

Webster is Wrong about St. Chrysostom, Peter, and the Primacy

A Partial Response to Webster's Second Attempt

(Find my first paper on St. John Chrysostom by [clicking here](#))

[Initial Notes: I wrote a book on Peter and the Papacy entitled [Upon this Rock: St. Peter and the Primacy of Rome in Scripture and the Early Church](#). It appears that Bill took umbrage with the footnotes in my book which referred to him and his books. It appears that Bill did not read my book before critiquing it since he zoomed on the eight footnotes that referenced him in the index but failed to comment on the other two footnotes referring to him. It seems that he missed those final two footnotes because the "indexer" (which is out of my control as the author) failed to add these two references to Bill Webster in the index. Bill would have avoided several, if not many pitfalls had he read my whole book—I still hope he does some day.

Bill wrote a forty page "refutation" to my book (dealing only with the footnotes where his name appeared) which can be found at his website (<http://www.christiantruth.com/stephenray.html>). The full text of his "refutation" is included in my [215-page response](#).

This current paper is a partial response to Bill Webster's "The Papacy: A Third Response to Stephen Ray" which appears on his website at <http://www.christiantruth.com/ray3index.html>. He has begun his latest "rebuttal" (link provided above) and I am answering each "rebuttal" as he posts them, though I now have very limited time.]

Was all that above confusing? Yeah, but the rest is really good reading if you are interested in the Peter and the Papacy—and very happy reading if you are a Catholic. A Catholic has nothing to fear and the deeper one digs, the more confident the Catholic becomes—as you will see here!

I don't want these exchanges to become mean-spirited or continue for the sake of getting the last word. As I've said earlier, I think Bill is probably a nice guy and I would enjoy having lunch with him. I don't want to argue with him unnecessarily. I don't have a big ego, I don't think, so having the last word is not important to me, but truth is.

I had pretty much decided not to continue the dialog after my long response, since the time involved with writing multiple page "rebuttals" is very prohibitive. This paper is one of several much shorter responses and I thank Joe Gallegos for his invaluable help in preparing this latest answer. I appreciate his knowledgeable and kind assistance in the face of my time restraints. You can visit Joe's website at <http://www.cin.org/users/jgallegos>.

In my first response, I answered Bill line-by-line, but since our discussion on St. John

Chrysostom and Peter (and the other issues) has started to repeat itself. There are many little things Bill says in his latest “Chrysostom rebuttal” that I could go into great detail on, and I may add to this present paper as time goes on, but I have decided to simplify this response and organize my reply into three key topics rather than a line-by-line rebuttal. The three topics are: (1) Peter, “this rock”, and Matthew 16:18; (2) the primacy of St. Peter; and (3) the primacy of the bishop of Rome. I am not going to respond to many of the personal and smaller issues, but to stick to the these three areas.

I am also not going to provide numerous quotations from other authors in this paper. I have added only very few. We will look at what St. John Chrysostom says., try to keep it simple, and make observations on his words.

St. John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) was given the descriptive name “Chrysostom” years after his death. It meant “golden-mouthed” and referred to the eloquence of his preaching. For the sake of brevity in this paper I will refer to St. John Chrysostom simply as Chrysostom – I beg his indulgence, and that of Bill Webster. Bill spends a good bit of time majoring on a minor issue regarding the name of St. John Chrysostom. He is right that many refer to St. John Chrysostom as simply “Chrysostom” and I was just having a bit of fun in the “trial scene”. I will accept Bill’s comments here and even for the sake of simplicity in this paper – with it clearly understood what St. John’s actual name was and the history behind it – refer to him here as Chrysostom. How’s that Bill? Are we friends on this point again?

The works referenced and the abbreviations used are listed at the end of this paper on the *Bibliography and Abbreviations* page.

So, let’s get right to work!

PETER, “THIS ROCK”, AND MATTHEW 16:18

Does Webster equate “this rock” in Matthew 16:18 with Peter himself? According to Webster, who or what is the foundation of the Church? Webster’s position on this passage in Matthew 16 is somewhat unclear. Webster writes:

“He did not interpret the rock of Matthew 16 to be the person of Peter, but his confession of faith, pointing to Christ himself as the rock and only foundation of the Church” (Webster, *A Refutation*; Webster, *The Church Fathers*).

“Chrysostom argues that the rock is not Peter but Peter’s confession of faith in Christ as the Son of God” (Webster, *A Refutation*; Webster, *The Church Fathers*).

“It is Peter’s confession that is the foundation of the Church. Peter is not the foundation. According to Chrysostom that position belongs to Christ alone.” (Webster, *A Refutation*; Webster, *The Church Fathers*).

“First of all, Chrysostom denies that Peter is the rock in Matthew 16. He states that the

rock is Peter's confession of faith. Therefore, since he is not the rock, the Church is not built upon him but upon his faith or confession. He, personally, is not the foundation." (Webster, *The Papacy*).

"Chrysostom argues that the rock is not the person of Peter, but Peter's confession of faith in Christ to be the Son of God." (Webster, *The Church of Rome*, 51).

"The church is built, therefore, not on Peter personally ... but on Peter's confession of faith ... Augustine ... is typical of the Fathers in this interpretation of Matthew 16:18 ... John Chrysostom ... echoes Augustine in his interpretation" (Webster, *Did I Leave* 278-279).

Webster clearly denies that Peter is the rock of Matthew 16:18. However, Webster ideas on Chrysostom are not altogether clear. In the quotes above, he asserts that the rock is Peter's confession, Peter's faith, *and* Christ himself. Well, is the rock Peter's *faith*, *Christ* (the object of Peter's confession), Peter's *confession*, or all three? If all three, then what is the relationship between the two rocks.

For the most part it seems that Webster believes that the rock is Peter's confession of faith. However, Webster asserts that *Christ* is the only foundation of the Church, while elsewhere he asserts that Peter's *confession* is the foundation of the Church. Again, who or what is the foundation of the Church for Webster? Is it Peter's confession, Peter's faith, or Christ (the object of Peter's faith)? Since Webster has not completely synthesized the writings of Chrysostom, he has failed to provide a balanced and unambiguous exposition on Chrysostom and Matthew 16:18. I will show below that Chrysostom not only equated the rock with Peter's faith and confession, but he considered *Peter* the rock as well. In fact, Peter the person and his faith are intertwined. Likewise, I will show that Chrysostom considered both *Christ* and Peter *himself* as foundations of the Church. Christ is the ultimate foundation, whereas Peter is a secondary foundation totally dependent on Christ. No problem here.

Webster equates Peter's confession, not his person, with "this rock" in Matthew 16. In support of his novel understanding, Webster cites several examples from Chrysostom:

" 'And I say unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church'; that is, on the faith of his confession. Hereby He signifies that many were on the point of believing, and raises his spirit, and makes him a shepherd ... For the Father gave to Peter the revelation of the Son; but the Son gave him to sow that of the Father and that of Himself in every part of the world; and to mortal man He entrusted the authority over all things in Heaven, giving him the keys; who extended the church to every part of the world, and declared it to be stronger than heaven" (Homily 54 on Matthew, NPNF 1 X:332-334).

"He speaks from this time lowly things, on his way to His passion, that He might show His humanity. For He that hath built His church upon Peter's confession, and has so fortified it, that ten thousand dangers and deaths are not to prevail over it ..." (Homily 82

on Matthew, NPNF1 X:494).

In these two passages, Chrysostom states that Peter's faith is the rock and the foundation on which the Church is built.

Webster continues citing Chrysostom:

“ ‘For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.’ I say, no man can lay it so long as he is a master-builder; but if he lay it ... he ceases to be a master-builder. See how even from men's common notions he proves the whole of his proposition. His meaning is this: ‘I have preached Christ, I have delivered unto you the foundation. Take heed how you build thereon, lest haply it be in vainglory, lest haply so as to draw away the disciples unto men.’ Let us not then give heed unto the heresies. ‘For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid.’ Upon this then let us build, and as a foundation let us cleave to it, as a branch to a vine; and let there be no interval between us and Christ ... For the branch by its adherence draws in the fatness, and the building stands because it is cemented together. Since, if it stand apart it perishes, having nothing whereon to support itself. Let us not then merely keep hold of Christ, but let us be cemented to Him, for if we stand apart, we perish ... And accordingly, there are many images whereby He brings us into union. Thus, if you mark it, He is the ‘Head’, we are ‘the body’: can there be any empty interval between the head and the body? He is a ‘Foundation’, we are a ‘building’: He a ‘Vine’, we ‘branches’: He the ‘Bridegroom’, we the ‘bride’: He is the ‘Shepherd’, we the ‘sheep’: He is the ‘Way’, we ‘they who walk therein.’ Again, we are a ‘temple,’ He the ‘Indweller’: He the ‘First-Begotten,’ we the ‘brethren’: He the ‘Heir,’ we the ‘heirs together with Him’: He the ‘Life,’ we the ‘living’: He the ‘Resurrection,’ we ‘those who rise again’: He the ‘Light,’ we the ‘enlightened.’ All these things indicate unity; and they allow no void interval, not even the smallest” (8th Homily on 1 Corinthians, NPNF1 XII:47).

Here, Chrysostom provides the Catholic understanding of 1 Cor 3:11 (‘For no other foundation can any one lay other than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus’ [RSV]). Chrysostom affirms that Christ is the ultimate foundation of the Church. No Catholic would deny this; in fact, Catholic teaching has always affirmed it in the strongest terms. Webster writes, “Peter is not the foundation. According to Chrysostom that position belongs to Christ alone”(Webster, *A Refutation*; Webster, *The Church Fathers*). Does Webster assert there are no secondary foundations of the Church? Does he deny the apostolic foundation of the Church? Doesn't Webster consider the apostles as secondary foundations dependent on Christ (Eph 2:20)?

Following these three citations from Chrysostom, Webster concludes that ‘the rock is not Peter but Peter's confession in Christ as the Son of God’ (Webster, *A Refutation*). Webster writes as if Chrysostom intended to completely eliminate Peter himself as the object of “this rock”. Chrysostom nowhere implies that Peter the person is ever eliminated as part of the rock equation. Chrysostom is simply emphasizing Peter's faith without eliminating Peter himself.

There are no watertight compartments in Chrysostom's thinking between Peter's *faith* and Peter the *person*. Chrysostom uses this indirect approach in his writings in order to emphasize the deity of Jesus Christ. One must remember that the See of Antioch was racked with schism and the Arian heresy. During Chrysostom's stay in Antioch, many of the Patriarchs and clergy of Antioch were Arian heretics. It is no surprise that Chrysostom's preaching and teaching would emphasize passages that emphasize the deity of Christ to highlight the deity of Christ and expose the Arian heresy. *Notice carefully*, Chrysostom writes, "I intended to preach before on the existence of God, but have always postponed it, because I saw that many of those [i.e., the Arians] who suffer from this illness, like to attend our sermons" (*Incomprehensible Nature of God*, Homily 1:6-7). Extending Matthew 16:18 to Peter's faith and confession was a common tool of the Fathers of Church in combating the Arian heresy – confessing Jesus as the unique Son of God.

For example Chrysostom writes:

"For He that has built His church upon Peter's confession" (Homily 82 on Matthew, NPNF1 X:494).

"[H]aving promised to lay the foundation of the Church upon his [Peter's] confession"(Chapter 1 on Galatians, NPNF1 X111:1).

Chrysostom extends the meaning of Matthew 16:18 to Peter's faith by his use of such words as built, foundation, and rock.

However, this did not prevent Chrysostom from directly equating Peter the person with the rock. Chrysostom provides us with these *equally* forceful passages:

"[H]e [Peter] became a foundation of the Church"(Homily 3 on Matthew, NPNF1 X:19).

"[T]o exhibit a man that is a fisher more solid than any rock, while all the world is at war with him..."(Homily 54 on Matthew, NPNF1 X:334).

"Peter ... the foundation of the faith" (*Hom. de decem mille talentis*, Chapman 74).

"Peter, that the head of the Apostles, the first in the Church, the friend of Christ, who received the revelation not from man but from the Father ... this Peter, and when I say Peter, I mean the unbroken rock, the unshaken foundation, the great apostle, the first of the disciples, the first called, the first to obey" (*Almsgiving* 3:4, Chapman 74).

Here, Chrysostom equates Peter himself with the rock of Matthew 16:18. Notice that he applies the same phrases and words to Peter's faith as he does with Peter himself. According to Chrysostom, Peter and his faith are inseparable. Chapman is correct in his study of Chrysostom:

"He has no idea of the two notions, 'Peter is the Rock' and 'his faith is the Rock' being

mutually exclusive, as, in fact, they are not”(Chapman 79).

Orthodox scholars, Veselin Kesich and John Meyendorff (an author Webster likes to quote when he agrees with him), echo the same theme:

“We may conclude that the early church Fathers and Christian writers recognized Peter’s position of honor and preeminence in the New Testament period ... Their interpretations of Jesus’ promise to Peter – ‘You are Petros, and on this petra I will build my church’ – converge with those modern exegetes: the rock is Peter. But they also interpreted the rock as Peter’s confession. The Church is built on Peter, or the church is built upon the rock, which is Peter’s confession. We cannot find two distinct groups of exegetes, one with whom states that ‘the rock is Peter,’ while the other concludes that ‘the rock is Peter’s confession.’ In the writings of any given author, one can find both interpretations simultaneously (Kesich)... [T]he great Cappadocians, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Augustine all concur in affirming that the faith of Simon made it possible for him to become the Rock on which the Church is founded” (Meyendorff 65,70).

Webster assertion that Chrysostom equated the rock of Matthew 16:18 with only Peter’s faith apart from Peter the person is one based, it seems, more on anti-Catholic zeal than scholarship. This passage above was offered to show that non-Catholic scholars, who have no bias towards the Catholic faith, assert that *Peter*, not his faith, is the rock of Matthew 16:18.

Webster writes, “Chrysostom followed the teaching of Origen that the rock is to be interpreted as Peter’s confession...” (Webster, *The Church of Rome*, 51). This statement is a partial truth. It is true that Origen provided the groundwork and foundation for Antiochean theology. However, Webster is incorrect when he asserts that Origen equated rock only with Peter’s confession in his 12th book on Matthew. In Origen’s 12th book on Matthew, cited by Webster, we find Origen extending Matthew 16:18 to *every* disciple of Christ. He applies the name ‘rock’ to *everyone* who confesses Christ, and not just Peter’s confession of faith. The first disciple and rock to benefit from this is Simon. Additionally, Origen writes:

“See what is said by the Lord to [Peter], that great foundation of the Church, and most solid rock, upon which Christ founded the Church” (Alnatt 15,16). (To say that Origen really didn’t mean that Peter is the Rock and that he later denied it by using another metaphor is quite disingenuous, as is explained in great detail in my first response.)

Therefore, it is no surprise that Chrysostom equates Peter with the rock, since Origen handed down the same tradition 100 years before Chrysostom’s birth.

Webster not only contradicts Chrysostom and Origen, *but he contradicts a passage he cited in one of his early criticisms of the papacy*. Webster cites the following passage from John Meyendorff, an Orthodox scholar:

“The same interpretation implicitly prevails in all the patristic texts dealing with Peter:

the great Cappadocians, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Augustine all concur in affirming that the faith of Simon made it possible for him to become the Rock on which the Church is founded and in a certain sense all those who share the same faith are his successors” (Webster, *A Reply* 41).

Perhaps Webster should take to heart the efforts of John Meyendorff and seriously engage with his writings. Instead, Webster has chosen to cull the writings of Catholic and Orthodox scholars in helter-skelter, willy-nilly fashion looking for proof texts that will suite his personal agenda.

When we bring forth *all* of Chrysostom’s writings on this subject, we are able to understand how he interpreted “this rock” in Matthew 16:18 and used it for a variety of applications. According to Chrysostom, the Church is founded on the Rock of Rocks, Jesus Christ. Jesus changed Simon’s name to Peter (“Rock”) and founded the Church upon Peter, because of Peter’s faith and confession. Peter is the rock from the Rock and the foundation of the Church dependent on the cornerstone, Jesus Christ.

I have mentioned to Webster before, as I explained also in my book, that even the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) refers to the Rock of the Church being Christ (CCC 756), the faith of Peter (CCC 424; *Upon this Rock*, 193), and Peter himself (CCC 552; *Upon this Rock*, 202). The *Catechism*, like Chrysostom, realizes that one does not negate the other. This is not an either/or proposition. Bill knows this because it’s been said many times. The *Catechism* and Chrysostom can apply Matthew 16 in various ways but no matter how they apply it, it is always assumed that Peter is the Rock. It seems that only Webster can’t comprehend this simple truth – he has too much to lose if he acknowledges it. His whole “papal denial” based on his misunderstanding of the Fathers and Matthew 16 would come crashing down and the premise of his book *The Matthew 16 Controversy* would be undermined. He can not afford to see this truth.

THE PRIMACY OF ST. PETER

Now let’s take a look at the second issue: did Chrysostom believe and teach that Peter received a special primacy from Christ?

Webster concludes that Peter is equal in status to any one of the apostles. According to Webster, Chrysostom believed that Peter enjoyed no increase in authority, jurisdiction, or responsibility amongst the apostles. Webster writes:

“He [Steve Ray] takes issue with my statements that in Chrysostom’s mind all of the apostles are equal in status. My reason for drawing these conclusions is derived from the fact that the titles attributed to Peter are likewise also attributed to the other apostles” (Webster, *The Papacy*).

“He places the apostles on an equal footing relative to authority” (Webster, *The Papacy*).

“However in the passage [Homily 88 on John] cited above Chrysostom speaks of the apostle John as also receiving the charge of the whole world and the keys equally with Peter” (Webster, *The Papacy*).

“He goes on to speak [Hom 32 on Romans] of Paul as being on an equal footing with Peter” (Webster, *The Papacy*).

“This quote [Inscr. Act.] clearly states that all the apostles are on an equal footing with one another. They are entrusted with the world ‘in common’ and they are all rulers, rulers in common” (Webster, *The Papacy*).

“Obviously, Chrysostom is saying [Homily 33 on Acts] that James is the one in high authority, even over Peter. He has the chief rule” (Webster, *The Papacy*).

Webster goes so far as to fire a salvo at patristic and papal scholar, Dom John Chapman:

“In his book *Studies in the Early Papacy*, the Roman Catholic apologist, Dom Chapman, has referenced approximately ninety citations from Chrysostom’s writings which he claims as proof of a clear and unambiguous affirmation of a Petrine and thereby a papal primacy. But Dom Chapman has committed a primary error of historiography--that of reading back into the writings of a previous age the presuppositions and conclusions of a later age. He assumes that because a particular father makes certain statements about Peter that he must have a primacy of jurisdiction in mind and that this applies in his thinking to the bishop of Rome in an exclusive sense as well” (Webster, *A Refutation*).

As we will see, this charge is simply off target and attempts to impugn and dismiss Chapman’s work in a single paragraph. Instead of engaging in Chapman’s entire work, Webster simply discounts it in a few sentences. Considering the erudition of Dom Chapman, decide for yourself who has the greater credentials to analyze the teachings of Chrysostom: Webster or Chapman. In contrast to Webster’s blast, we read in Dom John Chapman’s biography:

“This side that stands out most conspicuous was his great learning, prodigious in its range and versatility. All his life he was a hard student and a voracious reader. His acquisition of knowledge began at Oxford, where he got a First in Greats ... reading and thinking himself into Aristotelianism of the great Scholastics. No doubt at Cuddesdon and at Maredsous he read extensively, but it was during the seventeen years at Erdington that he laid by his great store of knowledge of the Fathers. He was the one of the few who read Greek as easily as Latin, and it may be truly said that he read the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers of the first six centuries, Latin and Greek, and knew them through and through with a mastery that won for him from an Anglican Scholar of repute the not undeserved name of ‘greatest English patristic scholar of today.’ “ (Butler, *Abbot Chapman* 3)

Therefore, I refer everyone to Chapman’s brilliant and scholarly work on the papacy: *Studies of the Early Papacy*. I encourage you to read the book and not just dismiss such

an outstanding scholar with a wave of the hand and a scoff.

No Eastern Father speaks so frequently, highly, and eloquently on the primacy of Peter as Chrysostom. Chrysostom provides us with an almost endless list of titles describing the primacy of St. Peter. According to Chrysostom, Peter is ‘the first of the apostles’, ‘the foundation of the Church’, ‘the leader of the choir of the apostles’, ‘the base’, ‘the pillar’, ‘the head of the apostles’, ‘the first in the Church’, ‘the foundation of the faith’, ‘the fisherman of the world’, ‘the unshaken foundation’, ‘the great apostle’, ‘the first of the disciples’, ‘the mouth of the disciples’, and ‘the unbroken Rock’! Has any other man or apostle gained such notoriety and praise in the writings of Chrysostom?

Webster’s primary argument is based on a *select few titles* shared between Peter and a select number of apostles (James, John, Andrew, and Paul). Webster concludes that since *some* of these titles are applied to these *other* apostles, than Peter enjoys no increase in authority, jurisdiction, or responsibility; instead, all of the apostles are equal in authority. Webster’s argument fails miserably. Webster fails abysmally to engage the context in which Chrysostom applies these titles and those passages where Chrysostom contrasts Peter with the other apostles. This egalitarian view of the apostles transforms Chrysostom’s writings into nonsense and clearly demonstrates Webster’s agenda. Let me provide a few examples. We will first look at Peter and James, then Peter and John, and lastly Peter and Paul.

First, Peter and James

Webster cites the following examples from Chrysostom to show that James possesses the same authority as Peter:

“He took the coryphaei and led them up into a high mountain apart ... Why does He take these three alone? Because they excelled the others. Peter showed his excellence by his great love of Him, John by being greatly loved, James by the answer... ‘We are able to drink the chalice’” (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume X, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, Homily 56.2; p. 345) (Webster, *The Papacy*)

Actually this citation is taken John Chapman’s *Studies* (75, note 5) not from Prevost’s translation found in either the Oxford or Edinburgh series of the Church Fathers. Here, Christ’s inner ring of apostles (Peter, James, and John) are collectively called leaders (*coryphaei*). In light of Chrysostom’s 88th homily on John, where the jurisdiction of Jerusalem (James’ chair) is contrasted with the world (Peter’s domain), I don’t see how this passage from Chrysostom’s homily on Matthew supports Webster’s egalitarian notion. The title ‘leaders’ is used here by Chrysostom simply to contrast Jesus’ inner circle with the rest of the apostles. In contrast, Webster attempts to put words of hay and stubble into the golden mouth of John of Antioch by concluding that Chrysostom intended to show that James, Peter and John possess equal authority on the basis of the word ‘leaders.’ In fact, Chrysostom provides Webster the reason in the very passage which he cites, “Because they excelled the others.”

Next, Webster cites:

“Do you not see that the headship was in the hands of these three, especially of Peter and James? This was the chief cause of their condemnation by Herod (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XI, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*, Homily XXVI, p. 169) (Webster, *The Papacy*).

Again, Webster misappropriates the citation. This citation is from John Chapman’s *Studies* (75, note 5). Likewise, Webster offers nothing new here to support his novel claim. Chrysostom is using the word ‘headship’ to set apart Jesus’ inner ring of Peter, James, and John from the rest of the apostles. Note carefully here, if Chrysostom intended to teach that Peter, James, and John were equal in authority on the basis of the word ‘headship’, what does Chrysostom mean by, ‘especially of Peter and James?’. Chrysostom’s words become nonsense if we apply Webster’s egalitarian view of the apostles.

Webster continues to cite passages which involve James:

“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, but of the world ... And this He did to withdraw them (Peter and John) from their unseasonable sympathy for each other; for since they were about to receive the charge of the world, it was necessary that they should no longer be closely associated together (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XIV, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Homily 88.1-2, pp. 331-332) (Webster, *The Papacy*).

Obviously, this passage was cited by Webster to show that Peter and John were equal in authority; however, I can’t imagine how this assists Webster’s cause with respect to James. This passage *alone* destroys any notion that James had equal authority with Peter. In fact, Chrysostom says that Peter had greater authority, jurisdiction, and responsibility than James. James’ jurisdiction was Jerusalem, whereas Peter’s domain was the world. Let’s take a deeper look at Chrysostom’s 88th homily on John. From the beginning of this homily Chrysostom writes:

“ ‘He saith unto him, Feed My sheep.’ And why, having passed by the others, doth He speak with Peter on these matters? He 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 putteth into his hands the chief authority among the brethren; and He bringeth not forward the denial, nor reproacheth him with what had taken place, but saith, “If thou lovest Me, preside over thy brethren, and the warm love which thou didst ever manifest, and in which thou didst rejoice, show thou now; and the life which thou saidst thou wouldst lay down for Me, now give for My sheep” (Homily 88 on John, NPNF1,XIV:331).

Chrysostom could not have made it any clearer. According to Chrysostom, Peter had authority over the other apostles, or in Chrysostom's words Peter had , 'the chief authority among the brethren.' Peter not James nor any other apostle had this increase in authority. Webster counters this unambiguous passage by citing passages describing the other apostles with phrases such as, 'chosen one of the Apostles,' 'mouth of the disciples,' and 'leader of the band' in order to obfuscate the truth. Chrysostom anticipated Webster reply when he writes a few lines later:

“And if any should say, ‘How then did James receive the chair at Jerusalem?’ I would make this reply, that He [Jesus] appointed Peter , not of the chair [in Jerusalem], but of the world” (Homily 88 on John, NPNF1,XIV:332).

In one fell swoop, Chrysostom destroys Webster's novel notion that James was equal in authority to Peter.

The passage continues with these golden words:

“ ‘Then Peter turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; who also leaned on His breast at supper; and saith, Lord, and what shall this man do?’ Wherefore hath he reminded us of that reclining? Not without cause or in a chance way, but to show us what boldness Peter had after the denial. For he 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 doth not commit to another what relates to himself, but himself now puts a question to his Master concerning another. John is silent, but Peter speaks” (Homily 88 on John, NPNF1,XIV:332).

Again, Peter, not James, nor any other disciple had authority over the apostles.

As if the point wasn't clear enough, Chrysostom hammers home the point:

“When therefore Christ had foretold great things to him, and committed the world to him [Peter], and spake beforehand of his martyrdom ...” (Homily 88 on John, NPNF1,XIV:332).

Again, Chrysostom destroys any attempts by Webster of downplaying the force of the words 'committed to world to him [Peter]'. John the apostle clearly understood that Peter, not himself, was entrusted with the world, for Chrysostom writes:

“...and testified that his love was greater than that of the others, desiring to have John also to share with him, he said, ‘And what shall this man do?’ ‘Shall he not come the same way with us?’ And as at that other time not being able himself to ask, he puts John forward, so now desiring to make him a return, and supposing that he would desire to ask about the matters pertaining to himself, but had not courage, he himself undertook the questioning. What then saith Christ?” (Homily 88 on John, NPNF1,XIV:332).

Lastly, Webster brings forth this passage from Chrysostom:

“This (James) was bishop, as they say, and therefore he speaks last ... There was no arrogance in the Church. After Peter Paul speaks, and none silences him: James waits patiently; not starts up (for the next word). No word speaks John here, no word the other Apostles, but held their peace, for James was invested with the chief rule, and think it no hardship. So clean was their soul from love of glory. Peter indeed spoke more strongly, but James here more mildly: for thus it behooves one in high authority, to leave what is unpleasant for others to say, while he himself appears in the milder part (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XI, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*, Homily 33, pp. 205, 207) (Webster, *The Papacy*).

Here, Webster concludes, “Chrysostom speaks of James, and not Peter, as possessing the chief rule and authority in Jerusalem and over the Jerusalem Council” (Webster, *The Papacy*). Unbelievably, Webster continues his wayward logic and concludes:

“Obviously, Chrysostom is saying that James is the one in high authority, even over Peter. He has the chief rule” (Webster, *The Papacy*).

Webster has transformed John’s golden-words into leaden-novelties. Again, it seems Webster is simply blinded by his anti-Catholic zeal. The only way one can maintain this novelty is to ignore the rest of Chrysostom writings and to base it on this single passage from the 33rd homily of Acts. The idea that James has authority over Peter is preposterous. First, Webster assertion that James possesses an authority ‘even over Peter’ contradicts *his own assertion* that all the apostles are equal in authority. Second, James was the bishop of Jerusalem; hence, his authority extended *only within his diocese* including those believing Pharisees that initiated the discussion. To infer from the words ‘chief rule’ that James had authority even over Peter, one has to ignore Chrysostom’s assertions that Peter was ‘entrusted with the chief authority over the brethren [including James]’ and was the ‘teacher, not of the chair [of Jerusalem], but of the world.’ Another passage where Peter is contrasted with James is in his 3rd homily on Acts. Here, Chrysostom discusses the appointment of an apostle to replace Judas.

“ ‘And in those days,’ it says, ‘Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said. ‘Both as being ardent, and as having been put in trust by Christ with the flock, and as having precedence in honor, he always begins the discourse. (The number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty.) ‘Men and brethren,’ he says, ‘this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spake before,’ [etc.] Why did he not ask Christ to give him some one in the room of Judas? It is better as it is. For in the first place, they were engaged in other things; secondly, of Christ’s presence with them, the greatest proof that could be given was this: as He had chosen when He was among them, so did He now being absent. Now this was no small matter for their consolation. But observe how Peter does everything with the common consent; nothing imperiously. And he does not speak thus without a meaning. But observe how he consoles them concerning what had passed. In fact, what had happened had caused them no small consternation. For

if there are many now who canvass this circumstance, what may we suppose they had to say then?" (Homily 3 on Acts, NPNF1,XI:18).

Chrysostom wonders why Peter, who is the leader of the apostles, did not ask Christ to appoint a replacement for Judas. Chrysostom answers:

"It is better as it is. For in the first place, they were engaged in other things; secondly, of Christ's presence with them, the greatest proof that could be given was this: as He had chosen when He was among them, so did He now being absent. Now this was no small matter for their consolation. But observe how Peter does everything with the common consent; nothing imperiously. And he does not speak thus without a meaning. But observe how he consoles them concerning what had passed. In fact, what had happened had caused them no small consternation...?" (Homily 3 on Acts, NPNF1,XI:18).

Above, Chrysostom assumes that Peter could have appointed Judas on his own authority. Instead, Peter consulted with the brethren and appointed Matthias by casting lots. Chrysostom continues:

"Wherefore at the beginning he said, 'Men and brethren. It behooves to choose from among you'. He defers the decision to the whole body, thereby both making the elected objects of reverence and himself keeping clear of all invidiousness with regard to the rest. For such occasions always give rise to great evils. Now that some one must needs be appointed, he adduces the prophet as witness: but from among what persons: 'Of these,' he says, 'which have companied with us all the time.' To have said, the worthy must present themselves, would have been to insult the others; but now he refers the matter to length of time; for he says not simply, 'These who have companied with us,' but, 'all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection': that their college might not be left mutilated. Then why did it not rest with Peter to make the election himself: what was the motive? This; that he might not seem to bestow it of favor. And besides, he was not yet endowed with the spirit. 'And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabus, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.' Not he appointed them: but it was he that introduced the proposition to that effect, at the same time pointing out that even this was not his own, but from old time by prophecy; so that he acted as expositor, not as preceptor..." (Homily 3 on Acts, NPNF1,XI:19).

There are a couple of versions of this particular passage. Above, I provided the safer and milder text. The version provided by Migne (via Montfaucon) reads: "What then? Could not Peter himself elect? Of course he could." The sense remains the same.

Strikingly, Chrysostom asserts that Peter, not James, nor any of the apostles, could have appointed a new apostle *by himself*. Instead, Peter exercised his leadership skills by deferring the decision to the apostolic college. According to Chrysostom, this increased authority was not given any individual apostle, but only given to the coryphaeus of coryphaeus of the apostles – St. Peter!

Chrysostom continues:

“Again, consider the moderation of James. He it was who received the Bishopric of Jerusalem, and here he says nothing. Mark also the great moderation of the other Apostles, how they concede the throne to him, and no longer dispute with each other ... Here is forethought for providing a teacher; here was the first who ordained a teacher. He did not say, ‘We are sufficient.’ So far was he beyond all vain-glory, and he looked to one thing alone. And yet he [Peter] had the same power to ordain as they all collectively” (Homily 3 on Acts, NPNF1,XI:20).

Peter possessed an authority possessed by Christ singularly and the apostles collectively . Chapman writes:

“I know no more emphatic testimony to the supreme jurisdiction of St. Peter in any writer, ancient or modern, than the view taken in this homily of the election of Matthias, for I know of no act of jurisdiction in the Church more tremendous than the appointment of an apostle”(Chapman,89).

The previous passages by Chrysostom provides us with the context to interpret Luke 22:32:

“But well might these things be done in this fashion, through the noble spirit of the man, and because prelacy then was not an affair of dignity, but of provident care for the governed. This neither made the elected to become elated, for it was to dangers that they were called, nor those not elected to make a grievance of it, as if they were disgraced. But things are not done in this fashion now; nay, quite the contrary. For observe, they were an hundred and twenty, and he asks for one out of the whole body with good right, as having been put in charge of them: for to him had Christ said, ‘And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren’ (Luke 22:32)”.

Chrysostom clearly understood Peter’s appointment as head of the apostles and the authority to appoint an apostle by himself was derived from Christ when he said to Peter, ‘strengthen thy brethren.’

If Webster had only looked at the previous homily (32nd Hom. on Acts) to the one he cited on behalf of James, he would have never asserted that “James is the one in high authority, even over Peter.” According to Chrysostom, the one who was able to select an apostle by himself, likewise had the sole authority to settle the Jewish ceremonial issue. Similarly, as Peter deferred the decision to the Church in the appointment of Matthias, Peter allowed the decision regarding Jewish ceremonial laws to be determined in the Church. Chrysostom writes, “And observe, he first permits the question to move in the Church, and then speaks” (Homily 32, NPNF1,XI:203).

It is clear Chrysostom considered Peter the chief of the apostles. Peter possessed an individual authority and jurisdiction unsurpassed or equaled by any apostle. James was

the head of the chair of Jerusalem, whereas Peter was the teacher of the world. James and the apostles had the collective authority to appoint a replacement for Judas or to settle the Jewish ceremonial matters, whereas Peter could have appointed Matthias or settle the matter at Antioch all by himself – based on his Christ-granted authority which is reiterated by Chrysostom over and over again.

Second, Peter and John

Similarly, Webster applies the same misguided logic to the apostle John as he did to the apostle James. Webster scoured the writings of Chrysostom for passages that used leadership titles to describe John the apostle and then says “Aha!”. Webster cites:

“He took the coryphaei and led them up into a high mountain apart ... Why does He take these three alone? Because they excelled the others. Peter showed his excellence by his great love of Him, John by being greatly loved, James by the answer... ‘We are able to drink the chalice.’ (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume X, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, Homily 56.2; p. 345) (Webster, *The Papacy*)

This passage was already addressed above. The word *coryphaei* (leader) simply refers to the inner ring of the apostles – Peter, James and John. Chrysostom is contrasting the *inner* ring with the *rest* of the apostles – *he was not considering the relationship among the three apostles*. Not understanding this, Webster asserts that all three apostles were equal in authority since all are called *coryphaeus*. Not only is this novel idea foreign to the faith of Chrysostom, but it doesn’t even pass the sanity check. This is a desperate grasp at anything to color Chrysostom’s teaching in non-Catholic terms. Next, Webster cites from Chrysostom’s homily on John:

“For the Son of thunder, the beloved of Christ, the pillar of the Churches throughout the world, who holds the keys of heaven, who drank the cup of Christ, and was baptized with His baptism, who lay upon his Master’s bosom, with much confidence, this man now comes forward to us now” (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XIV, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Homily 1.1, p. 1.) (Webster, *The Church Fathers*).

Again, Webster has misfired. Chrysostom asserts that John is a pillar of the Church, but it certainly does not deny that Peter, who was also called a pillar (Quod freq. Con. 5), holds the primacy and it certainly does not attribute a primacy of John over Peter or the others.

“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, but of the world ... And this He did to withdraw them (Peter and John) from their unseasonable sympathy for each other; for since they were about to receive the charge of the world, it was necessary that they should no longer be closely associated together (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XIV, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Homily 88.1-2, pp. 331-332) (Webster, *The Church*

Fathers).

The 88th homily on John was treated extensively above. This passage here, merely reiterates a Catholic theme; that is, *all the apostle together had the care of the world*. Although the care of the world was entrusted to all the apostles, this does not deny that Peter possessed an authority over the apostles, an authority over the other apostles which Chrysostom clearly teaches, as we have seen. I have also gone over this in great detail in my earlier 215-page response.

As previously shown, Chrysostom and John asserted that Peter was entrusted with authority over the apostles. Again, when we examine Webster's "shell game of leadership titles" in the context of Chrysostom's writings, we find that Peter is the pillar of pillars, the chief of chiefs, and the leader of leaders amongst the apostles. It is Peter, not John, who is entrusted with the authority over the apostles. Otherwise, the following words in his very last homily on John become meaningless:

"He [Peter] was the chosen one of the Apostles, the mouth of the disciples, the leader of the band ... Jesus putteth into his hands the *chief authority among the brethren*.... For he 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 doth not commit to another what relates to himself, but himself now puts a question to his Master concerning another. John is silent, but Peter speaks.... for Peter greatly loved John ... When therefore Christ had foretold great things to him, and *committed the world to him*, and spake beforehand of his martyrdom, and testified that his love was greater than that of the others, desiring to have John also to share with him, he said, "And what shall this man do?" "Shall he not come the same way with us?" (emphasis added) (Homily 88 on John, NPNF1,XIV:331-332).

Paul and Peter

The last disciple paraded out of Chrysostom's writings in Webster's shell game is the apostle of the Gentiles, Paul of Tarsus. As with James and John, Chrysostom uses phrases such as, 'the leaders [i.e., Peter and Paul]', 'leader of the choir of saints', and 'teacher of the world' to describe the dignity and authority of Paul. For example Webster cites the following:

"The coryphaei [i.e., the leaders], Peter the foundation of the Church, Paul the vessel of election" (Contra ludos et theatra 1, PG VI, 265 [Chapman, 76]) (Webster, *The Papacy*).

This passage certainly does not help Webster's cause. Chrysostom asserts that both Peter and Paul are leaders of the Church. The passage certainly does not deny that Peter holds the primacy amongst the apostles, rather Chrysostom states that Paul is the 'vessel of election' in deference to Peter who is 'the foundation of the Church'. Two men, both leaders, can have varying ranks, as should be obvious. One wonders if Webster simply scoured the writings of John Chapman simply to find proof text passages that support his novel claim, instead of seriously engaging the scholarly Abbot's entire work. Next

Webster cites:

“The merciful God is wont to give this honor to his servants, that by their grace others may acquire salvation; as was agreed by the blessed Paul, that teacher of the world who emitted the rays of his teaching everywhere” (Homily 24, On Genesis. Cited by E. Giles, *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority* (London: SPCK, 1952), p. 165). (Webster, *The Papacy*)

Again, nothing new is offered here. All the apostles were called to be teachers of the world; however, this passage does not give Paul a primacy over the others, nor does it deny that Peter enjoys a primacy amongst the apostles. Next, Webster cites the following two passages:

“Where the Cherubim sing the glory, where the Seraphim are flying, there shall we see Paul, with Peter, and as chief and leader of the choir of the saints, and shall enjoy his generous love.... I love Rome even for this, although indeed one has other grounds for praising it.... Not so bright is the heaven, when the sun sends forth his rays, as is the city of Rome, sending out these two lights into all parts of the world. From thence will Paul be caught up, thence Peter. Just bethink you, and shudder, at the thought of what a sight Rome will see, when Paul ariseth suddenly from that deposit, together with Peter, and is lifted up to meet the Lord. What a rose will Rome send up to Christ! ... what two crowns will the city have about it! what golden chains will she be girded with! what fountains possess! Therefore I admire the city, not for the much gold, nor for the columns, not for the other display there, but for these pillars of the Church (1 Cor. 15:38)” (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XI, Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle to the Romans*, Homily 32, Ver. 24, pp. 561-562).

These words are couched in the poetic terms of endearment. Again, nothing new here. Chrysostom affirms that Paul, with Peter, is the chief/leader of the saints. In other words, Paul enjoys the same authority as does Peter with respect to the saints in general, excepting the apostles. This certainly does not deny that Peter enjoys a primacy amongst the apostles and an authority over them. Even the Protestant editors of the Oxford/Edinburgh translation realized what Webster seemed to have missed: “not Apostles, but of the Saints in general” (NPNF1, XI:561). This is a crucial distinction. According to Chrysostom, Peter is the leader, chief, president of the Apostles not Paul. Lastly, Webster cites this passage from Chrysostom’s commentary on the epistle to the Galatians:

“For He that wrought for Peter unto the Apostleship of the Circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles.’ He calls the Gentiles the Uncircumcised and the Jews the Circumcision, and declares his own rank to be equal to that of the Apostles; and, by comparing himself with their Leader not with others, he shows that the dignity of each was the same. After he had established the proof of their unanimity, he takes courage, and proceeds confidently in his argument, not stopping at the Apostles, but advances to Christ Himself, and to the grace which He had conferred upon him...” (Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), Volume XIII, Saint

Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle to the Galatians*, Chapter II, ver. 8, p. 17).

Here Paul is equal in dignity to Peter, since the princes of the Apostles were given worldwide jurisdiction over the saints – Peter was given the Circumcised whereas Paul was given the Uncircumcised. However, again, this certainly does not deny that Peter alone had authority over the Apostles; hence, Peter had the greatest authority of them all. Peter and Paul have always been considered the princes of the Apostles in Rome for a couple of reasons: 1) each Apostle had been entrusted with the world in a special manner – Peter with the Jews and Paul with the Gentiles, and 2) both Apostles gave their greatest witness to the faith in Rome, as both died as martyrs in Rome. For example John Paul II writes:

“This is the same faith that we proclaim today as we celebrate the solemn memorial of Peter and Paul, the Princes of the Apostles. Following an ancient and venerable tradition, Rome’s Christian community, which has the honour of preserving the tombs of these two Apostles, the ‘pillars’ of the Church, expresses its devotion to them in a single liturgical feast and venerates them together as its heavenly patrons ... May our holy patrons, Peter and Paul, sustain us and obtain for us that missionary zeal which made them witnesses of Christ to the ends of the then-known world. Pray for us, holy Apostles Peter and Paul, “pillars” of God’s Church!” (Homily delivered by John Paul II on the Solemnity of SS. Peter and Paul delivered on June 29th).

Statements like this can be multiplied without end from Catholic tradition, but these statements do never deny that Peter, not Paul, is the chief of chiefs amongst the Apostles of the Church. Note that Pope John Paul II applies the words ‘honour’, ‘pillars’ (2x), and ‘princes’ to describe both Peter and Paul. Applying Webster’s logic (or illogic, as the case may be) we have Pope John Paul II asserting that Peter and Paul are equal in status. However, as with Chrysostom, if we examine Pope John Paul’s other writings, we find out that Peter is the pillar of pillars and the prince of princes of all the apostles. It is Peter, not Paul or any apostle, who is the head of heads of the Church. Isn’t it amazing how Chrysostom and John Paul II agree on this matter – and again Webster finds himself grasping at straws.

Webster concludes, that the apostles [including Paul] are “on equal footing relative to authority” (Webster, *The Papacy*), “Paul as being on equal footing with Peter” (Webster, *The Papacy*), and “that Peter and Paul are equal in status” (Webster, *The Papacy*).

This statement is sadly wrong on a couple of points. First, Chrysostom considered Paul greater in status than all the apostles excepting Peter. Note that Chrysostom writes, “declares his own rank to be equal to that of the Apostles; and, by comparing himself with their Leader not with others, he shows that the dignity of each was the same” (NPNF1,XIII:17). Paul compares himself with the *Leader* not with the rest of the Apostles because he considered himself superior to them.

Second, Chrysostom never wavered that Peter alone was the head over the apostles; therefore, Peter’s authority was greater than Paul’s. Additionally, according to

Chrysostom, Paul recognized the primacy of Peter. For example, in Chrysostom's homilies on First Corinthians, Paul places Peter first amongst the Apostles:

"I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas. Not esteeming himself before Peter hath he set his name last, but preferring Peter to himself, and that greatly. He arranged his statement in the way of climax..." (Homily 3 on 1 Corinth.,NPNF1,XII:11).

" 'Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the Apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?' Observe his [Paul's] skillfulness. The leader of the choir stands last in his arrangement: since that is the time for laying down the strongest of all one's topics. Nor was it so wonderful for one to be able to point out examples of this conduct in the rest, as in the foremost champion and in him who was entrusted with the keys of heaven" (Homily 21 on 1 Corinth., NPNF1,XII:120).

Hence, Paul considered himself inferior in status to Peter and recognized Peter as the leader of the Apostles, not himself. Chrysostom often deferred to Peter over Paul:

"So that even though John, though James, though Paul, though any other whatsoever, appears to perform any great deed after this, yet Peter excels them all, he that was the first to make way for their boldness, and open the entrance, and to enable them to enter with great confidence, like a river carried in mighty flood.... Was he such after the Cross? Before the Cross, also, was he not more fervent than all? Was he not the mouth of the apostles? Did he not speak when all were silent, etc.... And much more might he have said about Peter to show fervour, his courage, and his love for Christ" (Homily On the Words, "I withstood him to the face",Chapman,91-92).

Chrysostom was so convinced of Peter's primacy and authority that he even goes overboard on a few occasions. In an often-used passage by critics of the Catholic faith, Chrysostom believed Paul's rebuke of Peter was all theatrics, he writes:

"Many, on a superficial reading of this part of the Epistle, suppose that Paul accused Peter of hypocrisy. But this is not so, indeed it is not, far from it; we shall discover great wisdom, both of Paul and Peter, concealed herein for the benefit of their hearers... Wherefore Paul rebukes, and Peter submits, that when the master is blamed, yet keeps silence, the disciples may more readily come over. Without this occurrence Paul's exhortation would have had little effect, but the occasion hereby afforded of delivering a severe reproof, impressed Peter's disciples with a more lively fear. Had Peter disputed Paul's sentence, he might justly have been blamed as upsetting the plan, but now that the one reproves and the other keeps silence, the Jewish party are filled with serious alarm; and this is why he used Peter so severely... And the words, 'I resisted him to the face,' imply a scheme for had their discussion been real, they would not have rebuked each other in the presence of the disciples, for it would have been a great stumbling block to them" (Homily on Galatians,NPNF1,XIII:18-19).

Likewise, in the same Pauline homilies, Chrysostom goes so far as to *rearrange the list of apostles given by Paul* to emphasize Peter's primacy, he writes:

“ ‘And when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship’ (Gal 2:9).... Observe how he gradually proves that his doctrine was ratified both by Christ and by the Apostles. For grace would neither have been implanted, nor been operative in him, had not his preaching been approved by Christ. Where it was for the purpose of comparison with himself, he mentioned Peter alone; here, when he calls them as witnesses, he names the three together, ‘Cephas, James, John,’ and with an encomium, ‘who were reputed to be pillars’. “ (Homily on Galatians, NPNF1,XIII:17).

In context, Peter was the leader par-excellence amongst the apostles. While Chrysostom included James and John in the coryphaei (leaders), described John as a pillar of the Church and Paul as the vessel of election, described Paul, with Peter, as chief and leader of the choir of saints; Peter alone, according to Chrysostom, was the coryphaeus of the Apostles! While Chrysostom asserted that James was the chair and chief ruler of Jerusalem, Peter’s chair was of the world! While Chrysostom asserted that the apostles collectively were in charge of the world, asserted that Peter and Paul alone were individually commissioned with the world, Peter with the Jews and Paul the Gentiles! While the apostles collectively had the authority to appoint a successor to Judas and decide the Jewish matters in Antioch, Peter had the authority in virtue of his office to appoint an apostle and to decide the ceremonial issues on his own authority! Therefore, the dignity and rank of the apostles according to Chrysostom are as follows: 1) Peter, 2) Peter and Paul, 3) Paul, 4) Peter, James and John (inner ring) and 5) the rest of the apostles.

Terms of Leveling

Webster wrongly concluded that the apostles are equal in authority on the basis of common titles shared among some of the apostles. If one rigorously applies Webster’s logic than one ends up with all sorts of senseless conclusions, for Chrysostom writes of Our Lord and Savior, “We have no sect founder but the chief and leader of the Church” (Hom. 34:4 in Acts [PG 60,243-244]). Hence, according to Webster’s misguided logic, Peter, Paul, James, and John become equal in authority to Jesus Christ! Instead, one must measure the authority of the Peter, Paul, James, John and the apostles in the full context of Chrysostom’s writings, and not on the basis of a word shell game. For if we look at the complete faith of Chrysostom, we can understand the force of these golden words:

“Peter the coryphaeus of the choir of apostles, the mouth of the disciples, the foundation of the faith, the base of the confession, the fishermen of the world, who brought back our race from the depth of error to heaven, he who is everywhere fervent and full boldness, or rather of love than boldness” (Hom. de decem mille talentis 3, Chapman 74).

It is no surprise to find Dom Chrysostomus Baur, a Catholic scholar often cited by Webster, conclude:

“That he [i.e., John Chrysostom] taught the legitimate primacy of St. Peter over the whole

Church, one may assume as proved” (Baur, *John Chrysostom* I:348).

THE PRIMACY OF THE BISHOP OF ROME

Similarly, Webster has gone too far in his conclusions regarding Chrysostom and the bishops of Rome. Webster offers us these assertions:

“While holding a very high view of the status of the apostle Peter, Chrysostom ... did not transfer this status to the bishops of Rome. In his thinking ... all bishops are successors of Peter. There is no supreme authority of one bishop over another. In all his remarks about Peter, where does Chrysostom apply them to the bishops of Rome in an exclusive sense? He never does that” (Webster, *A Refutation*; Webster, *The Church Fathers*)

“Clearly, Chrysostom cannot be cited as a proponent of ... papal primacy in the Roman Catholic sense” (Webster, *A Refutation*; Webster, *The Papacy*, Webster, *The Church Fathers*)

“Chrysostom never conducted his affairs with a knowledge of the supremacy of Rome” (Webster, *The Papacy*)

“Chrysostom never taught that Peter was supreme ruler over the other apostles or over the Church” (Webster, *The Papacy*).

“I also pointed out that Chrysostom teaches that all legitimate bishops are successors of Peter, who possess the chair of Peter and not just the bishops of Rome” (Webster, *The Papacy*)

Webster argues that one cannot find the Vatican I papacy, expressed in all its glory, in the writings of Chrysostom. It is true there is no passage in the corpus of Chrysostom’s writings that expresses his belief in the primacy of Rome with the precision found in Vatican I. In fact, Webster goes so far as to conclude that Chrysostom did not have any understanding or sense of the primacy of the bishop of Rome. This latter assertion is wrong. While it is true that Chrysostom did not write on the papacy in the terms used at Vatican I, it is also true that Chrysostom affirmed several aspects of the papacy.

For example, Chrysostom affirmed that Peter lived and died in Rome. According to Chrysostom, the bishop of Rome was in a special sense a successor to Peter the apostle. Webster does not assert in his writings, or does not do so obviously at any rate, any one of the following three Petrine facts, or: 1) Peter’s presence in Rome, 2) Peter’s martyrdom in Rome and 3) the Bishop of Rome as a special successor to Peter the apostle. In contrast, Chrysostom affirmed all three assertions. I would like to ask Webster if he believes Peter was ever in Rome at all (or does he follow Boettner in calling such a “legends”)? Where did Peter die? Is the bishop of Rome a successor to Peter in a unique way? In contrast, Chrysostom writes:

“ ‘In speaking of Peter, the recollection of another Peter has come to me’ (viz. St. Flavian, his bishop) ‘our common father and teacher, who has succeeded to the virtue of Peter, and also his chair. For this is one great prerogative of our city, that it received the corphyaeus of the apostles as its teacher in the beginning. For it was right that she who first adorned with the name of Christians before the whole world, should receive the first of the apostles as her pastor. But though we received him as teacher, we did not retain him to the end, but gave him up to Royal Rome. Nay, but we did retain him to the end; for we do not retain the body of Peter but we retain the faith of Peter as though it were Peter himself; and while we retain the faith of Peter, we have Peter himself’” (Beginnings on Acts 2:6, Chapman 96).

Webster disregards the import of the letter to Pope Innocent altogether, because it was also addressed to the bishops of Milan and Aquileia. Webster argues that Chrysostom wrote to all three bishops as being equal in authority, and not primarily the bishop of Rome. Even Theophilus of Alexandria, the Patriarch that deposed Chrysostom, understood this. Theophilus attempted to short circuit Chrysostom’s appeal by sending his own embassy and letters to Pope Innocent, not to Milan or Aquileia, prior to Chrysostom. Theophilus the Patriarch of Alexandria and Chrysostom of Constantinople were familiar with the ancient canons, so they understood the primacy of the bishop of Rome amongst all the Sees of Christendom. Additionally, Rome was loved by Chrysostom, “And for this it is I love Rome: though I might praise her grounds, for her greatness, her antiquity, her beauty, her numbers ... and like a great and mighty body, she has two eyes, the bodies of those two saints [Peter and Paul]. The heaven is not so bright when the sun shoots forth his rays as the city of the Romans, shedding forth the light of these two lamps throughout the world” (Homily 32 in Romans). Therefore, Chrysostom primary target was Pope Innocent, bishop of the Apostolic See, not the metropolitan Sees of Milan and Aquileia. Note the opening of the letter to Pope Innocent reads:

“To my most reverend and most holy Lord, Bishop Innocent, from John, greeting in the Lord.”

It wasn’t till the *end* of the letter we read:

“This letter is also sent to Venerius, Bishop of Milan, as well as to Chromatius, Bishop of Aquileia.”

Chrysostom primary intent was to appeal to the See of Rome. Chrysostom’s intention was right on target, for it was the bishop of Rome, Pope Innocent, that responded in spades! In the end, Pope Innocent refused to acknowledge Atticus as the new bishop of Constantinople, broke off communion with Theophilus of Alexandria, considered the canons of Antioch null and void, and desired to initiate an ecumenical council to settle the matter. Chrysostom knew where the power resided to make jurisdictional decisions regarding bishops, even of another patriarchy.

This is not the first time Chrysostom appealed to the Apostolic See. Webster cannot deny that Chrysostom sought the ecclesiastical fellowship of the bishop of Rome, Pope

Siricius, for Bishop Flavian. Just after Chrysostom was consecrated bishop of the second ranking See of Christendom (according to Council of Constantinople), Chrysostom decided to announce his consecration to the Bishop of Rome, as this was the ancient practice of the major Sees. Chrysostom wanting to settle the rift between Flavian, the bishop of Antioch, and the bishop of Rome decided to include in his announcement of election a request to reconcile Flavian. Sozomen writes in his *Ecclesiastical Histories*:

“He [Chrysostom] requested the assistance of Theophilus in effecting the reconciliation of Flavian with the bishop of Rome” (*Ecclesiastical Histories* 8:3, in NPNF2, II:400).

Chrysostom felt it was necessary that the bishop of Antioch, the Fourth See of Christendom (according to the Council of Constantinople), be in union with the First See of Christendom, the bishop of Rome. Chrysostom requested the assistance of Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, in reconciling Flavian with Pope Innocent, and according to Sozomen, it was a success, “They soon effected the object of their journey, and sailed back to Egypt” (E.H 8:3). According to Chrysostom, Rome was the See where the princes of the apostles lived, taught, and gave their supreme witness to the faith, as they both gave their lives for Our Lord in the Eternal City of Rome. It is no surprise to find Chrysostom desiring to reconcile his paternal city of Antioch with Royal See of Rome. As we see, Chrysostom twice appealed to Rome, not as a See amongst equal Sees, rather he clearly understood this See as the Royal Roman See of Christendom.

There is much more on the topic of Chrysostom and the See of Rome in my book in my 215-page response to Webster. Above is just a few short examples.

SUMMATION

Webster has attempted to downplay Chrysostom’s witness on behalf of the papacy in three areas: Matthew 16:18 and Peter; the primacy of St. Peter amongst the Apostles; and the primacy of the bishop of Rome. As I have shown, Webster’s assertions simply do not have the ring of truth when one delves carefully and thoroughly in the writings of Chrysostom. In my honest opinion, Webster’s anti-Catholic zeal has skewed his understanding and representation of Chrysostom’s faith. One only needs to look at Webster’s website to discover his obvious anti-Catholic bias, as his website is almost completely devoted to criticizing the Catholic faith. When Bill abandoned the Tradition of the Church he accepted the Fundamentalist Protestant tradition in its place and has a new novel and modern filter through which he sees history and reads the Fathers, and also, through which he reads the Bible. Webster has read Chrysostom writings but he has not understood them. He tries to force the wording of Vatican I on Chrysostom and if Chrysostom does not use Vatican I terminology, per se, then he assumes Chrysostom knew nothing of Petrine or Papal primacy.

I close with the sober writings of the Angelic Doctor:

“Chapter 32: That the Roman Pontiff is the first and greatest among all bishops ... This moreover, accords well with Sacred Scripture, which both in the Gospels and in the Acts

of the Apostles (cf. Matt 16:18; John 21:17; Acts 1:15-6,2:14;15:7) assigns first place among the Apostles to Peter. Hence, Chrysostom commenting on the text of Matthew 18:1: The disciples came to Jesus and asked, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven says, ‘For they had created in their minds a human stumbling block, which they could no longer keep to themselves; nor did they control their hearts’ pride, because they saw that Peter was preferred to them and was given a more honorable place” (St. Thomas Aquinas “Contra errores Graecorum” [ad 1264]).

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