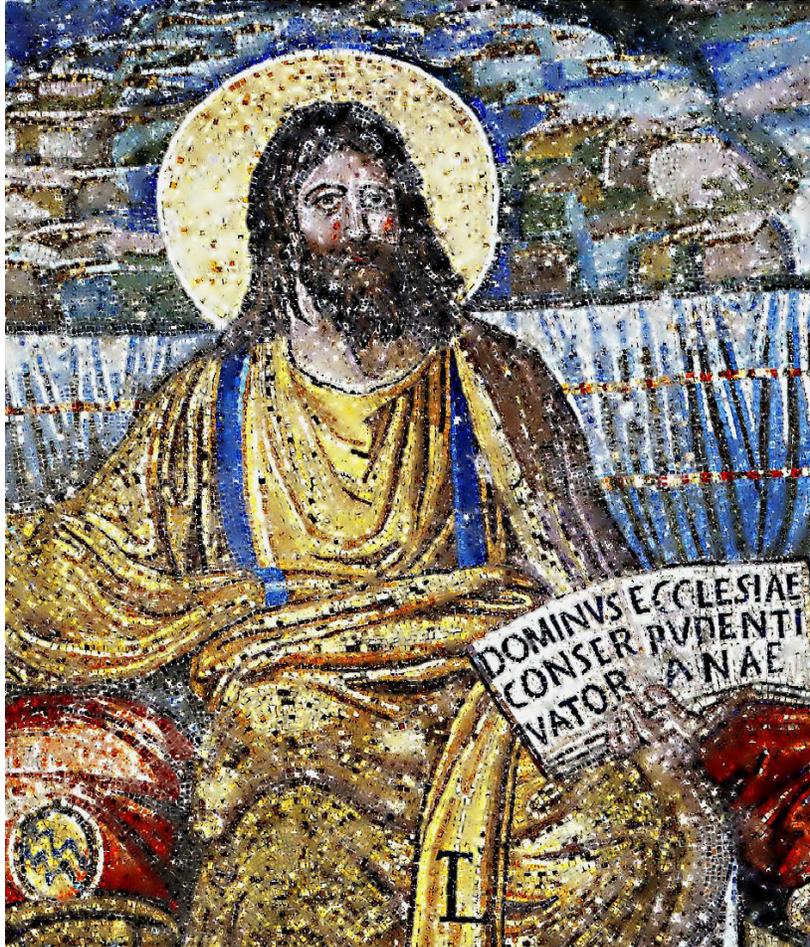


The Bishops of History and the Catholic Faith: A Reply To Brandon Addison

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On March 24 of this year we posted a guest article by Brandon Addison titled “[The Quest for the Historical Church: A Protestant Assessment](#).” We had invited Brandon some months earlier to write an essay for *Called To Communion* on the topic of his choice, and we are very grateful for his generosity, trust, and yeoman work in putting together such a thorough essay. Brandon’s essay is one of the first posts we have published written from a Protestant perspective, and we hope it leads to further, ever-more fruitful exchanges of this sort. Why did we invite Brandon to contribute an essay? Brandon stood out to us among many other Protestant interlocutors for a number of reasons, the most important of which was his consistently gracious and respectful manner of dialogue, his sincere engagement in the effort to improve mutual understanding and overcome what still divides us, and his experience and training within the Reformed tradition. We believe strongly that a deep commitment to charity and respect is an absolutely essential precondition for authentic dialogue. And we recognized that Brandon shares that commitment. So even though we disagree with him on some major points, and he with us, nevertheless we believe that building on our shared commitment to charity, respect, and a recognition and appreciation of the significant common ground we share, with an open exchange of ideas, evidence, and argumentation can be a way forward to better mutual understanding and hopefully, eventually, a resolution of those obstacles that still divide us. Our response below is co-authored by Barrett Turner, Ray Stamper, and myself.¹



Apse mosaic, Santa Pudenziana, Rome

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I. A Short Summary of Brandon's Essay and Argument

A. A Summary of the nine sections of his essay

In his post titled "[The Quest for the Historical Church: A Protestant Assessment](#)," Brandon sets out to refute the claim that Jesus founded the [Roman] Catholic Church. His post consists of nine sections. In his *first* section he presents his thesis and offers some thoughts about the burden of proof, methodology, what prompted him to write this article, the argument from silence, and why scholars cannot be dismissed on account of their beliefs about other matters. His *second* section discusses the Protestant and Catholic interpretive paradigms. Here Brandon argues from the acceptance by a number of Catholic scholars of the "fractionation" of early "Roman Christianity" to the conclusion that this interpretation of the historical data is not a result of the Protestant interpretive paradigm. In his *third* section Brandon examines the evidence from Scripture, and argues that the terms *πρεσβύτεροι* (elders/presbyters) and *ἐπισκόποι* (overseers/bishops) were used interchangeably, that the apostolic practice was to establish a plurality of presbyters in each particular church, that the Jerusalem council included presbyters, and that even if there was a difference between bishops and presbyters, leadership in each of the churches was under the direction of "multiple individuals," including the Church in Rome, where even St. Peter referred to himself as a fellow presbyter. The *fourth* section of Brandon's article examines some patristic data from the first and second centuries. Here Brandon argues that in St. Clement's letter to the Corinthians the terms 'bishop' and 'presbyter' are used interchangeably, that St. Ignatius's distinction between bishop and presbyter was not universal at that time, that St. Polycarp refers to presbyters present with himself in the leadership of the church at Smyrna, and does not mention a bishop in his letter, and that St. Ignatius, Hermas, and St. Justin Martyr do not mention a bishop at Rome. In the *fifth* section of his essay, Brandon examines the episcopal lists from Sts. Hegesippus and Irenaeus, and argues that their lists are not reliable. In his *sixth* section Brandon argues "that the city of Rome was fractionated in the first and second century," and thus that "Roman Christianity was not centralized and the entire Roman Church was not ruled over by a monarchical bishop." In his *seventh* section Brandon examines the argumentation of some scholars who dissent from the 'fractionation' thesis, and concludes that "modern scholarship ... agrees that the existence of a monarchical episcopate developed in the second century" and that "churches, and the church in Rome in particular, were governed by presbyterial authority." In his *eighth* section, Brandon considers some objections, and lays out some implications, particularly that "the failure to substantiate the claim that Jesus did found the Roman Catholic Church undermines the apologetic attempts at showing the Roman Catholic epistemological advantage over Protestants." Finally, in his *ninth* section Brandon presents his conclusion.

B. A Summary of the argument in his post

The argument in Brandon's essay is aimed ultimately at showing that Christ did not found the [Roman] Catholic Church, as Brandon states at the beginning of his first section where he points out that his goal is "refuting the claim that Jesus founded the RCC." He reasons to that conclusion from two key premises, the first premise stating an alleged necessary condition for the Catholic Church to be the Church Christ founded, and the second premise stating that this necessary condition is not satisfied. In essence, Brandon's argument looks like this:

(1) In order for Jesus to have founded the [Roman] Catholic Church, the monepiscopate in Rome would have had to originate with the Apostle Peter, and thus would have had to be present in Rome when Peter died and in the years immediately after Peter's death.

(2) The monepiscopate in Rome gradually emerged in the middle to late second century, and did not originate with the Apostle Peter.²

Therefore,

(3) Jesus did not found the [Roman] Catholic Church.

Before evaluating the argument, it may be helpful to explain here at least what motivates the first premise of Brandon's argument. In [Comment #11](#) following his essay Brandon writes:

The many Catholic authors I've cited remain committed to the Pope because they believe the Petrine office providentially developed even though it was not established by Jesus. Those who hold such a position are not the object of criticism in this essay.

Brandon believes that it is possible to be a faithful Catholic and simultaneously to believe that the Petrine office was not established by Jesus, but only providentially came into existence at some later time, and to believe that the Catholic Church is not the Church Christ founded. Brandon's first premise, then, is not aimed at opposing such a position, but instead is aimed at the position of those who claim that the Petrine office was established by Christ, and that the Catholic Church is the Church Christ founded.

But these beliefs are not optional for Catholics. It is *de fide* that Christ appointed St. Peter to be the prince of all the apostles, and visible head of the whole Church militant, and that Christ gave to him primacy of jurisdiction. As the First Vatican Council declares:

If anyone says that blessed Peter the apostle was not appointed by Christ the lord as prince of all the apostles and visible head of the whole Church militant; or that it was a primacy of honor only and not one of true and proper jurisdiction that he directly and immediately received from our lord Jesus Christ himself: let him be anathema.³

Moreover, the First Vatican Council defined as Catholic dogma that:

[T]he holy and most blessed Peter, prince and head of the apostles, the pillar of faith and the foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the savior and redeemer of the human race, and that to this day and for ever he lives and presides and exercises judgment in his successors the bishops of the Holy Roman See, which he [i.e., St. Peter] founded and consecrated with his blood. . . .

Therefore, if anyone says that it is not by the institution of Christ the Lord himself (that is to say, by divine law) that blessed Peter should have perpetual successors in the primacy over the whole Church; or that the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of blessed Peter in this primacy: let him be anathema.⁴

Finally, the doctrine that the Catholic Church is the Church Christ founded is not an optional belief that Catholics may deny. The 1973 Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* teaches:

Catholics are bound to profess that through the gift of God's mercy they belong to that Church which Christ founded and which is governed by the successors of Peter and the other Apostles, who are the depositories of the original apostolic tradition, living and intact, which is the permanent heritage of doctrine and holiness of that same Church. The followers of Christ are therefore not permitted to imagine that Christ's Church is nothing more than a collection (divided, but still possessing a certain unity) of Churches and ecclesial communities.⁵

The Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, promulgated in 2000, includes the following:

The Catholic faithful *are required to profess* that there is an historical continuity — rooted in the apostolic succession — between the Church founded by Christ and the Catholic Church: "This is the single Church of Christ... which our

Saviour, after his resurrection, entrusted to Peter's pastoral care (cf. Jn 21:17), commissioning him and the other Apostles to extend and rule her (cf. Mt 28:18ff.), erected for all ages as 'the pillar and mainstay of the truth' (1 Tim 3:15). This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in [*subsistit in*] the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him." With the expression *subsistit in*, the Second Vatican Council sought to harmonize two doctrinal statements: on the one hand, that the Church of Christ, despite the divisions which exist among Christians, continues to exist fully only in the Catholic Church, and on the other hand, that "outside of her structure, many elements can be found of sanctification and truth," that is, in those Churches and ecclesial communities which are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church. But with respect to these, it needs to be stated that "they derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church."⁶

And the 2007 document *Responsa ad quaestiones* explains:

Christ "established here on earth" only one Church and instituted it as a "visible and spiritual community," that from its beginning and throughout the centuries has always existed and will always exist, and in which alone are found all the elements that Christ himself instituted. "This one Church of Christ, which we confess in the Creed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic . . . This Church, constituted and organised in this world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the successor of Peter and the Bishops in communion with him."⁷

So if any Catholic claims either that St. Peter was not appointed by Christ as prince of all the Apostles, or that it is not by the institution of Christ Himself that St. Peter had perpetual successors in the primacy over the whole Church, or that the papal office did not come from Christ through St. Peter, or that the Catholic Church is not the one and only Church Christ founded,⁸ he or she has fallen into at least material heresy.⁹ Hence the reasoning behind the first premise of Brandon's argument. Brandon goes beyond the claim that Christ did not found the [Roman] Catholic Church, by claiming more ambitiously that "there are no good reasons to believe the traditional RCC narrative that Jesus founded the RCC."¹⁰

II. Evaluation

A. Evaluation of Brandon's Argument

In essence the formal structure of the argument is:

If *A* then *B*.
~*B*.
Therefore ~*A*.

where *A* is "Jesus founded the [Roman] Catholic Church" and *B* is "The monepiscopate in Rome originated with the Apostle Peter and was present in Rome when Peter died and in the years immediately after Peter's death up to the middle of the second century."

Formally, the argument is valid, as a *modus tollens*.¹¹ That means that the conclusion necessarily follows from the premises. The soundness of the argument therefore depends entirely on the truth of all the premises, and to that question we now turn.

1. Evaluation of major premise

In order to avoid confusion, and especially to avoid the fallacy of equivocation, we have to disambiguate the term ‘monepiscopate.’ But disambiguating the term ‘monepiscopate’ requires first disambiguating the term ‘episcopate.’ The term ‘episcopate’ or ‘bishop’ has different possible senses, and for that reason when we are evaluating arguments constructed from historical claims that make use of these terms, we have to make sure that the term is used in the same sense in each premise. In this case, the term ‘episcopate’ can refer to the office invested with the authority and responsibility of overseeing the Church generally, or of overseeing a particular Church. This is also known as the power of supreme jurisdiction over a particular Church. The verbal form of the term (“oversee”) means the activity of shepherding the Church, and is an activity in which each of the three grades of Orders participates, each according to its station.¹² The term ‘episcopate’ can also refer to that grade of sacramental Orders by which one man may ordain other men.

Explicitly distinguishing these two different senses of the term ‘episcopacy’ allows us to distinguish different senses of the term ‘monepiscopacy.’¹³ In one sense the term can refer to there being stationed within a particular Church only one person with that grade of sacramental order by which he may ordain others. In another sense the term can refer to that form of Church government by which within a particular Church there is only one person with the highest jurisdictional authority over that Church, such that all other ordained persons in that particular Church, whatever their grade of Holy Orders, are under his authority. Monepiscopacy in that latter sense of the term is compatible with multiple bishops in the former, third-grade-of-Holy-Orders sense of the term serving simultaneously in that local Church under that governing bishop’s authority.¹⁴ In fact, the Catholic Church today has many dioceses where several bishops labor together, one as the diocesan bishop having jurisdictional authority and the others as titular or auxiliary bishops.¹⁵ Monepiscopacy in that jurisdictional sense is also compatible with the simultaneous presence and collaboration with that bishop of ordained persons not possessing the third grade of sacramental order by which to ordain others, yet participating in the overseeing of the Church, each according to his station. Having distinguished these senses of the terms ‘episcopate’ and ‘monepiscopate,’ we can now return to the question of the truth-value of the first premise of Brandon’s argument.

The claim that Christ founded the [Roman] Catholic Church does not require that upon the death of the Apostles Peter and Paul in Rome, there was at any point in time subsequent to their martyrdoms only one man in the Church at Rome having the power to ordain other men. Given the truth of Catholic doctrine, there can be multiple men working at the same time in the Church at Rome, each having the power to ordain others. At the end of the third century Tertullian even provides us with a reason to believe this to have been the case by testifying that according to the Church at Rome, St. Peter ordained St. Clement, and from the Tradition we know that St. Clement was ordained to the third grade of Orders.¹⁶ Thus given the evidence we will discuss below there were at that time in the Church at Rome at least three persons capable of ordaining others: St. Peter, St. Linus who succeeded him, and St. Clement.¹⁷ Thus in that sense of the term ‘bishop,’ from the Catholic point of view there could be three bishops simultaneously present in the Church at Rome before St. Peter’s martyrdom. So in that sense of the term ‘episcopate,’ there being multiple bishops working together in the Church at Rome is fully compatible with the [Roman] Catholic Church being the Church Christ founded, with all Catholic doctrine, and with historical data indicating the presence of a plurality of presbyters in Rome. The simultaneous presence of a plurality of persons having the third degree of Holy Orders is compatible with historical data indicating a plurality of presbyters because every bishop, whether such in sacramental Orders or also in jurisdictional authority, is a presbyter. Much as every human is a mammal, but not every mammal is a human, so every bishop is a presbyter, but not every presbyter is a bishop.¹⁸

So on the one hand, if by ‘monepiscopate’ Brandon is referring to there being only one person in a particular Church with the power to ordain, then his first premise is false. It is not true that in order for Jesus to have founded the [Roman] Catholic Church, upon the death of the Apostles Peter and Paul there must have been only one person in the Church at Rome having the power to ordain others. On the other hand, if by ‘monepiscopate’ Brandon is referring to

there being only one man in a particular Church with supreme jurisdiction over that particular Church, then this puts the weight on the second premise, to which we now turn.

2. Evaluation of minor premise

To this very day, every Catholic diocese in the world is governed by a group of presbyters. We usually do not speak in this way, because now we more often use the term ‘presbyter’ (or ‘priest’) to refer only to those ordained to that grade of Orders by which one may offer the Eucharistic sacrifice but without the capacity to ordain others. That is, we usually use the term ‘presbyter’ to refer only to a man with the *second* grade of Holy Orders, because when speaking of men having the third grade of Orders we refer to them by a term that specifically designates their higher grade of Order, and the term ‘presbyter’ does not do this. But a presbyter having the second grade of Orders does not cease to be a presbyter (or priest) when he receives the third grade of Orders and becomes a bishop. Acquiring the ability to ordain does not remove one’s ability to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, and this is why bishops remain presbyters when they become bishops.

Furthermore, because no Catholic bishop governs his diocese alone, but does so only with a group of presbyters working with him under his authority, therefore it follows that every Catholic diocese in the world is governed by a group of presbyters. For that reason, merely knowing that a particular Church is governed by a group of presbyters does not show whether this particular Church is governed according to Presbyterian polity or episcopal polity. This is why each piece of data Brandon cites indicating the presence of a plurality of presbyters in Rome in the first two centuries is fully compatible with the existence of a jurisdictional monepiscopate in Rome at that time. And all the data Brandon cites in support of his thesis is data indicating that from the time immediately after the martyrdoms of Sts. Peter and Paul to the middle second century, the Church at Rome was governed by a group of presbyters. Hence Brandon writes:

I’ve argued that we should take the earliest sources at face value which state that there were multiple presbyters ruling the church in Rome.¹⁹

We too take those sources at “face value,” and fully affirm that there were multiple presbyters ruling the Church in Rome. But the Church at Rome being governed during this time by a group of presbyters is fully compatible with there being a jurisdictional monepiscopacy in Rome during that time, because a bishop is a presbyter. For this reason Brandon’s second premise has not been shown to be true, in part because the data he cites in support of his second premise is fully compatible with that premise being false, and, as we show below, is not evidence that that premise is true.

So although Brandon’s argument is valid, if by ‘monepiscopate’ he means that there is only one man in a particular Church with the power to ordain, then his first premise is false. If by ‘monepiscopate’ he means that there is only one man in a particular Church with supreme jurisdictional authority over that particular Church, then the data to which he appeals does not show his second premise to be true. Thus given that these are the only two available senses of the term ‘monepiscopate,’ Brandon’s argument has at least not been shown to be sound.

That evaluation of his argument depends on whether all the evidence he cites is fully compatible with the existence of a jurisdictional monepiscopate in Rome in the first hundred years or so after the martyrdom of St. Peter. So in the following section we examine the evidence Brandon presents, and show that the evidence is fully compatible with the existence of a jurisdictional monepiscopate in Rome from the time of the death of St. Peter to the middle of the second century.

B. Examination of the Evidence

1. Preliminary Principles

a. Inscrutable Likelihood Differential (ILD)

Before examining the evidence Brandon puts forward, it is worth reviewing certain second-order preliminary principles. One such principle is that data that is fully compatible with contrary available explanatory theses, and for which the respective likelihoods of the competing hypotheses are inscrutably comparable without begging the question, is not evidence for one of those theses above the others, all other things being equal. This follows from what is referred to as the “Law of Likelihood:”

Evidence E favors hypothesis H_1 over H_2 iff $P(E/H_1) > P(E/H_2)$.²⁰

From the “Law of Likelihood” it follows that if for two or more explanatory hypotheses the differences between the respective probabilities of the data given each hypothesis are inscrutable without begging the question against one or the other hypotheses, the data does not serve as evidence for one hypothesis over the others, all other things being equal. In other words, if one must presuppose one of the available hypotheses in order to determine the difference between the respective probabilities of the data given each hypothesis, then the data is not evidence for that hypothesis over and above the other available hypotheses, all other things being equal. So if we come across data for which multiple explanatory theses are available, and for which the difference between the likelihoods of the theses is inscrutable without presupposing what is in question, then we cannot justifiably claim that the data supports one of the explanatory theses above the others, all other things being equal. For short this can be referred to as the inscrutable likelihood differential (ILD) principle.

b. Conditions for silence to carry evidential weight

A second such principle concerns the conditions necessary in order for silence to carry evidential weight. In the first section of his essay Brandon claims that arguments from silence “are not fallacious;” rather, they “are valid arguments which infer conclusions from silence.” Of course an argument from silence infers a conclusion from silence, because any argument infers a conclusion from its premises. But the conclusion of an argument from silence does not necessarily follow from its premises. That is why such an argument is not deductively valid, and why such an inference is a logical fallacy.²¹ Silence can be legitimately used as evidence in abductive reasoning, but only if certain conditions are met. An argument from silence within a text carries evidential weight only when the conjunction of the four following conditions is satisfied:

- (a) we know by other means that the author of the text intended the text to provide an exhaustive list of the items or events of the sort to which the unstated entity or event would belong,
- (b) the author is not the sort of person who would overlook the unstated entity or event,
- (c) the missing entity or event is not the sort of thing that might be unnoticed or overlooked by the author, and
- (d) we have good reason to believe that the author has no overriding reason for concealing the entity or event.²²

Merely calling the silence “noteworthy,” for example, or “highly suggestive,” or saying that it “stands out,” or is “exceptionally noticeable,” or “conspicuous” is not enough to make the silence carry evidential weight.

c. Positive evidence in relation to silence

A third relevant principle has to do with the relative strengths of positive evidence in relation to arguments from silence. When claiming in his essay that the argument from silence is not a fallacy, Brandon quoted from a website hosted by the University of Massachusetts. That same [page](#) explains the third important preliminary principle related to the argument from silence:

A single positive may overturn any number of negatives. A single sound refutes all silences.²³

When one text gives a positive account of an event or condition, it trumps the silence of other accounts regarding that event or condition, all other things being equal.

d. Proximate evidence informs underdetermined evidence

A fourth principle is that proximate data informs the interpretation of underdetermined direct data unless there is independent positive evidence of discontinuity. If the data directly pertaining to the event in question is underdetermined with respect to its ability to indicate which of the available theses is correct, then data proximate to the direct data rightly informs the interpretation of the direct data, unless there is evidence of relevant discontinuity between the direct and proximate data. This means that when the direct data is such that from this data alone multiple explanations are possible, and the difference between the likelihoods of the explanations is inscrutable without presupposing what is in question, then all other things being equal, the explanation most compatible with data proximate in time and space is to be preferred unless there is independent positive evidence of a discontinuity between the direct data and the proximate data. As a consequence, the likelihood of an explanation of underdetermined direct data is increased by the existence of proximate data that comports with that explanation, all other things being equal.

This principle thus requires that the scope of relevant data must not be artificially restricted.²⁴ That form of epistemic reductionism applied to historical inquiry by which one excludes *a priori* the evidential relevance of proximate data on the basis of an assumed discontinuity is a violation of this principle, because such reductionism presupposes discontinuity by interpolating discontinuity into the methodology. Likewise, the positivist methodology of historiography by which one presupposes that there is no evidence for an event or entity at time *t*, unless there exists presently documents written at time *t* about that event or entity is a violation of this principle, again because such a methodology unjustifiably loads the presupposition of discontinuity into the methodology by unjustifiably disallowing proximate data to count as evidence. For this reason the silence of explanatorily underdetermined direct data does not establish *a priori* a discontinuity with proximate data having positive evidential implications for one of the available explanations of the direct data. On the contrary, all other things being equal, proximate data supports that explanation of the direct data that is continuous with that proximate data where there is no independent positive evidence indicating a discontinuity between the respective circumstances from which the direct and proximate data are drawn. With these principles in view, our evaluation of the evidence Brandon cited in support of his thesis follows below.

1. Section III: Canonical evidence

a. Acts

All the data in the book of Acts to which Brandon appeals (i.e., Acts 6, 14, 15, 20:17,28) is fully compatible with Catholic and Orthodox doctrine and polity, and is not evidence for Brandon's thesis, under the ILD principle explained above. That data includes the appointing of deacons in Acts 6, the existence of presbyters at the Church in

Jerusalem (Acts 11:30), the appointing of a plurality of presbyters in each of the particular Churches (Acts 14:23), the existence of presbyters at the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), and the plurality of presbyter-bishops in the Church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17, 28). Consider each of those pieces of evidence in turn. The appointing of deacons in Acts 6 is fully compatible with the Apostles ordaining bishops, and with there being a monepiscopate in Rome from the time of the martyrdom of St. Peter to the middle of the second century. The existence of a plurality of presbyters at a particular Church is fully compatible with at least nine different polity possibilities:

- (e) multiple presbyter-bishops, only one of whom has supreme jurisdictional authority, and no mere presbyters,²⁵
- (f) multiple presbyter-bishops, one having supreme jurisdictional authority, and accompanied by subordinate mere presbyters,
- (g) only mere presbyters all having equally shared supreme jurisdictional authority, but with the possibility of presbyter-bishops,
- (h) multiple presbyter-bishops, all having equal shared supreme jurisdictional authority, there being no mere presbyters present or possible, because to be a presbyter is *ipso facto* to have the power to ordain,
- (i) multiple presbyter-bishops, all having equally shared supreme jurisdiction, accompanied by mere presbyters subordinate to the presbyter-bishops,
- (j) only mere presbyters, only one of whom has supreme jurisdictional authority,
- (k) only mere presbyters, some of whom, but not all of whom, share equally supreme jurisdictional authority.
- (l) multiple presbyter-bishops, all having equally shared supreme jurisdictional authority, there being no mere presbyters present, though mere presbyters are possible, simply not present in this particular Church at this time.
- (m) only mere presbyters, none having supreme jurisdictional authority, because that authority is held by a living Apostle to whom these mere presbyters are subject.

All other things being equal, each of these nine is fully compatible with, and its likelihood differentially inscrutably comparable in the light of Scriptural data indicating a plurality of elders in a particular Church. However, Brandon appeals to this Scriptural data indicating a plurality of elders as if this data is evidential support for his own thesis, i.e., (h). Here's an example. In his section on Acts, Brandon writes:

The way the Jerusalem council is convened it would seem to match the definition of presbyterian government: the representation of the people of God from local congregations (Antioch, Jerusalem, outside Judea, etc.) in assembly making decisions as the body of Christ.

All other things being equal, the way the Jerusalem council is convened is no less compatible with, or scrutably more likely under a Catholic or Orthodox conception of Church polity than under a Presbyterian polity, without begging the question. This compatibility of the Scriptural data located in Acts 15 with Catholic and Orthodox polity makes possible the Catholic and Orthodox use of the Jerusalem council as an exemplar for all subsequent ecumenical councils. Brandon treats the Jerusalem council as evidence against Catholic (and Orthodox) polity for three reasons: because St. Luke mentions six times that presbyters are present at the council, because the final decision is conciliar (i.e., "is represented as the entire deliberative assembly's decision"), and because the council includes representation from local congregations (i.e., Antioch, Jerusalem, outside Judaea, etc.). But each of those three reasons is fully compatible with, and not non-question-beggingly and scrutably less likely under Catholic doctrine. Of course presbyters are present at councils; every Apostle is a presbyter, and every bishop is a presbyter. Likewise, the conciliar nature of council decisions is intrinsic to the very nature of councils; it is not something more likely under Presbyterian polity than under Catholic polity. And representation from various regions is fully compatible with, and no less likely under Catholic polity. So according to the ILD principle, the Acts 15 data is not evidence for Presbyterian polity over Catholic polity, and thus not evidence for Brandon's thesis.

Regarding Acts 20:28 (“Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.”), the First Vatican Council uses the language of this passage to describe the modern office of bishop, noting that “bishops, who have succeeded to the place of the Apostles by appointment of the Holy Spirit [*episcopi, qui positi a Spiritu Sancto...*; cf. Acts 20:28 Vulg.: *vos Spiritus Sanctus posuit episcopos*], tend and govern individually the particular flocks that have been assigned to them.”²⁶ Here the Church has no difficulty understanding the “presbyters” of Acts 20 as being “bishops,” called together in a kind of regional synod to hear St. Paul’s farewell and final instruction.

In short, nothing in the passages from Acts conflicts with Catholic doctrine, or is non-question-beggingly and scrutably less likely under Catholic doctrine. Thus according to the ILD principle, the data to which Brandon appeals in the book of Acts does not support his thesis.

b. Pastorals



The Skull of St. Titus

In his section on the Pastorals, Brandon first appeals to the fact that St. Paul explains that he left St. Titus in Crete to appoint presbyters in every town (St. Titus 1:5), and then two verses later says, “For a bishop, as God’s steward, must be blameless ... ” (St. Titus 1:7), as if this is a problem for Catholic doctrine. However, the use of the distinct terms already suggests two distinct offices, even if they conceptually overlap.²⁷ As Paul Owen points out, it is possible here that by “καταστήσης κατὰ πόλιν πρεσβυτέρους” [*katasteses kata polin presbyterous*] in St. Titus 1:5 St. Paul means that St. Titus is to appoint presbyter-bishops, according to city, that is, [one] in each city.²⁸ And for the reason already explained above, even if St. Titus appointed presbyter-bishops (plural) in every town in Crete, this is fully compatible with Catholic doctrine. Nothing about Christ founding the Catholic Church, and nothing about the truth of the Catholic doctrine of apostolic succession requires that only one bishop be appointed in each town. If St. Titus ordained a plurality of bishops in each town, there are multiple ways he could have done this, as explained in the section above on the book of Acts. Among those theoretical possibilities St. Titus could have established one bishop with jurisdictional authority in each town, with other bishops serving as auxiliaries. Or he could have established multiple bishops in each town but withheld supreme jurisdictional authority from the bishops of each town and

retained that authority to himself, thereby serving as the principle of unity among the congregations in the various towns of Crete until he could eventually select one bishop from each town, and give supreme jurisdictional authority to that bishop over the Church in his town. Or he could have given an equal share of supreme jurisdictional authority to each of the bishops in each town. Brandon assumes that St. Paul means the latter, and that there is no distinction between presbyter-bishop and mere presbyter. But again, because of the ILD principle, the data is not evidence for that assumption.

Brandon then points to 1 Timothy, writing:

A similar construction is found in 1 Timothy 3:1-2. Paul states that trustworthy saying that anyone who aspires to the office of “ἐπίσκοπῆς,” an overseer, he desires a noble thing. He then goes on to explain that an “ἐπίσκοπον,” overseer, must meet the specified criteria. The use of the singular here could indicate that Timothy has in mind the office of bishop, but that becomes highly unlikely when considered with the instructions in 1 Timothy 5:17, “Let the πρεσβύτεροι who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.” Not only does the mention of a plurality of leaders show that the church was led by multiple presbyters, the same grammatical construction with the singular is used just two verses later, “Do not admit a charge ‘κατὰ πρεσβυτέρου’ against an elder...” When talking about the presbyters corporately, we see the singular, πρεσβυτέρου, used to talk about a potential case of someone bringing a charge against one of the elders.

Here Brandon infers from the fact that St. Paul mentions a plurality of presbyters in 1 Timothy 5:17 to the conclusion that when St. Paul specifically refers to the “office of bishop” [ἐπίσκοπῆς] in 1 Timothy 3:1, it is “highly unlikely” that St. Paul has in mind the “office of bishop.” But that is a *non sequitur*. Loaded into Brandon’s reasoning here is the assumption that “office of bishop” can mean only jurisdictional monepiscopacy. But because the “office of bishop” can refer to the third grade of Holy Orders, and because in one particular Church at the same time there can be multiple persons having the power to ordain, therefore the existence of a plurality of presbyters in a particular Church, whether these presbyters are all presbyter-bishops or a combination of presbyter-bishops and mere presbyters, is fully compatible with there being actually an “office of bishop.” For this reason Brandon’s conclusion does not follow from what St. Paul says in 1 Timothy 5:17. Each of these possible polities is fully compatible with, and not non-question-beggingly and scrutably less likely under the data of 1 Timothy 5:17. Thus because of the ILD principle, what St. Paul says in 1 Timothy 5:17 is not evidence that there is no “office of bishop” or that in 1 Timothy 3:1 St. Paul is not referring to the “office of bishop.” The mistake in the argument here is conceptually conflating the office of bishop with jurisdictional monepiscopacy.

Brandon’s last piece of evidence from the Pastorals is from 1 Timothy 4:14, wherein St. Paul urges St. Timothy not to neglect the gift he has, which was given to him by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on him. Brandon claims that this shows that ordination was not by a single bishop, but that “presbyters corporately ordained Timothy.” Tim Troutman has addressed this question in his section titled “g. A Refutation of Presbyterian Ordination,” in “[Holy Orders and the Sacrificial Priesthood](#).”

Either the ordination being referred to in 1 Timothy 4:14 is to the [mere] presbyterate (i.e., the second grade of Holy Orders), or to the episcopate (i.e., the third grade of Holy Orders). If the ordination being referred to in 1 Timothy 4:14 is to the [mere] presbyterate but not to the sacramental episcopacy, then as St. Hippolytus of Rome records in AD 215 in his *Apostolic Tradition*:

When an elder is ordained, the bishop places his hand upon his head, along with the other elders . . . Upon the elders, the other elders place their hands because of a common spirit and similar duty. Indeed, the elder has only the authority to receive this, but he has no authority to give it. Therefore he does not ordain the clergy.²⁹

When a man is being ordained to the office of [mere] presbyter by the bishop, the other [mere] presbyters present also lay their hands on the one being ordained, not because they too can ordain, but in order to show their solidarity with the bishop and, as St. Hippolytus says, to indicate “a common spirit and similar duty” with the [mere] presbyter being ordained. If one attends any priestly ordination in the Latin Church to this present day, one will see the same thing, namely, all the other priests subsequently laying their hands on the one(s) whom the bishop has just ordained to the priesthood.

If, however, the ordination being referred to in 1 Timothy 4:14 is to the sacramental episcopacy, then the fact that bishops are also presbyters shows that the presbyters being referred to in 1 Timothy 4:14 could be presbyter-bishops, as distinct from mere presbyters. The ancient and modern Catholic practice regarding the ordination of bishops is for at least three bishops to participate in episcopal ordination.³⁰

So whether the ordination in 1 Timothy 4:14 was to the [mere] presbyterate or to the sacramental episcopacy, either way, the fact that presbyters laid their hands on St. Timothy at his ordination does not show either that mere-presbyters can ordain, or that there can be no distinction between presbyter-bishops and mere presbyters. The data of 1 Timothy 4:14 is for these reasons fully compatible with, and not non-question-beggingly and scrutably less likely under the truth of Catholic doctrine. For that reason, according to the ILD principle, the data of 1 Timothy 4:14 is not evidence for Presbyterian polity over Catholic polity.

Thus *all* the data from the Pastorals to which Brandon points in support of his thesis is fully compatible with Catholic doctrine, and not non-question-beggingly and scrutably less likely under the truth of Catholic doctrine. For this reason, none of the data to which he appeals from the Pastorals is evidence for his position or his thesis. Brandon’s mistake here is treating data that has multiple possible explanations as though it has only one possible explanation, namely, his own position, or presuming in question-begging fashion that his own position is the best explanation for the data.

c. Catholic Epistles

Brandon suggests that the letter to the Hebrews was written to persons in Rome, and then claims that since “Hebrews 13:7 mentions a plurality of leaders in the city of Rome who minister the Word of God to the faithful,” this supports his thesis that there was a plurality of leaders in Rome at the time the epistle was written. The problem with claiming that this passage supports the non-existence in Rome of a jurisdictional monepiscopacy is, as explained above, that there being a plurality of leaders in the Church at Rome is fully compatible with a jurisdictional monepiscopacy wherein there are also other auxiliary bishops and/or mere presbyters serving as leaders of the Church in Rome. As explained above when describing the ILD principle, evidence that is fully compatible with, and not non-question-beggingly and scrutably less likely under, contrary theses is not evidence for one of those theses, all other things being equal. So Hebrews 13:7 is not evidence in support of Brandon’s argument or his position.

Then Brandon turns to 1 Peter 5:1-4, and notes that there is a textual variant in verse 2 in which the elders referred to in verse 1 are exhorted to exercise oversight [ἐπισκοποῦντες] of the flock of God. From this he concludes that the Greek terms πρεσβύτερος [*presbyteros*] and ἐπίσκοπον [*episkopos*] were synonymous. However, that conclusion does not follow from the premise, because the truth of the premise is fully compatible with the conclusion being false. Moreover, given the ILD principle, the possibility that these presbyters were either all presbyter-bishops or that they were a mix of presbyter-bishop(s) and mere presbyters shows that this textual variant is no evidential support for Brandon’s argument or position over the alternative explanations. That is because the text is fully compatible with the falsity of his notion that there is no such thing as a distinction between presbyter-bishops and mere presbyters, and because the data in these verses is not non-question-beggingly and scrutably less likely under these other possibilities.

Similarly, Brandon, drawing from St. Peter’s reference in 1 Peter 5:1 to himself as a “fellow elder,” writes:

Even Peter, the one who is supposedly the bishop in the city of Rome, identifies himself as an apostle and a fellow presbyter with others throughout the “dispersion.” This statement again reinforces the thesis of the article: Roman Christianity was led by a plurality of presbyter-bishops in the first century.

Brandon thinks that St. Peter’s reference to himself as a fellow elder “reinforces” the thesis of Brandon’s article, namely that in the first century the Church in Rome “was led by a plurality of presbyter-bishops.”³¹ As we have shown above, however, there are at least nine possible ways in which there can be a plurality of presbyters in a particular Church. Brandon treats 1 Peter 5:1 as evidence for one of those nine (i.e., his own position), even though at least eight other possible scenarios are equally compatible with, and not non-question-beggingly and scrutably less likely than the data in 1 Peter 5:1, all other things being equal.³² Once again, for the reason of the ILD principle, 1 Peter 5:1 is not evidence for Brandon’s thesis or argument.

Brandon’s argument also entails that the Apostles Peter and Paul did not have authority over other presbyters. Here’s why. For Brandon, the fact that Sts. Peter and Paul could be identified as fellow elders proves his presbyterial thesis that there was no distinction among those men who were called “presbyter,” and that for this reason the presbyters shared supreme jurisdiction. Because Peter and Paul were called presbyters, this would entail that there was no difference in authority between them and other presbyters, and that the Apostles could not exercise jurisdiction apart from their presbytery. Yet that is contrary to the evidence, for how could St. Paul give orders to Sts. Timothy and Titus, and how could any apostle give orders to others, being “presbyters”? Nonetheless, that conclusion follows from the assumption that all presbyters are equal. What makes more sense of the behavior of the Apostles is seeing them as having been simultaneously both presbyters and having more authority than other presbyters. So it is possible to be called a presbyter and yet at the same time have jurisdictional authority superior to some other presbyter. This same point is confirmed also by the Apostle John, who refers to himself as “the elder” in 2 John 1:1, and in 3 John 1:1, and yet carried apostolic authority.

Peter being a fellow elder (1 Pet. 5:1), and holding an episcopal office (Acts 1:20) is important because it establishes that presbyters possessing distinct *episcopē* or authoritative oversight in a church, which *episcopē* the Apostles surely possessed and clearly exercised, is compatible with there being multiple presbyter-bishops in a given church. This indicates that there were at least three levels of ministry during the time of Apostles, namely, the Apostles themselves, presbyter-bishops, and deacons. This basic structure is preserved in the Church via the transition, in apostolic succession, from Apostles to monarchical bishops who assume the leadership role of the Apostles after the latter have passed from the scene. Note that this view, which is the one prevailing throughout Church history, preserves the original structure of the Church whereas Brandon’s view requires a substantial change in structure, which is, ironically, his exact criticism of Catholicism.

Thus, every piece of data Brandon draws from Scripture, including everything he draws from the book of Acts, from the Pastorals, and from the Catholic Epistles, is not evidence for this thesis, because in each case as shown above the data is fully compatible with and not non-question-beggingly and scrutably less likely under explanations contrary to his thesis. This is true not only for the Scriptural data taken individually, but also taken together.

In the final paragraph of this section Brandon states that in Scripture, “There is no mention of a threefold office, much less a monarchical bishop,” as if this supports his thesis. This, however, is an argument from silence. As explained above, an argument from silence in a text carries evidential weight only when the conjunction of the four necessary conditions is met. But here we have no way of knowing *a priori* or independently that the intention of the authors (both human and divine) of the New Testament was to provide an *exhaustive* prescription for ecclesial polity. Moreover, such an assumption would beg the question against the Catholic Church’s claim that the apostolic deposit comes to us not only through Tradition as written but also through unwritten Tradition, as explained in the [VIII](#).

Scripture and Tradition section of our article titled “Sola Scriptura: A Dialogue Between Michael Horton and Bryan Cross.”

In the Catholic paradigm this unwritten Tradition was exemplified in the practice of the universal Church, which very quickly showed itself to be episcopal in polity. Moreover, because the texts of the New Testament were written to existing particular Churches, there was no absolute need to lay out Church polity in these texts, since each Church would have already received this polity at its founding.³³ So we have some reason to believe that the New Testament authors would not seek to provide an exhaustive polity in the canonical works that were incorporated into the New Testament. Moreover, even if during the time of the Apostles, and thus during the time when the New Testament was written, there were no men who had been appointed by the Apostles to serve in jurisdictional monepiscopacies while the Apostles remained alive, it would not follow that the Apostles had not established a means by which those whom they had ordained to the third degree of Holy Order would fill jurisdictional monepiscopacies after the death of the Apostles in order to avoid strife and contention among the leadership. For that reason too, the absence of an explicitly laid out three-fold polity in the New Testament is not evidence that the Apostles intended no such thing. So Brandon’s appeal to silence here does not support his thesis, not only because it does not meet the conditions necessary for silence to carry evidential weight, but also because this follows from the ILD principle and there being multiple contrary and not non-question-beggingly and scrutably less likely explanations for that silence.

2. Section IV. Extra-Canonical evidence

a. 1 Clement

Regarding the letter of St. Clement to the Corinthians, Brandon makes multiple claims. First he claims that “For Clement there are two orders, “επισκοπους και διακονους” (“bishops and deacons”).” Second he claims that for St. Clement the terms επισκοπος [“bishops”] and πρεσβυτεροι [“presbyters”] are equivalent. Third he claims that both terms are used throughout in the plural, and that there is no mention in the letter of a “monarchical bishop.” Fourth he notes that St. Clement himself does not identify himself as a monarchical bishop. From this he infers the following:

Instead, what we find is what is consistent with my thesis: the church of Rome (and it appears Corinth) was led by a plurality of leaders of whom the title “presbyter” or “bishop” could be used.

Here we examine each of Brandon’s four claims. Regarding Brandon’s first claim, he draws an inference from St. Clement’s description in c. 42 of what the Apostles did after preaching through countries and cities, namely, “they appointed the first fruits [of their labors], having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe.” From this statement Brandon infers that “For Clement there are two orders.” But that is too hasty, because the conclusion does not follow from the premise. Merely because St. Clement notes that the Apostles appointed bishops and deacons, it does not follow that St. Clement believed that there are *only* two grades of Holy Orders: the episcopate and the diaconate. That is because by the instructions of the Apostles, presbyter-bishops could subsequently ordain mere presbyters, and in this way the second grade of Orders was and is contained in the third grade of Orders. St. Jerome points this out when he says

In writing both to Titus and to Timothy the apostle speaks of the ordination of bishops and of deacons, but says not a word of the ordination of presbyters; for the fact is that the word bishops includes presbyters also.³⁴

The third grade of Orders includes two capacities the first grade of Orders does not have, namely, the capacity to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice and the capacity to ordain. For this reason the bishop can ordain a man to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, without also conferring on him the capacity to ordain. In response to this statement by St. Jerome, Brandon writes:

This is a rather interesting way of putting it because typically it is stated in the reverse, bishops are presbyters. But Jerome's argument ("unwittingly," as Dolan puts it) shows that the distinction between presbyters and bishops wasn't present from the earliest stages. If presbyters were bishops (and it has already been conceded that bishops are presbyters) then the distinction between the offices evaporates.³⁵

If presbyter-bishops are bishops, and if bishops are presbyters, it does not follow that there is no difference between the office of bishop and the office of [mere] presbyter, i.e., between the third and second grades of Holy Orders. Brandon makes this mistaken inference because he does not conceive of the possibility of two types of presbyters. Brandon assumes that if bishops are presbyters, and presbyters are bishops, then there is no conceptual distinction between the meanings of the two terms. But that simply does not follow. Only if necessarily all bishops are presbyters, and all presbyters are bishops, would there be no semantic distinction between the two terms. If, however, all bishops are presbyters, and *some* presbyters are bishops, then there is a semantic and conceptual distinction between the two terms. And St. Jerome's statement is supporting the thesis that *some* presbyters are bishops, not that all presbyters are bishops.

Brandon assumes that St. Jerome's claim means that all presbyters *ipso facto* can ordain, and are thus bishops in that sense, and that it was only by some subsequent stipulated convention that by the time of St. Jerome some presbyters were allowed to ordain while others were not allowed to ordain, even though those not allowed to ordain retained the charism by which they could validly ordain others had they been permitted to do so by the Church. This is why Brandon thinks that there could be no development of the second office (i.e., mere presbyter), and thus that any later development of the episcopate, such that the distinction between bishop and mere presbyter became clearer is incompatible with the Catholic Church being the Church Christ founded. But St. Jerome's statement is better explained by the early predominance of presbyter-bishops, as Tim Troutman explained in 2010 in "[Holy Orders and the Sacramental Priesthood](#)." So in this way Brandon's argument against the episcopal position is built on the assumption that there cannot be two ways of being a presbyter, and thus simply presupposes precisely what is in question.

Two chapters before, St. Clement had already shown his awareness not only of the three grades of Orders, but also of the unique relation between the second and third grades of Orders where he writes:

For his own peculiar services are assigned to the high priest, and their own proper place is prescribed to the priests, and their own special ministrations devolve on the Levites. The layman is bound by the laws that pertain to laymen. (c. 40)

St. Clement draws an analogy here between the high priest and the priest in the Old Covenant on the one hand, and the bishop and the mere presbyter in the New Covenant on the other hand. In the Old Covenant, the high priest is still a priest, just as in the New Covenant a bishop is still a presbyter. The high priest and the priests share in the one priesthood, while the high priest uniquely retains certain offices. The Levite assists the priests and the high priest, without having a role in the offering of sacrifice. Likewise, in the New Covenant the bishop and the mere presbyter share the priesthood, and thus are both presbyters. The deacon assists the bishop and mere presbyters, but does not offer the Eucharist. So the key distinction in the Old Covenant hierarchy is between Levites and priests, one of the latter being the high priest, just as in the New Covenant the key distinction is between deacon and presbyters.

This same typology of the sacrament of Holy Orders can be found in other early sources, such as the *Apostolic Constitutions*:

For these [the bishops] are your high priests, as the presbyters are your priests, and your present deacons instead of your Levites; as are also your readers, your singers, your porters, your deaconesses, your widows, your virgins, and your orphans: but He who is above all these is the High Priest.³⁶

And St. Jerome says the same:

In fact as if to tell us that the traditions handed down by the apostles were taken by them from the old testament, bishops, presbyters and deacons occupy in the church the same positions as those which were occupied by Aaron, his sons, and the Levites in the temple.³⁷

Likewise, the *Scottish Catechism of Aberdeen* reads:

Q. Was not the Christian Priesthood typified or prefigured by the Jewish?

A. Yes; the Bishop is the Christian High Priest, and the Presbyters and Deacons answer to the Priests and Levites.

Q. Whom does the Christian High Priest represent?

A. Jesus Christ, the invisible Bishop and Head of the whole Church.³⁸

Brandon says in the comments that he has never encountered this in the literature.³⁹ He also claims that this interpretation “stretches this passage further than [he] believe[s] the text warrants.”⁴⁰ But simply stipulating the boundaries of warrant is easy, yet carries no evidential or argumentative weight, since any interlocutor could stipulate otherwise. Moreover, because stipulations are implicit appeals to the authority of the speaker, they are arguments from authority based on human reason, which is “the weakest” of all types of argumentation, as St. Thomas observes.⁴¹ And much has been written by scholars about the relation of the three-fold order under the Old Covenant and that of the New Covenant.⁴² The *Didache* hints at it when it says that the prophets are the people’s “high priests” (c. 13) presumably because these prophets approved by the Apostles oversaw in such cases even the presbyter-bishops in the particular Churches. This “high priestly” role would fall to one of the bishops in each particular Church after the prophets died. St. Hippolytus’s *Apostolic Tradition* written in AD 215 also explicitly relates the episcopate to the “high priesthood,” the [mere] presbyter to the elders Moses chose, and again refers to the “inheritance of the high priests” when describing ordination to the diaconate.⁴³ This is also discussed in the third-century work titled *Didascalia Apostolorum*.⁴⁴

Regarding this particular line from c. 42 of St. Clement’s letter, the *Catholic Encyclopedia* article on the Canon of the Mass says the following:

The high-priest [i.e., bishop] has his duties, a special place is appointed to the priests, and the Levites have their ministry” (xi). From this it is evident that at Rome the liturgy was celebrated according to fixed rules and definite order. Chap. xxxiv tells us that the Romans “gathered together in concord, and as it were with one mouth”, said the Sanctus from Isaiah 6:3, as we do.⁴⁵

In laying out the three-fold order in the Old Covenant, St. Clement is subtly teaching what is part of the Tradition passed down in the Church Fathers, namely, that Christ the new Moses established in His New Covenant three different grades of Holy Orders: new high priests, new priests, and new Levites. And these refer to the three-fold division of bishop, priest, and deacon, with the bishop being the high priest of the Church in his city. So the data Brandon cites is not evidence that “For Clement there are [only] two orders,” not only because that conclusion does not follow from what St. Clement says, and not only because the second grade of Orders is contained in the third, but

also because St. Clement himself alludes to there being three orders, and positive evidence trumps the argument from silence, as we explained above in our discussion of important preliminary principles of historical inquiry.

Regarding Brandon's second claim that for St. Clement the terms *επισκοπης* ("bishops") and *πρεσβυτεροι* ("presbyters") are equivalent, Brandon says this because St. Clement writes:

For our sin will not be small, if we eject from the episcopate those who have blamelessly and holily fulfilled its duties. Blessed are those presbyters who, having finished their course before now, have obtained a fruitful and perfect departure [from this world] . . . (c. 44)

But because every bishop is a presbyter, it does not follow from St. Clement's referring to bishops as presbyters that all presbyters are bishops, or that for St. Clement the two terms are semantically equivalent. For example, just because when speaking of humans we refer to ourselves as mammals, it does not follow that we believe that the term 'human' is equivalent to the term 'mammal.' Again on account of the ILD principle, the data is not evidence for Brandon's claim.

Brandon's third claim that both terms [i.e., *επισκοπης* and *πρεσβυτεροι*] are used throughout in the plural is misleading because there are multiple polity structures according to which what St. Clement says is true, and in which there is a monepiscopal bishop, as explained above. For example, every statement by St. Clement particularly about bishops, is fully compatible with there being a jurisdictional monepiscopate in Corinth along with auxiliary bishops. Moreover, nothing in his letter entails even the presence of multiple bishops in Corinth. Every statement in his letter is fully compatible with there being only one bishop in Corinth accompanied by multiple [mere] presbyters. And again, from the ILD principle, the data therefore is not evidence for Brandon's thesis over and against an episcopal polity. Given only the data from *1 Clement*, there may have been only presbyter-bishops all having equal jurisdictional authority in the Church in Corinth, but the data here is fully compatible with that being false. Nor are the likelihood differentials non-question-beggingly scrutable, and for this reason this data is not evidence that in Corinth the Apostles established Presbyterian polity and not episcopal polity.

What is doing all the argumentative work here, for Brandon, is an argument from silence, namely, that because St. Clement does not identify or name a single ruling bishop of the Church at Corinth, therefore, there was none, and all the Corinthian presbyter-bishops equally shared supreme jurisdictional authority, and the office of mere presbyter was not only not filled, it was not even possible. But that is not a good argument, not only because the conclusion does not follow from the premise, but also because as explained above, there are other possible scenarios that equally account for the data in the premise. It could be that there were multiple bishops all equally sharing jurisdictional authority, or that only one bishop possessed jurisdictional authority among other auxiliary bishops, or that the jurisdictional bishop had died and not been replaced, leaving only a group of bishops. It could also be that the presbyter-bishops had been until recently under the authority of a traveling apostle, a prophet having episcopal Orders, or a regional bishop like St. Titus or St. Timothy, the latter of which tradition claims to have remained bishop of Ephesus until the last decade of the first century, which is right around the most likely time St. Clement wrote his letter. Or it could be that presbyters consisted of one presbyter-bishop assisted by a number of mere presbyters. Because of the ILD principle, the data here is not evidence for Presbyterian polity over episcopal polity.

Regarding Brandon's fourth claim, his appeal to there being no mention in the letter of a "monarchical bishop" is likewise an argument from silence. There being no mention of a monarchical bishop in the letter is not in itself evidence that there was none. We have no way of knowing independently whether or not St. Clement intended in his letter addressed to the laity of the Church at Corinth to pick out explicitly or by name that presbyter-bishop having jurisdictional authority, if one had presided over the Church at Corinth up to that time. Because there are many

different possible explanations of the data, none independently more likely than the others given the data internal to the document, the data does not support the thesis that all presbyters are *ipso facto* presbyter-bishops, and thus that there is no such office as that of [mere] presbyter, or no such possible office as that of [mere] presbyter. For the very same reason, the data in *1 Clement* is not evidence that Rome had no jurisdictional monepiscopate until the mid-second century.

Finally, Brandon claims that the “tone of the letter does not indicate . . . at all” that St. Clement shows the authority of the Roman Church over the Corinthian Church. Brandon’s argument here presupposes that the only tone possible for one having authority is one of forceful compulsion and demand. His argument presupposes that a gentle pastoral tone is impossible for one having authority. This is not a safe assumption, however, and thus the argument is not a good argument. St. Clement is aware that the brute appeal to authority would not be prudent with persons who have recently ejected their divinely appointed leaders. The whole point of the letter is rhetorically to demonstrate that humbly submitting to divinely established authorities is submitting to God, as one of us has argued elsewhere.⁴⁶ St. Clement therefore recognizes the need for gentle persuasion over heavy-handedness, especially in a letter about humility. The schismatics have already shown that they will not accept authority, and so need to be reproved by a gentle, persuasive argument rather than an approach that places its primary emphasis on an appeal to the author’s authority.

Nevertheless, from one point of view the letter positively indicates self-consciousness of authority on the part of the sender both in the fact of his intervention from Rome, and in the judgment he lays down in the letter if the Corinthians should refuse to comply. For example, he writes:

But if certain people should disobey what has been said by him [God] through us, let them understand that they will entangle themselves in no small sin and danger. . . .

For you will give us great joy and gladness if you obey what we have written through the Holy Spirit and root out the unlawful anger of your jealousy, in accordance with the appeal for peace and harmony that we have made in this letter.⁴⁷

St. Irenaeus speaks of St. Clement’s letter as a “most powerful epistle” that “exhorted them to peace.”⁴⁸ Power is not necessarily manifest in force or compulsion. It can be manifest in love, virtue, and winsome revelation of the truth. Imagine the way, for example, Pope Francis might write a letter to the lay people of a diocese that had just ejected its bishop. It might not be strong-armed in tone. But that would not mean that Pope Francis does not have papal authority, or thinks he has no papal authority. So here too, again according to the ILD principle, the tone of the letter is not evidence that St. Clement did not have such authority.

Moreover, St. Clement provides us with additional indirect evidence that he is speaking of the monepiscopacy when he says:

Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect fore-knowledge of this, they appointed those [ministers] already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry. (c. 44)

The very notion of strife for the episcopal office makes little sense if there is no non-arbitrary maximum number of persons simultaneously occupying it in the same particular Church. The unlimited number of potential presbyters in Presbyterian polity does not fit with the idea of a new presbyter being selected to succeed each one who dies. And

when Presbyterian presbyters die, the remaining presbyters need only select men to replace them, which has little potential for intractable strife, since the persons having the authority in question are still present. The only strife would be among the remaining presbyters, insofar as they could not agree regarding who if anyone should replace the deceased presbyter. But St. Clement's wording implies that he is speaking of an office that, upon the death of the person holding that office, no one with equal authority already holds, so as to make the decision regarding who to replace that person. Hence there would potentially be strife for the vacated office among those not holding that authority, unless a system of succession were established in advance.

Having examined each piece of data to which Brandon has appealed in St. Clement's letter, we have shown that each is not only fully compatible with Catholic doctrine, and according to the ILD principle not evidence for Brandon's thesis, but also that additional data in St. Clement's points to a distinction between bishop and mere presbyter.

b. St. Ignatius of Antioch

In his treatment of St. Ignatius, Brandon notes that St. Ignatius says the following:

For even Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, is the [manifested] will of the Father; as also bishops, settled everywhere to the utmost bounds [of the earth], are so by the will of Jesus Christ.⁴⁹

From this Brandon infers:

If we are to believe Ignatius, the threefold view of ministry is one that was divinely instituted *and* which had spread throughout the world.

The first thing to observe is that Brandon's interpretation does not follow from St. Ignatius's statement. In the statement in question, St. Ignatius does not say anything about the three-fold view of ministry. He says only that bishops are settled everywhere to the utmost bounds of the earth. Brandon himself believes that bishops (i.e., presbyter-bishops) had been appointed by the Apostles, and that by the first decade of the second century had settled everywhere to the utmost bounds of the world.

The explanation of Brandon's *non sequitur* here is his assumption that for St. Ignatius, the bishop is not also a presbyter. Only if the bishop were not also a presbyter, and the ubiquity of presbyters and deacons taken as a given, would it follow that St. Ignatius's statement about bishops being settled everywhere around the world entails that the "three-fold view of ministry" had spread around the world. But if St. Ignatius believed that all bishops are presbyters, then it does not follow that he believed that there were both bishops and [mere] presbyters in all the particular Churches around the world. He may have believed that some particular Churches had no [mere] presbyters. Brandon's assumption is made clear in when he writes:

There is nothing from the canonical or extra-canonical data that shows any evidence of a single presbyter-bishop presiding over a city.⁵⁰

Of course Brandon is not unaware of St. Ignatius's writings. So his comment reveals his question-begging presupposition that no bishop is a presbyter. And it is this presupposition that leads Brandon, in violation of the ILD principle, to construe mistakenly data indicating a plurality of presbyters in particular Churches as though it were evidence that there were no monarchical presbyter-bishops presiding over those Churches.

Then Brandon sets out to refute St. Ignatius's claim. First he refers to a statement by St. Ignatius concerning those who act apart from their bishop:

It is fitting, then, not only to be called Christians, but to be so in reality: as some indeed give one the title of bishop, but do all things without him. Now such persons seem to me to be not possessed of a good conscience, seeing they are not steadfastly gathered together according to the commandment.⁵¹

From the fact that some people acknowledge the bishop's title, but do all things apart from him, Brandon infers that the existence of opponents with a "difference of opinion" about the episcopacy indicates something about whether Jesus Christ founded the Catholic Church or the episcopacy, and about the truthfulness of St. Ignatius's statement about bishops being settled everywhere to the utmost bounds of the earth. Hence Brandon says, "we do have reason to doubt the breadth of the episcopate at the time of Ignatius based on his own testimony . . ." ⁵² Brandon thus treats the existence of baptized persons who subsequently disregarded or rebelled against the authority of their bishop as evidence against St. Ignatius's statement about bishops being settled everywhere to the utmost bounds of the earth by the will of Jesus Christ. Or, at least Brandon's use of this passage as evidence against the truth of St. Ignatius's statement about the ubiquity of bishops presupposes that the Christians doing all things apart from their bishop were not persons who were rebelling against the authority of their bishop. But that is not a safe assumption. From the very fact that some people acted apart from the bishop, it does not follow that "Ignatius is not trustworthy in terms of the scope of the episcopate."⁵³ That's because it may have been the case that the persons acting apart from the bishop were schismatics or heretics.

Setting aside the problem of interpreting an author so as to make him out to be contradicting himself when a more charitable interpretation is available, there being persons who act apart from or against the authority of the bishop is fully compatible with Jesus Christ establishing the Catholic Church and the episcopate. St. Paul had his opponents, but this did not make his apostleship intrinsically doubtful. The heretic Cerinthus was also an opponent of the Apostle John, but that did not call into question the Apostle John's authority or veracity.⁵⁴ Moreover, the existence in a region of persons rebelling against their bishop does not entail or indicate that there is no rightful bishop in that region. The persons who acknowledge the title of the bishop, "but do all things without him" should not be interpreted as evidence that these persons who "do all things without him" were the original Presbyterians established by the Apostles, and from whom St. Ignatius, by arrogating to himself authority the Apostles gave to no one, was estranged, as though St. Ignatius was the false teacher here, and the ones who give lip service to the title of bishop but "do all things without him" were the true followers of Christ. The more charitable interpretation of what St. Ignatius is saying is the interpretation that does not make him out to be contradicting himself, and thereby make him out to be "not trustworthy." And that interpretation is that these persons who acknowledge the title of 'bishop' but "do all things without him" are in rebellion against their divinely established ecclesial authority. So once again, the existence of an alternative explanation of the data, fully compatible with and no less likely than the one Brandon proposes, shows that this data is not evidence for his thesis.

It is also worth noting Brandon's selective use of evidence here. Brandon treats this one statement from St. Ignatius's letter to the Ephesians as trustworthy and reliable, but dismisses as untrustworthy and unreliable a great portion of what St. Ignatius says in the rest of his letters, namely, most everything St. Ignatius says is normative about bishops, the relation of bishops to [mere] presbyters, and the relation of the laity to bishops, etc., doctrines that we lay out in a section below.⁵⁵ For example, St. Ignatius writes:

Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid. . . . It is well to reverence both God and the

bishop. He who honours the bishop has been honoured by God; he who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop, does [in reality] serve the devil. (*Smyrn.* 8:9)

Given Brandon's interpretation of St. Ignatius, it would follow that St. Ignatius did not realize that by noting that some Christians acknowledge the bishop's title, but wrongly "do all things without him," he was undermining his own credibility regarding all the things he says are normative concerning the bishop. Otherwise, Brandon could not selectively affirm and utilize the truth of St. Ignatius's claim that some Christians "do all things without [the bishop]" while rejecting the truth of St. Ignatius's claim that Christians who act apart from the knowledge of the bishop "serve the devil." If the "office of bishop" were only an innovation or optional, and not apostolic, St. Ignatius could not in good conscience say such a thing. But trusting a man's word, as the premise by which to accuse him of being a liar, is self-contradictory. And interpreting him in such a way as to make him out to be contradicting himself, when an alternative interpretation is available that does not make him out to be contradicting himself, is uncharitable.

Selective use of data is revealed in various ways, one of which is biased language. For example, regarding St. Ignatius, Brandon writes:

Ignatius, who is fixated on the importance of the bishop, does not mention any leaders in Rome or the all-important office of bishop.

Brandon would not say that St. Paul was "fixated" on justification, or that St. John was "fixated" on love. But Brandon construes St. Ignatius's teaching concerning the bishop as a "fixation," and by using this biased language aimed at detracting from St. Ignatius's trustworthiness, he seeks to dismiss all that St. Ignatius says is normative concerning the bishop. Why? Because Brandon does not agree with St. Ignatius. So St. Ignatius is "fixated."⁵⁶

As for Brandon's claim about St. Ignatius's silence regarding the bishop of Rome, to begin with, in his letter to the Church at Rome St. Ignatius *does* mention the office of bishop and the monarchical nature of the office in Syria. As Joe Heschmeyer has pointed out, St. Ignatius presents himself in his epistle *To the Romans* as "the bishop of Syria," without any further explanation (*Rom.*, 2:2).⁵⁷ St. Ignatius expects the Christians of Rome to understand what *ton episkopos Syrias* (τον επισκοπον Συριας) is, which would not be the case if St. Ignatius believed that the episcopacy was a novelty. Later, St. Ignatius asks the Church in Rome to pray for the Church in Syria, which now "has God for its shepherd in my place [αντι εμου]. Jesus Christ alone will be its bishop [επισκοπησει]—as will your [the Roman Church's] love."⁵⁸ Therefore, St. Ignatius *does* mention the office of bishop when writing to the Church at Rome.

Nevertheless, after observing that St. Ignatius does not mention the existence of the office of bishop *in Rome* when writing to the Church there, Brandon concludes that "the silence from Ignatius in his letter to the Romans speaks loudly about the church structure of the Roman church being led by one bishop as Ignatius elsewhere writes." That is, Brandon holds that the silence of St. Ignatius regarding any bishop in Rome indicates that there was no monarchical bishop in Rome. Brandon claims that "Ignatius's silence is actually a legitimate argument against the existence of an episcopate."⁵⁹

However, as others have already noted (including [Paul Owen](#), David Albert Jones, OP, and Francis A. Sullivan, SJ), one might as well argue that the silence of St. Ignatius on the subject of Roman presbyters and deacons shows that there were no presbyters or deacons in Rome. Or one might likewise argue that because in 1 Peter 5 St. Peter does not mention the existence of presbyters in the Church in Rome, that therefore the Church in Rome had no presbyters.⁶⁰ But Brandon would not accept those conclusions, and this indicates his selective use of silence, i.e.,

treating silence as “a legitimate argument” when that argument supports one’s own position, but ignoring silence when it opposes one’s own position.

Recall especially the fourth of the four conditions necessary for textual silence to carry evidential weight, discussed above, and how the context of the letter is relevant to those four conditions. Where exactly is St. Ignatius being taken? To Rome. Why? Because St. Ignatius, refusing to obey the Emperor Trajan’s command that the Christians should either sacrifice to idols or die, came forward on behalf of the Church of the Antiochians, and was thereby condemned by Trajan to be taken to Rome and fed to the wild beasts for the entertainment of the Roman people.⁶¹ So then, do we have good reason to believe that in writing to the Roman Christians, while bound to ten Roman soldiers,⁶² the author has no overriding reason for concealing the identity of Pope St. Alexander as the bishop of the Church at Rome? Obviously not. It would have been foolish, dangerous, and perhaps even immoral for St. Ignatius to identify openly Pope St. Alexander as the bishop of the Church at Rome. It would practically sentence Pope St. Alexander to death as well, for the very same reason St. Ignatius was being executed. Recall, for example, the discovery of [Pope Sixtus II](#) (AD 257-258) celebrating the Eucharist with four deacons and a crowd of laity on August 6, 258, in the catacomb of Praetextatus. While seated on his chair, addressing the flock, he was apprehended by a band of soldiers who beheaded him and the four deacons that same day.⁶³ So this silence in St. Ignatius’s letter to the Romans concerning the existence and identity of the bishop (and presbyters) of Rome is not evidence that at this time the Church at Rome had no bishop, because the silence does not meet all four conditions necessary for silence to carry evidential weight.

The letters of St. Ignatius show both the presence of the monarchical episcopacy in Antioch and also that St. Ignatius expected the Roman Christians to understand what he meant in referring to himself as “the bishop of Syria.” And as we show below, the lists of St. Hegesippus and St. Irenaeus provide explicit evidence for the episcopal succession in Rome. These are “sounds” that break St. Ignatius’s silence when writing to the Church at Rome. Moreover, St. Ignatius’s humble approach to the Church of Rome would make no sense in conjunction with his addressing them as the bishop of Syria and with his explicit teaching concerning the superiority of the bishop over the mere presbyter, *if* he believed that the leadership of the Church at Rome was composed only of mere presbyters. The very act of referring to himself as the bishop of Syria, in view of his other statements about the authority of bishops in relation to mere presbyters, and his humble approach to the Church at Rome, implies that he believed that the Church in Rome had a bishop.

Brandon further says that the threefold office of Orders found in St. Ignatius is not compatible with the threefold office of Orders as it exists in the post-Tridentine Catholic Church. He writes:

Furthermore, James F. McCue demonstrates how the conception of the “presbyters” in Ignatius is distinct from subsequent developments of the office where the presbyter serves a “priestly” role. Highlighting this development, McCue points out that the Council of Trent (Session 23) and Ignatius (*Smyrn.* 8.) have competing concepts of priesthood. Ignatius believes that anyone can offer the Eucharist under the direction of the bishop (including the laity) while Trent dogmatically teaches that only a priest validly ordained can do so (article [here](#)).

However, what St. Ignatius says in *Smyrn.* 8:1 is entirely compatible with the Council of Trent and the Catholic tradition, because [mere] presbyters (i.e., “priests”) can be designated by the bishop to say Mass. This is, in fact, what the parish priest does: celebrates the Mass in union with the diocesan bishop. St. Ignatius does not say that the bishop may designate simply *anyone* to celebrate the Eucharist, as Brandon takes him to say, for St. Ignatius only says, “Consider that Eucharist valid which is under the authority of the bishop, or whomever he himself appoints [ἡ ὁ ἀν αὐτοῦ ἐπιτρέψῃ].”⁶⁴ Nothing in this statement entails that *anyone* other than a bishop or a priest may celebrate Mass. Therefore, the Ignatian and Tridentine concepts of the priesthood are not “competing.” Hence Brandon’s inference, “Ignatius provides an example of a threefold ministry that exists but which does not possess the threefold office in the same manner as the Tridentine formula,” is a *non sequitur* because it does not follow from the text of St. Ignatius. An unspecified statement is not the same as an assertion of non-specificity. Brandon mistakenly treats St. Ignatius’s

unspecified statement “whomever he himself appoints” as though it is an assertion of non-specificity, i.e., he may appoint anyone, even the laity as such, to offer the Eucharist.

Next, similar to his argument from silence regarding St. Ignatius’s epistle *To the Romans*, Brandon also argues that St. Ignatius’s view of the episcopacy was not shared or practiced by other parts of the Church at the beginning of the second century AD. Brandon bases his case in part on Patrick Burke’s argument from silence. That argument seeks to prove that there was no bishop in first-century Egypt from the fact that we have no mention of a bishop in Egypt. Brandon writes:

We should be cautious about extrapolating too much data from the silence, but as Burke notes, we would think that some mention of a bishop who was exerting that type of authority Ignatius speaks of would be mentioned (particular in the literary hotbed of Alexandria!), but we encounter silence.

As explained above, this silence would carry evidential weight only if the four necessary conditions were satisfied. Regarding the Church in first-century Egypt, the corpus of literary evidence is quite small, comprised of three documents of possible Alexandrine origin, none of which directly addresses the question of the sacrament of Orders and jurisdictional office. In fact, Protestant scholar Richard Bauckham believes the *Apocalypse of Peter* to be of Palestinian origin, from after the Bar Kokhba revolt (AD 132-35). But if Burke means the *Coptic Apocalypse of Peter*, one wonders why this should be admitted as evidence against the Catholic tradition, for that work is Gnostic and teaches a heretical Docetic Christology! In that work the true “Savior” does not die on the Cross, but only the physical Jesus. Regarding the *Preaching (Kerygma) of Peter*, which “survives only in a small number of quotations,” Bauckham says nothing about its origin.⁶⁵ Regarding the epistle of *Barnabas*, Protestant scholar Michael Holmes says that a “lack of information renders difficult any determination regarding location,” though he thinks an origin in Alexandria is the most likely, given “its numerous affinities in hermeneutical style with Alexandrian Judaism and Christianity and because its earliest witness is Clement of Alexandria.”⁶⁶ So basing ourselves on “scholarship,” only one of these three texts is probably from late first- or early second-century Alexandria.

That being said, here is Burke’s only substantive comment on the Church in Egypt, in its entirety:

With regard to the condition of the church in Egypt, we have three documents which probably originated in Egypt early in the second century: the Kerygma of Peter, the Apocalypse of Peter, and the Epistle of Barnabas. This constitutes the totality of our contemporary sources of information for that time, which is itself a most remarkable fact, considering the eminence of Alexandria as one of the chief cities of the Empire at that time. However not one of these documents deals with any matter of church structure, also a very interesting fact. The terms “episkopos,” “presbyteros,” “diakonos,” or “teacher” do not occur in any of them. The term “prophet” is used only in reference to the Old Testament.

We must say therefore that we simply do not possess any evidence whatever for the structure of the church in Egypt, except the argument from silence: a monarchical bishop would surely make his presence felt, and the first structural evidence we do have comes with such a person, Demetrius, at the end of the second century.⁶⁷

In other words, these documents have absolutely nothing to say about the issue at hand. They provide no evidence for a bishop in Egypt; neither do they provide evidence for presbyters and deacons in Egypt. If silence about x were sufficient to establish $\sim x$, and the *ad hoc* appeal to silence were recognized as intellectually dishonest, then Brandon would also have to say that there were no presbyters or deacons in Egypt during this time. Rather, Burke’s own admission is that of the *three* documents *possibly* coming out of Egypt at this time, “not one of these documents deals with any matter of church structure.” Therefore the conditions for a proper use of silence in abductive reasoning have

not been fulfilled in this case, because the documents do not intend to address the sacrament of Holy Orders or supreme jurisdiction in the Egyptian Church. The silence of the textual history, composed of documents written in the first century about the first century Church in Egypt, is not an indication that there was no monarchical bishop in Egypt. On the contrary, the fact that we do hear of there being a bishop over the Egyptian Church later in the second century, with no mention of this being a radical change in ecclesial sacramental or jurisdictional order, provides yet another positive “sound” that fills in the picture left by the negative silence.

Thus the lack of a first- or early second-century documents mentioning a bishop in Egypt contemporary with St. Ignatius of Antioch is fully compatible with there being a bishop in Egypt contemporary with St. Ignatius. This silence is not evidence for the non-existence of a bishop in Egypt because the first condition for silence to carry evidential weight is not satisfied, namely, that we know by other means that the author of the text intended the text to provide an exhaustive list of the items or events of the sort to which the unstated entity would belong. We have no reason to believe that the authors of the documents in question intended to describe exhaustively the existing polity or leaders of the Church in Egypt, because they do not even address the general subject. Moreover, because the difference between the likelihoods of the available explanations of the direct data (i.e., silence in these three texts) is inscrutable without presupposing what is in question, this data is not evidence for one of these explanations over the other available explanations, all other things being equal.

In actuality, however, there is not silence regarding this question, because it is not the case that all other things are equal. We have an episcopal succession starting from St. Mark for the [Patriarchs of Alexandria](#). This list has been handed down internally as part of the tradition of the particular Church in Egypt. I (Bryan) laid out some of that history up to the third century elsewhere.⁶⁸ We discuss that also in one of the sections below.

How then does Brandon create the appearance of silence regarding the early Alexandrian succession? He does so by arbitrarily stipulating that only the text of documents written in the late first and early second centuries, and preserved to the present day, is allowed to count as evidence regarding the structure of the polity of the Alexandrian Church in the late first and early second centuries. This methodology implicitly presupposes that third and late second century documents have no evidential value regarding the question of late first- and early second-century polity, by presupposing discontinuity and disruption. But in examining Christianity, of which the Alexandrian Church is a part, we are examining a movement that not only began in the first century, and hence initially was relatively small, but also a movement that was widely and brutally persecuted during its first two hundred and fifty years of existence, limiting both the ordinary freedom of the documentary archive-keeping we experience in the modern West and the likelihood of preserving such documents. Stipulating that later data has no evidential value regarding underdetermined later first and early second century data violates the fourth principle laid out above in our section on preliminary principles, namely, that proximate data informs the interpretation of underdetermined data unless there is independent positive evidence of discontinuity of essence. And in this case there is no such evidence.⁶⁹ Hence by that fourth principle, instead of treating the late second and early third century data as evidence of a corruption of earlier polity on the arbitrary presupposition of discontinuity, that data is rightly treated as informing and contextualizing the earlier underdetermined data.

We cannot justifiably assume that we are in a better position to know the early history of each particular Church than were the third and fourth century leaders of those particular Churches, leaders who were not only bishops, but who all testify that the episcopacy was instituted by the Apostles. No one in the third and fourth centuries claims that the Apostles instituted only [mere] presbyters and deacons, and that ambitious, power-hungry men later went beyond the teaching of the Apostles and established for themselves the episcopacy, which subsequently spread around the whole Christian world. History is entirely silent about such a transition and any protest or controversy regarding such a transition. Brandon, however, thinks that *that* silence does not count as evidence. He creates his argument by drawing a stipulated, question-begging, and methodologically loaded circle around only the silence he can use to tell a

just-so story about how the Church went wrong, while ignoring or dismissing the silence that would falsify that story. Again, that is an example of the selective use of data.

Brandon also appeals to the *Didache* to refute St. Ignatius on the threefold office. For Brandon, this early Christian text is another piece of evidence for his presbyterial thesis and against there being a divinely-established episcopacy in the Church. He writes:

Of particular importance for the presbyterial position is that here we encounter another piece of evidence where there are two sources of leadership [in the *Didache*], the “bishops” and the “deacons.” There is no threefold understanding of the offices (*contra* Ignatius). This leadership rules in plurality and it is interesting that the laity seem to have the responsibility to make sure that things are carried out in an appropriate way (all the commands are in the second person plural).

While later responding to Paul Owen, Brandon also adds:

In #10 you are right to say that we should be careful to press the *Didache* too hard, but, it is simply another piece of evidence to show in the area of Asia Minor that the threefold office was not as widespread as Ignatius indicates at the end of the 1st century/beginning of the second century.⁷⁰

Yet the portrait of the *Didache* does not count as evidence for the “presbyterial” thesis over and above the episcopal thesis, because the text is equally compatible with either thesis. There are a number of names for leaders in the text: apostles, prophets, teachers, bishops, and deacons. “Apostles” are “prophets” (11:3-7). Moreover, “prophets” are “high priests” (13:3), who are capable of settling in one town (13:1), and who are capable of celebrating the Eucharist (10:7; cf. 15:1). “Bishops and deacons” perform the “service” (λειτουργία, “liturgy”) of prophets and teachers: “for they too carry out for you the service [υμιν λειτουργουσι και αυτοι την λειτουργια] of the prophets and teachers” (15:1).

All this is compatible with there being a threefold order either in the “apostles and prophets,” “bishops,” and “deacons;” or in the “bishops” and “deacons,” with [mere] presbyters latent in the episcopal order; or in the “bishops” and “deacons,” with one bishop being over the college of other bishops.⁷¹ For these reasons, and the ILD principle, the silence about the presence of a presiding “bishop” is not evidence for a Presbyterian polity over against an episcopal polity. Moreover, the *Didache* may quite possibly have been written thirty years earlier than the letters of St. Ignatius, and thus may reflect the time period of transition between Church government under still-living apostles and prophets. By contrast, as we show below, St. Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch after St. Evodius, and was writing after the Apostles had died. So it may be misguided to attempt to use the *Didache* to correct St. Ignatius, rather than allow them to complement each other by providing windows into transitional apostolic polity and post-apostolic polity.

c. St. Polycarp of Smyrna

In his article Brandon includes a section on St. Polycarp, presumably because Brandon thinks St. Polycarp’s writing supports Brandon’s Presbyterian thesis. Brandon notes that in his letter to the Philippians, St. Polycarp “introduces himself as “Polycarp and the presbyters with him.”⁷² Brandon does not say that this greeting is evidence that St. Polycarp was not a bishop. Brandon says only that it is “interesting,” thereby possibly hinting that St. Polycarp’s introduction is evidence for Brandon’s presbyterial thesis. However, the salutation of St. Polycarp’s letter, “Polycarp and the presbyters with him to the Church of God sojourning at Philippi,” is no evidence for the parity-of-presbyters position against the episcopacy position, because the salutation is entirely compatible with St. Polycarp being a bishop

and having presbyters under him. Brandon's source, Patrick Burke, admits this, writing: "While this [salutation] is, of course, compatible with the notion that Polycarp was a monarchical bishop, it is equally compatible with the idea that he was one member, though an outstanding one by virtue of his known saintliness and energy, of a college of elders."⁷³ In light of the ILD principle, this data is therefore not evidence against the Catholic position or for Brandon's thesis.

Brandon next suggests that St. Polycarp's silence about any bishop at Philippi indicates that there was not any bishop at Philippi, nor any empty episcopal office. Yet by the same ILD principle, even the overall silence of the letter on this point is not evidence that there was no episcopal office in Philippi. Moreover, when St. Polycarp's letter is viewed as a whole, not only is it not evidence against the Catholic position, but it supports the existence and normativity of the episcopacy because St. Polycarp's communication to the Philippians included St. Ignatius' teaching on the monarchical bishop, passed along with commendation by St. Polycarp. At the end of his letter (*Phil.* 13:2), St. Polycarp says that he is responding to the Philippians' request for St. Ignatius' letters by attaching copies of those "that were sent to us by him together with any other that we have in our possession." St. Polycarp commends these letters to the Philippians, for they [i.e., the Philippians] "will be able to receive great benefit from them, for they deal with faith and patient endurance and all building up that relates to our Lord."⁷⁴ Naturally, these letters contain precisely the doctrine of St. Ignatius on the monarchical episcopacy that Brandon is keen to show is an innovation.⁷⁵ Since St. Polycarp passed along St. Ignatius' teaching on the monarchical episcopacy by means of these copies of St. Ignatius' own letters, and did so commending them, St. Polycarp's *To the Philippians* does not count as evidence against the apostolic origin of the monarchical episcopacy, but in fact upholds the very thing on which, according to Brandon, St. Ignatius is "fixated." If St. Polycarp believed the episcopate to be an innovation departing from the apostolic teaching, wouldn't he have made sure to add that qualification to his letter? Brandon has simply selected the internal silence he wants to count as evidence, and ignored the internal silence he does not want to count as evidence. And again, that selective use of data is special pleading.



The Roman Amphitheater in Smyrna

But here too he is attempting to create silence by arbitrarily restricting the scope of what is allowed to count as evidence. Because “a single positive may overturn any number of negatives,” the other sources explicitly stating that St. Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna not only answer the question, but demonstrate the danger of attempting to argue from the silence of direct data, as Brandon does in attempting to argue from St. Polycarp’s not referring to himself as a bishop in his salutation to the Philippians. The other sources we have that mention St. Polycarp explicitly identify him as the “bishop” of Smyrna. So it is in the salutation of St. Ignatius to St. Polycarp in *To Polycarp*, which reads: “Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to Polycarp, Bishop of the Church of the Smyrnæans, or rather, who has, as his own bishop, God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁷⁶ Similarly, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, a second-century account, of which St. Irenaeus had a copy (cf. Chap. 22), includes the following which specifically designates St. Polycarp as the bishop of Smyrna:

At length, when those wicked men perceived that his body could not be consumed by the fire, they commanded an executioner to go near and pierce him through with a dagger. ... and all the people wondered that there should be such a difference between the unbelievers and the elect, of whom this most admirable Polycarp was one, having in our own times been an apostolic and prophetic teacher, and bishop of the Catholic Church which is in Smyrna.⁷⁷

Of his own article Brandon claims, “[T]he point of this article is to prove that the Church of Rome was ruled by presbyters (and not by a monarchical bishop) until c. 150 AD.”⁷⁸ But when the eighty-six year old St. Polycarp came to Rome to visit Pope Anicetus in AD 155 to defend the tradition he had received from the Apostle John concerning the date on which to celebrate Easter, why did he entirely overlook what Brandon claims to be a novel and non-apostolic monepiscopacy in Rome?⁷⁹ Of St. Polycarp’s visit to Rome, St. Irenaeus, as quoted by Eusebius, writes:

He [St. Polycarp] also was in Rome in the time of Anicetus and caused many to turn away from the above-mentioned heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received from the apostles this one and only system of truth which has been transmitted by the Church.⁸⁰

The Gnostics in Rome (e.g. Cerdo, Valentinus, Marcion) had been claiming that the Church in Rome was not faithfully passing on what the Apostles had taught, but that the Gnostics had some secret knowledge that came from the Apostles. St. Polycarp, having himself conversed with the Apostles in his younger years, was able to refute this claim powerfully by testifying that he himself had known Apostles and been taught by them directly, and that what he had received from them was the one and only system of truth which they had transmitted to the Church, and which the Church presently taught. St. Irenaeus, who had known St. Polycarp personally, describes this:

But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried [on earth] a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom, departed this life, having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time,— a man who was of much greater weight, and a more steadfast witness of truth, than Valentinus, and Marcion, and the rest of the heretics. He it was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus caused many to turn away from the aforesaid heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles—that, namely, which is handed down by the Church.⁸¹

In this way he was able to cause many Gnostics to turn away from their heresy. St. Polycarp's argument against the Gnostics in Rome would have been vitiated had any of the following been the case: (a) there had been some widespread debate within the Church about whether monepiscopacy was apostolic, or (b) there was a Presbyterian polity in the Church in Rome while all the Churches of Asia had a monepiscopacy, or (c) there was a newly formed monepiscopacy in the Church in Rome, departing thereby from a prior Presbyterian polity. He could not have argued successfully to the Gnostics that the Church had faithfully preserved the one and only system of truth from the Apostles if he believed that the Church in Rome had departed from the apostolic polity. If preserving the apostolic teaching concerning the date of Easter was important to him, *a fortiori* preserving apostolic teaching concerning Church polity was far more important. We therefore have reason to believe that had there been a monepiscopacy in Rome at the time of St. Polycarp's visit, and had he believed this polity to be contrary to the teaching of the Apostles, he would have vigorously protested it. Instead, he celebrated the Eucharist with Pope Anicetus, as St. Irenaeus records.⁸²

Thus the evidence that directly addresses the issue of the sacrament of Order and polity in relation to St. Polycarp testifies not only to there having been a monarchical bishop in Smyrna at the time of Ignatius, and that St. Polycarp was that bishop, but also that there was a bishop of Rome in St. Polycarp's time, and that for St. Polycarp, there being a bishop of Rome was not a departure from the apostolic teaching. As explained above in discussing arguments from silence, "A single positive may overturn any number of negatives."

As already noted, St. Polycarp's salutation, "Polycarp and the presbyters with him," is fully compatible with St. Polycarp being a monarchical bishop over the Smyrnaean Church. Nothing about the conjunctive grouping of monarchical bishop and college of presbyters proves otherwise. Even more problematic for Brandon's argument is the fact that being a monarchical bishop and being a member of a college of presbyters are compatible ideas, because each Catholic diocesan bishop is the presiding presbyter in his Church. In fact, St. Ignatius exhorts the various Churches to cling to their respective bishop and his presbyters as their rulers. In the epistle to St. Polycarp's Church in Smyrna, St.

Ignatius exhorts the laity to “follow the bishop as Jesus Christ the Father, and the council of presbyters as the apostles; respect the deacons as the commandment of God.”⁸³ St. Ignatius exhorts them on the one hand to “follow” the bishop and presbyters, and on the other to “respect” the deacons. The bishops and presbyters are together the governors the laity are to follow. And this is entirely compatible with St. Polycarp being the monarchical bishop presiding over a college of presbyters. In *To the Magnesians*, St. Ignatius links the bishop and presbyters as the organ of governance from the perspective of the laity: “be united with the bishop and with those who lead” (*Magn.* 6:2), and “you must not do anything without the bishop and the presbyters” (*Magn.* 7:1).

Again, this is fully compatible with the bishop being the president of the college of presbyters, which is fully compatible with the truth of the Catholic position. To this day, the pastors of parishes in the Catholic Church rule their parishes only in communion with the pastor of the entire diocese, the monarchical (diocesan) bishop. A lay Catholic today should still “follow” the bishop and the presbyters, while understanding at the same time that the bishop holds supreme jurisdictional authority in the diocese. So none of the data Brandon points to in relation to St. Polycarp is evidence that St. Polycarp was not a bishop. On the contrary, not only the internal data indicating an unqualified endorsement of St. Ignatius’s teaching, but the external data as well indicates clearly that St. Polycarp was in fact a bishop, even the bishop of Smyrna. Moreover, the very attempt to try to make it seem that St. Polycarp was not a bishop, in light of the magnitude of positive evidence showing that he was a bishop, suggests an ideologically- or theologically-driven agenda.

d. *Shepherd of Hermas*

Brandon dates the *Shepherd of Hermas* to around AD 140 by relying primarily on the Muratorian Fragment. How does it show this date? Because, according to Brandon, it states that Hermas “had a brother named Pius who was allegedly the bishop of the city of Rome c. AD 142-155.” The complete line from the Muratorian Fragment reads:

The Pastor [i.e., the *Shepherd*], moreover, did Hermas write very recently in our times in the city of Rome, while his brother, the bishop Pius, sat in the [episcopal] chair of the Church of Rome. [*Pastorem uero nuperrime temporibus nostris in Urbe Roma Hermas conscripsit, sedente cathedra Urbis Romae ecclesiae Pio Episcopo fratre eius.*]⁸⁴

Brandon adds “allegedly” because he does not believe that there was an episcopal chair [*cathedra*] in Rome occupied by Pope Pius in AD 142. Recall the aim of Brandon’s essay: “the point of this article is to prove that the Church of Rome was ruled by presbyters (and not by a monarchical bishop) until c. 150 AD.”⁸⁵ The presence of an episcopal chair in Rome prior to AD 150 is therefore problematic for his thesis. But Brandon *does* think that the Muratorian Fragment supports his claim that the *Shepherd of Hermas* was written around AD 140. Brandon thus uses a text which claims that Hermas wrote “while bishop St. Pius, his brother, was occupying the [episcopal] chair of the Church of the city of Rome” in order to date the *Shepherd* earlier than AD 150. He then claims as evidence for the no-bishop-in-Rome thesis that Hermas never mentions a single leader in the Church at Rome. So Brandon uses the Muratorian Fragment’s claim that Hermas wrote the *Shepherd* while his brother Pius occupied the episcopal chair in Rome, to date the *Shepherd* to AD 140, in order to show from the *Shepherd* that at that time there was no episcopal chair in Rome.

Obviously Brandon cannot have it both ways. If the Muratorian Fragment is reliable as Brandon wants it to be to establish when the *Shepherd* was written, then it should be treated as reliable evidence regarding St. Pius being the bishop of Rome in the 140s, especially since the only way to use the Fragment to support the AD 140 date for the *Shepherd* is to rely on the other lists (e.g. that of St. Irenaeus) that tell us when St. Pius was bishop, lists that Brandon himself thinks are false. But if the Muratorian Fragment is unreliable, then it cannot support the thesis that

there was no monepiscopacy in Rome in the 140s. This arbitrarily selective use of sources, and selective even within particular sources, is an example of the fallacy of special pleading.

Regarding the content of the *Shepherd*, the three main pieces of data Brandon wishes to use as evidence here are the silence regarding a “monarchical bishop,” the reference to a plurality of presbyters, and the fighting for prominence among the presbyters. Regarding the first point Brandon writes:

Hermas never mentions a single leader in the church but uses ἐπισκόποι and πρεσβύτεροι when discussing the leadership of the church

Here again Brandon is again attempting to use an argument from silence, which, in his section on St. Irenaeus he claims is “invalid.” More specifically, this case of silence does not satisfy the first and fourth conditions necessary for silence within a text to carry evidential weight. We have no evidence by other means that Hermas intends his text to provide the identity of the bishop sitting in the episcopal chair in Rome, or intends to provide a complete specification of the hierarchy in Rome. Nor do we have good reason to believe that the author has no overriding reason for concealing the entity or event. Identifying his brother as the bishop of Rome would likely get his brother killed.

Regarding Brandon’s second point relating to the *Shepherd*, Brandon is attempting to use Hermas’s reference to the plurality of presbyters as evidence that there was a presbyterial polity in Rome at the time. Recall what Brandon means by “presbyterian,” as he explains in his article:

By “presbyterian,” I am not thinking particularly of a current denomination or flavor of modern Presbyterianism (two office, three office, centralized power, “grass roots,” etc.) The meaning is broader and refers to the leadership of the church of a particular geographic area being led by a plurality of leaders (elders or presbyters). This definition would exclude a notion of a monarchical episcopate or the notion of a threefold office.

So according to Brandon, “presbyterianism” as he is using the term excludes “a threefold office.” But one problem for the attempt to use the *Shepherd* in defense of the claim that Rome was Presbyterian is that Hermas himself acknowledges the threefold office. Hermas writes:

Hear now with regard to the stones which are in the building. Those square white stones which fitted exactly into each other, are apostles, **bishops, teachers, and deacons**, who have lived in godly purity, and have acted as **bishops and teachers and deacons** chastely and reverently to the elect of God. Some of them have fallen asleep, and some still remain alive. And they have always agreed with each other, and been at peace among themselves, and listened to each other. On account of this, they join exactly into the building of the tower.⁸⁶

Here we have a description of apostles, bishops, teachers and deacons. The term ‘apostle’ seems clearly to be a title limited to the first generation of persons, those who had seen and been sent by Christ directly, for the other three are also functions that apostles also performed. But bishop, teacher and deacon are offices that continue, while that of apostle does not. The term ‘teacher’ here seems to be used to refer to the activity of the office described elsewhere (e.g. in St. Ignatius) as [mere] presbyter, though that is not definitive. Hermas does not use the term ‘presbyter’ here, because both bishops and teachers are presbyters, and therefore using the term ‘presbyter’ would not distinguish them from each other. Bishops too are teachers, of course, so there would be no need to specify the office of ‘teacher’ as distinct from the office of bishop, unless it referred to an office in which one had the authority to teach, but was not a bishop, because it did not include the power to ordain. The only ecclesial office fitting that description is the [mere] presbyter office St. Ignatius describes.

Furthermore, the vision in which the threefold office is described is not said to pertain only to the Church of Rome, exclusive of the whole universal Church. If anything, the vision pertains more to the universal Church, the mystical body of all the faithful, both those no longer alive and those now living (“some have fallen asleep, while others are still living”).⁸⁷ In the *Visions* of Hermas, he is visited by a lady under three forms, who later is revealed to be “the Church.”⁸⁸ A young man tells Hermas that “she was created before all things; therefore she is elderly, and for her sake the world was formed.”⁸⁹ Thus she is the one universal Church. Later in the next, third vision the lady identifies herself as the Church. This is the vision from which comes the quotation above about the threefold order after the apostles.

The lady takes Hermas to a field to observe the construction of a large tower built by six men out of stones from sea and land, with some stones rejected. The lady eventually reveals to Hermas what the tower is: “The tower that you see being built is I, the Church, who appeared to you now and previously.”⁹⁰ The tower is built upon water, signifying baptism, and has the Name [of Jesus] for its foundation. The six young men building the tower are identified as “the holy angels of God who were created first of all, to whom the Lord committed all his creation to increase and build up, and to rule over all creation. Through them, therefore, the construction of the tower will be completed.”⁹¹ The tower is the Church, and the ones building her are the angels superior to all others, the angels who rule over all creation. Creation itself was identified as existing for the Church in the previous vision. So the mystical representation here seems not to be one particular Church, but rather the one, universal Church throughout creation.

Next, the lady reveals who the stones of the tower are. The stones are the “apostles and bishops and teachers and deacons.” Now the apostles are simply mentioned as one group, supporting the identification of the Church as the one, universal Church. The “bishops” therefore are not necessarily limited to the “bishops” of any particular Church, for it is a general grouping of bishops. The other stones out of which the tower was built represent other general groups of people with regard to the Church: “those who have suffered for the name of the Lord,” “those whom the Lord has approved because they walked in the uprightness of the Lord and rightly performed his commandments,” and “the young in faith, and faithful.”⁹² Stones that were rejected but not destroyed are “the ones who have sinned and wish to repent. Therefore they were not thrown far from the tower, because they will be useful for building if they repent.”⁹³ Finally, stones that were not only rejected but destroyed are “the children of lawlessness; they believed hypocritically, and no wickedness escaped them...” The lady continues explaining whom the stones mystically represent through *Vis.* 3.7 [15]. Nothing in these visions requires us to find a presbyterial government (in Brandon’s sense) in Rome. In fact, their mystical character and the allegorical details of the visions point to the Church being the Church universal. And if that is the case, how can there be any surprise in Hermas’s reference to bishops in the plural? A plurality of bishops in the universal Church is obviously fully compatible with moniscopacy in the universal Church.⁹⁴

Later Hermas writes:

And from the tenth mountain, where were trees which overshadowed certain sheep, they who believed were the following: **bishops** given to hospitality, who always gladly received into their houses the servants of God, without dissimulation. And the **bishops** never failed to protect, by their service, the widows, and those who were in want, and always maintained a holy conversation. All these, accordingly, shall be protected by the Lord for ever.⁹⁵

Here we see him describe good bishops of the Church, those given to hospitality and care for widows, and preserving holiness in their conversation. Overall, while Hermas does not provide us with a substantive or complete ecclesiology, he clearly recognizes an hierarchical authority structure in the Church. And he shows (implicitly) an awareness of apostolic succession in his description of the continuity between the apostles on the one hand and the bishops, teachers, and deacons who continue the apostles’ work.

Assuming a date of Hermas being c. AD 140 on Brandon's premise that the Muratorian Fragment is a reliable historical document, and the fact that the visions pertain to the universal Church, the mention of a certain Clement in Vis. 2.4.3 [8:3] is not evidence for or against the establishment of a monarchical bishop in Rome. He is spoken of as someone alive during the time of Hermas' writing. But as far as anyone can tell, St. Clement I died around the year AD 100. Thus, the identification of the Clement of Hermas remains a subject of scholarly debate. That the Clement of Hermas had as his job sending things "to the cities abroad" is no evidence against there being a monarchical bishop in Rome, for it is also fully compatible with there being at that time a monarchical bishop in Rome. Neither is the mention of "those who preside over the Church" in 2.4.3 incompatible with there being one presbyter-bishop who leads the college of the city's presbyters, for reasons already explained above. Thus when Brandon says, "Such occurrences [e.g., the description of Clement's job and what Grapte will do, along with the mention of "those who preside over the Church"] fit exactly what Lampe's thesis of fractionation would expect," he violates the ILD principle. The evidence can "fit exactly" either hypothesis, and the likelihood differential is inscrutably comparable without begging the question, all other things being equal. So Brandon begs the question by presuming that this data supports his thesis over and against the Catholic position.

Brandon then quotes Hermas's criticism of those who "love the first seats" and writes, "Hermas is thus unequivocal that the leadership in the church should not seek to distinguish themselves from one another." By "distinguish" Brandon means hold a rank over other leaders. Similarly, Brandon says elsewhere that according to Hermas, possessing a leadership rank higher than other leaders in the Church is negative. Hence Brandon says:

Herms never mentions a single leader in the church but uses ἐπισκόποι and πρεσβύτεροι when discussing the leadership of the church and also calls them προϊσταμένοι, προηγούμενοι, and πρωτοκαθεδρίταις. (Vis. 3.9.7.) This latter term is particularly interesting because it is not a neutral description but an insult. The English translations bear this out:

I now say to you who preside over the Church and love the first seats

The context here is those who are looking to put themselves over others and jealously keep their wealth to themselves.

First, Brandon gives no evidence that *οι πρωτοκαθεδριται* is an insult; he only asserts it. The verse is addressed "to those who preside over the Church and occupy the first seats" (Gk. τοις προηγουμενοις της εκκλησιας και τοις πρωτοκαθεδριταις). These men are acknowledged to preside over the Church and occupy the first seats, indicating that members of the presbyterate are in view. Whether these men are also coextensive with the rich remains to be proved, for the Greek signals a shift in subject: "now, therefore, I say to you who lead the Church and occupy the first seats..." (νυν ουν υμιν λεγω τοις προηγουμενοις της εκκλησιας και τοις πρωτοκαθεδριταις...). The general context of this verse is Hermas relaying an exhortation to various groups within the Church. First, Hermas is commanded to "show [these things about the seven women, Faith, Self-control, Sincerity, Innocence, Reverence, Knowledge, and Love] to everyone."⁹⁶ Then Hermas delivers the message to the "children" (3.9.1-10), including both "you rich" as well as "those who preside over the Church and occupy the first seats." These groups could be overlapping sets of people, to be sure, but the distinct sets are addressed directly in different verses.

Further, the English translation of Vis. 3.9.7 provided by Brandon is inaccurate, for the verse says nothing about loving the first seats, but about "occupying the first seats" (Gk. τοις πρωτοκαθεδριταις). There is simply nothing in this sentence about "loving" the first seats. In the Gospels, the Lord Jesus excoriates the Pharisees for "loving" or "desiring" the first seats (Mt 23:6 [φιλουσιν]; Mk 12:39 [των θελοντων]; Lk 11:43 [αγαπατε]; 20:46 [φιλουντων]). Similarly, the "false prophet" mentioned by Hermas is not condemned for occupying the first seat, but for "desiring to have" (θελει ... εχειν) the first seat. In Vis. 3.9.7, however, these men are not said to love the first seats, but to be in them. This difference is not any more sophisticated than the difference between *money* being the root of all evil and

the *love of money* being the root of all evil (1 Tim 6:10; cf. 2 Tim. 3:2). Hermas does not tell them to abandon the first seats but to avoid “these divisions of yours.” In fact, Hermas grants that these men are involved in the instruction of God’s elect.⁹⁷ Brandon has not shown that Hermas is portraying negatively men who occupy the first seats, or the occupation of these seats.

Let us return to Brandon’s original comment about the negative connotation of possessing a higher leadership rank than other leaders. Here it is in context. Brandon writes:

This selfish tendency seems to have caught Hermas’s eye enough that he mentions it again to the leaders of the church in *Similitude* 8.7.4-6:

[A]s many as do not repent at all, but abide in their deeds, shall utterly perish. And they who gave in their branches green and cracked were always faithful and good, though emulous of each other about the foremost places, and about fame: now all these are foolish, in indulging in such a rivalry. Yet they also, being naturally good, on hearing my commandments, purified themselves, and soon repented. Their dwelling, accordingly, was in the tower. But if any one relapse into strife, he will be cast out of the tower, and will lose his life. Life is the possession of all who keep the commandments of the Lord; but in the commandments there is no rivalry in regard to the first places, or glory of any kind, but in regard to patience and personal humility. Among such persons, then, is the life of the Lord, but amongst the quarrelsome and transgressors, death.

Some of the teachers had repented of their rivalry and dissension, but Hermas reminds them that if they lapse back into their disputes about the “foremost places and about fame” then they will reap death. Hermas is thus unequivocal that the leadership in the church should not seek to distinguish themselves from one another.

Here Brandon infers from the sin of pridefully wanting and striving to be first and famous above others to the conclusion that there should be no hierarchy of authority among the Church’s leaders. But that is a *non sequitur*. From wanting pridefully to have more authority and fame than others have, it does not follow that all persons should have equal authority, or that presbyters and deacons should have equal authority, or that bishops and [mere] presbyters should have equal authority. Proudly coveting, strife, and ambition in relation to an hierarchy does not nullify the goodness and propriety of hierarchy itself. Brandon’s argument conflates disordered desires concerning first places in the hierarchy, with the hierarchy itself, and in this way wrongly infers from the wrongfulness of the former to the wrongfulness of the latter.

Hermas records his vision against these people for “having some zeal of one another concerning the first places and concerning some honor” (εχοντες δε ζηλον τινα εν αλληλοις περι πρωτειων και περι δοξης τινος). It cannot be the case that “distinction” is sinful, for then every presbyter in Rome (and any other particular Church) should have given up being a presbyter in distinction to being a layman. The issue is loving rank, honor, and one’s reputation for the very fact that they elevate one over others. This is the pride and double-mindedness that the Lord Jesus condemned in the Sermon on the Mount (St. Matthew 6). He also condemned it when He answered the request of the mother of the Sons of Thunder that her sons would have the honor of the first places at Jesus’ right and left. In response Jesus told the Twelve that if any were to be great, he should serve, and if any were to be first, he should be the slave of the rest (Mt 20:20-28). But Jesus did not then say that the Twelve were not the Twelve, or that Peter was not Peter. Quite the contrary! So the issue cannot be distinction *simpliciter*, but a craving to be superior, a disordered desire for a station, office, or power that has not been entrusted to oneself. For this reason there is nothing incompatible in this text with there having been a monarchical bishop in the city of Rome. Nor is the condemnation of disordered desire for a hierarchical position of authority evidence against there being a hierarchy or a moniscopacy.

Finally, Brandon's comments about the negative image of being in leadership is overturned by the one positive example of *Vis.* 3.5, in which text the Lady commends those who have ruled well. Also, that some clerics jockeyed with other clerics for honor is likewise compatible with, and not evidence against, the presence of a monarchical bishop in Rome. St. Jerome wrote [ep. 146](#) because deacons were jockeying for honor over presbyters. Of course everyone knows that there was a monarchical bishop in Rome at the time St. Jerome wrote.

e. St. Justin Martyr

In his brief section on St. Justin Martyr, Brandon appeals to two pieces of data in support of his thesis: (a) silence regarding the existence of a monarchical bishop in Rome, and (b) fractionation. We have addressed the fractionation issue in a subsequent section below. As for Brandon's argument from silence in St. Justin, anyone who has read the entirety of St. Justin's existing works will be aware that in the whole of his work, about the only opportunity St. Justin would have to mention a bishop of Rome is in the paragraph Brandon cites. That's because the topic of St. Justin's writings is not the polity of the Church, or the present leaders of any particular Church, but an apologetic of defending Christianity in general against the pagans. So this argument fails to meet the first condition necessary for silence to have evidential weight; it has not shown independently that the author intends to address the subject, and so in an exhaustive way such that if there was a bishop of Rome at the time, he would be mentioned in St. Justin's writings, all other things being equal.

Moreover, the nature of the document to which Brandon is appealing in his argument from silence regarding St. Justin's not mentioning the bishop of Rome, is relevant to Brandon's argument. Brandon is appealing to what might rightly be called a trial transcript, titled "[The Martyrdom of Justin](#)," which ends as follows:

Rusticus the [Roman] prefect pronounced sentence, saying, Let those who have refused to sacrifice to the gods and to yield to the command of the emperor be scourged, and led away to suffer the punishment of decapitation, according to the laws. The holy martyrs having glorified God, and having gone forth to the accustomed place, were beheaded, and perfected their testimony in the confession of the Saviour. And some of the faithful having secretly removed their bodies, laid them in a suitable place, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ having wrought along with them, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.



S. Giovanni Battista Church in Sacrofano

Note the words 'decapitation' and 'beheaded.' Recall also from above the fourth criterion for silence within a text to carry evidential weight, namely, that we have good reason to believe that the author has no overriding reason for concealing the entity or event in question. Seeing that in this text St. Justin foresees his immediate decapitation for being a Christian and refusing to sacrifice to the gods, do we have good reason to believe that St. Justin has no overriding reason for concealing the identity of the leader of the Church at Rome? It seems to us that the answer to

that question is “no.” In his trial before the Roman prefect, and facing immediate beheading for being a Christian, St. Justin would likely refrain from mentioning the existence or identity of St. Anicetus as the bishop of the Church at Rome, just as approximately fifty-eight years earlier St. Ignatius, while on his way to be eaten by wild beasts in Rome had a very good reason in his letter to the Christians in Rome not to refer to or identify the bishop of Rome, as we have explained above. Therefore, for the same reason here too Brandon’s argument from silence carries no evidential weight, because the data to which he refers does not satisfy one of the necessary conditions for silence to carry evidential weight.

3. Section V. Hegesippus and Irenaeus

a. St. Hegesippus

Here Brandon responds to the following quotation from St. Hegesippus, preserved by Eusebius:

καὶ ἐπέμενον ἡ ἐκκλησία ἡ Κορινθίων ἐν τῷ ὀρθῷ λόγῳ μέχρι Πρίμου ἐπισκοπεύοντος ἐν Κορίνθῳ· οἷς συνέμιξα πλέων εἰς Ῥώμην καὶ συνδιέτριψα τοῖς Κορινθίοις ἡμέρας ἱκανάς, ἐν αἷς συνανεπάημεν τῷ ὀρθῷ λόγῳ· γενόμενος δὲ ἐν Ῥώμῃ, διαδοχὴν ἐποιησάμην μέχρις Ἀνικητοῦ· οὗ διάκονος ἦν Ἐλευθέριος, καὶ παρὰ Ἀνικητοῦ διαδέχεται Σωτήρ, μεθ’ ὧν Ἐλευθέριος. ἐν ἐκάστῃ δὲ διαδοχῇ καὶ ἐν ἐκάστῃ πόλει οὕτως ἔχει ὡς ὁ νόμος κηρῦσσει καὶ οἱ προφῆται καὶ ὁ κύριος. (Εκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία, IV.22)

In English this reads:

And the church of Corinth continued in the true faith until Primus was bishop [ἐπισκοπεύοντος] in Corinth. I conversed with them on my way to Rome, and abode with the Corinthians many days, during which we were mutually refreshed in the true doctrine. And when I had come to Rome I pieced together the succession [διαδοχὴν ἐποιησάμην] until Anicetus, whose deacon was Eleutherius. And Anicetus was succeeded [διαδέχεται] by Soter, and he by Eleutherius. In every succession [διαδοχῇ], and in every city that is held which is preached by the law and the prophets and the Lord.

To this Brandon writes:

The import of this writing is that Hegesippus is talking about the “succession,” but the word “ἐπίσκοπος,” or “bishops” is not in the Greek text. Instead, Hegesippus states that he drew up for himself a succession of διαδοχὴν, or teaching.

Here again, Brandon uses an argument from silence, claiming that because St. Hegesippus does not use the word “ἐπίσκοπος,” [i.e., bishop] in the immediate statements about succession, therefore St. Hegesippus is not talking about a succession of bishops, but rather a succession of teaching. However, not only does that conclusion not follow from that premise, and not only is it an argument from silence, but it also presupposes a false dichotomy between continuity of teaching on the one hand, and succession of bishops on the other hand as if concern for one precludes concern for the other. The term “διαδοχὴν” means succession. And when Brandon writes, “a succession of διαδοχὴν” he is literally saying “a succession of succession,” which is already unintelligible. In claiming “he drew up for himself a succession of διαδοχὴν, or teaching,” Brandon is apparently mistaking the word διαδοχὴν [which means ‘succession’] with the word διδασκαλία or διδασκαλία, both of which mean teaching. Brandon’s additional claim that St. Hegesippus is talking about a succession of doctrine would require St. Hegesippus to switch in three sentences from speaking of a succession of doctrine, to a succession of three bishops, back to a succession of doctrine. Nothing justifies forcing that hermeneutic onto the text.

In this passage St. Hegesippus is referring to the succession of bishops, as can be shown by his use of the verbal form of the term to say that Anicetus was succeeded by Soter, and Soter succeeded by Eleutherius. The term ‘διαδοχην’ is the same word used a few sentences earlier when St. Hegesippus says that when he arrived in Rome, he made for himself a succession [list] “down to Anicetus.” He says this right after saying that he had been refreshed with the “true doctrine.” It would make no sense to talk about making a succession if by ‘succession’ he meant ‘teaching’ given that he had just finished saying that he already had the true doctrine. Nor would it make sense to piece together a succession of doctrine from prior times in the Church at Rome, as if there were records of the earlier doctrines, against which he (but, apparently not the Church in Rome) could compare the present teaching of the Church at Rome. St. Hegesippus’s broader project was comparing doctrine across the particular Churches to discover their agreement and thereby confirm their apostolicity, not making lists of *doctrinal* successions. A problem for Brandon’s claim is that we have no existing record of any such doctrinal succession lists, so if silence about prior bishop lists means there were no successions of bishops, then the present non-existence of first century “doctrinal succession” lists means that they didn’t exist either. But Brandon proposes them anyway. This is another example of selective, *ad hoc* use of silence.

It is worth considering what St. Hegesippus is doing in Rome and why. He is searching out the succession of bishops in order to determine to whom he should look to know what is the apostolic teaching. In the last sentence of the quotation St. Hegesippus states that in his travels he has found that ἐν ἐκάστη δὲ διαδοχῇ καὶ ἐν ἐκάστη πόλει [“in every succession and in every city”] the same doctrine is preached. This implies that every city (πόλει) has a succession (διαδοχῇ) of bishops. St. Hegesippus treats the universality of episcopal successions as an uncontroversial given, as he notes that in every succession of bishops, in every city, the same thing is held that is proclaimed by the law and the prophets and the Lord. Thus he is taking the same approach St. Irenaeus takes in response to the Gnostics, in both looking to and pointing to the succession of bishops in the Apostolic Churches as the standard by which the apostolic tradition is to be located, and against which any teaching is to be measured. If one claims that St. Hegesippus is simply making up a line of episcopal succession for the Church in Rome, where previously there had been only groups of presbyters all having equal authority, one has to claim that St. Hegesippus is fabricating such lines for *all* the cities through which he has travelled, not just for Rome.

Then Brandon, following T.C.G. Thornton, proposes that St. Hegesippus’s

proximity to Judaism ... caused him to view succession lists similarly to the Jewish disputes over the proper successor of the high priest.... For Thornton, the argument of Hegesippus is unique, but it is not mechanically tied to the succession of bishops. Hegesippus’s argument is instead wed to the tradition of the Apostolic teaching being passed down publicly in the Church.

The first statement is mere speculation. Nothing about St. Hegesippus’s proximity to Judaism entails that his commitment to truth is lacking, or that he is willing to lie about the succession of bishops of the Church at Rome or anywhere. The word “instead” in Brandon’s statement is a subtle and sophisticated way of attacking St. Hegesippus’s moral character. It asserts without any substantiating evidence that although St. Hegesippus is concerned about the truth of apostolic teaching, he is not only not concerned about the truth regarding the succession of bishops, but is even willing to make up falsehoods regarding the succession of bishops, as if a person can be deeply committed to the “Apostolic teaching” and yet be willing to lie about history. Intentionally misrepresenting history is not compatible with being committed to the “Apostolic teaching,” which includes love for the truth (and Christ who is the Truth), and teaches that liars end up in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). Couching and juxtaposing this personal attack against St. Hegesippus directly beside a positive claim affirming his concern for and commitment to the apostolic tradition, sophistically hides the personal attack the way honey hides the bad taste of medicine. Brandon then uses his unsubstantiated attack on St. Hegesippus’s character to discredit his testimony concerning the succession of bishops,

even though Brandon said above that St. Hegesippus was not talking about a succession of bishops, but only a succession of doctrine.

What justification does Brandon give for this personal attack against St. Hegesippus? In his article he writes:

For Thornton, the argument of Hegesippus is unique, but it is not mechanically tied to the succession of bishops. Hegesippus's argument is instead wed to the tradition of the Apostolic teaching being passed down publicly in the Church. The fact that his list is limited in its scope and in determining the identity of a bishop (let alone that there was a monarchical bishop) are reasons to avoid concluding that Hegesippus is writing about the existence of a monarchical episcopate connected to Peter in Rome.

St. Hegesippus never says that the doctrine of the Apostles is not necessarily joined to the episcopal succession from the Apostles, as though the Apostolic doctrine could be lost from all the successors of the Apostles. Nor does anything he says entail this. So already Thornton's claim that for St. Hegesippus the doctrine of the Apostles is not necessarily joined to the episcopal succession from the Apostles by being preserved within that succession is mere speculation. Moreover, everything in St. Hegesippus's method of inquiry suggests he believed at least in His own time (without making any speculation about whether he believed that necessarily, until Christ returned in glory, the Apostolic doctrine would remain in the succession of bishops from the Apostles), the way to find out what was the doctrine of the Apostles was to consult the successions of bishops from the Apostles.

But from Thornton's speculative assumption that for St. Hegesippus the doctrine of the Apostles is not necessarily preserved within the succession of bishop from the Apostles, Brandon infers that St. Hegesippus is concerned only with the Apostolic doctrine, and is not writing about the existence in Rome of an episcopate connected to St. Peter in Rome. That conclusion, however, does not follow from that premise. Even if it were true that St. Hegesippus either did not have any opinion about whether the succession of bishops would preserve the Apostolic doctrine until Christ returns, or even if he believed they would *not* preserve that doctrine until Christ returns, neither of which is entailed by anything St. Hegesippus actually says, it would not follow that when St. Hegesippus writes down in every city its succession of bishops, and explicitly writes that he does so in Rome as well, that when doing so he is not "writing about the existence of a monarchical episcopate connected to Peter in Rome," or that when doing so he is not concerned about truthfully reporting the succession of bishops, let alone that he is willing to falsify Church records and make up a false list of bishops. So Brandon's conclusion that St. Hegesippus was not "writing about the existence of a monarchical episcopate connected to Peter in Rome" is a *non sequitur* built on an unsupported assumption.

In the comments following his article Brandon says more about how he justified his conclusion concerning St. Hegesippus. He writes:

My argument is that the use of succession lists did not occur from the earliest times but originated in the second century (most likely from Jewish lists) when Hegesippus first used that methodology. His methodology was not confined to Rome because he did the same thing in Corinth. In tracing the Apostolic teaching through the bearers of tradition, Hegesippus utilized a methodology which later Christians would use as well taking their current ecclesiastical context (a monarchical episcopate) and assuming that the church had always had such a figure.⁹⁸ First of all, Hegesippus is writing not about bishops, but about the succession of doctrine. He mentions an individual named Anicetus whose deacon was Eleutherus, but Hegesippus is not concerned with bishop lists back to the Apostles (He only lists contemporary "bishops"), he is concerned with the continued teaching of the Apostolic teaching. This becomes significant because Hegesippus is reported as a former Jew (there is some contention about the specifics of his background, but Eusebius tells us that he was a Jew and knew Hebrew) and the Jewish arguments against Gentiles applied this same type of argument for the antiquity (and superiority) of Jewish beliefs. The Jewish argument was typically tied to a bearer of tradition like a High Priest, but the priority is always given to the passing

down of the true doctrine. Along those same lines Hegesippus is looking for bearers of the apostolic tradition and does not mention a monarchical bishop at all, as Lampe notes. The list itself also does not stretch back to the Apostles and only speaks to the contemporary time of Hegesippus (The alleged textual problems here could also greatly impact the meaning. It would be either “I took up residence in Rome until Anicetus” or “I made up a ‘succession’ until Anicetus”.) In addition, while I didn’t mention it in my article it is interesting (though not determinative) that Hegesippus writes in the middle/passive that he “made for himself” a succession. This would match with other considerations that Hegesippus does not have access to a pre-existent list. He creates the list himself.⁹⁹

Here he gives four fundamental reasons. First he claims that St. Hegesippus was the first Christian to make use of succession lists, particularly in an apologetic context. This seems to contradict Brandon’s other claim that St. Hegesippus is not writing about successions of bishops, but only about successions of doctrine. Surely Brandon is not claiming that St. Hegesippus was the first Christian apologist to claim that the doctrine taught in and by the Church is the doctrine received by the Apostles! But that self-contradiction problem aside, do we know that St. Hegesippus was the first to use episcopal succession lists in apologetics? No we do not. Given the historical evidence that has survived from the first and second centuries, his use of them is the first such instance preserved in that historical data. But that does not entail that he was the first to do so.¹⁰⁰

Let’s grant, for the sake of argument, that St. Hegesippus was the first Christian to use episcopal succession lists in apologetical arguments. From that premise, Brandon arrives at the conclusion that St. Hegesippus made up a false succession list. But again, that conclusion does not follow from that premise, and is thus a *non sequitur*. From St. Hegesippus being the first to use episcopal succession lists in apologetics, it does not follow either that these lists are false or that St. Hegesippus made false lists. Otherwise, no one could be the first to make a true historical list.

Moreover, even if St. Hegesippus were the first to use such lists apologetically, it would not follow that each particular Church did not keep a record of its bishops, or that there were no monarchical bishops in Rome or in the other particular Churches. The apologetic use of such lists would entirely backfire if the lists were false, because those persons to whom in response St. Hegesippus made apologetic use of these lists could have undercut that apologetic simply by pointing out that the lists were “fictive constructions.” So the very making of such lists for apologetic purposes methodologically presupposes that the one making and using them not only believes them to be true, but believes that his interlocutors either also believe them to be true, or can find out that they are true, and cannot show them to be false.

Moreover, there is a natural reason why this issue began to arise in the middle of the second century, and it has nothing to do with making up fictive lists of episcopal successions. This was the time period during which the last of the auditors of the apostles were dying. St. Polycarp was one of the last persons who had talked with an apostle, and when he visited Rome (c. AD 155), he was for this very reason able to win back many who had been led astray by the gnostics, as we discussed above in our section on St. Polycarp. Persons like St. Polycarp had an authoritative trump card: “I talked with apostles.”¹⁰¹ Naturally, when the last of these persons had died, the question regarding the authoritative locus of the Apostolic doctrine would arise. And right around this time we find St. Hegesippus traveling from city to city, writing down in each city the list of its succession of bishops. So the time between the death of the last apostle (c. AD 100), and the first surviving historical evidence of the apologetic use of episcopal succession lists (AD 155-166) does not imply either that there were no such successions of bishops during that 50-65 year time period. Even if we were to grant the positivist notion that the absence of surviving historical evidence of the apologetic use of succession lists during that period shows that there was no apologetic use of succession lists during that period, there are other possible factors, all fully compatible with there being actual episcopal successions during this time period, that can explain why there was no need to use such lists apologetically during this time period. And hence, not only

does this data not show that St. Hegesippus's lists are false, but by the ILD principle this data is not evidence for the claim that St. Hegesippus's lists are in some way false.

The second reason Brandon gives for justifying his conclusion concerning St. Hegesippus is that St. Hegesippus "is writing not about bishops, but about the succession of doctrine." We have already shown above that this claim is false. St. Hegesippus is indeed writing about a succession of bishops, while at the same time writing about the "true doctrine."

The third reason Brandon gives for justifying his conclusion concerning St. Hegesippus is that St. Hegesippus was Jewish, and Jewish apologetic arguments against the Gentiles used this same appeal to successions of high priests.¹⁰² Here again, even if this premise is true, Brandon's conclusion does not follow from his premise. That is, even if as a Christian St. Hegesippus was using the same appeal to successions that Jewish apologetic arguments used, it would not follow that St. Hegesippus's lists are false, or that St. Hegesippus made up "fictive constructions." St. Hegesippus's being Jewish and using a type of apologetic argument used also by Jewish apologists is fully compatible with everything St. Hegesippus says being true, and according to the ILD principle is not evidence for anything St. Hegesippus says being false.

In order to infer justifiably from St. Hegesippus using this same type of apologetic argument used also by Jews to the conclusion that St. Hegesippus constructed and made apologetic use of *false* succession lists, one would have to know both that the Jews who composed such lists typically and knowingly made false lists, and that St. Hegesippus knew and endorsed the making of false succession lists for apologetic purposes. But we have no evidence that the Jews made false lists, knowingly made false lists, or that St. Hegesippus knew and endorsed the making of false succession lists. On the contrary, everything we know about St. Hegesippus's character indicates that he was a person who feared God, and loved the truth.

The very line of reasoning that goes from St. Hegesippus being a former Jew, to the conclusion that St. Hegesippus's list is false, is troubling because of its implicit anti-Semitic presupposition. That's because the only way *justifiably* to reach the conclusion that St. Hegesippus's list is false from the given premises is for the argument to be an enthymeme in which the hidden premise is some sort of claim that Jews are not truthful, not trustworthy, or are willing to falsify history in order to defend their beliefs. Otherwise, if the Jewish succession lists were truthful, then nothing about St. Hegesippus's being formerly Jewish, and doing something similar to what Jews did when making succession lists, would be evidence that St. Hegesippus too is anything less than perfectly truthful and reliable regarding what he says concerning episcopal successions in the Catholic Church. Even if it were true that some Jews created false histories, we would still not be justified in inferring from the conjunction of St. Hegesippus being a former Jew and using the same type of appeal to successions also used by Jewish apologists to the conclusion that St. Hegesippus's lists were false and contrived. That would be a *non sequitur*.¹⁰³

As is, Brandon's conclusion does not follow from his premises. Just because St. Hegesippus was a "former Jew," and just because Jews kept track of succession lists, it does not follow that St. Hegesippus simply made up the successions of bishops of the cities he visited, or distorted the truth in any way concerning those lists. What if, because Jesus and the early Church were entirely Jewish, the whole notion of episcopal successions came from the Jewish Messiah and His Jewish Apostles, and each city therefore kept track of its succession of bishops?¹⁰⁴ Brandon presumes that that could not have been the case, and that therefore St. Hegesippus must have made up the succession lists. But that assumption is not only not substantiated, it is not justified. Nor, according to the ILD principle, is it evidence that St. Hegesippus's list is not true.

Brandon's fourth reason for justifying his conclusion concerning St. Hegesippus is that:

Hegesippus writes in the middle/passive that he “made for himself” a succession. This would match with other considerations that Hegesippus does not have access to a pre-existent list. He creates the list himself.¹⁰⁵

I addressed this previously when I wrote:

This term [ἐποίησάμην] is a first person, aorist middle, and means that he made for himself something, in this case a succession (διαδοχὴν) [list]. The verb does not in itself mean “creating where nothing existed before.” A person who makes something for himself may be doing so where nothing of that sort existed before. But the verb form itself does not demand that. It surely suggests that he himself did not already have a list of the succession of bishops at Rome. But what he says here is fully compatible with his wanting such a list for himself, and so making one for himself upon arriving at Rome, even possibly by using existing lists already present in Rome at the time.¹⁰⁶

Nothing at all about the middle/passive implies that St. Hegesippus did not have access to a pre-existing list in Rome. The data is fully compatible with, and its likelihood differential inscrutable under either thesis, i.e. that he *did not* have access in Rome to a pre-existing list, or that he *did* have access in Rome to a pre-existing list. For this reason, according to the ILD principle, St. Hegesippus’s use of the middle/passive is not evidence either that St. Hegesippus had no access in Rome to a pre-existing list, or that no such list already existed, or that St. Hegesippus made a false list.

From these four reasons, Brandon then concludes that St. Hegesippus was the first Christian to use succession lists in apologetics. Setting aside once more Brandon’s self-contradiction problem of St. Hegesippus being the first to use something St. Hegesippus is not writing about, even if it is true that St. Hegesippus was the first Christian to use episcopal succession lists in apologetics, this would not entail or imply that there had been no such successions, or that St. Hegesippus in any way falsified history. Again, that inference would be a *non sequitur*. So, in light of the ILD principle, not a single piece of data cites in relation to St. Hegesippus is evidence that St. Hegesippus’s list is false or contrived.

But undermining St. Hegesippus’s credibility is crucial to Brandon’s argument, because Brandon builds his case against St. Irenaeus’s list on the claim that St. Irenaeus wrongly trusted the list of St. Hegesippus. Brandon writes:

Irenaeus actually believes that the information as passed along via episcopal succession (from Peter and Paul). He uses a list composed c. 180 AD to trace the passing of the apostolic doctrine in the apostolically established episcopate.¹⁰⁷

Irenaeus’s list is composed c. 180 AD and is based off of the list of Hegesippus who is writing about the succession of doctrine and does not provide an exhaustive list of “bishops.”¹⁰⁸

With Hegesippus being the “innovator” we see Irenaeus as the “developer.”¹⁰⁹

But as we have just shown, no data or conjunction of data Brandon cites regarding St. Hegesippus is evidence that what he said concerning the succession of bishops is untruthful or untrustworthy. And Brandon’s repeated claim that St. Hegesippus is concerned with doctrine and not with the succession is, as we have shown, an entirely unjustified personal attack against St. Hegesippus.

Brandon’s reply to this is that St. Hegesippus presumably did not intentionally deceive anyone. St. Hegesippus made up a list of prominent presbyters in the history of the Church at Rome by talking to Christians in the Church at Rome and simply read back into that list the monepiscopal polity he saw around him both in the Church at Rome in the time

of St. Anicetus and in the other particular Churches he had visited in his journeys. But this is still a just-so story, with no evidence to support it.¹¹⁰ It presupposes either:

(n) that all the Christians in Rome with whom St. Hegesippus consulted concerning the succession were ignorant of and could not remember the transition from a plurality of presbyters each sharing equally in jurisdictional authority and none having any more authority than the others, to the monarchical episcopacy St. Hegesippus could see in bishop St. Anicetus, and still all these Christians in Rome gave to St. Hegesippus the same succession list or
(o) the Christians in Rome with whom St. Hegesippus consulted concerning the succession knew about this transition but all lied to hide the fact that it had happened, and conspired together among themselves to come up with the list they gave to St. Hegesippus, so that they would not give him many different incompatible lists, or
(p) the Christians in Rome with whom St. Hegesippus consulted concerning the succession told the truth to St. Hegesippus, and then St. Hegesippus lied.

The only reason to believe (p) would be the anti-Semitism we discussed above; St. Hegesippus was Jewish, therefore we may justifiably suppose that he lied. So (p) is not justified. Nor do we have any justifying reason to believe that the Christians in Rome conspired together to lie about their own history, so (o) is not justified. That leaves (n). But if there were any Christians in Rome who had been Christians all their lives, had lived their whole lives in Rome, and were over sixty years old, then this Presbyterian-to-episcopal transition would have had to occur prior to AD 115; otherwise they would have remembered it. If there were any such Christians over eighty years old, this tradition would have had to occur prior to AD 95. And here we are required to presuppose that their parents all failed to tell them about this transition, and instead all told them this same succession list. And that simply pushes the problem back a generation, i.e., either these parents lied, or they too were ignorant of the transition, and that again pushes the problem back to the AD 70s. But recall Brandon's claim that "[T]he point of this article is to prove that the Church of Rome was ruled by presbyters (and not by a monarchical bishop) until c. 150 AD." So how can it be that even if St. Hegesippus were making his inquiry in AD 166, i.e., the very last year of the episcopate of St. Anicetus and thus the latest year possible for St. Hegesippus to arrive in Rome, that none of the Christians of Rome whom St. Hegesippus consulted could even remember the transition just sixteen years earlier? So (n) is also not justified. But (n), (o), and (p) are the only available ways to discredit St. Hegesippus's testimony. Therefore, there is no good reason available to justify claiming that St. Hegesippus made up a list of prominent presbyters in the history of the Church at Rome by talking to Christians in the Church at Rome, and simply read back into that list the monarchical polity he saw around him both in the Church at Rome in the time of St. Anicetus and in the other particular Churches he had visited.

Brandon then writes:

The fact that his list is limited in its scope and in determining the identity of a bishop (let alone that there was a monarchical bishop) are reasons to avoid concluding that Hegesippus is writing about the existence of a monarchical episcopate connected to Peter in Rome.

Brandon is here claiming that there are two reasons not to conclude that St. Hegesippus is writing about the existence of a monarchical episcopate connected to St. Peter in Rome. The first reason is that St. Hegesippus's list is limited in scope; it does not list the succession of bishops all the way back to St. Peter. That's not a good reason not to conclude that this list is about the existence of a monarchical episcopate connected to St. Peter in Rome, because that conclusion does not follow from that premise. In the section of St. Hegesippus's writing Eusebius is quoting here, St. Hegesippus is not attempting to present the entirety of the list to his readers. He is telling a story. On his way to Rome he stayed in Corinth and was mutually refreshed in the true doctrine. Then when he arrived in Rome he pieced together a succession list up until St. Anicetus, who was the present bishop of Rome. Subsequent to his arrival in Rome, St. Anicetus was succeeded by St. Soter, and St. Soter by St. Eleutherius, who had been the deacon of St.

Anicetus. That's the narrative. The point of the narrative excerpt is not to lay out for the reader the historical succession of bishops prior to St. Anicetus. But that does not entail that the succession list St. Hegesippus drew up when he arrived in Rome was not about the existence of a monarchical episcopate connected to St. Peter in Rome. If I tell you the names in order of the Presidents of the United States that have been in office since I was born, that does not give you a reason *not* to conclude that the list I've just provided is about the existence of a presidential office connected to George Washington. When someone gives part of a list, and states that it is part of a larger list (as St. Hegesippus does in stating that he drew up a succession up to Anicetus, but then only gives the names of those bishops from Anicetus onward), that is no reason at all to think either that the part is not a part of a greater whole, or that the greater whole is incomplete.

The second reason Brandon gives as a reason to avoid concluding that St. Hegesippus is writing about the existence of a monarchical episcopate connected to St. Peter in Rome is that St. Hegesippus's list is limited "in determining the identity of a bishop (let alone that there was a monarchical bishop)." Again, however, just because the list I give you of U. S. Presidents who served during my lifetime is limited in its capacity to help you determine the identity of any president who served *prior* to my birth, that does not give you a reason *to avoid* concluding that there were U. S. Presidents prior to my birth, or to *avoid* concluding that the line of U. S. Presidents began with George Washington. Here again, Brandon is attempting to use an argument from silence to do positive evidential work, i.e., St. Hegesippus does not give a complete list in the excerpt quoted by Eusebius, therefore we have a reason to "avoid concluding that Hegesippus is writing about the existence of a monarchical episcopate connected to Peter in Rome." But the data does not support avoiding or denying that conclusion, just as my listing only the U. S. Presidents who served since I was born does not support avoiding or denying the conclusion that the line of U. S. Presidents extends back to George Washington. In short, nothing here in any way discredits the veracity of St. Hegesippus's list.

What is notable in St. Hegesippus's testimony is first that he arrives in Rome and immediately puts together the succession of bishops of the Church at Rome, leading up to St. Anicetus. St. Hegesippus does this, apparently, because he knows from his travel experience that every Church keeps a succession list. The matter-of-fact ordinariness of his putting together the list at Rome, of not noticing any evidence of some turbulent ecclesiastical revolution all around the world as individual bishops in each particular Church took power to themselves, and subordinated all other presbyter-bishops who originally equally shared supreme jurisdictional authority, suggests that the episcopal situation in Rome during the time of Anicetus (AD 155 – 166) was not only very much like it was throughout the rest of the world, but was also as it had been since St. Hegesippus had been investigating the question, and since anyone with whom St. Hegesippus talked could remember. How else could St. Hegesippus say, "In every succession, and in every city, that is held which is preached by the law and the prophets and the Lord," if there were or in living memory had been some kind of universal turmoil in the Church concerning whether the Apostles had taught presbyterial or episcopal polity? St. Hegesippus is saying that the Churches were in agreement regarding the "true faith," thus implying that there was no such turmoil concerning presbyterial or episcopal polity.

That is supported by something Eusebius says about what St. Hegesippus records in his five books. Eusebius writes:

In them he states that on a journey to Rome he met a great many bishops [πλειστοις επισκοποις], and that he received the same doctrine from all.¹¹¹

The Greek term πλειστοις is a superlative and is rightly translated as "great many." Hence St. Hegesippus claimed that on his way to Rome, during which journey he stayed for some time in the Church at Corinth, not only did he meet a great many bishops, he received the same doctrine from them all. Had there been some disagreement regarding polity, such as that between contemporary Presbyterians and Catholics, St. Hegesippus would not have observed what he claims to have observed.

A second point of observation is that according to J. B. Lightfoot, we *do* have the entirety of St. Hegesippus's list of bishops of Rome, preserved in the works of St. Epiphanius of Salamis (AD 310 – 403), who utilized St. Hegesippus's list.¹¹² St. Epiphanius writes:

In any case, the succession of the bishops at Rome runs in this order: Peter and Paul, Linus and Cletus, Clement, Evaristus, Alexander, Xystus, Telesphorus, Hyginus, Pius, and Anicetus, whom I mentioned above, on the list.¹¹³

If that is in fact the preserved list from St. Hegesippus, then his list is not, as Brandon claims, “limited in its scope and in determining the identity of a bishop,” and thus these are not “reasons to avoid concluding that Hegesippus is writing about the existence of a monarchical episcopate connected to Peter in Rome.” In sum, none of the data Brandon points to here is in any way evidence that St. Hegesippus's list is anything less than entirely truthful.

b. St. Irenaeus

(1.) Brandon's two mistakes

Brandon's treatment of St. Irenaeus's list of bishops of the Church in Rome is informed primarily by the Lutheran minister and theologian Peter Lampe. Brandon writes:

First, Lampe mentions the section from Irenaeus where he states, “Eleutherus does now, in the twelfth place from the apostles” as evidence that the number twelve—the Apostolic number—is an essential element of the list. The twelve apostles are followed by the twelve bearers of tradition. Lampe notes that the list could have as easily started with Peter (or Paul, which we will address momentarily), but that would interrupt the symmetry of the list and so it begins with Linus. Second, Lampe points out that the sixth member on the list happens to be named “Sixtus.” What is even more interesting about this is that the note concerning Sixtus, that he was the “sixth appointed” is in the present tense and is a constituent part of the list prior to Irenaeus. What does this mean? Because the number twelve is an essential feature to the list and because the mention of “Sixtus” as the halfway marker is also a constituent component of the list Irenaeus is using, that means that list could not have been composed prior to the bishopric of Eleutherus.

Brandon's argument here goes like this:

- (1) St. Irenaeus says that Eleutherius (the bishop of Rome at the time St. Irenaeus was writing) is “in the twelfth place from the apostles.”
- (2) The number twelve is an essential element in St. Irenaeus's list.
- (3) The list could have begun with Peter, but that would interrupt the symmetry of the list, so the author had it begin with Linus.
- (4) The sixth member of the list is named “Sixtus,” and the verb used here specifying that he was the “sixth appointed” is in the present tense.
- (5) Sixtus's being the sixth is a “constituent part” of the list.

Therefore,

- (6) The list “could not have been composed prior to the bishopric of Eleutherus.”

Then Brandon assures his readers that this does not mean that St. Irenaeus was “intentionally lying.” Hidden between the conclusion of the argument and the subsequent reassurance that this does not mean that St. Irenaeus was “intentionally lying” is the very clear implication that the list is false, but not *intentionally* false; it is merely a “fictive construction.”¹¹⁴

But that conclusion (i.e., that the list is false) does not follow from the conclusion of the argument, i.e., from line (6). Here is the way to see that.¹¹⁵ Imagine for the sake of argument that the list is entirely and completely accurate. Now, why could the list not have existed before St. Eleutherius became bishop of Rome? The answer is this: only because the list includes the name Eleutherius. There is no *a priori* reason why the sixth bishop in Rome after St. Peter could not have been called Sixtus, or why the list could not use the present tense in saying that Sixtus was the sixth bishop established. Eusebius, for example, says of the succession in Antioch, “Theophilus was well known as the sixth from the apostles.”¹¹⁶ If St. Irenaeus possessed an already existing list of bishops in the Church at Rome, and just before the name Sixtus he added the words ἔκτος ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων καθίσταται [is established sixth from the Apostles], this would in no way imply that the list itself was contrived. In other words, even if St. Irenaeus added the words highlighting Sixtus being the sixth from the Apostles, nevertheless, because of the ILD principle this would not be evidence that St. Irenaeus made up the list, or that the list is false.

Nor is there any *a priori* reason why if the sixth bishop has the name Sixtus, there cannot subsequently be a twelfth bishop, for the same reason that John Quincy Adams being the sixth U. S. President did not prevent Zachary Taylor from being the twelfth U. S. President. Nor is there any reason why a truthful list of successive bishops cannot be made while the twelfth bishop is in office, just as nothing prevented people from making a complete and truthful list of U. S. Presidents while Zachary Taylor was in office. Therefore the only reason the list could not have existed before St. Eleutherius became bishop of Rome is that the list includes the name Eleutherius.

Brandon makes two mistakes here. **First**, he treats the sixth person’s name being ‘Sixtus’ as evidence that the list is false. This is a mistake for two reasons: first, Lampe does not place any significance on the sixth bishop being named “Sixtus;” second, “Sixtus” does not mean “sixth” in Latin, but is the Latin transliteration of a Greek name, *Xystos* (Ξυστος). (See also St. Hegesippus’s list above, where the spelling is *Xystus*.) So *first*, Lampe does not place any significance on the name Sixtus, because his purpose is simply to note that St. Irenaeus mentions any name at the “half-way mark” of sixth. Here is all that Lampe says on that point: “Also, that with S[ixtus] the ‘half-way mark’ is noted (“as sixth, S[ixtus] is appointed”) shows the framework of twelve members to be intentional, already in the composition of the list before Irenaeus.”¹¹⁷ Lampe does not say that Sixtus’s own name is significant, but rather that he is one of two bishops explicitly identified by number in the list, and that Sixtus’s number is half the number of Eleutherius (“als sechster wird Sixtus eingesetzt”).¹¹⁸ When Lampe summarizes his argument against the authenticity of Irenaeus’s list on the following page of his book, he does not mention Sixtus’s name at all, but only the significance of the list containing twelve names and ending with Eleutherius.¹¹⁹ We respond to this argument below.



The Crypt under Église St-Irénée, Lyon

The *second* reason why Brandon’s emphasis on the name of “Sixtus” is mistaken is that the name does not even mean “sixth.” The Latin word for sixth is of course *sextus*. In contrast, “Sixtus” is simply one way to transliterate the Greek name *Xystos* (Ξυστος) into Latin. In fact the majority of manuscripts of Irenaeus’s *Adversus Haereses* testify to a reading other than Sixtus: “xustus” (*Claromontanus* [C]), “xystus” (*Claromontanus*, later correction), and “syxtus” (*Arundelianus* [A], *Salamanticensis* [S]). Only the youngest manuscript has “sixtus” (*Vossianus* [V]). Strangely, the manuscript *Vaticanus* (Q) has “sextus,” perhaps a copying mistaken attributable to the scribe seeing the ordinal in the same sentence.¹²⁰ “Sextus” was in fact an ancient Roman name. There was, for example, a Sextus Pompeianus (Cic. *Att.* 12.37.4) and a Sextus Amerinus (Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 6.15).¹²¹ The variant form was “Sestus.” But when “Sestus/Sextus” was transliterated into Greek, it was spelled *Sestos* or *Sextos* (Σεστος, Σεξτος).¹²² In contrast, the actual Greek spelling of Sixtus’s name is preserved in the Greek fragment of St. Irenaeus’s *Adversus Haereses* 3.3.3 from Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.6. Eusebius also witnesses to the Greek name of the sixth bishop of Rome at *HE* 4.4 and 5, and 5.25. In each case, the sixth bishop of Rome is *Xystos* (Ξυστος).¹²³ The name in Greek can perhaps mean “polished” or “shaved,” but not “sixth,” which in Greek is simply *hectos* (εκτος).

The Greek provenance of the name of the sixth bishop of Rome helps us make sense of two facts. The first fact is that subsequent popes continued to take the name Sixtus, for how much sense does it make to be named “Sixth the Second,” “Sixth the Third,” and “Sixth the Fourth?” Instead, Sixtus II, III, and IV were taking the Greek name of the sixth bishop of Rome after St. Peter. The second fact is that the Greek initial “x” in *Xystus*’ name was preserved in the memory of the Latin-speaking part of the Church. Two ancient lists of martyrs are included in the Roman Canon of the Latin Rite. One of these lists includes Sixtus, which is actually a reference to Pope St. Sixtus II, who died a martyr in AD 258.¹²⁴ Obviously, Sixtus II took the same name as Sixtus I. Though the modern English translation of the Roman Canon spells the name as “Sixtus,” the Latin of both the 1962 (Tridentine) and 1970 (Novus Ordo) Roman Missals is *Xystus*. Going even further back, the 1570 Roman Missal spells it *Xistus*.¹²⁵ The *Martyrologium Romanum*, the Church’s official list of feast days for the saints, spells the name of the first three popes with the name “Sixtus” — all of them saints — as *Xystus*.¹²⁶ Other evidence points to an awareness in the Catholic tradition of the Greek origin of the name. At least seven inscriptions originating during the pontificate of Sixtus IV (d. 1484) spell his name as *Xystus* or *Xistus*.¹²⁷ In sum, the name is originally Greek and does not mean “sixth.”¹²⁸

The **second** mistake Brandon makes here is confusing intentional accidents of the list with essential elements of the list, and thus treating these intentional accidents as essential to the order between all the members of the list. The emphasis on the sixth and twelfth members of the list by someone contemporary with St. Eleutherius does not make the numbers six and twelve essential to the order existing between all the members of the list, such that the list could not have been made from a list of the eleven bishops preceding St. Eleutherius, or could not subsequently be added to later when in AD 189 St. Victor became the next bishop of Rome. In other words, the relation between six and twelve may have been essential to the emphasis intended by the person compiling the list in the time of St. Eleutherius, but it was not essential to the order between all the members of the list. And this is why St. Irenaeus’s list could have been compiled from a previously existing list of the eleven bishops from St. Linus to St. Soter, and the emphasis on the sixth and twelfth bishops is not evidence that the list is false or a “fictive construction.”

So the false inference in Brandon’s argument regarding St. Irenaeus’s list of bishops of Rome is from the fact that a list that includes St. Eleutherius as bishop of Rome could not have existed before St. Eleutherius became bishop of Rome, to the conclusion that the rest of the list could not have existed as a list before St. Eleutherius became bishop of Rome, and therefore must have been made up by St. Irenaeus or a contemporary of St. Irenaeus. That’s the inferential mistake. Otherwise, since the list of U. S. Presidents including President Obama could not have existed before President Obama became President, it would follow that the earlier part of the list of presidents would be false, but not intentionally false. That, however, is clearly not a truth-preserving inference, and neither is Brandon’s inference from (6) to the implied conclusion that St. Irenaeus was lying (just not “intentionally lying”) or speaking falsehood. The premises of the argument do not entail that conclusion. Nor are they evidence for the truth of the conclusion,

because they are fully compatible with the falsity of the conclusion, and no less likely given the falsehood of the conclusion and thus because of the ILD principle explained above.

(2.) Selective arguments from silence

Next Brandon writes:

One may conceivably respond by claiming that the list Irenaeus used c. AD 180 could have used other ancient sources which originated from apostolic times, making the list a construction from 180 while maintaining its first century sources. Such a response, however, is unlikely and is an invalid argument from silence.

After having repeatedly made use of arguments from silence earlier in his essay, here Brandon disallows an objection on the basis that it is an argument from silence, and is thus “invalid.” But proposing some explanation or event behind what is stated is not an argument from silence. An argument from silence uses silence to argue for the non-existence or non-occurrence of something. Of course a proposed explanation or event behind what is stated can be false or unjustified, but it is not an argument from silence. Proposing what lies behind an historical silence is not the same as arguing to the non-existence of *x* on the basis of silence. For this reason, because speculating about what St. Irenaeus may have depended on is not using silence to argue for the non-existence or non-occurrence of anything, it is not an argument from silence.

Why is it “unlikely,” according to Brandon, that St. Irenaeus was relying on older lists or records? Because, he writes, “we do not possess any succession lists with this specificity [from] the first or early second century.” In other words, if we presently do not have any succession lists preserved from the first or early second centuries, then, reasons Brandon, neither could St. Irenaeus. The problem with that line of reasoning is that the conclusion does not follow from the premise. There are many ancient works that no longer exist, simply because they were not preserved. But their not being preserved does not entail that they never existed, or that subsequent generations did not have have copies of these ancient works. Again, that would be a kind of argument from silence.¹²⁹ When one of us pointed out in [Comment #30](#) under Brandon’s post that Brandon’s thesis proposes that St. Irenaeus commits a “grand mistake” embraced by the whole Christian world with nary a protest, Brandon replied:

First of all, we don’t know what level of protest Irenaeus’s list was meet with.¹³⁰

So when silence serves Brandon’s purpose, he treats it as counting as evidence, but when silence does not serve Brandon’s purpose, he dismisses it as not showing the non-existence of the thing in question, in this case a worldwide protest over the novelty introduced by St. Irenaeus and imposed on the whole world. That’s an example of *ad hoc* special pleading.

Regarding Brandon’s claim that we do not possess any [previous] “succession lists” with that specificity, we actually do. We have part of St. Hegesippus’s list in Eusebius, and, if Lightfoot is correct, the whole list preserved in Epiphanius. Brandon discounts that list as “concerned [only] with the succession of doctrine.” But as we have explained above, Brandon’s claim that St. Hegesippus’s bishop list is untrustworthy is unjustified. So we have one example prior to St. Irenaeus of a person around AD 165 making a list of the succession of bishops in Rome up to Pope Anicetus.

So do we have any reason to believe that either St. Hegesippus’s or St. Irenaeus’s account of the list of bishops in Rome is untrustworthy? No, as we have shown by going through each piece of data to which Brandon has pointed, we do not. Brandon is treating these lists as untrustworthy, while at the same time treating other Church Fathers and

sources as reliable (e.g. St. Clement, Hermas, St. Justin, *Didache*). As shown above, for example, Brandon relies on the Muratorian Fragment which he claims is “c. AD 170-400 though it certainly appears to be closer to 170 than 400,” to show that the *Shepherd* was written around AD 140, while at the same time rejecting the lists of Sts. Hegesippus and Irenaeus. He presumes the historical reliability of St. Clement and Hermas while discrediting St. Ignatius as “fixated on the importance of the bishop.” In essence, what Brandon is doing here is simply stipulating that St. Irenaeus and St. Hegesippus are untrustworthy sources regarding the succession of bishops in Rome, because what they say does not fit Brandon’s theology. And that is both *ad hoc* special pleading, and unjustified.

(3.) *St. Irenaeus’s two ‘mistakes’*

Brandon attempts to justify disbelieving St. Irenaeus’s list by pointing to two alleged mistakes St. Irenaeus made: first, according to Brandon, St. Irenaeus mistakenly believed that Christ “lived to be past his fifties while the Gospels tell us that Jesus was in his thirties,” and second, St. Irenaeus mistakenly believed that Sts. Peter and Paul founded the Church in Rome. Regarding the first claim, as I (Bryan) have pointed out elsewhere:

A person’s credibility regarding the Apostolic Tradition does not depend on being infallible about all the details of Christ’s life, including His age at death. ... [St. Irenaeus] never says that Jesus was fifty [or older] when He died. If you look at what he actually says, you won’t find a statement that is false, unless you read into it what he does not say. He is making a theological argument, based on the fact that Jesus exceeded the age of thirty, against those who were claiming that Jesus was crucified at the age of thirty. But this does not entail that St. Irenaeus believed Jesus was not thirty-three when He died. Even if it is true that such language (i.e., “Thou art not yet fifty years old”) is fittingly applied to one who is already past the age of forty, it does not entail that St. Irenaeus believed that Jesus was actually older than forty if St. Irenaeus believed that (a) the Jews were not attempting to claim that Jesus was already in His forties, but were attempting to claim by way of an *a fortiori* argument that He was not even yet to *that* period, and (b) that the one who has exceeded the age of thirty already begins thereby to taste of older age, which is only manifested more fully as one advances from forty to fifty. So given that this more charitable reading is available, it would be uncharitable to presume unnecessarily that he was ignorant on this point. But again, even if he did believe that Jesus was older than forty, this does not discredit him as a patristic witness.¹³¹

Regarding the second claim, I (Bryan) have discussed this already in two places. In 2010 I wrote:

[B]y “founding the Church” at Rome, St. Irenaeus does not mean that St. Paul was the first Christian in Rome, or that believers were not already assembling together in Rome until St. Paul arrived in Rome. When speaking of founding the Church at Rome, St. Papias and St. Irenaeus are referring to establishing its apostolic foundation as an apostolic [particular] Church. The ‘founding’ is not temporal *per se*, but missional.¹³²

And in 2011, I (Bryan) wrote:

When St. Irenaeus says that St. Peter and St. Paul laid the foundation for the particular Church at Rome, he doesn’t mean that they were the first Christians there, or that only when Sts. Peter and Paul arrived did the Christians meet together. Only persons who didn’t believe in (or know about) apostolic succession would think that’s what St. Irenaeus meant. He means, of course, establishing the Church at Rome as an apostolic Church, and thus having bishops ordained by an Apostle. It could not be a Church until either an Apostle was present, or a bishop was established there by an Apostle, or by bishops having succession from the Apostles.¹³³

Brandon later qualifies his claim regarding St. Irenaeus saying that Sts. Peter and Paul founded the Church at Rome, writing:

I've not argued that Irenaeus statement is necessarily false. The only thing I've said is that we need to be careful how we understand this statement because if we force it to be read in an overly literal fashion it creates problems.¹³⁴

We completely concur. Brandon has interpreted 'founded' in a Protestant sense, and thus misread St. Irenaeus. This is why Brandon thinks that St. Paul's reference to the church that meets in the house of Prisca and Aquila disproves St. Irenaeus's claim (Rom 16:5). But this overlooks the distinction between a particular Church, which is also called a diocese today, and a house-church, and thus Brandon's criticism begs the question. Simply noting that the word "church" occurs in Romans 16 does not settle the issue, nor does pointing out what was as obvious to St. Irenaeus as it is to us, namely, that there were Christians in Rome before St. Paul or St. Peter ever arrived there. Regarding Brandon's claim that the fact that Christians in Rome met in synagogues until the Edict of Claudius disproves St. Irenaeus, he misunderstands St. Irenaeus's point, namely, that the Roman Christians acquired apostolic succession from Sts. Peter and Paul.

In the section of *Against Heresies* in which the list of Roman monarchical bishops is located St. Irenaeus is discussing the succession of bishops from the Apostles. He is seeking to show that the Apostles did not pass along secret doctrines, for if they did, the men succeeding the Apostles would have received it. Hence in 3.3.1, he says: "We can enumerate those who were appointed by the Apostles as bishops in the churches as their successors even to our time, men who taught or knew nothing of the sort that they madly imagine." St. Irenaeus claims that these successions could be listed for every Church, but uses the succession from "only one of them, the church that is greatest, most ancient, and known to all, founded and set up by the two most glorious apostles Peter and Paul at Rome..." (3.3.2) What St. Irenaeus says in 3.3.1 about the bishops being the successors of the Apostles informs the proper interpretation of what he means in 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 when he speaks of two particular Apostles founding a Church. To found a Church means for an apostle to leave at least one bishop in oversight of that city: "After founding and building up the church, the blessed apostles delivered the ministry of the episcopate to Linus..." (3.3.3) Such a Church would thereby have an apostolic foundation insofar as the episcopal line had direct contact with an apostle at some point, insuring that the doctrine Christ imparted to the Apostles would also have been handed on in that city. St. Irenaeus's point in this section of *AH* is to prove that there is not a body of secret doctrines from the Apostles that is unknown to the successors of the Apostles. Hence after giving the succession of the bishops of Rome he adds, "This is a complete proof that the life-giving faith is one and the same, preserved and transmitted in the church from the apostles up till now." When we understand 'founded' as St. Irenaeus understood 'founded,' it becomes clear that the Roman Church having been founded by Sts. Peter and Paul does not entail either that there were no Christians or presbyters in that city prior to the founding of that Church, or that that St. Irenaeus thought there were no Christians or presbyters in Rome prior to the founding of the Church there.

(4.) Differences in the successions lists of the bishops in Rome

Then Brandon claims that the differences between the various accounts of the succession in Rome are a reason to doubt the truth of St. Irenaeus's list. Brandon notes that Tertullian tells us that St. Peter ordained St. Clement. Then Brandon writes:

The only problem with this is that when we compare it to the list from Irenaeus we notice that Irenaeus lists Linus, Anacletus, then Clement. ...

... Tertullian proposes a different belief about who Peter ordained to his episcopal role.

This “problem” is easily solved in much the way that Brandon is used to solving apparent discrepancies between the Gospel accounts of the life of Christ. Nothing prevented St. Peter from ordaining multiple men at the same time with the third grade of Holy Orders. But as already explained, having the third grade of Holy Orders within a particular Church does not entail having supreme jurisdictional authority over that particular Church. Hence Sts. Cletus and Clement could have been auxiliary bishops during St. Linus’s episcopate. What lies behind Brandon’s mistake here is his conflation of jurisdictional authority and the third grade of Holy Orders. Because he does not distinguish them, he mistakenly assumes that if St. Peter ordained St. Clement, then that conflicts with St. Irenaeus’s claim that St. Linus was the first bishop of Rome after St. Peter. Distinguishing jurisdictional authority and the third grade of Holy Orders allows one to see that there is no necessary conflict at all. But because according to St. Jerome there was some confusion among Christians in St. Jerome’s time regarding whether St. Linus or St. Clement was “second after the apostle,” therefore Brandon writes:

The competing traditions show us that we need to interact with the Fathers knowing that there are mistakes and discrepancies.

Indeed, undoubtedly there are mistakes and discrepancies in the patristic writings. But none justifies calling into question the veracity of St. Irenaeus’s list, or the claim by all nine lists we have, i.e., (1) from St. Hegesippus through St. Epiphanius,¹³⁵ (2) from the ancient Roman Canon of the Mass,¹³⁶ (3) from St. Irenaeus,¹³⁷ (4) from Julius Africanus (who composed the five books of his *Chronographiai* between AD 212 and 221, and which Eusebius claimed to have in its entirety) through Eusebius, (5) from St. Jerome,¹³⁸ (6) from the third century Poem against Marcion,¹³⁹ (7) from St. Hippolytus in the Liberian Catalogue,¹⁴⁰ (8) from St. Optatus,¹⁴¹ (9) and from St. Augustine,¹⁴² that there was a succession of bishops in Rome from St. Peter, any more than it justifies calling into question every patristic claim, something Brandon does not do, because to do so would be to embrace ecclesial deism to the full.¹⁴³ And all of the nine lists list St. Linus as the first after St. Peter.¹⁴⁴ In fact, the minor discrepancies between the lists of Roman bishops only add evidential strength to the truth that there was such a succession, because they suggest the independence of the testimonial sources for that succession rather than complete dependence on a single list, just as the variations in the Gospel accounts do not detract from the veracity of the story they tell of the life of Christ, but support it by showing each of the four sources to be in some respect an independent witness.

(5.) The testimony of St. Irenaeus’s arguments

St. Irenaeus himself states that he knows more than merely the list of bishops in Rome; he claims to know about the practices of the previous bishops of Rome, all the way back to St. Sixtus, when he writes the following to St. Victor, bishop of Rome in the last decade of the second century regarding a dispute about when to celebrate Easter, and thus when to commence and end the Lenten fast:

And this variety among the observers [of the fasts] had not its origin in our time, but long before in that of our predecessors, some of whom probably, being not very accurate in their observance of it, handed down to posterity the custom as it had, through simplicity or private fancy, been [introduced among them]. And yet nevertheless all these lived in peace one with another, and we also keep peace together. Thus, in fact, the difference [in observing] the fast establishes the harmony of [our common] faith. And the presbyters preceding Soter in the government of the Church which you now rule— I mean, Anicetus and Pius, Hyginus and Telesphorus, and Sixtus— did neither themselves observe it [after that fashion], nor permit those with them to do so. Notwithstanding this, those who did not keep [the feast in this way] were peacefully disposed towards those who came to them from other dioceses in which it was [so] observed although such observance was [felt] in more decided contrariety [as presented] to those who did not fall in

with it; and none were ever cast out [of the Church] for this matter. On the contrary, those presbyters who preceded you, and who did not observe [this custom], sent the Eucharist to those of other dioceses who did observe it.¹⁴⁵

First notice that St. Irenaeus twice here refers to the monarchical bishops of Rome as “presbyters.”¹⁴⁶ Again, this shows that when the patristic authors Brandon cites refer to “presbyters” in the Church of Rome, this does not rule out the existence of monarchical bishops at those time, because such bishops too are presbyters, and can be included in the list of presbyters ruling the Church at Rome.¹⁴⁷ Second, notice that St. Irenaeus here, presumably writing from Lyon, France, as the bishop of the Church at Lyon, traces the episcopal predecessors of St. Victor back from St. Soter to St. Sixtus, who was the bishop of the Church at Rome from AD 115-125. There were only two bishops (Sts. Evaristus and Alexander I), and roughly eighteen years (AD 97-115) between the episcopates of St. Clement and St. Sixtus. St. Irenaeus is here not only claiming to know how these bishops [from St. Sixtus to St. Soter] themselves practiced the Lenten fast, and what these bishops did not permit the members of the diocese to do regarding the Lenten fast. Irenaeus is also claiming to know what these bishops allowed visiting Christians from other dioceses to do in Rome regarding the Lenten fast, how these bishops were disposed toward these visiting Christians, and even that these bishops sent the Eucharist to these visitors.¹⁴⁸

St. Irenaeus’s argument here to St. Victor could carry persuasive force only if the premises he uses were known to St. Victor or were in some way verifiable by St. Victor. And *a fortiori* by living memory the bishop of Rome and the Church at Rome would know more about its own recent history than would the bishop of Lyon, all other things being equal. St. Irenaeus’s argument thus presupposes that the Church at Rome also knew these truths about its own history, and that St. Irenaeus knew that Pope Victor knew or could verify these truths concerning its own history. Otherwise, St. Irenaeus’s argument would carry no weight at all with the bishop of Rome. So Brandon’s claim that St. Irenaeus’s succession list is false and made up, makes no sense of the narrative between St. Irenaeus and St. Victor, because it would require the Christians in the Church at Rome to be massively deceived about their own history, so deceived that the deception could be used in an argument by an outsider to oppose what St. Victor was doing.

(6.) *False dilemmas*

Then Brandon says:

Instead of establishing a list of succession in an official episcopal office Irenaeus is particularly focused on the doctrine handed on to the bearers of the tradition.

Here, just as with St. Hegesippus, Brandon makes use of an implicit but false dilemma: if a person is focused on the doctrine being handed down, then that person cannot also be focused on truthfully reporting the episcopal succession. Hence therefore that person’s report of such a succession is unreliable. The false dilemma is that either the person cares for the truth of the doctrine, or cares for the truth concerning the succession, but cannot at the same time be concerned about both. This false dilemma is a way of attacking a person’s character, but it hides the personal attack under the dilemma, by affirming that the person is truly concerned about some good thing, i.e., the truth of the doctrine. To see how this false dilemma attacks the person’s character, imagine that you have two daughters, and a visitor tells your younger daughter that because you love your older daughter, you do not love the younger daughter, and that your words expressing love to your younger daughter therefore cannot be trusted. When we put it plainly like this, it is clear that the visitor is not only engaged in a logical fallacy (since his conclusion does not follow from his premise), he is also engaged in a personal attack against you. But this is precisely what Brandon is doing to St. Irenaeus. He is claiming that because St. Irenaeus is focused on doctrine, therefore St. Irenaeus’s words about the succession of bishops in Rome are false and unreliable. And that is no less of a personal attack upon St. Irenaeus than

what the visitor in our hypothetical would be doing if he were saying this about Brandon to Brandon's own children. It is a violation of the Golden Rule, in this case passing itself off as 'scholarship.' A personal attack is still a personal attack, even if one puts the label 'scholarship' on it.

A second false dilemma is that either a list of twelve bishops that emphasizes the sixth and twelfth bishop is false, or it would not exist. This false dilemma requires that we choose between these. Regarding the numbers six and twelve in the list, Brandon is following Lampe. And as explained above, Lampe is here assuming that the number twelve was *a priori* essential to the creation of the list. Lampe is using that assumption as a support for his conclusion that the list is a fictive construction designed by St. Irenaeus to fall into a pattern of twelve, rather than intended to be an historically accurate account of the actual episcopal succession in Rome from St. Peter to the time of St. Irenaeus. In this way Lampe's *a priori* assumption is doing the argumentative work, because the historical evidence itself does not produce that conclusion without that assumption. And his assumption is question-begging; it presupposes that it could not have been the case that actually there had been twelve successive bishops leading the Church at Rome from the time of St. Peter, and that St. Irenaeus wrote his list in a way that highlighted that number while remaining entirely truthful and reliable as an historical witness regarding the succession of those twelve bishops in Rome. Here the false dilemma is the implicit assumption that the list cannot be both truthful and have twelve members, the sixth one being referred to as the sixth one. That is, we are told implicitly that we have to choose between there being twelve members, and it being a true list, that it cannot be both true and have twelve members.

Brandon's false dilemma operates here in the same way that higher critics use St. Luke's account of Jesus prophesying the fall of Jerusalem in order to date St. Luke's gospel after AD 70, presupposing that there is no supernatural, and thus that his gospel could not have been written prior to AD 70. But such a presupposition assumes the impossibility of divine prophecy. If God exists and is omniscient and atemporal, and thus supernatural prophecy is possible, then the prophecy concerning the fall of Jerusalem could have been made prior to AD 70. Likewise, if there truly were twelve bishops of Rome up to St. Eleutherius, then when approaching St. Irenaeus's list we are not forced to choose between the list having twelve members (and thus a sixth member), and the list being true. Nor must we choose between St. Irenaeus having a commitment to pure doctrine, and his having a commitment to historical accuracy. Most of us would take offense if others approached our speech or writings in that way, as though if we showed concern for the truth of our claims about atemporal matters, then all our claims about temporal matters could be treated as false or suspect. And yet this is precisely what Lampe and Brandon do to Sts. Hegesippus and Irenaeus.

Of course we have no good reason to believe that St. Irenaeus made no errors in what he wrote. But neither do we have any good reason to believe that the list he set down was erroneous. In short, no data Brandon has provided in his essay gives any reason to doubt the veracity of the lists given by Sts. Hegesippus and Irenaeus. What is doing the work in 'weakening' their accounts is not any evidence or good argumentation, but only slightly veiled and entirely unjustified personal attacks on the moral character of these two saints.

(7.) Evidence in St. Irenaeus's account of the Gnostics

As St. Irenaeus reveals in his dialogue with Pope Victor that he knows more about the succession of bishops in Rome than merely a list of names, so also in his account of the Gnostics he reveals further knowledge of the earlier popes. Moreover, the apologetic and polemical anti-Gnostic nature of the writings in which St. Irenaeus makes these references to early Roman bishops adds additional evidential support to the veracity of his historical claims concerning the early Roman bishops, as we explain below.

First, in his account of the Gnostic heretic Cerdo, St. Irenaeus writes:

Others of them [Carpocratians] employ outward marks, branding their disciples inside the lobe of the right ear. From among these also arose Marcellina, **who came to Rome under [the episcopate of] Anicetus**, and, holding these doctrines, she led multitudes astray.¹⁴⁹

Cerdo was one who took his system from the followers of Simon, and came to live at Rome **in the time of Hyginus, who held the ninth place in the episcopal succession from the apostles downwards**. He taught that the God proclaimed by the law and the prophets was not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the former was known, but the latter unknown; while the one also was righteous, but the other benevolent. 2. Marcion of Pontus succeeded him, and developed his doctrine.¹⁵⁰

He specifies that Marcellina came to Rome under the episcopate of St. Anicetus (AD 155-166), and Cerdo came to live in Rome during the time of St. Hyginus (AD 136-140), and identifies St. Hyginus as the ninth in the episcopal succession from the Apostles. Of course that would make St. Hyginus's eighth in the succession of bishops after the Apostles, numbering St. Linus first after the Apostles, as St. Irenaeus numbers the bishops in Book III. Elsewhere in Book III, St. Irenaeus writes:

For Valentinus came to Rome in the time of Hyginus, flourished under Pius, and remained until Anicetus. Cerdon, too, Marcion's predecessor, himself arrived in the time of Hyginus, who was the ninth bishop. Coming frequently into the Church, and making public confession, he thus remained, one time teaching in secret, and then again making public confession; but at last, having been denounced for corrupt teaching, he was excommunicated from the assembly of the brethren. Marcion, then, succeeding him, flourished under Anicetus, who held the tenth place of the episcopate.¹⁵¹

Here notice that St. Irenaeus describes St. Hyginus as "the ninth bishop," refers to Pius as serving between St. Hyginus and St. Anicetus, and then describes St. Anicetus as one who "held the tenth place of the episcopate." St. Hyginus was ninth from the Apostles, but St. Anicetus, who was therefore eleventh from the Apostles, "held the tenth place of the episcopate." St. Irenaeus is clearly distinguishing between *n*th place from the Apostles, and *n*th place in the episcopate. More broadly, St. Irenaeus is using the periods of time served by each successive bishop of Rome as historical markers by which the time when particular events occurred can be specified, much as the Romans used the reigns of Roman emperors to do the same. St. Hyginus was bishop from AD 136-140, St. Pius was bishop from AD 140-155, and St. Anicetus was bishop from 155-166. St. Irenaeus's work, *Against Heresies*, was written between AD 175-185, so St. Irenaeus is writing about events that took place within his own lifetime, because as a young man he was an auditor of St. Polycarp, who was martyred in AD 155. In his letter to Florinus, St. Irenaeus describes his memories of listening to St. Polycarp:

For I distinctly remember the incidents of that time better than events of recent occurrence ... I can describe the very place in which the Blessed Polycarp used to sit when he discoursed ... his personal appearance ... and how he would describe his intercourse with John and with the rest who had seen the Lord, and how he would relate their words ... I can testify in the sight of God, that if the blessed and apostolic elder had heard anything of this kind, he would have cried out, and stopped his ears, and said after his wont, 'O good God, for what times hast thou kept me that I should endure such things?' ... This can be shown from the letters which he wrote to the neighbouring Churches for their confirmation....¹⁵²

So although St. Irenaeus may not have been in Rome at the time these events occurred, in writing about the arrival of the Gnostics in Rome, he is writing about events that occurred within his own lifetime. Tertullian, though approximately twenty to thirty years younger than St. Irenaeus, corroborates St. Irenaeus's statements in his work titled *Against the Valentinians*, Tertullian writes:

We know, I say, most fully their actual origin, and we are quite aware why we call them Valentinians, although they affect to disavow their name. They have departed, it is true, from their founder, yet is their origin by no means destroyed; and even if it chance to be changed, the very change bears testimony to the fact. Valentinus had expected to become a bishop, because he was an able man both in genius and eloquence. Being indignant, however, that another obtained the dignity by reason of a claim which confessorship had given him, he broke with the church of the true faith.¹⁵³

Valentinus came to Rome expecting to become a bishop, but he was indignant when “another obtained the dignity.” That “another” was St. Anicetus, who became pope in AD 155. If there had been a plurality of presbyter-bishops with equal authority, this other man’s becoming bishop would not be cause for Valentinus to become indignant, because there would not be reason that another presbyter-bishop could not be added to their number. This indicates that in AD 155, even the Gnostics knew there was a monepiscopacy in Rome.

The testimony of St. Irenaeus and Tertullian is supported also by St. Cyprian of Carthage, and St. Epiphanius. St. Cyprian of Carthage writes:

And this, too, while as yet the more terrible plagues of heresy had not broken forth; while Marcion of Pontus had not yet emerged from Pontus, whose master Cerdon came to Rome—while Hyginus was still bishop, who was the ninth bishop in that city—whom Marcion followed, and with greater impudence adding other enhancements to his crime, and more daringly set himself to blaspheme against God the Father, the Creator, and armed with sacrilegious arms the heretical madness that rebelled against the Church with greater wickedness and determination.¹⁵⁴

And St. Epiphanius writes:

One Cerdo succeeds these and Heracleon—a member of the same school, who took his cue from Simon and Saturnilus. He was an immigrant from Syria **who came to Rome and appeared there**, utter wretch that he was, as his own scourge and the scourge of his followers.... So these people, who had found the way and yet wanted to get hold of the reflection which had been formed in their imaginations, not only lost the nourishment which God had, as it were, graciously placed in their mouths, but drew destruction upon themselves as well. Cerdo, then, lived in the time of **bishop Hyginus, the ninth in succession from the apostles James, Peter and Paul**.... After a short time in Rome he imparted his venom to Marcion, and Marcion thus became his successor. (*The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, Bk 1, Against the Cerdonians, Sect. 41)

Marcion was born around 110 AD. His father was a bishop of Sinope in Pontus. Marcion was made a bishop (but not the diocesan bishop) in his home town. He was eventually expelled from his own church by his father, when he committed a grave sin with a virgin. The *Against All Heresies* fragment, which is attached as an appendix to the works of Tertullian, but may have been written by St. Justin Martyr, records that Marcion was excommunicated from the Church in Pontus “because of a rape committed on a certain virgin.”¹⁵⁵ After he was not allowed to re-admittance to the Church in Pontus, he traveled to Rome, arriving sometime around 140 AD. St. Epiphanius says that Marcion “arrived at Rome itself after the death of Hyginus, the bishop of Rome” but before the election of Pius.¹⁵⁶ He met with the elders [*presbyteros*] of the Church, who had been taught by the disciples of the apostles, and sought admission to the Church. This, of course, is around the very same time Hermas wrote the *Shepherd*, according to Brandon. Given that Hermas wrote around AD 140, St. Epiphanius indicates that the presbyters in Rome at that time were not presbyters in the Presbyterian sense. They may have been presbyter-bishops or mere presbyters, but either way, they were part of an episcopal polity.

According to Tertullian when Marcion sought entry to the Church of Rome, he made a donation of two hundred sesterces, which is a significant sum of money.¹⁵⁷ This money was later returned.¹⁵⁸ But the presbyters were not willing to receive him. St. Epiphanius explains:

And since they were unwilling to receive him, he asked them plainly, ‘Why will you not receive me?’ ‘We cannot without your worthy father’s permission,’ was their answer. There is one faith and one concord, and we cannot oppose our excellent colleague, your father. Becoming jealous then and roused to great anger and arrogance Marcion made the rent, founding his own sect and saying, ‘I am going to tear your church, and make a rent in it forever.’ He did indeed make a rent of no small proportions, not by rending the church but by rending himself and his converts.¹⁵⁹

In AD 144 Marcion was excommunicated from the Church at Rome, which was then under the episcopacy of Pope Pius. This date marks the beginning of the Marcionite sect.¹⁶⁰ Marcion started his own sect, with bishops, priests, and deacons, again indicating that the polity he knew was episcopal, not Presbyterian.¹⁶¹ The work titled *Dialogues of Adamantius*, composed sometimes around AD 300, indicates that Marcion’s followers referred to him as a bishop.¹⁶²

Meg. Marcion was my bishop (episcopus).

Ad. Out of whom, Marcion having died, a great many bishops, or rather, false-bishops have they been among you. Why doesn’t any of them make use of a name, but only Marcion’s, who even brought about a schism in the one church?¹⁶³

In the West, his sect continued to exist for at least 300 years after his excommunication; in the East, it lasted even longer.¹⁶⁴ About ten years after his excommunication, he encountered St. Polycarp in Rome, and asked St. Polycarp if he recognized him, to which St. Polycarp famously responded, “I do know you, the first-born of Satan.”¹⁶⁵

Valentinus was from Egypt. Cerdo was from Syria. Marcion was from Pontus. Why did they come to Rome? Because they understood, as Simon Magus had understood, that this was the place most efficiently to spread their beliefs. All three of these who came to Rome sought to become the bishop of Rome, in order to take control of the Church. We already mentioned above the statement from Tertullian regarding Valentinus’s indignance that he was not selected bishop. Marcion too was “seized with jealousy” when he was not selected for bishop of Rome, but Pope Pius was selected.¹⁶⁶ That is why it is probably no accident that he arrived in Rome during the interregnum, and sought to grease the process with a large financial donation.

The point, however, is not merely to tell the story of the interaction of these Gnostics with the Church in Rome. The point is that if on any historical point St. Irenaeus had been in error concerning the actions of the Gnostics in relation to the bishops of Rome, the Gnostics would have used such an error at least rhetorically to discredit St. Irenaeus’s entire argument. Therefore St. Irenaeus could not afford, apologetically speaking, to be making up “fictive constructions” regarding the early succession of bishops in Rome, because any such errors would have undermined the argumentative power of his entire apologetic and polemical endeavors. St. Irenaeus would not in AD 180 make up claims regarding Pius taking the episcopacy in AD 140 after Hyginus in a polemic against Gnostics for the same reason that Brandon would not make up historical claims regarding events that happened in 1974, in a polemical article against Catholics written in 2014. The reason is obvious; he would thereby discredit his whole article, because Catholics old enough to remember those events (and whose parents were old enough to remember events much older), would call him on it, and thereby destroy the entire credibility of his article. So the polemical context in which St. Irenaeus makes these historical claims about the interaction of the Gnostics with the early bishops of Rome gives evidential strength to his claims, and does not allow them to be dismissed as “fictive constructions.”

(8.) Which: the Petrine pattern or massive rejection of the patristics?

Claiming on the basis of non-evidential silence that St. Irenaeus is distorting history regarding the early bishops of Rome would require us on the same basis to treat many other recognized saints as dishonest distorters of history, saints such as St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 – 215), who, in the sixth book of his *Hypotyposes*, written around AD 190, very close to the same time St. Irenaeus wrote *Against Heresies*, claimed that Peter and James and John “did not contend for glory, but made St. James the Just, bishop of Jerusalem.”¹⁶⁷ St. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem from AD 350 – 386, and thus one who would know the internal living memory of the Church in Jerusalem refers to St. James the Just as “James the bishop of this Church.”¹⁶⁸ But claiming that St. Clement of Alexandria is untrustworthy about Sts. Peter and James [the brother of John] and John making St. James the Just the first bishop of Jerusalem would require us to believe that St. Clement of Alexandria is also untrustworthy about Mark writing down St. Peter’s Gospel, and that the whole of St. Clement’s testimony is untrustworthy, all other things being equal.¹⁶⁹ If, however, St. Clement of Alexandria is trustworthy about St. Peter’s role in making St. James the Just the first bishop of Jerusalem, then we have a good reason to expect that St. Peter would also establish an episcopal office in Rome.

St. Clement of Alexandria is not alone in arguing that the succession of bishops in Jerusalem was not a second century development. According to Eusebius, by the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt (AD 132-136), there had already been fifteen successive bishops of the Church at Jerusalem. He writes:

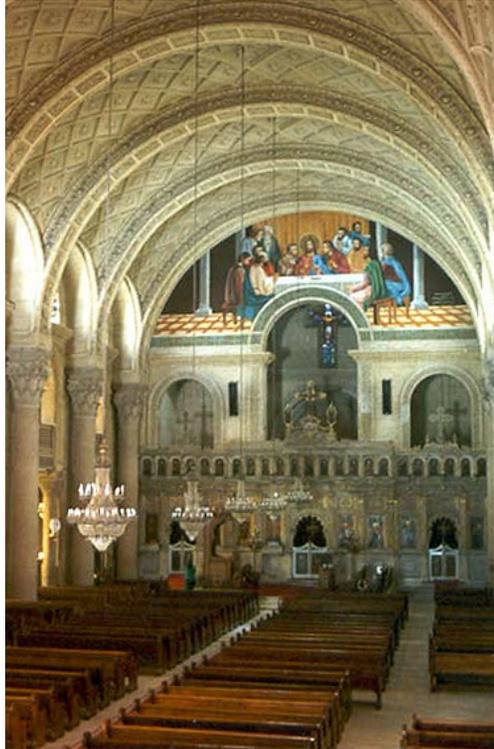
The chronology of the bishops of Jerusalem I have nowhere found preserved in writing; for tradition says that they were all short lived.

But I have learned this much from writings, that until the siege of the Jews, which took place under Adrian, there were fifteen bishops in succession there, all of whom are said to have been of Hebrew descent, and to have received the knowledge of Christ in purity, so that they were approved by those who were able to judge of such matters, and were deemed worthy of the episcopate. For their whole church consisted then of believing Hebrews who continued from the days of the apostles until the siege which took place at this time; in which siege the Jews, having again rebelled against the Romans, were conquered after severe battles.

But since the bishops of the circumcision ceased at this time, it is proper to give here a list of their names from the beginning. The first, then, was James, the so-called brother of the Lord; the second, Symeon; the third, Justus; the fourth, Zacchæus; the fifth, Tobias; the sixth, Benjamin; the seventh, John; the eighth, Matthias; the ninth, Philip; the tenth, Seneca; the eleventh, Justus; the twelfth, Levi; the thirteenth, Ephres; the fourteenth, Joseph; and finally, the fifteenth, Judas.

These are the bishops of Jerusalem that lived between the age of the apostles and the time referred to, all of them belonging to the circumcision.¹⁷⁰

That is, the Church at Jerusalem had already installed its fifteenth successive bishop, and according to Brandon the Church in Rome would not have its first bishop for at least fourteen more years in AD 150.



St. Mark's Cathedral, Alexandria

Likewise, we know that St. Peter, writing from Rome, had adopted St. Mark almost as a son (1 Peter 5:13). Mark, having been discipled by St. Peter, and written down the Gospel St. Peter preached, went to Alexandria under St. Peter's instruction, and founded the Church there. Eusebius writes:

And they say that this Mark was the first that was sent to Egypt, and that he proclaimed the Gospel which he had written, and first established churches in Alexandria. ... When Nero was in the eighth year of his reign, Annianus succeeded Mark the Evangelist in the administration of the parish of Alexandria.¹⁷¹

When St. Mark went to Alexandria, he established an episcopacy, whose first occupant, after himself, was Annianus.

The *Apostolic Constitutions* gives this same testimony concerning the origin of the bishops of Alexandria:

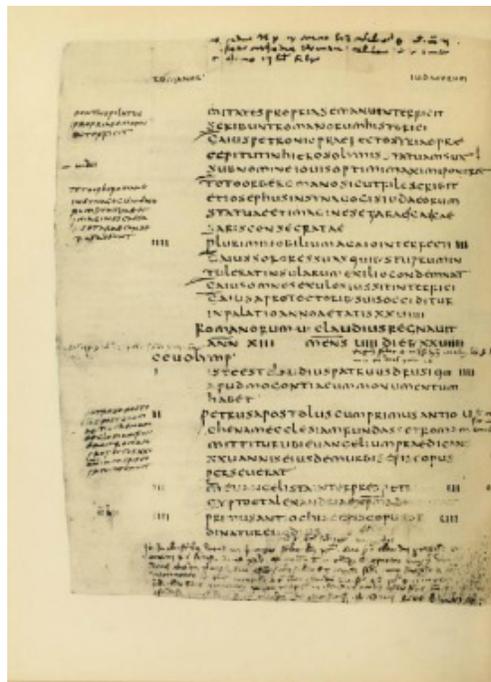
XLVI. Now concerning those bishops which have been ordained in our lifetime, we let you know that they are these:— James the bishop of Jerusalem, the brother of our Lord; upon whose death the second was Simeon the son of Cleopas; after whom the third was Judas the son of James. Of Cæsarea of Palestine, the first was Zacchæus, who was once a publican; after whom was Cornelius, and the third Theophilus. Of Antioch, Euodius, ordained by me Peter; and Ignatius by Paul. Of Alexandria, Annianus was the first, ordained by Mark the evangelist; the second Avilius by Luke, who was also an evangelist. Of the church of Rome, Linus the son of Claudia was the first, ordained by Paul; 2 Timothy 4:21 and Clemens, after Linus' death, the second, ordained by me Peter. Of Ephesus, Timotheus, ordained by Paul; and John, by me John. Of Smyrna, Aristo the first; after whom Stratæas the son of Lois; 2 Timothy 1:5 and the third Aristo. Of Pergamus, Gaius. Of Philadelphia, Demetrius, by me. Of Cenchrea, Lucius, by Paul. Of Crete, Titus. Of Athens, Dionysius. Of Tripoli in Phœnicia, Marathones. Of Laodicea in Phrygia, Archippus. Of Colossæ;, Philemon. Of Borea in Macedonia, Onesimus, once the servant of Philemon. Of the churches of Galatia, Crescens. Of the parishes of Asia, Aquila and Nicetas. Of the church of Æginæ, Crispus. These are the bishops who are entrusted by us with the

parishes in the Lord; whose doctrine keep always in mind, and observe our words. And may the Lord be with you now, and to endless ages, as Himself said to us when He was about to be taken up to His own God and Father. For says He, Lo, I am with you all the days, until the end of the world. Amen.¹⁷²

St. Jerome likewise tells us that St. Mark went to Alexandria, and started the Church there.¹⁷³ And St. Gregory Nazianzus, a contemporary of St. Athanasius writes that “he [i.e. St. Athanasius] is led up to the throne of Saint Mark, to succeed him in piety, no less than in office.”¹⁷⁴ So if these witnesses are reliable in their report that St. Peter sent St. Mark to Alexandria, and St. Mark by St. Peter’s instruction there founded the line of bishops of Alexandria, then we have at least two outside cases in which St. Peter was involved in establishing an episcopal office: Jerusalem, and Antioch. This gives us greater reason to believe that he would do in Rome as well, unless we are prepared to dismiss all these sources as well.

But then there is Antioch. The *Chronography* that Julius Africanus published in 221 and which Eusebius used in compiling his *Church History* apparently listed St. Evodius as the first bishop of Antioch. From this source Eusebius writes, “At this time Ignatius was known as the second bishop of Antioch, Evodius having been the first.”¹⁷⁵ Origen concurs, writing the following between AD 238 and 234 in his *Homilies on Luke*:

I found an elegant statement in the letter of a martyr — I mean Ignatius, the second bishop of Antioch after Peter.¹⁷⁶



Eusebius's Chronicle

And around AD 380, St. Jerome, in his translation of Eusebius’s *Chronicle*, writes that in the fourth year after the 205th Olympiad (AD 42), “*Primus Antiochiae episcopus ordinatur Evodius*” (Evodius is ordained the first bishop of Antioch). That can be seen on the last line at the bottom of the page at the right from the fifth-century Bodleian manuscript at Oxford, which may easily be a first copy of St. Jerome’s translation.¹⁷⁷ (Click on the graphic for a larger version.) At the bottom of the page the last two lines are as follows:

*primusantiochiaepiscoposor
dinatureuodius*

When the spaces between the words are included, it is “*Primus Antiochiae episcopus ordinatur Evodius*” (Evodius is ordained the first bishop of Antioch).

In AD 392-393 St. Jerome, to whom Brandon appeals in opposition to St. Ignatius regarding the office of bishop,¹⁷⁸ writes of St. Ignatius:

Ignatius, **third bishop of the church of Antioch after Peter the apostle**, condemned to the wild beasts during the persecution of Trajan, was sent bound to Rome, and when he had come on his voyage as far as Smyrna, where Polycarp the pupil of John was bishop, he wrote one epistle To the Ephesians, another To the Magnesians, a third To the Trallians, a fourth To the Romans, and going thence, he wrote To the Philadelphians and To the Smyrneans and especially To Polycarp, commending to him the church at Antioch.¹⁷⁹

Though Brandon appeals to St. Jerome to argue against moniscopacy, St. Jerome testifies that St. Ignatius was the third bishop of the Church of Antioch after St. Peter, which, in combination with St. Jerome’s earlier record of St. Evodius being “ordained the first bishop of Antioch,” implies that according to St. Jerome, St. Peter was the first bishop of Antioch.

Similarly, Socrates Scholasticus in the 430s writes the following in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*:

Ignatius **third bishop of Antioch in Syria from the apostle Peter**, who also had held intercourse with the apostles themselves, saw a vision of angels hymning in alternate chants the Holy Trinity. Accordingly he introduced the mode of singing he had observed in the vision into the Antiochian church; whence it was transmitted by tradition to all the other churches.¹⁸⁰

And St. John Chrysostom, who was born in Antioch in 347, testifies in a homily to the Christians of Antioch that St. Ignatius was ordained by St. Peter:

And if you will, let us come first to the praise of his episcopate. Does this seem to be one crown alone? Come, then, let us unfold it in speech, and you will see both two, and three, and more produced from it. For I do not wonder at the man alone that he seemed to be worthy of so great an office, but that he obtained this office from those saints, and that the hands of the blessed apostles touched his sacred head....For just as any one taking a great stone from a foundation hastens by all means to introduce an equivalent to it, lest he should shake the whole building, and make it more unsound, so, accordingly, when Peter was about to depart from here, the grace of the Spirit introduced another teacher equivalent to Peter, so that the building already completed should not be made more unsound by the insignificance of the successor. We have reckoned up then five crowns, from the importance of the office, from the dignity of those who ordained to it, from the difficulty of the time, from the size of the city, from the virtue of him who transmitted the episcopate to him.¹⁸¹

And Theodoret, also from Antioch, and bishop of Cyrrus (about 83 miles northeast of Antioch), writes the following in his *Dialogues*:

You have no doubt heard of the illustrious Ignatius, who received episcopal grace by the hand of the great Peter, and after ruling the church of Antioch, wore the crown of martyrdom.¹⁸²

If St. Ignatius was ordained bishop of Antioch by St. Peter, and was the third bishop of Antioch, St. Evodius being the second after St. Peter, then we have the makings of a clear pattern. St. Peter establishes a monepiscopacy in Jerusalem and installs St. James the Just as Jerusalem's first bishop, and then St. Peter establishes a monepiscopacy in Antioch, and installs St. Evodius as its first bishop in the early-mid 40s. Then from Rome St. Peter sends St. Mark to Alexandria, and there by his instruction St. Mark founds the episcopacy in Alexandria. Sometime later St. Peter ordains St. Ignatius, and designates him to succeed St. Evodius as the bishop of Antioch. In that case we have even more reason to expect that St. Peter would also establish an episcopal office in Rome, again, unless we are prepared to dismiss all these sources as well.

Moreover, we have some evidence that St. Peter travelled to Pontus, the region in the northeast part of present-day Turkey, extending up to the southern part of the Black Sea.¹⁸³ At least two patristic sources say that St. Peter travelled to Pontus. St. Epiphanius of Salamis writes,

Paul even reached Spain, and Peter often visited Pontus and Bithynia.¹⁸⁴

And St. Jerome writes,

Simon Peter the son of John, from the village of Bethsaida in the province of Galilee, brother of Andrew the apostle, and himself chief of the apostles, after having been bishop of the church of Antioch and having preached to the Dispersion — the believers in circumcision, in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia— pushed on to Rome in the second year of Claudius to overthrow Simon Magus[.]¹⁸⁵

But this leads us to Marcion, who was also from Pontus. Concerning Marcion, Tertullian writes the following:

After him emerged a disciple of his, one Marcion by name, a native of Pontus, son of a bishop, excommunicated because of a rape committed on a certain virgin.¹⁸⁶

And St. Epiphanius of Salamis writes:

He [Marcion] was a native of Pontus—I mean of Helenopontus and the city of Sinope, as is commonly said of him.¹⁸⁷

What does this have to do with St. Irenaeus's testimony concerning the succession of bishops in Rome from St. Peter? Marcion was born around AD 110.¹⁸⁸ His father was Philologus, the bishop of Sinope in Pontus, a "distinguished old man" who excommunicated his son for seducing / raping a virgin, after which Marcion came to Rome shortly after the death of Pope St. Hyginus (AD 136-140).

So putting all the Pontus data together we see the following. In AD 140 the bishop of the Church in Sinope in Pontus was a "distinguished old man." If Marcion's father was 70 years old in AD 140, then he would have been around 37 years old when St. Ignatius was martyred, and around 30 years old when the Apostle John died. He would have been born in AD 70, just two or three years after St. Peter's martyrdom. We have patristic testimony that St. Peter went to Pontus, and the next thing we see from the Church in Pontus is that a child born in Pontus around or shortly after the time of St. Peter's death becomes the monepiscopal bishop of the Church in Pontus.¹⁸⁹ Once again, as in the cases of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria, we find that where Peter went, he left behind an episcopacy.

What about Corinth? Tertullian shows that in AD 200 there was an Apostolic Seat in Corinth. He writes:

Come now, if you would indulge a better curiosity in the business of your salvation, run through the apostolic Churches in which **the very thrones [cathedrae] of the Apostles** remain still in place; in which their own authentic writings are read, giving sound to the voice and recalling the faces of each. Achaia is near you, so you have **Corinth**.¹⁹⁰

Tertullian thus testifies that an apostolic throne was established by the Apostles in Corinth, and existed still in his own time. About thirty years earlier, that apostolic cathedra was occupied by St. Dionysius, bishop of Corinth. In a *Letter to Pope Soter*, written in approximately AD 170, and later quoted by Eusebius, St. Dionysius writes:

You have also, by your very admonition, brought together the planting that was made by Peter and Paul at Rome and at Corinth; for both of them alike planted in our Corinth and taught us; and both alike, teaching similarly in Italy, suffered martyrdom at the same time.¹⁹¹

As bishop of the Church at Corinth in AD 170, St. Dionysius's testimony concerning the Church's recent history and living memory carries great evidential weight. He teaches that both Sts. Peter and Paul alike planted in Corinth.

Although St. Clement of Rome does not refer to a bishop in Corinth in his letter to the Corinthians at the end of the first century, St. Hegesippus (c. 110 – c. 180) does refer to bishop in Corinth in the middle of the second century. He records that the Corinthians “continued in the true faith until Primus was bishop in Corinth.”¹⁹² Eusebius says the following:

There is extant an epistle of this Clement which is acknowledged to be genuine and is of considerable length and of remarkable merit. He wrote it in the name of the church of Rome to the church of Corinth, when a sedition had arisen in the latter church. We know that this epistle also has been publicly used in a great many churches both in former times and in our own. And of the fact that a sedition did take place in the church of Corinth at the time referred to Hegesippus is a trustworthy witness.¹⁹³

Eusebius first says that St. Hegesippus is a trustworthy witness of the fact that a sedition did take place in the Church of Corinth “at the time referred to.”¹⁹⁴ Then Eusebius writes:

It is fitting to hear what he says after making some remarks about the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians.

2. His words are as follows: And the church of Corinth continued in the true faith until Primus was bishop in Corinth. I conversed with them on my way to Rome, and abode with the Corinthians many days, during which we were mutually refreshed in the true doctrine.¹⁹⁵

Notice that according to Eusebius, in St. Hegesippus's writings his claim that “the church of Corinth continued in the true faith until Primus was bishop in Corinth” follows “some remarks about the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians.” Hence there are three possibilities. Either St. Hegesippus is referring to the time period leading up to the occasion under which St. Clement wrote his letter to the Corinthians (c. AD 90s) or he is referring to a time period subsequent to St. Clement's letter but significantly prior to the time when St. Hegesippus visited Corinth, or he is referring to the present condition of the Church at Corinth at the time he visited that Church. If the first, then there was already a

bishop in Corinth at the time St. Clement wrote his letter. If the second or third, what St. Hegesippus writes implies that the episcopacy of Primus is in continuity with the previous polity.

Here's why. If the Apostles had established a Presbyterian polity in the Church of Corinth, and such was the condition when St. Clement wrote his letter to the Church of Corinth, then the subsequent rise of a monarchical bishop in Corinth would have been a departure from the true faith. But St. Hegesippus says that on his way to Rome he met with a "great many bishops," [πλείστοις ἐπισκόποις] and that he "received the same doctrine from all" [τὴν αὐτὴν παρὰ πάντων παρείληφεν διδασκαλίαν].¹⁹⁶ So St. Hegesippus cannot be saying that the formation of an episcopacy in Corinth was a departure from the true faith, because he clearly believed that the episcopacy was part of the true faith. Because St. Hegesippus "abode with the Corinthians many days," he thus became directly acquainted with the Corinthians' living memory of their own Church history. This is undoubtedly part of the reason Eusebius refers to him as a "trustworthy witness" [ἀξιόχρεως μάρτυς] regarding the Corinthian sedition. He had listened to the account of the sedition, quite likely, from persons who had participated in it! So what is implied by St. Hegesippus's account as one who knew first-hand the Corinthians's own living memory is not only that Primus being the bishop of Corinth was fully compatible with the "true doctrine" in which he was refreshed while there, and which agreed with what he had received from the "great many bishops" he had met in his journey," but also that both he and the Church at Corinth saw its having a bishop as in keeping with the Tradition that the Churches had received from the Apostles.

So we have evidence that St. Peter went to Jerusalem, Antioch, Pontus, and Corinth, and subsequently we find an episcopal seat in each of those four places. We have evidence that St. Peter sent St. Mark to Alexandria, and subsequently we find an episcopal seat there. That is five episcopacies, each started by St. Peter or by his instruction. This pattern shows us that it is reasonable to believe that St. Peter did the same when he went to Rome, even when non-evidential silence in the sparsity of surviving historical records written between AD 68 and AD 150 leaves the episcopacy-in-Rome question less clear than we might wish. To avoid the conclusion that the pattern of St. Peter's activities indicates that episcopacies can be found very shortly after at least five places St. Peter visited, and thus that we can expect him to have established also an episcopacy in Rome, one would have to disbelieve not only the testimony of St. Irenaeus, but all the patristic witnesses cited above.

(9.) Evidence in St. Irenaeus's own history

The notion that the moniscopacy was not from the Apostles would also require denying St. Irenaeus's own context, i.e., the truth of the teaching on Church polity he had received as a young man from St. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, and the legitimacy of the episcopal office in the Church of Lyon St. Irenaeus had received from St. Pothinus, who was born around the year AD 87, and died at the age of ninety, in about AD 177. Eusebius writes, "Pothinus having died with the other martyrs in Gaul at ninety years of age, Irenaeus succeeded him in the episcopate of the church at Lyons."¹⁹⁷ Of his martyrdom Eusebius writes:

The blessed Pothinus, who had been entrusted with the bishopric of Lyons, was dragged to the judgment seat. He was more than ninety years of age, and very infirm, scarcely indeed able to breathe because of physical weakness; but he was strengthened by spiritual zeal through his earnest desire for martyrdom. Though his body was worn out by old age and disease, his life was preserved that Christ might triumph in it.

When he was brought by the soldiers to the tribunal, accompanied by the civil magistrates and a multitude who shouted against him in every manner as if he were Christ himself, he bore noble witness.

Being asked by the governor, Who was the God of the Christians, he replied, 'If you are worthy, you shall know.' Then he was dragged away harshly, and received blows of every kind. Those near him struck him with their hands and feet, regardless of his age; and those at a distance hurled at him whatever they could seize; all of them thinking that they

would be guilty of great wickedness and impiety if any possible abuse were omitted. For thus they thought to avenge their own deities. Scarcely able to breathe, he was cast into prison and died after two days.¹⁹⁸



Saint Pothinus

Bishop St. Pothinus, who was already twenty years old when St. Ignatius was martyred, and was about thirteen years old when the Apostle John died, clearly believed in the monepiscopacy, and believed that it was apostolic. Brandon's thesis would require holding not only that St. Irenaeus lied about the episcopal succession in Rome, but that bishop St. Pothinus lied about it as well, and that St. Polycarp did too.

Brandon might object that he is not claiming that St. Irenaeus "lied," but merely that St. Irenaeus mistakenly read the monepiscopacy back into the history of the Church at Rome. But if Brandon is claiming that St. Irenaeus had before him a list of successive sets of simultaneously serving presbyter-bishops each having equal authority, and he arbitrarily picked a succession of names from that list, and designated them as monepiscopal bishops, then Brandon is claiming that St. Irenaeus lied, even if Brandon himself is not using that term. St. Irenaeus did not lie about the episcopal succession in Rome only if the list of twelve names he wrote down was the same list he had received by testimony, by parchment, and/or by direct observation. But if St. Irenaeus received from others this list of twelve bishops extending back to St. Peter, then this list he received stands as an independent historical piece of positive evidence to the episcopal succession in Rome. So if Brandon is not claiming that St. Irenaeus lied, then the list of twelve (excepting perhaps the more recent bishops Sts. Eleutherius and Soter) already existed as an independent piece of direct evidence of the episcopal succession in Rome from St. Peter. Just as telling a lie requires telling more lies to cover it up, so an accusation of lying requires compounding the accusations, not only regarding whatever else the accused said, but also regarding all that was said by his contemporaries agreeing with and confirming what he said. So the widespread evidence regarding both the monepiscopacies throughout the world at the time, as well as the evidence for their apostolic origin, must also be treated as resulting from lies or deception. One cannot simply dismiss St. Irenaeus while embracing the rest of the patristic testimony concerning the episcopacy, because they stand in agreement. To accuse St. Irenaeus of lying, therefore, is to accuse all the Church Fathers who address this subject of lying or perpetuating lies.

The error here is the inverse of the Gnostics error. The Gnostics error was its claim that there was some secret that the Apostles did not tell the Churches. By contrast, instead of claiming that there was some secret the Apostles did not tell, and to which only the later Gnostics were privy, Brandon's thesis implies that what the Apostles said about the

proper ecclesial polity became a secret to the universal Church by the second half of the second century, such that all the Church Fathers, and the whole entire Church forgot and abandoned in less than a century what the Apostles had taught concerning proper polity. But if we accept the patristic evidence concerning St. Peter's participation in the establishment of a monepiscopacy in Jerusalem, and his establishing a monepiscopacy in Antioch, then to accept Brandon's thesis we have to believe that when St. Peter arrived to Rome he abandoned his established practice and switched to a Presbyterian form of government. In short, given Brandon's thesis we must choose between the inverse-Gnostic error, and an *ad hoc* thesis that at the very least makes monepiscopacy an apostolic option, and makes St. Peter and St. Paul (for he too was active in setting up the Church in Antioch) reject their previous pattern of Church of polity. That is the consequence that follows from Brandon's treatment of St. Irenaeus.

Further, as explained above, because St. Irenaeus's purpose is indeed polemical in his intention of refuting the Gnostics, if there had been no succession of bishops, St. Irenaeus would be setting himself up for immediate refutation by those Gnostics. He could set forth the list confidently as an effective polemic *only* if what he was saying was public knowledge, or accessible as public knowledge, i.e., the memories, records, tombs, and even relics of these bishops were well-known among the Christians of Rome.¹⁹⁹ The only way to remove this contextual evidence is to stipulate that not only were Sts. Hegesippus and Irenaeus untrustworthy witnesses regarding the episcopal succession in Rome, but that St. Clement of Alexandria, Julius Africanus, Origen, Eusebius, St. Jerome, St. John Chrysostom, Socrates Scholasticus, and Theodoret were also untrustworthy witnesses regarding the first-century episcopacy in Jerusalem. In short, if we want to reject the testimony of St. Irenaeus, we have to be prepared to reject the testimony of the other Church Fathers as well, and thereby embrace the ecclesial deism that implicitly underlies such a large-scale rejection of the patristics.²⁰⁰

5. Fractionation

(a.) *Why fractionation is not evidence of the non-existence of the episcopacy*

In our section above on St. Justin Martyr, we noted that one of Brandon's two observations drawn from St. Justin Martyr was that of fractionation, and we indicated there that we would discuss that topic in this session. Appealing to St. Justin, Brandon uses the following quotation as evidence for "fractionation," which he then treats as evidence against there being a monarchical bishop in Rome:

Rusticus the prefect said, Where do you assemble? Justin said, Where each one chooses and can: for do you fancy that we all meet in the very same place? Not so; because the God of the Christians is not circumscribed by place; but being invisible, fills heaven and earth, and everywhere is worshipped and glorified by the faithful. Rusticus the prefect said, Tell me where you assemble, or into what place do you collect your followers? Justin said, I live above one Martinus, at the Timiotinian Bath; and during the whole time (and I am now living in Rome for the second time) I am unaware of any other meeting than his. And if any one wished to come to me, I communicated to him the doctrines of truth.²⁰¹

In response to this Brandon writes:

Instead, Justin is describing the worship of a house church worship setting. The absence of a Roman bishop in Justin's writing as well as in the writing of Justin's opponents provides us with even greater evidence from silence.

This account that Brandon cites from St. Justin is from no earlier than AD 165, because St. Justin was martyred in AD 165. So what then should we make of the account of St. Polycarp meeting with St. Anicetus, bishop of Rome, in AD 155, quoted above in the section on St. Polycarp? Brandon is trying to use an argument from silence (which, in his section on St. Irenaeus he refers to as "invalid") from something written no earlier than AD 165, while existing *positive* evidence of an event that took place in AD 155 indicates that there was a monepiscopate in Rome in

AD 155. Recall from our preliminary principles section above that “a single positive may overturn any number of negatives.” To avoid refutation of his argument here, Brandon would have to claim that St. Irenaeus contrived the meeting between St. Polycarp and St. Anicetus. But that would have backfired on St. Irenaeus, for if there had been no such meeting between St. Polycarp and St. Anicetus, St. Irenaeus’s argument to St. Victor would have been undermined, for his argument presupposes that St. Victor was aware of or could verify for himself that there had in fact been such a meeting. So St. Irenaeus must have known that the Church in Rome knew that St. Polycarp had met with St. Anicetus.

This is one example showing why Brandon’s fractionation data is not evidence for the absence of a monarchical bishop in Rome. The ‘fractionation’ he describes is perfectly compatible with there being a bishop in Rome, as shown by there already being such a bishop in Rome at least ten years prior to the state of fractionation to which Brandon appeals as evidence that there was no monarchical bishop of Rome.²⁰² So St. Justin’s implication that there were multiple house churches in Rome, each having its own “presider,” “lector” and “deacons” is fully compatible with there being a head presbyter-bishop over the Church in Rome.

In his section on fractionation Brandon first refers to his [review of Lampe](#) from January 24, 2014, before offering a summary paragraph. Brandon places much weight on this fractionation thesis as evidence that there was no monarchical bishop in Rome.

Brandon’s fractionation argument runs like this. During the first and second centuries there was great diversity in the city of Rome. The meeting of Christians in large gatherings was unsafe, on account of persecution, and so Christians met mostly in house churches throughout the city. This lack of a central meeting place “shows that no monarchical episcopate existed,” and that the monarchical episcopate developed later.

Brandon is correct that there was great diversity in Rome at the time, and that the meeting of Christians in large gatherings was dangerous, and that Christians mostly met in house churches. There are at least two problems with his argument. One problem with his argument is that the conclusion is a *non sequitur*; that is, the conclusion does not follow from the premises. Just because there was great diversity in Rome, and Christians in Rome mostly met in house churches, it does not follow that there was no bishop sitting on the seat of St. Peter. From internal evidence alone, uninformed by the full scope of available evidence, the difference between the likelihoods of the competing explanatory theses is inscrutable without presupposing precisely what is in question, and thus, according to the ILD principle this fractionation data is not evidence that there was no monarchical bishop in Rome at the time. A second problem with his argument is that he provides no principled difference between the fractionation conditions sufficient to demonstrate the non-existence of a monepiscopacy, and the fractionation conditions sufficient to demonstrate the non-existence of a presbytery. Without such a criterion, it is *ad hoc* special pleading to treat fractionation that would be incompatible with the existence of a presbytery as evidence against there being a monepiscopacy.

In his review of Lampe, Brandon provided thirteen pieces of data to which he appealed as evidence showing that there was no monarchical bishop in Rome during the first two centuries. However, as I [Bryan] showed in my response to Brandon’s review of Lampe, each of these thirteen pieces of evidence is fully compatible with there being a monarchical bishop in Rome, and therefore is not evidence that there was no monarchical bishop of Rome.²⁰³ Those thirteen pieces of data are the following:

- (1) Among the Christians in Rome, some were wealthy, but most were poor.
- (2) The Christians of the various city quarters each cared for their own burial sites.
- (3) Some Christians were not buried at the Vatican.
- (4) There was a growth in Church ownership of property.
- (5) There were house churches in Rome.
- (6) There were Christians in Rome who followed the Quartodeciman tradition.

- (7) The Church of Rome contained different ethnicities.
- (8) Some heretics freely left the Church, without having been disciplined.
- (9) The Christians in Rome held different eschatological views.
- (10) Hermas refers to Clement, and to the presbyters who quarrel over status, but does not mention a monarchical bishop.
- (11) In his letter to Rome St. Ignatius does not mention the bishop of Rome.
- (12) The accounts of the dispute with Marcion mention that he faced the “presbyters and teachers” in Rome, but do not mention a monarchical bishop.
- (13) Clement in his letter mentions leadership in the plural at the city in Rome.

Regarding (1), (2), (3), and (7), these are each fully compatible with there being a monarchical bishop in Rome, as shown by contemporary Catholic practice in any diocese. Likewise, regarding (4), the Church in Rome initially owned no property, but over time came to own property, as Christians donated their houses to the Church to be used as places of worship. This too, however, is fully compatible with there having been a monarchical bishop even prior to Church ownership of land or buildings. Regarding (5), as we discuss in more detail below, the fact that there were houses churches in Rome is fully compatible with there being a monarchical bishop in Rome, just as for the same reason the plurality of parishes in any present city does not show that there is no monarchical bishop over the Church in that city. Regarding (6), there being Christians in Rome who had come from Asia Minor and continued to follow the Quartodeciman tradition is fully compatible with there being a monarchical bishop in Rome, as St. Irenaeus demonstrates in his letter to St. Victor, discussed above. Regarding (8), even to this day heretics freely leave the Church while there is a monarchical bishop. Hence heretics freely leaving the Church does not show that there was no bishop, because it is fully compatible with there being a bishop. Regarding (9), this would count as evidence against a monarchical bishop only if one assumes that bishops would not allow divergent eschatological views. And that is a question-begging assumption. Bishops typically allow divergent views on unsettled matters, unless or until this causes problems or divisive disputes. At this point in time (prior to St. Augustine), the eschatological questions had not yet been settled in the Church. Hence this diversity of eschatological opinion is fully compatible with there being a monarchical bishop in Rome. Reasons (10), (11), and (13) have been addressed above. Regarding (12), this too is an argument from silence, and thus is fully compatible with there being a monarchical bishop in Rome. The authors who describe this dispute wrote that there was a succession of bishops in Rome from St. Peter. Tertullian wrote of Marcion in his work *Against Marcion*, but wrote of the succession of bishops in Rome from St. Peter in chapter 32 of his *Prescription against Heretics*.²⁰⁴ St. Irenaeus wrote about Marcion in *Against Heresies*, I.27, as explained above, but also of the succession of bishops in Rome from St. Peter in Book III of his *Against Heresies*.²⁰⁵ So it is disingenuous to use selectively their not mentioning a bishop of Rome in their focused account of Marcion when in fact they *do* state elsewhere that there was a bishop of Rome during the time of Marcion. Hence, given the ILD principle, none of these pieces of data is evidence of there being no bishop of Rome.

Continuing in his section on fractionation, Brandon then offers some unsubstantiated speculative claims about the conception of schism in the third century, claiming both that it applied to whoever did not have the buildings and altar, and that schism was “quite impossible.” Then he quotes from an article by Allen Brent in which Brent, referring to the dispute between Hippolytus and St. Callistus between AD 217 and 222, claims, “If the dispute had been between two contenders to a single episcopal chair, as in the case of later antipopes, it is curious that Hippolytus set out his account of the dispute in no such terms.” Brandon follows that quotation with these words:

In other words, there was no single episcopal office in Rome because the conflict testifies that the opponents were not combating one another over a disputed episcopal chair.

The mistake Brandon makes here is again an “invalid” argument from silence. Because Hippolytus (who was not a saint at the time, and in fact held a heretical view concerning the Trinity) did not frame his dispute with St. Callistus

as a struggle over the Chair of St. Peter, therefore, concludes Brandon, “there was no single episcopal office in Rome.” That is another *non sequitur*, because the conclusion does not follow from the premise.

First, recall that Brandon’s thesis is that “Rome was organized as a presbytery until the middle to later part of the second century.” Brandon acknowledges that there was a monepiscopate in Rome during the second half of the second century. His whole speculative argument against the veracity of the succession lists of Sts. Hegesippus and Irenaeus is that they were reading back into the past the monarchical episcopacy they themselves saw in the Church at Rome of their own time, i.e., the second half of the second century. But here Brandon contradicts himself by attempting to argue from the conflict between Hippolytus and St. Callistus (AD 217 and following) to the conclusion that there was no episcopal office in Rome even in the first quarter of the *third* century.

Second, Brandon’s argument from silence does not satisfy the fourth criterion for an argument from silence within a text to carry evidential weight, namely, that we have good reason to believe that the author has no overriding reason for concealing the entity or event. The argument goes like this. Because Hippolytus did not set out his dispute with St. Callistus in terms of “two contenders to a single episcopal chair,” therefore, concludes Brandon, “there was no single episcopal office in Rome.” The particular silence from which Brandon is arguing is Hippolytus’s silence regarding the episcopal chair as the object of their dispute. But does a person contending with the bishop of Rome have any reason not to frame his dispute as a rebellion against a divinely established office of authority? Obviously, yes. So we do not have good reason to believe that Hippolytus would lay out the dispute as a struggle against episcopal authority, if in fact that is exactly what it was. And therefore the silence to which Brandon appeals here carries no evidential weight in support of the thesis that there was no monepiscopacy in Rome at this time.

Third, as stated above, “a single positive may overturn any number of negatives” and “a single sound refutes all silences.” Therefore, all the positive evidence regarding the existence of a monarchical bishop in Rome prior to AD 217, the very evidence causing Brandon to cut off his thesis at AD 150, trumps the silence in Hippolytus’s dispute with St. Callistus. Not only that, but Hippolytus himself, when describing the narrative of St. Callistus, refers specifically to “the episcopal throne.” Hippolytus writes,

Callistus attempted to confirm this heresy—a man cunning in wickedness, and subtle where deceit was concerned, (and) who was impelled by restless ambition to mount the **episcopal throne**. ... But after a time, there being in that place other martyrs, Marcia, a concubine of Commodus, who was a God-loving female, and desirous of performing some good work, invited into her presence the blessed Victor, who was at that time a bishop of the Church, and inquired of him what martyrs were in Sardinia. And he delivered to her the names of all, but did not give the name of Callistus, knowing the acts he had ventured upon. ... Now (the governor) was persuaded, and liberated Callistus also. And when the latter arrived at Rome, Victor was very much grieved at what had taken place; but since he was a compassionate man, he took no action in the matter. Guarding, however, against the reproach (uttered) by many—for the attempts made by this Callistus were not distant occurrences—and because Carpophorus also still continued adverse, Victor sends Callistus to take up his abode in Antium, having settled on him a certain monthly allowance for food. And after Victor’s death, Zephyrinus, having had Callistus as a fellow-worker in the management of his clergy, paid him respect to his own damage; and transferring this person from Antium, appointed him over the cemetery. ... Thus, after the death of Zephyrinus, supposing that he had obtained (the position) after which he so eagerly pursued, he excommunicated Sabellius, as not entertaining orthodox opinions.²⁰⁶

Hippolytus here speaks of “the episcopal throne,” singular, not plural, as something St. Callistus attained. But according to Hippolytus at the beginning of the story this throne belonged to “blessed Victor,” who was at that time a “bishop” of the Church. Marcia came to him to find out the list of martyrs who had been exiled to Sardinia, and he had this list. He also “took no action” when St. Callistus returned, even though apparently he had the authority to do so. Then Hippolytus again shows St. Victor’s authority in noting that St. Victor sent St. Callistus to work in Antium

(about 30 miles south of Rome) and established a monthly allowance for him. If St. Victor had been bishop only of a house church, he could not have exiled St. Callistus out of the city of Rome, but only out of the parish in which that house church was located.

Upon St. Victor's death (c. 199), according to Hippolytus, St. Zephyrinus took his place as bishop, and appointed Callistus (then still deacon) to care for the cemetery which became known as the [Catacomb of Saint Callistus](#).²⁰⁷ This was the first substantial property owned by the Church in Rome,²⁰⁸ and shows that the monepiscopacy that we see clearly in the second half of the second century could operate without the possession of Church property. And upon St. Zephyrinus's death, St. Callistus mounted or ascended the "episcopal throne" in AD 217. Through attaining this office, St. Callistus was able then to excommunicate the modalist Sabellius. That would be no problem for Sabellius if there had been more than one "episcopal throne" of the Catholic Church in Rome, for then he could just walk over to the next house church, and continue receiving the Eucharist. Hippolytus strongly opposed Sts. Zephyrinus and Callistus at the time, but even so he reveals the succession of bishops, writing:

At that time, Zephyrinus **imagines that he administers the affairs of the Church** — an uninformed and shamefully corrupt man. And he, being persuaded by proffered gain, was accustomed to connive at those who were present for the purpose of becoming disciples of Cleomenes. But (Zephyrinus) himself, being in process of time enticed away, hurried headlong into the same opinions; and he had Callistus as his adviser, and a fellow-champion of these wicked tenets. But the life of this (Callistus), and the heresy invented by him, I shall after a little explain. The school of these heretics **during the succession of such bishops**, continued to acquire strength and augmentation, from the fact that Zephyrinus and Callistus helped them to prevail.²⁰⁹

The story as described by Hippolytus thus indicates in multiple ways that there was a succession of monarchical bishops in Rome, from St. Victor, to St. Zephyrinus, to St. Callistus, and that this episcopal office gave its occupant the authority to exile an offending Christian from the city of Rome, and to excommunicate heretics. St. Irenaeus wrote a letter to Pope Victor, urging him to expel the writings of Florinus, a [mere] presbyter in the Church at Rome, who had fallen into the Valentinian error; a fragment of that letter exists to this day.²¹⁰ The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* notes the following: "Among other incidents of Victor's pontificate were the deposition of the presbyter Florinus for defending Valentinian doctrines and the excommunication of the leather merchant, Theodotus, the founder of Dynamic Monarchianism."²¹¹ Concerning this heretic Theodotus, Eusebius provides an account recorded by a contemporary of Pope Zephyrinus:

I will remind many of the brethren of a fact which took place in our time, which, had it happened in Sodom, might, I think, have proved a warning to them. There was a certain confessor, Natalius, not long ago, but in our own day.

This man was deceived at one time by Asclepiodotus and another Theodotus, a money-changer. Both of them were disciples of Theodotus, the cobbler, who, as I have said, was the first person excommunicated by Victor, bishop at that time, on account of this sentiment, or rather senselessness.

Natalius was persuaded by them to allow himself to be chosen bishop of this heresy with a salary, to be paid by them, of one hundred and fifty denarii a month.

When he had thus connected himself with them, he was warned oftentimes by the Lord through visions. For the compassionate God and our Lord Jesus Christ was not willing that a witness of his own sufferings, being cast out of the Church, should perish.

But as he paid little regard to the visions, because he was ensnared by the first position among them and by that shameful covetousness which destroys a great many, he was scourged by holy angels, and punished severely through

the entire night. Thereupon having risen in the morning, he put on sackcloth and covered himself with ashes, and with great haste and tears he fell down before Zephyrinus, the bishop, rolling at the feet not only of the clergy, but also of the laity; and he moved with his tears the compassionate Church of the merciful Christ. And though he used much supplication, and showed the welts of the stripes which he had received, yet scarcely was he taken back into communion.²¹²

This account again shows the bishop of Rome having authority, such that a mere presbyter (Natalius) in the Church at Rome, would repent not to a group of presbyter-bishops, but to one monepiscopal bishop, namely, Pope Zephyrinus.

Tertullian likewise confirms this awareness by the bishops of Rome their ecclesial authority when, writing after AD 213 during his Montanist period concerning St. Zephyrinus, says the following:

For after the Bishop of Rome had acknowledged the prophetic gifts of Montanus, Prisca, and Maximilla, and, in consequence of the acknowledgment, had bestowed his peace on the churches of Asia and Phrygia, he, by importunately urging false accusations against the prophets themselves and their churches, and insisting on the authority of the bishop's predecessors in the see, compelled him to recall the pacific letter which he had issued, as well as to desist from his purpose of acknowledging the said gifts. (*Against Praxeas*, c. 1)

Tertullian, writing in criticism of St. Zephyrinus, points out that St. Zephyrinus, in condemning Montanism, was "insisting on the authority of the bishop's predecessors in the see." This indicates that Pope St. Zephyrinus appealing to his authority as bishop, an authority known to be possessed by his predecessors, by which authority he made this judgment against Montanism. None of this would be intelligible if Brandon were correct that there was no monepiscopacy in Rome during the time of Hippolytus.

Hippolytus even gives evidence that disagrees with Brandon's claim that "the opponents [i.e., Hippolytus and St. Callistus] were not combating one another over a disputed episcopal chair," for Hippolytus says of St. Callistus, "supposing that he had obtained (the position) after which he so eagerly pursued." In other words, St. Hippolytus does not say that St. Callistus occupies some chair and Hippolytus occupies another chair. Rather, by saying "supposing that he had obtained," Hippolytus indicates that he does not entirely accept that St. Callistus is the rightful occupant of *the* chair. So when Brandon writes, "the Hippolytus affair seems to corroborate [the notion that] ... the entire Roman Church was not ruled over by a monarchical bishop," the data in question actually shows exactly the opposite. And if, as scholarship has contended, the Liberian Catalogue mentioned above draws the first two centuries of its list from that of Hippolytus, then not only did Hippolytus believe there to be an episcopal succession in Rome, he actually left a record of it, a record preserved in the first part of the Liberian Catalogue.

Hippolytus was the first antipope in Church history,²¹³ having set himself up as a rival to St. Callistus after St. Callistus received the episcopal throne in AD 217. Brandon's mistake here is treating an historical condition in which there is an antipope, as described from the point of view of that antipope, as though it is evidence that at that time there was not yet a monepiscopacy in Rome.

This episcopal throne of which St. Hippolytus writes around AD 217 is the same throne of which Tertullian wrote of around seventeen years earlier, saying:

Come now, if you would indulge a better curiosity in the business of your salvation, run through the apostolic Churches in which **the very thrones [cathedrae] of the Apostles** remain still in place; in which their own authentic writings are read, giving sound to the voice and recalling the faces of each. Achaia is near you, so you have Corinth. If you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi. If you can cross into Asia, you have Ephesus. 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, where Paul was crowned in a death like John's [the Baptist], where the Apostle John, after being immersed in boiling oil and suffering no hurt, was exiled to an island."²¹⁴

What Hippolytus indicates about the bishops of Rome occupying the episcopal chair fits precisely what Tertullian's earlier statement implying that there was in Rome a throne of the apostles, from which they had taught, and from which their successors continued to teach apostolic doctrine. For all these reasons, the case of Hippolytus not only does not support Brandon's thesis, but argues against it.

In the comments following his essay, Brandon returns to his claim that the existence of house churches in Rome indicates the non-existence of a monarchical bishop. He writes:

The reason something like a presbyterian model (notice that I have not capitalized it so as to bring in confusion) is the most accurate way to label the Roman church is because the church did have a consciousness of a catholicity. Even though there were house churches they regarded one another as members of the Christian body and part of the church at Rome. The presbyterian label is used because it explains how 1st Clement could be written, how Hermas could have his book read throughout the entire city of Rome as well as having someone from the church take his book and distribute it to others. These and factors are the reason that the presbyterian model provides the best explanatory power.²¹⁵

As has now been shown above, the existence of house churches in Rome, St. Clement's letter, and Hermas's book being read throughout the house churches in Rome, are all fully compatible with there being a bishop in Rome on the Chair of St. Peter. Because of the ILD principle these are not evidence for Brandon's thesis. Brandon concedes their compatibility with the falsehood of his thesis in the subsequent comment, writing:

Your final statement ... seems to say that the existence of house churches does not rule out the possibility of oversight of a bishop. I want to be as clear as possible: this is a conceptual possibility, but a conceptual possibility is not an historical argument. I've attempted to set forth a hypothesis based on the evidence that we have about church structure and that is that what we see is a plurality of leaders. Everything we see points towards leadership of the churches by house-churches while oversight over those churches was conducted when the churches would gather together and attempt to persuade false teachers against promulgating their doctrines. In order to see if this conceptual possibility is likely, an argument needs to be made showing how this possibility comports with the data we have about first and second century Roman Christianity.²¹⁶

Brandon thus grants that "the existence of house churches does not rule out the possibility of oversight of a bishop." His argument, however, is that the data points to there being a plurality of leaders. Of course, Catholics too grant that there were a plurality of leaders. So again this is not evidence for the presbyterial thesis and against there being an episcopal polity in the Church at Rome. As Paul Owen writes:

There seems to be the presumption that if there were a plurality of house churches in a city, they could not have been under the authority of a singular bishop (whose approval would be required for the sanctioning of their eucharists). But that does not at all follow. A bishop would not have to be bodily present in each specific assembly in order for them to be under his care, for presbyters could be appointed to stand in the place of the bishop in each gathering in any given city (cf. Smyrn. 8:1).²¹⁷

For this reason, given the ILD principle, none of the actual data Brandon points to is evidence that there was no monarchical bishop in Rome. This can be shown as well by the co-presence of the house churches during the period of time when Brandon agrees that there *was* a monarchical bishop in Rome. Just before the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313 there were more than twenty *tituli* (i.e., house churches) in Rome, each with its own priest (i.e., presbyter). Brandon refers to “the list of 40 churches [in Rome] given by Optatus of Mileve in 312 CE.”²¹⁸ The *tituli* were originally *ecclesiae domesticae* (“house churches”) that had later come to be called individually *domus Dei* (“house of God”), and then finally *tituli*.²¹⁹



Santa Maria in Trastevere

Recall that Brandon’s goal in writing his essay *was* “to prove that the Church of Rome was ruled by presbyters (and not by a monarchical bishop) until c. 150 AD.” But the house churches to which he appeals as evidence that there was no monarchical bishop in Rome continued to be used as the primary places of worship in Rome from AD 150 even to 312.²²⁰

Even in AD 312, no church building had been built in Rome as a parish church; the existing churches in Rome at the time were all houses that had been converted into churches; they were at that time called *tituli*. The first church building built in Rome as a church was St. John Lateran Cathedral Basilica, which Constantine gave to Pope Miltiades in AD 312, and which Pope Sylvester consecrated as a cathedral on November 9, in AD 324.²²¹ So if the presence of active house churches in Rome were actually evidence of there being no monarchical bishop in Rome, then the presence of house churches from AD 150 to 312 would be evidence that there was no monarchical bishop in Rome from AD 150 to 312. But we know (and Brandon agrees) that there *was* a monarchical bishop in Rome from AD 150 to 312. Therefore, the existence of house churches in Rome in the late first and early second centuries is not evidence that there was no monarchical bishop in Rome during that time.

Moreover, in AD 336 there were at least twenty eight house churches under Pope St. Julius I, again confirming that the presence of house churches in a city is fully compatible with the existence of a jurisdictional monepiscopacy in that city, and that the existence of house churches in Rome in the late first and early second centuries is not evidence for the non-existence of a monarchical bishop during that time period. In fact the house churches continued to be used for at least a century after Constantine, as is made clear in the video below:

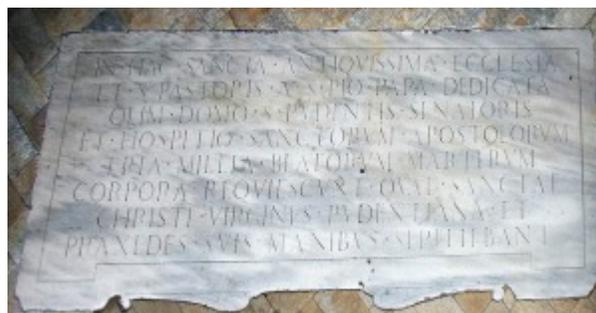
So the existence and use of house churches in Rome in the late first and early second centuries is not evidence that there was no Chair of St. Peter or monepiscopal bishop in Rome during that time.

(b.) Fractionation as Diocesan Parishes: An Alternative Perspective



An inscription in S. Pudenziana

The oldest of the *ecclesiae domesticae* (house churches) “in accordance with the most ancient Roman traditions, ... were those of Aquila and Prisca on the Aventine and the *Ecclesia Pudentiana* on the Viminal.”²²² An old internal tradition in the Church at Rome holds that when St. Peter came to Rome, he stayed at the house of the Pudens who is referred to by St. Paul in 2 Timothy 4:21. This Pudens is mentioned in St. Paul’s letter along with St. Linus as saints present with St. Paul in Rome who send their greeting to St. Timothy. According to this tradition, Pudens had been baptized by St. Peter, and was a leading figure in the Church at Rome, along with St. Linus. St. Peter stayed in the house of Pudens for some time (at least six or seven years, according to one tradition), and this house was used continually as a house church even into the fourth century, and restored by Pope Siricius toward the end of the fourth century.²²³ This house church came to be known as *Titulus Pudentis*, and later came to be called the Santa Pudenziana, possibly after Pudens’s daughter Pudenziana. From the earliest times in Roman Christian memory this church, located about two miles east of the Vatican, has been believed to be the most ancient church in Rome. Three thousand Christian martyrs lie buried in a well under it, interred there by Sts. Pudenziana and Praxedes.



The marble slab marking Pope Pius’s dedication of Santa Pudenziana

According to tradition, a chapel in the *Ecclesia Pudentianae* was consecrated for Christian worship by Pope Pius I at some point between AD 141 and 145.²²⁴ During the papacy of Pope St. Damasus (366-83) a basilica was built on top of the house (*domus*) of Pudens, called the [Basilica di Santa Pudenziana](#). And archaeology has confirmed that there is a first or second century *domus* (house) below this Basilica.²²⁵ The first-century origin of this house-church as a church is supported by its historic liturgical relation to St. John Lateran Cathedral. George Edmundson writes:



The Peter Chapel in Santa Pudenziana

The wooden altar at the St. John Lateran again has been in continuous use there since the fourth century, when it was removed from St. Pudentiana, and that despite the fact that Pope Sylvester in 312 A.D. ordered that all altars should henceforth be of stone. Many indeed had been so before, for the word *titulus* which signifies a consecrated parish church implies its possession of a stone altar. In the Church of St. Pudentiana at the present time there is preserved within the altar a single wood plank reputed to have been left at that church as a memorial when the altar itself was removed. When Cardinal Wiseman was titular cardinal of St. Pudentiana he had the plank examined and found that the wood was identical with that of the altar at the Lateran Church. The reason of its preservation was the tradition that this altar had been used by St. Peter when he celebrated the Eucharist in the oratory in Pudens' house. When St. John Lateran replaced St. Pudentiana as the Cathedral Church of Rome the bishop and the altar moved there together.²²⁶

The removal of the wooden altar from Santa Pudenziana to St. John Lateran indicates that the Church at Rome had preserved the memory of the location of St. Peter's first mass in Rome in that house.

Just over a mile southwest of Santa Pudenziana is Santa Prisca, the other church of the oldest *ecclesiae domesticae* mentioned above, namely, that of Aquila and Prisca on the Aventine, located about two miles southeast of the Vatican. Concerning this church, the *Catholic Encyclopedia* entry on St. Prisca says:



The marble slab marking the altar where St. Peter first celebrated the Eucharist in Rome

There still exists on the Aventine a church of St. Prisca. It stands on the site of a very early title church, the *Titulus Priscoe*, mentioned in the fifth century and built probably in the fourth. In the eighteenth century there was found near this church a bronze tablet with an inscription of the year 224, by which a senator named Caius Marius Pudens Cornelianus was granted citizenship in a Spanish city. As such tablets were generally put up in the house of the person so honoured, it is possible that the senator's palace stood on the spot where the church was built later. The assumption is probable that the Prisca who founded this title church, or who, perhaps as early as the third century, gave the use of a part of the house standing there for the Christian church services, belonged to the family of Pudens Cornelianus. Whether the martyr buried in the Catacomb of Priscilla belonged to the same family or was identical with the founder of the title church cannot be proved. Still some family relationship is probable, because the name Priscilla appears also in the senatorial family of the Acilii Glabriones, whose burial-place was in the Catacomb of

Priscilla on the Via Salaria. The “Martyrologium Hieronymianum” mentions under 18 January a martyr Priscilla on the Via Salaria (ed. De Rossi-Duchesne, 10). This Priscilla is evidently identical with the Prisca whose grave was in the Catacomb of Priscilla and who is mentioned in the itineraries of the seventh century.²²⁷

There is thus some evidence connecting Santa Prisca to the family of Pudens, and thus connecting the two house churches that later became known as Santa Pudenziana and Santa Prisca. In addition, fourth century records going back to AD 311 show that a feast of the Chair of St. Peter was being celebrated annually by Christians in Rome on the twenty-second of February, even before Constantine’s conversion. The Calendar of Philocalus, which lists events back to the year 311 includes this entry:

“VIII Kl. Martias: natale Petri de cathedra” (eighth day before the Calends of March, the birthday [i.e., feast] of the Chair of Peter).

And the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* includes the following regarding the eighteenth of January:

XV Kl. Feb. Cathedra sancti Petri apostoli qua primo Roma sedit.²²⁸

So even prior to Constantine, the Church in Rome was celebrating at least one, possibly two feasts of the Chair of St. Peter, one on January 18, and the other on February 22. This indicates at least that the Chair of St. Peter was something highly regarded by the Church at Rome. During the fourth century the feasts of the Chair of St. Peter were held at the Vatican Basilica and in a cemetery on the Via Salaria:

This double celebration was also held in two places, in the Vatican Basilica and in a cemetery (coemeterium) on the Via Salaria. At both places a chair (cathedra) was venerated which the Apostle had used as presiding officer of the assembly of the faithful. The first of these chairs stood in the Vatican Basilica, in the baptismal chapel built by Pope Damasus; the neophytes in albis (white baptismal robes) were led from the baptistery to the pope seated on this ancient cathedra, and received from him the consignatio, i.e., the Sacrament of Confirmation. Reference is made to this custom in an inscription of Damasus which contains the line: “una Petri sedes, unum verumque lavacrum” (one Chair of Peter, one true font of baptism). St. Ennodius of Pavia (d. 521) speaks of it thus (“Libellus pro Synodo”, near the end): “Ecce nunc ad gestatoriam sellam apostolicæ confessionis uda mittunt limina candidatos; et uberibus gaudio exactore fletibus collata Dei beneficio dona geminantur” (Behold now the neophytes go from the dripping threshold to the portable chair of the Apostolic confession; amid abundant tears called forth by joy the gifts of Divine grace are doubled). While therefore in the apse of the Vatican Basilica there stood a cathedra on which the pope sat amid the Roman clergy during the pontifical Mass, there was also in the same building a second cathedra from which the pope administered to the newly baptized the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Chair of St. Peter in the apse was made of marble and was built into the wall, that of the baptistery was movable and could be carried.²²⁹

The feast of January 18 was held in the [Catacomb of Priscilla](#) on the Via Salaria, about four miles northeast of the church of Santa Prisca, and also four miles northeast of the Vatican. This catacomb (or the villa above it at the time) is outside the city, and was celebrated as the place “ubi prius sedit sanctus Petrus, ubi Petrus baptizabat” (where Saint Peter first sat, where Peter baptized).²³⁰ But in the fourth century the feast of February 22 was held in St. Peter’s Basilica, where each year the Chair on which the Apostle Peter had sat was brought out from the baptismal chapel Pope Damasus had built, and venerated.

From whence did Pope Damasus move this Chair to St. Peter’s Basilica in the latter part of the fourth century? We do not have a direct historical account of the movement of the Chair. However, according to the *Catholic*

Encyclopedia article on the “[Chair of St. Peter](#),” there is some evidence that Pope Damasus may have moved this Chair from the Santa Prisca church:

We come now to the question, where stood originally the chair shown and venerated in the Vatican Basilica during the fourth century? On the strength of ancient tradition it has been customary to designate the church of Santa Pudenziana as the spot where, in the house of the supposed Senator Pudens, the two great Apostles not only received hospitable entertainment, but also held Christian services. But the legends connected with Santa Pudenziana do not offer sufficient guarantee for the theory that this church was the cathedral and residence of the popes before Constantine. At the close of his Epistle to the Romans (xvi, 5), St. Paul mentions a place where religious services were held, the house of Aquila and Prisca (*ten kat oikon auton ekklesian* — now Santa Prisca on the Aventine). Aquila and Prisca are first among the many to whom the Apostle sends salutations. Aquila’s connexion with the Catacomb of Priscilla is still shown by the epitaphs of that burial place. In 1776 there was excavated on the Aventine, near the present church of Santa Prisca, a chapel with frescoes of the fourth century; in these frescoes pictures of the two Apostles were still recognizable. Among the rubbish was also found a gilded glass with the figures of Peter and Paul. The feast of the dedication of this church (an important point) still falls on the same day as the above-described cathedra feast of 22 February; this church, therefore, continued to celebrate the traditional feast even after the destruction of the object from which it sprang. In the crypt of Santa Prisca is shown a hollowed capital, bearing in thirteenth-century letters the inscription: BAPTISMUS SANCTI PETRI (Baptism of Saint Peter), undoubtedly the echo of an ancient tradition of the administration of baptism here by Peter. In this way we have linked together a series of considerations which make it probable that the spot “*ubi secundo sedebat sanctus Petrus*” (where Saint Peter sat for the second time), must be sought in the present church of Santa Prisca; in other words, that the chair referred to by St. Damasus was kept there in the period before Constantine. It was there, consequently, that was celebrated the “*natale Petri de cathedrâ*,” (birthday of the chair of Peter) set for 22 February in the calendars beginning with the year 354. It follows also that this is the cathedra referred to in the oldest testimonia which speak of the chair from which Peter taught at Rome. The (third-century) poem, “*Adversus Marcionem*“, says (P.L., II, 1099):

*Hâc cathedrâ, Petrus quâ sederat ipse, locatum
Maxima Roma Linum primum considerare iussit.*
(On this chair, where Peter himself had sat,
great Rome first placed Linus and bade him sit.)

This same episcopal Chair, apparently, was referred to by St. Cyprian in the middle of the third century,²³¹ by St. Hippolytus in the early third century, by Tertullian around AD 200,²³² and by the Muratorian Fragment in the second half of the second century referring to the existence and occupation of the Chair in the AD 140s.

So we have an almost continuous line of positive documented testimonies regarding the presence in Rome of an episcopal Chair purported to be the Chair of St. Peter, and indicating a monarchical office from which authoritative judgments were made, from the fourth century to the first half of the second century. This preservation of the Apostolic Chair was not unique to Rome. According to Eusebius, Jerusalem preserved the cathedra of St. James. He writes:

The chair of James, who first received the episcopate of the church at Jerusalem from the Saviour himself and the apostles, and who, as the divine records show, was called a brother of Christ, has been preserved until now, the brethren who have followed him in succession there exhibiting clearly to all the reverence which both those of old times and those of our own day maintained and do maintain for holy men on account of their piety.²³³

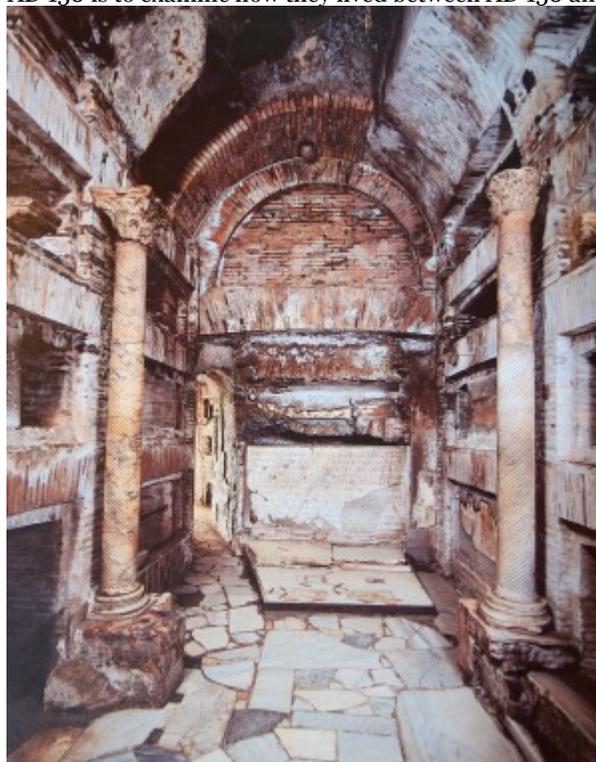
The Church in Alexandria also preserved the Chair of St. Mark.²³⁴ The point is not that the Chair of St. Peter was located in the house church that became Santa Prisca's from the end of the first century until the fourth century. Nor is the point that this Chair was located in one or more house churches from the time of St. Peter until it was moved to St. Peter's Basilica by Pope Damasus in the fourth century. Rather, the point is that in every instance in which the Chair of St. Peter in Rome is mentioned in the first four centuries, it refers to an office of episcopal authority functioning at that time. And just as the Chair could exist and be revered for two and a half centuries in house churches until Christianity was legalized under Constantine, so the episcopal office represented by the Chair could exist and function for two and a half centuries in and through house churches until the time of Constantine. Moreover, just as the necessity of working within and through house churches does not nullify the existence of the moniscopacy in Rome from AD 150 to AD 312, so likewise the necessity of working within and through house churches does not nullify the existence of the moniscopacy in Rome from the time of St. Peter until AD 150.

Additional historical data is also part of the broader context for rightly understanding the 'fractionation' data to which Brandon appeals. The *Liber Pontificalis*, which was compiled in the fifth or sixth century from prior documents, including the Liberian Catalogue and the Leonine Catalogue, records that St. Linus ordained eighteen presbyters. Regarding St. Cletus, it records that by the direction of blessed St. Peter he "*XXV presbiteros ordinavit in urbe Roma*" (ordained twenty-five presbyters in the city of Rome). The *Liber Pontificalis* records that "*fecit VII regiones, diuidit notariis fidelibus ecclesiae*" (he made seven districts and assigned them to faithful notaries of the church) for the purpose of recording the acts of the martyrs, and ordained "*presbiteros X, diaconos II*" (ten presbyters, two deacons). Giovanni Battista de Rossi has shown in his *Roma Sotterranea* that each of these seven districts was composed of two of the municipal regions in which Caesar Augustus had divided the city.²³⁵ Regarding Pope St. Evaristus, the *Liber Pontificalis* records "*Hic titulos in urbe Roma diuidit presbiteris et VII diaconos ordinavit*" (He divided the *tituli* [i.e., parish churches] in the city of Rome among the priests, and ordained seven deacons). Each bishop of Rome would not only ordain presbyters and deacons for the churches in Rome, but would also ordain bishops for the surrounding cities.²³⁶

This positive account, though the earliest surviving documents are from the fifth and sixth centuries, shows that there is another available explanation of the 'fractionation' data to which Brandon appeals. The plurality of house churches in Rome is not evidence that there was no moniscopacy in Rome because such a plurality is exactly what is present where a bishop is shepherding his particular diocese under conditions in which Christianity is illegal, and the hierarchical unity these house churches enjoy on account of the bishop is not visible to the secular eye. For example, the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix was written no earlier than AD 176, because of its reference to Fronto, who died shortly after AD 175.²³⁷ It can therefore be dated broadly between AD 176 and AD 250. So the *Octavius* was written during the time when, according to Brandon, there was already a moniscopate in Rome. However, notice the way in which Christian worship appeared from the perspective of a Roman pagan named Caecilius:

I purposely pass over many things, for those that I have mentioned are already too many; and that all these, or the greater part of them, are true, the obscurity of their vile religion declares. For why do they endeavour with such pains to conceal and to cloak whatever they worship, since honourable things always rejoice in publicity, while crimes are kept secret? Why have they no altars, no temples, no acknowledged images? Why do they never speak openly, never congregate freely, unless for the reason that what they adore and conceal is either worthy of punishment, or something to be ashamed of? Moreover, whence or who is he, or where is the one God, solitary, desolate, whom no free people, no kingdoms, and not even Roman superstition, have known? The lonely and miserable nationality of the Jews worshipped one God, and one peculiar to itself; but they worshipped him openly, with temples, with altars, with victims, and with ceremonies; and he has so little force or power, that he is enslaved, with his own special nation, to the Roman deities. But the Christians, moreover, what wonders, what monstrosities do they feign!—that he who is their God, whom they can neither show nor behold, inquires diligently into the character of all, the acts of all, and, in fine, into their words and secret thoughts.²³⁸

Clearly, as described by a pagan, during the time in which Brandon acknowledges there was a moniscopacy in Rome, the Christians worshipped in a clandestine manner. The official status of Christianity within the Roman empire changed in AD 311 when the Edict of Toleration was issued, ending the Roman persecution of Christians. This was followed shortly by the Edict of Milan in AD 313, legalizing Christianity.²³⁹ So one way to understand how the bishops of Rome lived prior to AD 150 is to examine how they lived between AD 150 and 311.



The Crypt of the Popes

Pope St. Caius (AD 283-296), for example, apparently lived at least some of his pontificate in his own house, which was connected to the house of the presbyter Gabinus (or Gavinius), where St. Susanna, Pope Caius's niece, was martyred.²⁴⁰ He was buried in the catacomb of St. Callistus, and in the 1800s the famous archaeologist Giovanni Battista de Rossi discovered in this catacomb the broken tablet bearing his name, marking the place where his body had been laid. In 1622 Pope St. Caius's relics were moved from the catacomb of St. Callistus to the Roman Church of San Caio (Saint Caius), which had been built on his house. Until Christianity was made legal, no buildings intended for Christian worship could be built. For this reason, from AD 150 to the time of Constantine, a period of 161 years during which Brandon acknowledges there was a moniscopacy in Rome, each bishop of Rome lived either in a house or a house-church that had been dedicated secretly by the Christians as a church, and carried out his episcopal function from that 'fractionated' condition. During that 161 year period, the carrying out of the episcopal function was not made impossible or improbable by the plurality of house churches and the non-existence of a publicly designated cathedral building owned by the Church. And yet this is exactly the sort of data from AD 70 – 150 to which Brandon appeals as though it were evidence that there was no moniscopacy in Rome prior to AD 150.

In his work titled "The Apostolic Tradition," which St. Hippolytus of Rome wrote around AD 215, he describes the pattern of the clerical practice in Rome, writing:

The deacons and elders shall meet daily at the place which the bishop appoints for them. The deacons especially should not fail to meet every day, except when illness prevents them. When all have assembled, they shall teach all those who are in the assembly. Then, after having prayed, each one shall go to the work assigned to him.²⁴¹

This was written while Christianity was still illegal, and around the same general time when Minucius Felix wrote his *Octavius*, quoted above, regarding the clandestine way in which Christians in Rome worshipped, with no cathedral, no publicly designated church buildings, and no publicly designated diocesan center. The presbyters and deacons would meet daily at a place designated by the bishop. After a time of teaching and prayer, each would then go to the work assigned to him. This indicates that the bishop governed the diocese but not in a public way. He would designate the place for the presbyters and deacons to meet, and they were under his authority, with particular work he assigned to each one. But from an outward, public perspective, the Church in Rome would appear fractionated, while internally it was under the authority of a monepiscopal bishop. Indeed, although St. Hippolytus wrote his “Apostolic Tradition” around AD 215, as discussed above, Brandon appeals to St. Hippolytus’s “Refutation of all Heresies,” written around AD 225, to argue that there was no monepiscopacy at that time. So this shows that the fractionation to which Brandon appeals, not only in AD 225, but also from AD 68 through AD 150, is fully compatible with there being a monepiscopacy in Rome, and is not evidence for the non-existence of a monepiscopacy in Rome during that time. In this sort of way, during that whole time period, the bishop of Rome could exercise authority over the presbyters and deacons functioning in the house-churches in each of the parishes within the diocese of Rome.



Pope Damasus Inscription

Another piece of evidence is found in relation to the tombs of the leaders of the Church at Rome. What we do not find in the tombs is evidence that at any time in the history of the Church at Rome, including prior to AD 150, there were at the same time multiple leaders of equal supreme authority and honor. There is no burial record of two or more presbyter-bishops that had served simultaneously with equal supreme authority, and whose tombs were subsequently honored and memorialized equally by the Church at Rome. There is no evidence that the tombs of the [mere] presbyters who served prior to AD 150 were ever accorded the same degree of honor as were those of the bishops of that time period. Nor does the evidence show any shift in the burial custom of Church leaders who served prior to AD 150, and those who served from AD 150 and following. The *Liber Pontificalis* records not only that St. Peter was buried in the Vatican necropolis, but also that eleven of the thirteen popes of the first two centuries were buried there as well: St. Linus, St. Cletus, St. Evaristus, St. Xystus, St. Telesphorus, St. Hyginus, St. Pius, St. Anicetus, St. Soter, St. Eleutherius, and St. Victor.²⁴² This public claim indicates that at the time, these tombs were known to be located in the Vatican. In 1615, workers digging near the tomb of St. Peter discovered a burial slab marked “Linus.” Unfortunately the slab was broken, so that the letters “Linus” could have been part of a longer name.²⁴³ George Edmundson writes the following about that excavation:

Excavations made near the Great Altar of St. Peter's in the early seventeenth century by Paul V and Urban VIII revealed many interesting facts. A large coffin was found made of great slabs of marble containing a mass of half-charred bones and ashes, pointing to the probability that Peter was interred close by the remains of the martyrs who had perished as living torches at the Neronian Vatican fête. All round the 'Confessio' in which the Apostle's relics were supposed to rest were placed coffins side by side against the ancient walls, containing bodies swathed in Jewish fashion. On the slabs that covered them were no inscriptions, save in one case where the name Linus could be deciphered.²⁴⁴

Whether these coffins uncovered in the seventeenth century were those of the bishops of Rome during the first two centuries, we do not know. That these bodies were "swathed in Jewish fashion" would fit this explanation. But the identity of the bodies of these bishops was sufficiently known to the Church at Rome at an earlier period that even in 1132, Pope St. Xystus's (AD 115-125) remains could be located, and transported to the city of Alatri, as we explain below.

Brandon's thesis requires that we posit that around AD 150 the Church at Rome not only falsely and retroactively elevated the honor of the tombs of one presbyter-bishop over the others in each fictional papal term of service from AD 68-150, but also that in her cult of the dead she falsely demoted all the other presbyter-bishops who had possessed equal authority to the 'popes,' and served simultaneously with them up to AD 150. Brandon's thesis presupposes that the alleged falsification of Church history of which he accuses Sts. Hegesippus and Irenaeus was as simple as making a list composed of names of known prior presbyter-bishops. But Brandon's accusation requires a conspiracy on a grand scale, by which the Christians of the Church at Rome posthumously and arbitrarily demoted the honor of the tombs of all but one of the presbyter-bishops in each 'fictional' papal period, while arbitrarily but unanimously elevating the honor of the tomb of one such presbyter-bishop.²⁴⁵

And we know that the Christians in Rome took seriously the veneration of Christian saints. In AD 107 Christians in Rome took up the remains of St. Ignatius, and triumphantly carried them back to Antioch. They who did so wrote, "For only the harder portions of his holy remains were left, which were conveyed to Antioch and wrapped in linen, as an inestimable treasure left to the holy Church by the grace which was in the martyr."²⁴⁶ This is why the native Antiochian St. John Chrysostom, speaking in a homily to the Antiochian Christians in the late fourth century, could actually point to the bones of St. Ignatius:

When, therefore, he [St. Ignatius] made an end of life there, yea rather, when he ascended to heaven, he departed henceforward crowned. For this also happened through the dispensation of God, that he restored him again to us, and distributed the martyr to the cities. For that city received his blood as it dropped, but you were honoured with his remains, you enjoyed his episcopate, they enjoyed his martyrdom. They saw him in conflict, and victorious, and crowned, but you have him continually. For a little time God removed him from you, and with greater glory granted him again to you. And as those who borrow money, return with interest what they receive, so also God, using this valued treasure of yours, for a little while, and having shown it to that city, with greater brilliancy gave it back to you. You sent forth a Bishop, and received a martyr; ye sent him forth with prayers, and you received him with crowns; and not only ye, but all the cities which intervene. For how do ye think that they behaved when they saw his remains being brought back? What pleasure was produced! How they rejoiced! With what applause on all sides they beset the crowned one! For as with a noble athlete, who has wrestled down all his antagonists, and who comes forth with radiant glory from the arena, the spectators receive him, and do not suffer him to tread the earth, bringing him home on their shoulders, and besetting him with countless praises: so also the cities in order receiving this saint then from Rome, and bearing him upon their shoulders as far as this city, escorted the crowned one with praises, celebrating the champion, in song; laughing the Devil to scorn, because his artifice was turned against him, and what he thought to do against the martyr, this turned out for his behoof. Then, indeed, he profited, and encouraged all the cities; and from that time to this day he enriches this city, and as some perpetual treasure, drawn upon every day, yet not failing,

makes all who partake of it more prosperous, so also this blessed Ignatius fills those who come to him with blessings, with boldness, nobleness of spirit, and much courage, and so sends them home.

Not only today, therefore, but every day let us go forth to him, plucking spiritual fruits from him. For it is, it is possible for him who comes hither with faith to gather the fruit of many good things. For not the bodies only, but the very sepulchres of the saints have been filled with spiritual grace. For if in the case of Elisha this happened, and a corpse when it touched the sepulchre, burst the bands of death and returned to life again, (2 Kings 13:21) much rather now, when grace is more abundant, when the energy of the spirit is greater, is it possible that one touching a sepulchre, with faith, should win great power; thence on this account God allowed us the remains of the saints, wishing to lead by them us to the same emulation, and to afford us a kind of haven, and a secure consolation for the evils which are ever overtaking us. Wherefore I beseech you all, if any is in despondency, if in disease, if under insult, if in any other circumstance of this life, if in the depth of sins, let him come hither with faith, and he will lay aside all those things, and will return with much joy, having procured a lighter conscience from the sight alone.²⁴⁷

The disposition of the Christians of Smyrna toward St. Polycarp was the same, as the account of his martyrdom recounts:

Accordingly, we afterwards took up his bones, as being more precious than the most exquisite jewels, and more purified than gold, and deposited them in a fitting place, whither, being gathered together, as opportunity is allowed us, with joy and rejoicing, the Lord shall grant us to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom, both in memory of those who have already finished their course, and for the exercising and preparation of those yet to walk in their steps.²⁴⁸



The Altar in the Basilica of S. Clemente, Rome

Given this attitude toward the remains of her heroes, the Church in Rome would not fail to give due honor and remembrance to her leaders, as was the custom of Roman culture. But the burial records from the Church of Rome never show two or more presbyter-bishops having served with supreme ecclesial authority at the same time. They show only the existence of a monepiscopacy. Pope St. Clement's (AD 88-97) remains rest in the [Basilica San Clemente](#) in Rome, which was built over a [first century house church](#) that may have belonged to St. Clement's family or patron.²⁴⁹ Of this Church, one of the twenty-five original *tituli* in Rome St. Jerome wrote in 392-392, "*nominis eius [Clementis] memoriam usque hodie Romae exstructa ecclesia custodit*" (a church built at Rome preserves the memory of his [Clement's] name unto this day).²⁵⁰ If this house church belonged to the family of St. Clement, it is possible that he may have lived there during his episcopacy. But there is no burial record or relics of other presbyter-bishops who served simultaneously with St. Clement, and possessed authority equal to him.

Similarly, regarding Pope St. Alexandria (AD 105-115), the [Liber Pontificalis](#) records: *Qui etiam sepultus est uia Numentana, ubi decollatus est, ab urbe Roma non longe, miliario VII, V nonas Mai* (He also was buried on the via Numentana, where he was beheaded, not more than seven miles from the city of Rome). A subterranean cemetery of Sts. Alexander, Eventulus, and Theodulus was discovered at this location in 1855, and some archaeologists think this is the tomb of Pope Alexander.

Pope Sixtus's (AD 115-125) remains presently are divided between the [Cathedral of Alatri](#), about fifty miles east-southeast from Rome, and the [Cathedral of Alife](#), about 69 miles further southeast. His remains were transported to Alatri from Rome in a public and celebrated way in AD 1132. Each year on the Wednesday after Easter, as explained at the first link, the Christians of Alatri and Alife process through the city of Alatri carrying a statue of Pope St. Sixtus, as can be seen in the following video of that procession in 2012:²⁵¹

We have spoken above in some detail about Pope St. Anicetus (155-166). Valentinus was indignant that St. Anicetus, rather than himself, had been elected. St. Anicetus was the bishop when St. Polycarp came to Rome, when they discussed the date of Easter, and celebrated the Eucharist together. He was therefore in a similar position to St. Irenaeus, in having directly conversed with one who was discipled by apostles. St. Anicetus was the bishop when St. Hegesippus arrived in Rome. He was the bishop when St. Justin Martyr was martyred in AD 165. What about his burial?



The Sarcophagus of Pope St. Anicetus

The Altemps Palace (Piazza Navona), Rome

Pope St. Anicetus (AD 155-166) was originally buried next to St. Peter in the Vatican, but later his remains were moved to the cemetery of St. Callistus. In 1604 Pope Clement VIII gave permission for his remains to be exhumed. Duke Giovanni Angelo placed his body in a chapel in his palace in Altemps, where it remains to this day.²⁵² (See the graphic at right.)

At some point in the third century, the bodies of Sts. Peter and Paul were moved to the catacombs at what is now known as the catacombs of S. Sebastiano Fuori le Mura [St. Sebastian Outside the Walls]; the Constantinian church built on the site was originally called the Basilica Apostolorum. The temporary transfer of their bodies to this catacomb is supported by the fourth-century inscription of Pope Damasus in the catacomb, the *Liber Pontificalis*, and archaeological evidence showing about 190 ancient pilgrim graffiti with invocations to Sts. Peter and Paul such as “*Paule et Petre petite pro Victore*” (“Paul and Peter, pray for Victor”) and “*Paule Petre in mente habete Sozemenum*” (“Paul and Peter, keep Sozemenum in mind”). Many are signed, and one shows a consular date that translates to AD 260.²⁵³

Pope Damasus’s inscription on one of the marble plaques over the place they were laid is as follows:

*Hic habitasse prius sanctos cognoscere debes
Nomina quisque Petri pariter Paulique requiris.
Discipulos oriens misit quod sponte fatemur,
Sanguinis ob meritum Christum qui per astra secuti
Aetherios petiere sinus regnaque piorum
Roma suos potius meruit defendere cives
Haec Damasus vestras referat nova sidera laudes.*²⁵⁴

which translates as:

Here, you should know, previously abided saints,
Their names, you may learn, were Peter and likewise Paul.
The East sent these Disciples, which we freely acknowledge
For Christ's sake and the merit of His blood they followed Him through the stars
They sought the heavenly realm and the kingdom of the righteous.
Rome was deemed worthy to preserve them as her citizens.
May Damasus offer them these verses, new stars, in their praise.

The *Liber Pontificalis*, under the record of Pope Cornelius (AD 251-253), records the following:

Hic temporibus suis, rogatus a quodam matrona Lucina, corpora apostolorum beati Petri et Pauli de Catacumbas leuauit noctu : primum quidem corpus beati Pauli accepto beata Lucina posuit in praedio suo, uia Ostense, iuxta locum ubi decollatus est ; beati Petri accepit corpus beatus Cornelius episcopus et posuit iuxta locum ubi crucifixus est, inter corpora sanctorum episcoporum, in templum Apollinis, in monte Aureum, in Vaticanum palatii Neronis, III kal. Iul. (In his time, at the request of a certain matron Lucina, he [Cornelius] took up the bodies of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul from the Catacombs by night. First the body of the blessed Paul was received by the blessed Lucina, and placed in her own garden on the via Ostiensis, beside the place where he was beheaded. The body of the blessed Peter was received by bishop Cornelius and placed beside the place where he was crucified, between the bodies of the holy bishops, in the shrine of Apollo, on Mons Aureus, in the Vatican by the palace of Nero, June 29.)



**“Paul and Peter, pray for Victor”
In the Catacomb of St. Sebastian**

The “*corpora sanctorum episcoporum*” referred to here cannot be the bodies of the third century bishops, because none of the third century bishops before St. Cornelius [i.e., St. Zephyrinus (199-217), St. Callistus (217-22), St. Urban (222-30), St. Pontian (230-35), St. Anterus (235-36) and St. Fabian (236-50)] were buried in the Vatican.²⁵⁵ So the bishops referred to here must be from the first and second century. It would not make sense to start burying Church leaders next to the body of St. Peter only after AD 150. The burial of the bishops of the second half of the second century in the Vatican indicates that the practice in Rome of burying Church leaders in the Vatican next to St. Peter had continued from the first century. Moreover, the comment by Caius to Proclus, at the beginning of the third century adds a context related to the early Church of Rome's understanding of the relation of her bishops to St. Peter. About a hundred and thirty years after the deaths of Sts. Peter and Paul, Caius writes:

But I can show the trophies of the apostles. For if you will go to the Vatican or to the Ostian way, you will find the trophies of those who laid the foundations of this church. (*Church History II*.25.7)

St. Peter had been buried in the Vatican, near where he had been crucified upside down. But St. Paul had been buried on the via Ostiensis, at the place now marked by the [Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls](#). None of the bishops of Rome in the first two centuries were buried next to St. Paul. Of the thirteen bishops of Rome following St. Peter in the first two centuries, all except St. Clement (who was exiled, and died in the Black Sea), and St. Alexander (who was beheaded seven miles from Rome) were buried in the Vatican next to St. Peter. This indicates that from the beginning these bishops, and the Church that buried them, saw themselves as carrying on St. Peter's office. If St. Peter and St. Paul had exercised a Presbyterian polity with parity of authority over the Church at Rome, we would expect the presbyter-bishops of Rome to be buried next to both St. Peter *and* St. Paul. The fact that the bishops of Rome were buried *only* beside St. Peter, and not beside St. Paul, already implies a monepiscopal polity.

If the location and identity of the “*corpora sanctorum episcoporum*” (bodies of the holy bishops) from the first and second centuries were known to the author and audience of the *Liber Pontificalis*, *a fortiori* they were known to the third century Christians in Rome. These leaders were considered saints. For example, St. Irenaeus knew of the glorious martyrdom of St. Telesphorus by the Emperor Hadrian in AD 136.²⁵⁶ When the persons in question have all been buried in a publicly accessible and regularly visited cemetery within the previous century, revising history about them is not as easy as making up a list on paper. When the cult of the saints is added to that picture such that the names and locations of the bodies of all the Church leaders of the previous one hundred years are well known and visited as regularly as the Christians of Rome visited the tomb of St. Peter and celebrating mass over their remains, re-writing Church history from a Presbyterian to a monepiscopal polity, by making up a false list of bishops, is practically impossible. It would require changing all the tombs from being groups of Presbyterian leaders who served together with equal supreme jurisdictional authority, to that of successive monepiscopal bishops. And because of the cult of the saints, such a change would require the conspiratorial cooperation of all the Christians of Rome to go along with the plan. In short, Brandon's thesis involves a conspiracy theory on a grand scale, in which all the Christians of Rome (a city swarming with the coming and going of travelers and pilgrims) to keep silent about this revision of history and alteration of all the tombs of her leaders from her first eighty years of existence (AD 70 to AD 150).

At this point it is worth returning to something Brandon claims in section II of his essay, a section titled “II. The Protestant and Catholic Interpretive Paradigms.” There he writes:

Is it true that our disagreement about the value of the historical evidence is attributable to our competing Protestant/Catholic interpretive paradigms? The fact is that the acceptance of fractionation in Roman Christianity and the development of the office of the episcopate (in the threefold sense) are nearly unanimous in modern Roman Catholic scholarship. We will look at the evidence in the next section (and it must be viewed on its own right), but some of the statements from Roman Catholic scholars will serve to show that this is not a Protestant idiosyncrasy.

Brandon's point, in response to Michael Liccione, is that to arrive at his [i.e. Brandon's] conclusion from the historical evidence, one does not need to presuppose the Protestant paradigm. Brandon's support for this claim is the fact that certain Catholic scholars arrive at positions very much like his own regarding early polity in Rome and elsewhere. But Michael never claimed that in order to arrive at Brandon's Presbyterian conclusion concerning early Church polity, one must presuppose the Protestant interpretive paradigm. Rather, what Michael Liccione claimed is that the impossibility of *demonstrating* (which is a technical term) the truths of apostolic succession in the early Church and St. Peter being the first bishop of Rome is not a problem in the Catholic paradigm, because the motives of credibility need not get us to the level of demonstration, but only to moral certainty through a preponderance of the evidence. So

regarding the “acceptance of fractionation in Roman Christianity and the development of the office of the episcopate (in the threefold sense),” there are two things to say.

First, there is a way of understanding the development of the office of the episcopate that is perfectly orthodox; we have laid out that way in some detail both in this present article and in Tim Troutman’s article “[Holy Orders and the Sacrificial Priesthood](#).” According to this account, the apostles first ordained bishops and deacons, just as St. Clement describes, and then as the apostles died off, these bishops ordained mere presbyters to assist them, and preserve the threefold order that had existed under the apostles. Conceptually, even the development of jurisdictional monepiscopacy would not be contrary to Catholic orthodoxy.

Second, if by ‘fractionation’ one conceives of a particular Church with many parishes and no bishop, then drawing from the data the conclusion that the Church in Rome was fractionated during its first eighty or so years is not necessarily the result of a Protestant interpretive paradigm, only poor reasoning from the historical data. If, however, by ‘fractionation’ one conceives of the diversity described above, which is fully compatible with there having been a monepiscopacy in Rome, then this interpretation too is not necessarily the result of a Protestant interpretive paradigm. So either way, we agree with Brandon that arriving at a fractionation interpretation of the historical data is not necessarily the result of making use of or relying upon the Protestant interpretive paradigm.

Nevertheless, the Catholic faith and practice is not gnostic; it is deeply and inextricably bound up with matter, bones, tombs, lives, families, death days, calendars, monuments, relics, feast days and memorials. It also always incorporated the communion of the saints and the cult of the dead. For this reason, Brandon’s proposal is conceivable only from a non-sacramental, non-material, non-liturgical point of view, such that all that is necessary to revise radically and essentially the previous eighty years of Church history is for someone like St. Hegesippus or St. Irenaeus to make up the revision on paper. In this way, what Brandon proposes of St. Irenaeus presupposes a gnostic conception of Catholic faith, precisely what St. Irenaeus so vigorously battled. The faith and practice of the early Christians in Rome, bound up with matter and history in the way just described, makes this revisionary thesis incompatible with the historical data. Not only does the broader context and positive data explain the ‘fractionation’ data as the mode of operation of monepiscopacy during a time when Christianity was illegal, but the data also shows that Brandon’s thesis would require much more than St. Hegesippus or St. Irenaeus putting down some names on paper. It would require a grand conspiracy, comparable to getting all the employees of NASA to fake the Moon landing, and no one coming forward to reveal it, and no outsider finding out. Only by way of a positivist historical methodology that violates at least one of our four principles can such a thesis seem plausible, as we explain below.

6. Evaluative Summary

a. Summary of evaluation of Brandon’s argument

At this point we have analyzed and evaluated every piece of historical data Brandon brought forward in support of his thesis. We have examined every piece of data Brandon presented from the book of Acts, the Pastorals, the Catholic Epistles, as well as from *1 Clement*, St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and St. Justin Martyr. We have showed that each piece of data is not only fully compatible with the truth of Catholic doctrine, but also that given the ILD principle, none of this data is evidence for Brandon’s thesis. That is true not only for the data taken individually, but also taken conjunctively, again, because of the ILD principle. Likewise, we showed that none of the data to which Brandon points in relation to Sts. Hegesippus and Irenaeus is evidence that the lists of bishops of Rome they provided are not truthful. Finally, we showed that the fractionation data to which Brandon appealed is not evidence that there was no monepiscopacy in Rome between the death of St. Peter and AD 150.

How then does Brandon reach his conclusion? Reading through our evaluation of each piece of data to which Brandon appeals shows a pattern involving the repetition of a few mistakes. One repeated mistake is failing to recognize ways in which the data fits an alternative paradigm, and thus treating such data as evidence for his own position, in violation of the ILD principle. For example, Brandon writes:

My argument is that all of the relevant data explicitly states that the Roman church was led by a plurality of presbyters.”²⁵⁷

If that were actually the thesis of Brandon’s essay, then every Catholic could affirm it, because there being a plurality of presbyters is fully compatible with there being a bishop accompanied by many mere presbyters, or multiple bishops (one having supreme jurisdictional authority) accompanied by mere presbyters.

A second repeated mistake is attempting to use silence as evidence when that silence does not satisfy all the conditions necessary for silence to carry evidential weight, as we have shown repeatedly above.

A third common mistake is artificially restricting the scope of relevant data to create silence, and then using an argument from that constructed silence to infer discontinuity with proximate data, in violation of the fourth principle we laid out above. Brandon does this, for example, in attempting to argue that St. Polycarp was not a bishop. He does this as well by arbitrarily limiting the relevant data regarding the polity of the early Church in Rome only to five patristic texts composed prior to AD 165, and then using arguments from non-evidential silence in those texts to discredit and reject positive data from both the second half of the second century, and from the early third century, that fills in the silence of those earlier works concerning the succession of bishops from St. Peter. Brandon writes:

My case is that there is absolutely no evidence that anything like a bishop exists. ... First of all, I am not “extrapolating from silence.” I’m taking the evidence we do have and forming conclusions based on that evidence.²⁵⁸

Brandon creates the appearance of there being “absolutely no evidence” for anything like a bishop in Rome not only by failing to notice how that data would fit with there being such a bishop (e.g. St. Clement’s actions with regard to the Church at Corinth), but also by restricting what counts as evidence only to a handful of texts written during the early second century, using non-evidential silence within those texts, and disallowing or discrediting all other proximate data that informs and contextualizes that silence.

This is a positivist methodology of historiography, presupposing that there is no evidence for an event or entity at time t , unless there exists presently documents written at time t about that event or entity. Positivism in general is a stance of disbelief in certain legitimate ways of knowing, and the attempt to prohibit these ways of knowing from being treated as legitimate or able rightly to relate us epistemically to reality. For this reason, positivism in general is a form of skepticism. Positivist historical methodology is likewise a philosophical form of skepticism, because it artificially and unjustifiably disallows proximate data to count as evidence. Brandon adopts this philosophy in practice by arbitrarily restricting the temporal scope of data allowed to count as evidence, and then treating anything written outside that stipulated temporal scope as untrustworthy for providing insight into the conditions within that time period, and therefore the positive evidence from proximate data is made to seem to be refuted by arguments from non-evidential silence drawn from the data inside that restricted temporal scope. In this way the method presupposes discontinuity, and thus its results entail discontinuity. The discontinuity it ‘finds’ is loaded into its very methodology.

For this reason the evidence concerning the Church in Rome from AD 70 to AD 165 cannot rightly be interpreted in isolation. That is, if all the other particular Churches had bishops, then it would be very odd that the Church in Rome

had none, especially given that the first records of the moniscopacy in Rome show it to be fully present, and show no evidence of a break with a presbyterial past, and all the records from AD 70 to AD 165 are fully compatible with there being a monarchical bishop in Rome. That's an explanatory problem for the positivist historiographical approach to the succession of bishops in Rome. Because of his positivist methodology, Brandon claims that it is a "fact" that "there are no successors to the Petrine office."²⁵⁹ He seems not to realize that this "fact" is a result of a number of mistakes in historical methodology.

A fourth mistake is the selective use of data, resulting in special pleading. In addition to the cases already cited, Brandon makes selective use of data in the following cases. In [Comment #59](#) Brandon relies on St. Jerome (who died in the fifth century), over against St. Ignatius of Antioch, who died around AD 107, to argue against the threefold distinction in office. Brandon selectively uses the *Shepherd* of Hermas, affirming what he says about presbyters, but denying the "communion of saints" doctrine revealed in the opening narrative between Hermas and Rhoda. When Paul Owen pointed out in [Comment #50](#) the same problem regarding the silence of John in Revelation 2-3 concerning the existence of officers in those churches, Brandon replied:

We can certainly assume there were church officers in the churches that John writes to because we see them mentioned everywhere in Scripture.²⁶⁰

In the case of Revelation 2-3, Brandon allows proximate data to fill in the silence. But in the case of the silence of the five patristic texts from the early second century regarding the succession of bishops in Rome, Brandon does not allow proximate data to fill in the silence. That's special pleading.

Also in [Comment #59](#), in response to Paul Owen pointing out that the same appeal to silence, from St. Paul's not mentioning presbyters in Romans 16, would vitiate Brandon's claim that there were presbyters in the Church of Rome, Brandon writes in reply:

Making a suppositions about the leadership position of the owner of a house gathering and assuming that Clement is a bishop in Rome are in a completely different category, however. We can make assumptions about the former because Paul often addresses leaders in churches and those whom he addresses seem to play an important role in the church. In terms of the latter though, there is no mention of a monarchical bishop, much less that the author of Clement was that person. It is possible but it is not plausible.²⁶¹

Brandon thinks we can justifiably "make assumptions" in this case (i.e., Romans 16) that there were presbyters there, because St. Paul "often addresses leaders in churches." So Brandon allows evidence from other places in St. Paul's writings to inform St. Paul's silence in Romans 16 concerning the existence of presbyters in Rome. Yet Brandon does not allow evidence from other places (e.g. Jerusalem, Antioch, Smyrna, etc.) and texts to inform our interpretation of the plurality of presbyters mentioned in Hermas. Again, that is special pleading.

A fifth mistake is presupposing what is unique to the Protestant paradigm, in order to argue for the Protestant paradigm. For example, Brandon uses the [BDAG](#) lexicon in [Comment #102](#) to deny that St. Peter held the episcopal office, and thus begs the question against the Catholic paradigm by methodologically preferencing the lexicon over the Tradition in the way I [Bryan] explained in 2010.²⁶² In [Comment #127](#), responding to Paul Owen, Brandon writes, "I agree with BDAG, generally speaking, while you agree with BAGD."²⁶³ By contrast, on the question of the apostolic occupancy of the episcopal office St. Cyprian writes:

But deacons ought to remember that the Lord chose apostles, that is, bishops and overseers; while apostles appointed for themselves deacons after the ascent of the Lord into heaven, as ministers of their episcopacy and of the Church.²⁶⁴

And likewise St. Chrysostom in his Homily 3 on the Acts of the Apostles similarly shows that that the episcopal office held by the Apostles, including Judas, and then by Matthias, is continued in the bishops, including St. Chrysostom himself.²⁶⁵ This belief is part of the Tradition preserved in the Church Fathers, namely, that the episcopacy held by the Apostles is carried on by the bishops. Brandon seeks to answer this question by way of a lexicon, as if the Tradition is either unreliable or has nothing to say about the question. But that methodology begs the question, by presupposing something approaching “solo scriptura.”²⁶⁶

Given that the Apostles exercised distinct *episcopē* in the churches, the “silent period” regarding bishops in Rome, i.e., the period between the deaths of the apostolic leaders of the Church in Rome (Sts. Peter and Paul, note the latter’s deference to “another man’s foundation”) and the compilation of St. Irenaeus’s list, is reduced to less than 120 years (68 to 180 AD), and less than 100 years for St. Hegesippus’s list, not the 150 or 180 years that Brandon routinely claims. During this fewer than 100 years in which a bishop-presbyter in Rome with distinctive *episcopē* is not explicitly mentioned in documents written during this time period, we find the activity of St. Clement who in writing or transmitting the letter to the Corinthians on behalf of the Church of Rome acts in a manner analogous to St. James at the Council of Jerusalem in drafting the letter to the Church in Antioch on behalf of the Apostles and presbyters at the Council. It is commonly acknowledged that St. James was an early example of the monarchical episcopate in Jerusalem, as we show below, so this similarity between his activity and that of St. Clement is at least suggestive of a similar office. Given that St. Clement wrote around AD 100, this places him roughly in the middle of the “silent period,” and so virtually eliminates the gap.

As for the other monarchical or ruling bishops in Rome during this period, in addition to taking into account the positive evidence provided by Sts. Hegesippus and Irenaeus we should consider the general paucity of Christian documents from this era. The silence on which Brandon seeks to build a case against monepiscopacy in Rome is a “slim” silence due to the small pool of data. In sum, once the terminological issues are addressed and the monepiscopate is considered in relation to the three-fold office of Apostle, bishop-presbyter, and deacon (as preserving this three-fold structure), Brandon’s case is reducible to an argument from silence during a roughly one hundred year period for which we have very little documentary evidence of any kind, let alone documentary evidence intended to address polity in Rome during this period. Unfortunately for his argument and his own ecclesiology, the strength of this point as an argument against an early Roman episcopacy is equivalent to its strength as an argument against an early Roman presbyterate.

b. The Original Challenge

In the first section of his essay Brandon explains that he is attempting to meet the challenge found in Sean Patrick’s post titled “[Modern Scholarship, Rome and a Challenge](#).” The specific challenge Sean put forward in that post was excerpted from a comment I (Bryan) made on September 10, 2009, located on page 12 of the comments under Jason Stellman’s post titled “[Newman on the Development of the Papacy](#),” on his old blog “De Regnis Duobus.” Those comments are no longer accessible. The challenge is the following:

Can you name one piece of historical evidence that meets these two conditions:

- (1) it shows that there was no monarchical bishop in Rome until the second half of the second century, and;
- (2) it is stronger evidence than is the list of St. Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* III.3.3)

(Please show why it is stronger evidence than is St. Irenaeus's list.)"

Does the historical evidence Brandon provides here meet that challenge? The answer to that question is clear from what we have shown above. Not only is there no historical evidence that Sts. Hegesippus and Irenaeus fabricated their lists of bishops in Rome, but none of the historical data to which Brandon appeals is evidence for his thesis. Because none of the historical data he puts forward meets the challenge, all the appeals he makes to scholars turn out to reduce to an argument from authority. As St. Thomas Aquinas points out, however, although the argument from authority based on divine revelation is the strongest, "the argument from authority based on human reason is the weakest."²⁶⁷ Nor do these opinions by contemporary scholars satisfy the original challenge, because contemporary opinions are not historical evidence.

Here again is another instance of special pleading, as we shall explain. Toward the end of the first section of his article, Brandon writes:

Finally, I also want to press back on the notion that Christians cannot utilize the discoveries of those who hold unorthodox beliefs. The fact that Lampe does not hold to biblical inerrancy is irrelevant to his discussion of Roman Christianity. There is nothing that Lampe says in terms of Roman ecclesiology that threatens any of the confessional standards of Reformed churches.

The fact that Lampe may believe doctrine "X", "Y", or "Z" is of no consequence to his arguments unless someone can propose a legitimate connection. If we want to discuss his perspective on the "pseudo-Pauline" epistles, that is a noble task, but there is nothing about Lampe's conclusions there that impacts his belief about the monarchical episcopate. If someone believes otherwise they would need to demonstrate why Lampe's belief in "X" is connected with his belief that the church at Rome had presbyterian church governance. Furthermore, as I will show, there would be no way for the Catholic to consistently apply this principle when utilizing the few remaining scholars who reject Lampe's theory of the fractionation of Roman Christianity.

Of course we agree that Christians can "utilize the discoveries" of persons who hold unorthodox beliefs. And we agree that Lampe's belief or disbelief in doctrines "X," "Y," or "Z," does not *ipso facto* nullify his arguments or refute his claims about other matters. But within the specialized field of historical criticism in relation to the bible and early Christian history, there is well known evidence of a methodologically and ideologically motivated preference for a hermeneutic of discontinuity with ancient testimony or tradition, in favor of intra-guild theories constructed with the historico-critical tools of the trade. Thus when the appeal to scholars reduces to an argument from authority, as it does in Brandon's article, then when one appeals to scholars when it suits one's purpose, but rejects scholarship when it does not suit one's purpose, one is engaged in *ad hoc* special pleading. Brandon does this, for example, when he counts contemporary academic noses, while dismissing scholars like Felix Cirlot and Gregory Dix, as one of us explained in the comments.²⁶⁸ He does this when he rejects historical-critical scholars who attempt to raise and spin various data points so as to drive a wedge of discontinuity between the alleged "Jesus of history" (a de-mystified Jesus) and the "Jesus of faith" as witnessed in the New Testament documents, while embracing the conclusions of certain patristic scholars guided by the very same presuppositions of discontinuity when those conclusions are favorable to his Presbyterian thesis regarding Church polity. The *ad hoc* selective use of the appeal to scholarship is fallacious. It was precisely this problem that motivated the "original challenge" in the first place, back in 2009. So as to avoid that *ad hoc* argument from authority, we must stick with the historical evidence, and see if any of it overturns the testimony of St. Irenaeus. As we have shown here in this present work, the answer to that question is still "no."

Paul Owen explains this well:

Irenaeus was in a better position to know such things than any modern scholar trying to reconstruct the history. At least that's my opinion. Same goes for Tertullian. There is no patristic memory of there being only a collection of presbyters in Rome up to the time of Eleutherus (allegedly the first bishop in the catholic sense). The texts from which modern scholars infer that idea are not trying to answer that question. Whenever any patristic writer does actually intend to speak to that issue, they give more or less the same answer.²⁶⁹

The reason why trusting scholars over persons who were there “just doesn't smell right” is because doing so is theologically loaded.²⁷⁰ The strength of a testimony is proportional to the proximity of the witness to the event, all other things being equal. This is why St. Irenaeus's testimony concerning the succession in Rome is not trumped by the opinions of contemporary scholars who live over eighteen hundred years later than did St. Irenaeus, especially given what we have shown above concerning the historical data to which these scholars have appealed. If, as Tertullian argued, the testimony of the Gnostics was to be rejected because they arose a hundred years after Christ, and therefore did not have the credibility of the Apostles and those disciples who learned from the Apostles, *a fortiori* what should we say of the comparative value of the appeal to the opinions of persons two thousand years removed?

c. Apostolic Succession

Brandon thinks that the data to which he has appealed somehow falsifies the Catholic doctrine of apostolic succession. In the section titled “VIII. Objections and the implications” in his article, Brandon writes:

One can see why, if my thesis is correct, namely, that there was no sacramental apostolic succession with the bishop possessing the authority to pass on this charism, that Roman Catholicism would not be on any better epistemological ground than Protestantism. As Cross and Judisch put it, this authority cannot be acquired through providence—it must be passed on in history through the laying on of hands of the bishops. The absence of this succession is acidic to their conception of the church and undermines their thesis, that apostolic succession is the only means for differentiating between Divine revelation and human opinion. Consequently, this article has falsified the thesis of the Judisch and Cross article by undermining the major premise that Catholics can appeal to apostolic succession while Protestants cannot.

The focus of Brandon's argument has been to show that there was no monepiscopal bishop in Rome until AD 150. Even if he had shown that, that would not have shown that there was no apostolic succession in the Church at Rome during that time period, precisely because the non-existence of a monepiscopal bishop in Rome would not entail the non-existence of a plurality of presbyter-bishops, distinct in Holy Orders from mere presbyters. And as explained above, apostolic succession in its sacramental sense requires only the third grade of Holy Orders; it does not require that there be only one bishop with supreme jurisdictional authority in a diocese. But even if Brandon had shown that during that time period there was no monepiscopacy in Rome, and no sacramental succession in Rome until AD 150, this still would not entail that the doctrine of apostolic succession is false, or that there is no apostolic succession, even in Rome, because it would not refute the fact of apostolic succession in all the other particular Churches during this same time period, and would not rule out Rome acquiring Holy Orders after AD 150.²⁷¹ The point is that refuting the doctrine of apostolic succession would require much more than constructing an argument from silence during a seventy year period in a particular city. Brandon, however, has shown none of this, as our analysis of his data has explained. So the entirety of Catholic doctrine remains wholly intact.²⁷²

Brandon makes the same sort of claim elsewhere in the comments. In Comment #39 he writes:

I'm arguing this sacramental notion of Apostolic Succession is falsified by what we know about the organization of the Roman church.²⁷³

How does Brandon reach this conclusion? He clarifies in Comment #51:

Leadership in the church was instituted, but my argument has been that it was not sacramental episcopal succession. And if it was not episcopal succession this subverts the arguments made by the traditional Catholic argument.²⁷⁴

Later, in Comment #73, he writes:

As such, if my argument about the presbyterian manner of church government (which excludes monarchical episcopacy and a threefold view of ministry) is correct then it necessarily follows that the Roman Catholic does not have Apostolic Succession as a principled means to distinguish human opinion from Divine revelation.²⁷⁵

In addition to his flawed argument from silence, what fundamentally lies behind Brandon's belief that he has shown that the Catholic Church does not have apostolic succession is his mistaken assumption (explained above) that references in the patristic literature to presbyters and rule by presbyters is evidence of Presbyterian polity. This assumption is based on a failure to recognize not only that bishops are presbyters, but also that references to presbyters does not entail that there is no distinction between presbyter-bishops and mere presbyters. So his assumption is question-begging (i.e., presupposes precisely what is in question), and thus he arrives at a Presbyterian polity by presupposing a Presbyterian conception of the office of 'presbyter.' That's a form of circular reasoning, unintended, of course, but circular nonetheless.

He reaches his conclusion by conflating jurisdictional monepiscopacy and the third grade of Holy Orders, such that in his mind, if he can show that there were no jurisdictional monepiscopacy in the Church at Rome from AD 68 to the middle of the second century, then he will have shown that there could be no sacramental succession in the Church at Rome during that time. But in actuality, even if there had been no jurisdictional monepiscopacy in the Church at Rome from AD 68 to the middle of the second century, there could still have been sacramental succession in the Church at Rome during that time, because the third grade of Holy Orders is not equivalent to jurisdictional monepiscopacy. This is why Brandon mistakenly infers from the existence of a plurality of presbyters to the refutation of the Oath Against Modernism.²⁷⁶

The mistaken premise underlying that inference is that monepiscopal jurisdiction just is "the episcopacy," when in actuality, in Catholic doctrine "the episcopacy" is the third grade of Holy Orders. So even if he were to have shown the non-existence of the monepiscopacy in Rome from AD 68 to AD 150, this would leave the doctrine of apostolic succession intact. But as we have shown in the previous section, none of the data to which Brandon appeals is evidence that there was no monepiscopacy in Rome during that time period.

The unique authority of the bishop of Rome depends on his having received the unique authority Christ gave to St. Peter, represented in the Chair of St. Peter. The episcopate, however, did not have to originate with St. Peter in order for the Catholic Church to be the Church Christ founded. The apostles were themselves overseers of the Church, as was Christ Himself (1 Pet. 2:25), and so the episcopate was not limited to St. Peter, because the other apostles did not receive their episcopal authority from St. Peter, but from Christ. Hence while Catholic doctrine depends on St. Peter's establishing an episcopal office in Rome, one which he himself held while ministering in the Church at Rome, Catholic doctrine does not depend on St. Peter himself ordaining anyone. While episcopal ordination requires the

laying on of hands, the unique authority of the pope is not necessarily received through the laying on of hands by one having that authority, but rather by succeeding to the episcopal chair established in Rome by St. Peter.

Moreover, since all the implications Brandon lays out in the “VIII. Objections and the implications” section of his article depend on the data to which he appeals being evidence for this thesis, especially on his having successfully refuted the doctrine of apostolic succession, and because we have shown in our previous section above that this data is not evidence for his thesis, therefore there is no need for us to address these implications, because we have refuted their premises.

III. Resolution: Continuity and Paradigms

A. Documentary Witness of the Early Church Concerning the Episcopate

1. Brief introduction to the documentary witness

In section II, we evaluated a wide range of data deriving from a relatively narrow time frame in response to Brandon’s thesis. That time frame ranged from the post-ascension ministry of the apostles to the middle or end of the second century. Through the application of the ILD principle, as well as the two relevant principles for determining the evidential value of silence, we have shown that all of the evidence Brandon cites in support of his thesis is fully compatible with the existence of a jurisdictional monoepiscopate in Rome from the time of the death of St. Peter to the middle of the second century. Accordingly, the truth of Brandon’s second premise has not been established, thereby rendering his overarching argument unsound. However, so long as inquiry is limited to the narrow evidentiary time frame pertinent to Brandon’s thesis, the Catholic position may appear as one explanation among others wherein the respective difference in likelihood for the truth of one explanation over another is inscrutable; thereby leaving any principled reason for preferring one explanation over another underdetermined. Hence, in order to discover whether such apparent underdetermination can be resolved in one direction or another, it is necessary to test explanations against the principle of proximate evidence as outlined in II.b.1 above. This section, therefore, will present the earliest explicit testimony of the Christian community concerning the apostolic origins of the episcopate in general, and the existence and authority of the Petrine succession in particular. Examination of such proximate evidence will make apparent which explanation of the restricted data set, Brandon’s or that of the Catholic Church, best comports with the proximate testimony of the early Church found immediately outside the narrow scope of inquiry explored thus far.

We present here a non-exhaustive selection of testimonies from the early Church in two sections. Section one provides documentary witness to the apostolic origins of the episcopate throughout the Christian world, including the episcopate at the Church in Rome from the first through the fourth centuries, accompanied by clarifying contextual comments. Section two provides a simple listing of textual witnesses to the early Church’s recognition of both the existence and authority of a unique Petrine succession, from the first through the sixth centuries.

(2) Presentation of the documentary witness

(a.) Proximate Evidence for the apostolic origins of the episcopate

According to the universal testimony of the Church Fathers, the Apostles had received authority from Christ Himself, and the Apostles then handed on their authority to their successors. We find evidence of this succession in all the apostolic Churches.

(1.) First Century

St. Clement of Rome, writing sometime toward the last part the first century, describes what the Apostles did, writing:

The Apostles have preached the gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ [has done so] from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the Apostles by Christ. Both these appointments, then, were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God. Having therefore received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. And thus preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first fruits [of their labours], having first proved [i.e., tested] them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe. Nor was this any new thing, since indeed many ages before it was written concerning bishops and deacons. For thus says the Scripture in a certain place, I will appoint their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith.²⁷⁷

St. Clement first explains that the preaching of the Apostles by having received Christ's authorization and commission is a continuation of the preaching of Jesus, by the authorization and commission of God the Father. This authorization and commission means that one speaks for the other, and therefore that accepting the sending One requires accepting those He sends, while rejecting those He sends entails rejecting the One who sent them. Having that pattern as the basis for their own authorization, the Apostles then, by this same authority they had received, appointed men whom they had tested, to be bishops and deacons of those who would come to believe in Christ.

Then in chapter 43 of his epistle to the Corinthians, St. Clement refers to the example of Moses, who had to deal with rivalry and contention concerning the priesthood and authority. St. Clement describes how Moses placed the twelve rods in the tabernacle, knowing all the while that Aaron's rod would blossom. Moses did this not to learn which tribe ought to have the priesthood, but according to St. Clement, "he acted thus, that there might be no sedition in Israel." In other words, Moses did this so that all the people would know who rightfully held the priesthood, and in this way would have no excuse for sedition. Then St. Clement shows that the Apostles (whom St. Clement knew personally) likewise knew "with perfect foreknowledge" that there would be contention over authority in the Church. So the Apostles did something that would show the people who had the rightful authority in the Church, and thus leave men without excuse with respect to sedition. He writes:

Our Apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect fore-knowledge of this, they appointed those already mentioned [i.e., bishops and deacons], and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry. We are of opinion, therefore, that those appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ, in a humble, peaceable, and disinterested spirit, and have for a long time possessed the good opinion of all, cannot be justly dismissed from the ministry. For our sin will not be small, if we eject from the episcopate those who have blamelessly and holily fulfilled its duties. Blessed are those presbyters who, having finished their course before now, have obtained a fruitful and perfect departure [from this world]; for they have no fear lest any one deprive them of the place now appointed them.²⁷⁸

According to St. Clement, in order to show the people who had the rightful authority in the Church, the Apostles publicly appointed bishops and deacons, so that everyone would know who were the rightful successors of the Apostles. In addition, the Apostles instructed these bishops to do the same when they too approached death, so that "other approved men should succeed them [i.e., the first generation of bishops] in their ministry." Here we see the principle that underlies apostolic succession. Teaching and governing authority in the Church is given from the top-down, that is, from Christ, to the Apostles, and then to their successors. Since no one can give what he does not have,

those who have not received such authorization cannot give it. Not only that, but in order to prevent sedition, these appointments, like Christ's authorization of the Apostles, were made in an orderly way, because "all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner." (1 Cor. 14:40) By ordaining their successors in this public and orderly way, no one could claim ignorance of who was the rightful ruler, as a justification for sedition or schism.

This same pattern of succession can be found from the beginning in all the apostolic Churches. According to Eusebius (c. AD 263–339), after the martyrdom of St. James the Righteous, who became the bishop of **Jerusalem**, Symeon, the son of Clopas was found to be worthy of "the episcopal throne of that see."²⁷⁹ When Symeon was martyred under the emperor Trajan in A.D. 106 or 107, "his successor on the throne of the Jerusalem bishopric was a Jew named Justus."²⁸⁰ Eusebius goes on to list the succession of bishops in Jerusalem until the siege of Hadrian (AD 133):

But since the bishops of the circumcision ceased at this time, it is proper to give here a list of their names from the beginning. The first, then, was James, the so-called brother of the Lord; the second, Symeon; the third, Justus; the fourth, Zacchæus; the fifth, Tobias; the sixth, Benjamin; the seventh, John; the eighth, Matthias; the ninth, Philip; the tenth, Seneca; the eleventh, Justus; the twelfth, Levi; the thirteenth, Ephres; the fourteenth, Joseph; and finally, the fifteenth, Judas. These are the bishops of Jerusalem that lived between the age of the apostles and the time referred to, all of them belonging to the circumcision.²⁸¹

Eusebius gives us a succession of fifteen bishops that sequentially occupied the "episcopal throne" of the Church at Jerusalem, until the time of Hadrian.

Regarding the succession from St. Mark in the Church at **Alexandria**, Eusebius writes:

In the fourth year of Domitian, Annianus, the first bishop of the parish of Alexandria, died after holding office twenty-two years, and was succeeded by Abilius, the second bishop.²⁸²

Domitian came into power in AD 81. So according to Eusebius, Annianus died about AD 85, having held the episcopacy in Alexandria since around AD 63. Then Eusebius writes:

It was during the first year of [Trajan's] reign that Abilius, who had ruled the church of Alexandria for thirteen years, was succeeded by Cerdon. He was the third that presided over that church after Annianus, who was the first. At that time Clement still ruled the church of Rome, being also the third that held the episcopate there after Paul and Peter. Linus was the first, and after him came Anencletus. At this time Ignatius was known as the second bishop of Antioch, Evodius having been the first. Symeon likewise was at that time the second ruler of the church of Jerusalem, the brother of our Saviour having been the first. ...²⁸³

Later he writes:

About the twelfth year of the reign of Trajan the above-mentioned bishop of the parish of Alexandria died, and Primus, the fourth in succession from the apostles, was chosen to the office.²⁸⁴

Trajan took office in AD 98, and so according to Eusebius, it was during this year that Abilius, the second bishop of Alexandria, was succeeded by Cerdon. Cerdon was bishop of Alexandria until about AD 110, at which time he was succeeded by Primus. At this time, St. Clement was still bishop of the Church at Rome. Primus was succeeded by Justus (121-129), who was succeeded by Eumenes (129-141), who was succeeded by Mark II (141-152), who was succeeded by Celadion, (152 – 167)²⁸⁵ then Agrippinus (167 – 178), and then Julian (178-189), and then Demetrius

(189-232), who died at the age of 106. Demetrius is the bishop who appointed Origen to teach at the Catechetical school in Alexandria, and then later (around 230) condemned Origen (for self-castration and, possibly, heresy). Demetrius was the first bishop of Alexandria to establish other bishoprics in Egypt.

Concerning St. Clement of **Rome**, Eusebius writes:

In the third year of the reign of the emperor mentioned above, Clement committed the episcopal government of the church of Rome to Evarestus, and departed this life after he had superintended the teaching of the divine word nine years in all.²⁸⁶

According to Eusebius, St. Clement served as bishop of Rome until about AD 101, while St. Ignatius was the bishop of **Antioch** after Evodius who was the first bishop of the Church of Antioch. Concerning St. Ignatius, Eusebius writes:

And at the same time Papias, bishop of the parish of Hierapolis, became well known, as did also Ignatius, who was chosen bishop of Antioch, second in succession to Peter, and whose fame is still celebrated by a great many.²⁸⁷

On this account, St. Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch after St. Evodius, about whom little is known. Evodius, apparently, was ordained by the Apostle Peter, who according to the account in Acts 12, seems to have gone immediately to Antioch after being released from jail by the angel. St. Ignatius is thought to have been an auditor (hearer) of the Apostle John, who died around AD 100. St. John Chrysostom (c. AD 347 – 407), who grew up in Antioch, taught that St. Ignatius had been ordained at the hands of Apostles, including St. Peter.

On his way to Rome in the year AD 107, St. Ignatius composed seven epistles, five of which were addressed to Churches of various cities along the way, one to the Church at Rome, and one composed to St. Polycarp (AD c. 69 – 155), the bishop of Smyrna. St. Polycarp knew St. Ignatius (they had met face to face) and wrote about St. Ignatius's epistles in his *To the Philippians*. Smyrna was the first place that St. Ignatius stopped on his way from Antioch to Rome. There he wrote his letters to the Churches at Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles and Rome. When St. Ignatius arrived at Troas, he wrote his letters to the Church at Philadelphia and to the Church at Smyrna, and he also wrote his letter to St. Polycarp. Because the life and ministry of St. Ignatius stands as a bridge between the age of the apostles and the post-apostolic Church, and also because each of these seven letters bear witness to the nature and structure of the Church at the beginning of the second century; it is important to consider his testimony in detail.

In *To the Ephesians*, St. Ignatius refers to Onesimus as the bishop of the Ephesians (c. 1). Then he writes:

It is therefore befitting that you should in every way glorify Jesus Christ who has glorified you, that by a unanimous obedience you may be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment, and may all speak the same thing concerning the same thing," [1 Corinthians 1:10] and that, being subject to the bishop and the presbytery, you may in all respects be sanctified. (c. 2)

Notice here that he enjoins the Christian faithful in Ephesus to be subject to their bishop and the presbytery, as the means by which they may all be in "unanimous obedience." He speaks of bishops being already established all over the world, writing:

"For even Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, is the [manifested] will of the Father; as also bishops, settled everywhere to the utmost bounds [of the earth], are so by the will of Jesus Christ." (c. 3)

Then he continues in chapter 4, writing:

“Wherefore it is fitting that you should run together in accordance with the will of your bishop, which thing also you do. For your justly renowned presbytery, worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to the bishop as the strings are to the harp. Therefore in your concord and harmonious love, Jesus Christ is sung. And man by man, become a choir, that being harmonious in love, and taking up the song of God in unison, you may with one voice sing to the Father through Jesus Christ, so that He may both hear you, and perceive by your works that you are indeed the members of His Son. It is profitable, therefore, that you should live in an unblameable unity, that thus you may always enjoy communion with God.”

Notice that unity and harmony are, for St. Ignatius, made possible by hierarchical order. St. Ignatius is not teaching that unity takes place by a ‘flattening’ of authority to some form of egalitarianism. Rather, for St. Ignatius, it is precisely in the harmony of each person acting in accordance with his appointed office that true harmony is made possible.

Then in chapter 5 he writes:

For if I in this brief space of time, have enjoyed such fellowship with your bishop — I mean not of a mere human, but of a spiritual nature — how much more do I reckon you happy who are so joined to him as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Father, that so all things may agree in unity!”

Here St. Ignatius again shows how being united to one’s divinely appointed ecclesial authority is analogous to the union of the Church with Jesus, and the union of Jesus to God the Father. Just as the gospel has come to men in an hierarchical fashion (from the Father, to the Son, from the Son to the Apostles, from the Apostles to the bishops), so likewise one’s present union with God the Father is through an harmonious hierarchy: first with the bishop, through union with him to the Apostles, through union with them to Jesus Christ, and through union with Him to God the Father.

Then in chapter 6 St. Ignatius writes:

“Now the more any one sees the bishop keeping silence, the more ought he to revere him. For we ought to receive every one whom the Master of the house sends to be over His household, (Matt 24:25) as we would do Him that sent him. It is manifest, therefore, that we should look upon the bishop even as we would upon the Lord Himself. And indeed Onesimus himself greatly commends your good order in God, that you all live according to the truth, and that no sect has any dwelling-place among you. Nor, indeed, do ye hearken to any one rather than to Jesus Christ speaking in truth.”

Notice the relation between following the bishop, preserving unity and avoiding any sect. For St. Ignatius, Christians receive and follow the bishop because He is sent by Jesus. And the bishop is sent by Jesus by having been sent by the Apostles, not by a secret inward call from heaven.

In ***To the Magnesians***, chapter 2, Ignatius writes:

Since, then, I have had the privilege of seeing you, through Damas your most worthy bishop, and through your worthy presbyters Bassus and Apollonius, and through my fellow-servant the deacon Sotio, whose friendship may I ever

enjoy, inasmuch as he is subject to the bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ, [I now write to you].

Notice that the deacon is subject to the bishop (as by analogy to God the Father) and also to the presbytery (as by analogy to Jesus Christ).

In chapter 3, he writes:

Now it becomes you also not to treat your bishop too familiarly on account of his youth, but to yield him all reverence, having respect to the power of God the Father, as I have known even holy presbyters do, not judging rashly, from the manifest youthful appearance [of their bishop], but as being themselves prudent in God, submitting to him, or rather not to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, the bishop of us all. It is therefore fitting that you should, after no hypocritical fashion, obey [your bishop] in honour of Him who has willed us [so to do], since he that does not so deceives not [by such conduct] the bishop that is visible, but seeks to mock Him that is invisible. And all such conduct has reference not to man, but to God, who knows all secrets.

Chapter Three in this way gives us an insight into the thought of St. Ignatius regarding the hierarchical way of being united with God in love and obedience. When Christians submit to the bishop, they are not submitting ultimately to the bishop himself, but ultimately to God the Father, because it is God who has sent and appointed the bishop as His representative. Christians thus serve God by way of following their divinely appointed shepherd, the bishop. To disobey the visible bishop (or feign obedience to him) is to disobey the Bishop who is invisible (i.e., God the Father).

In chapter 4 he writes:

It is fitting, then, not only to be called Christians, but to be so in reality: as some indeed give one the title of bishop, but do all things without him. Now such persons seem to me to be not possessed of a good conscience, seeing they are not steadfastly gathered together according to the commandment.

Some Christians, according to St. Ignatius, recognize a person as having the title 'bishop', but disregard their bishop in their activities, as if he has no authority. This behavior, claims St. Ignatius, is not in accordance with the commandment pertaining to the assembling of believers. Believers are supposed to assemble in union with their bishop.

In chapter 6 he writes:

Since therefore I have, in the persons before mentioned, beheld the whole multitude of you in faith and love, I exhort you to study to do all things with a **divine harmony, while your bishop presides in the place of God, and your presbyters in the place of the assembly of the apostles, along with your deacons, who are most dear to me, and are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ**, who was with the Father before the beginning of time, and in the end was revealed. Do ye all then, imitating the same divine conduct, pay respect to one another, and let no one look upon his neighbour after the flesh, but do ye continually love each other in Jesus Christ. Let nothing exist among you that may divide you; but be ye united with your bishop, and those that preside over you, as a type and evidence of your immortality. (our emphases)

This paragraph again shows how St. Ignatius understands the basis for a divine harmony in the Church. There is an hierarchical order of bishop, presbyters, and deacons. They are united to each other in that hierarchy, and the laity are united to them in obedience and love.

In chapter 7 he writes:

As therefore the Lord did nothing without the Father, being united to Him, neither by Himself nor by the apostles, so neither do ye anything without the bishop and presbyters. Neither endeavour that anything appear reasonable and proper to yourselves apart; but being come together into the same place, let there be one prayer, one supplication, one mind, one hope, in love and in joy undefiled.

Here again we see that the unity St. Ignatius urges believers to maintain is based on an hierarchical order that comes from God the Father, through His Son Jesus Christ whom He sent, then through the Apostles whom Christ sent, and then through the bishops whom the Apostles appointed.

In chapter 13 he writes:

with your most admirable bishop, and the well-compacted spiritual crown of your presbytery, and the deacons who are according to God. Be subject to the bishop, and to one another, as Jesus Christ to the Father, according to the flesh, and the apostles to Christ, and to the Father, and to the Spirit; that so there may be a union both fleshly and spiritual.

Notice again St. Ignatius's hierarchical conception order and unity. The unity of a plurality in which the plurality is in some sense preserved is always a unity of **order**. There is an order in the Trinity. So likewise, there is an order in the Church, of deacons to presbyters, and presbyters to the bishop.

In ***To the Trallians***, St. Ignatius writes in chapter 2:

For, since you are subject to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, you appear to me to live not after the manner of men, but according to Jesus Christ, who died for us, in order, by believing in His death, you may escape from death. It is therefore necessary that, as you indeed do, so without the bishop you should do nothing, but should also be subject to the presbytery, as to the apostle of Jesus Christ, who is our hope, in whom, if we live, we shall [at last] be found. It is fitting also that the deacons, as being [the ministers] of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, should in every respect be pleasing to all. For they are not ministers of meat and drink, but servants of the Church of God. They are bound, therefore, to avoid all grounds of accusation [against them], as they would do fire.

Here again we see St. Ignatius distinguish the offices of bishop, presbyter, and deacon. He explains that the Christians are to be subject to their bishop as to Jesus Christ. They are to do nothing apart from their bishop, that is, nothing pertaining to the Church. They are to be subject to the presbytery as to the apostle of Jesus. So the authority of Christ and the Apostles continues in the Church, according to St. Ignatius, through the offices of bishop and presbyter. The deacon holds a different order. The deacon is distinct from the bishop and presbyter in the third place after the bishop and the presbyter. The deacon is not a minister of the “mysteries” (i.e., the sacraments), because he is not a priest. Deacons are not “ministers of meat and drink” (i.e., the Body and Blood of Christ). They are servants of the bishop, and in this way servants of the Church of God.

In chapter 3 he writes:

In like manner, let all reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the sanhedrim of God, and assembly of the apostles. Apart from these, there is no Church. Concerning all this, I am persuaded that you are of the same opinion. For I have received the manifestation of your love, and still have it with me, in your bishop, whose very appearance is highly instructive, and his meekness of itself a power; whom I imagine even the ungodly must reverence, seeing they are also pleased that I do not spare myself.

Here again the deacon is to be honored as an “appointment of Jesus Christ” while the bishop is to be honored (by comparison) as if Jesus Christ. This is a very early explanation of what it means for the bishop or priest to be *in Persona Christi*. The presbyters are to be honored as “the sanhedrin of God, and assembly of the apostles.” By describing the presbytery in both these ways, St. Ignatius draws a connection between the magisterial authority under the Old Covenant and that of the New Covenant, showing that under the New Covenant, the presbyters have succeeded the Sanhedrin, and by implication the bishop has the place of the high priest. He again in this chapter we see the three-fold distinction in Holy Orders, from bishop, presbyter, and deacon.

In chapter 13, he writes:

Fare well in Jesus Christ, while you continue subject to the bishop, as to the command [of God], and in like manner to the presbytery.

St. Ignatius seems to believe that with the death of the Apostles, he as a bishop must remind the Christians that the apostolic authority continues in the succession of bishops whom the Apostles appointed. Only in this way can unity be preserved and heresy avoided.

In ***To the Romans***, St. Ignatius writes in a very different manner from the tone in his other letters. He never enjoins the Christians at Rome to submit to their leaders. Instead he asks them to pray for him. It is worth recalling that at this time there was a recognized primacy in the three apostolic churches: Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria. They held a primacy not because of their size or importance, but because of their relation to St. Peter.²⁸⁸ But St. Ignatius here shows deference to the Church at Rome, in contrast to the tone he adopts in his other letters. This seems to be an indication of his recognition of the primacy had by the Church at Rome, even among the three apostolic Churches, since he himself was the bishop of the Church at Antioch.

In chapter 2 he identifies himself as “the bishop of Syria,” writing “that God has deemed me, the bishop of Syria, worthy to be sent for from the east unto the west.” He clearly does not see himself as one among many different equal bishops of Syria. Then in chapter 9 he writes, “Remember in your prayers the Church in Syria, which now has God for its shepherd, instead of me.” His role as “the bishop of Syria” has been to shepherd the believers in Syria. It is not that while he was the bishop of Syria the Church there in Syria did not have God as its shepherd. What he means here is that now (upon his absence from Syria) the Church in Syria has **only** God as its shepherd (or bishop).

From Troas, St. Ignatius wrote ***To the Philadelphians***. In chapter 4 of this epistle, he writes:

Take heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to [show forth] the unity of His blood; one altar; as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow-servants: that so, whatsoever you do, you may do it according to [the will of] God.

St. Ignatius here enjoins the believers in Philadelphia to be united to their bishop, so that they may have only one Eucharist and in this way show forth the unity of Christ's blood. St. Ignatius here again clearly distinguishes between the three offices: bishop, presbyter and deacon.

In his epistle *To the Smyrnaeans*, St. Ignatius writes in chapters 7-8:

But avoid all divisions, as the beginning of evils. See that you all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as you would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid.

How are divisions to be avoided (which are the beginning of evil)? For St. Ignatius, the answer is: Follow the bishop even as Jesus Christ follows God the Father, and follow the presbytery as one would the apostles, and reverence the deacons as being the institution of God. Here St. Ignatius highlights the three primary Holy Orders as having been established and perpetuated by God, so that to follow those holding these Holy Orders is to follow God. Likewise, according to St. Ignatius there is a very important relation between Holy Orders and the other sacraments, particularly the Eucharist. Only that Eucharist is proper which is administered by the bishop or by one to whom the bishop has entrusted it (i.e., a presbyter under him). According to St. Ignatius, the same is true of baptisms. The people are to follow the bishop. Where the bishop is, there is the Catholic (i.e., universal) Church.

In chapter 9, he writes:

It is well to reverence both God and the bishop. He who honours the bishop has been honoured by God; he who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop, does [in reality] serve the devil.

Here St. Ignatius teaches in the strongest language that those who reject the authority of the bishop are serving the devil. This is because the bishop has been authorized by Christ, by way of the succession from the Apostles. Just as those who reject Jesus are rejecting God the Father, so also those who reject the successors of the Apostles are rejecting the Apostles, and those who reject the Apostles are rejecting Jesus Christ. The bishop is a continuation of Christ's ministry on earth. So to honor and reverence the bishop is to honor and reverence Christ, and to reject the bishop is to reject the One who sent him, namely, Jesus Christ.

In chapter 12 he writes:

I salute your most worthy bishop, and your very venerable presbytery, and your deacons, my fellow-servants, and all of you individually, as well as generally, in the name of Jesus Christ, and in His flesh and blood, in His passion and resurrection, both corporeal and spiritual, in union with God and you.

Here again he distinguishes the three offices of Holy Orders, corresponding to the high priest, priest, and Levite in the Old Covenant.

Lastly, in his *To Polycarp*, St. Ignatius, in speaking of the duties of the flock, writes in chapter 6:

Give heed to the bishop, that God also may give heed to you. My soul be for theirs that are submissive to the bishop, to the presbyters, and to the deacons, and may my portion be along with them in God!

Here again, St Ignatius highlights the three-fold distinction in Holy Orders, as well as the nature of the divine authority of those having Holy Orders.

St. Ignatius teaches that the basis for the authority of the bishop, is that Christ sent him. The authorization and sending of the bishops was not merely an internal, private, subjective witness, nor were they authorized by a bottom-up democratic election by the local congregation. Rather, they were authorized and given their mission by the Apostles. Hence, St. Ignatius shows that in his understanding (formed by personal acquaintance with apostles), when the Apostles ordained and commissioned a bishop, it was primarily Christ who was ordaining and commissioning that bishop. And this is the consistent principle we find in the early Church Fathers, that when a bishop having apostolic succession ordains someone, it is Christ who is doing so through the one He authorized to speak and act in His Name. St. Ignatius also clearly and repeatedly distinguishes between the three Holy Orders in the Church: bishop, presbyter, and deacon.

According to Eusebius, when St. Ignatius was martyred (around AD 107), “he was succeeded by Heros in the episcopate of the church of Antioch.”²⁸⁹ Heros was succeeded by Cornelius, who was succeeded by Eros, who was succeeded in the latter part of the second century by Theophilus, who wrote the work *Ad Autolychum*, which still exists today.²⁹⁰ Theophilus was succeeded by Maximus I (AD 182 – 191), who was succeeded by Serapion, who was bishop until AD 211.

In Asia, the apostolic appointment of bishops continued even to the end of the first century. Eusebius relates the following from St. Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215):

For when, after the tyrant’s [i.e., Domitian’s] death, [the Apostle John] returned from the isle of Patmos to Ephesus, he went away upon their invitation to the neighboring territories of the Gentiles, to appoint bishops in some places, in other places to set in order whole churches, elsewhere to choose to the ministry some one of those that were pointed out by the Spirit.²⁹¹

Shortly after AD 96, the Apostle John returned from Patmos to Ephesus, and began to travel to neighboring territories to appoint bishops, and set in order whole churches, and to choose to the ministry some that were pointed out by the Spirit. By “choosing to the ministry” St. Clement of Alexandria is likely referring to St. John choosing some laymen to become presbyters, something distinct from “appoint bishops,” which likely refers to ordaining one presbyter (within a particular Church) to the episcopacy. Among those ordained by the Apostle John at this time was St. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. Tertullian writes, “For this is the manner in which the apostolic churches transmit their registers: as the church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John.”²⁹² Concerning St. Polycarp, Eusebius writes:

At that time Polycarp, a disciple of the apostles, was a man of eminence in Asia, having been entrusted with the episcopate of the church of Smyrna by those who had seen and heard the Lord.²⁹³

And this is confirmed in the epistle of St. Ignatius to St. Polycarp. St. Polycarp was entrusted with the episcopate of Smyrna by one or more apostles. According to less established tradition, the first bishop of Smyrna was Apelles (mentioned in Romans 16:10), followed by Strataes, a brother (or uncle) of Timothy, then Ariston, then Bucolus, the bishop under whom St. Polycarp was raised, first being made a deacon, then a presbyter, and finally, upon the death of Bucolus, bishop.

In **Athens**, Dionysius the Aeroapagite became the first bishop of the Church there. This we learn from a letter written by a different Dionysius, Dionysius the bishop of Corinth, written around AD 170 to Soter, bishop of the church at Rome from AD 166-175 AD. Dionysius the Aeroapagite was succeeded by Narkissos (who was originally from Palestine) around the year AD 96. Narkissos was succeeded by Publius (who was from Malta). According to St. Jerome, Publius was martyred during the persecution under the Emperor Hadrian (AD 117-138). He was succeeded by Quadratus. There is some dispute as to whether the Quadratus who was bishop of Athens after Publius was the same Quadratus of Athens who was an apologist, and who wrote a letter to Hadrian when the latter visited the city of Athens. The letter helped relax the persecution against the Christians. In the letter he reports that he himself had seen many who were healed by Jesus and even raised from the dead by Jesus.²⁹⁴

In **Crete**, St. Paul ordained St. Titus to be the first bishop of the churches there. From Dionysius, bishop of Corinth (writing in AD 170) we learn that at that time Philip was bishop of Crete, the church at Goryna being the location of the episcopal see of Crete. It was this Philip, according to Eusebius, whose writings most effectively refuted Marcion's errors. We learn from Eusebius that Pinytus then became bishop of Crete, and died around AD 180.

St. Paul also ordained St. Timothy the first diocesan bishop of Ephesus. The tradition indicates that St. Timothy served as bishop there until the last decade of the first century, and was martyred. His relics were later moved to Constantinople. Around AD 107, St. Ignatius, in his epistle *To the Ephesians*, refers to Onesimus as the bishop of Ephesus.²⁹⁵ About AD 190, Polycrates, the bishop of Ephesus, wrote a letter to Victor, the bishop of Rome, in which letter he states that the Apostle John is buried in Ephesus, and the Apostle Phillip is buried in Hieropolis. He also tells us that seven of his relatives had been bishops before him. So Polycrates thus testifies to the connection and continuity between the episcopal office held by Onesimus and later by Polycrates.

Hermas, mentioned in Romans 16:14, is said to have become the bishop of **Philippi**, and was later martyred. (His feast day is May 9.) Tradition holds that Philemon, to whom the Apostle Paul wrote his epistle, became the bishop of **Colossae**, where tradition says he was martyred. The earliest tradition shows that Crescens (mentioned by Paul in 2 Tim 4:10) became a bishop in **Galatia**. Aristarchus, mentioned in Acts, Colossians and Philemon, became the bishop of **Thessalonica**. According to tradition, Jason, at whose home Paul stayed in Thessalonica (Acts 17; cf. Rom 16:21), became the bishop of **Tarsus**, Prochorus, one of the seven deacons named in Acts 6, became the bishop of **Nicomedia**, and Nicolas, another of the seven deacons, is said to have become the bishop of **Samaria**.

Also according to St. Jerome, St. Philip, one of the seven deacons mentioned in Acts 6, later became the bishop of **Tralles**. When St. Ignatius composed his epistles, he tells us that at that time Polybius was the bishop of Tralles. Tradition maintains that the bishop of **Philadelphia** to whom Ignatius refers without naming him in his [Ignatius's] epistle to the Philadelphians, was Demetrius (mentioned in 3 John 12). Demetrius had been ordained bishop of Philadelphia by the Apostle John. According to tradition Gaius (mentioned in 3 John 1) was the first bishop of **Pergamum**, followed by Antipas (mentioned in Revelation 2:13). According to that tradition Antipas was martyred by being burned at the stake some time before John wrote the book of Revelation. A piece of Antipas's skull is now preserved as a relic in the Monastery of St. John the Theologian on the island of Patmos. St. Ignatius also tells us that at that time (AD 107), Damas was the diocesan bishop of **Magnesia**. Papias (AD 60 – 135), an auditor of the Apostle John, and a friend of Polycarp, became the diocesan bishop of **Hierapolis**, the place where Philip, one of the Twelve Apostles, was buried.²⁹⁶ Two later bishops of Hierapolis were **Apolinarius**, who flourished during the time of

Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180), and then Abircius Marcellus, who was martyred around AD 200. According to tradition the first bishop of the Church at **Laodicea** was Archippus (Col 4:17), followed by Nymphan, followed by Diotrophes (3 John 9), followed by Sagaris, who was martyred in AD 166 under Marcus Aurelius. [St. Melito](#), fl. 160s-170s, was the bishop of **Sardis**. The episcopacy in **Corinth** has already been discussed in a previous section above.

Everywhere one looks, this same pattern emerges regarding the authorization and commissioning of bishops by the Apostles, and then these bishops continuing this practice in ordaining bishops to succeed them.

In the generation after the Apostles, if someone had asked the question, “By what authority do you do these things?” it is clear that the bishops would have answered by pointing to their ordination, i.e., their having received authorization from the Apostles.

(2.) Second Century

In the same way, the second generation of bishops would have pointed to their having been ordained by those having the succession from the Apostles. We see this most clearly in St. Irenaeus and Tertullian, both writing toward the later part of the second century. In his work “Against Heresies” **St. Irenaeus** writes:

It is possible then for everyone in every Church, who may wish to know the truth, to contemplate the tradition of the Apostles which has been made known throughout the whole world. And we are in a position to enumerate those who were instituted bishops by the Apostles, and their successors to our own time . . . [297](#)

Here St. Irenaeus explains that the apostolic tradition has been preserved in the Churches which the apostles founded. Moreover, there is no difficulty determining which churches are of apostolic origin (and are therefore sure depositories of the apostolic tradition) since it is possible to trace the line of succession from the current bishops of the Churches back to the apostles themselves. In this way, for those Christians living at the time of St. Irenaeus, knowledge of the content of apostolic teaching was dependent upon the truth and verifiability of episcopal succession. Moreover, apostolic succession entails the principle means by which heretical groups are identified, as St. Irenaeus makes clear when he writes:

For all these [heretics] are of much later date than are the bishops of whom the Apostles handed over the Churches . . . [298](#)

In the same work, St. Irenaeus details the origins of the episcopate within the Church at Rome:

The blessed Apostles [Peter and Paul] , having founded and built up the Church [of Rome], they handed over the office of the episcopate to Linus. Paul makes mention of this Linus in the Epistle to Timothy. To him succeeded Anencletus; and after him, in the third place from the Apostles, Clement was chosen for the episcopate. He had seen the blessed Apostles and was acquainted with them. It might be said that He still heard the echoes of the preaching of the Apostles, and had their traditions before his eyes. And not only he, for there were many still remaining who had been instructed by the Apostles. [299](#)

Here St. Irenaeus indicates that the apostles Peter and Paul understood themselves to hold an episcopal office capable of being handed on to others, and in fact did so before their martyrdoms. St. Irenaeus continues:

The true gnosis is the doctrine of the Apostles, and the ancient organization of the Church throughout the whole world, and the manifestation of the body of Christ according to the successions of bishops, by which successions the bishops have handed down the Church which is found everywhere . . .³⁰⁰

Here St. Irenaeus explains, not only that the Church was organized in an episcopal fashion throughout the whole world from ancient times, but that such organization actually constitutes the [visible] manifestation of the body of Christ.

Further explaining the essential connection between apostolic teaching and apostolic succession, St. Irenaeus writes:

Since therefore we have such proofs, it is not necessary to seek the truth among others which it is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man [depositing his money] in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth: so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life. For she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers. On this account are we bound to avoid them, but to make choice of the thing pertaining to the Church with the utmost diligence, and to lay hold of the tradition of the truth. For how stands the case? Suppose there arise a dispute relative to some important question among us, should we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear in regard to the present question? For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary, [in that case,] to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the Churches?³⁰¹

Here St. Irenaeus is teaching that the truth about Christ and Christianity is to be found not by looking to the heretics but by looking to the bishops who were entrusted by the Apostles with the deposit of faith, and to the apostolic Churches which these bishops shepherd. Because the Apostles entrusted the deposit of faith to the bishops, that deposit belongs to those bishops and is guarded and preserved by the succession of bishops in those apostolic Churches.

Earlier in this same work St. Irenaeus had written:

Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions [of bishops] of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; [we do this, I say,] by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its preeminent authority—that is, the faithful everywhere—inasmuch as the Apostolic Tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who are everywhere.³⁰²

First, it is worth noting that according to St. Irenaeus it is necessary that “every Church should agree with this Church,” meaning that every particular Church (e.g. Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus) must agree with the particular Church at Rome on account of its “preeminent authority” due to its having been founded by St. Peter and St. Paul.³⁰³ But, St. Irenaeus is also saying here that the faith comes down to his time by means of “the succession of bishops.” He is not saying that the faith merely happens to have been preserved in the succession of bishops; he is making a much stronger claim than that. He is saying that the succession of bishops is the normative means by which the deposit of faith can be determined, precisely because the authority of stewardship of this deposit was entrusted to these lines of bishops by the Apostles. His whole argument against the Gnostics would be undermined if he was

claiming only that it presently happens to be the case that the genuine deposit of faith is found in the succession of bishops. In that case, it would be pointless to bring up the succession of bishops, for it would offer no more (or less) assurance of finding the genuine deposit of faith there than among the Gnostics.

St. Irenaeus continues:

Wherefore it is incumbent to obey the presbyters [priests] who are in the Church—those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, together with the succession of the episcopate [bishop], have received the certain gift of truth, according to the good pleasure of the Father. But [it is also necessary] to hold in suspicion others who depart from the primitive succession, and assemble themselves together in any place whatsoever But those who cleave asunder, and separate the unity of the Church, [shall] receive from God the same punishment as Jeroboam did.³⁰⁴

We see here that the priests and the bishops have their authority because they “possess the succession from the apostles.” This phrase shows what St. Irenaeus understood concerning the gift the bishops (including himself) had received at their ordination. They possessed something that those not having the succession did not. Through having the succession from the Apostles, they possessed stewardship over the deposit of faith, to guard and preserve it, and to provide the authoritative determination concerning its identity and meaning. By having the succession from the Apostles, they possessed what St. Irenaeus calls “the certain gift of truth.” The priests and bishops are promised (by Christ) the gift of preserving the truth that was entrusted to them by Christ through the Apostles, upon condition of remaining in communion with the successor of the one to whom Christ entrusted the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. In this quotation we see also that St. Irenaeus teaches that we should hold in suspicion those who depart from “primitive succession”—i.e., those who reject apostolic succession, and claim to teach the apostles’ doctrine, but do not have the authority from the Apostles to say what is the Apostles’ doctrine. St. Irenaeus views departure from the succession of bishops as schism, as having in some sense rejected the Apostles who authorized and sent these bishops. The principle is that he who rejects the Apostles, rejects Christ, just as he who rejects Christ rejects the Father who sent Christ. “The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.” (Luke 10:16)

St. Irenaeus was himself only one generation removed from the Apostles, because he had known St. Polycarp (AD 69 – 155), who had been ordained by the Apostle John. Concerning St. Polycarp, St. Irenaeus writes:

But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he [Polycarp] tarried [on earth] a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom, departed this life, having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time—a man who was of much greater weight, and a more steadfast witness of truth, than Valentinus, and Marcion, and the rest of the heretics.”³⁰⁵

According to St. Irenaeus, St. Polycarp was instructed by apostles, and by apostles appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna. During his long life he taught the things he had learned from the Apostles. Surely, if apostolic succession was something the Apostles either did not teach, or taught against, St. Polycarp would have opposed it. But, there is absolutely no evidence that St. Polycarp, or anyone of the second generation bishops, opposed the doctrine and practice of apostolic succession. We have every reason to believe that the doctrine of apostolic succession we find in St. Irenaeus is the doctrine of apostolic succession he had received from men like St. Polycarp, who had themselves received it from the Apostles.

We can see this same idea in **Tertullian** in his work titled [The Prescription Against Heretics](#), where he writes:

The apostles . . . next went forth into the world and preached the same doctrine of the same faith to the nations. They then in like manner founded churches in every city, from which all the other churches, one after another, derived the tradition of the faith, and the seeds of doctrine, and are every day borrowing them, that they may become churches. **Indeed, it is on this account only that they will be able to deem themselves apostolic, as being the offspring of apostolic churches.** Every sort of thing must necessarily revert to its original for its classification. Therefore the churches, although they are so many and so great, comprise but the one primitive church, (founded) by the apostles, from which they all (spring). In this way all are primitive, and all are apostolic, whilst they are all proved to be one, in (unbroken) unity, by their peaceful communion, and title of brotherhood, and bond of hospitality, — privileges which no other rule directs than the one tradition of the selfsame mystery.³⁰⁶

According to Tertullian, the authority of the Church corresponds to the origin and organic development of the Church. The Apostles founded Churches and ordained bishops over those Churches. These Churches are apostolic by having been directly founded by the Apostles. Later, other Churches were founded by men sent out by the Churches founded by the Apostles. Tertullian explains that in order for a Church which was not founded by the Apostles to be apostolic, it must have been founded by a Church which is itself apostolic. In this way there is always organic unity between all the priests and bishops, and all the particular Churches. All true Churches can be traced back to the Churches founded by the Apostles, because they have the authorization from the Apostles.

Tertullian again writes:

But if there be any (heresies) which are bold enough to plant themselves in the midst of the apostolic age, that they may thereby seem to have been handed down by the apostles, because they existed in the time of the apostles, we can say: Let them produce the original records of their churches; let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning in such a manner that [that first bishop of theirs] bishop shall be able to show for his ordainer and predecessor some one of the apostles or of apostolic men,— a man, moreover, who continued steadfast with the apostles. For this is the manner in which the apostolic churches transmit their registers: as the church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John; as also the church of Rome, which makes Clement to have been ordained in like manner by Peter. In exactly the same way the other churches likewise exhibit (their several worthies), whom, as having been appointed to their episcopal places by apostles, they regard as transmitters of the apostolic seed. Let the heretics contrive something of the same kind. For after their blasphemy, what is there that is unlawful for them (to attempt)? But should they even effect the contrivance, they will not advance a step. For their very doctrine, after comparison with that of the apostles, will declare, by its own diversity and contrariety, that it had for its author neither an apostle nor an apostolic man; because, as the apostles would never have taught things which were self-contradictory, so the apostolic men would not have inculcated teaching different from the apostles, unless they who received their instruction from the apostles went and preached in a contrary manner. To this test, therefore will they be submitted for proof by those churches, who, although they derive not their founder from apostles or apostolic men (as being of much later date, for they are in fact being founded daily), yet, since they agree in the same faith, they are accounted as not less apostolic because they are akin in doctrine. Then let all the heresies, when challenged to these two tests by our apostolic church, offer their proof of how they deem themselves to be apostolic. But in truth they neither are so, nor are they able to prove themselves to be what they are not. Nor are they admitted to peaceful relations and communion by such churches as are in any way connected with apostles, inasmuch as they are in no sense themselves apostolic because of their diversity as to the mysteries of the faith.³⁰⁷

Tertullian is here saying that the way to distinguish heretics from the orthodox is to get out the records and see whose bishops can trace their succession back to the Apostles. The heretics cannot trace their bishops back to someone who was ordained by the Apostles. The Apostolic Churches, however, can do just that. Tertullian provides two tests to show that the doctrine of the heretics is contrary to that of the Apostles. These two tests are related to each other. One necessarily comes before the other, and depends on the other. First, he uses the test of apostolic succession. “Let them produce the original records of their churches, let them unfold the roll of their bishops”. The second test depends on the first test. The second test is comparing whether the ‘faith’ proposed by the heretics agrees with the doctrine held by the Apostles. But to determine whether the doctrine of the heretics agrees with the doctrine of the Apostles, Tertullian does not say, “Look at the Scriptures.” He says that the ‘faith’ of the heretics must be compared to the faith of the Churches which are in agreement with the Churches founded by the Apostles. So the Apostolic Churches (the ones founded by the Apostles and maintaining the succession from the Apostles) are still the standard for what is the apostolic faith. For Tertullian, we know which Churches have the apostolic faith by comparing their doctrine to that of the apostolic Churches, i.e., the ones having the succession from the Apostles. So the second test (comparing the faith of the heretics to that of the Apostles) depends on the first test (apostolic succession). According to Tertullian, the succession of bishops in the Apostolic Churches is what determines the standard for what is the apostolic doctrine, against which to compare the doctrine of these Gnostic heretics.

The requirement of testing the claims of heretics against the faith taught in the Apostolic Churches would make no sense if there were no “charism of truth” in the Apostolic Churches. If ecclesial deism were true, there would be no more reason to expect to find the Apostles’ doctrine in the Apostles doctrine than in the assemblies of the Gnostics. In other words, if Tertullian believed that the Apostolic Churches of his time only **happened** to contain the Apostles’ doctrine, but were not necessarily the divinely authorized and divinely protected guardians and stewards of the deposit of faith, there would be no reason to point to the Apostolic Churches as the standard by which to locate the Apostles doctrine. That would simply beg the question (i.e., presume precisely what was in question) between the Catholics and the Gnostics, because the Gnostics maintained that the true doctrine of the Apostles had not been passed down to the bishops. So Tertullian’s requirement that apostolic doctrine be determined by conformity to the doctrine taught in the Churches founded by the Apostles presupposes not only that the Apostles did not withhold any revealed doctrine from the bishops they ordained, but also that there is a divine promise of preservation of the faith among those having the succession from the Apostles. In other words, we see here implicitly in Tertullian the same notion in St. Irenaeus of a “charism of truth” that accompanies possessing the succession from the Apostles, in full communion with the successor of St. Peter.

Again Tertullian writes:

From this, therefore, do we draw up our rule. Since the Lord Jesus Christ sent the apostles to preach, (our rule is) that no others ought to be received as preachers than those whom Christ appointed; for “no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” Nor does the Son seem to have revealed Him to any other than the apostles, whom He sent forth to preach—that, of course, which He revealed to them. Now, what that was which they preached—in other words, what it was which Christ revealed to them—can, as I must here likewise prescribe, properly be proved in no other way than by those very churches which the apostles founded in person, by declaring the gospel to them directly themselves, both *viva voce* [with the spoken voice], as the phrase is, and subsequently by their epistles. If, then, these things are so, it is in the same degree manifest that all doctrine which agrees with the apostolic churches—those moulds and original sources of the faith must be accounted true, as undoubtedly containing that which the (said) churches received from the apostles, the apostles from Christ, Christ from God. Whereas all doctrine must be prejudged as false which savours of contrariety to the truth of the churches and apostles of Christ and God. It remains, then, that we demonstrate whether this doctrine of ours, of which we have now given the rule, has its origin in the tradition of the apostles, and whether all other doctrines do not *ipso*

facto proceed from falsehood. We hold communion with the apostolic churches because our doctrine is in no respect different from theirs. This is our witness of truth.”³⁰⁸

Tertullian is here saying that no man knows the Father except Christ, and no one knows Christ except the Apostles, and no one knows the Apostles except the bishops whom they appointed. Therefore, no one who is not sent by the bishops should be received to preach. In other words, the imperative for Catholics of the second century is this: Do not accept as your Church authority anyone who is not sent by the bishops (who are themselves sent by the Apostles, who were themselves sent by Christ, who was Himself sent by God the Father). If it does not come from the Apostles and those ordained by the Apostles, then it is *ipso facto* not to be received. This applies not only to teaching, but also to teachers and preachers.

Again Tertullian writes:

Come now, you who would indulge a better curiosity, if you would apply it to the business of your salvation, go through the apostolic churches, in which the very seats of the apostles are still pre-eminent in their places, in which their own authentic writings are read, uttering the voice and representing the face of each of them severally. Achaia is very near you, (in which) you find Corinth. Since you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi; (and there too) you have the Thessalonians. Since you are able to cross to Asia, you get Ephesus. Since, moreover, you are close upon Italy, you have Rome, from which there comes even into our own hands the very authority (of apostles themselves). How happy is its church, on which apostles poured forth all their doctrine along with their blood! where Peter endures a passion like his Lord's! where Paul wins his crown in a death like John's where the Apostle John was first plunged, unhurt, into boiling oil, and thence remitted to his island-exile!³⁰⁹

Notice Tertullian's emphasis on the unique authority of the Church of Rome among all the other apostolic churches, much as we saw in St. Irenaeus's claim that all the particular Churches should agree with the Church at Rome, on account of its preeminent authority.

And again Tertullian writes:

Since this is the case, in order that the truth may be adjudged to belong to us, “as many as walk according to the rule,” which the church has handed down from the apostles, the apostles from Christ, and Christ from God, the reason of our position is clear, when it determines that heretics ought not to be allowed to challenge an appeal to the Scriptures, since we, without the Scriptures, prove that they have nothing to do with the Scriptures. For as they are heretics, they cannot be true Christians, because it is not from Christ that they get that which they pursue of their own mere choice, and from the pursuit incur and admit the name of heretics. Thus, not being Christians, they have acquired no right to the Christian Scriptures; and it may be very fairly said to them, “Who are you? When and whence did you come? As you are none of mine, what have you to do with that which is mine? Indeed, Marcion, by what right do you hew my wood? By whose permission, Valentinus, are you diverting the streams of my fountain? By what power, Apelles, are you removing my landmarks? This is my property. Why are you, the rest, sowing and feeding here at your own pleasure? This (I say) is my property. I have long possessed it; I possessed it before you. I hold sure title-deeds from the original owners themselves, to whom the estate belonged. I am the heir of the apostles. Just as they carefully prepared their will and testament, and committed it to a trust, and adjured (the trustees to be faithful to their charge), even so do I hold it. As for you, they have, it is certain, always held you as disinherited, and rejected you as strangers—as enemies.”³¹⁰

Tertullian here shows that those who are not in communion with the Apostolic Churches have no right to appeal to Scripture to defend their positions, because the Scriptures belong to the bishops to whom the apostolic writings were entrusted by the Apostles. Since the Scriptures belong to the bishops, those not in communion with those bishops in the universal Church have no right to challenge what the bishops say that the Scriptures teach. The sacred books do not belong to them, but to the bishops to whom the Apostles entrusted them. Since the Scriptures belongs to the bishops and have been entrusted to them, they have the right and authority to determine its authentic and authoritative interpretation.

The arguments given by St. Irenaeus and Tertullian for apostolic succession are not that the apostolic doctrine is *more likely* to be found among those having the succession from the Apostles. Otherwise, the Gnostics could have treated such arguments as question-begging, that is, as presuming without any justification that the succession of bishops fully received and faithfully preserved the deposit of faith. That is precisely what was in question between the Catholics on the one hand, and the Gnostics on the other hand. In their arguments against the Gnostics, St. Irenaeus and Tertullian are making a much stronger claim. They are claiming that the Apostles publicly authorized certain men (i.e., bishops) to function as official stewards of the deposit of faith, to guard it and explicate it, and charged them to publicly authorize other tested and qualified men to carry on this function of stewardship, in a line of perpetual successions, until Christ returned for His Bride.

According to St. Irenaeus and Tertullian, the Apostles did not merely preach truths of the divine revelation of Christ to the first Christians, and then go to their martyrdom. That would have left the Church susceptible to the Gnostic challenge, with many clamoring voices claiming to speak for the Apostles, and claiming to have texts written by the Apostles. It would have left the sheep without divinely-designated shepherds, entirely at a loss regarding what is the truth concerning Christ and His Gospel. Rather, according to St. Irenaeus and Tertullian, by publicly appointed successors, and giving to them the authority to appoint further successors *in perpetuum*, the Apostles cut off the Gnostic challenge at the knees, by, in a sense, perpetuating themselves, and so ensuring that no Gnostic challenger could ever have an equal claim to speak for the Apostles. In this way, it is not just an “historical argument.” It is an argument that reaches back into history in order to show why the normative way of determining the truth concerning the apostolic deposit is to unroll the lines of bishops, and see whose go back to the Apostles. Only those bishops have the divine authority from the Apostles to say what does or does not belong to the deposit of faith received from the Apostles.³¹¹

The notion of apostolic succession we see clearly in the latter half of the second century in the writings of St. Irenaeus and Tertullian we find also in the middle of the second century. Eusebius tells us that St. Hegesippus, who was already a young man at the time of the time of the death of Antinous (AD 130), came to Rome under Anicetus (155-166) and wrote in the time of Eleutherius, bishop of Rome from 175 to 189. Eusebius writes:

Hegesippus in the five books of Memoirs which have come down to us has left a most complete record of his own views. In them he states that on a journey to Rome he met a great many bishops, and that he received the same doctrine from all. It is fitting to hear what he says after making some remarks about the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians. His words are as follows:

“And the church of Corinth continued in the true faith until Primus was bishop in Corinth. I conversed with them on my way to Rome, and abode with the Corinthians many days, during which we were mutually refreshed in the true doctrine. And when I had come to Rome I remained there until Anicetus, whose deacon was Eleutherius. And Anicetus was succeeded by Soter, and he by Eleutherius. In every succession, and in every city that is held which is preached by the law and the prophets and the Lord.”³¹²

As St. Hegesippus traveled through many different cities in the middle of the second century, he met a great many bishops, and received doctrine from them. He notes that he received the same doctrine from them all. And this is a testimony to the unity of the faith and practice of the Church in the second century. Even though we see heretics (e.g. Marcion, Valentinus) arise within the Church, be excommunicated from the Church, and lead some Catholics to follow them out of the Church, there is no evidence here or elsewhere of a great falling away of the Church. There is no outcry or protest as though some group of Christians within the Church adopted a novel practice of apostolic succession, while some original group of Christians or Churches stood in opposition, maintaining the apostolic practice of ordination from below by congregational election. In St. Hegesippus's letter we see evidence that in the mid-second century, the faith of the Church is everywhere preserved within the Church. That is significant because in the middle and late second century, we see apostolic succession, as episcopal succession, practiced ubiquitously in the Catholic Church. And this implies that the apostolic succession described at the end of the second century by St. Irenaeus and Tertullian was the same apostolic succession believed and practice in the middle of the second century. And in order for there to have been the kind of widespread agreement St. Hegesippus describes in the middle of the second century, we have very good reason to believe that the mid-second century belief and practice of apostolic succession was itself a faithful continuation of a doctrine and practice established by the Apostles themselves.

Between St. Hegesippus and the testimonies of St. Irenaeus and Tertullian, we find the testimony St. Dionysius. Around AD 170, St. Dionysius, the bishop of Corinth wrote a number of letters to various Churches, and in these letters he describes each Church as having its own bishop.³¹³ In his letter to the Church at Athens, St. Dionysius writes of the recent martyrdom (under the persecution of Marcus Aurelius) of their bishop Publius, and reminds them of the faith of their first bishop, Dionysius the Areopagite, who had been converted to the faith by the Apostle Paul, recorded by St. Luke in Acts 17:34.³¹⁴ Similarly, a few years later, Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, wrote a letter to Victor, bishop of Rome from 189 to 199.³¹⁵ There is no reason to disbelieve that the episcopacy we see in the example of bishop Polycrates at the end of the second century is not the continuation of the episcopacy that St. Paul had established at Ephesus in St. Timothy, and which St. John had maintained when he returned from Patmos.

Around AD 215, St. Hippolytus, a presbyter at the Church of Rome, wrote a work known as the “*Apostolic Tradition*.” This is a work intended to record some of the tradition which the Church at Rome had received and always practiced concerning ordination of bishops and presbyters. St. Hippolytus writes:

We have set forth as was necessary that part of the discourse which relates to the spiritual gifts, all that God, right from the beginning, granted to people according to his will, bringing back to himself this image which had gone astray. Now, driven by love towards all the saints, we have arrived at the essence of the tradition which is proper for the Churches. This is so that those who are well informed may keep the tradition which has lasted until now, according to the explanation we give of it, and so that others by taking note of it may be strengthened (against the fall or error which has recently occurred because of ignorance and ignorant people), with the Holy Spirit conferring perfect grace on those who have a correct faith, and so that they will know that those who are at the head of the Church must teach and guard all these things.

St. Hippolytus here states that he is presenting the “essence of the Tradition which is proper for the Churches,” a Tradition that has lasted from the time of the Apostles “until now.” Those at the head of the Church “must teach and guard all these things.” He then presents a description of the rite by which a bishop is ordained:

He who is ordained as a bishop, being chosen by all the people, must be irreproachable. When his name is announced and approved, the people will gather on the Lord's day with the council of elders and the bishops who are present. With the assent of all, the bishops will place their hands upon him, with the council of elders standing by, quietly.

Everyone will keep silent, praying in their hearts for the descent of the Spirit. After this, one of the bishops present, at the request of all, shall lay his hand upon him who is being ordained bishop, and pray, saying:

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of mercies and God of all consolation, you who live in the highest, but regard the lowest, you who know all things before they are, you who gave the rules of the Church through the word of your grace, who predestined from the beginning the race of the righteous through Abraham, who instituted princes and priests, and did not leave your sanctuary without a minister; who from the beginning of the world has been pleased to be glorified by those whom you have chosen, pour out upon him the power which is from you, the princely Spirit, which you gave to your beloved Son Jesus Christ, which he gave to your holy Apostles, who founded the Church in every place as your sanctuary, for the glory and endless praise of your name. Grant, Father who knows the heart, to your servant whom you chose for the episcopate, that he will feed your holy flock, that he will wear your high priesthood without reproach, serving night and day, incessantly making your face favorable, and offering the gifts of your holy Church; in the spirit of high priesthood having the power to forgive sins according to your command; to assign lots according to your command; to loose any bond according to the authority which you gave to the Apostles; to please you in mildness and a pure heart, offering to you a sweet scent, through your son Jesus Christ, through whom to you be glory, power, and honor, Father and Son, with the Holy Spirit, in the Holy Church, now and throughout the ages of the ages. Amen.

We see that one who is to be ordained a bishop can be ordained only by a bishop. We also see an explicit description of the authority of the bishop as a continuation of the authority of the Apostles. The bishop has the responsibility to feed the holy flock, to function as a high priest through the sacrifice he offers in the Eucharist (“the gifts of your holy Church”), having the apostolic power to forgive or retain sins (John 20:23). He also has the authority to assign presbyters and deacons their places in the Church, and to loosen any bond. Next, regarding the ordination of elders St. Hippolytus writes:

When an elder is ordained, the bishop places his hand upon his head, along with the other elders, and says according to that which was said above for the bishop, praying and saying:

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, look upon your servant here, and impart the spirit of grace and the wisdom of elders, that he may help and guide your people with a pure heart, just as you looked upon your chosen people, and commanded Moses to choose elders, whom you filled with your spirit which you gave to your attendant.

Now, Lord, unceasingly preserving in us the spirit of your grace, make us worthy, so that being filled we may minister to you in singleness of heart, praising you, through your son Christ Jesus, through whom to you be glory and might, Father and Son with the Holy Spirit, in your Holy Church, now and throughout the ages of the ages. Amen.

Of note here is that while the [mere] elders do also place their hands on the candidate to be ordained an elder, they do so not for the same reason or with the same necessity as that of the ordaining bishop. Mere elders cannot ordain, but a bishop can ordain. The other elders also lay hands on the candidate to show their union with the bishop and to join their prayer to that of the bishop, that the candidate may receive the Holy Spirit’s sacramental gift of ordination to the priesthood.

(3.) Third and Fourth Centuries

This same affirmation of the Catholic understanding of apostolic succession is ubiquitous in the third and fourth centuries. For example, St. Jerome, in his letter to Evangelus (date unknown) writes:

When afterwards one [presbyter] was chosen to preside over the others, this was done to remedy schism, lest anyone rend the church of Christ by drawing it to himself. For even at Alexandria from the time of Mark the evangelist up to the bishops Heraclas and Dionysius the presbyters have always named as bishop one chosen from their own number and set in a more exalted position . . .”³¹⁶

In a similar vein, St. Augustine, responding to the Donatists in 393 wrote:

You know what is the Catholic Church is, and what is cut off from the Vine.
If there are any among you cautious, let them come; let them live in the Root.
Before they become too withered to be liberated from the fire.
For this reason we do not rebaptize, [for baptism] is a sign of unity in the faith.
Not because we see that you are holy, but to hold the only form,
Because the form itself has a branch which is cut off from the Vine.
But what do they profit from a form, who do not live in the Root?
Come, brethren, if you wish to be engrafted in the Vine.
A grief it is when we see you lying thus cut off.
Number the Bishops even from the very seat of Peter.
And see every succession in that line of Fathers.
That is the Rock against which the proud Gates of Hell prevail not. (*Psalmus contra Partem Donati*. PL 43.30)

Seven years later, responding to a Donatist appeal to episcopal succession, St. Augustine writes:

For if the lineal succession of bishops is to be taken into account, with how much more certainty and benefit to the Church do we reckon back till we reach Peter himself, to whom, as bearing in a figure the whole Church, the Lord said: “Upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!” The successor of Peter was Linus, and his successors in unbroken continuity were these:— Clement, Anacletus, Evaristus, Alexander, Sixtus, Telesphorus, Iginus, Anicetus, Pius, Soter, Eleutherius, Victor, Zephirinus, Calixtus, Urbanus, Pontianus, Antherus, Fabianus, Cornelius, Lucius, Stephanus, Xystus, Dionysius, Felix, Eutychianus, Gaius, Marcellinus, Marcellus, Eusebius, Miltiades, Sylvester, Marcus, Julius, Liberius, Damasus, and Siricius, whose successor is the present Bishop Anastasius. In this order of succession no Donatist bishop is found. But, reversing the natural course of things, the Donatists sent to Rome from Africa an ordained bishop, who, putting himself at the head of a few Africans in the great metropolis, gave some notoriety to the name of “mountain men,” or Cutzupits, by which they were known.

Now, even although some traditor had in the course of these centuries, through inadvertence, obtained a place in that order of bishops, reaching from Peter himself to Anastasius, who now occupies that see—this fact would do no harm to the Church and to Christians having no share in the guilt of another; for the Lord, providing against such a case, says, concerning officers in the Church who are wicked: “All whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.” Thus the stability of the hope of the faithful is secured, inasmuch as being fixed, not in man, but in the Lord, it never can be swept away by the raging of impious schism. (Letter 53)

In all the evidence available from the early Church, one finds universal agreement concerning the apostolic origins of the episcopacy. Not a single case can be found in which someone was recognized as holding episcopal authority, but did not receive that authority either from Christ Himself, or from someone who had received authority mediately from Christ, by way of succession from the Apostles. No one could take ecclesial authority to himself, precisely because it is not a human authority, but a divine authority, which therefore has to be given from above. And this is

also why no one could receive ordination from someone who had not himself received this authority from Christ directly or from Christ mediately through succession from the Apostles. Knowingly treating an invalid ordination as though it were a valid ordination would be the equivalent of arrogating ecclesial authority to oneself. Because no one can give what he does not have, therefore those not having ecclesial authority could not give it. Only those having ecclesial authority could give ecclesial authority in the act of ordination. Congregations might put forward candidates for ordination, as in Acts 6:1-6 where the whole multitude put forward seven candidates to be ordained as deacons. But in the history of the Church there is not a single known case of ordination “from below,” rather than by apostolic succession.

(b.) Proximate Evidence for the Existence and Authority of the Petrine Succession

The following list of quotations is a representative, though not exhaustive, list of references showing widespread recognition of a Petrine succession as well as the unique ecclesial authority of St. Peter and his successors within the early Church.

(1.) First Century

St. Clement, third bishop of Rome, writes an unsolicited letter of correction and exhortation to the Church at Corinth (80AD) which begins as follows:

The Church of God which sojourns in Rome to the Church of God which sojourns in Corinth, to those who are called and sanctified by the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace from almighty God be multiplied unto you through Jesus Christ. Owing to the sudden repeated calamities and misfortunes which have befallen us, we acknowledge that we have been somewhat tardy in turning our attention to the matters in dispute among you, beloved; and especially that abominable and unholy sedition, alien and foreign to the elect of God, which a few rash and self-willed persons have inflamed to such madness that your venerable and illustrious name, worthy to be loved by all men, has been greatly defamed.³¹⁷

St. Clement goes on to warn the Corinthians that their disobedience to his instruction will be a transgression since it is Christ which speaks through this instruction:

If anyone disobey the things which have been said by Him [Christ] through us, let them know that they will involve themselves in transgression and in no small danger. We, however, shall be innocent of this . . .³¹⁸

And again, in the same letter, St. Clement insists that obedience is due to his instruction since what is written is through the Holy Spirit:

You will afford us joy and gladness if, being obedient to the things which we have written through the Holy Spirit, you will root out the wicked passion of jealousy, in accord with the plea for peace and concord which we have made in this letter.³¹⁹

(2.) Second Century

St. Ignatius, in his *To the Romans* (AD 107) lauds the Church at Rome, recognizing the Roman Church to hold a “presidency of love”, writing:

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the Church that has found mercy in the greatness of the Most High Father in Jesus Christ, His only Son; to the Church beloved and enlightened after the love of Jesus Christ, our God, by the will of Him that has willed everything which is; to the Church also which holds the presidency in the place of the country of the Romans, worthy of God, worthy of honor, worthy of blessing, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy of sanctification, and, **because you hold the presidency of love**, named after Christ and named after the Father: her therefore do I salute in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father. To those who are united in flesh and in spirit by every commandment of His, who are filled with the grace of God without wavering, and who are filtered clear of every foreign stain, I wish an unalloyed joy in Jesus Christ, our God.³²⁰

St. Ignatius, in the same letter, explains that the Roman Church has taught others and that its teaching is to remain in force:

You have envied no one; but others you have taught. I desire only that what you have enjoyed in your instructions may remain in force.³²¹

Hermas, in his work the Shepherd (AD 140), refers to one Clement whose duty it was to communicate with other Churches, writing:

Therefore shall you write two little books and send one to Clement and one to Grapte. Clement shall then send it to the cities abroad, because that is his duty; and Grapte shall instruct the widows and the orphans. But you shall read it in this city along with the presbyters who are in charge of the Church.³²²

The precise identity of Clement in this passage remains an open question. If the Clement of Hermas is St. Clement of Rome, this passage would seem to reinforce the authoritative role played by the head of the Roman Church among early Christian communities. Yet many scholars date *Hermas* to approximately AD 140 based upon a passage found within the Muratorian Fragment. Such dating places the writing of *Hermas* well beyond the known lifetime of St. Clement of Rome. The relevant passage from the Muratorian Fragment reads:

The Pastor [i.e., the Shepherd], moreover, did Hermas write very recently in our times in the city of Rome, while his brother, the bishop Pius, sat in the [episcopal] chair of the Church of Rome. [*Pastorem uero nuperrime temporibus nostris in Urbe Roma Hermas conscripsit, sedente cathedra Urbis Romae ecclesiae Pio Episcopo fratre eius.*]

Nevertheless, despite the later dating, there remain reasons for thinking that the Clement of *Hermas* may be identifiable with St. Clement of Rome. It may be that *Hermas* was written in parts (perhaps by different authors) over an extended period of time, coming finally to completion in the mid second century. In that case, the inclusion of St. Clement of Rome might be explained as a feature pertaining to portions of *Hermas* written prior to AD 140. Or it may be that the author, utilizing an allegorical form, introduces St. Clement of Rome as a character in the visions because St. Clement was perhaps the most widely known ecclesial figure of the prior generation. However, even if the dating of *Hermas* based upon the Muratorian Fragment were to render the identification of the two Clements unlikely, the very passage from the Muratorian Fragment upon which the date of *Hermas* is predicated, constitutes an independent second century witness to apostolic succession in Rome, for it explicitly references one Pius, the brother of Hermas, who “sat in the chair of the Church of Rome.”

St. Irenaeus, in his work *Against Heresies* (AD 180) explicitly recounts the succession of bishops at Rome, writing:

The blessed Apostles [Peter and Paul] , having founded and built up the Church [of Rome], they handed over the office of the episcopate to Linus. Paul makes mention of this Linus in the Epistle to Timothy. To him succeeded Anencletus; and after him, in the third place from the Apostles, Clement was chosen for the episcopate. He had seen the blessed Apostles and was acquainted with them. It might be said that He still heard the echoes of the preaching of the Apostles, and had their traditions before his eyes. And not only he, for there were many still remaining who had been instructed by the Apostles.³²³

St. Irenaeus, in the same work, explains that because the Roman Church is founded upon Peter and Paul, it serves as a center of unity for the Christian world. He writes:

But since it would be too long to enumerate in such a volume as this the successions of all the Churches, we shall confound all those who, in whatever manner, whether through self-satisfaction or vainglory, or through blindness and wicked opinion, assemble other than where it is proper, by pointing out here the successions of the bishops of the greatest and most ancient Church known to all, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul, that Church which has the tradition and the faith which comes down to us after having been announced to men by the Apostles. **For with this Church, because of its superior origin, all Churches must agree, that is, all the faithful in the whole world; and it is in her that the faithful everywhere have maintained the Apostolic tradition.**³²⁴

St. Irenaeus, in the same work, explains that St. Clement's letter to the Church at Corinth was precisely a case of the Church of Rome exercising its duty of fraternal correction. He goes on to recount the succession of bishops at Rome from the time of Clement to his own day, writing:

In the time of Clement, no small dissension having arisen among the brethren in Corinth, the Church in Rome sent a very strong letter to the Corinthians, exhorting them to peace and renewing their faith . . . To this Clement, Evaristus succeeded; and Alexander succeeded Evaristus. Then, sixth after the Apostles, Sixtus was appointed; after him, Telesphorus, who also was gloriously martyred. Then Hyginus; after him, Pius; and after him, Anicetus. Soter succeeded Anicetus, and now, in the twelfth place after the Apostles, the lot of the episcopate has fallen to Eleutherius. In this order, and by the teaching of the Apostles handed down in the Church, the preaching of the truth has come down to us.³²⁵

Muratorian Fragment (AD 180-200)

The Pastor [i.e., the *Shepherd*], moreover, did Hermas write very recently in our times in the city of Rome, while his brother bishop Pius sat in the [episcopal] **chair of the Church of Rome**. And therefore it also ought to be read; but it cannot be made public in the Church to the people, nor placed among the prophets, as their number is complete, nor among the apostles to the end of time.³²⁶

(3.) Third Century

Tertullian (c. 160 – c. 225), wrote the following in this Prescription Against Heretics, around AD 200:

Come now, if you would indulge a better curiosity in the business of your salvation, run through the apostolic Churches in which **the very thrones [cathedrae] of the Apostles** remain still in place; in which their own authentic writings are read, giving sound to the voice and recalling the faces of each. Achaia is near you, so you have

Corinth. If you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi. If you can cross into Asia, you have Ephesus. 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, where Paul was crowned in a death like John's [the Baptist], where the Apostle John, after being immersed in boiling oil and suffering no hurt, was exiled to an island.³²⁷

Sometime between AD 212 and 219, already a Montanist but revealing nonetheless, Tertullian wrote the following concerning the magisterial authority Christ set up in His Church:

But further, if Christ reproves the scribes and Pharisees, sitting in the official chair of Moses, but not doing what they taught, what kind of (supposition) is it that He Himself withal should set **upon His own official chair** men who were mindful rather to enjoin — (but) not likewise to practise — sanctity of the flesh, which (sanctity) He had in all ways recommended to their teaching and practising?³²⁸

Tertullian, though already separated from the Catholic Church, argues that Christ would not have set upon His own official chair men who would be like the Pharisees who sat on the seat of Moses, saying one thing yet doing another. Tertullian's argument aside, what is telling is his reference to Christ's official chair, as a seat of teaching authority in the Church.

Around AD 225, St. Hippolytus wrote:

Callistus attempted to confirm this heresy—a man cunning in wickedness, and subtle where deceit was concerned, (and) who was impelled by restless ambition to mount the **episcopal throne**. ... But after a time, there being in that place other martyrs, Marcia, a concubine of Commodus, who was a God-loving female, and desirous of performing some good work, invited into her presence the blessed Victor, who was at that time a bishop of the Church, and inquired of him what martyrs were in Sardinia. And he delivered to her the names of all, but did not give the name of Callistus, knowing the acts he had ventured upon. ... Now (the governor) was persuaded, and liberated Callistus also. And when the latter arrived at Rome, Victor was very much grieved at what had taken place; but since he was a compassionate man, he took no action in the matter. Guarding, however, against the reproach (uttered) by many—for the attempts made by this Callistus were not distant occurrences—and because Carpophorus also still continued adverse, Victor sends Callistus to take up his abode in Antium, having settled on him a certain monthly allowance for food. And after Victor's death, Zephyrinus, having had Callistus as a fellow-worker in the management of his clergy, paid him respect to his own damage; and transferring this person from Antium, appointed him over the cemetery. ... Thus, after the death of Zephyrinus, supposing that he had obtained (the position) after which he so eagerly pursued, he excommunicated Sabellius, as not entertaining orthodox opinions.³²⁹

The third-century poem, "*Adversus Marcionem*," says:

*Hâc cathedrâ, Petrus quâ sederat ipse, locatum
Maxima Roma Linum primum considerare iussit.*
(On this chair, where Peter himself had sat,
great Rome first placed Linus and bade him sit.) (P.L., II, 1099)

In AD 251, St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage wrote:

There is one God and one Christ, and one Church, and **one Chair** founded on the Rock [Peter] by the voice of the Lord [*et cathedra una super Petrum Domini uoce fundata*]. It is not possible to set up another altar or another priesthood besides that one altar and that one priesthood. Whoever gathers elsewhere, scatters.³³⁰

About that same year St. Cyprian wrote:

The Lord says to Peter: ‘I say to you,’ He says, ‘that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it. And to you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever things you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth, they shall be loosed also in heaven.’ And again He says to him after His resurrection: ‘Feed my sheep.’ On him 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 desert **the chair of Peter upon whom the Church was built**, can he still be confident that he is in the Church?³³¹

Concerning the Novatian schism, led by the antipope Novatian, St. Cyprian writes (AD 251-3)

You wrote, moreover, for me to transmit a copy of those same letters to [Pope] Cornelius our colleague, so that he might lay aside all anxiety, and know at once that you held communion with him, that is, with the Catholic Church. ... Moreover, Cornelius was made bishop by the judgment of God and of His Christ, by the testimony of almost all the clergy, by the suffrage of the people who were then present, and by the assembly of ancient priests and good men, when no one had been made so before him, when the place of Fabian, that is, **when the place of Peter and the degree of the sacerdotal throne** was vacant; which being occupied by the will of God, and established by the consent of all of us, whosoever now wishes to become a bishop, must needs be made from without; and he cannot have the ordination of the Church who does not hold the unity of the Church. Whoever he may be, although greatly boasting about himself, and claiming very much for himself, he is profane, he is an alien, he is without. And as after the first there cannot be a second, whosoever is made after one who ought to be alone, is not second to him, but is in fact none at all.

Then afterwards, when he had undertaken the episcopate, not obtained by solicitation nor by extortion, but by the will of God who makes priests; what a virtue there was in the very undertaking of his episcopate, what strength of mind, what firmness of faith — a thing that we ought with simple heart both thoroughly to look into and to praise — that he intrepidly sat at Rome **in the sacerdotal chair** at that time when a tyrant, odious to God’s priests, was threatening things that can, and cannot be spoken, inasmuch as he would much more patiently and tolerantly hear that a rival prince was raised up against himself than that a priest of God was established at Rome.³³²

St. Cyprian is very explicit that Christ made St. Peter the ground (or foundation or basis) of the unity of the Church. In giving to St. Peter a primacy, Christ gave to the Church a gift, a means by which to preserve her unity. Otherwise at the first schism there would be no objective way to determine where the Church is, for each faction would seemingly have equal claim to be the continuation of the Church. Christ did not set up the Church so that all of her members must have graduate degrees in theology in order to determine where is the Church, as if even then there would be unity.

St. Cyprian continues, in AD 252, still writing about the Novatian schism:

For neither have heresies arisen, nor have schisms originated, from any other source than from this, that God's priest is not obeyed; nor do they consider that there is one person for the time priest in the Church, and for the time judge in the stead of Christ; whom, if, according to divine teaching, the whole fraternity should obey, no one would stir up anything against the college of priests; no one, after the divine judgment, after the suffrage of the people, after the consent of the co-bishops, would make himself a judge, not now of the bishop, but of God. No one would rend the Church by a division of the unity of Christ. No one, pleasing himself, and swelling with arrogance, would found a new heresy, separate and without, unless any one be of such sacrilegious daring and abandoned mind, as to think that a priest is made without God's judgment, when the Lord says in His Gospel, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them does not fall to the ground without the will of your Father." (Matt. 10:29) [...]

Nevertheless, Peter, upon whom by the same Lord the Church had been built, speaking one for all, and answering with the voice of the Church, says, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we believe, and are sure that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God: " (Matt. 15:13) signifying, doubtless, and showing that those who departed from Christ perished by their own fault, yet that the Church which believes on Christ, and holds that which it has once learned, never departs from Him at all, and that those are the Church who remain in the house of God; but that, on the other hand, they are not the plantation planted by God the Father, whom we see not to be established with the stability of wheat, but blown about like chaff by the breath of the enemy scattering them, of whom John also in his epistle says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us." (1 Jn. 2:19) [...]

With a false bishop appointed for themselves by heretics, they dare even to set sail and carry letters from schismatics and blasphemers to **the chair of Peter and to the principal Church, in which sacerdotal unity has its source**; nor did they take thought that these are Romans, whose faith was praised by the preaching Apostle, and among whom it is not possible for perfidy to have entrance."³³³

Notice that for St. Cyprian, the unity of the bishops and priests has its source not only as a past event but as a present grounding or principle in the chair of Peter.

Again, between 251-53, St. Cyprian writes:

But what sort of a thing is this, that, because Novatian dares to do this thing, we are to think that we must not do it! What then? Because Novatian also usurps **the honour of the priestly throne**, ought we therefore to renounce our throne? Or because Novatian endeavours wrongfully to set up an altar and to offer sacrifices, does it behoove us to cease from our altar and sacrifices, lest we should appear to be celebrating the same or like things with him? Utterly vain and foolish is it, that because Novatian arrogates to himself outside the Church the image of the truth, we should forsake the truth of the Church. ... For first of all the Lord gave that power to Peter, upon whom He built the Church, and whence He appointed and showed the source of unity — the power, namely, that whatsoever he loosed on earth should be loosed in heaven. And after the resurrection, also, He speaks to the apostles, saying, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and says, unto them, Receive the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins you retain, they are retained." Whence we perceive that only they who are set over the Church and established in the Gospel law, and in the ordinance of the Lord, are allowed to baptize and to give remission of sins; but that without, nothing can either be bound or loosed, where there is none who can either bind or loose anything.³³⁴

And during this same time (251-253) he writes:

For if she [the Church] is with Novatian, she was not with [Pope] Cornelius. But if she was with Cornelius, who succeeded the bishop Fabian by lawful ordination, and whom the honour of the priesthood, the Lord glorified also with martyrdom, [then] Novatian is not in the Church; nor can he be reckoned as a bishop, who, succeeding to no one, and despising the evangelical and apostolic tradition, sprang from himself. For he who has not been ordained in the Church can neither have nor hold to the Church in any way. ... But if the flock is one, how can he be numbered among the flock who is not in the number of the flock? Or how can he be esteemed a pastor, who — while the true shepherd remains and presides over the Church of God by successive ordination — succeeding to no one, and beginning from himself, becomes a stranger and a profane person, an enemy of the Lord's peace and of the divine unity, not dwelling in the house of God, that is, in the Church of God, in which none dwell except they are of one heart and one mind, since the Holy Spirit speaks in the Psalms, and says, "It is God who makes men to dwell of one mind in a house." ... But that they [i.e., the Novatians] are said to have the same God the Father as we, to know the same Christ the Son, the same Holy Spirit, can be of no avail to such as these. For even Korah, Dathan, and Abiram knew the same God as did the priest Aaron and Moses. And yet those men had not made a schism, nor had gone out abroad, and in opposition to God's priests rebelled shamelessly and with hostility; but this these men [i.e., the Novatians] are now doing who divide the Church, and, as rebels against the peace and unity of Christ, **attempt to establish a throne for themselves, and to assume the primacy**, and to claim the right of baptizing and of offering [i.e., the Eucharistic sacrifice].³³⁵

In AD 254, St. Cyprian, in his *Letter to Florentius Pupianus*, wrote:

There speaks Peter, upon whom the Church would be built, teaching in the name of the Church and showing that even if a stubborn and proud multitude withdraws because it does not wish to obey, yet the Church does not withdraw from Christ. The people joined to the priest and the flock clinging to their shepherd are the Church.³³⁶

Two years later, in AD 256, when St. Stephen was pope, some of the African bishops were claiming that those persons who had been baptized while in a heresy, needed still to be baptized upon wishing to be received into the Catholic Church, because, according to these bishops, those first baptisms were invalid. St. Cyprian himself held this position and argued for it against Pope St. Stephen, who determined that such persons ought not to be re-baptized, because even though they were baptized while in a heresy, and the baptism was therefore illicit, nevertheless such baptisms were valid.³³⁷

Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, wrote to St. Cyprian in AD 256 regarding Pope Stephen, saying the following:

[H]e who so boasts of the place of his episcopate, and contends that he holds the succession from Peter, on whom the foundations of the Church were laid, should introduce many other rocks and establish new buildings of many churches; maintaining that there is baptism in them by his authority. For they who are baptized, doubtless, fill up the number of the Church. But he who approves their baptism maintains, of those baptized, that the Church is also with them. Nor does he understand that the truth of the Christian Rock is overshadowed, and in some measure abolished, by him when he thus betrays and deserts unity. The apostle acknowledges that the Jews, although blinded by ignorance, and bound by the grossest wickedness, have yet a zeal for God. Stephen, who announces that **he holds by succession the throne of Peter**, is stirred with no zeal against heretics, when he concedes to them, not a moderate, but the very greatest power of grace: so far as to say and assert that, by the sacrament of baptism, the filth of the old man is washed away by them, that they pardon the former mortal sins, that they make sons of God by heavenly regeneration, and renew to eternal life by the sanctification of the divine laver. ... For while you think that all may be excommunicated by you, you have excommunicated yourself alone from all; and not even the precepts of an apostle have been able to mould you to the rule of truth and peace.³³⁸

Of course Firmilian is claiming that Pope St. Stephen is wrong about re-baptizing heretics. But not only does Pope St. Stephen turn out to have been right, but Firmilian's letter reveals the way in which Pope St. Stephen conceived of the role and authority of the office signified by the chair of St. Peter.

(4.) Fourth Century

Poem Against the Marcionites (prior to AD 325):

In **this chair** in which he himself had sat, Peter, in mighty Rome, commanded Linus, the first elected, to sit down . . .³³⁹

The Church historian, Eusebius Pamphilus, recounts the succession of bishops at Rome in Book III of his *Ecclesiastical History* (AD 325), writing:

After the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, Linus was the first that received the episcopate at Rome. Paul makes mention of him in his epistle from Rome to Timothy . . .³⁴⁰

A little further in the same work, Eusebius makes clear that Linus was Peter's successor:

Linus whom he [Paul] has mentioned in his Second Epistle to Timothy as his companion at Rome, has been before shown to have been the first after Peter, that obtained the episcopate at Rome. Clement also, who was appointed the third bishop of this church . . .³⁴¹

Continuing his account of the Roman succession, Eusebius writes:

After Vespasian had reigned about ten years, he was succeeded by his son Titus; in the second year of whose reign, Linus, bishop of the church at Rome, who had held the office about twelve years, transferred it to Anencletus. . . In the twelfth year of the same reigns [Domitian's reign], after Anencletus had been bishop of Rome twelve years, he was succeeded by Clement, who, the apostle, in his Epistle to the Philippians, shows, had been his fellow-laborer . . .³⁴²

In the same work, Eusebius recounts the earlier testimony of St. Hegesippus, writing:

Hegesippus, indeed, in the five books of commentaries that have come down to us, has left a most complete record of his own views. . . . 'And the church of Corinth,' he says 'continued in the true faith, until Primus was bishop there. With whom I had familiar conversation (as I passed many days at Corinth,) when I was on the point of sailing to Rome, during which time also, we were mutually refreshed in the true doctrine. After coming to Rome, I made my stay with Anicetus, whose deacon was Eleutherius. After Anicetus, Soter succeeded, and after him Eleutherius. In every succession, however, in every city, the doctrine prevails according to what is declared by the law and the prophets and the Lord.'³⁴³

Pope St. Julius I, in his letter to the Eusebian party in Antioch (AD 341), explains that the jurisdictional authority of the Roman See was of ancient origin, writing:

If, then, any suspicion rested upon the bishop there, notice of it ought to have been written to the Church here [Rome]. But now, after they have done as they pleased, they want to obtain our concurrence, although we never condemned him [Athanasius]. Not thus are the constitutions of Paul, not thus the traditions of the Fathers. This is another form of procedure, and a novel practice. I beseech you, bear with me willingly: what I write about this is for the common good. For what we have received from the blessed Apostle Peter, these things I signify to you.³⁴⁴

The Council of Serdica (343-344) in what is today Sophia, Bulgaria highlighted the jurisdictional prerogatives of the Roman See in its third canon as follows:

But if any bishop loses the judgment in some case, and still believes that he has not a bad but a good case, in order that the case may be judged anew, if it pleases Your Charities, **let us honor the memory of the apostle Peter, by having those who gave the judgment write to Julius, Bishop of Rome, so that, if it seem proper, he may himself send arbiters, and judgment may be made again by the bishops of a neighboring province.** But if the case cannot be shown to be such as to warrant being heard again, let the judgment once given not be set aside, but let the judgment remain as it was given.³⁴⁵

The same thought is expressed in canon four which reads:

Bishop Gaudentius said: If it pleases you, it is necessary to make an addition to the decree which the fullness of Your Unalloyed Charity has proposed, so that if some bishop be deposed by the judgment of the bishops sitting in the neighborhood, and if declare that he will seek further redress, **another should not be appointed to his see until the bishop of Rome can be acquainted with the case and render a judgment.**³⁴⁶

The Council concludes with a summary of the acts of the synod by writing to the bishop of Rome with these words:

For this will seem to be best and most fitting indeed, if the priests from each and every province refer to the head, that is, to the **chair of Peter** the Apostle."³⁴⁷

St. Athanasius, the famous defender of Nicene orthodoxy, wrote the following around AD 358:

Thus from the first they [i.e., the Arians] spared not even Liberius, Bishop of Rome, but extended their fury even to those parts; they respected not his bishopric, because it was an **Apostolical throne**; they felt no reverence for Rome, because she is the Metropolis of Romania ; they remembered not that formerly in their letters they had spoken of her Bishops as Apostolical men. But confounding all things together, they at once forgot everything, and cared only to show their zeal in behalf of impiety. When they perceived that he was an orthodox man and hated the Arian heresy, and earnestly endeavoured to persuade all persons to renounce and withdraw from it, these impious men reasoned thus with themselves: 'If we can persuade Liberius, we shall soon prevail over all.'³⁴⁸

St. Optatus of Milevisu, bishop of Milevis in Africa, in a work begun in AD 367 writes:

For it was not Caecilian who went forth from Majorinus, your father's father, but it was Majorinus who deserted Caecilian; nor was it Caecilian who separated himself from the **Chair of Peter**, or from the Chair of Cyprian I but Majorinus, on whose Chair you sit, a Chair which had no existence before Majorinus himself. ... Victor would not have been able, had he been asked where he sat, to show that anyone had been there before him, nor could he have pointed

out that he possessed any Cathedra save the Cathedra of pestilence, for pestilence sends down its victims, destroyed by diseases, to the regions of Hell which are known to have their gates against which we read that Peter received the saving Keys, Peter, that is to say, the first of our line, to whom it was said by Christ:

To thee will I give the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and these keys the gates of Hell shall not overcome.

How is it, then, that you strive to usurp for yourselves the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, you who, with your arguments, and audacious sacrilege, war against the **Chair of Peter**? ... For it has been proved that we are in the Holy Catholic Church, who have too the Creed of the Trinity; and it has been shown that, through the **Chair of Peter** which is ours through it the other Endowments also belong to us. ... Will you be able to prove that **the Chair of Peter** is a lie and the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, which were granted him by Christ, with which we are in communion?³⁴⁹

Between AD 384 and 387 St. Optatus wrote the following:

But you cannot deny that you know that **the episcopal seat** was established first in the city of Rome by Peter and that in it sat Peter, the head of all the apostles, wherefore he is called Cephas, **the one chair in which unity is maintained by all**. Neither do other Apostles proceed individually on their own; and anyone who would set up another chair in opposition to **that single chair** would, by that very fact, be a schismatic and a sinner. It was Peter, then, who first occupied **that chair**, the foremost of his endowed gifts. He was succeeded by Linus, Linus was succeeded by Clement, Clement by Anencletus, Anencletus by Evaristus, Evaristus by Eleutherius, Eleutherius by Xystus, Xystus by Telesphorus, Telesphorus by Hyginus, Hyginus by Anicetus, Anicetus by Pius, Pius by Soter, Soter by Alexander, Alexander by Victor, Victor by Zephyrinus, Zephyrinus by Callistus, Callistus by Urban, Urban by Pontianus, Pontianus by Anterus, Anterus by Fabian, Fabian by Cornelius, Cornelius by Lucius, Lucius by Stephen, Stephen by Xystus, Xystus by Dionysius, Dionysius by Felix, Felix by Marcellinus, Marcellinus by Eusebius, Eusebius by Melchiades, Melchiades by Sylvester, Sylvester by Mark, Mark by Julius, Julius by Liberius, Liberius by Damasus, Damasus by Siricius, our present incumbent. I but ask you to recall the origins of your chair, you who wish to claim for yourselves the title of holy Church. (*De Schismate Donatistarum*, pp. 66-69.)

St. Optatus shows that schism is defined in relation to the chair of St. Peter, because Christ made Peter the head of the Apostles.³⁵⁰

St. Epiphanius, sometime between 374-377AD, recounted once again the succession of Bishops in Rome. In his work *Against All Heresies* he writes:

At Rome the first Apostles and bishops were Peter and Paul; the Linus, then Cletus; then Clement, the contemporary of Peter and Paul, whom Paul remembers in his Epistle to the Romans. It should surprise no one that others received the episcopate from the Apostles before him, who was the contemporary of Peter and Paul; for He was, at any rate, the contemporary of the Apostles . . . The succession of the bishops in Rome is as follows: Peter and Paul, Linus and Cletus, Clement, Evaristus, Alexander, Sixtus, Telesphorus, Hyginus, Pius, Anicetus, whom I have already mentioned above in my enumerating the bishops.³⁵¹

Pope St. Damasus, in the year AD 382, wrote the following:

The holy Roman Church has been placed at the forefront not by the conciliar decisions of other Churches, but has received the primacy by the evangelic voice of our Lord and Savior, who says: You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it; and I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you shall have bound on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall have loosed on

earth shall be loosed in heaven. ... The most blessed Apostle Paul, who contended and was crowned with a glorious death along with Peter in the City of Rome in the time of Caesar Nero — not at a different time, as the heretics prattle, but at one and the same time and on one and the same day: and they equally consecrated the above-mentioned holy Roman Church to Christ the Lord; and by their own presence and by their venerable triumph they set it at the forefront over the others of all the cities of the whole world. The **first see**, therefore, is that of Peter the Apostle, that of the Roman Church, which has neither stain nor blemish nor anything like it.”³⁵²

The term “See” comes from the Latin *sedes*, meaning ‘chair.’ This reference to the “first see” is in this way a reference to the primary chair. And this is also the origin of the term ‘Apostolic See,’ which refers to the Chair of the Apostle and the particular Church at Rome.³⁵³

St. Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, and the one who baptized St. Augustine, wrote the following in AD 388:

You said to Peter when he excused himself from having his feet washed by You: “If I wash not your feet, you will have no part with Me.” (John 13:8) What fellowship, then, can they [i.e., the Novatians] have with You, who receive not the keys of the kingdom of heaven, saying that they ought not to remit sins? And this confession is indeed rightly made by them, for they have not the succession of Peter, who hold not the **chair of Peter**, which they rend by wicked schism; and this, too, they do, wickedly denying that sins can be forgiven even in the Church, whereas it was said to Peter: “I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven.”³⁵⁴

In his “Commentaries on Twelve of David’s Psalms” (AD 381-397), St. Ambrose writes:

It is to Peter himself that He says: ‘You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church.’ Where Peter is, there is the Church. And where the Church, no death is there, but life eternal.³⁵⁵

St. Ambrose, along with Sabinus, Bassian and others, wrote a “Synodal Letter to Pope Siricius” in AD 389, part of which reads:

We recognized in the letter of your holiness the vigilance of the good shepherd. You faithfully watch over the gate entrusted to you, and with pious solicitude you guard Christ’s sheepfold, you that are worthy to have the Lord’s sheep hear and follow you. Since you know the sheep of Christ you will easily catch the wolves and confront them like a wary shepherd, lest they despise the Lord’s flock by their constant lack of faith and their bestial howling.”³⁵⁶

St. John Chrysostom, a priest at Antioch for twelve years before becoming bishop of Constantinople in 398, wrote about the difference in authority between the episcopal chair of St. James in Jerusalem and the chair of St. Peter in Rome:

And why, having passed by the others, does He [Jesus] speak with Peter on these matters? He [Peter] was the chosen one of the Apostles, the mouth of the disciples, the leader of the band; on this account also Paul went up upon a time to enquire of him rather than the others. And at the same time to show him that he must now be of good cheer, since the denial was done away, Jesus puts into his hands the chief authority among the brethren.... And if any should say, ‘How then did James receive the chair at Jerusalem?’ I would make this reply, that He appointed Peter teacher, **not of the chair [of Jerusalem], but of the world**.... For he [Peter] who then did not dare to question Jesus, but committed the office to another, was even entrusted with the chief authority over the brethren, and not only does not commit to another what relates to himself, but himself now puts a question to his Master concerning another.³⁵⁷

St. Jerome, in AD 376 wrote:

Since the East, shattered as it is by the long-standing feuds, subsisting between its peoples, is bit by bit tearing into shreds the seamless vest of the Lord.... I think it my duty to consult the **chair of Peter**.... My words are spoken to the successor of the fisherman, to the disciple of the cross. As I follow no leader save Christ, so I communicate with none but your blessedness, that is with the **chair of Peter**. For this, I know, **is the rock on which the church is built!** This is the house where alone the paschal lamb can be rightly eaten. This is the ark of Noah, and he who is not found in it shall perish when the flood prevails.... He that gathers not with you scatters.... If you think fit enact a decree; and then I shall not hesitate to speak of three hypostases. Order a new creed to supersede the Nicene; and then, whether we are Arians or orthodox, one confession will do for us all.... I beg you also to signify with whom I am to communicate at Antioch. Not, I hope, with the Campenses; for they — with their allies the heretics of Tarsus — only desire communion with you to preach with greater authority their traditional doctrine of three hypostases.³⁵⁸

In that same year he wrote the following in a letter to Pope St. Damasus:

The untiring foe follows me closely, and the assaults that I suffer in the desert are severer than ever. For the Arian frenzy raves, and the powers of the world support it. The church is rent into three factions, and each of these is eager to seize me for its own. The influence of the monks is of long standing, and it is directed against me. I meantime keep crying: “He who clings to the **chair of Peter** is accepted by me.” Meletius, Vitalis, and Paulinus all profess to cleave to you, and I could believe the assertion if it were made by one of them only. As it is, either two of them or else all three are guilty of falsehood. Therefore I implore your blessedness, by our Lord’s cross and passion, those necessary glories of our faith, as you hold an apostolic office, to give an apostolic decision. Only tell me by letter with whom I am to communicate in Syria, and I will pray for you that you may sit in judgment enthroned with the twelve; Matthew 19:28 that when you grow old, like Peter, you may be girded not by yourself but by another, John 21:18 and that, like Paul, you may be made a citizen of the heavenly kingdom.³⁵⁹

Between AD 392 and 393 St. Jerome wrote:

Simon Peter the son of John, from the village of Bethsaida in the province of Galilee, brother of Andrew the apostle, and himself chief of the apostles, after having been bishop of the church of Antioch and having preached to the Dispersion — the believers in circumcision, in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia — pushed on to Rome in the second year of Claudius to overthrow Simon Magus, and held the **sacerdotal chair** there for twenty-five years until the last, that is the fourteenth, year of Nero. At his hands he received the crown of martyrdom being nailed to the cross with his head towards the ground and his feet raised on high, asserting that he was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord. He wrote two epistles which are called Catholic, the second of which, on account of its difference from the first in style, is considered by many not to be by him. Then too the Gospel according to Mark, who was his disciple and interpreter, is ascribed to him. ... Buried at Rome in the Vatican near the triumphal way he is venerated by the whole world. [...]

Novatianus, presbyter of Rome, attempted to usurp the **sacerdotal chair** occupied by [Pope] Cornelius, and established the dogma of the Novatians, or as they are called in Greek, the Cathari, by refusing to receive penitent apostates.³⁶⁰

About that same time, in AD 393, St. Jerome wrote:

The Church was founded upon Peter: although elsewhere the same is attributed to all the Apostles, and they all receive the keys of the kingdom of heaven, the strength of the Church depends upon them all alike, yet one among the twelve is chosen so that when a head has been appointed, there may be no occasion for schism.”³⁶¹

In AD 393, writing against Jovinian, St. Jerome remarks:

. . .you will say ‘it was on Peter that the Church was founded’. Well, in another place the same is accorded to all the apostles, and all receive the keys to the kingdom of heaven, the strength of the Church depends equally on all of them; but one among the twelve I chosen to be their head in order to remove any occasion for division.³⁶²

Later, in AD 414, he wrote in a letter to Demetrias:

I think, therefore, that I ought to warn you, in all kindness and affection, to hold fast the faith of the saintly [Pope] Innocent, the spiritual son of [Pope] Anastasius and **his successor in the apostolic see**; and not to receive any foreign doctrine, however wise and discerning you may take yourself to be.³⁶³

St. Jerome affirmed the role of the chair of Peter in preserving and grounding the unity of the Church. The church in Syria was at that time divided into three factions, and St. Jerome turned to the visible head of the Church (the bishop occupying St. Peter’s chair) to determine which of the factions was part of the true Church, and which were schisms from the true Church. He clearly understand that Christ had foreseen that the Church needed a visible head in order not to provide an occasion for schism. For St. Jerome, the unity of the Church was not based on a continuous miracle operating against nature. Even nature teaches us that where there is no visible head, there will be no end of quarreling and divisions, to the point of disintegration. That is why Christ established a visible head, to provide a *principium unitatis* (principle of unity) for the Church. To be in communion with that rock upon which the Church is built, is to be in full union with the Church. To spurn that rock is to be in schism.

St. Ephriam, writing sometime in the second half of the fourth century writes the following in his *Homilies*:

Simon, my follower, I have made you the foundation of the holy Church. I betimes called you Peter, because you will support all its buildings. You are the inspector of those who will build on earth a Church for Me. If they should wish to build what is false, you, the foundation, will condemn them. You are the head of the fountain from which My teaching flows, you are the chief of my disciples. Through you I will give drink to all peoples. Yours is that life-giving sweetness which I dispense. I have chosen you to be, as it were, the first-born in my institution, and so that, as the heir, you may be executor of my treasures. I have given you the keys of my kingdom. Behold, I have given you authority over all my treasures.³⁶⁴

(5.) Fifth Century

Pope St. Innocent I, writing to St. Jerome in AD 417, says the following:

The spectacle of these terrible evils has so thoroughly roused us that we have hastened to put forth **the authority of the apostolic see** to repress the plague in all its manifestations; but as your letters name no individuals and bring no specific charges, there is no one at present against whom we can proceed. But we do all that we can; we sympathize deeply with you. And if you will lay a clear and unambiguous accusation against any persons in particular we will appoint suitable judges to try their cases; or if you, our highly esteemed son, think that it is needful for us to take yet graver and more urgent action, we shall not be slow to do so. Meantime we have written to our brother bishop John

[bishop of Jerusalem] advising him to act more considerately, so that nothing may occur in the church committed to him which it is his duty to foresee and to prevent, and that nothing may happen which may subsequently prove a source of trouble to him.³⁶⁵

In the same year, he wrote to the bishops of Africa:

In seeking the things of God . . . preserving the examples of ancient tradition . . . you have strengthened ... the vigor of your religion with true reason, for you have acknowledged that judgment is to be referred to us, and have shown that you know what is owed to the **Apostolic See**, since all of us placed in this position desire to follow the Apostle, from whom the episcopate itself and all the authority of this name have emerged. Following him we know how to condemn evils just as well as how to approve praiseworthy things. Take this as an example, guarding with your sacerdotal office the practices of the fathers you resolve that they must not be trampled upon, because they made their decisions not by human, but by divine judgment, so that they thought that nothing whatever, although it concerned separated and remote provinces, should be concluded, unless it first came to the attention of **this See**, so that what was a just proclamation might be confirmed by the total authority of **this See**, and from this source (just as all waters proceed from their natal fountain and through diverse regions of the whole world remain pure liquids of an uncorrupted source), the other churches might assume what [they ought] to teach, whom they ought to wash, those whom the water worthy of clean bodies would shun as though defiled with filth incapable of being cleansed.³⁶⁶

Pope St. Boniface, the bishop of Rome from 418 through 422, wrote the following to Rufus, bishop of Thessaly on March 11, 422:

To the Synod [of Corinth] ... we have directed such writings that all the brethren may know . . . that there must be no withdrawal from our judgment. For it has never been allowed that that be discussed again which has once been decided by the **Apostolic See**.”³⁶⁷

On that same day, Pope St. Boniface wrote the following letter to the bishops of Thessaly:

The universal ordering of the Church at its birth took its origin from the office of blessed Peter, in which is found both directing power and its supreme authority. From him as from a source, at the time when our religion was in the stage of growth, all churches received their common order. This much is shown by the injunctions of the council of Nicea, since it did not venture to make a decree in his regard, recognizing that nothing could be added to his dignity: in fact it knew that all had been assigned to him by the word of the Lord. So it is clear that this church is to all churches throughout the world as the head is to the members, and that whoever separates himself from it becomes an exile from the Christian religion, since he ceases to belong to its fellowship.”³⁶⁸

In his *Sermons* (AD 391-430), St. Augustine clearly indicates that the unity of the Church is intrinsically tied to the Petrine office when he writes:

Among the apostles almost everywhere Peter alone merited to represent the whole Church. For the sake of his representing the whole Church, which he alone could do, he merited to hear: ‘I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.’ For it was not one man, but the unity of the Church, which received those keys. In that way, therefore, Peter’s own excellence is foretold, because he acted the part of the unity and totality of the Church herself, when to him it was said, ‘I hand over to you,’ what was in fact handed over to all.³⁶⁹

St. Augustine points to the chair of St. Peter as one of the things that keeps him in the Catholic Church. He writes in AD 396:

There are many other things which most justly keep me in [the Catholic Church's] bosom. The consent of peoples and nations keeps me in the Church; so does her authority, inaugurated by miracles, nourished by hope, enlarged by love, established by age. The succession of priests keeps me, beginning from **the very seat of the Apostle Peter**, to whom the Lord, after His resurrection, gave it in charge to feed His sheep, down to the present episcopate. And so, lastly, does the name itself of Catholic, which, not without reason, amid so many heresies, the Church has thus retained; so that, though all heretics wish to be called Catholics, yet when a stranger asks where the Catholic Church meets, no heretic will venture to point to his own chapel or house. Such then in number and importance are the precious ties belonging to the Christian name which keep a believer in the Catholic Church ...no one shall move me from the faith which binds my mind with ties so many and so strong to the Christian religion.... For my part I should not believe the gospel except the authority of the Catholic Church moved me. So when those on whose authority I have consented to believe in the gospel tell me not to believe in Manichæus, how can I but consent? Take your choice. If you say, Believe the Catholics: their advice to me is to put no faith in you; so that, believing them, I am precluded from believing you — If you say, Do not believe the Catholics: you cannot fairly use the gospel in bringing me to faith in Manichæus; for it was at the command of the Catholics that I believed the gospel.”³⁷⁰

In the following year (AD 397), St. Augustine wrote:

[B]ecause [the bishop of Carthage] saw himself united by letters of communion both to the Roman Church, in which the **primacy** (principality/supremacy) of an **apostolic chair**[*apostolicae cathedrae principatus*] has always flourished, and to all other lands from which Africa itself received the gospel, and was prepared to defend himself before these Churches if his adversaries attempted to cause an alienation of them from him.³⁷¹

In the year 400, St Augustine wrote:

For if the lineal succession of bishops is to be taken into account, with how much more certainty and benefit to the Church do we reckon back till we reach Peter himself, to whom, as bearing in a figure the whole Church, the Lord said: “Upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!” (Matt. 16:18) The successor of Peter was Linus, and his successors in unbroken continuity were these: — Clement, Anacletus, Evaristus, Alexander, Sixtus, Telesphorus, Iginus, Anicetus, Pius, Soter, Eleutherius, Victor, Zephirinus, Calixtus, Urbanus, Pontianus, Antherus, Fabianus, Cornelius, Lucius, Stephanus, Xystus, Dionysius, Felix, Eutychianus, Gaius, Marcellinus, Marcellus, Eusebius, Miltiades, Sylvester, Marcus, Julius, Liberius, Damasus, and Siricius, whose successor is the present Bishop Anastasius. In this order of succession no Donatist bishop is found. But, reversing the natural course of things, the Donatists sent to Rome from Africa an ordained bishop, who, putting himself at the head of a few Africans in the great metropolis, gave some notoriety to the name of “mountain men,” or Cutzupits, by which they were known.

Now, even although some traditor had in the course of these centuries, through inadvertence, obtained a place in that order of bishops, reaching from Peter himself to Anastasius, **who now occupies that see** — this fact would do no harm to the Church and to Christians having no share in the guilt of another; for the Lord, providing against such a case, says, concerning officers in the Church who are wicked: “All whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.” (Matt. 23:3) Thus the stability of the hope of the faithful is secured, inasmuch as being fixed, not in man, but in the Lord, it never can be swept away by the raging of impious schism; whereas they themselves are swept away who read in the Holy Scriptures the names of churches to which the

apostles wrote, and in which they have no bishop. For what could more clearly prove their perversity and their folly, than their saying to their clergy, when they read these letters, “Peace be with you,” at the very time that they are themselves disjoined from the peace of those churches to which the letters were originally written?³⁷²

In his *Answer to Petilian the Donatist* (400-401), we find the following exchange between Petilian and St. Augustine:

Petilianus said: “If you wretched men claim for yourselves a seat, as we said before, you assuredly have that one of which the prophet and psalmist David speaks as being the seat of the scornful. For to you it is rightly left, seeing that the holy cannot sit therein.”

Augustine answered: Here again you do not see that this is no kind of argument, but empty abuse. For this is what I said a little while ago, You utter the words of the law, but take no heed against whom you utter them; just as the devil uttered the words of the law, but failed to perceive to whom he uttered them. He wished to thrust down our Head, who was presently to ascend on high; but you wish to reduce to a small fraction the body of that same Head which is dispersed throughout the entire world. Certainly you yourself said a little time before that we know the law, and speak in legal terms, but blush in our deeds. Thus much indeed you say without a proof of anything; but even though you were to prove it of some men, you would not be entitled to assert it of these others. However, if all men throughout all the world were of the character which you most vainly charge them with, **what has the chair done to you of the Roman Church, in which Peter sat, and which Anastasius fills today**; or the chair of the Church of Jerusalem, in which James once sat, and in which John sits today, with which we are united in catholic unity, and from which you have severed yourselves by your mad fury? Why do you call **the apostolic chair** a seat of the scornful? If it is on account of the men whom you believe to use the words of the law without performing it, do you find that our Lord Jesus Christ was moved by the Pharisees, of whom He says, “They say, and do not,” to do any despite to the seat in which they sat? Did He not commend the seat of Moses, and maintain the honor of the seat, while He convicted those that sat in it? For He says, “They sit in Moses’ seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.” (Matt. 23:2-3) If you were to think of these things, you would not, on account of men whom you calumniate, do despite to **the apostolic seat**, in which you have no share. But what else is conduct like yours but ignorance of what to say, combined with want of power to abstain from evil-speaking? [...]

But if you [i.e., Donatists] are really men like this, how much better and how much more in accordance with truth do we act in not baptizing after you [i.e., in your manner], as neither was it right that those whom I have mentioned should be circumcised after the worst of Pharisees! Furthermore, when such men sit in the seat of Moses, for which the Lord preserved its due honor, why do you blaspheme **the apostolic chair** on account of men whom, justly or unjustly, you compare with these?³⁷³

St. Augustine writes the following to Pope Sixtus in AD 418:

Wherefore, my venerable lord, and holy brother worthy of being received in the love of Christ, although you render a most excellent service when you thus write on this subject to brethren before whom the adversaries are wont to boast themselves of your being their friend, nevertheless, there remains upon you the yet greater duty of seeing not only that those be punished with wholesome severity who dare to prate more openly their declaration of that error, most dangerously hostile to the Christian name, but also that with pastoral vigilance, on behalf of the weaker and simpler sheep of the Lord, most strenuous precautions be used against those who more covertly, indeed, and timidly, but perseveringly, and in whispers, as it were, teach this error, “creeping into houses,” as the apostle says, and doing with practised impiety all those other things which are mentioned immediately afterwards in that passage. (2 Tim.3:6) Nor ought those to be overlooked who under the restraint of fear hide their sentiments under the most profound silence,

yet have not ceased to cherish the same perverse opinions as before. For some of their party might be known to you before that pestilence was denounced by the most explicit condemnation of **the apostolic see**, whom you perceive to have now become suddenly silent; nor can it be ascertained whether they have been really cured of it.³⁷⁴

Between 419-20, St. Augustine wrote the following:

The new-fangled Pelagian heretics have been most justly condemned by the authority of catholic councils and of **the Apostolic See**.³⁷⁵

Between AD 420 and 421, St. Augustine wrote:

For who does not see in what degree Coelestius was bound by the interrogations of your holy predecessor and by the answers of Coelestius, whereby he professed that he consented to the letters of Pope Innocent, and fastened by a most wholesome chain, so as not to dare any further to maintain that the original sin of infants is not put away in baptism? Because these are the words of the venerable Bishop Innocent concerning this matter to the Carthaginian Council: “For once,” he said, “he bore free will; but, using his advantage inconsiderately, and falling into the depths of apostasy, he was overwhelmed, and found no way whereby he could rise from thence; and, deceived for ever by his liberty, he would have lain under the oppression of this ruin, if the advent of Christ had not subsequently for his grace delivered him, and, by the purification of a new regeneration, purged all past sin by the washing of His baptism.” What could be more clear or more manifest than that judgment of **the Apostolical See**?³⁷⁶

In a letter to Pope Caelestine, St. Augustine writes the following in AD 423:

First of all I congratulate you that our Lord God has, as we have heard, established you in **the illustrious chair** which you occupy without any division among His people.³⁷⁷

In AD 426, St. Augustine wrote:

Now Pelagius was either afraid or ashamed to avow this to be his own opinion before you; although his disciple experienced neither a qualm nor a blush in openly professing it to be his, without any obscure subterfuges, in presence of **the Apostolic See**. ... The venerable Pope Zosimus, keeping in view this deprecatory preamble, dealt with the man, puffed up as he was with the blasts of false doctrine, so as that he should condemn all the objectionable points which had been alleged against him by the deacon Paulinus, and that he should yield his assent to the rescript of **the Apostolic See** which had been issued by his predecessor of sacred memory. The accused man, however, refused to condemn the objections raised by the deacon, yet he did not dare to hold out against the letter of the blessed Pope Innocent; indeed, he went so far as to “promise that he would condemn all the points which **the Apostolic See** condemned.” ... This being the case, you of course feel that episcopal councils, and **the Apostolic See**, and the whole Roman Church, and the Roman Empire itself, which by God’s gracious favour has become Christian, has been most righteously moved against the authors of this wicked error, until they repent and escape from the snares of the devil.... But I would have you carefully observe the way in which Pelagius endeavoured by deception to overreach even the judgment of the bishop of the **Apostolic See** on this very question of the baptism of infants. He sent a letter to Rome to Pope Innocent of blessed memory; and when it found him not in the flesh, it was handed to the holy Pope Zosimus, and by him directed to us.³⁷⁸

To fellow bishop Auxilius, St. Augustine writes in an undated letter:

I desire with the Lord's help to use the necessary measures in our Council, and, if it be necessary, to write to **the Apostolic See**; that, by a unanimous authoritative decision of all, we may have the course which ought to be followed in these cases determined and established.³⁷⁹

In an undated sermon, St. Augustine writes:

For already have two councils on this question [i.e., Pelagianism] been sent to the **Apostolic see**; and rescripts also have come from thence. The cause is finished. [*causa finita est*]; would that the error may sometime be brought to an end as well! [*Utinam aliquando finiatur error*]³⁸⁰

On May 8, 431, Pope Celestine, in his *Letter to His Legates to the Council of Ephesus*, writes the following:

We enjoin upon you the necessary task of guarding the authority of the Apostolic See. And if the instructions handed to you have to mention this and if you have to be present in the assembly, if it comes to controversy, it is not yours to join the fight, but to judge of their opinions.³⁸¹

On August 11, 431, Pope Celestine wrote to St. Cyril, the bishop of Alexandria, delegating him with authority to preside over the Council of Ephesus, saying:

... If he, Nestorius, persist, an open sentence must be passed on him, for a wound, when it affects the whole body, must be cut away at once. ... And so, appropriating to yourself the authority of **our See**, and using our position, you will execute our sentence with exact severity, that either he shall within ten days, counted from the day of your notice, condemn in writing this wicked assertion of his, and shall give assurance that he will hold, concerning the birth of Christ our God, the faith which the Romans, and the church of your holiness, and the universal religion holds; or if he will not do this (your holiness having at once provided for that church) he will know that he is in every way removed from our body.³⁸²

At the Council of Ephesus (431) in which Nestorius was condemned, the papal legates said the following:

Philip the presbyter and legate of the **Apostolic See** said: There is no doubt, and in fact it has been known in all ages, that the holy and most blessed Peter, prince (ἑξάρχος) and head of the Apostles, pillar of the faith, and foundation (θεμέλιος) of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of the human race, and that to him was given the power of loosing and binding sins: who down even to today and forever both lives and judges in his successors. The holy and most blessed pope Coelestine, according to due order, is his successor and holds his place, and us he sent to supply his place in this holy synod, which the most humane and Christian Emperors have commanded to assemble, bearing in mind and continually watching over the Catholic faith. For they both have kept and are now keeping intact the apostolic doctrine handed down to them from their most pious and humane grandfathers and fathers of holy memory down to the present time, etc.

Arcadius the most reverend bishop and legate of the **Apostolic See** said: Nestorius has brought us great sorrow....And since of his own accord he has made himself an alien and an exile from us, we following the sanctions handed down from the beginning by the holy Apostles, and by the Catholic Church (for they taught what they had received from our Lord Jesus Christ), also following the types (τύποις) of Coelestine, most holy pope of the **Apostolic See**, who has condescended to send us as his executors of this business, and also following the decrees of the holy

Synod [we give this as our conclusion]: Let Nestorius know that he is deprived of all episcopal dignity, and is an alien from the whole Church and from the communion of all its priests.

Projectus, bishop and legate of the Roman Church said: Most clearly from the reading, etc....Moreover I also, by my authority as legate of the holy **Apostolic See**, define, being with my brethren an executor (ἐκβιβαστής) of the aforesaid sentence, that the beforenamed Nestorius is an enemy of the truth, a corrupter of the faith, and as guilty of the things of which he was accused, has been removed from the grade of Episcopal honour, and moreover from the communion of all orthodox priests.³⁸³

St. Vincent of Lerins, three years later in AD 434, wrote the following:

For it has always been the case in the Church, that the more a man is under the influence of religion, so much the more prompt is he to oppose innovations. Examples there are without number: but to be brief, we will take one, and that, in preference to others, from **the Apostolic See**, so that it may be clearer than day to every one with how great energy, with how great zeal, with how great earnestness, the blessed successors of the blessed apostles have constantly defended the integrity of the religion which they have once received.

Once on a time then, Agripinnus, bishop of Carthage, of venerable memory, held the doctrine — and he was the first who held it — that Baptism ought to be repeated, contrary to the divine canon, contrary to the rule of the universal Church, contrary to the customs and institutions of our ancestors. This innovation drew after it such an amount of evil, that it not only gave an example of sacrilege to heretics of all sorts, but proved an occasion of error to certain Catholics even.

When then all men protested against the novelty, and the priesthood everywhere, each as his zeal prompted him, opposed it, Pope Stephen of blessed memory, Prelate of **the Apostolic See**, in conjunction indeed with his colleagues but yet himself the foremost, withstood it, thinking it right, I doubt not, that as he exceeded all others in the authority of his place, so he should also in the devotion of his faith. In fine, in an epistle sent at the time to Africa, he laid down this rule: “Let there be no innovation — nothing but what has been handed down.” For that holy and prudent man well knew that true piety admits no other rule than that whatsoever things have been faithfully received from our fathers the same are to be faithfully consigned to our children; and that it is our duty, not to lead religion whither we would, but rather to follow religion whither it leads; and that it is the part of Christian modesty and gravity not to hand down our own beliefs or observances to those who come after us, but to preserve and keep what we have received from those who went before us.³⁸⁴

The Church historian Sozomen (c. 370 – d. after 439), of Palestine, wrote the following concerning the activities of St. Athanasius in relation to Pope Julius (pope from AD 337-52):

Athanasius, on leaving Alexandria, had fled to Rome. Paul, bishop of Constantinople, Marcellus, bishop of Ancyra, and Asclepas, bishop of Gaza, repaired thither at the same time. Asclepas, who was opposed to the Arians and had therefore been deposed, after having been accused by some of the heterodox of having thrown down an altar; Quintianus had been appointed in his stead over the Church of Gaza. Lucius also, bishop of Adrianople, who had been deposed from the church under his care on another charge, was dwelling at this period in Rome. The Roman bishop, on learning the accusation against each individual, and on finding that they held the same sentiments about the Nicæan dogmas, admitted them to communion as of like orthodoxy; and as the care [oversight – *kedemonia*] for all was fitting to the dignity of **his see**, he restored them all to their own churches. He wrote to the bishops of the East, and rebuked them for having judged these bishops unjustly, and for harassing the Churches by abandoning the Nicæan doctrines. He summoned a few among them to appear before him on an appointed day, in order to account to him for the sentence they had passed, and threatened to bear with them no longer, unless they would cease to make

innovations. This was the tenor of his letters. Athanasius and Paul were reinstated in their respective sees, and forwarded the letter of Julius to the bishops of the East. ... The bishops of Egypt, having sent a declaration in writing that these allegations were false, and Julius having been apprised that Athanasius was far from being in safety in Egypt, sent for him to his own city. He replied at the same time to the letter of the bishops who were convened at Antioch, for just then he happened to have received their epistle, and accused them of having clandestinely introduced innovations contrary to the dogmas of the Nicene council, and of having violated the laws of the Church, by neglecting to invite him to join their Synod; for he alleged that there is a sacerdotal canon which declares that whatever is enacted contrary to the judgment of the bishop of Rome is null.”³⁸⁵

Elsewhere in the next book he wrote:

This event was, no doubt, ordained by God, that the **seat of Peter** might not be dishonored by the occupancy of two bishops; for such an arrangement is a sign of discord, and is foreign to ecclesiastical law.³⁸⁶

Pope St. Leo the Great, who was pope from 440 through 461, wrote the following in the year AD 443:

Leo, bishop of the city of Rome, to all the bishops appointed in Campania, Picenum, Etruria, and all the provinces, greeting in the Lord. ... All such persons [men who have married a widow, or a divorced woman], therefore, who have been admitted [to the priesthood] we order to be put out of their offices in the church and from the title of priest by the authority of **the Apostolic See**: for they will have no claim to that for which they were not eligible, on account of the obstacle in question: and we specially claim for ourselves the duty of settling this, that if any of these irregularities have been committed, they may be corrected and may not be allowed to occur again, and that no excuse may arise from ignorance: although it has never been allowed a priest to be ignorant of what has been laid down by the rules of the canons.³⁸⁷

Pope St. Leo the Great, around the year AD 446, wrote the following:

The connection of the whole body makes all alike healthy, all alike beautiful: and this connection requires the unanimity indeed of the whole body, but it especially demands harmony among the priests. And though they have a common dignity, yet they have not uniform rank; inasmuch as even among the blessed Apostles, notwithstanding the similarity of their honourable estate, there was a certain distinction of power, and while the election of them all was equal, yet it was given to one to take the lead of the rest. From which model has arisen a distinction between bishops also, and by an important ordinance it has been provided that every one should not claim everything for himself: but that there should be in each province one whose opinion should have the priority among the brethren: and again that certain whose appointment is in the greater cities should undertake a fuller responsibility, through whom the care of the universal Church should converge towards **Peter's one seat**, and nothing anywhere should be separated from its head. Let not him then who knows he has been set over certain others take it ill that some one has been set over him, but let him himself render the obedience which he demands of them.³⁸⁸

Pope St. Leo, to the bishop of Aquileia:

Let them [i.e., the Pelagians] by their public confession condemn the authors of this presumptuous error and renounce all that the universal Church has repudiated in their doctrine: and let them announce by full and open statements, signed by their own hand, that they embrace and entirely approve of all the synodal decrees which **the authority of the Apostolic See** has ratified to the rooting out of this heresy.³⁸⁹

Pope St. Leo, writing in July of 445:

To the beloved brothers, the whole body of bishops of the province of Vienne, Leo, bishop of Rome. Our Lord Jesus Christ, Saviour of mankind, instituted the observance of the Divine religion which He wished by the grace of God to shed its brightness upon all nations and all peoples But the Lord desired that the sacrament of this gift should pertain to all the Apostles in such a way that it might be found principally in the most blessed Peter, the highest of all the Apostles. And He wanted His gifts to flow into the entire body from Peter himself, as if from the head, in such a way that anyone who had dared to separate himself from the solidarity of Peter would realize that he was himself no longer a sharer in the divine mystery.... The **Apostolic See** — out of reverence for it, I mean, — has on countless occasions been reported to in consultation by bishops even of your province. And through the appeal of various cases to this see, decisions already made have been either revoked or confirmed, as dictated by long-standing custom.³⁹⁰

Pope St. Leo wrote to the Council of Chalcedon in 451:

I had indeed prayed, dearly beloved, on behalf of my dear colleagues that all the Lord's priests would persist in united devotion to the Catholic Faith, and that no one would be misled by favour or fear of secular powers into departure from the way of Truth; but because many things often occur to produce penitence and God's mercy transcends the faults of delinquents, and vengeance is postponed in order that reformation may have place, we must make much of our most merciful prince's piously intentioned Council, in which he has desired your holy brotherhood to assemble for the purpose of destroying the snares of the devil and restoring the peace of the Church, so far respecting the rights and dignity of the most blessed Apostle Peter as to invite us too by letter to vouchsafe our presence at your venerable Synod. That indeed is not permitted either by the needs of the times or by any precedent. Yet in these brethren, that is Paschasinus and Lucentius, bishops, Boniface and Basil, presbyters, who have been deputed by **the Apostolic See**, let your brotherhood reckon that I am presiding at the Synod; for my presence is not withdrawn from you, who am now represented by my vicars, and have this long time been really with you in the proclaiming of the Catholic Faith: so that you who cannot help knowing what we believe in accordance with ancient tradition, cannot doubt what we desire.³⁹¹

In the same year, the Fathers of the Council of Chalcedon wrote to Pope St. Leo I recognizing him as head of the assembly through his legates:

For if where two or three are gathered together in His name, He says He is there in the midst of them, how much more will He not show His companionship with five hundred and twenty priests, who preferred the spread of knowledge concerning Him to their own home and affairs, when you, as head to the members, showed your good will through those who represented you?³⁹²

In AD 461, St. Pope Leo I wrote the following in one of his *Sermons*:

From the whole world only one, Peter, is chosen to preside over the calling of all nations, and over all the other apostles, and over the Fathers of the Church. Thus, although among the people of God there are many priests and many pastors, it is really Peter who rules them all, of whom, too, it is Christ who is their chief ruler. Divine condescension, dearly beloved, has granted to this man in a wonderful and marvelous manner the aggregate of its power; and if there was something that it wanted to be his common with other leaders, it never gave what it did not deny to others except through him.³⁹³

Theodoret, (c. 393 – 457) a native of Antioch, and bishop of Cyrus: wrote the following letter to Pope Leo about AD 449:

To Leo, bishop of Rome. If Paul, the herald of the Truth, the trumpet of the Holy Ghost, had recourse to the great Peter, in order to obtain a decision from him for those at Antioch who were disputing about living by the Law, much more do we small and humble folk run to **the Apostolic See** to get healing from you for the sores of the churches. For it is fitting that you should in all things have the pre-eminence, seeing that your See possesses many peculiar privileges. For other cities get a name for size or beauty or population, and some that are devoid of these advantages are compensated by certain spiritual gifts: but your city has the fullest abundance of good things from the Giver of all good. For she is of all cities the greatest and most famous, the mistress of the world and teeming with population. And besides this she has created an empire which is still predominant and has imposed her own name upon her subjects. But her chief decoration is her Faith, to which the Divine Apostle is a sure witness when he exclaims “your faith is proclaimed in all the world;” (Rom 1:8) and if immediately after receiving the seeds of the saving Gospel she bore such a weight of wondrous fruit, what words are sufficient to express the piety which is now found in her? She has, too, the tombs of our common fathers and teachers of the Truth, Peter and Paul, to illumine the souls of the faithful. And this blessed and divine pair arose indeed in the East, and shed its rays in all directions, but voluntarily underwent the sunset of life in the West, from whence now it illumines the whole world. These have rendered your See so glorious: this is the chief of all your goods. And their See is still blest by the light of their God’s presence, seeing that therein He has placed your Holiness to shed abroad the rays of the one true Faith.³⁹⁴

Theodoret, in a letter to the presbyter Renatus, writes:

This most holy See [Rome] has preserved the supremacy over all Churches on the earth, for one especial reason among many others; to wit, that it has remained intact from the defilement of heresy. No one has ever sat on **that Chair**, who has taught heretical doctrine; rather that See has ever preserved unstained the Apostolic grace.³⁹⁵

Bishops Ceretius, Salonius and Veranus, in a letter to Pope St. Leo, concerning his “*Tome*,” which he wrote in 449:

Moreover we, who specially belong to you, are filled with a great and unspeakable delight, because this special statement of your teaching is so highly regarded wherever the Churches meet together, that the unanimous opinion is expressed that **the primacy of the Apostolic See** is rightfully there assigned, from whence the oracles of the Apostolic Spirit still receive their interpretations.³⁹⁶

St. Peter Chrysologus (c. 400 – 450), a Greek and bishop of Ravenna, in a letter to Eutyches [an archimandrite of a monastery outside the walls of Constantinople, where he ruled over three hundred monks] about AD 449, wrote the following:

We exhort you in every respect, humble brother, to heed obediently what has been written by the Most Blessed Pope of the City of Rome; for Blessed Peter, who lives and presides **in his own see**, provides the truth of faith to those who seek it. For we, by reason of our pursuit of peace and faith, cannot try cases on the faith without the consent of the Bishop of the City of Rome”³⁹⁷

The bishops of the Council of Chalcedon wrote the following to Pope St. Leo in AD 451:

We have ratified also the canon of the 150 holy Fathers who met at Constantinople in the time of the great Theodosius of holy memory [AD 381], which ordains that after your most holy and **Apostolic See**, the See of Constantinople shall take precedence, being placed second: for we are persuaded that with your usual care for others you have often extended that Apostolic prestige which belongs to you, to the church in Constantinople also, by virtue of your great disinterestedness in sharing all your own good things with your spiritual kinsfolk. Accordingly vouchsafe most holy and blessed father to accept as your own wish, and as conducing to good government the things which we have resolved on for the removal of all confusion and the confirmation of church order. For your holiness' delegates, the most pious bishops Paschasinus and Lucentius, and with them the right Godly presbyter Boniface, attempted vehemently to resist these decisions, from a strong desire that this good work also should start from your foresight, in order that the establishment of good order as well as of the Faith should be put to your account.³⁹⁸

Pope St. Leo wrote later,

But the bishops' assents, which are opposed to the regulations of the holy canons composed at Nicæa in conjunction with your faithful Grace, we do not recognize, and by the blessed Apostle Peter's authority we absolutely dis-annul in comprehensive terms."³⁹⁹

(6.) Sixth Century

Pope St. Hormisdas, who was bishop of Rome from AD 514 through 523, wrote the following:

Our first safety is to guard the rule of the right faith and to deviate in no wise from the ordinances of the Fathers; because we cannot pass over the statement of our Lord Jesus Christ who said: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church" . . . [Matt 16:18] These [words] which were spoken, are proved by the effects of the deeds, because in the **Apostolic See** the Catholic religion has always been preserved without stain. Desiring not to be separated from this hope and faith and following the ordinances of the Fathers, we anathematize all heresies, especially the heretic Nestorius, who at one time was bishop of the city of Constantinople Similarly anathematizing both Eutyches and Dioscorus of Alexandria We condemn, too, and anathematize Acacius, formerly bishop of Constantinople, who was condemned by the **Apostolic See** No less do we condemn Peter of Antioch with his followers Moreover, we accept and approve all the letters of the blessed Leo the Pope, which he wrote regarding the Christian religion, just as we said before, following **the Apostolic See** in all things, and extolling all its ordinances. And therefore, I hope that I may merit to be in the one communion with you, which the **Apostolic See** proclaims, in which there is the whole and the true and the perfect solidity of the Christian religion, promising that in the future the names of those separated from the communion of the Catholic Church, that is, those not agreeing with the **Apostolic See**, shall not be read during the sacred mysteries.⁴⁰⁰

Pelagius I, the bishop of Rome from 556 to 561, wrote the following:

... the Church was founded by Christ our Lord upon the chief of the Apostles, so that the gates of hell might not be able to prevail against it.... If you had read this, where did you believe the Church to be outside of him [the Pope] **in whom alone are clearly all the apostolic sees?** To whom in like measure as to him, who had received the keys, has the power of binding and of loosing been granted?⁴⁰¹

Pope St. Gregory the Great, who was pope from 540 to 604, wrote the following to John, the bishop of Syracuse:

For as to what they say about the Church of Constantinople, who can doubt that it is subject to the **Apostolic See**, as both the most pious lord the emperor and our brother the bishop of that city continually acknowledge? Yet, if this or any other Church has anything that is good, I am prepared in what is good to imitate even my inferiors, while prohibiting them from things unlawful. For he is foolish who thinks himself first in such a way as to scorn to learn whatever good things he may see.⁴⁰²

In another letter to Bishop John, Pope St. Gregory writes:

And it is exceedingly doubtful whether he says such things to us sincerely, or in fact because he is being attacked by his fellow bishops: for, as to his saying that he is subject to the **Apostolic See**, if any fault is found in bishops, I know not what bishop is not subject to it. But when no fault requires it to be otherwise, all according to the principle of humility are equal.⁴⁰³

In a letter to Eulogius, bishop of Alexandria, Pope St. Gregory writes:

Gregory to Eulogius, Bishop of Alexandria.

Your most sweet Holiness has spoken much in your letter to me about **the chair of Saint Peter**, Prince of the apostles, saying that he himself now sits on it in the persons of his successors. And indeed I acknowledge myself to be unworthy, not only in the dignity of such as preside, but even in the number of such as stand. But I gladly accepted all that has been said, in that he has spoken to me about **Peter's chair who occupies Peter's chair**. And, though special honour to myself in no wise delights me, yet I greatly rejoiced because you, most holy ones, have given to yourselves what you have bestowed upon me. For who can be ignorant that holy Church has been made firm in the solidity of the Prince of the apostles, who derived his name from the firmness of his mind, so as to be called Petrus from petra. And to him it is said by the voice of the Truth, To you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16:19). And again it is said to him, And when you are converted, strengthen your brethren (xxii. 32). And once more, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? Feed my sheep (John 21:17). Wherefore though there are many apostles, yet with regard to the principality itself **the See of the Prince of the apostles** alone has grown strong in authority, which in three places is the See of one. For he himself exalted the See in which he deigned even to rest and end the present life. He himself adorned the See [i.e., Alexandria] to which he sent his disciple as evangelist. He himself established the See [i.e., Antioch] in which, though he was to leave it, he sat for seven years. Since then it is the See of one, and one See, over which by Divine authority three bishops now preside, whatever good I hear of you, this I impute to myself. If you believe anything good of me, impute this to your merits, since we are one in Him Who says, That they all may be one, as You, Father, art in me, and I in you that they also may be one in us John 17:21.⁴⁰⁴

Summary of Evidence for the Existence and Authority of the Petrine Succession

The testimony of the tradition we find in the Fathers and other early writers indicates a deepening awareness of the significance and authority of St. Peter's chair, especially in grounding and preserving the fidelity and unity of the Church. But some conception of the authority of this chair seems to have been present even from the second century. And the clearest and most developed conception of this authority seems to have been in the particular Church of Rome, and especially in her bishops. At the same time, there is no comparable set of patristic quotations in which it is claimed that the chair of St. Peter did not hold such authority. So the inquirer is then faced with a dilemma that in a certain respect parallels that each of us faces regarding Christ's own claims concerning Himself.⁴⁰⁵ **Either** the Church at Rome almost immediately fell into serious error regarding her own ecclesial authority and role in relation to the

universal Church, and though various bishops at times disagreed with her decisions (e.g. St. Cyprian), no one 'corrected' her claim concerning her own authority until the time of Photius in the ninth century, **or** during all those centuries (and to the present) she was truly what she always claimed to be. The former option leaves us with the paradox that the Apostolic seat widely believed to be the touchstone of orthodoxy in every respect for hundreds of years, was terribly wrong about its own identity, and therefore unsuited to be anyone's touchstone of orthodoxy. In this way, we are left either with some form of ecclesial deism, or the unavoidable conclusion that the Catholic Church, consisting of all those particular Churches throughout the world in full communion with the episcopal successor of St. Peter in the Apostolic See, is the Church Christ founded, and over which, by His promise, the gates of hell shall not prevail.

St. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life." (John 6:68) Christ, in response, made these same words apply to St. Peter, by making St. Peter the *principium unitatis* of the Church. If we were to turn away from St. Peter, to whom should we go? What other visible ecclesial authority has been given St. Peter's authority and charism? Likewise, if we wish to see all Christians united in full visible unity, we must do so by entering into communion with the one who by Christ's authorization is the rightful occupant of the chair of St. Peter.

(3) The documentary witness of the early Church and the principle of proximate evidence

(a.) The Proximate Witness of the Early Church and the New Testament

In light of the foregoing documentary evidence of the early Christian centuries with respect to apostolic succession, an important question that arises is whether or not the New Testament texts that touch upon ecclesiology comport with the extra-biblical witness of the early Church. When understood according to the evidence from the early Church Fathers, the meaning of the evidence in Scripture is more apparent. Christ made His Apostles the foundation of His Church. We see this in Ephesians 2:20, where St. Paul explains that the Church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone. Just as Christ is a divine Person, before He ascended into Heaven He established authorized persons to stand in His place as stewards of His Church until He returns. In that respect, it is not Scripture that is the foundation of the Church, but the Apostles, even those Apostles who never wrote any Scripture.⁴⁰⁶

When men have "hands laid" on them by those having authority, in the sacrament of ordination, they receive delegated authority (1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6; Heb 1.10). This was a continuation in the Church of a practice under the Old Covenant, as Moses laid hands on Joshua (Num 27:15-23, Deut. 34:9); in this way the Spirit which was upon Moses was given to the elders (cf. Num. 11:16-17,25). St. Paul tells Titus to "declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority" (Titus 2:15). But this is not Titus' own authority; Christ has all authority, and He entrusted His authority to His Apostles, who delegated this same authority to their successors.

The evidence for this can be seen in the New Testament in the clear pattern of authorized succession that has its source in the Godhead. This succession begins with God the Father. Jesus does not speak or act on His own initiative; He does and says only what He was sent to do and say by His Father (John 5:19, 30; 8:28, 42; 12:49-50; 14:10). His teaching is not His own but that of the Father who sent Him (John 7:16). That is why to listen to Jesus is to listen to the Father (John 14:24). The same pattern continues with the Spirit, who is sent by Christ and discloses what belongs to Christ (John 16:14-15). Jesus teaches that this same pattern continues with the Apostles. "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me" (Matthew 10:40), and "He who listens to you listens to Me, and he who rejects you, rejects Me" (Luke 10:16). To receive the Apostles is to receive Jesus, because Jesus is the one who sent them (John 13:20). Just as the Father had given authority to Jesus, so Jesus gives authority to His Apostles (Luke 22:29-30; Matthew 11:27). Jesus gives to St. Peter the keys of the Kingdom. The Apostles in communion with Peter share in the authority by which their decisions on earth are ratified in heaven (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). St. Paul speaks of the authority which the Lord gave to him as an Apostle (2 Cor 10:8, 13:10). When the

Apostles forgive sins, those sins are forgiven; when they retain men's sins, those sins are retained (John 20:23). This all reveals that Christ had extended to the Apostles a participation in His divine governance of the Church; upon His ascension, He governed through them. As the Father sent Christ, so Christ sent the Apostles (John 17:18; 20:21). The Church was to continue to follow the pattern it had received from the Apostles (2 Tim 1:13) including the pattern of succession of authority.

Just as Christ had authorized the Apostles to teach and govern His kingdom in His name, so the Apostles authorized successors to do the same, entrusting to them the deposit of the faith, and teaching them to do the same to their own successors (2 Tim 2:2; Titus 1:5). We see this already in their filling Judas' unoccupied "ἐπισκοπήν" (bishopric; Acts 1:20). If there were no apostolic office, but only twelve individuals chosen by Christ, it would make no sense to choose someone to take Judas' bishopric after his death.⁴⁰⁷ The apostolic authorization was given through the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 2 Tim 1:6; 1 Tim 4:14). And St. Paul warns St. Timothy not to be hasty or incautious when Timothy ordains successors (1 Tim. 5:22). Without this authority received from the Apostles or their successors, those speaking did not speak for the Church, or as Christ's authorized representatives; they could only speak in their own name (John 5:43). When the Apostles ordained successors, they knew that it was not only they who were doing this, but also the Holy Spirit working through them (Acts 20:28; cf. Acts 14:23).

Consider Acts 15:24, "Since we have heard that some of our number who went out without any mandate from us have upset you with their teachings and disturbed your peace of mind." If apostolic succession were merely doctrinal, then the Apostles would not have implied that the disturbers needed a mandate from the Apostles. Their lack of an apostolic mandate would be irrelevant, and therefore not even mentioned. The Apostles and elders should simply have said only that the doctrine of the disturbers was not the Apostles' doctrine. But the Apostles and elders do not merely say that. Instead they provide a mandate to Paul and Barnabas, Silas and Judas called Barsabbas. The "letter" mentioned in verse 23 is the authentication or proof that these men have the necessary mandate from the Apostles to teach and preach in their name, as official legates or ambassadors of the Apostles.

In Romans 10:15, St. Paul writes, "And how shall they preach unless they are sent?" St. Paul indicates that a person needs to be sent, in order to preach. But who can send the preacher? There are two possible answers to that question: the Spirit apart from the Church, or the Spirit speaking in and through the Church. But if someone claims to be sent by the Spirit, apart from the Church, we should not assume he has been sent by God, unless by miraculous signs he demonstrates himself to be divinely authorized. Hence, if someone comes without signs, he cannot give an authorized message unless he has the authorization of the Church. Those who claim that prophecy ceased at the end of the apostolic era, therefore can be authorized to preach only by being sent out by those having the authority to send out men to preach on behalf of the Church. If only ordained people can ordain, then it follows by logical necessity that if anyone is presently ordained, there must be an unbroken succession extending back to the Apostles.⁴⁰⁸ In this way, Romans 10:15 requires apostolic succession, for those who claim that prophecy ceased at the end of the first century.

Those having this authority from the Apostles could "speak and reprove with all authority." (Titus 2:15) Titus, for example, was authorized by St. Paul as bishop of Crete, and Timothy as bishop of Ephesus. Eusebius writes, "Timothy, so it is recorded, was the first to receive the episcopate of the parish in Ephesus, Titus of the churches in Crete."⁴⁰⁹ In the New Testament, we see that to be authorized by the Apostles was to be authorized by Christ, precisely because when the Apostles exercised the divine authority entrusted to them, Christ worked through them (Mt 16:19; Lk 10:16, 2 Tim 1:6) Those who know God listen to those who are "from God," i.e., have been sent by Christ or by those whom He sent, or by those whom they sent. (1 John 4:6)

Only on the basis of this succession is it right for us to obey and submit (Heb 13:17) to the shepherds of the Church, for in doing so we are submitting to Christ. But those who "take the honor" (Heb 5:4) to themselves, without the succession, are not true shepherds. (John 10:1-2)

Only by this succession of divine authorizations, derived from the Apostles who had themselves received it from Christ, does the Church remain perpetually the “pillar and ground of truth,” (1 Tim 3:15) preserving the apostolic *kerygma* until the end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Any person can claim that Christ has given him authority. Any group of people can claim to speak for Christ or speak for the Church. Any group of people can claim to act on behalf of Christ in giving Christ’s authority to an ordained. Anyone can claim to have the Apostles’ teaching. The *sacramentality* of ordination helps guard the unity and doctrinal purity of the Church. In order to preach in the name of Christ, one must be sent by the legitimate authorities of the Church, i.e., those in sacramental succession from the apostles, just as the apostles could not send themselves but could only be sent by Christ. (cf. Acts 15:24; Romans 10:15; 2 Cor 5:20).

In summary when a reading of the New Testament is informed by the witness of those Christians living just beyond the apostolic era, the universal patristic witness to the apostolic origins of the episcopate appears in perfect continuity with the New Testament itself. Therefore, Brandon’s positing of a radical rupture between the meaning of those New Testament texts which touch upon issues of ecclesiology, and the actual ecclesiological witness of the early Church requires that he bring forward positive evidence explaining why the documentary witness of the early Church is in fact discontinuous, rather than continuous, with the New Testament texts. Yet, as section II above has demonstrated, Brandon has provided no such positive evidence.

(b.) The Principle of Proximate Evidence and the Evaluation of Paradigms

Recall from section II.b.1 above that the principle of proximate evidence was defined as follows:

When the direct data is such that from this data alone multiple explanations are possible, and the difference between the likelihoods of the explanations is inscrutable without presupposing what is in question, then all other things being equal, the explanation most compatible with data proximate in time and space is to be preferred unless there is independent positive evidence of a discontinuity between the direct data and the proximate data.

In evaluating each piece of data brought forward by Brandon in support of his thesis in sections II.b.2,3,4,5 and 6 above, we have shown by the application of the ILD principle and the principles governing the evidential value of silence, that the likelihood differential for the truth of Brandon’s thesis, over against that of the Catholic thesis, is inscrutable without presupposing precisely what is in question or allowing proximate evidence to inform that silence. Nor has Brandon presented a single piece of positive evidence that would support the hypothesis of a discontinuity in ecclesial governance between the time of the apostles and the proximate witness of the early Church with respect to the apostolic origins of the episcopate either at Rome or elsewhere. Accordingly, restricting the allowable data only to works written within that time frame, and building a thesis on the non-evidential silence within those texts is a violation of the principle of proximate evidence.

By contrast, the Catholic explanation of the evidence raised by Brandon’s challenge is in perfect continuity with the proximate witness of the early Church concerning the apostolic origins of the episcopate both at Rome and elsewhere. Moreover, the Catholic explanation of the evidence which Brandon has brought forward forms an organic and contiguous bridge between the ecclesial texts of the New Testament and the witness of the early Fathers such that the former can be readily understood as having a trajectory ordered to the later. Accordingly, the Catholic explanation of the evidence presented by Brandon’s challenge is continuous with the most proximate documentary evidence concerning the apostolic origins of the episcopate, whereas Brandon’s thesis, manifestly, is not. Therefore, in keeping with the principle of proximate evidence explained in section II.b.1, the Catholic position is to be rationally preferred over Brandon’s thesis of discontinuity.

B. Two Paradigms

Brandon's post and our response represent two paradigms for interpreting the first- and second-century evidence for the presence of the monarchical episcopacy in the Church generally and in the Roman Church in particular. Above, we have shown that the evidence supplied by Brandon as supporting his paradigm in fact is completely compatible with the Catholic paradigm. Furthermore, Brandon only achieves that support by omitting aspects of the data that do not favor his case, and that favor the Catholic case. In contrast, this section considers three implications of Brandon's paradigm that would be problematic if it were true. On the other hand, the Catholic approach avoids these same three implications. That the Catholic paradigm avoids these implications is an argument for the superiority of the Catholic paradigm. Hence, the Catholic paradigm's explanation of the evidence examined in this article is rationally preferable. All the evidence taken together, therefore, does not support Brandon's argument; instead it supports the paradigm recognizing the presence of a jurisdictional monarchical episcopate in the Church and even at Rome.

From what has been said it is clear that Brandon's ecclesial thesis and that of the Catholic Church represent two radically divergent paradigms with respect to the proximate and universal witness of the early Church to the apostolic origins of the episcopate, not only at Rome, but elsewhere throughout the early Christian world. In addition to violating the principle of proximate evidence with respect to the ecclesial testimony of the early Fathers generally, Brandon's thesis also raises several specific historical problems. Below are the three problematic implications for Brandon's paradigm that are not entailed by the Catholic paradigm.

(1) Deconstructing the Fathers

As the documentary evidence makes clear, everywhere one looks throughout the landscape of the ancient Churches, one finds not only universal testimony to the fact of episcopal governance as a functioning norm by the time of the Fathers themselves, but also a universal testimony to the **apostolic origins** of episcopal succession, inclusive of detailed succession lists for various ancient Sees, most prominently Rome. Yet, if the episcopal office is not a succession originating with the apostles, as Brandon's thesis holds, how is one to explain such ubiquitous error on the part of the early Fathers?

One strategy for lending plausibility to Brandon's thesis is to undermine the force of the widespread patristic testimony concerning the apostolic origins of episcopal succession by positing that nearly all of the patristic references to such origins depend upon one very early, erroneous account; an account which is more or less repeated or interpolated by later authors. In this way, one can avoid attributing direct deception to a multitude of Fathers. On this account, most of the early Fathers would be guilty only of ignorance; themselves being victims of a primordial deception. Positing an early and fundamental error as the source of later claims concerning the apostolic origins of the episcopate is crucial for Brandon's thesis, since the likelihood of an identical error arising independently in multiple places becomes vanishingly small with every additional independent source of error one admits.

If a man who claims to be an expert archer were to shoot a single bullseye, one might plausibly doubt his claim to expertise, perhaps by appealing to beginner's luck. However, if he shoots a bullseye repeatedly, denial of the truth of his expertise becomes increasingly difficult to sustain. In a similar way, if there were only one original claim concerning the apostolic origins of the episcopate upon which all others depended, one might plausibly question the truth of apostolic succession, especially if there were positive evidence indicating that the original claim might be false. However, if there should be multiple **independent** attestations to the fact of apostolic succession, denial of its truth becomes extraordinarily difficult to sustain. However, nothing in the evidence which Brandon has brought forward supports the thesis that the great body of patristic texts which speak to the apostolic origins of the episcopate depend upon one original source. Nor is there any positive evidence which would militate against the truthfulness of any of the accounts we possess. Instead, what we find among the Fathers is testimony that episcopal succession arose from the apostles in a multitude of locations throughout the Mediterranean world. Hence, there is simply no good reason to think that the ubiquitous testimony of the early Church to the apostolic origins of the episcopate is founded

upon a single primordial error. That evidential situation entails that the most reasonable course is to accept as truthful the testimony of the Fathers on this point.

Moreover, Brandon's thesis must necessarily impinge upon the integrity of at least one of the early Fathers. Even if one postulates that the greater part of the documentary witness to the apostolic origins of the episcopate rests upon a single primordial and catastrophic error on the part of one very early Father, intellectual dishonesty must evidently be attributed to that one Father at least. For if, prior to the first promulgation of this foundational error, there really were no such thing as an episcopal succession originating with the apostles themselves, whichever Father first promulgated the notion of apostolic succession, or penned the first bishop list feigning historical support for apostolic succession, would necessarily have been either aware of the outright falsity of his writing or else negligent of the truth through being willing to interpolate his current ecclesial experience backwards as a historical fiction without evidential warrant. Therefore, it would seem that the original promulgation of this error could be accounted for in no other way than by recognizing an intention to deceive, at least by way of gross exaggeration and misrepresentation. While such a scenario is logically possible, it is eminently implausible given what we generally know concerning the integrity of the early Fathers and the persecuted Christian community. It goes without saying that if one were to hold that the error of apostolic succession arose independently in multiple places, then besides being implausible for the reasons given above; such a notion would undermine the integrity, not only of one individual Father, but of however many Fathers were involved in the independent inception of such a grand ecclesial hijacking.

Ultimately, the need to postulate a primordial ecclesial error in order to make sense of the widespread testimony of the early Church, as well as the concomitant necessity of accusing at least one of the early Fathers of deception, flows directly from the more general problem mentioned above; namely, that Brandon's thesis violates the principle of proximate evidence. By striking contrast, the Catholic paradigm, precisely because it conforms to the principle of proximate evidence, has no need to deconstruct the Fathers by erecting a theory about a network of interdependent patristic errors or attributing intentional deceit to any Church Father.

(2) A Silent Ecclesial Revolution?

Another problem that arises for the thesis that monoepiscopal governance was discontinuous with, and contrary to, the will of Christ and the apostles, is the inability of such a thesis to explain how monoepiscopal governance of the Church became a universal fact by the mid to late second century without giving rise to a single explicit patristic objection to such a novel ecclesial sea change. If ever there were a silence which called for an explanation, this is it. Unlike a silence on some subject encountered within the writings of a single Church Father (such as the various silences evaluated in section II); this silence amounts to a universal hush casting its shadow across the entire documentary corpus of the early Christian centuries. If the apostles themselves founded and organized Churches throughout the Roman Empire without an episcopal structure, how could such a non-apostolic practice have emerged everywhere throughout the Christian world within a hundred years of the last apostle's death without leaving a single documentary trace of resistance being offered to such an unauthorized power-grab? In the patristic era one finds clear documentary evidence of controversy concerning practices far less fundamental than the structure and governance of the Church. The second century Quartodeciman controversy mediated by St. Irenaeus concerning the date of the celebration of Easter is just one example. That the very structure and governance of the Church could undergo a radical metamorphosis without any indication of struggle against such novelty seems incredible on its face. Nevertheless, in keeping with sound historical practice, the evidential value of such a universal silence must be tested against proper principles for evaluating the evidential weight of silence.

Remember from section II.b.1 above, that in order for an argument from silence within a text to carry evidential weight all four of the following conditions must be satisfied: (a) we know by other means that the author of the text intended the text to provide an exhaustive list of the items or events of the sort to which the unstated entity or event

would belong, (b) the author is not the sort of person who would overlook the unstated entity or event, (c) the missing entity or event is not the sort of thing that might be unnoticed or overlooked by the author, and (d) we have good reason to believe that the author has no overriding reason for concealing the entity or event.

With respect to criteria (a), the documentary testimony presented above makes clear that a great many of the early Fathers attest, not only to the fact of monoepiscopal governance in their own day, but also to its apostolic origins; going so far as to recount the succession of bishops from the apostles within various ancient Sees, including Rome. If the emergence of an episcopal form of governance were a novelty contrary to the intentions and practice of the apostles, such a change and any resistance to such change would certainly belong among the many patristic writings which speak to ecclesial issues. In terms of criteria (b) and (c), the Church Fathers themselves were often bishops responsible for guiding their flocks amidst rising heresies. As such, they were by no means indifferent to the history and structure of the Churches since recounting such history was often deployed to expose the chronological and doctrinal novelty of the sects. The same must be said for a Church historian such as Eusebius, whose purpose, precisely as a historian, would certainly include accounting for substantial changes or controversies related to the very structure of the Church. In short, if there really were an early ecclesial revolution, the patristic writers were not the sort of persons to overlook such a revolution, nor would such a revolution be the sort of thing such persons would overlook. Finally, with respect to criteria (d), since the patristic writers directly address the structure and origin of the Church, there is no evidence to suggest that they concealed or repressed witness to a rupture or power struggle related to Church governance between the apostolic age and the mid to late second century. One might suggest that since many of the Fathers were bishops, they might conceal the truth about such a sea change to protect their own position and power. However, to do so involves both a gratuitous skepticism ungrounded in historical fact, as well as an attribution of dishonesty and abuse of power to men otherwise known to be exemplars of holiness.

Since all four criteria are verified, the absence in the patristic corpus of any evidence that monoepiscopal succession represented a novel or controversial rupture with apostolic practice allows for a legitimate inference to the effect that no such rupture ever occurred. Moreover, the force of the inference is especially powerful in this case since the four criteria are met not only with respect to one patristic writer, but with respect to the entire patristic corpus. Furthermore, recall from section II.b.1 that the second principle for evaluating the evidential weight of silence is that “When one text gives a positive account of an event or condition, it trumps the silence of other accounts regarding that event or condition, all other things being equal.” The writings of the Fathers are manifestly replete with explicit testimony to the fact that monoepiscopal governance in the Church is of apostolic origin, without any explicit countervailing testimony to the contrary. Since one sound trumps any number of silences, and since the silence of the Fathers’ concerning rupture or controversy surrounding the structure of the Church passes all four of the criteriological tests for establishing the evidential value of silence, we may safely infer that no such rupture or controversy ever happened.

Just like the need to deconstruct the Fathers discussed above, the need to postulate an entirely undocumented rupture in Church governance between the apostolic age and the patristic era ultimately arises from the more fundamental mistake endemic to Brandon’s thesis, namely, that it violates the principle of proximate evidence. And once again, by striking contrast, the Catholic paradigm, precisely because it conforms to the principle of proximate evidence, has no need to posit such a breach. To the contrary, careful and consistent application of the principles governing the inferential value of silence highlight an evidential situation entailing that the most reasonable course is to accept as truthful the ecclesial witness of the Church Fathers.

(3) Where did the Church Christ Founded go for a Thousand Years?

Brandon’s position is that the Church was founded by Jesus Christ, but that the Church was not originally unified around a visible, apostolic hierarchy of bishops. Instead, the emergence of a visible hierarchy was a second-century

development that replaced an original “presbyterial” order in which all presbyters were of equal rank. Since the Catholic Church holds that the hierarchy is of apostolic origin, this later novelty of episcopacy (in Brandon’s sense of a single bishop with supreme jurisdiction) disqualifies the Catholic Church from being the Church that Christ founded. Brandon’s argument assumes that the evidence further proves that Christ, the apostles, and the Holy Spirit did not intend this later development. A Reformed Protestant, however, holds that the forms of governance in the Church can vary without destroying the essence of the Church. Brandon cited the PCA’s Book of Church Order to the effect that Presbyterian governance is of the well-being of the Church (*bene esse*), but not the being of the Church (*esse*).

Now the main objective of Brandon’s article is to show that the Catholic Church is not the Church that Christ founded. We are to look for the visible Church elsewhere. Hence in Comment #131 Brandon writes,

Why don’t you see a possible candidate for the church outside of the Catholic Church?⁴¹⁰

In Comment #148 Brandon writes,

I’ve focused on showing that ... the RCC is not the community begun by Jesus.⁴¹¹

Further, on the body of his article Brandon says,

If visibility entails hierarchical government as established by Jesus and handed on from the Apostles, it is manifestly clear that Christ did not found a visible church. Of course, Protestants want to affirm the necessity and importance of the visible church.

Brandon affirms in this quotation both that the Church founded by Jesus is necessarily visible, and also that Jesus did not constitute this visible Church with a “hierarchical government.”

This position, however, ultimately destroys either the visibility of the Church or the assertion that the visible Church has no hierarchical constitution. In other words, the two positions are incompatible given the nature of societies, of which the Church is a special case. Brandon must explain where the Church went for the thousand or more years between the emergence of bishops and the emergence of the Reformed and Presbyterian denominations, or he must look for the Church founded by Christ among those bodies with an apostolic hierarchy. One cannot have it both ways, as we explain below. This inability to explain where the Church went ultimately points to the problem of a Docetic ecclesiology in Brandon’s approach to the data. Docetism was a form of the heresy of Gnosticism, and it denied that the Savior suffered in true, visible human flesh for our redemption. Instead, Christ only “seemed” to suffer (*δοκεω* = “I seem”), but in fact the Savior was only invisible and spiritual. Hence Docetism denies the Incarnation, the scandal of Christ assuming a visible human nature. Since the Church is Christ’s mystical body on earth (Acts 9:4; 1 Cor 12:12-13; Eph 2:15-16; 3:6; Col 1:18, 24), a theology of the Church that either denies or is unable to account for its visibility likewise falls into an ecclesiological Docetism.⁴¹²

In contrast to this intrinsic difficulty with accepting Brandon’s *ad hoc* affirmation of a visible Church with no hierarchy, the Catholic paradigm can account for the same evidence analyzed in the paper above *and* have no difficulty explaining where the Church founded by Christ went. It subsists in the Catholic Church, whose bishops have apostolic succession and who have maintained communion with the successor of St. Peter, who presides in that particular Church of Rome, with which St. Irenaeus tells us all others must agree. The visible head of the apostolic college, St. Peter, still rules as the visible head of the Church through his successors, the popes of Rome.⁴¹³ In this

way, the Catholic avoids a Docetic theology of the Lord's Body, the Church, for he can affirm both the visibility and the hierarchical constitution of the Church founded by Christ.

What follows here explains why Brandon's position is *ad hoc*, namely, that the Church is necessarily visible and that she does not have a hierarchical order in her very constitution or essence. I must first outline a "social ontology," to borrow a term from Russell Hittinger, in order to explain how the Church is a visible union of persons. That is to say, the Church is a society.⁴¹⁴ For the sake of this section, "society," "social unity," and "moral body" are synonymous terms. The Church is both a human society and also above all a divine society animated by the Holy Spirit for the sake of our being incorporated into Jesus Christ. Every society has an intrinsic common good and an extrinsic common good. The intrinsic common good is the society's own order, which enables coordination in the activity of the members. This coordination is necessary for the attainment of the extrinsic common good, namely, the point or end of the society. Now the intrinsic common good is itself ordered to the extrinsic common good. To use an example Hittinger has modified from St. Thomas Aquinas, a crew team has the goal (extrinsic common good) of winning the race, and therefore has an intrinsic order of rowers to the coxswain. Each rower in the crew team has operations which do not belong to the whole crew team. Nonetheless, the crew team has an operation which is not reducible to the operation of the single rowers, the operation of the crew rowing the boat. The intrinsic ordering of the rowers to the coxswain exists in order to achieve the operation of the whole for the sake of the extrinsic common good, winning the race.⁴¹⁵

Now the unity that exists in a society differs from that of a substance, which has compositional unity (e.g., the composite unity of body and soul in an animal). In contrast a society is only a unity of order. St. Thomas Aquinas explains the difference between the unity of a natural substance and of a social unity in this way:

It must be known moreover that the whole which the political group or the family constitutes has only a unity of order, for it is not something absolutely one. A part of this whole, therefore, can have an operation that is not the operation of the whole, as a soldier in an army has an activity that does not belong to the whole army. However, this whole does have an operation that is not proper to its parts but to the whole—for example, an assault of the entire army.... There is also a kind of whole that has not only a unity of order but of composition... and according to this unity a thing is one absolutely; and therefore there is no operation of the part that does not belong to the whole.⁴¹⁶

What St. Thomas Aquinas means is that the activity of each part of a compositional unity belongs to the whole. Pius XII, in *Mystici corporis* 61, further explains this important difference between a human society and the compositional unity of a natural substance. In a natural or compositional unity, the parts are "ultimately destined to the good of the whole alone." The limbs of a dog are destined strictly to the good of the dog as a whole, and the whole supports the parts for sake of the whole. In contrast, the members of a human society are "in the end directed to the advancement of all in general and of each single member in particular; for they are persons." Think of the family in this case. The children are oriented to the common good of the family, but that common good also exists for the sake of each and every child in the family. If some member of the family were treated as a means to the end of any of other members, that is evidence of dysfunction and contrary to the human dignity of that member of the family.

A mere set or aggregate of persons is not a society and thus has no real unity. To put it another way, the persons in a set are just parts, not members. When the members of a society change, the society is not necessarily destroyed but can even be sustained, as France or the Church is sustained by member's being made citizens or being baptized. On the other hand, a mere set or aggregate of persons changes whenever someone leaves or is added to the set, just as a line at the DMV changes whenever someone advances to the next available agent and whenever a new person is added to the back of the queue.⁴¹⁷ In the case of a mere set, there is no coordinated activity of the members toward an extrinsic common good and thus no unity of order.

The point, then, is that any social unity by definition has a unity of order in the members. To lack a unity of order is to cease to be a social unity, for there can be no coordinated activity of the whole without a unity of order (intrinsic common good). A mere collection or set of human beings has no social unity in the relevant sense. For this reason, neither “people in a subway car” nor “all individuals who profess the true religion” are descriptions of societies; they are aggregates of parts. A group of persons with unity of order manifests itself as such by coordinated activity of the whole. The crew team’s unity of order is obvious from the rowers being ordered to the coxswain, following her commands and obeying her decisions. If there were no coxswain, there would be no order, and thus there would be no victory. One can see the unity of an army by the parts being ordered to the general, and in the family by the parts being coordinated to the father. In each case, the unity of order exists for the sake of obtaining the extrinsic common good of that society.

Thus, a human society is one and visible precisely because of its intrinsic common good, its unity of order. As Pius XII summarizes this social ontology, “In the moral body [Pius’s term for a human society], the principle of union is nothing else than the common end [extrinsic common good], and the common cooperation of all under the authority of the society for the attainment of that end [intrinsic common good].”⁴¹⁸ The Catholic Church is at least that, for she is a human society. Since she is also the Mystical Body of Christ, the Catholic Church is much more, for she has “another internal principle” who unites the members of the Church to Christ the Head. This other principle is the Holy Spirit, who dwells in her as a temple.⁴¹⁹ As St. Paul says, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call” (Eph 4:4). The Church is a society that is at once human and divine, being vivified by the Holy Spirit for the sake of a supernatural activity and a supernatural goal. She is thus unlike all other human societies; but she is at least a human society. As Pius taught, “[T]he Church, a perfect society of its kind, is not made up of merely moral and juridical elements and principles. It is far superior to all other human societies; it surpasses them as grace surpasses nature, as things immortal are above all those that perish.”⁴²⁰

For the reason that she is a human and divine society, the Church necessarily has an internal unity of order, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:20-22). The presence of a unity of order within the society of salvation is why to be united to God requires being united to the visible Word, Jesus Christ; and being united to Jesus Christ required the first Christians to be united to the visible head of the Church, Peter at the head of apostolic college (Mt 10:40 [“whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me”]; 16:18-19; 18:15-18). That Peter the apostle was the visible head of the Church is evident from Jesus’ own actions toward Peter: that Jesus gave him the new name meaning “rock” and identified him as the foundation of the Church (Jn 1:42; Mt 16:18), that Peter received the keys of the kingdom of heaven and no other apostle (Mt 16:19; cf. the typological antecedent in Eliakim, the vicegerent of the Davidic kingdom [Is 22:20-24]), that Peter is listed first in the lists of apostles (Mt 10:2; Lk 6:14; Jn 21:2), that Peter often speaks for the Twelve (Mt 16:16; Jn 6:68; Jn 13:24), that Peter is one of the Three and given access to Jesus different from the rest of the Twelve (Mt 14:28 [walking on water]; Mt 17:1ff. [Transfiguration]; Mt 26:37 [Gethsemane]; Lk 24:34, 1 Cor 15:5 [Resurrection]), that Peter’s denial is such a significant failure (Mt 26:31-35; Jn 13:36-38), that Jesus predicts Peter’s special place in restoring the apostles (Lk 22:31,32), that Peter is given a special commission to shepherd the flock of Jesus (Jn 21:15-19), that Peter is the one to stand and preach the moment the Church is established at Pentecost (Acts 2), and that Paul wanted to meet with Peter in particular (Gal 1:18). Peter was undeniably the visible head of the apostolic college both before and after the resurrection of Jesus.⁴²¹ On a Protestant reading, however, the wisdom of Jesus in establishing a visible head of the apostles was not to carry over to the Church after the apostles. A Catholic reading, aware that Jesus prayed for the unity of the apostle precisely so that the Church would be one (Jn 17:20), understands that Jesus intended the office of Peter to carry over past Peter’s death.

The bishops succeed the apostles in carrying out visibly the threefold office of Christ: prophet, priest, and king. The apostles and bishops therefore have been configured to Christ's threefold office of teaching, ruling, and sanctifying. The bishops together with the pope preserve and interpret the teachings of the faith, govern the Church, and administer sacraments, which unite us to God. Hence we see that the internal order of the laity to the hierarchy in the Church exists for the benefit of each member: that each would be united to God the Father through the Head, Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit.⁴²²

The fact of the Church's visible unity demands that it have this intrinsic common good of a hierarchy, a unity of the members to a visible head. Hence Jesus chose Twelve apostles, to be the new "tribal heads" in the New Covenant. He also established a visible head over the apostolic college, St. Peter, who was especially bestowed with the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" and told to shepherd the flock of Jesus (Mt 16; Jn 21). In Brandon's account of order in the first- and second-centuries, not only did the universal Church lose this hierarchical connection to one visible head, but also each particular Church lost a hierarchical ordering to a visible head insofar as no Church was divinely constituted with a monarchical bishop. Instead, there were only sets of presbyters, who themselves were not ordered to one visible head. Instead they somehow ruled in a completely egalitarian manner, like a crew team without a coxswain or head rower.⁴²³

The problem is now apparent: a society may survive the loss of individual members, but it cannot survive the loss of its unity of order. It would cease to be a society and thus cease to be one and visible. Brandon's position is susceptible to the following dilemma: either (~H) the Church did not have a hierarchical constitution at some point after the Resurrection, or (H) she had a hierarchical constitution after the Resurrection. If (~H), Brandon should explain how a society can remain united and visible without a visible principle of unity. On the contrary, every society has an internal common good comprised of its own order, precisely to coordinate its activity in attaining its external common good. If (H), Brandon should explain where the one, visible Church of Jesus Christ went after the Resurrection and the late second-century. Brandon's thesis is that the universal emergence of monarchical bishops in communion with the monarchical bishop of Rome was not a continuation of the apostolic hierarchy, but a corruption of an original parity of mere presbyters. Given that thesis, Brandon faces two difficult choices. On the one hand, it could have been that the one, visible Church somehow remained intact despite the change in its unity of order. What social body, then, is the one, visible Church of Christ today? Branch theory won't cut it precisely because it violates the ontology of societies: the branches are not united in a unity of order. On the other hand, it could have been the case that the visible unity of the Church was destroyed by the change in its unity of order. In this case, where did the one, visible Church of Christ go? She became invisible, if not destroyed. It is impossible on such a supposition to find the one, visible Church anywhere after the second century. In either case, Brandon must identify where the Church went and where she is now. To avoid this question is tacitly to concede that one holds a Docetic ecclesiology.

In contrast, the Catholic paradigm has no difficulty showing that the Church never lost her intrinsic common good, for the college of bishops with the pope at their head are the successors of the apostles with St. Peter at their head. Hence, the one Church founded by Christ, which is his visible Body on earth, is identical with the Catholic Church.

C. Three Objections

Now in this section we consider three potential objections to the foregoing response to Brandon's argument. First we will consider two objections related to whether adopting Catholicism is a leap of faith. Then we will consider whether the ILD principle undermines the case for the Catholic Church.

Obj. 1 "Your response to Brandon is even longer than his own article. Let us concede that the Catholic interpretation of the historical data is plausible. Now we face choosing between two plausible and incompatible interpretations of the historical data. This places the undecided reader in the very epistemological situation that *Called To*

Communion criticizes as Protestant and individualistic. The undecided reader must simply choose which interpretation seems right to him, for both seem plausible to him. Such a reader cannot appeal to the Catholic Magisterium without begging the question. For that matter, he cannot appeal to Protestant theology without begging the question. Therefore, the individual cannot escape choosing between the two interpretations on the basis of his own judgment. The *tu quoque* objection stands: the Catholic is in no different an interpretive position than the Protestant on this point. One must leap in the dark.”

Reply to Obj. 1 Ray, Bryan, and Neal have responded to this objection [several times before](#). That the individual uses his reason and will to examine the evidence takes nothing away from discovering the existence and identity of the Catholic Church, as well as her divine teaching authority. The one who discovers the Catholic Church is in a fundamentally different epistemological situation than the one who arrives at a Protestant confession, because of the difference in the nature of what he discovers. The former discovers a divine authority to which he recognizes he must submit, in the same way that someone would recognize the Lord Jesus as having a divine authority to which one must submit. The latter arrives at only an opinion, and must therefore judge the historical data by his interpretation of scripture to see whether the church of the Fathers is compatible with his own interpretation of the written Word of God.

The motives of credibility help identify the location of any God-given teaching authority, and thereby point toward the Catholic Church. That is not equivalent to the individual determining or judging what God has revealed by the light of his own intellect and then joining or remaining in a community on the basis of that judgment. Adjudicating the motives of credibility by the natural light of reason is not the same as the act of faith. Sifting through the historical evidence laid out above, in comparing their fit with Brandon’s paradigm and the Catholic paradigm, is still part of evaluating the motives of credibility. The Catholic act of faith is a distinct act, following this process, in which one, having recognized by the motives of credibility the identity and divine authority of the Catholic Church as the Church Christ founded, submits oneself to her in faith, as to Christ.

Nevertheless, if true, any *tu quoque* objection simply proves that we Christians are the most miserable of men. For we claim to have a sure faith in what God has revealed, and yet we have no means by which we can distinguish our own opinions about faith from what faith itself holds with definitive and irrevocable strength. Such a despairing situation does not fit with what we know concerning God’s existence and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, a despairing situation should seem absurd to us, and the insouciance of the *tu quoque* objection toward discovering a divinely-established and divinely-protected teaching office should also strike us as absurd.

Obj. 2 “Ok, but then the Catholic seems to admit that the historical data do not prove his position. There is still a leap of faith from the historical data to the Catholic faith. I thought the Catholic position led to certainty.”

Reply to Obj. 2 Demanding that the historical data prove the Catholic position misunderstands the Catholic Church’s teaching on the nature of believing (faith) and the relationship of reason to the act of faith (motives of credibility). The Church does not hold that the truth of any Catholic dogma can be demonstrated from a mere historical examination, such that by unaided reason the examiner is compelled to believe dogmas of faith. So for example, the supernatural origin of the Church and her infallibility in preserving what God has revealed are not proved by a historical examination of the monarchical episcopate. The reason for this is that someone can firmly assent to such dogmas about the nature of the Church only by the theological virtue of faith. This virtue, which is a gift of God’s grace, enables the rational creature to see and believe what he would otherwise be unable to know by the natural light of his intellect. By the supernatural light of faith, a man can adhere to something as true simply because God has revealed it, who is the First Truth and who cannot lie or err. If the man could see the truth of such dogmas by the natural light of his intellect, he would not need to believe on God’s authority, but would simply know it by reason.

At the same time, the Church also knows that for faith to be reasonable, there must be some way of finding the teaching authority through which God communicates his revelation to mankind. Otherwise, asking God for the ability to believe what He has revealed would be a hopelessly arbitrary exercise. Faith would be an arbitrary leap into one worldview and not another. This is called fideism, the position that there is no rational basis for discriminating between genuine and false religious authorities and thus genuine and false revelations. One must simply believe! The parallel intellectual vice is called rationalism, the position that it is only reasonable to accept a revelation when we can see its truth by the natural light of our own intellect.⁴²⁴ In contrast, the Church teaches the reasonability of faith, but also the transcendence of faith. A man needs faith precisely because his own natural light is a limited participation in the light of God's own truth (Ps 4:7). We cannot know God as He knows himself, and thus to enter into fellowship with God requires that God grant an additional light to our minds.⁴²⁵ This is the light of faith, by which he holds to the truths that God has revealed about Himself and the way of salvation. A man accepts these truths on the basis of an authority divinely authorized to guard and proclaim these truths of faith. That authority is in the Catholic Church.

In order for the assent of faith to be compatible with reason, the discovery of the Catholic Church must be clear enough to the reasonable man that he can have good reasons for accepting the Church's proclamation. These good reasons the Church calls the *motives of credibility*: the prophecies of the coming of Christ and the establishment of his Church; the beauty of Jesus himself; the beauty of Catholic life and teaching; the unity of the Catholic Church over two millennia, and her growth over the same period; her resilience in the face of schism, heresy, and the sins of even some of her bishops; the continued working of miracles in her midst; and the incredible holiness and love of her saints. These motives of credibility testify to the presence of a supernatural agency in this human social body. Yet these motives of credibility cannot prove in the strong, *demonstrative* sense that the Catholic Church is what she claims to be: the visible and supernatural society of salvation founded by Jesus Christ and protected by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the plan of God the Father. They can do so only at the level of moral certitude.

Since the motives of credibility give good reasons for accepting the Church's claims without proving them with metaphysical certitude, the motives of credibility can be resisted in a way that a metaphysical proof cannot be. A man can say that the evidence does not demonstratively prove the Catholic position, and he would be right. But he would be straining against the trajectory of the evidence, for the same reason that denying the resurrection of Christ strains against the trajectory of the evidence.

Now the historical investigation into the existence of the episcopacy in the early Church would fall under this concept of the motives of credibility. Such an investigation, therefore, cannot prove demonstratively the truth of the Catholic faith. But the investigation can point out to the reasonable man that something consistent, organic, and otherworldly is at work in this society. The historical data we have examined above could show development in the Church's internal organization, but it also shows a fundamental continuity of the Church's internal common good from the death of the apostles to now. Her bishops rightly claim to have succeeded the apostles who were chosen and sent by Jesus Christ in the oversight of the Church. The pope, as the bishop of Rome, has succeeded to the office of Peter.⁴²⁶

Of course the historical investigation can be prosecuted and the data handled in such a way that someone is not philosophically forced to give his assent to the Church's teaching. This does not detract from the reasonableness of the Catholic argument or the weight of the evidence in its support. On the contrary, this argument is part of the motives of credibility which lead the reasonable inquirer by the natural light of reason to moral certainty that the Church is the society of salvation founded by Jesus Christ, God incarnate. The analogy to the resurrection of Christ is fitting as we conclude the Easter season. The case for the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead is rationally compelling, even morally certain, but it is not a metaphysical proof that it happened or that Jesus was who he claimed to be. But to know the case for Jesus' resurrection and then to avoid accepting who Jesus Christ claimed to be and submitting to His authority is to strain against the trajectory of the evidence. In the same way, no one is rationally forced to accept

the Catholic conclusion that the bishops are the successors of the apostles and to submit to their authority. Nevertheless to do so is to strain against the direction in which the evidence points.

Obj. 3 “But the ILD principle undermines the motives of credibility for the Catholic faith. For the ILD principle states that where the differential in likelihood between two interpretations of the data is inscrutable, the data cannot serve as evidence for one thesis over against the other. In this response, *Called To Communion* has noted on the basis of the ILD principle that the data cited by Brandon do not count as evidence against the Catholic view. In the same way, neither then do they count against Brandon’s view. Therefore the Catholic paradigm is not more plausible than Brandon’s view.”

Reply to Obj. 3 This objection would go through if we had limited ourselves to analyzing the data cited by Brandon, thereby accepting his data set as definitive. Yet even in that stipulated range of data, Brandon has not proved his thesis that there was no monarchical bishop in Rome prior to the late second century. Given that he accepted the burden of proof in his post’s Part I, his argument fails on the basis of this indeterminacy of the data. Brandon has not proved his case, and there is no piece of evidence he cites which is not also compatible with the presence of a monarchical bishop in Rome during this period. This objection, then, attempts to undermine the Catholic position through another *tu quoque* accusation.

A large part of our response, however, and one of the reasons for its length, is that Brandon’s method of selecting which data are relevant to his inquiry is itself *ad hoc* and methodologically loaded. He selects certain parts of the sources which seem to favor his thesis, while leaving out clear evidence of episcopacy from the very same sources. This inappropriate method artificially constrains the historical investigation into the existence and nature of the episcopate in the early Church. If one accepts a wider range of data (both within the late first- and early second-century period and within the time period following), Brandon’s thesis does not emerge as equally plausible at all. Instead, the Catholic interpretation is not only more plausible but morally certain, because there exist witnesses to the fact that there had been monarchical episcopates throughout the Church and in particular the Roman Church from the apostles. Earlier ambiguous or underdetermined data does not undermine these witnesses, given the historiographical principle that all other things being equal, one should interpret earlier data in continuity with later testimony. Therefore, the ILD principle does not make the Catholic view only equally plausible in comparison with a “presbyterial” view. In fact, following a sound historical method and a complete data set makes it clear that the Catholic position is morally certain.

IV. Conclusion

To have a sustained and honest dialogue about matters of religious truth is rare, especially when the dialogue begins with disagreement. We are grateful, then, to have enough trust between Brandon and us to have been able to host his article on the historical implausibility of the claims of the Catholic Church regarding the episcopate. He has evinced a desire to understand the Catholic position and respond accordingly, and his effort is a mark of humility and generosity of spirit. His engagement here at CTC has also shown that we all agree that unity among Christians is only possible in the truth, for the Lord Jesus is Himself the truth, and the Spirit the Spirit of truth. May our discussion continue under the guidance of the same Spirit in order that all Christians may be “one flock, one Shepherd” (St. John 10:16).

In response, we have argued first negatively that Brandon’s article does not sustain his conclusion that the governance of the early Church was “presbyterial” in such a way as to exclude both a universal monepiscopate instituted by the apostles and also the particular monepiscopacy at Rome after St. Peter’s sojourn in that city. Either Brandon’s evidence is indeterminate as to the question at hand, or abstracted from the full literary and social context of the early Church. Moreover, even if his conclusion were somehow true, we have shown that it would have disastrous

consequences for ecclesiology. Secondly, we have made the positive argument that the Catholic Church's teaching on the episcopate is more plausible than Brandon's mere presbyterianism on a full consideration of the historical evidence, as well as on the theological implications. In this way the reader can see that the Catholic tradition accounts for the historical data just as well as, and in fact better than, Brandon's Presbyterian account. Furthermore, the Catholic tradition surmounts the theological problems that the Presbyterian account generates for itself, while simultaneously being able to express why the Presbyterian account generates precisely those intractable problems. For this reason, the Catholic tradition's approach to the historical data is demonstrably the superior paradigm when looking for the visible Church in history.

Pentecost Sunday, 2014

1. Ray Stamper is a guest author for CTC. He previously contributed an essay titled "[The Catholic and Protestant Authority Paradigms Compared](#)." He is presently pursuing an MA in theology with a focus in Church History through Holy Apostles College and Seminary in Cromwell Connecticut. [↵]
2. In [Comment #17](#) Brandon writes, "[T]he point of this article is to prove that the Church of Rome was ruled by presbyters (and not by a monarchical bishop) until c. 150 AD." [↵]
3. First Vatican Council, Sess. 4, Ch. 1. [↵]
4. First Vatican Council, Sess. 4, Ch. 2. [↵]
5. [Mysterium Ecclesiae](#), 1. [↵]
6. [Dominus Iesus](#), 16. [↵]
7. [Responsa ad quaestiones](#), Q2. [↵]
8. "Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only." [Unitatis Redintegratio](#), 1.) [↵]
9. See also Pope St. John Paul the II's January 27, 1993 General Audience titled "[The Bishop of Rome is Peter's Successor](#)." In light of that, when Brandon in [comment #23](#), says, "I wanted to point out that Catholics of good repute and in full communion with the Church share my rejection of traditional Catholic claims," if the "traditional Catholic claims" he has in mind are or include either the claim that St. Peter was not appointed by Christ as prince of all the Apostles, or that it is not by the institution of Christ Himself that St. Peter has perpetual successors in the primacy over the whole Church, or that the papal office did not come from Christ through St. Peter, then such a Catholic is at least in material heresy, and is thus in that respect *not* in full communion with the Catholic Church. So for any Catholic scholar Brandon cites, if that Catholic is in [at least] material heresy regarding the aforementioned doctrines, then he or she is not in full communion. If, however, that Catholic *is* in full communion with the Catholic Church, then that Catholic disagrees with Brandon on these points. [↵]
10. [Comment #131](#). [↵]
11. For an explanation of *modus tollens*, see "[Modus tollens](#)." [↵]
12. On the three degrees or grades (Latin: '*gradus*' of Orders, see 1554-1571 of the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#). The diaconate is the first grade of Holy Orders, the presbyterate is the second grade of Holy Orders, and the episcopate is the third grade of Holy Orders. The first and second grades of Holy Orders do not include the capacity to ordain anyone. A person having the third grade of Holy Orders does have the capacity to ordain. [↵]
13. For the purposes of this essay the term 'monepiscopacy' should be considered equivalent to the term "monarchical episcopate." [↵]
14. I (Bryan) explained this in 2010 in the "[X. Bishops](#)" section of my reply to Michael Horton's closing reply in my *Modern Reformation* interview with him. [↵]
15. See the *Code of Canon Law* on [diocesan bishops](#) and [coadjutor and auxiliary bishops](#). [↵]
16. For Tertullian's testimony that St. Clement was ordained by St. Peter, see [Prescription Against Heretics](#), c. 32. [↵]
17. Given that St. Cletus followed St. Linus in the order of episcopal leadership, and preceded St. Clement, it is likely that St. Cletus was also ordained either by St. Peter or St. Paul, in which case there were at the same time at least four bishops present and collaborating in the Church at Rome before St. Peter was martyred. [↵]
18. See Tim Troutman's "[Holy Orders and the Sacrificial Priesthood](#)." [↵]

19. [Comment #131](#). [↪]
20. Cf. Branden Fitelson, “Likelihoodism, Bayesianism, and Relational Confirmation,” *Synthese*, 156, 3: 473-89. [↪]
21. See David Hackett Fischer’s *Historical Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (Harper & Row, 1970), 47-48. [↪]
22. Cf. John Lange, “The Argument from Silence,” *History and Theory*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1966), pp. 288–301. See also Timothy McGrew, “The Argument from Silence,” *Acta Analytica* (2013), 1-14. [↪]
23. Accessed May 23, 2014. [↪]
24. Artificially restricting the scope of data is a form of what David Hackett Fischer calls “The Fallacy of the Lonely Fact.” See his *Historical Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*, (Harper & Row, 1970), 109-110. [↪]
25. By ‘mere presbyter’ we mean an ordained man having the power to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, but not having the power to ordain. Such a man has the second grade of Holy Orders, but not the third. [↪]
26. Vatican I, *Pastor Aeternus*, ch. 3. [↪]
27. See Tim Troutman’s explanation in [Section III](#) of “Holy Orders and the Sacrificial Priesthood.” [↪]
28. Cf. [Comment #82](#). [↪]
29. “[Apostolic Tradition](#),” 7,8. [↪]
30. See, for example, Canon 4 of the [Council of Nicea](#), and [c. 1014](#) of the modern *Code of Canon Law*. [↪]
31. Brandon at least acknowledges (in [Footnote 78](#)) that St. Peter went to Rome. For evidence that St. Peter was in Rome, see [Comment #360](#) in the post titled “Joshua Lim’s Story: A Westminster Seminary California Student becomes Catholic.” [↪]
32. St. Peter’s statement “You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders” in 1 Peter 5:5 provides even by age a basis for hierarchy among those ordained, within the same particular Church. [↪]
33. The fact that the Apostles repeated in their writings things they had already stated is fully compatible with it being true that if polity had already been established, there would be no absolute need to reiterate polity. [↪]
34. [Epis. 146.2](#). [↪]
35. [Comment #140](#) [↪]
36. *Apostolic Constitutions*, II.4. [↪]
37. St. Jerome, *Ep.* 146.2. [↪]
38. Cf. *A Harmony of Anglican Doctrine with the Doctrine of the Catholic and Apostolic Church of the East*, (A. Brown, 1846, pp. 165-166). [↪]
39. [Comment #23](#). [↪]
40. [Comment #102](#). [↪]
41. [Summa Theologica I Q.1 a.8](#) ad 2. [↪]
42. See, for example, *Priestly People: A Baptismal Priesthood and Priestly Ministry* by Jean-Pierre Torrell, (Paulist Press, 2013). See also Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priests According to the New Testament* (trans. J. B. Orchard; Petersham, Mass.; St. Bede’s Publications, 1986). See also “[Priests of My People: Levitical Paradigms for Christian Ministers in the Third and Fourth Century Church](#),” a Ph.D. dissertation for the University of Virginia by Brian Alan Stewart. See also [page 34](#) of Harnack’s *Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries* (Williams & Norgate, 1910). The entry ‘Bishop’ in the *Catholic Bible Dictionary* includes the following, “The early Christians saw the orders of Christian clergy as a fulfillment of the OT hierarchy of high priest, priest, and levite. These offices corresponded, respectively, to bishop, priest, and deacon.” ed. Scott Hahn, (Doubleday, 2009), 121. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “The liturgy of the Church, however, sees in the priesthood of Aaron and the service of the Levites, as in the institution of the seventy elders, a prefiguring of the ordained ministry of the New Covenant.” (CCC 1541.) [↪]
43. “[The Apostolic Tradition](#),” 3.4, 7.3, 8.11. [↪]
44. Cf. [Didascalia Apostolorum](#) chapters VIII – IX. [↪]
45. “[Canon of the Mass](#).” [↪]
46. Cf. “[St. Clement of Rome: Soteriology and Ecclesiology](#).” [↪]
47. *1 Clement*, 59:1 and 63:2. [↪]
48. *Against Heresies*, III.3. [↪]
49. *To the Ephesians*, c. 3. [↪]

50. [Comment #59](#). [↪]
51. *To the Magnesians*, c.4. [↪]
52. [Comment #102](#). [↪]
53. [Comment #102](#). [↪]
54. Cf. [Against Heresies, III.3](#). [↪]
55. Cf. "[St. Ignatius of Antioch on the Church](#)." [↪]
56. Brandon does the same with St. Irenaeus, when he treats St. Irenaeus's claims about the apostolicity of the episcopal office as a mere "assumption," writing in [Comment #13](#), "His assumption about the Apostolicity of the episcopal office . . ." [↪]
57. Cf. "[The First- and Second-Century Papacy: An Answer to Eamon Duffy](#)." [↪]
58. *Rom.*, 9:1, Holmes trans. [↪]
59. [Comment #109](#). [↪]
60. David Albert Jones, OP, "Was there a Bishop of Rome in the First Century?" *New Blackfriars* 80 (March 1999): 128-143, at 140; Francis A. Sullivan, SJ, *From Apostles to Bishops: The Development of the Episcopacy in the Early Church* (New York: Newman, 2001), 221: "One cannot build such an argument from the failure of Ignatius to mention a bishop in his letter to the Romans, for there he says nothing about presbyters or deacons either; that letter was very different from his others." [↪]
61. See [Martyrium Ignatii](#). [↪]
62. *Ign. Rom.*, 5. [↪]
63. St. Cyprian writes about this event in [Epistle 81](#). [↪]
64. *Smyrn.* 8:1. [↪]
65. See Bauckham's entry, "Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal Writings," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, edited by Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 68b-73a. [↪]
66. *Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 373. [↪]
67. Patrick Burke, "The Monarchical Bishop at the End of the First Century," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 7 (1970): 499-518, at 511-12. [↪]
68. Cf. "[Apostolic Succession](#)" section of my reply to Michael Horton's last rejoinder in our *Modern Reformation* interview. See also [Comment #133](#) under Brandon's post. [↪]
69. Regarding St. Jerome's statement in [Epistle 146](#) ("to Evangelus") about the selection of bishops by the presbyters in the Church of Alexandria, see [footnote #270](#) in Tim Troutman's "Holy Orders and the Sacrificial Priesthood." [↪]
70. [Comment #23](#). [↪]
71. Cf. Burke, "Monarchical Episcopate," 513:

It is taken for granted that the prophets will be mostly wandering prophets; on the other hand, it is also possible for a prophet to settle in a community (13,1). However, a community cannot be certain of always having a prophet, and so they are exhorted to 'appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons' to ensure that the teaching is carried out, and also that the Eucharist will be celebrated regularly. The bishops and deacons are entitled to honor *because they are a substitute for the prophets and teachers*, 'because they minister to you the ministry of the prophets and teachers. Therefore do not despise them.' (15,1 and 2)

This is entirely compatible with either a community's residential prophet being what we would call "bishops" in the modern sense, or for one of the "bishops" to be a monarchical bishop. That is why Burke's conclusion does not follow: "Of all the documents which date from this period, the *Didache* presents us with a picture of the Church most removed from that with a monarchical bishop." (ibid.) Not only is it compatible with the monarchical episcopate, but Burke himself has pointed out the possible origin of a residential cleric of the third grade of Orders in a prophet taking up residence. [↪]

72. Cf. [Letter to the Philippians](#). [↪]
73. Burke, "Monarchical Episcopate," 514-15. [↪]
74. *Ibid.*, Gk. [↪]
75. *Ign. Smyrn.* chs. 8, 9; *Pol. proe.*, chs. 1, 6. [↪]

76. Cf. [“Ignatius, *To Polycarp*.”](#) [↪]
77. Cf. [“The Martyrdom of Polycarp.”](#) [↪]
78. [Comment #17.](#) [↪]
79. [Against Heresies, III.3.4.](#) [↪]
80. [Church History, IV.14.](#) [↪]
81. [Against Heresies, III.3.4.](#) [↪]
82. “Anicetus conceded to Polycarp in the Church the celebration of the Eucharist, by way of showing him respect; so that they parted in peace one from the other, maintaining peace with the whole Church, both those who did observe [this custom] and those who did not.” ([Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenaeus, 3.](#)) [↪]
83. [Smyrn. 8:1 Gk.](#) [↪]
84. [Muratorian Fragment.](#) [↪]
85. [Comment #17.](#) [↪]
86. [Vis. 3.5.1 \[13:1\].](#) [↪]
87. [3.5.1 \[13:1\].](#) [↪]
88. [Vis. 2.4.1 \[8:1\].](#) [↪]
89. [ibid.](#) [↪]
90. [Vis. 3.3.3 \[11:3\].](#) [↪]
91. [3.4.1 \[12:1\], Holmes trans.](#) [↪]
92. [3.5.2-4 \[13:2-4\].](#) [↪]
93. [3.5.5 \[13:5\].](#) [↪]
94. Presently there are about 5,000 Catholic bishops throughout the world. [“Catholic Church grows at a faster rate than the global population.”](#) (Accessed May 28, 2014.) [↪]
95. [Sim. 9.27.1-3 \[104:1-3\], our emphases.](#) [↪]
96. [3.8.10; cf. 3.8.1-8.](#) [↪]
97. [Vis. 3.9.10-11 \[17:10-11\].](#) [↪]
98. [Comment #148.](#) [↪]
99. [Comment #155.](#) [↪]
100. See the discussion below on historical positivism. [↪]
101. An analogous contemporary example can be seen in [this excerpt](#) from the Lloyd Bentson vs. Dan Quayle U.S. Vice-Presidential debate in 1988. [↪]
102. See also Brandon’s reference to this reason in [Comment #23.](#) [↪]
103. Of course we are in no way suggesting that Brandon is anti-Semitic. We are speaking of the argument he is using. This argument is not original with Brandon, and he has endorsed it we presume, without realizing its implicit anti-Semitic assumption and basis. [↪]
104. See the quotation below from George Edmundson regarding the “bodies swathed in Jewish fashion.” [↪]
105. [Comment #155.](#) [↪]
106. [Comment #26](#) under “Modern Scholarship, Rome and a Challenge.” [↪]
107. [Comment #23.](#) [↪]
108. [Comment #127.](#) [↪]
109. [Comment #155.](#) [↪]
110. The notion of a “just so” story is taken from Rudyard Kipling’s [“Just So Stories.”](#) The “just so story” [fallacy](#) refers to the speculative, *ad hoc* and unsubstantiated narrative constructed to explain an event or entity. [↪]
111. [Church History, IV.22.1](#) [↪]
112. See J. B. Lightfoot, [S. Clement of Rome](#), (MacMillan and Co. London and New York, 1890), 327ff. Lightfoot’s argument has been widely accepted and to the best of our knowledge, has not since been refuted. [↪]
113. [Panarion, Bk 1, Section 2, Part 27.](#) [↪]
114. Peter Lampe, [From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries](#), trans. Michael Steinhauser, ed. Marshall D. Johnson (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 406. [↪]
115. I (Bryan) addressed this in 2010 in [comment #20](#) of the “Modern Scholarship” thread. [↪]
116. [Church History, IV.20.](#) St. Jerome concurs, writing,

Theophilus, sixth bishop of the church of Antioch, in the reign of the emperor Marcus Antoninus Verus composed a book Against Marcion, which is still extant, also three volumes To Autolytus and one Against the heresy of Hermogenes and other short and elegant treatises, well fitted for the edification of the church. (*De Viris Illustribus*, 25)

[↵]

117. Lampe, 405. We have corrected the English translation at “Sextus,” for Lampe more correctly wrote “Sixtus” in the first German edition of his book. See Peter Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten. Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1987), 342. [↵]
118. Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen*, 342. Emphasis original. [↵]
119. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 406. [↵]
120. See critical apparatus in Irénée de Lyon, *Contre les hérésies. Livre III. Tome II. Édition critique, texte et traduction*, rev. ed., trans. and ed. by Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, Sources chrétiennes 211 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 36. For a discussion of the manuscripts, especially *Salamanticensis*, see also Irénée de Lyon, *Contre les hérésies. Livre III. Tome I. Introduction, notes justificatives, tables*, Rev. ed., trans. and ed. by Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, Sources chrétiennes 210 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002). [↵]
121. Lewis & Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, 1688b. [↵]
122. Aegidio Forcellini, Iosepho Furlanetto, Francisco Corradini, and Iosepho Perin, eds., *Lexicon Totius Latinitatis*, Tom. VI: *Onomasticon, J-Z* (Patavii: Typis Seminarii, 1940), p. 621b-622a. [↵]
123. Eduard Schwartz and Theodor Mommsen, *Die Kirchengeschichte. Eusebius Werke: Zweiter band, Erster Teil*, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller 6.1 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), 304, 306, 438, and 496. Rufinus’s Latin translation says *Xystus* at each place (pp. 305, 307, 439, and 497). [↵]
124. See the *Catholic Encyclopedia* article on “[Pope St. Sixtus II.](#)” [↵]
125. Manlio Sodi and Achille Maria Triacca, eds., *Missale Romanum. Editio Princeps (1570)*, (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), 342. [↵]
126. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004. For the entry on St. Sixtus I, see, “Die 3 aprilis,” at p. 217. [↵]
127. See Jill E. Blondin, “Power Made Visible: Pope Sixtus IV as *URBIS RESTAURATOR* in Quattrocento Rome,” *Catholic Historical Review* 91 (2005): 1-25, at pp. 7, 12n34, 14, 16n44, 19, and 23n62; Roberto Weiss, *The Medals of Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484)* (Roma, 1961), 32-33. [↵]
128. One of us has the personal hypothesis that *Xystus* became *Sixtus* in some usage in order to make the name easier to say for non-Greek speakers. [↵]
129. An example of this can be found in Eusebius, where he writes:

At that time there flourished in the Church Hegesippus, whom we know from what has gone before, and Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, and another bishop, Pinytus of Crete, and besides these, Philip, and Apolinarius, and Melito, and Musanus, and Modestus, and finally, Irenæus. From them has come down to us in writing, the sound and orthodox faith received from apostolic tradition. (*Historia Ecclesiastica* IV.21.)

The works of most of these authors are no longer extant, but Eusebius claims that it was from these second century men that the sound and orthodox had come down to him and the Christians contemporary with him. [↵]

130. [Comment #44](#). [↵]

131. Cf. [Comment #37](#) under the “St. Irenaeus on Justification” thread. [↵]

132. [Comment #20](#) under the “Modern Scholarship, Rome and a Challenge” thread. [↵]

133. [Comment #68](#) under the “Mary as Co-Redemptrix” thread. [↵]

134. [Comment #59](#). [↵]

135. St. Epiphanius writes:

I heard at some time of a Marcellina who was deceived by them [i.e., the Carpocratians], who corrupted many people in the time of Anicetus, Bishop of Rome, the successor of Pius and the bishops before him. For the bishops at Rome were, first, Peter and Paul, the apostles themselves and also bishops — then Linus, then Cletus, then Clement, a contemporary of Peter and Paul

whom Paul mentions in the Epistle to the Romans. And no one need wonder why others before him succeeded the apostles in the episcopate, even though he was contemporary with Peter and Paul — for he too is the apostles' contemporary. I am not quite clear as to whether he received the episcopal appointment from Peter while they were still alive, and he declined and would not exercise the office — for in one of his Epistles he says, giving this counsel to someone, “I withdraw, I depart, let the people of God be tranquil.” (I have found this in certain historical works) — or whether he was appointed by the bishop Cletus after the apostles' death.

But even so, others could have been made bishop while the apostles, I mean Peter and Paul, were still alive, since they often journeyed abroad for the proclamation of Christ, but Rome could not be without a bishop. Paul even reached Spain, and Peter often visited Pontus and Bithynia. But after Clement had been appointed and declined, if this is what happened — I suspect this but cannot say it for certain — he could have been compelled to hold the episcopate in his turn, after the deaths of Linus and Cletus who were bishops for twelve years each after the deaths of Saints Peter and Paul in the twelfth year of Nero.)

In any case, the succession of the bishops at Rome runs in this order: Peter and Paul, Linus and Cletus, Clement, Evaristus, Alexander, Xystus, Telesphorus, Hyginus, Pius, and Anicetus, whom I mentioned above, on the list. And no one need be surprised at my listing each of the items so exactly; precise information is always given in this way. In Anicetus's time then, as I said, the Marcellina I have spoken of appeared at Rome spewing forth the corruption of Carpocrates' teaching, and corrupted and destroyed many there. (*The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, Bk 1, Against Carpocratians, Sect. 6.)

[↵]

136. “*Communicantes, et memoriam venerantes, in primis gloriosae semper Virginis Mariae, Genetricis Dei et Domini nostri Iesu Christi: sed et beati Ioseph, eiusdem Virginis Sponsi, et beatorum Apostolorum ac Martyrum tuorum, Petri et Pauli, Andreae, Iacobi, Ioannis, Thomae, Iacobi, Philippi, Bartholomaei, Matthaei, Simonis et Thaddaei: Lini, Cleti, Clementis, ...*” (“In union with the whole Church we honor Mary, the ever-virgin mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God. We honor Joseph, her husband, the apostles and martyrs Peter and Paul, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon and Jude; we honor Linus, Cletus, Clement, ...” [↵]
137. [Against Heresies III.3.](#) [↵]
138. Cf. His “[De Viris Illustribus](#),” written between AD 392-393. [↵]
139. See [here](#) lines 36off of Book III. [↵]
140. The Liberian Catalogue can be found [here](#). The list as far as Pope Pontiananus (AD 230-35) is believed to be the work of St. Hippolytus, who compiled his list in AD 235. [↵]
141. See his [Against the Donatists](#), pp. 68-69. [↵]
142. [Ep. 53.](#) [↵]
143. A tenth witness, writing in the early third-century, unknown in name, does not provide the list of names of the bishops of Rome, but states that St. Victor “was the thirteenth bishop of Rome from Peter.” The full quotation reads:

For they say that all the early teachers and the apostles received and taught what they now declare, and that the truth of the Gospel was preserved until the times of Victor, who was the thirteenth bishop of Rome from Peter, but that from his successor, Zephyrinus, the truth had been corrupted.

And what they say might be plausible, if first of all the Divine Scriptures did not contradict them. And there are writings of certain brethren older than the times of Victor, which they wrote in behalf of the truth against the heathen, and against the heresies which existed in their day. I refer to Justin and Miltiades and Tatian and Clement and many others, in all of whose works Christ is spoken of as God.

For who does not know the works of Irenæus and of Melito and of others which teach that Christ is God and man? And how many psalms and hymns, written by the faithful brethren from the beginning, celebrate Christ the Word of God, speaking of him as Divine.

How then since the opinion held by the Church has been preached for so many years, can its preaching have been delayed as they affirm, until the times of Victor? And how is it that they are not ashamed to speak thus falsely of Victor, knowing well that he cut off from communion Theodotus, the cobbler, the leader and father of this God-denying apostasy, and the first to declare that Christ is mere man? For if Victor agreed with their opinions, as their slander affirms, how came he to cast out Theodotus, the inventor of this heresy? (Quoted in Eusebius, *Church History* V.28.)

[↪]

144. According to the tradition, St. Linus was from Volterra, in Tuscany, about 170 miles northwest of Rome. Later the [Chiesa di San Lino](#) (Church of Saint Linus) was built over the place his house had been. To this day the city of Volterra celebrates “La festa di San Lino patrono di Volterra” (The Feast of Saint Linus, patron of Volterra) on his feast day, i.e., September 23, as can be seen in the video at [this link](#). [↪]
145. [Fragments from the Lost Writings of St. Irenaeus](#). [↪]
146. See also *AH* IV.26.2. [↪]
147. Even St. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon, is referred to as a ‘presbyter’ by St. Hippolytus. See *Refutation of All Heresies*, [Book VI](#), c. 37., where St. Hippolytus writes, “For also the blessed presbyter Irenaeus, having approached the subject of a refutation in a more unconstrained spirit, has explained such washings and redemptions, stating more in the way of a rough digest what are their practices.” [↪]
148. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, Pope Telesphorus (AD 125-136) ordained that the fast of seven weeks should be kept before Easter. [↪]
149. [Against Heresies, I.25.6](#). [↪]
150. [Against Heresies, I.27.1-2](#). [↪]
151. [Against Heresies, III.4.3](#). [↪]
152. [Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenaeus](#). [↪]
153. [Against the Valentinians](#), 4. [↪]
154. [Epistle 73](#). [↪]
155. *Against All Heresies*, 6. [↪]
156. *Panarion*, Bk. 1 pt. 42, 1:7. [↪]
157. *Prescription Against Heretics*, c. 30. [↪]
158. Tertullian writes:

With regard, then, to the pending question, of Luke’s Gospel (so far as its being the common property of ourselves and Marcion enables it to be decisive of the truth,) that portion of it which we alone receive is so much older than Marcion, that Marcion himself once believed it, when in the first warmth of faith he contributed money to the Catholic church, which along with himself was afterwards rejected, when he fell away from our truth into his own heresy. (*Against Marcion*, IV.4.)

[↪]

159. *Panarion*, Bk. 1 pt. 42. 2:6-8. [↪]
160. Tertullian writes:

Now, from Tiberius to Antoninus Pius, there are about 115 years and 6-1/2 months. Just such an interval do they place between Christ and Marcion. (*Against Marcion*, [Bk. 1](#). c. 19.)

The Marcionites believed that Christ came down in the fifteenth year of Tiberius (AD 14-37), and that Marcion began his sect 115 years after Christ came down. [↪]

161. “[Marcionites](#),” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*. [↪]
162. “[Marcionites](#),” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*. [↪]
163. [Dialogues of Adamantius](#), Bk. VIII. [↪]

164. Ibid. [↵]

165. *Against Heresies*, III.3.4. [↵]

166. St. Epiphanius writes:

Finally, seized with jealousy since he could not obtain high rank besides entry into the church, he reflected and took refuge in the sect of that fraud, Cerdo. (*Panarion*, Bk. 1 pt. 42. 1:8.)

[↵]

167. Recorded in Eusebius's *Church History*, II.1.2. Eusebius also records this in his Chronicle, writing that in the same year Christ was crucified, "*Ecclesiae Jerosolymorum primus episcopus ab Apostolis ordinatur Jacobus frater Domini*," (i.e. "The first bishop of the Church of Jerusalem, James the brother of the Lord, is ordained by the Apostles.") To see the Latin in the Bodleian manuscript of St. Jerome's translation of Eusebius's Chronicle, see the the second line from the top on [this page](#). [↵]

168. *Catechetical Lecture 4*. [↵]

169. Eusebius, *Church History*, VI.14.6. [↵]

170. *Church History*, IV.5. [↵]

171. *Church History II*.16 & 24. [↵]

172. *Apostolic Constitutions, Bk. VII*, Sect. 4. [↵]

173. *De Viris Illustribus*, 8. [↵]

174. *Oration 21*. [↵]

175. *Church History*, III.22. [↵]

176. Homily 6, para.4, on Luke 1:24-32, in *The Fathers of the Church: Homilies on Luke*, trans. Joseph T. Lienhard, (CUA Press, 2010), 24. [↵]

177. That page can be found online at [this link](#). [↵]

178. See Comments #59 and #140. [↵]

179. *De Viris Illustribus*, 16. [↵]

180. *Historia Ecclesiastica VI*.8. [↵]

181. *Homily on St. Ignatius*, 2,4. [↵]

182. *Dialogue 1*. View the Greek excerpt of this quotation [here](#). [↵]

183. St. Peter had a personal connection by which to go there. Aquila, who was from Pontus (Acts 18:2), had departed from Rome at the edict of Claudius expelling all Jews from Rome (AD 50). According to St. Jerome's translation of Eusebius's *Chronicle*, St. Peter had gone to Rome after leaving Antioch between AD 42-43. So if St. Peter was in Rome from AD 43-50, he would very likely have been acquainted with Aquila, who undoubtedly would have wanted St. Peter to come to his homeland, and share the gospel with his kinsman. After the Jerusalem Council in AD 50, St. Peter likely travelled to Bithynia, Pontus, and Cappadocia, before returning to Rome around AD 54. By the mid to late 50s, when St. Paul's letter to the Romans was written, Aquila and Prisca were back in Rome, and a church was meeting in their house (Romans 16:5). Again St. Peter would have good reason to know Aquila and Prisca. St. Peter could have visited Pontus either for the first or second time between AD 57-62, before returning for his third sojourn in Rome, at which time, while in Rome, he specifically addresses first the Christians of Pontus in the beginning of his first epistle, where he writes, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood." [↵]

184. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, Bk 1, Against Carpocratians, Sect. 6. [↵]

185. *De Viris Illustribus*, 1. [↵]

186. *Against All Heresies*, 6. [↵]

187. *Panarion*, I.42. [↵]

188. See the "[Marcionites](#)" entry in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*. [↵]

189. And the son of this bishop seems to know something about the importance of the Church in Rome. [↵]

190. *Prescription Against Heretics*, 36, emphases ours. [↵]

191. *Church History* 2:25:8. [↵]

192. *Historia Ecclesiastica IV*.22. [↵]

193. *Historia Ecclesiastica III*.16. [↵]

194. In the Greek this line reads: καὶ ὅτι γε κατὰ τὸν δηλούμενον τὰ τῆς Κορινθίων κεκίνητο στάσεως, ἀξιόχρεως μάρτυς ὁ Ἡγήσιππος. [↵]
195. [Historia Ecclesiastica IV.22.](#) [↵]
196. [Historia Ecclesiastica IV.22.1.](#) [↵]
197. [Church History, V.5.8.](#) [↵]
198. [Church History V.1.](#) [↵]
199. For example, around AD 200, Caius, who opposed Proclus the Montanist, wrote, “But I can show the trophies [tombs] of the Apostles. For if you will go to the Vatican or to the Ostian Way you will find the trophies of those who laid the foundations of this church.” (As quoted in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* II.25. [↵]
200. On ecclesial deism, see our article titled “[Ecclesial Deism.](#)” [↵]
201. [Martyrdom of Justin](#), c.2. [↵]
202. Not only that, but if the “Timiotinian Bath” to which St. Justin refers is the “Baths of Novatus,” Novatus being the brother of Timothy, referred to in the “Acts of Pudentiana and Praxedis,” then possibly the house church at which St. Justin worshipped was the *Ecclesia Pudentiana* built on the Baths of Novatus, and which may have been for some time the residence of the bishop of the Church at Rome. See Edmundson, *The Church in Rome in the First Century*, 211. [↵]
203. My response can be found in [Comment #97](#) under the “Modern Scholarship, Rome and a Challenge” post. [↵]
204. [Prescription Against Heretics](#), c. 32. [↵]
205. [Against Heresies, III.3.3.](#) [↵]
206. [Refutation of All Heresies, IX.6,7.](#) (our emphasis) [↵]
207. This catacomb was rediscovered in 1854 by the Italian archaeologist Giovanni Battista de Rossi. Cf. Wendy J. Reardon *The Deaths of the Popes*, (Macfarland & Company, 2004), 291. [↵]
208. Warren H. Carroll, *The Founding of Christendom*, Vol. 1, (Christendom Press, 1985), 468. [↵]
209. “[Refutation of All Heresies, IX.](#) c. 2. [↵]
210. [Fragments of the Lost Writings of Ireaneus](#), 51. [↵]
211. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* Third edition., F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, eds., (Oxford University Press, 1997) 1693. [↵]
212. [Church History, V.28.](#) [↵]
213. See “[Antipope](#)” in the Catholic Encyclopedia. [↵]
214. [The Prescription Against Heretics](#), 36. [↵]
215. [Comment #101.](#) [↵]
216. [Comment #102.](#) [↵]
217. [Comment #82.](#) [↵]
218. Cf. “[Extended Review of Peter Lampe’s “From Paul to Valentinus.”](#)” [↵]
219. “[Titulus](#)” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*. [↵]
220. And even more house churches came into existence after the time Brandon acknowledges a monepiscopacy in Rome existed. For example, in AD 220 Pope Callistus founded a house church now named [Santa Maria in Trastevere](#) on a refuge for retired soldiers called the Taberna meritoria. See E.G. Weltin, *The Ancient Popes* (Westminster, MD, 1964), 96-97. [↵]
221. See “[St. John Lateran](#)” in the Catholic Encyclopedia. [↵]
222. “[Titulus](#),” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*. [↵]
223. Cf. “[Stazione a Santa Pudenziana.](#)” [↵]
224. The account of this event can be found on [page 299](#) of Volume IV of the *Acta Sanctorum* for the month of May. The relevant excerpt reads:

Eodem tempore Virgo Domini Praxedis accepta potestate rogavit beatum Pium Episcopum, ut thermas Novati, quae jam tunc in usu non erant, ecclesiam consecraret: quia aedificium magnum in iisdem et spatiosum esse videbatur. Quod et placuit sancto Pio Episcopo: thermasque Novati dedicavit ecclesiam, sub nomine beatae Virginis Potentiane [in vico Patricius. Dedicavit autem et aliam sub nomine sanctae Virginis Praxedis] infra urbem Romam; in vico qui appellatur Lateranus: ubi constituit et titulum Romanum: in quo loco consecravit baptisterium sub die IV Idus Maji. (At the same time, Praxedis, Virgin of the Lord, having received power, asked blessed bishop Pius that at the baths of Novati, which even then

were not in use, he would consecrate a church: because the building in that same place seemed to be large and spacious. Now that pleased holy Bishop Pius, and at the baths of Novati he dedicated a church under the name of the blessed Virgin Potentiane [in the ward of Patricius. However, he dedicated another church under the name of the holy Virgin Praxedis] within the city of Rome, in the ward which is called Lateranus, where the titulum Romanum is established. In that place he consecrated a baptistery four days before the Ides of May.)

[↵]

225. See *La Basilica Titolare di S. Pudenziana: Nuove Ricerche*, by Claudia Angelelli (Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra, 2010). See also Vitaliano Tiberia's *Il Mosaico di Santa Pudenziana a Roma: Il Restauro*. (Ediart, 2003), for an analysis of the art in this church, traced back to just after the time of Pope St. Damasus. [↵]

226. George Edmundson, *The Church in Rome in the First Century* (Longmans, Green, 1913), 248. [↵]

227. “[St. Prisca](#)” entry in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*. [↵]

228. See [here](#) on page 11 in *Martyrologium Hieronymianum: E Codice Trevirensi* (Brussels, 1883).

The entry on the “Chair of St. Peter” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* includes the following:

According to Duchesne and de Rossi, the “Martyrologium Hieronymianum” (Weissenburg manuscript) reads as follows: “XV KL. FEBO. Dedicatio cathedræ sci petri apostoli qua primo Rome petrus apostolus sedit” (fifteenth day before the calends of February, the dedication of the Chair of St. Peter the Apostle in which Peter the Apostle first sat at Rome). The Epternach manuscript (Codex Epternacensis) of the same work, says briefly: “*cath. petri in roma*” (the Chair of Peter in Rome). ((“[Chair of St. Peter](#)” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*. [↵])

229. “[Chair of St. Peter](#)” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*. [↵]

230. There are two levels in this catacomb, and a large tank in each one, possibly where these baptisms took place. See Marucchi,

Elém. d'Arch. Chrét. ii. 459. [↵]

231. See the citations [here](#). [↵]

232. Come now, if you would indulge a better curiosity in the business of your salvation, run through the apostolic Churches in which **the very thrones [cathedrae] of the Apostles** remain still in place; in which their own authentic writings are read, giving sound to the voice and recalling the faces of each. Achaia is near you, so you have Corinth. If you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi. If you can cross into Asia, you have Ephesus. 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, where Paul was crowned in a death like John's [the Baptist], where the Apostle John, after being immersed in boiling oil and suffering no hurt, was exiled to an island.” ([The Prescription Against Heretics](#), 36). [↵]

233. *Church History* VII.19. [↵]

234. Cf. G. Secchi, *La cattedra alessandrina di San Marco*, (Venice, 1853). [↵]

235. Cf. *Roma Sotterranea*, Vol. III, p. 514ff. This is a subtle and indirect example of the principle that grace builds on nature. [↵]

236. The ordination of a bishop required three bishops. The long-standing tradition is that the ordination of a bishop of Rome would be done by the bishop of Ostia, accompanied by the bishop of Albano and the bishop of Porto. The [mere] presbyters in Rome could not ordain anyone, let alone a replacement bishop. The bishop of Rome was usually selected from one of the Cardinal deacons of the Church in Rome, who served in the *tituli*. [↵]

237. See [Minucius Felix](#). [↵]

238. [Octavius of Minucius Felix](#), 10. [↵]

239. See [Galerius and Constantine: Edicts of Toleration 311/313](#). [↵]

240. See the account of the martyrdom of St. Susanna in *Acta Sanctorum: Augusti Tomus Secundus*, from [page 624](#) through page 632, in which it is implied that Pope St. Caius's house, which was joined to the house of his niece St. Susanna where she was martyred, belonged to him as his residence while he also held the episcopacy. [↵]

241. [The Apostolic Tradition](#), 39. [↵]
242. The pagans used the word ‘necropolis,’ meaning, ‘city of the dead,’ for the places where Christians buried their dead; the Christians, however, used their own term, ‘cemetery,’ from the Greek word κοιμᾶω [koimao], meaning to sleep. [↵]
243. Wendy Reardon, *The Deaths of the Popes*, (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2004) 23. [↵]
244. Edmundson, *The Church in Rome in the First Century*, (Longmans, Green and Co., 1913), 261. [↵]
245. The elevation and demotion would be arbitrary because on Brandon’s thesis, no presbyter-bishop had any more authority than any other simultaneously serving presbyter-bishop. The other alternative, that the Christians of Rome engaged in this retrospective elevation and demotion not arbitrarily, but in order to conform to the arbitrary fictional lists of two non-Romans, Sts. Hegesippus and Irenaeus, makes liars not only of Sts. Hegesippus and Irenaeus, but of all the Christians of Rome in the second half of the second century who, according to this hypothesis, would have knowingly gone along with the conspiracy. [↵]
246. [The Martyrdom of Ignatius](#). [↵]
247. [Homily on St. Ignatius](#). [↵]
248. [The Martyrdom of Polycarp](#), 18. [↵]
249. Warren Carroll writes,
- When Cletus died — in 92, according to Eusebius — his successor was Clement, whom Peter himself had ordained. Since the principal patron of Christianity at this time was probably the Emperor’s cousin Flavius Clemens, father of the heirs to the empire, the similarity of the fourth Pope’s name to his is unlikely to be coincidental. (*The Founding of Christendom*, (Christendom Press, 1985), 448.
- [↵]
250. [De Viris Illustribus](#), 15. [↵]
251. A photograph of this event can be seen [here](#). In August of each year the Christians of Alatri attend a similar celebration in Alife, as explained [here](#). [↵]
252. See [page 473](#) and 474 in the *Acta Sanctorum: Aprilis Tomus Secundus*. [↵]
253. Regarding this graffiti, see [here](#), and Lietzmann, Hans, (1923), “The Tomb of the Apostles Ad Catacumbas,” *Harvard Theological Review* 16.2: 147-162. [↵]
254. De Rossi, *Inscriptiones Christianae urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores*. vol. ii. (Ex Officina Libraria Pontificia, 1857), pages 32, 65-66, 89, 105. This volume can be accessed online [here](#). [↵]
255. See the *Liber Pontificalis*, which records the burial location of each pope. [↵]
256. Cf. [Church History V](#).6.4. [↵]
257. [Comment #109](#). [↵]
258. [Comment #44](#). [↵]
259. [Comment #180](#). [↵]
260. [Comment #59](#). [↵]
261. Ibid. [↵]
262. Cf. [“The Tradition and the Lexicon.”](#) [↵]
263. Paul Owen’s statement in [Comment #103](#) regarding the difference between BAGD and BDAG on this question shows the potential ideologically-loaded (and not theologically neutral) presuppositions at work behind the lexical method. [↵]
264. [Epist. 64](#). [↵]
265. [Homily 3 on the Acts of the Apostles](#). [↵]
266. See [“Solo Scriptura, Sola Scriptura, and the Question of Interpretive Authority.”](#) [↵]
267. [Summa Theologica I Q.1 a.8](#) ad 2. [↵]
268. [Comment #30](#). [↵]
269. [Comment #82](#). [↵]
270. [Comment #103](#). [↵]
271. Of course that would be problem for the Catholic doctrine of papal primacy, but that is a distinct doctrine from the Catholic doctrine of apostolic succession, as I explained in the comments under [“Apostolic Succession and Historical Inquiry: Some Preliminary Remarks.”](#) [↵]

272. Brandon responds to St. Ignatius's statement (*Rom. 4:3*), "I do not, as Peter and Paul, issue commandments unto you. They were apostles; I am but a condemned man: they were free, while I am, even until now, a servant," by saying that this is evidence against apostolic succession. Brandon writes:

This passage is further evidence that even episcopal government did not operate under the principles of a bishop succeeding the Apostolic office (as if the authority from the Apostles is sacramentally transferred to the bishop). (Comment #102)

I (Bryan) addressed this in footnote #68 of my [reply](#) to Michael Horton's last rejoinder in our *Modern Reformation* interview. [\[↵\]](#)

273. [Comment #39](#). [\[↵\]](#)

274. [Comment #51](#). [\[↵\]](#)

275. [Comment #73](#). [\[↵\]](#)

276. In his comments regarding the "[Oath Against Modernism](#)," Brandon says,

The teaching of the Church in this regard is that the episcopacy was instituted by the "real and historical Christ."

However, the Oath Against Modernism states that the "Church" was founded by the "real and historical Christ." Christ gave episcopal authority to the Apostles, and they gave this authority to the bishops who succeeded them. That is *de fide*, (Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 278) as is the superiority of bishops to mere presbyters. (Ott, 453). The question whether the office of mere presbyters was established directly by Christ or by the Church, has not been decided by the Church. (Ott, 453) [\[↵\]](#)

277.1 *Clement*, 42. [\[↵\]](#)

278.1 *Clement*, 44. [\[↵\]](#)

279. *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.11. [\[↵\]](#)

280. *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.35. [\[↵\]](#)

281. *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV.5. [\[↵\]](#)

282. *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.14. [\[↵\]](#)

283. *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.21-22. [\[↵\]](#)

284. *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV.1. [\[↵\]](#)

285. *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV.19. [\[↵\]](#)

286. *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.34. [\[↵\]](#)

287. *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.36. [\[↵\]](#)

288. According to the tradition, at Rome St. Peter sent St. Mark to found the Church at Alexandria. [\[↵\]](#)

289. *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.36. [\[↵\]](#)

290. Eusebius writes, "At that time also in the church of Antioch, Theophilus was well known as the sixth from the apostles. For Cornelius, who succeeded Hero, was the fourth, and after him Eros, the fifth in order, had held the office of bishop." (*Historia Ecclesiastica* IV.20.) [\[↵\]](#)

291. *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.23. [\[↵\]](#)

292. *Liber de praescriptione haereticorum*, 32. See also *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.36. [\[↵\]](#)

293. *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.36. [\[↵\]](#)

294. Cf. [this fragment](#). [\[↵\]](#)

295. That this Onesimus is the same Onesimus in St. Paul's epistle to Philemon, see John Knox, *Philemon among the Letters of Paul* (Chicago, 1935), 50-65, and see F.F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Free Spirit* (Exeter, England, 1977), 399-406. [\[↵\]](#)

296. St. Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, 18. [\[↵\]](#)

297. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 89. [\[↵\]](#)

298. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 101. [\[↵\]](#)

299. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 90. [\[↵\]](#)

300. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 97. [\[↵\]](#)

301. *Adversus haereses* III.4.1. [\[↵\]](#)

302. *Adversus haereses* III.3.2. [↵]
303. As for Schaff's interpretation of this paragraph from St. Irenaeus, his is a novel interpretation; that is not how it has always been understood. Nor does it fit with what St. Irenaeus is saying. St. Irenaeus says nothing about travelers to Rome keeping the Church at Rome orthodox. Travelers to Rome could just as easily have corrupted it with heresies. In fact we know of many Gnostics who went to Rome in the second century (e.g. Marcellina, Cerdon, Valentinus, Marcion), precisely to try to infiltrate the mother Church with their heretical doctrines. The basis St. Irenaeus gives for the "preeminent authority" of the Church at Rome is the succession from St. Peter. [↵]
304. *Adversus haereses* IV.26.2. [↵]
305. *Adversus haereses* III.3.4. [↵]
306. *Liber de praescriptione haereticorum*, 21. [↵]
307. *Liber de praescriptione haereticorum*, 32. [↵]
308. *Liber de praescriptione haereticorum*, 21. [↵]
309. *Liber de praescriptione haereticorum*, 36. [↵]
310. *Liber de praescriptione haereticorum*, 37. [↵]
311. St. Augustine wrote, "[I]f you acknowledge the supreme authority of Scripture, you should recognise that authority which from the time of Christ Himself, through the ministry of His apostles, and through a regular succession of bishops in the seats of the apostles, has been preserved to our own day throughout the whole world, with a reputation known to all. (*Against Faustus* Bk. 33.9) [↵]
312. *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV.22. [↵]
313. *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV.23. [↵]
314. *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV.23. [↵]
315. *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.31. [↵]
316. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 2* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 188. [↵]
317. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 7. [↵]
318. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 12. [↵]
319. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 12. [↵]
320. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 21. [↵]
321. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 21. [↵]
322. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 34. [↵]
323. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 90. [↵]
324. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 90. [↵]
325. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 90. [↵]
326. [Muratorian Fragment](#). [↵]
327. [The Prescription Against Heretics](#), 36. [↵]
328. [On Monogamy](#), 8. [↵]
329. [Refutation of All Heresies, IX](#).6,7. (our emphasis). [↵]
330. [Epistle 39 \(43\)](#). [↵]
331. Treatise on the Unity of the Catholic Church, 1st edition. There is another version of this text, which appears to have been written a few years later, when St. Cyprian was disputing with Pope St. Stephen regarding the re-baptism of heretics. That version can be read [here](#). Dom John Chapman, in the second chapter of his book titled *Studies on the Early Papacy*, provides good reasons to believe that both versions were written by St. Cyprian. See [here](#). [↵]
332. [Letter 51](#). [↵]

333. [Epistle 54](#), 14. [↵]
334. [Epistle 72](#). [↵]
335. [Epistle 75](#). [↵]
336. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 234. [↵]
337. This same question arose again in the following century with respect to the Donatist schism. [↵]
338. [Epistle 74](#). In his [69th Epistle](#), St. Cyprian writes, “But if he cannot give the Holy Spirit, because he that is appointed without [i.e., outside the Church] is not endowed with the Holy Spirit, he cannot baptize those who come; since both baptism is one and the Holy Spirit is one, and the Church founded by Christ the Lord upon Peter, by a source and principle of unity, is one also. Hence it results, that since with them all things are futile and false, nothing of that which they have done ought to be approved by us.” [↵]
339. [Poem Against the Marcionites](#). [↵]
340. Christian Frederick Cruse, *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 82. [↵]
341. Christian Frederick Cruse, *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 85. [↵]
342. Christian Frederick Cruse, *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 100. [↵]
343. Christian Frederick Cruse, *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 157. [↵]
344. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 346. [↵]
345. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 308. [↵]
346. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 308. [↵]
347. [Denzinger, 57e](#). “And you [Pope Julius], most dearly loved brother, though absent from us in body, were present in mind concordant, and will . . . For this will be seen to be best, and by far the most befitting thing, if to the head, that is to the **see of the Apostle Peter**, the priests of the Lord report from every one of the provinces.” (Fragment 2 *ex opere Historico [ex Epistle Sardic. Concil. Ad Julium]* [before 367 AD] [↵]
348. [History of the Arians](#), Part V. [↵]
349. [The work of St. Optatus](#). [↵]
350. That definition of schism is very similar to what we see today in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*; see [CCC 2089](#). [↵]
351. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 2* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 72. [↵]
352. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 406ff. [↵]
353. Cf. [Holy See](#). [↵]
354. Concerning Repentance, [Book 1](#), 7:33. [↵]
355. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 2* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 150. [↵]
356. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 2* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 148. [↵]
357. [Homily 88](#) on the Gospel of John. [↵]
358. [Letter 15](#) to Pope St. Damasus. [↵]
359. [Letter 16](#) to Pope Damasus. [↵]
360. [De Viris Illustribus](#), 1, 70. [↵]
361. [Against Jovianus, Bk I](#). [↵]
362. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 2* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 199. [↵]
363. [Letter 130](#). [↵]

364. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 311. [↵]
365. [Letter 136](#). [↵]
366. Letter to the Council of Carthage, as quoted in Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy*, pp. 146-147. [↵]
367. Epistle 13, cited in Giles, *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority*, pp. 229-230. [↵]
368. Epistle 14, to the bishops of Thessaly, cited in Giles, p. 230. [↵]
369. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 3* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 32. [↵]
370. [Against the Fundamental Epistle of Manichaeus](#), 4-5. [↵]
371. [Letter 43](#). [↵]
372. [Letter 53](#). [↵]
373. [Answer to Petilian the Donatist, Book II](#), c. 51. [↵]
374. [Letter 191](#). [↵]
375. [On the Soul and its Origin, Bk II](#), 17. [↵]
376. [Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, Bk II](#). [↵]
377. [Letter 209](#). [↵]
378. [On the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin, Bk II](#), 19. [↵]
379. [Letter 250](#). [↵]
380. [Sermon 81 on the New Testament](#). [↵]
381. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 3* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 184. [↵]
382. Pope Celestine, Epistle 11, cited in Giles, pp. 240-41. [↵]
383. [Council of Ephesus](#), AD 431. [↵]
384. [Commonitorium](#), 6. [↵]
385. [Ecclesiastical History, Bk III](#). [↵]
386. [Ecclesiastical History, Bk IV](#), 15. [↵]
387. [Letter 4](#). [↵]
388. [Letter 14](#) of Pope Leo I to Anastasius, Bishop of Thessalonica. [↵]
389. [Letter 1](#). [↵]
390. [Letter 10](#). [↵]
391. [Letter 93](#). [↵]
392. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 3* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 271. [↵]
393. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 3* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 275. [↵]
394. [Letter 52](#). [↵]
395. [Letter 116](#). [↵]
396. [Letter 68](#). [↵]
397. William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume 3* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 271. [↵]
398. [Letter 98](#). [↵]
399. [Letter 105](#). [↵]
400. Cited from [Denzinger 171-2](#). [↵]
401. [Denzinger, 230](#). [↵]
402. [Registrum Epistolarum Bk IX, Letter 12](#). [↵]
403. [Registrum Epistolarum Bk IX, Letter 59](#). [↵]
404. [Letter to Eulogius, bishop of Alexandria](#). [↵]
405. See C.S. Lewis' trilemma regarding Christ in his book *Mere Christianity*. [↵]
406. Just as the writing of the Old Testament came after the covenant with Abraham, so the writing of the New Testament came after Christ's crucifixion and resurrection and sending of His Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The people of God existed prior to the sacred writings, because God used members of these communities to write these texts. Therefore the sacred writings could not be the foundation of the Church, for otherwise the Church could not exist until the writings existed. [↵]

407. Moreover, the Apostles made use of lots in order to choose Judas' successor, precisely because they so strongly believed Christ's promise that the Spirit was guiding the Church, that they trusted His providential guidance of the lots. [↵]
408. But if unordained people can ordain, then any believer can ordain any other believer, perhaps even himself. In that case, anyone can celebrate the Lord's Supper, even in one's own kitchen. [↵]
409. *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.4. [↵]
410. [Comment #131](#). [↵]
411. [Comment #148](#). [↵]
412. Cf. the section titled "[III. Denial of Visibility is Ecclesial Docetism](#)" within our article titled "Christ Founded a Visible Church." [↵]
413. See Leo XIII, *Satis cognitum* 13. [↵]
414. Much of what follows comes from Pius XII, *Mystici corporis* and Russell Hittinger, "The Coherence of the Four Principles of Catholic Social Doctrine: An Interpretation," in *Pursuing the Common Good: How Solidarity and Subsidiarity Can Work Together, Proceedings of the 14th Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences*, ed. Margaret S. Archer and Pierpaolo Donati (Vatican City, 2008), 75-123. [↵]
415. Obviously, a boat without a coxswain does not thereby lack a unity of order, for a certain one of the rowers would himself be the one giving commands and making the decisions. He would be a visible head who also rows with the others. Without someone occupying the office of head, the team will not succeed. Indeed, the team would be more of an aggregate of rowers all independently rowing and only accidentally in the same boat. [↵]
416. *In Ethic.* I,5; cf. Hittinger, "Four Principles," 81. [↵]
417. Hittinger, "Four Principles," 83. [↵]
418. *Mystici corporis* 62. [↵]
419. See *Mysticis corporis* 56-58. [↵]
420. Pius XII, *Mystici corporis* 63 [↵]
421. And the Fathers concur. See, for example, St Clement of Alexandria's "[Who is the Rich Man that Shall Be Saved?](#)", XI. See also Origen's [Commentary on Matthew, XIII](#).31. See also St. Cyril of Jerusalem's [Catechetical Lectures](#) 2.19; 6.14; 17.27. See also St. Augustine's [On Baptism: Against the Donatists, VII](#).20. See St. John Chrysostom's [Homily 9 on 1 Thessalonians](#). [↵]
422. Here is Vatican II's teaching on the office of bishop from the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," *Lumen gentium*, 21:
- In the bishops, therefore, for whom priests are assistants, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Supreme High Priest, is present in the midst of those who believe. For sitting at the right hand of God the Father, He is not absent from the gathering of His high priests,[FN: See Leo the Great, *Serm.*, 5, 3...] but above all through their excellent service He is preaching the word of God to all nations, and constantly administering the sacraments of faith to those who believe, by their paternal functioning (see 1 Cor 4:15). He incorporates new members in His Body by a heavenly regeneration, and finally by their wisdom and prudence He directs and guides the People of the New Testament in their pilgrimage toward eternal happiness. These pastors, chosen to shepherd the Lord's flock of the elect, are servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (see 1 Cor 4:1), to whom has been assigned the bearing of witness to the Gospel of the grace of God (see Rom 15:16; Acts 20:24), and the ministration of the Spirit and of justice in glory (2 Cor 3:8-9). For the discharging of such great duties, the apostles were enriched by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit coming upon them (see Acts 1:8; 2:4; John 20:22-23), and they passed on this spiritual gift to their helpers by the imposition of hands (see 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6-7), and it has been transmitted down to us in Episcopal consecration. [FN: Council of Trent, session 23, ch. 3, quotes the words of 2 Tim 1:6-7 to show that Order is a true sacrament...] And the Sacred Council teaches that by Episcopal consecration the fullness of the sacrament of Orders is conferred, that fullness of power, namely, which both in the Church's liturgical practice and in the language of the Fathers of the Church is called the high priesthood, the supreme power of the sacred ministry. [FN: In *Apostolic Tradition*, 3...] But Episcopal consecration, together with the office of sanctifying, also confers the office of teaching and of governing, which, however, of its very nature, can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and

the members of the college. For from the tradition, which is expressed especially in liturgical rites and in the practice of both the Church of the East and of the West, it is clear that, by means of the imposition of hands and the words of consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is so conferred, [FN: See *Apostolic Tradition*, 2...] and the sacred character so impressed, [FN: See Council of Trent, session 23, 4, which teaches that the sacrament of Order imprints an indelible character...] that bishops in an eminent and visible way sustain the roles of Christ Himself as Teacher, Shepherd and High Priest, and that they act in His person. [FN: Cyprian, *Epist.*, 63, 14... John Chrysostom, *In 2 Tm.*, homily 2, 4... Ambrose, *In Ps.*, 38, 25-26... Ambrosiaster, *In 1 Tm.*, 5, 19... and *In Eph.*, 4, 11-12... Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Hom. Catech.*, XV, 21 and 24... Hesychius of Jerusalem, *In Lev.*, book 2, 9, 23...] Therefore it pertains to the bishops to admit newly elected members into the Episcopal body by means of the sacrament of Orders.

[↵]

423. One of us has also written on this in "[Philosophy and the Papacy](#)." [↵]

424. One of us has written on this here at CTC in a post titled "[Wilson vs. Hitchens: A Catholic Perspective](#)."

[↵]

425. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh Ia.12.5*. [↵]

426. The "[list of popes](#)" helps illustrate that continuity of succession back to St. Peter. [↵]