Peter was, in fact, “the first pope.” I look forward to the continuation of this discussion.



## Martignoni's Second Affirmative

Mr. Thrasher's response can be summed up in this manner: "When I read the Bible I see that it says Christ is the head of the Church, therefore, John and the Roman Catholic Church are wrong." Essentially, the only "proof" he offers, is his limited and very fallible interpretation of the Bible.

There are problems, though, with the conclusion drawn from his private, fallible interpretation. Chief among those being that Catholics agree that Christ is the head of the Church. Yes, Jesus Christ was, is, and always will be the head of the Church. No one has, nor ever will, replace Him. Christ being the head of the Church, however, in no way conflicts with the statement that Peter is also the head of the Church.

And, Mr. Thrasher, just to be clear, when a Catholic says Peter was the "first" head of the Church, the "first" Pope, we are essentially saying two things: 1) That Peter was the head of the Church with, in, and through Christ, not instead of Christ...Peter shepherded the Church with the authority given to him by Jesus Christ Himself; and, 2) Peter assumed his role as the earthly head of the Church after the Ascension of Jesus into Heaven. So, we are using the word "first" in the context of the first after Christ ascended bodily into Heaven.

But, "How can this be," you might ask, "you cannot have two heads of the Church. Either Jesus is the head of the Church, as you admit, or Peter is the head, it cannot be both!" Ah, but it can. "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" In Matthew 23:9, we see that we "have one Father." One! Yet, the Bible also speaks of many fathers (e.g., Mt 1:2-16; Mk 1:20; Lk 15:20; Jn 4:53; Acts 16:1; Eph 5:31). How can this be? The Bible says there is only one Father, yet the Bible says there is more than one father. Which is it, Mr. Thrasher?

Matthew 23:8 says we only have one teacher. One! Yet, the Bible speaks of more than one teacher (e.g., 1 Cor 12:28; Acts 5:34; Acts 13:1; Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 2:7). How can this be? The

Bible says there is only one teacher, yet the Bible says there is more than one teacher. Which is it, Mr. Thrasher?

The Bible says there is no other foundation than Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:11). None! Yet, the Bible tells us the household of God, the Church, is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets (Eph 2:20). How can this be? The Bible says there is only one foundation, yet the Bible says there is more than one foundation. Which is it Mr. Thrasher?

In all these instances, Mr. Thrasher's scriptural logic, which stems from his private fallible interpretation of Scripture, causes him a problem. His "logic" turns all of the above examples into either-or situations, which necessarily forces contradictions on the Bible. Well, we know the Bible cannot contradict itself, therefore, something must be wrong with Mr. Thrasher's logic.

Catholics, however, realize that these are both-and situations and that there are no contradictions here. So, yes, God is our only Father, but Abraham was also father (Lk 16:24; Rom 4:11). Yes, God is our only teacher, but there are teachers in the Church (1 Cor 12:28). Yes, Jesus is our only foundation, but the Apostles and Prophets are also the foundation (Eph 2:20). In just the same way, Jesus is the only Head of the Church, but Peter, too, is head of the Church.

If Mr. Thrasher wishes to claim that Peter cannot be the head of the Church because Jesus is the one and only head of the Church, then he needs to explain how God can be our one and only Father, yet Abraham is also a father. He needs to explain how God is our one and only teacher; yet there are teachers, plural, in the Church. He needs to explain how Jesus is our one and only foundation, yet the Apostles and Prophets are also the foundation.

Now, let's look at some of the specifics of Mr. Thrasher's arguments. He said "the Scriptures **never** state that Peter...was the pope!" Indeed, the Scriptures do not use the word "pope." But, does Mr. Thrasher not call his Scriptures, "the Bible?" Yet, nowhere does that word appear in the Bible. It seems he holds Catholics to a standard that he does not hold himself to.

Mr. Thrasher asks: “**What year** did [Peter] officially become ‘the first pope’... and If Peter was ‘the first pope,’ what men (or women) succeeded Peter?” And he wants the names and dates of the “2<sup>nd</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> popes.” Here they are (no women):

Peter (30-67)

Linus (67-76)

Anacletus (76-88)

Clement I (88-97)

Evaristus (97-105)

Alexander I (105-115)

Sixtus I (115-125)

Telesphorus (125-136)

Hyginus (136-140)

Pius I (140-155)

I ask Mr. Thrasher: Can you give me the name of a single preaching elder of your Campbellite Church of Christ from the 1<sup>st</sup> century and one from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century? How about the 3<sup>rd</sup> century? The 4<sup>th</sup>? 5<sup>th</sup>? I can give Mr. Thrasher the complete lists of popes from Peter down to the current pope. 2000 years of popes. Historical evidence. Can he give me the names of the “elders” who laid hands on the “elders” who currently oversee his church? What about the names of the elders who ordained those elders? And the elders who ordained them? And so on back to the Apostles? If not, how does he know anyone in his church has the authority to lay on hands?

He can’t! In fact, Mr. Thrasher’s Campbellite Church of Christ has no evidence for its existence before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But, I digress. Back to Mr. Thrasher’s other arguments.

One of the evidences I presented for Peter as the first pope, was that in every **list** of the **12** Apostles, Peter’s name is always first. Mr. Thrasher responds by citing Galatians 2:9, where Peter is not named first. Two points: 1) That was not a **list** of the **12**

Apostles, so my argument stands; and 2) James, at that time, was Bishop of Jerusalem, where Paul was, so it was entirely proper to mention his name before Peter's in that circumstance. Mr. Thrasher also fails to note that, in Galatians 1, Paul goes to Jerusalem to see who? Peter. Why would Paul go to Peter? Because he knew that Peter was the head of the Church.

Mr. Thrasher asks if Paul's name being mentioned more than Peter's in the last half of Acts "proves" Paul "became Pope in the second half of Acts?" Two points: 1) I did not offer that fact about Peter's name being mentioned more than the other Twelve combined as "proof," of Peter being the pope, but as evidence; and 2) the proposition being debated is about the "first" pope, not the 2<sup>nd</sup>, so Mr. Thrasher's argument is irrelevant. Paul could not have been the "first" head of the Church since the Church existed for years before he converted.

I contended in my first affirmative that the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the Acts of the Apostles was "all about Peter." Mr. Thrasher says that is "inaccurate at best." Really? Acts 1: Peter decides that Judas should be replaced. Acts 2: Peter speaks to the crowds at Pentecost and converts thousands. Acts 3: Peter heals a lame man and again addresses the crowds. Acts 4: Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, addresses the Jewish rulers, priests, and scribes. Acts 5: Peter speaks the death sentence upon Ananias and Sapphira. Acts 8: Peter rebukes Simon. Acts 9: Saul's conversion; Peter raises the dead and heals the paralyzed. Acts 10: Peter, at God's direct command, opens the door to the Gentiles. Acts 11: The Judaizers came to Peter to complain. Acts 12: Peter is arrested and saved by an angel. Acts 15: Peter decides the issue at the Council of Jerusalem, and after he finishes speaking, "all the assembly kept silence."

There is no doubt that Peter is the main actor in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the Acts of the Apostles, which does indeed provide evidence for Peter being the first head of the Church, the first Pope. Does Paul become the main actor in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Acts? Indeed. But, so what? That has no bearing whatsoever on whether or not Peter was the first pope. Does it point to Paul being a very, very important leader in the early Church? Absolutely. Just so Peter's

exploits being the main focus of the first half of Acts points to him being a very, very important leader of the Church. Evidence.

Mr. Thrasher denies that when Jesus told Peter to feed and tend the lambs and the sheep (John 21:15-17) that He was appointing Peter as shepherd of the flock. He cites two other verses, Acts 20:28 and 1 Ptr 5:2, where others are told to “feed” the church of God and flock of God, respectively, and asks if I think “those people were also popes?” No, Mr. Thrasher, I do not. But, it is very clear, is it not, Mr. Thrasher, that those charged with feeding the flock had authority over those they were told to feed? They were bishops, or overseers, of their flocks.

In Acts 20:28, who is it being told to “feed the church?” Those who have been given authority over the flock in their area - the overseers (bishops). In 1 Ptr 5:2, who is it that is told to “feed the flock of God?” Those who have been given charge of, or oversight over, the flock in their area.

So, if Paul (Acts 20) and Peter (1 Ptr 5) recognize that those who feed the flock are those who are the overseers of their particular flock, why doesn't Mr. Thrasher recognize that fact when it comes to Peter? Jesus tells Peter to “Feed My lambs,” “Tend My sheep,” and “Feed My sheep.” If the overseers mentioned in Acts 20 and 1 Ptr 5 have authority over their local flocks, then it is apparent that the act of feeding the sheep comes with the authority to do so. And, since Jesus is telling Peter to feed His flock, He is thereby giving Peter authority over His flock...the flock that is His Church. Scripture speaks very plainly that Jesus is appointing Peter the shepherd of His flock and Mr. Thrasher basically says, “Unh-unhh.”

And, what was Mr. Thrasher's response to the historical evidence presented for Peter being the first pope? “I reject anyone's opinion when that opinion conflicts with the Scriptures.” The problem is, though, the “opinions” of those early Christians don't conflict with the Scriptures. They conflict with Mr. Thrasher's “opinion”... with his private, fallible interpretations ... of the Scriptures. Is Mr. Thrasher possibly declaring his interpretations of Scripture to be infallible?

When once debating one of Mr. Thrasher's co-religionists, Pat Donahue, I asked, "Who wrote the Gospel of Mark, and how do you know?" His response: "I know because of the witness of the early Christians." Does Mr. Thrasher reject that statement of one of his preaching elders? Or, is it okay for the Campbellite Church of Christ to appeal to the "witness of the early Christians," but when the Catholic Church of Christ does it, these same witnesses are simply rejected outright?

This is a very important point. Mr. Thrasher, how do you know who wrote the Gospel of Mark? Is it by the witness of the early Christians as Mr. Donahue stated? And, if so, why then do you reject the witness of these same early Christians in regard to Peter being the first head of the Church?

Mr. Thrasher is not one of those who argues Peter was never in Rome, so it is not necessary to argue that point any further.

I close by summarizing the actual evidence offered by Mr. Thrasher to "prove" Peter was not the first pope:

## Thrasher's Second Negative

I am delighted to continue this discussion of the proposition: "The apostle Peter was the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church." Commenting on my first speech, John said, "Essentially, the only 'proof' he offers, is his limited and very fallible interpretation of the Bible." Actually, it is my calling attention to what **the Scriptures teach** that gives John problems.

John neglected to answer these questions: What **Bible verse** states that Peter was the **first head** of the church? Do you agree with **everything** written by 'early Christian writers'? Did each of the four men you quoted write by inspiration, guided by the Holy Spirit **as Bible writers were**?

When John argued that Peter was pope because his name is mentioned first, I responded to his *evidence* by citing **Bible passages** (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; Galatians 2:9) in which Peter's name was **not** first. John attempted to justify Peter's not being mentioned first in Galatians 2:9, but he ignored my other *evidence*.

When John presented *evidence* that Peter was pope based upon his frequent mention, I responded, "Paul's name is mentioned **many more times** than Peter's after the beginning of the church on Pentecost." John rejected this *evidence* that Paul became pope, saying that Paul was an "**important leader** in the early church." Likewise, Peter's frequent mention indicates he was an "important leader," but not *evidence* he was **pope**!

John contended that the first half of Acts was "all about Peter." I demonstrated this statement's inaccuracy by providing *evidence* from other events in the first half of Acts. John rejected this *evidence* that the 1<sup>st</sup> half of Acts is **not** "**all** about Peter." Isn't it strange? Half of Acts is "all about Peter," yet **not once** does it call Peter **Bishop of Rome, pope, or head of the church?** *Evidence?*

John claimed, "Christ being the head of the Church, however, in no way conflicts with the statement that Peter is also

the head of the Church.” Yet, John never provided a verse confirming **Peter** was “**head** of the Church”!

My friend states: “In Galatians 1, Paul goes to Jerusalem to see who? Peter.” Of course, it does **not** say “because Peter was the pope”! In fact, Paul said, “They ... who were of repute imparted **nothing** to me” (2:6)!

John asked, “How do you **know** who wrote the Gospel of Mark?” I don’t. All that really matters to me is that God is the source (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Ephesians 3:3-5; 1 Corinthians 2:10). If God wanted us to know, He could have easily named the inspired writer (cf. Romans 1:1; James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1)!

In clarifying his position, John explained, “Peter assumed his role as the earthly head of the Church after the Ascension of Jesus into Heaven.” He evidently thinks that occurred in AD 30. Questions: In what **year** did Peter become “Bishop of Rome”? What Scripture says that **subsequent bishops of Rome** would be Peter’s **successors** as **head of the church**?

In attempting to explain how Jesus could be Head of the church and Peter could also be head, John offered supposed parallels: “Matthew 23:9...we see that we ‘have one Father.’... Yet, the Bible also speaks of many fathers”; “Matthew 23:8 says we only have one teacher.... Yet, the Bible speaks of more than one teacher.” Obviously, when God the Father is said to be our Father, no other father occupies His position or shares His Fatherhood. He is one-of-a-kind! Likewise, when Jesus is called Master/Teacher, no other teacher occupies His position or is on a par with Him. No one is Father as God is, and no one is Master/Teacher as Jesus is!

John’s “parallels” are interesting. How did he know that others besides God were referred to by the term “father”? That’s in the Bible, of course. How did he know others besides Jesus were called teachers? That’s in the Bible. However, he **cannot find** where **Peter** was ever called “**head** of the church” in the Bible! Therefore, his parallels fail in the absence of Bible *evidence*!

John suggested another parallel: “The Bible says there is no



other **foundation** than Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:11)... Yet, the Bible tells us ... the Church, is built upon the **foundation** of the Apostles and the Prophets (Eph 2:20).” Are the apostles and prophets the foundation of the church **in the same sense** Jesus is? Definitely not! The “foundation” figures are being used in different ways. Clearly, the apostles and prophets are **not** the “foundation” in the same sense Jesus is, because when they are called the “foundation,” Jesus is called the “**chief corner stone**” (Ephesians 2:20).

Furthermore, the passage John cited actually **undermines** his position that the church was founded/built upon Peter. Ephesians 2:20 calls the “**apostles** [plural] and **prophets** [plural]” the foundation, **not just Peter!** Therefore, the church was **not** built on **Peter**, as my friend contended from Matthew 16:18. In whatever way Peter was part of the foundation, so were the other apostles and prophets!

My opponent says, “Jesus is the **only Head** of the Church,” [I agree!], then he adds, “But Peter, **too**, is **head** of the Church.” However, John once again fails to cite where God’s word says **that!** Suppose I alleged that **Paul** was the head of the church. Would John accept that without my giving Bible “evidence”?

John asks, “Does Mr. Thrasher not call his Scriptures, ‘the Bible?’ Yet, nowhere does that word appear in the Bible.” I am sure that my friend knows that “Bible” is simply a transliteration of the Greek word βιβλία (translated “books” in Revelation 20:12, KJV), as “baptize” is of βαπτίζω. The singular form βιβλιον is used to refer to God’s word (Luke 4:17-20; John 20:30; Hebrews 10:7), as is the form βιβλος (Mark 12:26; Luke 3:4; 20:42; Acts 1:20; 7:42). Now, in what passage of Scripture is Peter called “head of the church” or “bishop of Rome”?

I asked John: “If Peter was ‘the first pope,’ what men (or women) succeeded Peter?” He responded, “I can give Mr. Thrasher the complete lists of popes from Peter down to the current pope. 2000 years of popes.” However, John’s list of the first 10 (alleged) popes is interesting. Note the following comparison of listings for the first five (alleged) popes and the

observations that follow.

<b>John's Second Affirmative Article</b>	<i>Catholic Biblical Apologetics</i>	<i>Original Catholic Encyclopedia</i>	<i>Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature</i>	<i>Britannica Online Encyclopedia</i>
Peter 30 - 67	Peter 42 - 67	Peter 33 - 67	Peter 42 - 67	Peter ? - c 64
Linus 67 - 76	Linus 67 - 79	Linus c 67 - 76	Linus 67 - 78	Linus c 67 - 76/79
Anacletus 76 - 88	Anacletus 79 - 92	Anacletus 76 - 88	Cletus 78 - 90	Anacletus 76 - 88 or 79 - 91
Clement I 88 - 97	Clement I 92 - 101	Clement I 88 - 97	Clement I 90 - 100	Clement I 88 - 97 or 92 - 101
Evaristus 97 - 105	Evaristus 101 - 105	Evaristus c 98 - 106	Anacletus 100 - 112	Evaristus c 97 - c 107

## **Peter**

- “Peter died in Rome and ... his martyrdom came during the reign of Emperor Nero, probably in **64**” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*). So how was he pope from 64-67?
- “Imprisoned by King Herod Agrippa, he [Peter] was aided in an escape by an angel. He then resumed his apostolate in Jerusalem and his missionary efforts included travels to such cities of the pagan world as Antioch, Corinth, and **eventually Rome**” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*). Consequently, Peter did not arrive in Rome for **several years after the church began**. Therefore, he was **not** “bishop of Rome” (or pope) in AD 30, as John asserted.
- “Ancient tradition assigns to the **year 42** the **first coming of St. Peter to Rome**” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*). If Peter did not come to Rome until AD

42, then he was **not** Bishop of Rome (pope) from 30-41, contrary to John's claim.

- “As to the duration of his Apostolic activity in the Roman capital, the continuity or otherwise of his residence there, the details and success of his labors, and the chronology of his arrival and death, all these questions are **uncertain**” (*Original Catholic Encyclopedia*)

### Linus

- “Pope St. Linus ... reigned about A.D. 64 **or** 67 to 76 **or** 79” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*). There appears to be some **uncertainty** about his reign.
- “Ancient documents about his papacy have proven to be **inaccurate** or **apocryphal**” (*New Catholic Dictionary*).

### Anacletus

- “Tertullian **omits** him altogether. To add to the **confusion**, the order is **different**. Thus Ireneus has Linus, Anacletus, Clement; whereas Augustine and Optatus put Clement before Anacletus. On the other hand, the ‘Catalogus Liberianus’, the ‘Carmen contra Marcionem’ and the ‘Liber Pontificalis’, all most respectable for their antiquity, make Cletus and Anacletus distinct from each other” (*Original Catholic Encyclopedia*).
- “The chronology is, of course, in consequence of all this, **very undetermined**, but Duchesne, in his ‘Origines’, says ‘we are far from the day when the years, months, and days of the Pontifical Catalogue can be given with any guarantee of exactness. But is it necessary to be exact about popes of whom we **know so little?** ... Anicetus reigned certainly in 154. That is **all** we can say with assurance about **primitive pontifical chronology**” (*Original Catholic Encyclopedia*).

## Clement I

- “According to Tertullian, writing c. 199, the Roman Church claimed that **Clement was ordained by St. Peter** ..., and St. Jerome tells us that in his time ‘most of the Latins’ held that Clement was the **immediate successor** of the Apostle.... St. Jerome himself in several other places follows this opinion...The early evidence shows **great variety**.” (*Original Catholic Encyclopedia*)
- “Little is known of his life” (*New Catholic Dictionary*).

## Evaristus

- “Date of birth unknown; died about 107.... The earliest historical sources offer **no authentic data** about him” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*).
- “**Little** is known about his reign with certainty.... Evaristus reportedly followed Clement as the fourth successor of Saint Peter. However, contemporary scholars generally hold that **a single bishop did not yet rule at Rome at this time**, and the office of pope is therefore thought to be attributed to Evaristus and his colleagues **retroactively by later writers**” (*New World Encyclopedia*).

“In the article PAPACY we have referred to the **uncertainty** prevailing in regard to the first bishops of Rome. Roman Catholic writers themselves quite generally admit that the **statements of ancient Church-writers on the subject are entirely irreconcilable**, and that it is **impossible** to establish with any degree of certainty the order in which they followed each other, the years of their accession to the see of Rome, and the year of their death” (*Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, volume 8, page 409).

Many more issues could be raised about John’s listing, if space allowed. I may offer additional observations later.

My friend made several disparaging comments about what

he calls the “Campbellite Church of Christ”; however, he later acknowledged, “But, I digress.” Since he admitted his remarks were a **digression** from the issue, I am reluctant to respond in this debate. However, if John really wants to discuss “Campbellism,” I will gladly debate that issue when this debate has concluded.

At the close of my first article I advanced the following argument, evidently overlooked by John. The primacy of Peter, his being the first pope and first head of the church were ideas unknown to the apostles themselves. Near the close of Jesus’ earthly ministry, “there arose also a dispute among them [the apostles], which of them was reputed to be the greatest” (Luke 22:24). The Lord could have ended that dispute quickly by telling them it was Peter; however, He didn’t. To the contrary, He taught them it was “not so” among them that one would “exercise authority” over the others (22:25-26). Indeed, if John’s contention is correct, Jesus missed a wonderful opportunity to identify Peter as the head of the church!

## Martignoni's Third Affirmative

Mr. Thrasher states he is giving me “problems” by “calling attention to what the **Scriptures teach.**” I actually have no problem with what the Scriptures teach. I have a problem, though, with Mr. Thrasher's private, fallible interpretation of what the Scriptures teach. And, more importantly, I have a problem with Mr. Thrasher's private, fallible interpretation of what the Scriptures don't teach. Most of his “scriptural” argument here is an argument from silence. The summation of his “scriptural” argument for Peter not being the first head of the Church is:

1) Nowhere does the Bible specifically say that Peter was the first head of the Church, therefore, Peter was not the first head of the Church. An argument from silence.

2) In Luke 22:24-26, the disciples argued as to which of them was the greatest, and Jesus could have said Peter was the greatest and settled the issue, but He didn't. So Jesus “missed a wonderful opportunity to identify Peter as the head of the church!” Therefore, Peter is not the first head of the Church. Another argument from silence.

That basically sums up his “scriptural” argument. Addressing the former point, nowhere does the Bible use the term “preaching elder.” Yet, Pat Donahue, a member of Thrasher's Campbellite Church of Christ, was introduced to me as a “preaching elder.” Which I suppose means that there are non-preaching elders as well. Mr. Thrasher, where does the Bible specifically identify the office of “preaching elder”? Yet, you have them.

The Campbellite Church of Christ has regular church meetings on Wednesday night. Nowhere in the Bible does it mention anything about church meetings on Wednesday night. Yet, you have them.

Nowhere in the Bible does it say, “Go forth and limit the number of your children by using contraception.” Yet, contraception is an acceptable practice in the Campbellite Church

of Christ.

God commands that He be worshipped and praised, on earth, using musical instruments (Ps 33:2-3). In Heaven, we see that musical instruments are involved in the worship and praise of God (Rev 5:8). Yet, instruments are banned in the Campbellite churches.

The point being, Mr. Thrasher, that you have many beliefs and practices in your faith tradition that are not specifically mentioned in the Bible. So, to argue from silence that Peter cannot be the first head of the Church because nowhere does the Bible specifically “call Peter **Bishop of Rome, pope, or head of the church,**” smacks of hypocrisy.

Tell me where the Bible specifically mentions the offices of preaching and non-preaching elders, or that Christians should meet on Wednesday nights, or that Christians should use contraception, or that there is a prohibition against musical instruments in worship services, and I will concede your point. But, if you can't show me where those things are specifically stated in Scripture, then you will have conceded my point: that you believe in things that are not directly mentioned in Scripture and, therefore, this particular argument of yours regarding Peter is without merit.

On point two mentioned above, I would have to say that Mr. Thrasher is badly mistaken in claiming that “Jesus missed a wonderful opportunity to identify Peter as the head of the church!” This is one of those situations where one's private, fallible interpretation of the Bible can get one in trouble. Let's look at Lk 22:24-26, but let's also go a few verses farther and see if maybe Mr. Thrasher overlooked, or possibly intentionally ignored, a tiny little inconvenient detail.

In Luke 22:24-26, the disciples are arguing amongst themselves as to who should be considered the greatest. Mr. Thrasher seems to think that Jesus' silence in not naming Peter as the greatest is scriptural evidence that Peter was not the first head of the Church. Three things that Mr. Thrasher is either overlooking or intentionally ignoring:

1) Nowhere does it state that Peter was involved in this “dispute.” He may have been, but the Bible does not specifically say he was.

2) Jesus wasn’t about “greatness” as the world saw it and as the disciples saw it at the time. So why on earth would He say, “Peter is the greatest among you?” Yet Mr. Thrasher claims Jesus’ not saying that is scriptural proof that Peter was not the first head of the Church.

3) Jesus actually did settle their dispute as to which was the greatest among them. Mr. Thrasher, though, refuses to recognize what Scripture puts right in front of him.

There are several places in Scripture that mention how the disciples argued about who was the greatest and, when that happened, what did Jesus do? He responded by talking about humility (e.g., Mt 18:4), not about greatness. But, Jesus did indeed tell his disciples who the greatest among them was. He said, “He who is greatest among you shall be your servant,” (Mt 23:11). It just so happens that one of the main titles of the Pope is: Servant of the Servants of God. So, Jesus did indeed tell us, indirectly, who was “greatest” among them.

However, Jesus also tells us directly. In that very passage cited by Mr. Thrasher as proof that Peter was not the head of the Apostles, we see that Jesus did the exact opposite of what Mr. Thrasher claims. Jesus did indeed tell us that Peter was the greatest among them...if you read a few more verses. Luke 22:24-26 is where the Apostles were arguing about who was greatest among them. In verses 27-30, Jesus explains to them, again, that greatness consists in humility...in serving others...and that all of them will have a place at the table in His Kingdom, but then in verse 31, Jesus settles their argument.

Right after the Apostles are arguing about who is the greatest, who, and who alone, does Jesus turn to and what name alone does Jesus mention? Simon Peter! So, Jesus did not miss “a wonderful opportunity to identify Peter as the head of the Church,” as Mr. Thrasher claims. Right there, Mr. Thrasher, in verse 31, Jesus settles the dispute. “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded



to have you [plural - the Apostles], that he might sift you [plural - the Apostles] like wheat, but I have prayed for you [singular - Peter] that your faith may not fail; and when you [singular - Peter] have turned again, strengthen your brethren”

Jesus turns to Peter and says that He, Jesus, has prayed for who? All of the Apostles, since they are all equal? No! Jesus has prayed for Peter and for Peter’s faith not to fail. Wow, Jesus missed a wonderful opportunity here to tell them that they were all equal. Jesus prays for Peter so that Peter can strengthen the other Apostles. I guess that means Bartholomew was the greatest among them? Or James? Or John? Or Jude? No! Mr. Thrasher’s biased, and very fallible, interpretation of Scripture is on display here. Jesus did not miss an opportunity to identify Peter as the head of the Apostles and thereby the head of the Church. Jesus ends the dispute by singling out Peter. By clearly identifying Simon Peter as having a special role among the Apostles. Never, after that instance, do the Apostles argue that topic again.

Any other Scripture verses that affirm this? Well, there is the time Jesus appointed Peter to be shepherd of His flock (John 21:15-17). Was any other Apostle told by Jesus to feed His lambs, tend His sheep, and feed His sheep? No! Mr. Thrasher’s response to that Scripture verse, which clearly shows Jesus appointing Peter as shepherd of His flock, was to say, “Well, there are a couple of other places in Scripture where someone is told to feed the flock, does that mean they were the Pope?” In other words, his response was a non-response. He never addressed John 21:15-17 directly. If Jesus was not appointing Peter shepherd of His flock, then please, Mr. Thrasher, let us know what He was doing there?

As I showed previously, every time someone is told to feed the flock or the sheep, it is obvious that they have authority over that flock, as is the case with any local bishop. In John 21, Jesus is telling Peter to tend and feed His sheep, which means Jesus is giving Peter authority over His flock - His entire flock.

Want more? Another Scripture passage I’ve already mentioned - Matt 16:16-19. Here Jesus gives Peter the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Was any other Apostle given the keys to the

Kingdom of Heaven, Mr. Thrasher? No. So, will you admit that this was unique to Peter?

And, as I mentioned in my first affirmative, the language Jesus uses in Matt 16:16-19, is almost identical to the language used by God in Isaiah 22:19-22. Mr. Thrasher has completely ignored that in his responses thus far. In Isaiah 22, the Prime Minister of the Davidic Kingdom, Shebna, is being told by God that his office will be filled by another, Eliakim. And it is said that Shebna has authority over the household - the house of Judah...the house of David. How is this authority signified? By the “key” of the house of David.

In Mr. Thrasher’s private, fallible interpretation of Matt 16:19, Peter being given the keys to the kingdom “*refers to Peter’s role in being the first to preach to the Jews (Acts 2) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10).*” Does Mr. Thrasher thereby wish to contend that Eliakim being given the key to the kingdom signifies that Eliakim will be the first to preach the Jews and the Gentiles? I doubt it. Which means Mr. Thrasher’s interpretation of Matt 16:19 is dubious, at best. No, being given the keys to the kingdom signifies being given authority. The authority of the king to act in the king’s stead.

What else does Isaiah 22 mention? It speaks of opening and shutting (binding and loosing). It also speaks of an “office” that is held by Shebna. What office? Well, Shebna was, again, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom. So, Isaiah uses the language of the keys, and opening and shutting, in connection with the highest office in the kingdom, after the king himself. And Jesus uses this very same language when speaking to Peter. This couldn’t possibly mean that there was any connection to Peter holding the highest office in the kingdom, after the King Himself, could it? Anyone who cannot see the connection has scales on their eyes.

Finally, let’s look at the **remarkable** admission Mr. Thrasher made in response to my question about who wrote the Gospel of Mark. He said he doesn’t know!!! “All that matters to me is that God is the source,” and he cites 2 Tim 3:16-17, Eph 3:3-5, and 1 Cor 2:10 to prove that God is the source of the Gospel of

Mark. I'm confused by his references, though, as not a single one of them says anything about the Gospel of Mark, or its author. Mr. Thrasher, if you don't know who wrote it, how do you "God is the source?" Explain.

His "scriptural" argument against Peter being the first head of the Church is that the Bible nowhere specifically states Peter was, "the Bishop of Rome, pope, or head of the church." But, he believes Mark is inspired by God, yet nowhere does the Bible specifically say so. How do you know it is, Mr. Thrasher? Who told you if not the Bible?

Give me book, chapter, and verse where the Bible states, "God is the source," of the Gospel of Mark. You can't, so I ask you to concede that the argument regarding the Bible never saying, "Peter was the Pope," is specious and concede that I have won that point. If the Bible never specifically stating Peter was, "Bishop of Rome, pope, or head of the church," proves in your mind that he was not, then the Bible never specifically stating that "God is the source of the Gospel of Mark," proves that He was not.

## Thrasher's Third Negative

Once more I am blessed to participate in this discussion with my friend, John Martignoni. Not only do he and I share weighty responsibility for our contributions to this debate, but our readers are also accountable to God for their responses (Luke 8:18; Acts 17:11).

My opponent claims, "Most of his [Thrasher's] 'scriptural' argument ... is an argument from silence." Suppose John ordered a lawnmower costing \$250 from Sears. However, when his order arrived, Sears had shipped the lawnmower, a boat, and a refrigerator, charging John \$5000. When John complained, Sears argued, "You didn't say **not** to ship a boat and refrigerator!" I suspect John might argue that he hadn't ordered those other items, and Sears was **not authorized** to add items to his order. Surely, every reader of this debate understands that principle.

However, it is unfortunate that John seems to have so little respect for God's word that he fails to recognize the importance of **respecting the "silence" of the Scriptures!** God warned, "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone **adds** to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18). God cautioned, "Every word of God is pure;... **Do not add** to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:5-6). God charged, "You **shall not add** to the word which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2). Furthermore, "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you **shall not add** to it" (Deuteronomy 12:32). God killed Nadab and Abihu because they did that which God "had **not commanded** them" (Leviticus 10:1). John declared, "Whoever transgresses and **does not abide** in the doctrine of Christ **does not have God**" (2 John 9). Peter wrote, "If anyone speaks, let him speak **as the oracles of God**" (1 Peter 4:11). God expects us to respect His silence.

The writer of Hebrews made an argument based upon the principle that silence does **not** authorize, **silence prohibits**: "For

He [Jesus] of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses **spoke nothing** concerning priesthood” (Hebrews 7:13-14). The point is that Jesus could not have been a priest under the Old Law, because Moses “**spoke nothing**” (God’s word was **silent!**) about priests from the tribe of Judah! Evidently, John rejects the argument from the “silence” of the Scriptures. In so doing, he rejects the Holy Spirit’s argument!

I have repeatedly asked where the Scriptures refer to Peter’s being Bishop of Rome, Head of the Church, or Pope. John knows the Scriptures **nowhere** mention these ideas. However, instead of respecting the **silence** of the Scriptures, he attacks me for insisting that we should **not add** to God’s word (Revelation 22:18; Proverbs 30:5-6; Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32), but “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11).

John states: “Nowhere does the Bible use the term ‘preaching elder.’ Yet, Pat Donahue...was introduced to me as a ‘preaching elder.’” Pat told me he thinks John is mistaken. Regardless, Pat rejects being called that, for he is not an “elder” at all! The Bible mentions elders (1 Peter 5:1; Acts 20:17), but it **never** mentions Archbishops, Cardinals, or Popes!

My opponent said, “The Campbellite Church of Christ has regular church meetings on Wednesday night.” Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). Wouldn’t that include any time—even *Wednesday night*? Early Christians were involved **daily** in “teaching and preaching Jesus” (Acts 5:42).

John states, “Instruments are banned in the Campbellite churches.” Sadly, although my friend has previously admitted that “Campbellism” is a **digression** from our topic, he seems unwilling to refrain from insulting epithets. Tactics such as name-calling and insults are frequently employed as a subterfuge when one does not have Bible authority for his practices! Interestingly, John ignored my offer to discuss “Campbellism” when this debate has concluded.

John said, “Tell me where...there is a prohibition against musical instruments in worship services, and I will concede your point.” The use of instrumental music in New Testament worship is **prohibited** because it is an **addition!** “Whoever transgresses and **does not abide in the doctrine of Christ** does not have God” (2 John 9). God destroyed people who did that “which He had **not commanded** them” (Leviticus 10:1), and God warns **not to add** to His word (Revelation 22:18; Proverbs 30:5-6; Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32).

Christians are taught to **sing** in worship to God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Acts 16:25). We are **never authorized** to use instruments of music (pianos, organs, guitars, etc.) in **New Testament worship**. If John honestly thinks we are, perhaps he will put that on our growing list of debate topics!

My opponent stated concerning Luke 22:24-26, “Mr. Thrasher seems to think that Jesus’ silence in not naming Peter as the greatest is scriptural evidence that Peter was not the first head of the Church.” My point was that Jesus could have easily settled the issue by saying, “Peter is the greatest,” but He didn’t!

John objected, “Nowhere does it state that Peter was involved in this ‘dispute.’” However, whether or not Peter was *involved* is irrelevant to the point, although John admitted Peter may have been. Regardless who was disputing, Jesus could have said, “Peter is the greatest,” if that were true.

John said, “Jesus did indeed tell his disciples who the greatest among them was”—Peter. However, his conclusion contradicts the very point Jesus made: “Those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ But **not so among you**” (Luke 22:25)!

John alleges, “Jesus did indeed tell us that Peter was the greatest among them” when He said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). Dear reader, does that verse say anything about Peter being the greatest?

John adds, “Jesus prayed for Peter.” Is that evidence that

Peter was the greatest? Perhaps it was because Peter was going to deny the Lord three times and would need restoring. However, Jesus also prayed for His other disciples: “I pray for **them**” (John 17:9).

My friend argues that Jesus told Peter to “strengthen your brethren”; therefore, Jesus was selecting Peter to be Pope. However,

- Paul and his company “returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, **strengthening** the souls of the disciples” (Acts 14:21-22). Does the fact that they **strengthened** disciples make them Pope?
- “Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and **strengthened** the brethren” (Acts 15:32). Were Judas and Silas Popes?
- Paul “went through Syria and Cilicia, **strengthening** the churches” (Acts 15:41) and he “went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, **strengthening** all the disciples” (Acts 18:23). Was Paul Pope?

John refers to Shebna (Isaiah 22) as “Prime Minister of the Davidic Kingdom.” However, Shebna is called “steward” (Isaiah 22:15, NKJV, NASB, NIV, ESV) or “treasurer” (KJV, ASV), not Prime Minister. He did not occupy a position such as the Pope does.

John asked, “Does Mr. Thrasher thereby wish to contend that Eliakim being given the key to the kingdom signifies that Eliakim will be the first to preach the Jews and the Gentiles?” Obviously not! Does John think that “Eliakim being given the key” signifies that Eliakim was *Pope*?

John says I believe the book of “Mark is inspired by God, yet nowhere does the Bible specifically say so.”

- God **revealed** His word: “For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).
- God **completely** revealed His word: “When He, the

Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into **all truth**” (John 16:13).

- God’s word was **written**: “How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly **written** already, by which, when you **read**, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)” (Ephesians 3:3-4); “What you see, **write** in a book” (Revelation 1:11); “**Write** the things which you have seen, the things which are, and the things which will take place after this” (Revelation 1:19); “The things which I **write** to you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37); “I now **write** to you this second epistle” (2 Peter 3:1); and many other passages.
- God promised to **preserve** His word: “The word of the Lord **endures forever**” (1 Peter 1:25); “My words will by no means **pass away**” (Matthew 24:35). I trust God as revelator and **preserver** of His word—**all of it!** However, He was/is under no obligation to reveal the names of human writers, either of Mark or any other inspired book. The fact that God didn’t reveal certain information demonstrates that information wasn’t vital for us to know. God “has given to us **all things** that pertain to **life** and **godliness**” (2 Peter 1:3). Knowing for certain who wrote the book of Mark evidently does not “pertain to life and godliness”!

John asserts that my “argument against Peter being the first head of the Church is that the Bible **nowhere specifically states** Peter was, ‘the Bishop of Rome, pope, or head of the church.’” However, that is only one of many arguments. For example,

- According to the Bible, Jesus is the **only** Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23; Colossians 1:19).
- Peter did not have authority over other apostles. Paul wrote, “In **nothing** was I behind the most eminent apostles” (2 Corinthians 12:11); “I am **not at all inferior** to the most eminent apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:5).



- Jesus condemned exalting one disciple above others: “But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and **you are all brethren**” (Matthew 23:8).
- Peter referred to himself as *a fellow elder*: “The **elders** who are among you I exhort, I who am a **fellow elder** ... shepherd the flock of God which is **among you**, serving as overseers, ... and when the **Chief Shepherd** appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Peter 5:1-4). Peter did not claim preeminence over other elders. He declared that the oversight of elders is limited to the local church. He called Jesus (not Peter) the Chief Shepherd.
- Peter’s name was not mentioned first in several passages (Galatians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22; 9:5).
- The power to “bind and loose” was given to all the apostles (Matthew 18:18).
- The **12 apostles** were (in some sense) to “sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28).
- Peter did **not accept reverence** from men (Acts 10:25-26).
- The Bible provides no indication that Peter accepted titles such as Pope, Vicar of Christ, Bishop of Rome, Head of the Church (cf. 1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1).
- Peter did not speak of being Pope or having any papal successors.
- Peter was a married man (1 Corinthians 9:5; Matthew 8:14).
- Peter never celebrated mass, never heard confessions, never directed anyone to pray to Mary or the saints, never advocated the use of holy water, never ordered people to abstain from meat on Fridays or during Lent,

never taught that priests and nuns should not marry, never presented his foot to be kissed, and never lived in a palace with soldiers to guard him and numerous servants to supply his wants. He didn't do these things and many others ... because he was **never Pope!**

My friend has mentioned repeatedly my “private, fallible interpretation.” John, what about **your** numerous interpretations—are they fallible or infallible? If fallible, does that mean you are wrong?

Dear reader, if my opponent could produce one **verse of Scripture** demonstrating that Peter was **Head of the Church** or **Pope**, that verse would settle the dispute! We are still waiting.

## Martignoni's Fourth Affirmative

I must have touched a nerve with Mr. Thrasher, as he accused me of using an “insulting epithet” with the term “Campbellite” Church of Christ. No insult intended. I merely used that term to distinguish his faith tradition from the “Catholic” Church of Christ to which I belong. I didn't realize that associating his church with its founders (the Campbells) would cause insult. I find his sensitivity to be a bit disingenuous, however, as he has no sensitivity when it comes to insulting my church.

Regarding his arguments, notice how he responds to some things I have posed to him, but not others. He has to be very careful because his faith tradition is prone to contradicting itself over and over again in its theology, and particularly in its interpretation of Scripture.

For instance: He states that we must “respect the silence of the Scriptures!” Really?! This is his main argument in regards to this debate - that nowhere does the Bible actually say, verbatim, “Peter was the Pope,” the “Bishop of Rome,” or the “Head of the Church.” So, his argument goes, since Scripture is “silent” on the matter, Peter was not the first Pope.

Yet, as previously stated, the Bible nowhere calls itself “The Bible.” But, he calls it “The Bible.” Do the Greek words *biblion* and *biblios* (book or scroll) appear in Scripture? Absolutely. Do they once refer to all 73 books of the Bible as “The Bible.” No. Does Mr. Thrasher respect that silence? No.

On earth and in Heaven we see musical instruments used in the worship and praise of God (Ps 33:2-3; Rev 5:8). Since God has commanded the use of musical instruments in worship and praise, then if God had changed His mind and no longer wanted us to use musical instruments in worship and praise, one would expect to find that command in the Bible, right? Does the Bible ever ban the use of musical instruments in the worship and praise of God. No. Does Mr. Thrasher respect that silence? No. And, to use Thrasher's

reasoning, if Jesus had not wanted us to use musical instruments, He could have easily told us so.

Does the Bible ever say to use contraception? No. Does Mr. Thrasher's church of Christ respect that silence? No. Did Thrasher have any comment on this argument? No. If Jesus had wanted us to use contraception, He could have easily told us so.

Does the Bible ever say to meet together at the church on Wednesday night? No. Does Thrasher respect that silence? No. In fact, he tries to twist the verse, "Where two or three are gathered in My name," to somehow make it say, "Gather at the church on Wednesday night." And, to use his fundamentalist method of Scripture interpretation: Jesus says wherever "two or three" are gathered in His name, He doesn't say anything about four or more people, does He? Ridiculous interpretation? Indeed! But it employs his method of scriptural interpretation.

Of all the Bible verses Mr. Thrasher trots out to prove that "God is the source" of the Gospel of Mark, did one of them ever mention the "Gospel of Mark?" No. Did one of them ever say, "God is the source of the Gospel of Mark?" No. Did one of them ever say, "Mark was inspired by the Holy Spirit?" No. Did one of them ever say, "The Gospel of Mark is inspired Scripture?" No. Does Mr. Thrasher respect that silence? No. If Jesus had wanted us to know that the Gospel of Mark was inspired Scripture, He could have easily told us so.

The gyrations and twisting that Mr. Thrasher goes through to get the Scriptures to say what he wants them to say are almost unbelievable! The fact is, even though the Bible nowhere states that God is the source of the Gospel of Mark, and even though Mr. Thrasher has confessed that he doesn't even know who wrote the Gospel of Mark, he believes the Gospel of Mark was written by Mark and it is indeed inspired! The only problem is, he just can't tell us the source for his belief.

To summarize: the Scripture is silent, in his fallible opinion, on Peter being the 1<sup>st</sup> head of the Church; therefore, he doesn't believe Peter was and he believes the Catholic Church of Christ wrong to teach such a thing. The Scripture is also silent,

according to his own words, on who wrote the Gospel of Mark; yet, he believes Mark wrote Mark. The Scripture is silent as to whether the Gospel of Mark was inspired by God; yet, he believes it was. The Scripture is silent on God banning musical instruments in worship; yet, he believes they were. The Scripture is silent on the use of contraception; yet, he believes it's okay to use. The Scripture is silent on Wednesday night church meetings; yet, he attends them. Can we talk double standard? Contradiction? Hypocrisy even?

Mr. Thrasher, I am asking you again to give me book, chapter, and verse that states: “God inspired the Gospel of Mark,” or “Mark was inspired by the Holy Spirit,” or any similar passage that proves, from the Bible, that Mark was indeed inspired by the Holy Spirit. Or, give me any book, chapter, and verse that states Mark was an Apostle or that he ever performed a miracle. After all, that's your belief about “proof” of inspiration, isn't it? If you cannot do so, then please have the intellectual honesty to admit that your argument about the Scripture's “silence” in regard to it not stating, verbatim, “Peter was the first Pope,” is a specious argument and proves absolutely nothing!

Furthermore, he quoted from the Letter to the Hebrews in his reply. Who wrote that letter, Mr. Thrasher? You don't know. Well, if you don't know who wrote it, how do you know it is inspired? Does the Bible somewhere say, “The Letter to the Hebrews is inspired Scripture?” No! Therefore, by the same reasoning you use to “prove” Peter was not the 1<sup>st</sup> Pope, I can “prove” the Letter to the Hebrews is not inspired Scripture. Who told you, Mr. Thrasher, that the Letter to the Hebrews is inspired Scripture? Or that the Gospel of Mark is inspired Scripture? I demand you answer those questions, because if you can't, then all of your arguments are worthless and you must concede this debate.

Now, about Mr. Thrasher's previous quotations of early Christian writers in regard to the successors of Peter. Please note pretty much everything he quoted buttressed my arguments. He thought he was somehow trapping me by asking me to name the first ten Popes and then he would pounce on me and “prove” Peter wasn't the first Pope by showing that there was disagreement

amongst early Christians as to the order and timing of Peter's successors.

Well, he actually proved too much. First of all, the early Christian sources he quoted were not disagreeing about whether or not Peter was the first head of the Church, they simply disagreed about the exact order and timing of Peter's first few successors as head of the Church! Mr. Thrasher was quoting early Christians who all took for granted that Peter was the first head of the Church. In essence, he conceded the debate with those quotations. The argument went from being about whether or not Peter was the first head of the Church, to being about who succeeded him as head of the Church and when! Debate over!

Second, if disagreements among early Christians regarding the facts about Peter's successors, somehow “prove” Peter wasn't the first Pope - as Thrasher believes - then that must mean Hebrews, James, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> John, Jude, and Revelation are all not inspired Scripture. After all, there was disagreement over the canonicity of all of those books amongst early Christians. So, according to Thrasher's logic, since disagreement proves error, those books are not inspired Scripture.

I noticed Mr. Thrasher had no answer for my comments regarding Jesus appointing Peter as the shepherd of His flock, so I must assume that he simply has no answer. Mr. Thrasher, if Jesus is not appointing Peter as the shepherd of His flock in John 21:15-17, then please tell us what He is doing. Explain that passage for all to read.

Now, regarding Thrasher's comments on Isaiah 22:15-22, I find it hard to take them seriously. He states that Shebna is called the “steward,” but not the “Prime Minister,” as if the exact title mattered and as if the function of the steward in this case and the function of a prime minister are somehow not one and the same. Is he not aware that the “steward” of the kingdom, the one who has been given the keys, is the chief minister, or the “prime” minister in the kingdom, regardless of his actual title? And that, after the king himself, the steward of the kingdom is the highest ranking authority in the kingdom?! Is he really not aware of the authority

the “key of the house of David” signifies? I truly find that hard to believe.

And, Mr. Thrasher asked if I think “that ‘Eliakim being given the key’ signifies that Eliakim was *Pope*?” First of all, please note that he avoided my question of what exactly does being given the key mean? He didn't answer. Why? He can't. At least, he can't in a way that will fit his theology and still make sense.

Secondly, my answer to his question is, yes. He may have ignored it in my first affirmative, but the word, “Pope,” simply means, father. And, the Word of God itself calls Eliakim “a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.” (By the way, Mr. Thrasher, don't you believe that we aren't supposed to call anyone “father;” yet, God Himself is calling Eliakim, “father.” What's up with that?!) So, Eliakim was the Old Testament equivalent to the Pope. He was the steward of the house of Judah. A father to the people of the house of David. And, is the church not the New Testament house of David? Indeed it is. And, what does the word, “Pope,” mean? Father. Just so, the Pope is a father for the people of the house of David, the Church. And the Pope's role, as holder of the keys, is the same as the role of the steward of the Kingdom. He is the highest authority in the Kingdom, after the King Himself.

Which means, that when Jesus gives Peter, and Peter **ALONE**, the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew 16 (hearkening back to Isaiah 22 and Eliakim), He is indeed appointing Peter to be a father (pappas, papa, pope) to His people, just as God appointed Eliakim to be a father (pappas, papa, pope) to His people. And this fatherhood, this authority, was signified by the keys. Also, the fact that Shebna was replaced by Eliakim, denotes succession in the office. As Shebna was succeeded, so was Eliakim, and so was Peter.

So, while the Bible may not say, verbatim, “Peter was the Pope,” it is very clear from Matthew 16:16-19 and Isaiah 22:15-22, that Jesus was indeed appointing Peter to be a pope, or a father, to His people.

Finally, Thrasher's response to my argument about Luke 22:24-26 is nonsensical. I can't tell if he is purposely ignoring what I said or simply doesn't understand it. After they ask Jesus who is the greatest among them, how does Jesus respond? He defines the greatest among them as being he that serves the rest. And then what does He do? He turns to Peter and tells him to serve the rest. "Strengthen your brethren," the other Apostles, He says to Peter. Jesus tells all of them, out loud, that He will be praying specifically for Peter to strengthen the rest of them.

[Would be happy to debate which is the real Church of Christ.]



## Thrasher's Fourth Negative

My friend thinks he “touched a nerve” by using an “insulting epithet” (“Campbellite”). He says, “I didn't realize that associating his church with its founders (the Campbells) would cause insult.” John is surely not so naïve or uninformed that he does not know the term “Campbellite” is offensive to us. John's pretense at innocence in repeatedly using that term is quite disingenuous! John then charges that I have been guilty of “insulting” his church; however, he neglects to cite any instances. I have referred to the *Roman Catholic Church* because that is the term used in **his proposition**, and he accepts it. Not only do I not accept the term “Campbellite,” I reject it!

John mentions several items again (the term *Bible*, instrumental music in worship, church meetings on Wednesday nights, and authorship of Bible books). Since I have already commented on these matters, since his remarks do not provide evidence for his proposition, and since my rebuttal space is limited, I ask you to re-read my third speech for my replies to these points.

However, my friend also mentions “contraception” again (apparently a topic of great importance to him), yet he has never submitted a single verse supporting his viewpoint on this issue. If he wishes to introduce some scriptural evidence on “contraception,” I will respond. However, I am confident that whatever he offers will not demonstrate that Peter was Pope!

John asked, “Do the Greek words *biblion* and *biblios* ... once refer to all 73 books of the Bible as ‘The Bible’?” John, was that a “trick” question? My Bible has 66 books. However, Revelation 20:12, “And the dead were judged ... by the things which were **written in the books**” (*tois bibliois*), is an example.

My opponent also asked, “Of all the Bible verses Mr. Thrasher trots out to prove that ‘God is the source’ of the Gospel of Mark, did one of them ever mention the ‘Gospel of Mark?’” 2 Timothy 3:16 states: “**All Scripture** is given by inspiration of God...”

John states: “To summarize: the Scripture is silent, in his fallible opinion, on Peter being the 1<sup>st</sup> head of the Church; therefore, he doesn't believe Peter was.” My friend misrepresents my rebuttal arguments by **ignoring** many points I have made. For example, note the following scriptural evidence that Peter was **not** a Pope:

- According to the Bible, Jesus is the **only** Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23; Colossians 1:19). What verse teaches Peter or his alleged successors were Heads?
- Peter did not have authority over other apostles. Paul wrote, “In **nothing** was I behind the most eminent apostles” (2 Corinthians 12:11); “I am **not at all inferior** to the most eminent apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:5).
- Jesus condemned exalting one disciple above others: “But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and **you are all brethren**” (Matthew 23:8).
- Peter referred to himself as *a fellow elder*: “The **elders** who are among you I exhort, I who am a **fellow elder** ... shepherd the flock of God which is **among you**, serving as overseers, ... and when the **Chief Shepherd** appears...” (1 Peter 5:1-4). Peter did not claim preeminence over other elders. He declared the oversight of elders is limited to the local church. Peter called Jesus (not himself) the Chief Shepherd.
- Peter's name is not mentioned first in several passages (Galatians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22; 9:5), so, by John's reasoning, Peter must not have been Pope!
- The power to “bind and loose” was given to **all** the apostles (Matthew 18:18), not just Peter!
- The **12 apostles** were (in some sense) to “sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28).

- Peter did **not accept reverence** from men (Acts 10:25-26).
- The Bible provides no indication that Peter accepted titles such as Pope, Vicar of Christ, Bishop of Rome, Head of the Church (cf. 1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1).
- Elders/Bishops were instructed to “shepherd the flock of God which is **among you**, serving as overseers” (1 Peter 5:1-3), not the church universal.
- The term “Holy Father” is never used of Peter. It is only used by Jesus in addressing God the Father (John 17:11).
- Peter said nothing about being a Pope or having any papal successors (Book of Acts; 1 Peter; 2 Peter).
- Peter was a married man (1 Corinthians 9:5; Matthew 8:14). John, who was the last married Pope of whom you have knowledge?
- The office and qualifications of Pope are never mentioned in the Scriptures; however, others are (e.g., apostles--Ephesians 4:11; 2 Corinthians 12:11-12; bishops or elders--Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-3; deacons--Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13); and evangelists (2 Timothy 4:5). “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11), but no mention of Popes, Cardinals, or Archbishops!
- The apostle Paul wrote several letters to or from Rome, naming many individuals (e.g., Romans 16:1-23; Colossians 4:7-14; 2 Timothy 4:9-21; Philemon 23-24). However, Paul never mentions Peter, a peculiar omission if Peter was Bishop of Rome or Pope!
- Peter did not have primacy. Paul wrote: “God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me. But on the

contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised” (Galatians 2:6-9).

- Peter never celebrated mass, never heard confessions, never directed anyone to pray to Mary or the saints, never advocated the use of holy water, never ordered people to abstain from meat on Fridays or during Lent, never taught that priests and nuns should not marry, never presented his foot to be kissed, and never lived in a palace with soldiers to guard him and numerous servants to supply his wants. He didn't do these things and many others ... because he was **never Pope!**

John asserts, “In essence, he conceded the debate with those quotations” concerning the early so-called popes. Completely untrue! My friend offered statements regarding the primacy of Peter from Tertullian (ca 213 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria (ca 200 A.D.), Origen (ca 230 A.D.), and Cyprian of Carthage (ca 251 A.D.), writing approximately 170-221 years **after** the beginning of the church!

My opponent admits, “There was disagreement amongst early Christians as to the order and timing of Peter's successors.” That is exactly what I was demonstrating—their testimony is not inspired or necessarily trustworthy. Therefore, we ought to depend upon inspired scripture, not uninspired (and often contradictory) statements of men as evidence for John's proposition. As previously quoted:

“In the article PAPACY we have referred to the **uncertainty** prevailing in regard to the first bishops of Rome. Roman Catholic writers themselves quite generally admit that the

**statements of ancient Church-writers on the subject are entirely irreconcilable**, and that it is **impossible** to establish with any degree of certainty the order in which they followed each other, the years of their accession to the see of Rome, and the year of their death” (*Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, volume 8, page 409).

John never answered some questions I asked in my second speech: Do you agree with **everything** written by ‘early Christian writers’? Did each of the four men you quoted write by inspiration, guided by the Holy Spirit **as Bible writers were**?

My opponent argued that Jesus appointed Peter as “shepherd of His flock” (John 21:15-17); therefore, Peter was over the other apostles and head of the whole church. However, **all the apostles** were told to feed the sheep in the sense of teaching them (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16) and caring for them (2 Corinthians 11:28). Bishops/elders were also told to feed the flock (1 Peter 5:1-3; Acts 20:28). Are all of them Popes?

The truth is that there is no passage, including John 21, that calls Peter the Chief Shepherd or that states He has authority over the other apostles. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4) and Great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20), not Peter. The fundamental error of the doctrine of Papal authority is that it exalts a man to the place of God. Jesus is Head (Ephesians 1:22-23), Foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11), and Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4).

John asked, “If Jesus is not appointing Peter as the shepherd of His flock ... what He is doing”? After Peter’s three-fold denial of the Lord (Luke 22:34, 61), Jesus uses this occasion to restore Peter to His service. Despite Peter’s previous failures, the Lord now admonishes Peter to “follow Me” (John 21:19, 22).

John asked, “Don’t you believe that we aren’t supposed to call anyone ‘father’”? **In the sense that Jesus prohibited it, we shouldn’t**—“Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven” (Matthew 23:9). John, what do you think the Lord meant when He said that? Should we **do** what He said **not to do**?

John apparently overlooked my response to his argument that Peter's being told to "strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:24-26) shows he was to become the Pope:

- Paul and his company "returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, **strengthening** the souls of the disciples" (Acts 14:21-22).
- "Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and **strengthened** the brethren" (Acts 15:32).
- Paul "went through Syria and Cilicia, **strengthening** the churches" (Acts 15:41) and he "went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, **strengthening** all the disciples" (Acts 18:23). Strengthening others does not make a person Pope!

Furthermore, my friend evidently thought that the Lord's praying specifically for Peter meant he would become Pope. However, my friend again overlooked my observation that Jesus also prayed for **all** of the apostles (John 17:9). Were all of the apostles Popes? Furthermore, the context shows that Jesus did not pray for Peter to exalt him as Pope, but because Jesus knew that Peter was soon to deny Him (Luke 22:34). The context also indicates that Peter would not be **over** the other apostles; rather, the apostles [plural] would in some sense "sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (:28-30).

My opponent claims, "It is very clear from Matthew 16:16-19 and Isaiah 22:15-22, that Jesus was indeed appointing Peter to be a pope, or a father, to His people." Actually, neither passage says anything that necessitates that conclusion. Isaiah 22 has nothing to do with the apostle Peter, despite John's assertions.

Peter had important work to do in the kingdom. He opened the door to the kingdom through his **preaching** to Jews (Acts 2) and Gentiles (Acts 10). This is the idea of Peter's having the "keys of the kingdom" (Matthew 16:19); he had **authority** to preach the gospel so people could be saved and enter the kingdom.

Others besides Peter also engaged in preaching work that opened the door to the Lord's kingdom: **Paul** (1 Corinthians 16:9;

2 Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3; Acts 16:14); **Paul and Barnabas** (Acts 14:27); the evangelist **Titus** also had **authority** (Titus 2:15). The **other apostles** likewise used the keys of the kingdom, for Jesus told them, “Assuredly, I say to you [plural], whatever you [plural] bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you [plural] loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 18:18; cf. Matthew 16:19). The Lord gave all of the apostles **the same** binding-and-loosing authority and the same commission (Matthew 16:19; 18:18; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20).

Please give your attention to my friend’s closing speech.

## Martignoni's Fifth Affirmative

Obviously I did “touch a nerve” with Mr. Thrasher regarding the “Campbellite” Church of Christ. I use that appellation to distinguish his Church of Christ from my Church of Christ. It is historical fact that his Church of Christ was founded by the Campbells a couple hundred years ago, so I fail to see why calling his Church of Christ “Campbellite” would be so insulting. But, he is certainly free to reject the term “Campbellite” and to take insult if he so chooses. I do not take offense at the term “Roman Catholic.” The point I was making, is that he has no problem in saying bad things about the Catholic Church; yet, he gets all bent out of shape because I associate his church with its founders?! Again, I find his sensitivity to be a bit disingenuous.

Thrasher has not actually responded to my arguments regarding instrumental music in worship, nor Wednesday night church meetings, nor authorship and inspiration of the Gospel of Mark. I have to conclude that he is either unwilling or unable to do so. This is a very important point, because this line of argumentation strikes at the heart of the main portion of his arguments in this debate.

He uses “silence” in the Bible to justify banning instrumental music in the worship of God. Yet, the Bible is not silent on the use of musical instruments in the worship of God. The Bible actually commands that music be used in the worship of God (Ps 33:2–3)! And, the Bible says, “For I, the Lord, do not change,” (Mal 3:6). Mr. Thrasher apparently believes the Lord does change when it comes to the use of musical instruments. Scripture shows the use of instrumental music in worship on Earth and in Heaven. So, for the Campbellite Church of Christ (CCoC) to be true, it must show where God changed His mind and specifically prohibited the use of instrumental music in worship. They can't, which means the “silence” of Scripture in this case actually contradicts their belief.

Wednesday night church meetings. Thrasher uses Acts 5:42 to justify this practice. Yet, what does Acts 5:42 actually



say? It says the Apostles taught every day “in the temple” and “at home.” Two questions: 1) Why then is the CCoC not meeting every day; and, 2) Where does it say anything about gathering at a church? It says at the temple – a public place where the Apostles preached to believers and unbelievers alike; and at home – where private instruction of the faithful took place. Why aren’t they gathering in a public place with unbelievers or at home? Acts 5:42 doesn’t describe exactly what they practice, does it? Seems they interpret the Bible to mean whatever they need it to mean to justify their beliefs.

Thrasher’s comments on contraception indicate the hypocrisy of his arguments and how twisted his logic is when it comes to biblical interpretation. In his “third speech,” he indicates that the CCoC’s ban on instrumental music is scriptural because of the principle: “silence does not authorize, silence prohibits.” Yet, nowhere does he produce a Scripture verse – Old Testament or New – authorizing contraception. So, were he consistent in his beliefs, he would say that the use of contraception by Christians is prohibited in accord with the “silence” of Scripture on this matter. Yet, the CCoC fully accepts contraception! Apparently, CCoC scriptural reasoning goes like this: A) The Bible is silent on Christians using instrumental music in worship; therefore, it is prohibited; and, B) The Bible is silent on Christians using contraception; therefore, it is permitted. Silence prohibits when it comes to music; silence authorizes when it comes to contraception. Hypocrisy.

Plus, the Bible does, in fact, speak of contraception. There is one contraceptive act in the Bible. In Genesis 38, Onan “spilled his seed on the ground,” to avoid fulfilling his levirate duty to his dead brother. That was an act of contraception. What did God do? “And what [Onan] did was displeasing in the sight of the Lord and He slew him,” (Gen 38:10). God killed Onan for what “he did,” – spilling his seed on the ground. Furthermore, the Bible says, more than once, go forth and multiply. Nowhere does it say, “Go forth and contracept.” God’s displeasure with “spilling seed,” contraception, is directly spoken of in the Bible.

The whole point I am making by my comments about the banning of musical instruments, Wednesday night church meetings, contraception, and the authorship and inspiration of the Gospel of Mark, is to show that Mr. Thrasher maintains one standard for himself and the CCoC when it comes to the Bible; yet, he imposes a completely different standard when it comes to the Catholic Church of Christ and the Bible. And, the arguments he employs to maintain this double standard are replete with circular reasoning, illogic, and outright hypocrisy.

For example, Mr. Thrasher's whole argument about Peter not being the first Pope can be boiled down to: "The Bible nowhere specifically states that Peter was 'Pope,' or 'Head of the Church,' or 'Bishop of Rome.'" So, the standard of proof that he places upon me is that I must show where the Bible specifically uses one of these titles in relation to Peter, or he wins the debate (according to his logic).

But, when I question him about the biblical support for his beliefs, all of a sudden there is a different standard. Mr. Thrasher believes the Gospel of Mark was written by someone named Mark, and that this Mark was inspired by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, that God is "the source" of the Gospel of Mark. Yet, when I ask for specific passages from the Bible that tell us who wrote that Gospel, or that the writer of that Gospel was inspired by the Holy Spirit, or that God is indeed "the source" of the Gospel of Mark, how does Thrasher respond?

He throws out a bunch of Bible verses, none of which are referring to the Gospel of Mark, as if that was actually an answer to my questions. When I point out that not a single verse he quoted from says anything about the Gospel of Mark and, therefore, does not answer my questions, what is his reply? "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God..."

In other words, he can "prove" that God is the source of the Gospel of Mark only if he first makes the assumption that it is inspired Scripture, which then allows him to quote from 2 Tim 3:16 about all Scripture being inspired of God, and thereby he can conclude that God is the source of the Gospel of Mark. He has to

first assume what he is attempting to prove, in order to prove it! A finer example of circular reasoning I have never seen! The problem is, though, he has yet to give me one shred of evidence, from the Bible, that the writer of the Gospel of Mark was inspired by the Holy Spirit or that God is indeed the source of the Gospel of Mark.

Not only does he not give one single verse that says God is the source of the Gospel of Mark, he actually admits that he doesn't know who wrote the Gospel of Mark! He admits the Bible is silent on that. So, according to the principle of "silence prohibits," since the Bible is silent on who wrote the Gospel of Mark, I assume the second Gospel in his Bible is entitled, "The Gospel According to Anonymous," right? Don't bet on it. He believes Mark wrote Mark. He does not practice what he preaches.

I have clearly demonstrated that Mr. Thrasher employs double standards, circular reasoning, and hypocrisy in his argumentation. None of which speaks well for his beliefs. So, unless he can give me a Bible passage that specifically contradicts God's command to use music in worship (in Psalm 33); or that everyone should meet at a church – not at the temple or in a home – on Wednesday nights only rather than every day of the week as the Scripture he cites states; or that specifically allows the use of contraception; or that specifically states that God is "the source" of the Gospel of Mark; then all of his arguments regarding Scripture being silent on Peter as "Pope," "Head of the Church," or "Bishop of Rome," are shown to be null and void. And, since the "silence" argument is the bulk of his argumentation, I win the debate.

Furthermore, as I stated in the last round, his citations regarding the successors of Peter do indeed prove, from history, that Peter was the first Pope. The sources he cited state there is disagreement as to the exact order and timing of Peter's 217 successors as head of the Church. He claims that these citations therefore show that the historical sources I quoted regarding Peter as the first Pope were "not inspired or necessarily trustworthy" in their testimony.

Well, 1) I never claimed they were inspired. These are historical sources. Since the Bible nowhere mentions Hannibal, does Mr. Thrasher then not believe Hannibal existed? By the way, on what historical sources does he rely to claim that his church is the historical Church of Christ? Or that the CCoC's elders have authority to preach and teach? 2) To state these sources are not trustworthy because they disagree as to the exact order and timing of Peter's successors, is an absolutely ridiculous claim. His sources and mine agree on these historical facts: A) Peter was the first Bishop of Rome and head of the Church; B) Peter had successors; and C) The names of those successors. They disagree on matters of timing, but not on the matter of primacy and succession. Does that make them untrustworthy? It does only if you are desperately trying to deny something that is as plain as the nose on your face. So, again, from an historical standpoint, even his own sources prove Peter was the first head of the Church. I win the debate.

His response to my comments on the obvious connection between Matthew 16 and Isaiah 22 was, essentially, "Unhh, unhh." Both passages mention the keys of the kingdom and binding (closing) and loosing (opening). The parallels are easy for all to see except those who have eyes but will not see. Thrasher simply pronounces that these two passages have nothing to do with each other – no reasons why, no arguments – just an infallible "Unhh, unhh." As mentioned previously, in Isaiah 22 the chief steward of the Kingdom of David, the holder of the keys, is called a father (papa, pope) to his people. Jesus gives Peter the keys to the Kingdom, which means he is a father (papa, pope) to his people. He has no response, I win the debate.

Again, from my first four affirmatives, Scripture tells us the following about Peter and Peter alone:

- 1) Peter walked on water
- 2) Peter called for a replacement to Judas
- 3) Peter settled the issue at the Council of Jerusalem
- 4) Peter was appointed, by Jesus, as shepherd of Jesus' flock

- 5) Jesus prayed specifically for Peter
- 6) Peter spoke for the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost
- 7) Peter received a special vision from God to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles
- 8) Peter was given a special revelation about Jesus being the Messiah
- 9) Peter was given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven
- 10) Jesus paid the temple tax for Himself and Peter only
- 11) Paul comes to Peter to consult with him
- 12) Peter generally speaks for all the Apostles
- 13) Peter spoke judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira
- 14) Peter has his name changed to “Rock.”

About no other Apostle can these things be said. Peter's role is unique. Scripture, history, and tradition (the same tradition Thrasher relies on to know his Bible is the inspired Word of God) all show that Peter was indeed the first head of the Church.

## Thrasher's Fifth Negative

Although John has previously acknowledged that “Campbellism” is a digression from the issue of this debate, he continues to employ the term, despite knowing that it is offensive to me and that I reject it. He did not show **one thing** that I believe, teach, or practice that originated with Alexander Campbell! Entirely different is my reference to the church with which he is associated as the Roman Catholic Church. That term is not only not objectionable to him, he readily accepts it (it is even in his affirmative proposition!).

John asserts, “It is historical fact that his Church of Christ was founded by the Campbells a couple hundred years ago, so I fail to see why calling his Church of Christ ‘Campbellite’ would be so insulting.” However, my friend’s “fact” is actually fiction! Alexander Campbell did not arrive in this country until 1810, and he did not preach his first sermon until 1811, yet (for example) the Bridgeport, Alabama church of Christ (not far from my home) was established in 1809. Alexander Campbell certainly did **not** “found” it!

My opponent evidently fits one of the categories cited by Vergilius Ferm (*Encyclopedia of Religion*), who observed that the term “Campbellite” is used “ignorantly by the non-church public ... [or] viciously, as well as ignorantly, by the less enlightened sects—Obsolescent, with the general advance of religious intelligence”!

My friend adds, “The point I was making, is that he has no problem in saying bad things about the Catholic Church.” However, I have only expressed my belief that the Catholic Church is in error on certain doctrinal matters, as even my denial of his proposition indicates. John neglected to cite instances of my “saying bad things about the Catholic Church.” I have many Catholic friends whom I love, respect, and want to go to heaven, yet I am compelled by my love for the Lord to believe and teach His word (Romans 1:16; John 8:32; Acts 5:29; 1 Peter 4:11), even when His word differs from Catholic teaching.

My opponent brings up another off-topic issue: “The Bible actually commands that [instrumental, TNT] music be used in the worship of God (Ps 33:2–3)!” Note that John cited an **Old Testament command!** The Old Testament also **commanded animal sacrifices**: “And thou shalt offer **every day a bullock** for a sin offering for atonement” (Exodus 29:36). Does the Catholic Church do that, John?

My friend demands that I “show where God changed His mind and specifically prohibited the use of instrumental music in worship.” Although God does not change (Malachi 3:6), **His law** has (Hebrews 7:12)! We are to serve God according to the **New Testament** (Hebrews 8:6; 9:15; 10:9)! New Testament **worship** includes singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), but not playing on mechanical instruments. Such instruments would be an unauthorized addition (Revelation 22:18; 2 John 9).

John mentions “Wednesday night church meetings” again. However, he ignored my response based upon Matthew 18:20—“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I [Jesus] in the midst of them.” Doesn’t that include Wednesday night?

He again mentions “contraception”: “There is one contraceptive act in the Bible.... Onan ‘spilled his seed on the ground,’ to avoid fulfilling his levirate duty to his dead brother.” This text does not prove all contraception is wrong. In fact, John’s own statement demonstrates that it was Onan’s refusal to fulfill “his levirate duty” that involved disobedience to God (Genesis 38:9-10). Please read this text!

Even many Roman Catholics do not accept their Church’s prohibition against all contraception: “Ninety percent of [the theologians on the papal birth control commission] concluded that birth control was not intrinsically evil and that the teaching against contraception could be changed” (Patty Crowley, Papal Commission on Birth Control, 1966). “Contraception is not intrinsically evil” (Archbishop Cardinal Julius Doepfner, *The Politics of Sex and Religion*, 1985). “[Fr. Richard McCormick maintains that] there are many Jesuits who do not accept the thesis

that every contraceptive act is morally wrong. I can vouch for the fact that very many bishops share the same conviction” (Thomas J. Gumbleton, auxiliary bishop of Detroit, *America*, November 20, 1993).

My opponent said, “Mr. Thrasher’s **whole argument** [emphasis mine, TNT] about Peter not being the first Pope can be boiled down to: ‘The Bible nowhere specifically states that Peter was ‘Pope,’ or ‘Head of the Church,’ or ‘Bishop of Rome.’” Isn’t it strange that Peter was called an **apostle** (1 Peter 1:1) and an **elder** (1 Peter 5:1), but **never** any of the things **John says** Peter was!

- John never proved by the Bible that Peter was Bishop of Rome. In fact, Paul’s letter to the saints in Rome names numerous individuals (Romans 16:1-15), but **never mentions Peter**, whom John contends was Bishop of Rome!
- The Bible states that Jesus was **the head** of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23), but never says that Peter was!
- The Bible nowhere says that Peter (nor anyone else) was the Pope!

However, John mischaracterizes this as my “whole argument.” Later in his speech he admitted the incorrectness of his earlier assertion when he claimed “the ‘silence’ argument is the **bulk** [my emphasis, TNT] of his argumentation.”

In my fourth speech alone, I offered at least 17 other items of evidence that Peter was not a Pope. Although I do not have space to repeat them here, I urge the reader to re-read them. John neglected to respond to these items of evidence! He had plenty of time to rehash instrumental music, Wednesday night meetings, contraception, and the authorship of Mark (all of which I had already discussed), but he chose not to reply to the evidence I offered against his proposition that Peter was the Pope!!!

Despite my detailed explanation of my position, my friend largely ignores my responses and insists that I prove that Mark



wrote “the Gospel of Mark.” As I emphasized previously, I do **not know for certain** who wrote “Mark,” and, if God required that we know, **He could have told us** (as He did, for example, for the authorship of Romans, Galatians, James, and Jude). However, since John evidently thinks this is such an important issue, the following entry on the “Gospel of Mark” in *Theopedia* represents my view:

Strictly speaking, the work is anonymous, in that no claim of authorship is inherently made within the letter itself. However, there is evidence both in Scripture and in history to support John Mark ... The internal evidence is corroborated by early attestations, including an ancient caption (“according to Mark”), and testimony by Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. The nearly universal acceptance of Mark as the author of the gospel in light of the fact that he was neither an apostle nor a hero in the first century church lends credence to the validity of the traditional claim that John Mark wrote the gospel which bears his name.

However, uninspired writers may be mistaken and their testimony is sometimes contradictory. Regardless of who wrote “Mark,” God promised to preserve His word, and I am convinced He has done that.

My opponent states that he “never claimed they [his historical sources] were inspired.” He also admits that “historical sources” are sometimes wrong, as I demonstrated by citing some of their disagreements and inconsistencies. That was exactly my point in response to his effort to uphold his proposition by citing statements of uninspired, fallible men.

John lists 14 items that he claims “Scripture tells us ... about Peter and Peter alone.” However, not any one of these separately, nor all of them collectively, make Peter the Pope!

- “Peter walked on water.” [And Peter began sinking (Matthew 14:30) and was rebuked by Jesus for his little faith (:31)!]
- “Peter called for a replacement to Judas.” [However, the apostles (“they”), not only Peter, presented the names of two men (Acts 1:23) and the Lord made the choice of Matthias (:24).]
- “Peter settled the issue at the Council of Jerusalem.” [Not true! Paul, Barnabas, and others from Antioch did not go to **Peter** to “settle” the issue; they went “unto the **apostles and elders** about this question” (Acts 15:2, 4, 6). Several men spoke, including Peter, Barnabas, and Paul; however, it was James who proposed the solution: “Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood” (:19-20). The apostles and elders accepted James’ conclusion (:22-25, 28-29).]
- “Peter was appointed, by Jesus, as shepherd of Jesus’ flock.” [Peter was only one of many shepherds (1 Peter 5:1).]
- “Jesus prayed specifically for Peter.” [Jesus prayed for all of the apostles (“they” and “them”—John 17:15-20).]
- “Peter spoke for the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost.” [All of the apostles spoke on Pentecost (Acts 2:4, 7). All of the apostles were the Lord’s witnesses (2:32).]
- “Peter received a special vision from God to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles.” [But when he went, he instructed them not to bow down to him (Acts 10:26) like people do to the Pope; Paul received a special vision to take the gospel to the Macedonians (Acts

16:9); Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:7-9).]

- “Peter was given a special revelation about Jesus being the Messiah.” [Paul received a special vision about Jesus being Lord (Acts 9:3-5).]
- “Peter was given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.” [The same text (Matthew 16:19) mentions the power to bind and loose, which Jesus gave to all of the apostles (Matthew 18:18).]
- “Jesus paid the temple tax for Himself and Peter only.” [The fact is that Peter was involved because “they that received tribute money came to Peter” (Matthew 17:24). That doesn’t make Peter a pope—even my opponent doesn’t believe Peter was pope when that occurred!].
- “Paul comes to Peter to consult with him.” [Nothing is said about Peter’s being Pope! In fact, Paul said, “They who seemed to be somewhat in conference **added nothing to me**” (Galatians 2:6). Later, Paul rebuked Peter for his hypocrisy (:11-14).]
- “Peter generally speaks for all the Apostles.” [Peter didn’t speak for Paul, Barnabas, and James in Acts 15. That Peter was an exceptional leader and often the chief speaker (e.g., Acts 2:14-40) doesn’t prove he was pope. At times Paul was called “the chief speaker” (Acts 14:12), but that doesn’t make him pope!]
- “Peter spoke judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira.” [Paul spoke judgment upon Elymas (Acts 13:8-11), but that didn’t make Paul pope!]
- “Peter has his name changed to ‘Rock.’” [Cephas means “a stone” (John 1:42), but the “Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4)! The name Cephas is used a few times (e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Galatians 2:9), but these references never indicate that

he was pope or that he held primacy over the other apostles.]

In my first speech, I pointed out that not only was Peter never called Pope, Bishop of Rome, or Head of the Church in the word of God, but “the Scriptures never mention many things associated with the Roman Catholic Church: Pope, Cardinal, Archbishop, Mass, Lent, Rosary, Purgatory, Extreme Unction, Holy Water, Limbo, Immaculate Conception, Assumption of Mary, and many other concepts.” In his four speeches since that time, John has never provided a single Bible passage that demonstrates the scripturalness of these concepts. One cannot “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11) in support of these doctrines!

Several times John has boasted, “I win the debate.” However, I have no desire for a personal victory, but a victory for truth over error! Furthermore, any decision concerning the merits of the arguments offered by John and me must be made by the individual reader. I lay no claim to achieving a victory over John in this debate; however, any reader who better understands God’s revealed truth is truly a *winner*!

“**The truth** shall make you free” (John 8:32).

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