THE RISE AND FALL OF THE PAPACY:

An Orthodox Perspective

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Patrick (Craig) Truglia

Uncut Mountain Press

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"Believe facts rather than words."

— Saint Pope Gregory the Great

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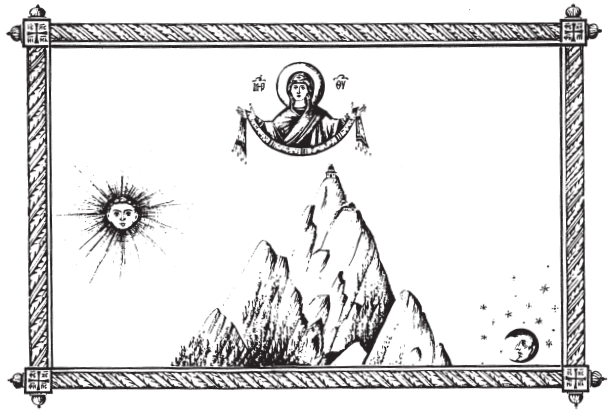

St. Gregory the Great (540-604)

INTRODUCTION

Resetting One's Historical Presumptions

The study of history is not well understood, even though most people take a passing interest in it. Getting a good look at the past is not entirely possible. The only sources one has at his or her disposal are the "primary sources," which are documents, archaeological finds, and other pieces of evidence which actually originate from the era being studied. Historians know this well. However, most people do not interact with these, but rather with secondary sources: Wikipedia, scholarly books, polemical blogs, apologetics Youtube channels, and the like.

The crucial difference between primary and secondary sources is interpretative. Primary sources *require* interpretation, while secondary sources *provide* an interpretation. In the English language, most of the secondary sources that bear on the issue of the Papacy's rise and fall suffer from cultural biases that are inherited from the intellectual heritage of the West. The English-language reader (or any Western language) must deal with this interpretive issue whether he or she likes it or not.

Popular historical treatments of the Papacy and its role in the Great Schism are almost always written in a Western language. They presume upon Western epistemology, ecclesiology, and cultural expectations pertaining to what the Papacy is. By so doing, they (wittingly or not) presume upon the modern, Western view

of the "Papacy"[1] despite many of these authors not being Roman Catholic. Protestants presume upon the modern Papacy, because they reject it. They oftentimes do not appreciate the ancient version of this institution and it is not "on their radar." Roman Catholics presume upon the Papacy in their various nuanced takes, whether "traditional" or "post-modernist," conforming it using one epistemic method or another to the Council of Vatican I (which is dogmatic). Professional historians, simply imbibing an issue which is chiefly relevant in their societies due to its import upon Protestantism or Roman Catholicism, though often skeptical of the institution's present claims, will fill the gaps found in the primary sources with anachronistic presumptions of what the Papacy is.

A good example of the preceding tendency is Henry Chadwick's relatively recent take on the Great Schism.[2] Though the following greatly simplifies his work, one may summarize its operating thesis to be that the East never conceived of the Papacy and the West, from at least the time of Pope Victor I, always had an undeveloped notion of the "Vatican I Papacy." This would include Rome laying claim to direct and universal jurisdiction, infallibility, necessity of Roman communion, etcetera. The schism, in effect, was as old as the second century and only finalized when both sides finally realized how different they were all along. Chadwick's thesis reduces the Papacy to an almost millennium-old misunderstanding.

A. Edward Siecienski's view on the topic slightly modifies this thesis in some respects and in so doing takes more care not to make anachronistic ecclesiastical assumptions.[3] However, he similarly

1 "Papacy" is derived from the 11th century term *Papatus*, which is a Latin term which implies the Roman Bishopric is a class above the "normal" episcopate. See Aristeides Papadakis and John Meyendorff, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church 1071-1453 A.D.*. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994, 167. For the purposes of this book, the Roman Bishop will often simply be called the "Pope" and the local Roman Church "the Papacy" due to popular usage—however the 11th century implications, being anachronistic, are not intended.

2 Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

3 A. Edward Siecienski, *The Papacy and the Orthodox: "Sources and History of a*

identifies the divide as originating in early times (particularly the fourth century during the semi-Arian controversy) and henceforth expanding. While this may serve the needs of present ecumenical dialogue, the idea both sides spoke past each other does not make for good history. The ancients were knowledgeable people and understood the points at issue. In fact, they arguably had a more enhanced sensitivity to differences in their own time, especially considering they were often under dire necessity to diplomatically navigate these differences.

In the popular imagination, as found in an array of Roman Catholic apologetics, the Western Church always expounded an undeveloped, but real Vatican I Papacy. Supposedly, the Eastern Church went back and forth, getting convenient amnesia about the Pope's prerogatives as an excuse to imbibe some heresy (Arianism, Monophysitism, Monothelitism, Iconoclasm, etcetera). Those opposing these heresies did not have this alleged amnesia (Saints Maximus, Theodore the Studite, etcetera) and these men are proof that the orthodox in the East had always remembered what the West had collectively held about the Pope.

This story arc does not align with the facts. Yet, because the notions surrounding it are popular, it *seems* to provide the correct interpretative lens for understanding the meaning behind some of the words that are ascribed to ecclesiastics in the first millennium Church. However, one must dispense with such a story arc. It is self-evident that the *facts* surrounding the statements from the primary sources are more useful in interpreting them than any narrative 1,000 years removed from the events.

The key to interpreting ancient sources in a neutral manner is to surmise *what the story arc should be* if all one had at his or her disposal were the primary sources alone, with no notion of the developments that occurred after the Great Schism and well into the modern era. To the pious Orthodox Christian, history is not looked upon in such a neutral sense. Instead, traditionally, history has been approached hagiographically with an eye for what the Church has historically approved of and saints teach up until the present day. However, as a

Debate." New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

condescension to readers of all communions and even non-religious inclinations, the historical treatment presented here will strive for neutrality and a return to the sources in order to establish the lens for evaluating the historical development of the Papacy. This will explain the more straight-forward historical analyses of the saints in this work. Due to the press and author being Orthodox, the work still contains hagiographic glosses. Likewise, saints will be identified with their title bestowed upon them by the Church.

Having established the preceding basis, what is needed is a story arc that is actually found in the primary sources. The rest of the book will unpack in detail what is found in these sources that inform the following brief sketch of the history of the Papacy:

The early Church was an episcopal institution, where bishops presided over lower clergy and laity in a specific locale. There was always hierarchy between the bishops. These locales and hierarchies were inherited from the Apostles themselves. Those who inherited the mantles of Saints Peter or Paul (or John, or James, etcetera) were of a higher priority than those who inherited the mantle of Saints Mark, Titus, one of the blessed Seventy lesser Apostles, or whomever else. Being that Saints Peter, Paul, John, and James had evangelized specific locales, in their passing everyone they ordained had become their successors. Those who inherited their episcopate from where they died (such as Rome, Ephesus, and Jerusalem) were chief among these successors. Hence, all the successors from the evangelized territory (i.e. jurisdiction) in effect became the "local synod," with the chief successor (later known as a Metropolitan and then Patriarch) being the "CEO" of the organization.

Being that Saints Peter and Paul were the most successful evangelists in the Apostolic Era, their "territory" was by far the largest—stretching from Asia Minor, Crete, and the Balkans to Italy and Spain. Both saints were also martyred in Rome, thereby making the Roman bishop the rightful inheritor of their mantles. The spiritual authority of the Roman bishop and the synod he belonged to thereby, as a default, would be preeminent. However, as alluded to before, this did not make the Roman bishop somehow exclusive in his preeminence. Saint James was the bishop of Jerusalem and

being martyred there, its jurisdiction was functionally independent. As history details, Saint John moved to Ephesus and was a bishop there. Despite the city being originally evangelized by Saint Paul, John's presence in effect "reset" the region's Apostolic Succession and rescinded Rome's initial local jurisdictional rights.

Due to no one taking offense at Saint John doing this, in effect *consenting* to this state of affairs, this is a demonstration that jurisdictions can shift and change by the consent of all. The power of consent cannot be understated, as it was the operating principle behind the Council of Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15. When the entirety of the Church decided something, it was understood as evidence that God did so with them. The Lord taught that Church discipline worked in the same way in Matt 18:18-20. In Church history, the Holy Spirit's most ubiquitous works are not dazzling visual miracles. Rather, they are the daily workings of the Christian people in unity. When the whole Church has *consensus* on something, this is proof of the Spirit's work. Hence, the Church from Apostolic times worked with a *consensus-based epistemology* and *consensus-based ecclesiology*.

Due to scholarship up until now neglecting the issue, it is worth defining what consensus-based epistemology and ecclesiology is. As Church history unfolds, they are evidently the operating principles behind the Church's self-understanding of doctrine and ecclesiology. The drive to both identify and establish consensus is evident in all the ante-Nicene ecclesiastical controversies. Controversies are fortuitous for the historian because they draw out all sides of an issue and the presumptions intrinsic to their positions. It is most noteworthy that modern presuppositions concerning the Papacy as an institution are wholly lacking in these early controversies. Yet, the desire for consensus and the maintenance of Apostolic inheritance (both traditional/doctrinal and jurisdictional) are explicitly stated.

Conciliarity in the early Church provides evidence of consensus-based ecclesiology at work. Local councils operated according to a unanimous, as opposed to majority vote, as consensus conveyed Spiritual authority. The workings of several local synods held in concert with one another, ideally, were to all agree. In the second and

third centuries, local councils were held worldwide to determine the day to celebrate Pascha, the jurisdictional standing of the Ephesian church vis-à-vis the Roman church, the correct bishop of Rome during the Novatian controversy, the correct way to receive into the Church those baptized from other Christian groups, and the deposition of Paul of Samosata in Antioch. Long before the Church became "an Imperial institution," even without the logistical and legal means to collect all the local synods into one room in an Ecumenical Council to resolve an issue, the Church always sought to establish universal consensus on matters of dispute. The drive to forge consensus without any Imperial motivation was so strong that at great expense and risk councils would be held on such questions.

The side that always "won" was the side that had the consent of nearly all. Tellingly, Rome was the specific subject of two of these controversies (the Ephesian ecclesiastical situation and the rebaptism issue) and both times they "lost." Going strictly by what the primary sources state, Rome never explicitly or implicitly asserted Vatican I Papal prerogatives and both times they were defending their own local views concerning disciplines and the (local) boundaries of their jurisdiction. These positions lacked the consensus of the rest of the Church—who in response specifically censured Rome. In both cases, Rome afterwards reformed their views—bringing them into line with the consensus. Papal Infallibility, direct jurisdiction, and the like were simply not on the radar.

These controversies also demonstrate precisely *how* consensus-based ecclesiology dealt with interjurisdictional (hereafter referred to as interpatriarchal) matters. During the Novatian Controversy, where Rome had a disputed election over who was Pope, Saint Pope Cornelius wrote a "consecration letter" (or "systatic letter") defending his own claims. His claim to be Pope required both the consent of those within his own jurisdiction (like Saint Cyprian) and those in other jurisdictions (like Saint Pope Dionysius of Alexandria). This established two principles: the local synod must consent to its Patriarch (here the Pope of Rome) and that to be a peer with the other "Patriarchs," their consent was necessary also. Naturally, depositions worked in the same way. When the

local Council of Antioch deposed the heretic Paul of Samosata, they sought the consent of the world's patriarchates (as they existed during that time, the term being anachronistic).

Indeed, conciliarity in the early Church was predicated by consensus-based ecclesiastical presumptions, but so were the epistemic presumptions as to what amounted to what is today called Sacred Tradition. Catholicity's meaning in its "strictest sense" according to Saint Vincent of Lerins is not merely the universal geographic dispersion of conciliar teachings, but the "faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all."[4] Hence, consensus-based epistemology specifically identified what was the correct faith. Saint Irenaeus pointed to the apostolic pedigree (antiquity) as well as the universal geographic dispersion of the Catholic/Orthodox, as opposed to the Gnostic, approach to Scripture as well as Christianity as a whole. Eusebius of Caesarea similarly treats how one identifies canonical Scriptural books from non-canonical, discerning between what was "universally accepted" and what was not.[5] There were no local synods at that point in the early fourth century which issued a canon of the Scriptures. This demonstrates that conciliarity was not solely what demonstrated consensus, but also universal practice and acceptance.

Consensus-based ecclesiology and epistemology were necessarily intertwined. This is why Saint Augustine on the same question argues that the canonicity of *Wisdom of Solomon* (which was questioned due to its not being written by Solomon) was established:

> *since for so long a course of years that book has deserved to be read in the Church of Christ from the station of the readers of the Church of Christ, and to be heard by all Christians, from bishops downwards, even to the lowest lay believers, penitents, and catechumens, with the veneration paid to divine authority.*[6]

4 Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium,* Par 6. Open-source Patristic books/translations whenever possible will have basic citations to assist the reader in finding these sources on the internet.

5 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History*, Chapter 3, Par 2. See also Par 7.

6 Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints*, Book 1, Chapter 27.

Augustine did not solely point to bishops (or councils like the one held in Carthage in recent years). The universality of *Wisdom*'s acceptance ("heard by all Christians") from *both* clergy and laity decided the question conclusively in Augustine's mind. As stated beforehand, consensus was seen to derive from the Holy Spirit—it made apparent the origin of a given mindset behind both ecclesiastical and doctrinal questions.

When Saint Constantine ended the persecution of Christianity and began the first Imperial patronage of the Church, Christianity had already been operating for centuries upon consensus-based ecclesiastical principles. When the first Ecumenical Council occurred in Nicaea, those who attended, as well as their contemporaries, immediately recognized that the council was directed by God Himself—just as the Apostolic council in Jerusalem was centuries earlier. Unambiguously, all cited consent as the determining factor. In the subsequent semi-Arian controversy, Rome sometimes vetoed the Eastern councils due to these councils, unlike Nicaea, lacking consent—something Rome did not always provide during this era. Not surprisingly, consent was cited by Popes like Julius I. Why wouldn't he? Consensus was the exclusive criterium by which the Church had operated up to that point. No one could have even conceived otherwise.

What follows are later local and interpatriarchal controversies that repeatedly demonstrate the same dynamics at work. The Pope was explicitly rejected in the Council of Carthage (419/424, a council later received as functionally "ecumenical" in authority by Canon 2 of the Council in Trullo and Canon 1 of the Council of Nicaea II), his synod's excommunications treated as only locally binding during the Council of Ephesus, his teachings (like the *Tome of Leo*) subject to review and accusations of heresy during the Council of Chalcedon, his synod's communion treated as optional during what is popularly called the "Meletian Schism" (as Rome lacked communion with Antioch, but had communion with others who *were* in communion with Antioch), and his deposition with consent of the Patriarchs thrice repeated (and twice accepted by Rome, the one other time the Pope recanted and his deposition was

reversed). If one never read a Papal honorific, one would naturally not infer even the seeds of Vatican I in the consciousness of the early Church.

Yet, the collapse of the Western Roman Empire into Germanic kingdoms had set into motion geopolitical changes. These kingdoms had only nominal allegiance to Constantinople as Roman "client states." The Roman Synod and most of its jurisdiction found itself "out in the cold." Not long afterwards, Rome was occupied by Byzantium and treated as an occupied territory, beginning the Byzantine Papacy. Popes took measures, with little success, to try to insulate their local church from Arian manipulation (at the hands of the Germanic kingdoms) and from Constantinopolitan dominance (a threat which became real when the "Byzantine Empire"[7] reoccupied Rome for the next two centuries). This is when "high Papal language," particularly in interpatriarchal contexts, began in earnest.

If one is to "believe facts rather than words,"[8] as Saint Pope Gregory the Great teaches, while the language surrounding the Papacy evolved, operating realities stayed the same. Unsurprisingly, allegedly weak Popes like Gregory explicitly asserted Rome's jurisdiction to be strictly local. Yet, even the allegedly strong Popes like Saint Martin, while stating things that *sound* very forceful, in fact reiterated the historical ecclesiology of the Church. For example, Pope Martin explicitly asserted "power was lacking" by himself "to appoint the Patriarch of Jerusalem,"[9] a statement irreconcilable

7 "Byzantine" is a moniker for the Roman Empire, whose capital was moved from Rome to Constantinople in the fourth century and had persisted as an empire until the 15th century. In short, there is no such thing as the "Byzantine Empire." They called themselves "Roman" and were considered solely as Roman until the Franks had adopted the term for themselves at the beginning of the ninth century. For the sake of simplicity, the term "Byzantine" will be used as it correctly implies a foreign power dominating a local power rightly called "Rome" which otherwise wished to exercise more independence or political dominance of its own.

8 Gregory the Great, *Epistles*, Book 4, Letter 40.

9 *Pope Martin to Pantaleon* in Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen, *Conflict and Negotiation in the Early Church: Letters from Late Antiquity, Translated from the Greek, Latin, and Syriac*. Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press,

with the Vatican I doctrine of direct jurisdiction. Hence, even a Pope who is often confused by scholars as teaching direct jurisdiction because some of his words may be construed as such,[10] evidently rejects the notion. Other Popes are the same. Their actions are always inconsistent with such Vatican I ideas.

It is difficult to over-emphasize how important of a principle of weighing actions above words (in isolation) is for the historian. The scientific method, for example, tests a theory and through direct observations confirms or denies the truth of a theory. If history is a legitimate social science, surely the actions of historical actors are the tests that confirm or deny interpretations given by historians to their words.

In any event, perhaps the most important statement for the student of the pre-Great Schism Papacy is found in the minutes of the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea II. The council, in Session 6, explicitly defines what an Ecumenical Council is by contrasting itself with a pseudo-Ecumenical Council, that of Hiera:

> *It [the Council of Hiera] did not enjoy the cooperation [lit. συνέργεια] of the then Pope of Rome or his priests, neither by means of his representatives or an encyclical letter, as is the rule for councils; nor did it win the assent [lit. συμφρονοῦντας] of the [P]atriarchs of the [E]ast, of Alexandria, Antioch, and the holy city, or of their priests and bishops…Nor did 'their voice', like that of the apostles, 'go out into the whole earth or their words to the ends of the world', as did those of the six holy [E]cumenical [C]ouncils.*[11]

As one can see, an Ecumenical Council is not an exercise of the Pope of Rome decreeing one to be so. Rather, the Pope of Rome *cooperates* with his synod while the Patriarchs of the East "assent" (the Greek implies conviction and activity), as well as the rest of the Church worldwide. In short, consensus decided the ultimate

2020, 223.

10 Richard Price, Phil Booth, and Catherine Cubitt, *The Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014, 397.

11 Richard Price, *The Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020, 442.

authority of a council. After all, consensus was always understood as the evidence of God's cooperation with the Church's work.

Mere years before Nicaea II, the Byzantine Papacy officially ended. Due to conflicting political players in the Italian peninsula (specifically the Franks and the Lombards), when Byzantine power collapsed, the city of Rome itself was able to play the Franks against the Lombards in order to attain a degree of political independence. In effect, the Papal States were created, with ecclesiastical reforms undertaken with the intent to further insulate Roman ecclesiastical business from foreign-political usurpation.

Over time, the Franks would dominate Papal business, but ironically this did not do much to change the independent-minded trajectory of Rome. The Franks, after all, were in a geopolitical struggle against the Byzantines and other than the briefest moments of rapprochement sought political, military, and ecclesiastical means to dominate their foe. Hence, being coerced by the Franks, Rome during the ninth century would turn decidedly against the Byzantines and expound a dramatically new ecclesiology. This sudden shift revolved around two men specifically—Anastasius the Librarian (a Frankish ghostwriter and *de facto* head diplomat for Popes Nicholas, Adrian II, and John VIII) and Saint Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople.

For the first time, Papal chanceries explicitly rejected both consensus-based ecclesiology and epistemology. Not coincidentally, at the exact same time, forged documents offering a "historical pedigree" for these changes conveniently were exploited. At minimal this included the *Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals*, but the case will be made that significant forgeries were inserted in the Latin minutes of Nicaea II and Constantinople (869-870). All of these writings either came from the pen of Anastasius or were specifically popularized internationally by himself. Anastasius also gave voice to new ideas that would become pivotal to the modern Papacy, such as Papal Infallibility. In effect, Anastasius reinvented or "rebooted" the office of the Papacy to confront the geopolitical realities of his day.

Suddenly in the 870s, the Byzantines were retaking southern Italy. Political alliances with Constantinople vis-à-vis collapsing Frankish

power became preferable for the sake of the Papal States' stability. The anti-Byzantine Anastasius died or was "retired." Interestingly, his ideas were largely not set aside by Pope John VIII during the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (879-880), but they were muted enough to make peace with Photius. This would prove to be the last gasp for the orthodox Papacy. The Roman Synod devolved into a middling, feudal faction in Italian 10th century politics and became inconsequential ecclesiastically in crucial interpatriarchal matters.

By the eve of the Crusades, however, the Papacy of Anastasius was dusted off. Eastern Frankish ecclesiastics subsumed power within the College of Cardinals. A reform program was initiated that largely depended upon precedents from Anasatasius' writings and the *Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals*. They constitutionally changed the Roman church in order to make it more independent of local Italian nobility, as well as Frankish (the Holy Roman Empire) meddling. This new Papacy had fundamentally abandoned the operating principles of its historic predecessor. Anastasius' dissemination of a slew of forgeries had allowed their innovative ideas to marinate in Rome for two centuries; these were understandably confused to be authentic Patristic witnesses. Geopolitical necessities now incentivized putting them into practice. This specific combination of historical incidents decisively changed the Papacy for good. All the Vatican I distinctives, though undeveloped, finally had some sort of concrete historical antecedent. The Papacy had finally fallen.

The preceding story arc is internally consistent, and it has a thread which can be followed from the beginning of the Church. If one looks with the eyes of a Christian where "he who is greatest among you shall be your servant,"[12] the rise and the fall of the Papacy can be easily surmised. It rose from two humble men, the Apostles Peter and Paul, who served to their deaths. Rome's primatial standing in the Church was inherited by their successors and grew when they acted as a stalwart of orthodoxy in their service to the Church (generally, there were hiccups along the way). For centuries, Rome "played by the rules" and so the Papacy rose when they were

12 Matt 23:11.

vindicated in controversies and repented when they fell short. Their great degree of independence from Byzantium, when compared to the other patriarchates, allowed the ecclesiastical prominence of Rome to grow as a counterweight to (often heretical) Imperial policy. When their complete independence from Byzantium effectively cut off Rome geopolitically from the rest of the canonical Church,[13] the Papacy fell when, through political necessity and the inculcation of ideas found in forgeries, the Roman Synod abandoned the consensus-based ecclesiology. This became irrevocable with their schism during the Crusades.

It is time now to unpack this story. Once unpacked, the post-schism, ethnocentric story arcs surrounding the Papacy will be exposed for what they are—the insertion of anachronistic ideas into primary sources lacking them. Consensus-based ecclesiology and epistemology are clear in the sources and do not require excessive elaboration. It is perhaps the appreciation of consensus that one will encounter most in the study of the pre-schism Papacy.

13 This presumes that the non-Chalcedonian sect went into schism and was no longer canonically in the Church. See W.H.M. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

St. Peter the Apostle

CHAPTER 1

The First Century of the Papacy

For the Papacy to have a rise, it must have a point of origin. The Scriptures provide what may be gleaned to be the earliest evidence of the institution. Before discussing the earliest historical witnesses pertaining to Saint Peter and the Roman church specifically, it is helpful to look at the first-century ecclesiology of the Church more broadly.

The Earliest Ecclesiology of the Local Church

Identifying what was the earliest mode of ecclesiology is relevant to the history of the Papacy. This is especially true considering there is modern scholarship that asserts there was no original "Papacy" *per se*.[14] This scholarship posits that the Church of Rome, and the Church at-large, had a plural episcopacy that essentially operated like contemporary Presbyterians on the local level. Scriptures such as Phil 1:1 and Acts 20:28, as well as early Church documents such as 1 Clement and *The Shepherd of Hermas,* refer to there being multiple bishops in cities such as Rome and Corinth.[15] This scholarship

14 Eamon Duffy, "Was there a Bishop of Rome in the First Century?," *New Blackfriars,* 80:940, 1999, 301-308.

15 See 1 Clem 1, 47; *Shepherd* 2.4.8 and 3.9.7.

infers that if there are multiple "bishops," "presbyters," or "rulers" identified within singular cities in the preceding sources, this must mean they all were equals serving an identical function.

One must quibble with the insufficient evidence drawn from in making such conclusions. Where do these sources provide any textual basis for the conclusion that these multiple bishops were fundamentally equal, serving the same function? The supposed plural episcopacy is based upon inferences which ignore explicit historical evidence.

There is no example in any early Church document of there being multiple Bishops being named in one city. Even the Scriptures, such as 1 Cor 1:1, do not fail to name a single bishop despite there being schisms and potentially multiple episcopal claimants in Corinth.[16] This makes documents such as the epistles of Saint Ignatius of Antioch unexceptional in this regard. In six of his letters, the resident bishop, who is a singular bishop, is named. The chances that he would write to six cities and they all coincidentally only had one bishop, but any other church would have had a plural episcopacy is 1 in 64. It requires, without a textual basis, inferring that Ignatius was an innovator inventing the monoepiscopacy. The simplest explanation of the evidence is that cities had singular ruling bishops.

What is one to make of the aforementioned passages where the existence of several bishops are mentioned? For one, the geography of a city must be considered. Cities as large as ancient Rome or

16 Saint Sosthenes was likely the Bishop of Corinth (at least temporarily) as indicated by Acts 18:17 and 1 Cor 1:1. Sacred Tradition also identifies him as bishop of Colophon in modern-day Turkey. The Metropolis of Corinth lists "ΣΩΣΘΕΝΗΣ" as one of the city's first bishops, simply "Σωσθένης" (Sosthenes) in all capital letters. See "ΟΙ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΕΣ," *ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΚΟΡΙΝΘΟΥ*, https://www.imkorinthou.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=55&Itemid=52. In any event, it is not entirely clear how literal the schisms were that are mentioned in 1 Cor 1:10, though it is likely the schismatics attached themselves to leaders, perhaps even "bishops," who claimed allegiance to Saints Peter and Apollos. See 1 Cor 1:12 and 1 Clem 47. Saint Paul may have also been obliquely referring to a Judaizing faction which had nominal allegiance to Saint James. See 1 Cor 4:6 and 2 Cor 11:5, 13, 22.

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