

Papal Abuse of Power



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The original title to the chapter is:

Keys For The Wrong Lock

KEYS are a symbol of power, the power to open up and distribute, or to lock up and deny things necessary or longed-for – be it jam in the cupboard, electric energy in the dynamo, or the power of God in the kingdom of heaven.

Everyone knows the “key story” which has been repeated throughout the centuries by the Church of Rome. It was told to me like a bedtime story when I was a child: How only to Peter the apostle did Jesus Christ give the keys of the kingdom of heaven with all power over men and nations. And how only to the popes of Rome as the rightful successors of Saint Peter can these keys be handed down for all time. This makes a pope in Rome, as the present Pope Pius XII reminded all Americans in a recent radio broadcast, “the only one authorized to act and teach for God.”

Thus this same Eugenio Pacelli, under the name of Pope Pius XII, residing on Vatican Hill in Rome, would today be the only one who has in his pocket these keys that can open the floodgates of the power of the spirit of God and heal the ills of the world. Hitler was tearing Christian civilization to shreds when Pope Pius XII made the above awesome announcement. This means that **he could have stopped Hitler and the other war-guilty dictators and brought peace and salvation to all men. Instead, he helped their evil deeds.** It was this same Eugenio Pacelli who helped Hitler to power by putting his signature to the Vatican’s concordat with Nazi Germany in 1933.

This key story may sound all right when things are going well with the world. When they go wrong, however, and criminal men ride their apocalyptic horses of tyranny and brutality, death and destruction over the face of the earth,

we may well ask why the power of God is kept locked up by the one man who boasts of having the keys to release it. Today more than ever before, with the threat of atomic destruction hanging over the whole world, this power of God is the only effective weapon to save us all from complete annihilation. **If Eugenio Pacelli has any keys at all, he must either refuse to put them to their proper use, or else they must fit the wrong set of locks.**

Jesus Christ plainly warned against those who falsely profess to have the sole power to open up or lock the gates of heaven. In dire condemnation of them he says: "Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matt. 23:13).

The strangest paradox of Roman Catholic teaching is **its claim, on the one hand, that Saint Peter was the first pope and Bishop of Rome; and its refusal, on the other hand, to listen to and obey the teaching of Saint Peter** as written down in the New Testament. If a pope's words are accepted as infallible today, one would think that Roman Catholics, including the pope himself, would accept as even more infallible what Peter decreed in New Testament teaching. They should at least accept with equal authority Peter's writings and the encyclical letters and decrees of the popes of Rome down the centuries. The reason why Peter's instructions are hushed up happens to be because what he decreed is a condemnation of the very position of the pope and his Roman *curia*.

Saint Peter wrote two epistles or letters, and in the first he solemnly instructs his coworkers in the Christian ministry how the Christian Church should be governed. In chapter 6, verses 1 to 3, he decrees as follows:

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

"Neither being as lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock."

Here we have Peter, speaking with authority as Christ's coworker and chief of the apostles, making it clear that the set-up of Christ's Church must be first of all democratic, not authoritarian. He calls himself an "elder" (presbyter, which has nothing at all to do with a sacrificing priest), equal to the other apostles and Christian leaders whom he also calls elders. He exhorts them to minister to the faithful, not by forceful methods but in a way that will bring free response.

Most important of all, he forbids the Church leaders to become "lords" over the people. The full significance of this can only be understood from the Greek word which Peter used for "lords." That word in the Greek is

katakuriontes, which the Latin Vulgate version of the New Testament translates as dominates. But if Peter's own Greek word *katakuriontes* is closely examined, it will be found to contain the word *curia*, which was the autocratic governing body of the Roman Empire of the Caesars. To Peter himself and to those he addressed in his letter, the full significance of this word was very plain. For **the Roman *curia* at that time ruled the world with an iron fist**. It was as plain to people in his time as if he told the leaders of the Christian Church today: **"Don't be Fascists or Nazis!"**

In other words, Peter plainly decreed that the method of governing the Christian Church must not be patterned after that of Caesar – or sawdust imitators of him in the twentieth century. He wants it to be the very opposite of the *curial* system of Rome. It was to be a democratic system, with no one lording it over the others, and the people corresponding freely, not by coercion.

It is scarcely necessary for me to mention the fact that the Roman Catholic Church acts directly opposite to these instructions of Saint Peter, its so-called first pope. After the fourth century, the Bishops of Rome stepped right into Caesar's shoes, took on his pagan title of Pontifex Maximus, the Supreme High Priest of the Roman religion, sat down on Caesar's throne and wrapped themselves in Caesar's gaudy trappings. Everything about the pope and his court today is as it was at the court of the Caesars in ancient Rome. Through the very Roman *curia* which Peter abhorred and condemned, the Vatican has ruled the Catholic Church to this day.

Not content with claiming the autocratic power of the Caesars in religion and politics, the popes of Rome also claimed to have the power of Almighty God himself. By infallible decree the pope has been made the very mouthpiece of God on earth, God's sole deputy. He can impose dogmatic decrees under pain of excommunication and death in this life, and the loss of eternal salvation in the next. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.

On these sky-high claims rests the whole foundation of the Church of Rome. But no pope will ever mention that they are in direct contradiction of the instructions that Saint Peter set down in the very book of the Gospels.

On other points too, the Church of Rome has completely perverted the word of the Gospel. Jesus Christ (Matt. 23:7) distinctly says: "Call no man your father on the earth, for one is your father which is in heaven." Christ here meant spiritual father, one who usurps the place of our Father in heaven. But not only does the very name pope (papa) mean father as designating the pope's spiritual office, but every Roman Catholic priest has to be called "Father" by the people. Another title of the pope is *Sua Santita di Nostro Signore*, "The Holiness of Our Lord." Christ taught his apostles and disciples to be poor and humble, not lavishly rich and authoritative. Yet the pope of Rome, with his *curia* of cardinals and bishops, dresses in the most sumptuous and expensive garments of cloth of gold and lace studded with precious gems. In February, 1946, when thirty-two new cardinals were created by Pope Pius XII, Americans were shocked to learn that the scarlet robes alone of every new cardinal's outfit cost \$10,000. Everything the pope touches – even his telephone and microphone – is of gold.

In view of all this, how can the pope, cardinals and bishops be, as Saint Peter exhorts, "examples" to the people? And how can the people, in turn, imitate them, since their lives are so different from those of the people to whom they are supposed to minister? Far from carrying out Saint Peter's instructions not to be "lords" over the people and not to coerce them, the leaders of the Church of Rome have always resisted democratic principles of equality and brotherhood and allied themselves to despotic kings and authoritarian governments. In our own time, the Roman *curia* at the Vatican bound itself by solemn concordats and alliances to the Nazi-fascist dictatorships of Mussolini, Hitler, Franco and others.

To me, who once served the altars of the Church of Rome, it becomes more sadly apparent, the farther I draw away from it, how much it has perverted both the form and teaching of the true Church of Christ. My work and prayers now are directed to the end that, by the preservation of our democratic freedoms, the Catholic people in America will some day discover the truth and, instead of blindly submitting to the *curial* dictatorship of the Vatican, accept the democratic, Gospel teaching of Saint Peter.

The growth of this ecclesiastical dictatorship of the Roman papacy began with the need for a 'president' who was later designated as 'bishop' or overseer over the other elders. This led to distinctions between ranks and authority, and, step by step, to a plan of Church government patterned after the law and regulation of Roman military regimentation, that was not sanctioned by the New Testament. The bishop soon extended his rule over several congregations called a 'diocese,' and thus established one-man rule over a district of Churches. Later, many dioceses were grouped together under one head called a 'metropolitan,' similar to the archbishop of today.

These departures from New Testament Church government continued until there developed a trend toward religious imperialism in the Christian Church. The last stage in its development was the establishment of the Roman papacy with its curia and hierarchy, at the apex of which was the Bishop of Rome as pope and autocratic monarch. This was **in the year 606, when the title of "Universal Bishop of the Church"** was bestowed upon him. But the papacy did not reach the zenith of its power until the time of Pope Gregory VII, in the year 1073.

Consummation of this growth of universal power of the Bishop of Rome took place in 1870, when Pope Pius IX, by the dogmatic decree of papal infallibility, proclaimed himself and all popes to come after him absolute dictator of the entire Christian Church. Were he to visit Rome today, Peter, the gentle elder of the New Testament Church, would be horrified to find himself and Jesus Christ impersonated by the bejeweled occupant of the throne of Caesar on Vatican Hill. For Peter was taught by Christ not to rule over the people the same as "the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them." He heard from his Master's own lips the command: "But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister: And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant(Matt. 20:25-27).

These departures from the spirit and teaching of the New Testament Church,

and from the instructions laid down by Saint Peter himself, were the natural consequences of the self-interest and ambition of men to gain supreme and unlimited power over other men. They led, as history bears witness, to the spirit of tyranny which destroyed the congregational or democratic form of Church government in Europe. For ecclesiastical power succeeds where other institutions fail in forcing masses of trusting people to give up their liberty. Designing politicians, themselves scheming at all times to lord it over their fellow men, have always been quick to align themselves with those in supreme positions of power in the religious world.

It was thus in Jerusalem when the priests of the Jewish religion conspired with the Roman politicians to crucify Christ because they feared the moral reform his teaching threatened to bring about. And it is thus today in the big cities of the United States where the priests, the police and the politicians combine to control politics and the press. The Roman Catholic cardinal's chancery office in New York City is known to all as the political "power house."

But the politicians in the end become mere tools of the Church authorities. They are forced to serve as partners of the more dominant church power for fear of losing their own positions if they should act against the wishes of their ecclesiastical overlords. Europe has been bedeviled for fifteen centuries with this unbeatable combination of political- ecclesiastical control. Protestant America is now faced with its appearance on this side of the Atlantic. In the struggle to overcome it. the only effective remedy is a return to the spirit and pure teaching of the Gospel of Christ.