

APOLOGETICS MADE EASY

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The Authority of the Church

One of the fundamental principles of the Protestant Reformation begun by Martin Luther was that for Christians the Bible was the sole, exclusive source of authority. Luther and most Protestants to this day have rejected the authority of Peter, his followers, subsequent popes and the Catholic Church.

However, Jesus clearly granted his authority to Peter in Matthew 16:18-19, when He said, "And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

The Bible recounts in Acts 15:6-28 how Peter convened the Council of Jerusalem to resolve the issue of how to accept the Gentiles into the Christian movement. The leaders of the Church, headed by Peter, reached a decision through prayer and discussion, with minimal guidance from scripture, which decision was then communicated to the Christian communities outside Jerusalem.

And then there are these passages from Paul's second letter to Timothy: "But you, remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know from whom you learned it," and "what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well."

The Catholic Church has flourished for over 2,000 years because Peter, the apostles and their successors have faithfully passed on the teachings of Jesus, those written down and those passed down orally.