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Attitudes in the Early Church Affecting Petrine Primacy

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ATTITUDES IN THE EARLY CHURCH AFFECTING PETRINE PRIMACY

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by

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CHAPTER I

THE RELATION OF THIS STUDY TO THE PETRINE QUESTION

This study is an investigation of the attitudes expressed by the early church toward St. Peter. While most attempts to understand the origin of Rome's claim to authority based on Petrine primacy have dealt with attitudes expressed in documents,[1] the approach here is to examine the evidence found in various types of artistic expression. It is hoped that the attitudes toward St. Peter which affected and may have caused the unique association between himself and Rome are clarified. It is important to note in this respect that this study deals with the development of attitudes actually held in the early church, irrespective of the historical accuracy of these attitudes; e.g. although it is not conclusively proved that Peter was buried below the tropaeum on the Vatican, it is historical fact that Gaius believed it to be so.[2] It is with the latter type of history that this study deals.

This investigation began as a research project as faculty assistant to Professor Herbert T. Mayer; it was intended to discover when St. Peter is first represented in art with a symbol of authority such as the keys. Interest in the subject deepened as it was discovered that prior to the fifth century there was no depiction of special authority granted peculiarly to St. Peter. In fact, St. Paul and St. Peter enjoyed equal esteem. It became very interesting to discover when the

apparent change occurred and what may have caused it.

This investigation is limited to an historical study of the first five centuries, concentrating particularly on the third and fourth centuries. There is very little extant datable artistic expression available from the first and second centuries, although it must be realized that the legends and traditions which are considered as evidence had their background and development in the preceding centuries. The fifth century receives less attention than one might expect due to the fact that studies of the documents indicate already during Damasus' pontificate (366-384), that the Roman Primacy was coming to be accepted in principle by numerous churches outside Italy.[3] Furthermore, it was during the mid-fifth century pontificate of St. Leo the Great (440-461), that the dogmatic basis for the sovereign supremacy of the See of Peter was firmly established.[4]

The attitudes expressed in and around Rome are of particular concern for this study because it is there that the primacy developed. It is also in Rome itself that attitudes regarding St. Peter's relationship to that city might be discovered. This means that a consideration of Byzantine art and traditions can legitimately be excluded from this study. It is already well-known from documentary sources that the East generally was somewhat behind Rome in appreciating the unique Petrine sovereignty expounded by Pope Leo.[5]

Four areas are examined for evidence: art, archeology, liturgies, and traditions. Art is a fruitful field although it

suffers, as was mentioned above, from the lack of extant datable material from the early centuries. Often one encounters difficulties in dating even later objects; occasional instances of restoration complicate the dating process. This study of the graphic arts relies principally on frescoes, mosaics, sarcophagi, and statury which depict St. Peter. Archeological evidence has furnished an understanding of the early Roman Christians' practices in commemorating the martyred apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul; this is helpful in assessing their attitudes toward them. Early liturgies, especially martyrologies, supplement archeological finds in this respect. Early traditions present comparisons of St. Peter and St. Paul with pagan mythological persons, whose functions in society are known. This helps determine the use the apostles, especially St. Peter, were made to serve.

Previous scholarship has been primarily concerned with the question of St. Peter's actual presence in Rome and his martyrdom there, as well as the authenticity of Jesus' commission to St. Peter in the Gospel of Matthew chapter sixteen. A very helpful history of the debate over St. Peter's residence and death in Rome is found in Oscar Cullmann's book, Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr, upon which the following sketch of principle contenders is dependent.[6] Since Adolf Harnack's work, Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Literatus bis Eusebius, published in 1897, the major studies have been in support of his conclusions that St. Peter did live and die in Rome. Hanz Lietzmann published Petrus und

Paulus in Rom in support of Harnack's conclusions in 1915; a second expanded edition appeared in 1927. Oscar Cullmann published Petrus in 1952, further expanding it in 1962, in which he continues in the tradition of Harnack and Lietzmann. Opposition was mounted at the turn of the century by Adolf Bauer who denied the tradition. It was taken up by Karl Huessi in 1936 and carried until quite recently in a string of articles and essays. The conclusions that St. Peter did reside in Rome and actually died there have won general acceptance.[7]

Cullmann also offers an historical survey of the exegesis of the Matthew primacy passage.[8] It is more divided than the question of St. Peter's residence and martyrdom. The debate revolves around the genuineness of the passage. H. Holtzmann toward the end of the nineteenth century denied that Jesus had uttered the saying. Adolf Harnack modified Holtzmann's denial; while accepting the saying, he rejects only the sentence relating to the establishment of the church. K. L. Schmidt and Joachim Jeremias, in the 1920's, independently emphasized the Aramaic and Semitic character of the saying and accepted it as genuine. Rudolf Bultmann in 1941 asserted that Jesus spoke only of a future Kingdom, not of a realized church. W. G. Kümmel supported Bultmann's conclusions but through different arguments. N. A. Dahl and O. Michel, each in 1941, published opinions which did not deny the genuineness although they were cautious of it. R. Liechtenhan and A. Oepke saw the church as a part of Jesus' expectation, and

accepted the geniuneness of the saying. At present the weight of scholarship may lie on the skeptical side of the question, at least in favor of some restriction of the passage. There is also another question of whether or not the passage applied to St. Peter alone and his faith or to his successors and the Church. The answers to this question are nearly evenly divided between Roman Catholic and Protestant exegetes.[9]

It appears that the present approach to the problem has not been investigated by any published study. This investigation has depended on the previous debates for background material, primarily as presented in Oscar Cullmann's book. Other sources have been Jocelyn Toynbee and John Perkin's book, The Shrine of St. Peter,[10] which is the most easily available report on the Vatican excavations for the English reader. Daniel O'Conner's recent study, Peter in Rome, gives a helpful and fairly comprehensive study of the literary, liturgical, and archeological evidence related to St. Peter's residence, martyrdom and burial in Rome. He concludes that although St. Peter was an apostle and martyr in Rome, his body was probably not recovered for burial, but early traditions and monuments were later accepted as indicators of his grave.[11] Another valuable source which traces the development of the Papacy from documentary evidence, is that by H. Burn-Murdoch, The Development of the Papacy.[12] The classic work by Fustel de Coulanges, The Ancient City,[13] has furnished an understanding of the place of heroes in the

founding of a city in ancient times. An assortment of early Christian art books have supplied primary evidence in that field along with interpretations of various themes. Perhaps the most helpful have been two works by André Grabar, Christian Iconography[14] and The Beginnings of Christian Art.[15]

This investigation has reached certain conclusions which may be mentioned for clarity. (1) In early Christian art, St. Peter is generally associated with St. Paul; the two together have a definite place of prominence. It is in the fourth century that St. Peter begins to receive prominence apart from St. Paul, and not until the fifth century that he is given the symbol of the keys. (2) Early traditions associated St. Peter and St. Paul together in their martyrdom, although there were also conflicting traditions of separate graves. These traditions existed side by side until sometime in the fourth century when the former was consciously displaced by the latter. (3) Early martyrologies reflect a similar displacement of a joint commemoration by two separate ones about the same time. (4) An inscription, art objects, and traditions indicate a similarity between pagan attitudes toward founding heroes of cities and St. Peter and St. Paul jointly and even more to St. Peter himself. It could be that the church in Rome consciously founded a new city with St. Peter as its mentor.

FOOTNOTES

[1]A fine detailed example of this approach is H. Burn-Murdoch's book The Development of the Papacy (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1954).

[2]Daniel William O'Conner, Peter in Rome (New York City: Columbia Univeristy Press, 1969), p. 208.

[3]James Shotwell and Louise Loomis, The See of St. Peter (New York City: Columbia Univeristy Press, 1927), pp. 626-672.

[4]H. Burn-Murdoch, The Development of the Papacy (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1954), p. 230.

[5]Ibid., p. 240.

[6]The following interpretation of the debate is a summary of a portion of Oscar Cullmann's book, Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr, translated by Floyd V. Filson (2nd rev. ed.; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 72-78.

[7]Ibid., pp. 72-78.

[8]The following interpretation is a summary of Cullmann's survey.

[9]Cullmann, pp. 164-176.

[10]Jocelyn Toynbee and John Perkins, The Shrine of St. Peter and the Vatican Excavations (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957).

[11]O'Conner, p. 209.

[12]H. Burn-Murdoch, The Development of the Papacy (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1954).

[13]Fustel de Coulanges, The Ancient City (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. Paperback, n.d.).

[14]André Grabar, Christian Iconography (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968).

[15]André Grabar, The Beginnings of Christian Art (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967).

CHAPTER II

ST. PETER IN THE ARTS

Five categories of Peter as he appears in early Christian art will be discussed. They do not necessarily occur in the chronological order in which they are discussed; however, in general this order does represent the development of expression. The categories and their representative examples (cf. Appendix I -- Illustrations) will be discussed in full before conclusions are drawn.

I

The first category is that which depicts Peter apart from Christ or the other Apostles. This group is illustrated by portraits, historical scenes, and sequences which depict a dogma. An appropriate illustration to begin with is that of Peter in the Catacomb of Peter and Marcellinus in Rome (illus. 1). This late third century fresco shows Peter seated, reading a book. No discussion was available on this particular painting other than its location. It is one of the earliest representations of Peter. There is a marked similarity between it and later images of Peter. This is not strictly a portrait as it shows the apostle involved in an activity. Andrè Grabar points out that the portrait as such presented a theological problem to the early Christians; it exposed them to the danger of idolatry.[1]

The second example is a detail from the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (d. 359) in the crypt of Peter (illus. 2). Dated from the middle of the fourth century, this fine example represents several similar scenes showing Peter and Paul separately in their arrest prior to execution. This theme of judgment was borrowed from judgment scenes in imperial art. There the purpose was to glorify the state which established order through judgment; for the Christian scenes the purpose was to condemn the state for falsely judging the executed. This reversal in function carried with it a corresponding exaltation of the memory of the apostle.[2]

Finally, in this category there is an example from the back of an ivory lipsanotheca, or reliquary casket, from Brescia in Northern Italy (illus. 3). It is dated by André Grabar as belonging "to the seventh decade of the fourth century."[3] Generally a juxtaposition of scenes would represent some iconographic theme which they all have in common. Grabar comes to the conclusion that the collection of scenes on the Brescia lipsanotheca offers no point of comparison.[4] At first one might think that the central scene of Ananias and Saphira before Peter would place Peter in a position of great authority. However, it must be remembered that this is a scene from the Scriptures like any other iconographic representation. Although these scenes do not relate a specific dogma, those on the back panel surrounding Peter do carry out the general theme of God's jusgment (Jonah under the gourd vine, Judas hanging himself, and Moses exiled from

Egypt for killing an Egyptian).

II

The second category for consideration is that of Peter and Paul appearing together. The earliest example is from the early third century (illus. 4): a bronze medallion, one of several similar ones, showing profiles of Peter and Paul. These are copies of pagan medallions which depict facing profiles of emperors, gods, or heroes in the same way. Later the Constantinian monogram of Christ (☧) was added between Peter and Paul to symbolize the relationship between the two apostles, again copying the practice of pagan medallions.[5]

Another detail from the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus shows Christ as Judge between Peter and Paul (illus. 5). This particular example may also fit into the following category of Christ delivering the law to Peter; it is a shame that Christ's right hand is broken off, leaving no record of what He held. Walter Lowrie suggests, however, that with respect to the figure representing the cosmos upon which Christ is enthroned, the theme of this detail is <u>majestas</u>.[6] Grabar concurs and offers evidence: Christ is seated on a representation of the universe just as the emperors are represented on the triumphal arch of Galerius at Salonika.[7] This scene tells more about Christ than it does about the apostles.

A third example in this category comes from the apsidal

arch of St. Paul's Church, Rome (illus. 6). This mosaic shows Christ enthroned between Peter and Paul and two other saints. The theme is similar to that in the detail of Christ as Judge from Junius Bassus' sarcophagus. There, too, Christ is seated as judge with Peter and Paul on either side. The dating of this mosaic poses a problem; at first it would appear to be from the fourth century as is the basilica. However, the mosaics date from different times. This question will be considered in more detail in the last category of art examples because it is in connection with the keys that the dating becomes crucial.

A very similar scene is depicted in the catacomb of Saints Peter and Marcellinus (illus. 7); it shows Christ between Peter and Paul. This is dated from the fourth century; a significant hypothesis suggests that it is an imitation of an apse decoration in a church above ground. This suggestion is made on the basis of two registers of symmetrical figure groups in the shape of an apsidal painting. This would indicate that at least one mosaic no longer extant was almost identical to this decoration and existed earlier.[8]

The final example is the mosaic at the summit of the arch in S. Maria Maggiore, Rome (illus. 8). This decoration has Peter and Paul on either side of the empty throne of God; it is dated very accurately by the inscription of the redecorator, "XYSTVS EPISCOPUS PLEBI DEI." The pontificate of Xystus III was from 432-440.[9] This mosaic, though it is in poor repair, illustrates the theme of the dual prominence

of the apostles, at a place of exaltation.

III

A recurring theme in early Christian art is the traditio legis. Deriving the symbol from Imperial imagery, Grabar associates it with the theme of God's sovereignty as revealed through Christ.[10] It is illustrated by various scenes on sarcophagi in the fourth century. A representative detail from an unidentified sarcophagus (illus. 9) shows the normal picture, Christ giving the scroll of the law to Peter in the presence of Paul.

The next two examples may be considered together. They have the same theme, but they are from two different centuries. The mosaic from S. Costanza in Rome (illus. 10), Grabar dates uncertainly around 350 A.D.; that from the baptistry of S. Giovanni in Fonte, Naples (illus. 11), he places "a century later." He describes both of these as, "the symbol of the Church in the form of the Law given into the hands of the most venerated of the apostles, St. Peter."[11] Whether this interpretation of the scroll of the law as a symbol of the church is adequate might be questioned in light of his own assertion that the theme of this imagery is God's omnipotence. As can be seen from the illustrations, the scrolls read, (illus. 10) "DOMINVS PACEM DAT" and (illus. 11) "DOMINVS LEGEM DAT." The idea of the Lord giving peace and the law is very compatible with the theme of God's sovereignty. One would almost expect that if the scroll had

been intended to represent the church, it would read, "DOMINVS ECCLESIAM DAT," since an inscription is already employed.

The final example in this category is further evidence that the scroll of the law does not symbolize Petrine authority in the church. The fourth century sarcophagus of Bishop Liberius (d. 378) is noteworthy (illus. 12); here Christ entrusts the scroll of the law to Paul instead of Peter. This is significant because if the traditio legis symbolized the Petrine commission to papal authority, this scene would certainly not be expected on the sarcophagus of a Roman Pope!

IV

The reluctance to use portraits for fear of idolatry has been mentioned. This resulted especially in a late development of portraits of Christ. However, in the fourth century there are examples of Peter (no other apostle) portrayed in the roles of Christ and portraits of Christ.[12] It is the former that is of interest. There are two good examples (illus. 13): a bronze statuette of Peter bearing a cross and monogram of Christ, and a fragment detail from a sarcophagus showing Peter as the Good Shepherd. Neither of these examples can be dated with more accuracy than to ascribe them to the fourth century. Grabar comments that particularly in Rome it is not too surprising to find this closeness between Peter and Christ since it is Peter who succeeds Christ as head of the earthly church.[13]

V

The final category under consideration is that which contains Peter with a symbol of authority. The question of whether the traditio legis is such a symbol has already been considered. What appear to be the three earliest occasions of Peter with the keys will be treated.[14] Reference has been made to the apse mosaic in St. Paul's Outside the Walls (illus. 6); however, at that time only the appearance of Peter and Paul together was under consideration. Now the matter of dating in connection with the keys which Peter holds (barely discernible) in his right hand must be considered. St. Paul's Church was originally built by Constantine, but was rebuilt by the three reigning emperors in 385, to copy the grand Constantinian basilica of St. Peter's.[15] The apse mosaic is occasionally mistaken for a fourth century work;[16] therefore, it is necessary to consider it in this study.

Frederick van der Meer identifies the apse mosaic as "12th century," and says that it survived the fire of 1823.[17] André Chastel notes in Die Kurst Italiens, "Topographisches Verzeichnis," concerning St. Paul's: "Mosaik in der Apsis stammt aus dem Jahre 1220."[18] It could not be from the fourth century, with Lowrie, because the basilica was not completed until sometime into the fifth century; in fact, much of the art work was not done until Leo the Great's pontificate (440-461).[19] At any rate, it seems to belong to

the twelfth or thirteenth century[20] and therefore need not be considered further in this study.

The second example is dated from the fifth century. It is the bronze statue of St. Peter in the Vatican (illus. 14). Peter is enthroned as a philosopher, holding the keys in his left hand.[21] Here is another example of the instances from the fourth century forward which portray Peter in a role like Christ; here Peter is shown enthroned like Christ was, either in majesty, in judgment, or as a philosopher-teacher.[22] It is very obvious that Peter has the keys, symbols of his authority and a clear reference to the Matthew chapter sixteen passage which Pope Leo the Great established unequivocably as the basis of the doctrine of papal supremacy.[23]

Finally, a comparison of two mosaics from Ravenna will help date the development of the keys as Peter's symbol. A detail from the Baptistry of the Orthodox (illus. 15a) shows Peter standing in classical robes, holding a wreath. This mosaic is dated from the fifth century. A very similar detail from the Baptistry of the Arians (illus. 15b), also shows Peter standing in classical robes, but holding the keys. This mosaic is dated as sixth century. Because these two examples are from the same city and so very similar in form and expression, the addition of the keys to the latter is all the more striking. Sometime between the fifth century origin of the Vatican statue of Peter and the sixth century production of the mosaic in the Baptistry of the Arians, the keys as Peter's symbol reached Ravenna from Rome.

In conclusion, a gradual change has been indicated in the depiction of Peter. At first Peter is generally associated with Paul; there are some scenes of historical events taken from scripture, but by the third century, Peter and Paul are commemorated together on medallions. They appear together in scenes of Christ's exalted majesty as the two most prominent apostles. They, however, are considered equals. There is some preference shown for Peter in the fourth century traditio legis scenes, somehow connected with God's omnipotence, perhaps associated with the church, although it is not conclusive.

In the fourth century also, Peter begins to appear more often by himself in roles previously associated with Christ. He receives a special prominence in this way and evidently at that time is thought of as above Paul, more closely related to Christ. By the fifth century that relationship is clearly defined in terms of Matthew sixteen.

FOOTNOTES

[1]André Grabar, Christian Iconography (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 66.

[2]Ibid., p. 50.

[3]Ibid., p. 137.

[4]Ibid., p. 138.

[5]Ibid., pp. 68-69.

[6]Walter Lowrie, Art in the Early Church (New York City: Pantheon Books, 1947), p. 89.

[7]Grabar, Iconography, p. 43.

[8]André Grabar, The Beginnings of Christian Art (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967), p. 212.

[9]Charles Rufus Morey, Early Christian Art (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1942), p. 146.

[10]Grabar, Iconography, p. 42.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid., p. 69.

[13]Ibid., pp. 69-70.

[14]"Appear to be" is used for two reasons. The very first example is not even from the fourth century; it is conceivable that there are other instances as early or earlier which have not been discovered in this research.

[15]Richard Krautheimer, Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 63-64.

[16]As in Lowrie, Art, p. 149, where he attributes the keys in Peter's hand to a nineteenth century restoration made after the fire of 1823.

[17]Frederick van der Meer, Early Christian Art (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 128.

[18]André Chastel, Die Kunst Italiens (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1962), II, 325.

[19]Meer, p. 128.

[20]It seems more plausible to date it from 1220 with André Chastel. His is the more precise date and the more thorough work.

[21]Karl Ipser, Vatican Art (New York City: Philosophical Library, 1953), p. 22.

[22]Grabar, Iconography, p. 70.

[23]H. Burn-Murdoch, The Development of the Papacy (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1954), p. 230.

CHAPTER III

ST. PETER IN ARCHEOLOGY

Attitudes toward Peter can be discovered through archeology. The graffiti below San Sebastian's Church on the Via Appia are representative of similar examples. In the excavations begun in 1915 by Dr. Paul Styer and Professor Orazio Marruchi of the Pontifical Commission on Sacred Archeology, a late third century room was discovered which contains hundreds of graffiti. Among those deciphered are invocations to both Peter and Paul, without Peter receiving general preference: "Paule ed [sic] Petre petite pro Victore. . . . Petro et Paulo Tomius refrigerium feci . . . . At Paulo et Pet(ro) refrigeravi."[1] These examples indicate that toward the end of the third century, Christians were seeking the prayers of Peter and Paul together.

As the joint prayers to Peter and Paul in the room below St. Sabastian reflect, this center, referred to as Ad Catacumbas, was believed to be the joint grave of the two foremost apostles. Archeology has helped discover the history of the cemetary ad catacumbas. In the first century it had been a quarry; sometime in Trajan's reign (98-117), the excavated galleries were in use for burial. By 200 A.D. the cemetary was in the hands of Christians, possibly through the conversion of the owning family. About A.D. 238-244 the last burials were made in a certain area (the hypogeaum), and the

Memoria was built above it. At that time the cult of the apostles comes into the picture.[2]

Further evidence that the Memoria ad catacumbas was associated with the burial of Peter and Paul is found in legends from the third and fourth centuries such as those from the Passio Sanctorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli. These tell of an attempt by Eastern Christians to steal the bodies of the two apostles, which was frustrated by an earthquake. The bodies were kept or preserved (custodita sunt) at the third milestone on the Via Appia ad catacumbas. Similar narratives are found in two other apocryphal acts of the apostles and in the Passio Syriaca of the martyr Sharbil.[3] It should be remembered that it is not the purpose of this study to investigate the historical basis of these legends; their very existence is evidence of attitudes held concerning Peter.

The refrigeriae which were celebrated for Peter and Paul ad catacumbas also indicate that it was considered to be the tomb of the apostles. These were pagan refreshment banquets in commemoration of the dead, held on the date of birth. In Christian usage they were retained in order not to turn away new converts, but were held on the date of death and called natale, signifying birth into eternal life. Graffiti in the Triclia, the room beneath St. Sabastian's where the refrigeriae were held, indicate that they were celebrated to the memory of Peter and Paul from A.D. 260 to 300. A characteristic of these refrigeriae graffiti is that they always occur near the

place where the bodies are buried or believed to be buried.[4] Toynbee and Perkins indicate that from the fourth century onward, the refrigeriae demanded the physical presence of nothing more than cult objects. They propose that the situation ad catacumbas may be a foreshadowing of the fourth century practice.[5] In light of the following discussion, it is more probable that the refrigeriae indicate a real belief that the apostles were buried ad catacumbas in the latter part of the third century.

Pope Damasus (d. 384), who is acknowledged in documentary studies as having done much to strengthen the papacy, is well known for the inscriptions which he caused to be placed at the tombs of the martyrs.[6] Concerning the inscription which he had erected ad catacumbas (see Appendix II), there has been extended debate. Basically, disagreement has involved the proper interpretation of two words, hic and habitasse. If hic is to be taken in a limited sense, it could indicate the precise tomb; in a wider sense, Rome itself could be the antecedent. Whether habitasse is to be taken as referring to burial or domicile is unclear. It "seems very possible" to O'Conner that Damasus believed the relics of the two apostles had once been deposited ad catacumbas.[7]

While the probability of a fairly popular belief that Peter and Paul were buried ad catacumbas has been established, the Vatican has consistantly claimed the tomb of Peter beneath St. Peter's Basilica. Recent excavations have discovered

an Aedicula which is taken to be the shrine built over the tomb of Peter. Basically, this conclusion rests on the fact that a large wall, about forty-five centimeters wide and called the "Red Wall," was discovered to have a niche intentionally carved out of it at its base. It is in connection with this niche that the Aedicula is built. The upper parts of the niche were built into the Red Wall. Below the foundations of the wall, under the niche, a deposit of votive coins was found, and a number of reburied bones. A reconstruction of the history of the site asserts that as the Red Wall was being built (ca. 160-170), it was discovered to pass right over the tomb of the Apostle Peter. The lower niche was carved out to make the shrine assessible, while the upper niches were built into the as yet unfinished wall. This Aedicula later became the center point for Constantine's basilica which intended to perpetrate the shrine to the martyr.[8]

From about the year 200, Gaius is recorded by Eusebius as saying that he was able to point out St. Peter's τρόπαιον on the Vatican. There is some discussion as to whether this "trophy" is to be understood as a monument indicating a burial place or merely a commemoration. Toynbee and Perkins note that Eusebius understood it as a tomb-monument which is the most natural meaning.[9] If this is the case, and if the Aedicula can be identified with Gaius' τρόπαιον, as Toynbee and Perkins believe, then the tradition that Peter's tomb is on the Vatican hill has existed since about 170 A.D.

The results of this investigation present two conflicting traditions which existed at the same time. This study is not concerned with determining which is true; it is interested in what happened to them. It appears that the tradition associating Peter and Paul together ad catacumbas lost ground to that which believed the two apostles to have been buried separately at the Vatican and on the Via Ostia, respectively. This is accounted for by a tradition that the relics of the apostles were translated from one to the other. We have already mentioned the legends from the apocryphal Acta Apostolorum which account for the Memoria Ad Catacumbas through the attempted body-snatching by Eastern Christians. An account in the Liber Pontificalis from the pontificate of Pope Cornelius (251-253) tells how at the urging of lady Lucina he returned the body of Peter to the Vatican, while Lucina saw to the placing of St. Paul's body back at the site on the Via Ostiensis. Although this account comes from the sixth century, La Piana points out that is was compiled with the use of older documents from still older legends.[10]

Henry Chadwick interprets Damasus' inscription ad catacumbas as a conscious attempt to reconcile these two conflicting traditions by using the translation legends that were afloat. Chadwick proposes that in order to consolidate his position against the claims of Constantinople as the "New Rome," Damasus asserted the primacy of Rome based on Tu es Petrus and the martyrdom of Peter and Paul in Rome. The latter point is made clear in his inscription, "Roma

suos potius meruit dedendere cives, . . . (Appendix II)." "Hic habitasse prius . . ." also helped to strengthen his position by reminding tourists that the relics were no longer ad catacumbas; thus the papacy was strengthened in its claim to Peter as the Memoria on the Via Appia lost its importance.[11]

FOOTNOTES

[1]J. Stuart Jones, "The Memoria Apostolorum on the Via Appia," Journal of Theological Studies, XXVIII (October 1926), 34-36.

[2]Daniel O'Conner, Peter in Rome (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp. 140-145.

[3]George La Piana, "The Tombs of Peter and Paul Ad Catacumbas," Harvard Tehological Review, XIV (January 1921), 57-58.

[4]O'Conner, pp. 148-151.

[5]Jocelyn Toynbee and John Ward Perkins, The Shrine of St. Peter (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956), p. 193.

[6]H. Burn-Murdoch, The Development of the Papacy (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1954), pp. 180, 182.

[7]O'Conner, pp. 103-110.

[8]Toynbee, pp. 138-154.

[9]Ibid., p. 154.

[10]La Piana, p. 57.

[11]Henry Chadwick, "St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome," Journal of Theological Studies, VIII (April 1957), 49-51.

CHAPTER IV

PETER IN EARLY LITURGIES

Attitudes toward Peter are reflected in early Christian liturgies. The Depositio Martyrum of the Philocalian Catalogue lists February 22 as follows: viii Kal. Mart. Natale Petri de Cathedra.[1] This date is now celebrated as Peter's ascent to the episcopacy at Antioch;[2] however, between the fourth and eighth centuries, February 22 was celebrated in Rome as a doublet of January 18, the chair of Peter.[3] There is some discussion as to how these two Cathedra dates came to be. O'Conner states that for the fourth century and later, February 22 was celebrated as a Cathedra festival; prior to A.D. 300, however, it is more closely associated with the pagan cara cognatio or caristia, celebrated on that same day, and from which the Christian refrigeria developed. The term cathedra came from the empty chair that was left for the dead during the feast. O'Conner suggests that the Calendar of Polemias Silvius (A.D. 448) may reflect earlier tradition as it makes February 22 a festival in memory of Peter and Paul.[4]

During the fourth century, the refrigeria type memorial festival for Peter and Paul was changed to a celebration of the chair of Peter although there was already another date (January 18) for remembering Peter's elevation to the episcopacy. From the fourth to the eighth century, the resulting doublet was tolerated, until February 22 was finally unloaded

on Antioch as a commemoration of Peter's chair there. The fact that what, before the fourth century, had been a festival commemorating the death of Peter and Paul was patterned on the pagan refrigeria suggests that it was probably closely associated with the Triclia ad catacumbas. That it was changed to a Cathedra celebration suggests an attempt to depreciate the Memoria on the Via Appia.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Daniel O'Conner, Peter in Rome (New York: Columbia Univeristy Press, 1969), p. 41.

[2]Ibid., p. 48.

[3]E. Bickersteth, "A Note on the Festival Commemorating the Primacy of Peter," Eastern Churches Quarterly, XIII (Autumn/Winter 1959), 154-155.

[4]O'Conner, pp. 41-44.

CHAPTER V

THE CHRISTIAN DIOSCURI

There are various examples from art, liturature, and liturgies which indicate that the early Roman Christians thought of the two Apostles as their pagan neighbors thought of the Dioscuri. The inscription of Damasus, already considered, reflects a comparison. In the last line he refers to Peter and Paul as nova sidera (Appendix II). Castor and Pollux had been referred to by Horace as lucida sidera in "Vergil's Voyage."[1] Another instance of such an allusion has already been mentioned in chapter I. The third century medallion (illus. 4) casts Peter and Paul in the role of the Dioscuri. Castor and Pollux, the hero-protectors of Rome, appear on medallions in this way, as do emperors and gods.[2]

Literature also reflects the fact that Peter and Paul were regarded as the protectors of Rome and its citizens, just as the twin brothers were. In City of God,[3] Augustine attributes Rome's salvation from Radagaisus, the Ostrogoth, in 406 A.D., to protection by the martyred apostles' power.[4] Chadwick also illustrates that Peter and Paul, as well as the other Roman martyrs exercised a patrocinium over the citizens. Prayers in the Veronese or "Leonine" Sacramentary for June 29, show an awareness of the blessedness of Rome in having the Apostles as protectors.[5]

One further comparison in this respect is more interesting. Cullmann observes that June 29, the day which is celebrated as the natale of Peter and Paul, is also the day on which the founding of Rome is celebrated.[6] Here is a comparison of Peter and Paul with Romulus, which is specifically mentioned by Pope Leo the Great in a sermon on June 29: "The apostles founded the city better than did those who built the walls and sullied them by fratricide."[7] This comparison in the early Christian attitude takes on new significance when the role of a city-founder in ancient times is understood. Fustel, in discussing the worship of the founder, observes that he performed the religious act necessary to begin a city; he was adored as the special protector of the city. Sacrifices and festivals were commemorated each year at his tomb.[8]

The results of this study indicate a relation between the Apostles and the heroes of Rome. Just as Rome looked for protection to the twin brothers, Castor and Pollux, she sought care and watchfulness from Peter and Paul. In the same way that shrines of pagan heroes were expected to benefit the city, the blood of the Christian martyrs, especially Peter and Paul, was a powerful ally in time of seige.

FOOTNOTES

[1]George la Piana, "The Tombs of Peter and Paul Ad Catacumbas," Harvard Theological Review, XIV (January 1921), 65.

[2]André Grabar, Christian Iconography (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univeristy Press, 1968), pp. 68-69.

[3]St. Augustine, The City of God (New York: Random House, Inc., 1950), pp. 176-177.

[4]Henry Chadwick, "Pope Damasus and the Peculiar Claim of Rome to St. Peter and St. Paul," Neotestamentica et Patristica, VI (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), p. 316.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Oscar Cullmann, Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr (2nd rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 129.

[7]Ibid., p. 129, n. 31.

[8]Fustel de Coulanges, The Ancient City (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., n.d.), p. 142.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

In this investigation, the attitudes of early Christians toward St. Peter were examined as they are found in art and other subjective expressions. Extensive attention was given to examples of early Christian art in five categories related to Peter. A change in attitude toward St. Peter was observed which began to give him special recognition in the fourth century; a prominence shared with Paul gave way to an honored position by himself. In the fifth century at Rome he had been given the keys of authority. By the sixth century that attitude had spread at least as far as Ravenna.

Archeological evidence was examined for possible hints about Peter's status. In the early graffiti as well as the legends about the Memoria ad catacumbas, Peter and Paul were linked together. In connection with Catacumbas, refrigeriae for both apostles were held in the latter half of the third century, indicating a probable belief that the Memoria marked the joint grave of the Apostles, at least at some time. Several legends were available to explain how and why the Apostles had been buried there. Meanwhile there was a tradition, perhaps as early as A.D. 170, which recognized a certain spot on the Vatican as Peter's grave. In the fourth century the latter tradition gained ascendancy and displaced the former.

The festival associated with February 22 underwent a change at the beginning of the fourth century. At first it had been a memorial festival to commemorate the martyr-deaths of Peter and Paul. In the fourth century it became a celebration of Peter's episcopal chair.

Peter and Paul were represented together in the types of images often associated with the Dioscuri protectors of pagan Rome. In fact, it was observed that the same function of protecting Rome was ascribed to them in the fourth and fifth centuries. Pope Leo the Great even compared them to Romulus as founders of the city! These attitudes are very similar to the way in which ancients saw founders and other heroes associated with their cities.

It is proper to conclude that situations and traditions during the third and fourth centuries combined in such a way as to make possible a re-evaluation of Peter as the patron of the City of Rome and the foundation of authority for the Church of Rome. Further questions could be posed: Was Damasus' inscription a conscious attempt to consolidate Rome's position over against the East? Because of the threat of Constantinople as the "New Rome," was there an intentional re-founding of the old one, with the purpose of establishing it on Christian heroes rather than pagan? Was the Memoria Apostolorum ad catacumbas discredited in order to strengthen the position of the Pope by having the Vatican be the only petrine shrine? This study has observed those results, but the motives are perhaps lost in history.

ILLUSTRATIONS

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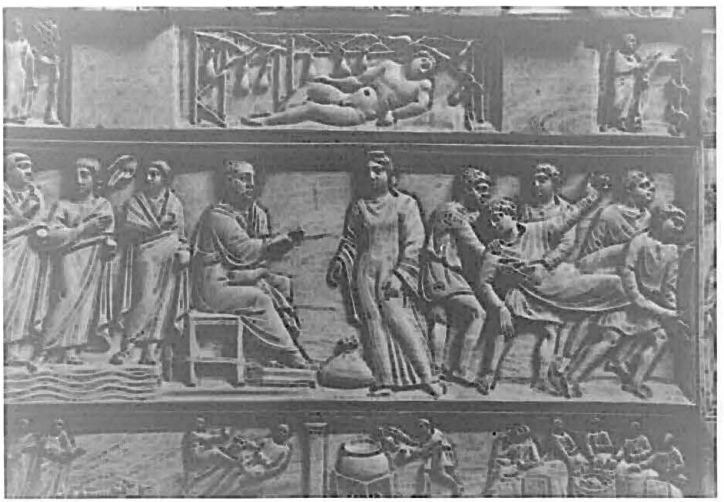

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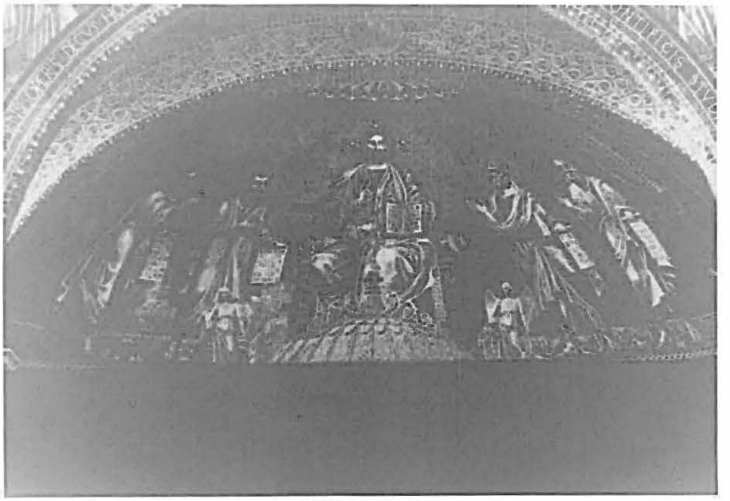

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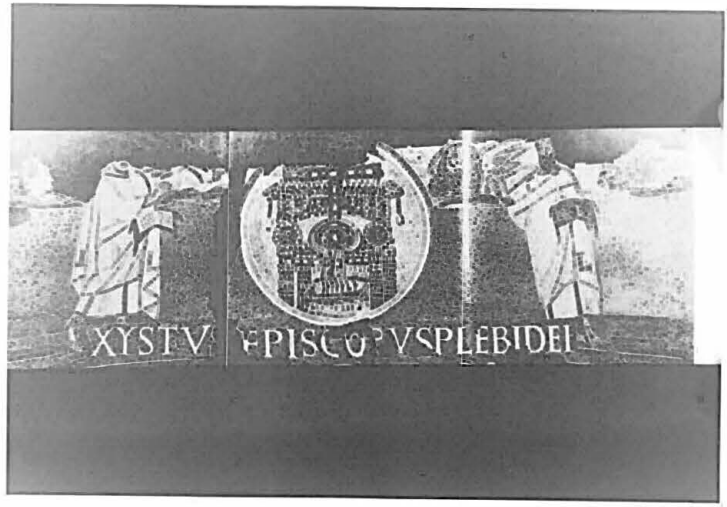

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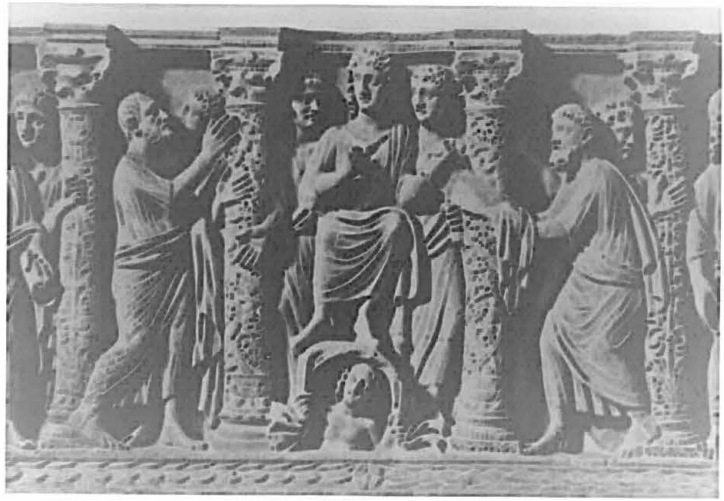

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170 St. Peter as the Good

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APPENDIX I

DESCRIPTION OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Detail from a fresco in the Catacomb of Peter and Marcellinus, Rome (late 3rd C.). St. Peter seated, reading (Newton, Christian Art, p. 29).

2. Detail from the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, Vatican Grottoes (A.D. 359). The judgment of St. Peter (Grabar, Christian Iconography, illus. 148).

3. Detail from the central panel on the back of a lipsanotheca, Museo Civico, Brescia (ca. 360 A.D.). Saphira before Peter, the dying Ananias carried off to burial (Grabar, Christian Iconography, illus. 337).

4. Bronze medallion, Museo Sacro, Vatican (3rd C.). Profiles of SS. Peter and Paul (Grabar, Christian Iconography, illus. 163).

5. Detail from the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, Vatican Grottoes (A.D. 359). Christ as Judge between SS. Peter and Paul (Grabar, Beginnings of Christian Art, illus. 41).

6. Apse mosaic in St. Paul's Church, Rome. Christ enthroned between St. Peter and St. Paul with St. Peter holding the keys (Lowrie, Art in the Early Church, pl. 64a).

7. Detail of a wall painting (86 by 94 inches) in the Catacomb of Peter and Marcellinus, Crypt of the Saints, Rome (Late 4th C.). Christ between St. Peter and St. Paul (Grabar, Beginnings of Christian Art, illus. 234).

8. Mosaic at the summit of the arch in S. Maria Maggiore, Rome (A.D. 432-440). SS. Peter and Paul on either side of the empty throne (Morey, Early Christian Art, illus. 156).

9. Detail from the front of an unidentified sarcophagus, Museo Laterano, Rome (4th C.). Christ seated above a personification of the cosmos delivering the scroll of the law to St. Peter (Grabar, Beginnings of Christian Art, illus. 276).

10. Apse mosaic in the north ambulatory of Sta. Costanza Rome (ca. 350?). Christ standing between SS. Peter and Paul, delivering the scroll of the law to St. Peter (Grabar, Christian Iconography, illus. 101).

11. Cupola mosaic in the baptistry of St. Giovanni in Fonte, Naples (ca. 450?). Christ standing delivering the scroll of the law to St. Peter (Grabar, Christian Iconography, illus. 102).

12. Detail of the sarcophagus of Bishop Liberius (d. 378) in the church of San Francesco, Ravenna (ca. 400). Christ seated delivering the scroll of the law to St. Paul (New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 11, "Paul," fig. 2, p. 4).

13. (a) Bronze statuette, staatliche Museen, Berlin (4th C.?). St. Peter bearing cross and monogram of Christ. (b) Detail from a Christian sarcophagus, Catacomb of Domitilla, Rome (4th C.?). St. Peter as the Good Shepherd (Grabar, Christian Iconography, figs. 169 and 170 respectively).

14. Bronze statue in the basilica of St. Peter, Vatican (5th C.). St. Peter enthroned as a philosopher, holding the keys (Ipser, Vatican Art, p. 22).

15. (a) Mosaic detail from the Baptistry of the Orthodox, Ravenna (5th C.). St. Peter standing in classical robes, holding a wreath. (b) Mosaic detail from the Baptistry of the Arians, Ravenna (6th C.). St. Peter standing in classical robes, holding the keys (Lassus, Early Christian and Byzantine World, fig. 40, (a) and (b) respectively).

APPENDIX II

DAMASUS' INSCRIPTION AD CATACUMBAS*

* Daniel O'Conner, Peter in Rome (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 104.

Latin Text

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

Translation
by A. S. Barnes

Here you should know that the saints dwelt at one time, you who seek the names of both Peter and Paul. We freely acknowledge that the East sent them as disciples [of the Lord]. For Christ's sake and the merit of his blood, they followed him across the stars, and sought the heavenly regions, Kingdom of pious souls. Rome has merited to claim them as citizens. Damasus has wished to proclaim these things, O new stars, to your praise.

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