

UNLOCKING THE SCEPTRE

Beyond the Key to Papal Primacy

By

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Introduction

Upswells of a recalcitrant populace pervade the history of man. Throughout history, whoever legitimately made the rules was bound to have an objector. Such is the history of rebellious man without the supernatural help of the Logos¹. Man without God's grace fights against the truth and the light for control of the world. The Logos becomes foolishness to man, and true reason becomes the enemy. No more evidence is needed than the battle for life being waged and the positions taken on either side. To one side, life is sacred, a gift and always good. To the other, life is a choice and disposable. This fight exemplifies the greater rebellion over who has godly authority over mankind. Defense against such rebellion has been the mark of the Church Militant under a banner of authority.

On occasion, God raises the lowly to great heights to accomplish His purpose in spectacular fashion. When a young girl of sixteen becomes a commander of an army, reviving her broken countrymen in the name of God, throwing her English invaders into the Loire river, few words are necessary to proclaim authority:

You, Oh English, who have no right to this kingdom of France, the King of Heaven orders and commands you through me, Joan the Maid, to leave your fortresses and return to your country, and if you do not so I shall make a *hahay* [uproar] that will be perpetually remembered. Behold what I write you for the third and final time: I shall write no further.

Signed,

Jesus-Maria,

Joan the Maid.²

¹ The term *Logos* is a Greek word literally defined as "a word", but also a term used in Christian theology to designate Christ, the Word of God, and second person of the Trinity. St. John is the only writer in Scripture to use the term, cf. Rev 19:13; John 1:1-14. In describing St. John's use of the term Logos, the Catholic Encyclopedia states "the Word is for him [St. John] the Word of God, and thereby he holds with Jewish tradition, the theology of the Book of Wisdom, of the Psalms, of the Prophetical Books, and of Genesis; he perfects the idea and transforms it by showing that this creative Word which from all eternity was in God and was God, took flesh and dwelt among men." The same concept is found in St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians where Christ is called "the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24) and "the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Lebreton, Jules. "The Logos." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 9. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910. 6 Nov. 2009 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09328a.htm>>.

You would be remiss to question the clear authority given to St. Joan of Arc, as the English found out in Orleans and at the Day of Patay where thousands of English soldiers were slain compared to three Frenchmen. While self-evidently legitimate, St. Joan's authority was limited in scope and duration, just as with many great Old Testament representatives of God who served a temporal purpose, such as Abraham, Moses, David and Solomon. These men were all examples of God's delegation of representative authority to his creatures, bringing God's majesty and power to rule mankind as antitypes of a future authority and greater impending kingship.

When Christ appeared in that fullness of time, there was, for a select number of men and for a limited duration, a human supreme authority physically on earth. Christ acted with authority by exercising legislative, juridical and punitive powers. When Christ ascended to His Kingdom in Heaven, He humanly departed, although His work continued.³ As this fount of all Truth left earth, was mankind forever deprived of a living, human authority on earth? Was mankind left to simply follow Scripture guided by the Holy Spirit?

Inevitably, man would need to know which teachers, and even what scripture, to follow, just as the disciples and apostles needed Christ's human direction. If the truth is immutable, out of all the divergent opinions and interpretations of Scripture and beliefs today, one must be correct. So, who is speaking the truth to you right here, today? If there is one true answer to every question regarding your relationship with God, including His written word in Scripture, who is proclaiming the truth?

² Pernoud, Regine, Clin, Marie-Veronique, *Joan of Arc: Her Story*, originally published as *Jeanne d'Arc*, Paris:librairie Artheme Fayard, (1986); revised and translated by Jeremy duQuesnay Adams, St. Martin's Press, 1998

³ Christ confirmed his bodily departure from earth as He indicated "The poor you will always have with you; but you will not always have me." Mt. 26:11. After the ascension of Christ to heaven, he remains bodily in heaven interceding for man. Rom. 8:34. So, as he suffers currently in His human body for our ongoing sins we can consider His body not whole and His mission ongoing until all are gathered together as one at the end of time. "Jesus Christ will not be whole until the number of saints is complete. Our gaze must ever be fixed on this consummation of God's work." Bossuet, *Elevations su les Mysteres*, 18, 6, as quoted in *Catholicism, Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, de Lubac, Henri. This departure from earth is differentiated from Christ's continual physical, sacramental presence on earth in the Eucharist. "Christ's body is not in this sacrament in the same way as a body is in a place, which by its dimensions is commensurate with the place; but in a special manner which is proper to this sacrament. Hence we say that Christ's body is upon many altars, not as in different places, but "sacramentally": and thereby we do not understand that Christ is there only as in a sign, although a sacrament is a kind of sign; but that Christ's body is here after a fashion proper to this sacrament, as stated above." St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III Q.. 75, Part 1.

A ruler leaving his kingdom without a representative would be an imprudent risk of anarchy.⁴ Scripture provides us example, not coincidentally, of the proper protocol to maintain a kingdom during a king's absence.⁵ Was this protocol followed by the King of Kings? Is there currently someone who could claim that "the King of Heaven orders and commands you through me?" God's rule is concordance, it is harmonious and fluid. This harmony applies to Christ's body on earth, His Church. For almost 2000 years the Catholic Church has continually proclaimed that the King of Heaven orders and commands you through the See of Peter⁶ :

Over this mighty multitude God has Himself set rulers with power to govern, and He has willed that one should be the head of all, and the chief and unerring teacher of truth, to whom He has given "the keys of the kingdom of heaven."⁷

Acknowledging the legitimacy of this representative authority and choosing to kneel before it is nothing less than the perpetual replication of Adam's test of obedience. Each man faces this test of faith in order to appropriate a share in the New Adam's redemption; to obey or to rebel, to hear Christ through His representative, or to reject Christ by rejecting His representative.

⁴ Wis 6:24 "A great number of wise men is the safety of the world, and a prudent king, the stability of his people." The scene portrayed in Luke 22:29-30 is one of Christ's delegation to human representatives who are thereby empowered over a kingdom. Christ's actions alone confirm its prudence to accomplish His mission.

⁵ Is 22:15-24: While not a king's authority being delegated, this passage provides a clear example of a transfer of ruling authority. "Thus says the Lord, the GOD of hosts: Up, go to that official, Shebna, master of the palace, ¹⁶ Who has hewn for himself a sepulcher on a height and carved his tomb in the rock: "What are you doing here, and what people have you here, that here you have hewn for yourself a tomb?" ¹⁷ The LORD shall hurl you down headlong, mortal man! He shall grip you firmly ¹⁸ And roll you up and toss you like a ball into an open land To perish there, you and the chariots you glory in, you disgrace to your master's house! ¹⁹ I will thrust you from your office and pull you down from your station. ²⁰ On that day I will summon my servant Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah; ²¹ I will clothe him with your robe, and gird him with your sash, and give over to him your authority. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. ²² I will place the key of the House of David on his shoulder; when he opens, no one shall shut, when he shuts, no one shall open. ²³ I will fix him like a peg in a sure spot, to be a place of honor for his family; ²⁴ On him shall hang all the glory of his family: descendants and offspring, all the little dishes, from bowls to jugs."

⁶ The terms Apostolic See, Holy See and See of Peter are terms used identifying the authority given to Peter through a representative chair or seat of authority. This chair historically has represented the office of the official and the authority that office held. The Greek term καθέδρας (kathedras) is used in Scripture to represent a teacher's chair. Mt 23:2. The Latin translation is cathedrum, from which the term cathedral is derived and designates the chief Church in the diocese in which the bishop has his chair of authority.

⁷ *Immortale Dei*, On the Christian Constitution of States, His Holiness Pope Leo XIII (1885). Citations omitted.

Every Catholic doctrine can be supported by the statement “Because the Church has spoken.”⁸ Catholic apologists tend to argue solely on the Protestant playing field – whether conceding away the deuterocanonical⁹ support for a doctrine or arguing solely from Scripture and ignoring other revelation.¹⁰ While we are to become all things to all people when evangelizing¹¹, when seeking the truth the path always follows Christ, and so does the teaching authority over questions of faith. The one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church has retained all of Christ’s authority over mankind. This truth trumps all remaining exegesis of Scripture and novel theologies and should never be diminished for ecumenism.

This article will present a new approach to defending the doctrine of Papal Primacy using established truths consistent with Scripture, Church teaching, and the historic teaching of the Church Fathers, and thereby offer a new understanding of the power source of the Catholic Church Militant.

I. Recognize His Empire

Man’s rebellion neatly splays out through history. What Adam began, Cain continued. Through time men have chosen to follow themselves instead of following God. The Jews were perpetually disobedient and the protest continued with Martin

⁸ St. Augustine’s Sermon 131, 10, vol v, p. 734 is most often paraphrased for the summary proposition that when “Rome has spoken; the case is closed.” Some Protestant objectors have denied Augustine intended that summary, but his words exude obsequiousness to the See of Peter: “My brethren, be of one mind with me. Wheresoever you find such men do not hide them, have no perverse pity. Refute those who contradict, and bring to us those who resist. For already two Councils have been sent to the Apostolic See concerning this matter, **and rescripts have come from thence. The case is concluded;** would that the error would soon cease also.” The common summation of this statement is consistent with numerous other declarations of papal primacy by St. Augustine, for example: “I am held in the communion of the Catholic Church by...and by the succession of bishops from the very seat of Peter, to whom the Lord, after His resurrection commended His sheep to be fed up to the present episcopate.” *Augustine, Against the Letter of Mani, 5 (A.D. 395)*; and “Carthage was also near the countries over the sea, and distinguished by illustrious renown, so that it had a bishop of more than ordinary influence, who could afford to disregard a number of conspiring enemies because he saw himself joined by letters of communion to the Roman Church, in which the supremacy of an apostolic chair has always flourished.” Augustine, *To Glorius et.al, Epistle 43:7 (A.D. 397)*.

⁹ The bible was first compiled by the Catholic Church and was redacted over one thousand years later during the Protestant reformation and seven books of the Old Testament, commonly called the deuterocanonical, books were removed. Many protestant versions of the bible remove 1 and 2 Maccabees, Sirach, Wisdom, Baruch, Tobit, and Judith, and passages from the books of Daniel and Esther.

¹⁰ 2 Thes 2:15, “Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.”

¹¹ 1 Cor 9:22-23.

Luther. Cafeteria Catholics, who pick those doctrines they like and discard those inconvenient to their personal lifestyle, sit proudly at the table with Calvin. Sin in its entirety is rebellion against God.

The Church as properly understood, is one undivided body. Those rebelling do not divide up the Church or carve up Christ's body, they scatter:

There is one God and one Christ, and one Church, and one Chair founded on Peter by the word of the Lord. It is not possible to set up another altar or for there to be another priesthood besides that one altar and that one priesthood. Whoever has gathered elsewhere is scattering¹²

You simply cannot be united to something you reject. The import of this question of authority cannot be overstated: Christ is the Church and our salvation depends upon being united to Christ. Fulfilling the purpose of your creation depends upon the understanding and acceptance of Christ's Church. Christ was clear as to the consequences:

Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.¹³

Acceptance leads to rebirth and Christian rebirth is rebirth in unity, as we are first born separated by original sin then reborn into one body, one Church, one Christ:

And since he is one, the principal of all unity, and even unity itself, instead of saving us by so many distinct and separate ways, he has obliged us to embrace the means of our salvation and its conditions in unity. "He is one," said St. Augustine (In Psalm. 101), "the Church is unity, nothing corresponds to the one save unity." That is, he was not content to win us and possess us separately as so many scattered and dispersed individuals, but willed that by the terms of the same covenant between him and ourselves we should be bound up together in a common society...¹⁴

The discord among Protestant denominations demonstrates that without a unifying authority to follow, disagreements cause division instead of unification. As with most enumerated Catholic dogmatic pronouncements, those dogmas began as an

¹² *Letter of Cyprian to All his People*, 43 (40) 5, in Jurgens, *Faith of the Early Fathers*, 1:229

¹³ Lk. 10:16-20, Cf. Mt 10:40

¹⁴ *Salvation through Unity*, Cardinal Du Perron, quoted in *Catholicism, Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, de Lubac, Henri 378.

internal disagreement on questions of faith by theologians and clergy.¹⁵ Once an authoritative statement is made by the Church, all disagreement is quelled and the Body remains unified. This is the exact process described in Scripture.¹⁶ To the contrary, seven men from seven different Protestant churches can hold conflicting views on the most crucial issues of faith and the outcome is splintering, scattering and division. Ultimately, some are wrong in their beliefs and none of them can be assured of who is correct. In fact, most rest on the recent teaching of a man, not on God.¹⁷ The current 30,000 denomination state of Protestantism is a sad testimonial to divisiveness and uncertainty. This is grossly displeasing to God:

It is for us then earnestly to lay to heart this lesson of mutual harmony. For, as in music, if each chord chimes harmoniously with the rest, the whole harmony is pleasing and true, but if there be but one note out of harmony, then discordant noise is the result and the whole joy of the song is lost, so with those who fight for God. If they allow dissension and discord to exist among them, then nothing they have is pleasing or acceptable to God – no matter how many battles they may win or spoils they bring home, nor however numerous the gifts they make to God.¹⁸

In the beginning, mankind was unified in Adam. Consistent with the process of redemption described in St. Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 5, several Fathers taught that, although an individual, Adam also represented mankind in the whole.¹⁹

¹⁵ The most glaring example is the Protestant reformation. Martin Luther, John Calvin and other founding reformers must be remembered as full members of the Catholic Church who became disgruntled over various teachings of the existing Church. It was a protest against and desertion from an existing entity, after all, and, more specifically, a question of authority. Another clear example is Scripture itself. For four hundred years after Christ's ascension Scripture remained undefined and uncodified. The dispersed local congregations were reading various and differing letters during mass, as God provided no list through prophetic command or annunciation. It took the Church in Rome through several councils to compile a list of what should be trusted as inspired. This true formation of the Bible rests on Catholic Church authority.

¹⁶ Mt 18:15-17: 15 "If your brother sins (against you), go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. ¹⁶ If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that 'every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector.

¹⁷ The most divisive protestant positions, such as Sola Scriptura and Sola Fide, were created by men disenchanted with the Catholic Church, and are not found in Scripture.

¹⁸ Origen, *Homily 26 on the Book of Numbers*, n.2

¹⁹ St. Augustine referred to ADAM as an acronym for the four directions of the earth, intending to encompass the entirety of mankind.; "we were all in Adam", says St. Ambrose, cited by St. Augustine (*Opus imperf.*, IV, civ); "For God (the Creator of nature, and not of vice) made man upright: who being willingly depraved and justly condemned, begot all his offspring under the same depravation and condemnation. For in him were we all, since we all were that one man,

With Adam's fall, mankind fell and a reunification of mankind would take a new Adam, to roll the entirety of mankind to greater unity with God by becoming communal with God Himself. This reunification unites man to the entirety of God. We sometimes forget this unifying aspect of our Church and true purpose of the Eucharist, or Communion. This communion brings mankind not only into Christ but also into a kingdom.

To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By His obedience He brought about redemption. The Church, or, in other words, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world.²⁰

Christ is the head of mankind, as God, man, and as king. Christ's power is over all aspects of our life, derived from the "ineffable hypostatic union." Christ declares himself the eternal King ²¹and we learn from St. John that he is not just any king, but King of all Kings.²² Simply, Christ's earthly authority is not subordinate to any other.²³ Following the King is far beyond following the King's teaching and direction in Scripture alone, it means following the King for eternity. It is a living kingdom which needs a living rule:

Jesus Christ was given to man, not only as our Redeemer, but also as a law-giver, to whom obedience is due. Not only do the gospels tell us that he made laws, but they present him to us in the act of making them. Those who keep them show their love for their Divine Master, and he promises that they shall remain in his love. He claimed judicial power as received from his Father, when the Jews accused him of breaking the

who, through the woman who was made of himself before sin, fell into sin. We had not our particular forms yet, but there was the seed of that nature, the slave to death, and the object of just condemnation." City of God 13:14 John Healey's translation, The City of God, Everyman's Library, 1620.

²⁰ Pope Paul VI, lumen Gentium, para. 3.

²¹ Christ publically declares his kingship to Pilate, and the world, in John 18:37: "So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Christ also announces to his disciples how he shall come at the end of time, as King. Mt 25:31-34: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, ³² and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴ Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

²² Rev 14:16.

²³ See, 1 Tim 1:17, 6:15, Jn 1:49, Rev 15:3.

Sabbath by the miraculous cure of a sick man. “For neither doth the Father judge any man; but hath given all judgment to the Son.” In this power is included the right of rewarding and punishing all men living, for this right is inseparable from that of judging. Executive power, too, belongs to Christ, for all must obey his commands; none may escape them, nor the sanction he has imposed.²⁴

As Christ has complete power over all of his creatures, it would be incomplete to limit the creature’s responsibility to the worship of His Godliness. A complete subjugation to Christ includes the submission to Christ the man-king. Pope Pius XI beautifully presents this truth:

“His kingship is founded upon the ineffable hypostatic union. From this it follows not only that Christ is to be adored by angles and men, but that to him as man angels and men are subject, and must recognize his empire; by reason of the hypostatic union Christ has power over all creatures.”²⁵

The very value and dignity of man derives from this union of creation, as it is a timeless and living union working for the purpose of mankind’s redemption. The recognition of Christ’s earthly empire is a current obligation of man in obedience to the living union of the incarnation. This redemption, and obedience, can be considered a singular redemption of one body with individual temporal assimilation within that body completed as obedient subjects to the King. Christ’s reign extends beyond formal members of His Church and penetrates through all humanity, into all faithful attempts to do His will, into the smallest, weakest and most wrong minded thief who unites his actions to the will of God – and to those who do not.²⁶ All kings are kings because of Christ, leaders and nations are His subjects.²⁷ It is the very regal nature of Christ’s office as king over mankind which “invests the human authority of princes and rulers with a religious significance; it ennobles the citizen’s duty of obedience.”²⁸ Also, it obligates subjects and societies with a holy duty. Therefore, when nations rebel

²⁴ Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas*, para. 14 (1925).

²⁵ *Id.*, para. 13.

²⁶ Lk 23:39-43. While before the resurrection and the formal institution of the Church, the good thief exemplifies a simple and glorious unification with Christ’s will. As the Good Thief rebukes the other thief, he unites himself with Christ’s mission.

²⁷ Wis 6:1-3: “¹ Hear, therefore, kings, and understand; learn, you magistrates of the earth’s expanse! ² Hearken, you who are in power over the multitude and lord it over throngs of peoples! ³ Because authority was given you by the LORD and sovereignty by the Most High, who shall probe your works and scrutinize your counsels!”

²⁸ *Supra*, *Quas Primus*, 19.

they implode. When individuals rebel, they similarly disobey both Christ's spiritual and earthly rule.

All Christians have some agreement regarding the kingship of Christ, but Christ and human agreement seem to depart from the earth simultaneously. So we begin and finish with Christ the King, our Lord, our Savior, but what about now, today? What has happened to the rule of this earthly King in the meantime? Before His return whose empire do you recognize?

II. Beyond the Keys

Papal primacy has historically been declared based upon Scripture as follows: Jesus presented Peter with the keys to the kingdom, instructing him, and the other apostles, that what they bound and loosed would be bound and loosed in heaven. Jesus also instructed Peter to feed his sheep and tend his lambs. Jesus further, dramatically in front of the very large rock of Cesar Philipi told Peter he was the Rock upon which He was going to build his Church, and nothing could destroy it and that Christ would be with this Church until the end of time.

There is a plethora of additional evidence in Scripture confirming this primacy: Peter is always named first whenever the apostles are listed, and is called "first" in the Gospel of Matthew²⁹; Peter is named 155 times while the rest of the apostles are mentioned 130 times altogether; The name of Cephas, which Christ changes to Peter, means Rock in Aramaic consistent with Matt 16's Rock on which the Church was to be built; Jesus taught from Peter's boat³⁰; Peter and Christ were intertwined in the payment of the temple tax, including the use of single coin to pay the tax for them in partnership³¹; Peter is singled out as the head of the apostles by an angel declaring the resurrection³². Although the apostles share great power, the evidence of Peter's primacy is also pervasive:

While the whole Apostolic College enjoyed this power in the Church, St. Peter always appears in that position of primacy which Christ assigned to him. It is Peter who receives into the Church the first converts, alike

²⁹ Mt 10:2: "The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John."

³⁰ Lk 5:3.

³¹ Mt 17:24-27. The "stater" coin Peter pays the tax with is a single coin worth four drachmas. The tax was two drachmas per person. In conjunction with the miraculous production of this coin from the fish's mouth, this rich symbolism evidences the miraculous unification of Jesus and Peter.

³² Mk 16:7.

from Judaism and from heathenism (Acts 2:41; 10:5 sq.), who works the first miracle (Acts 3:1 sqq.), who inflicts the first ecclesiastical penalty (Acts 5:1 sqq.). It is Peter who casts out of the Church the first heretic, Simon Magus (Acts 8:21), who makes the first Apostolic visitation of the churches (Acts 9:32), and who pronounces the first dogmatic decision (Acts 15:7). [reference removed] So indisputable was his position that when St. Paul was about to undertake the work of preaching to the heathen the Gospel which Christ had revealed to him, he regarded it as necessary to obtain recognition from Peter (Galatians 1:18). More than this was not needful: for the approbation of Peter was definitive.³³

There have been contests to the interpretation of each of these passages and inferences, such as: The Rock of Matthew 16 on which the Church was built was Peter's faith, not Peter; all the apostles received the power to bind and loose; we all get a key, not just Peter; Peter had primacy but it ended when he died, etc. These arguments have been fully countered and primacy explored in detail by some brilliant theologians in numerous texts and articles, but of all of these defenders, all have overlooked the single most powerful connection that is made in Scripture tying the power of Christ's Kingdom to the papal office.

John 21:15-17 describes the single greatest delegation of authority in history:

- 15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."
- 16 He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep."
- 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." (Jesus) said to him, "Feed my sheep. (John 21:15-17)

This triple proclamation of love was preceded by Matthew 16:16's proclamation of faith³⁴, which together presents a striking duo of faith and love. In Matthew 16:18-

³³ Joyce, George. "The Church." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 3. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908. 27 Oct. 2009 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm>>.

³⁴ "He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'" Mt 16:15-16.

19, Christ promised to give Peter, at a future time, a threefold power over the community: that Peter would be the Rock upon which the Church would be built, that Peter would receive the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and that Peter in a individual way would have the power to bind and loose.³⁵ Consummating this promise post-resurrection, Christ in John 21:15-17 transfers this power, which is truly Christ's consecration of the government of the Church. Feed and tend my lambs and sheep. St. Chrysostom in 390 A.D. noted that Christ's power was conferred distinctly to one:

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. ³⁶

St. John Chrysostom relayed a common understanding among early Christians – Peter had ultimate authority over the Church. Given that John 21:15-17 is a very dramatic, yet simple, scene focused on one specific apostle, how did the office of the papacy merit the regalia it currently displays?³⁷ The answer lies in what was always understood from the specific words used by Christ in John 21:16: Christ as king handed Peter His scepter of authority.

We are told in Scripture that Christ rules with a Sceptre. This is an analogy of rule, as there obviously is no physical sceptre, and it is foretold early in Scripture:

³⁵ The Catholic Encyclopedia has a succinct and clear definition of the tremendous powers of binding and loosing: "The expressions *binding* and *loosing* here employed are derived from the current terminology of the Rabbinic schools. A doctor who declared a thing to be prohibited by the law was said to *bind*, for thereby he imposed an obligation on the conscience. He who declared it to be lawful was said to *loose*. In this way the terms had come respectively to signify official commands and permissions in general. The words of Christ, therefore, as understood by His hearers, conveyed the promise to St. Peter of legislative authority within the kingdom over which He had just set him, and legislative authority carries with it as its necessary accompaniment judicial authority." Joyce, George. "The Pope." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 12. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. 2 Nov. 2009 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12260a.htm>>.

³⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 88 on John*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 14, Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of Saint John and the Epistle to the Hebrews, originally published by the Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1889, Hendrickson Publishing, reprint edition 2004.

³⁷ At various times throughout papal history, popes have worn a tiara called a *Triregnum*, regal vestments and carried a staff call a *Crosier*. Bona, an 18th century liturgical historian, held the crosier is to bishops what the sceptre is to kings. *Rerum Liturgic*, as quoted by Morrisroe, Patrick. "Crosier." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 4. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908. 15 Nov. 2009 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04515c.htm>>.

“The scepter shall never depart from Judah.”³⁸ The prophesy continues when Balaam proclaims:

I see him, though not now; I behold him, though not near: A star shall advance from Jacob, and a staff [sceptre]³⁹ shall rise from Israel⁴⁰

A messianic rule intended, Jesus Christ himself was commonly interpreted to be the scepter of God’s rule.⁴¹ Pope St. Clement in 97 A.D. unequivocally connected this analogy of rule with Christ:

For Christ is of those who are humble-minded, and not of those who exalt themselves over His flock. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sceptre of the majesty of God, did not come in the pomp of pride and arrogance, although he might have done so, but in a lowly condition, as the Holy Spirit had declared regarding Him.⁴²

As Christ is the physical manifestation of the word of God, fulfilling the word of law in the Old Testament with the Word of grace, He also represents and literally is the authority under which mankind is subject. This is a supersession of rule as the kingdom is purchased with the precious blood of Christ, replacing the rule of the law over man with the new kingdom’s rule by grace.

The sceptre of the kingdom, although viewed from Christ and in Christ, is also impersonally discussed as a representative object of God’s authority:

³⁸ Gen 49:10.

³⁹ The Hebrew used here שֵׁבֶט (*shebet*), is the same Hebrew word used in Gen 49:10, Ps 2:9, Ps 45:6, Jer 51:19, and Micah 7:14 and I would argue may rightfully be translated as “sceptre” in the context of its usage in these passages.

⁴⁰ Num 24:17.

⁴¹ “And when it is said that He changed the name of one of the apostles to Peter . . . this was an announcement of the fact that it was He by whom Jacob was called Israel, and Oshea called Jesus (Joshua), under whose name the people who survived of those that came from Egypt were conducted into the land promised to the patriarchs. And that He should arise like a star from the seed of Abraham, Moses showed beforehand when he thus said, ‘A star shall arise from Jacob, and a leader form Israel;’ and another Scripture says, ‘Behold a man; the East is His name.’ Accordingly, when a star rose in heaven at the time of His birth, as is recorded in the memoirs of His apostles, the Magi from Arabi, recognizing the sign by this, came and worshipped Him.” St. Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, chp. CVII.,

⁴² St. Clement, *The First Epistle of Clement*, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1, The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, originally published by Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885, Fourth Printing, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004.

7 Your throne, O God, stands forever; your royal scepter is a scepter for justice. 8 You love justice and hate wrongdoing; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellow kings⁴³

The throne is the throne of kingship⁴⁴ while the sceptre is the ruling power of the throne. This ruling power of the sceptre of Christ is described thoroughly in Scripture. We are told that out of Bethlehem “shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel”⁴⁵ and that Christ was “destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod”⁴⁶, and at the *parousia* “He will rule them with an iron rod, and he himself will tread out in the wine press.”⁴⁷ In these passages St. John is quoting from Psalm 2:9: “With an iron rod you shall shepherd them, like a clay pot you will shatter them.” This is a dramatic expression of the authority of this divine rule. The shepherding analogy, as expressed throughout Scripture but specifically applied here, intermixes the control of the shepherd by guiding with one end of his staff and the power of defense and judgment of the crook.

This power of Christ flows throughout His body, as it is beautifully shared in unity with those saints who persevere in His work until the end of their lives:

²⁶“To the victor, who keeps to my ways until the end, I will give authority over the nations. ²⁷ He will rule them with an iron rod. Like clay vessels will they be smashed, ²⁸ just as I received authority from my Father. And to him I will give the morning star.”⁴⁸

As one body of Christ, those beatified in heaven share in the authority to rule by a three part transfer of power; from God to Christ and then from Christ to the beatified through assimilation. It can always be understood that the unified body of Christ rules with one unified sceptre. There is no division or multiplicity of this power, simply concordance.

The sceptre, always understood as derived from God⁴⁹, is an explicit reference in Scripture intended to express the supreme power to rule, with supreme authority.

⁴³ Ps 45:7-8.

⁴⁴ The throne is the kathedra, or seat discussed in note 6.

⁴⁵ Mt 2:6.

⁴⁶ Rev 12:5; The same Greek word, ῥάβδος, is used in all of the above examples and is translated variously as rod or sceptre.

⁴⁷ Rev 19:15.

⁴⁸ Rev 2:26-28.

Christ being king, after the resurrection but before His ascension, chooses to maintain a living authority on earth to guide His Church until he returns. To do so, beyond empowering the apostles as a group by conferring upon them a kingdom with judicial power⁵⁰, selecting Peter to be the rock of the Church, giving Peter the power to bind and loose, and handing Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven, Christ transfers kingly power and authority, the actual majesty of God, to Peter in John 21:16, by transferring the sceptre of God's righteousness.

The power and authority Christ gives to Peter in John 21:16, commonly translated as "feed my sheep", uses the exact Greek verb, ποιμανεῖς (Poimaneis), that is used in the Greek Septuagint version of Ps 2:9's example of the power of the sceptre held by Christ. In the entirety of written revelation, Peter is the only individual besides Christ to whom this verb is directed.⁵¹ In addition to giving solely Peter the keys to the kingdom on earth⁵², Christ gives the power to ποιμανεῖς (rule) solely to Peter. To Peter alone does Christ entrust this special power of ruling, a ruling under the authority of the sceptre of God's majesty.

While no Catholic theologian or writer known to this author has specifically connected this transfer to an actual transfer of, or unification with, the sceptre of Christ the King, the unique use of Poimaneis has been thoroughly and thoughtfully established as defining a transfer of a ruling power:

. . . there is the change from 'feed' (Greek: *boske*) to 'shepherd' (Greek: *poimanine*). Peter is told to 'feed' the lambs, but both 'shepherd' and

⁴⁹ The power and authority of the apostles, and specifically Peter, is from God through Christ. Scripture tells us so in that God sent Jesus and Jesus does nothing on his own, John 8-28-29, and Jesus sends the apostles just as God sent Jesus. Jn 17:18, 20:21. Lk 22:29.

⁵⁰ Christ goes so far as to "confer a kingdom" unto the apostles empowering them to "sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Lk 22:29-30.

⁵¹ The use of Poimaneis in Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2 is addressed to the ordained presbyters and bishops and consistent with the hierarchal transfer of power through ordination. This power of the sceptre is passed to the apostles and disciples through the Holy Spirit in lineage and subordination of Peter. Peter's charge comes directly from Christ, as it is the establishment of an office and not a successive human transfer. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers to feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with his own blood. Acts 20:28 . . . See, it is from the Spirit you have your ordination." Chrysostom, *Homily 44* on the Acts of the Apostles; The Catholic Encyclopedia also makes the distinction between these powers: "This power of the supreme pontiff in no way derogates from the ordinary immediate power of Episcopal jurisdiction, in virtue of which bishops, who, appointed by the Holy Spirit [Acts 20:28], have succeeded to the place of the Apostles as true pastors, feed and rule their several flocks, each the one which has been assigned to him: that power is rather maintained, confirmed and defended by the supreme pastor (Enchir. n. 1828)" Supra, Catholic Encyclopedia, Joyce, George, "The Pope."

⁵² Scripture limits the scope of authority given to Peter to the kingdom on earth during Christ's absence. Cf. Mt 16:19.

‘feed’ the sheep. Of the two, *poimaine* is the more technical and comprehensive of the two. It is used of ‘ruling’ in other texts, (e.g., Matthew 2:6; Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15), whereas *boske* refers only to feeding. . .

The Greek word *poimanao*, which is used in John 21:16 when Jesus directs Peter to ‘shepherd’ the sheep, has a linguistic range which includes the aspects of ‘feeding,’ ‘tending,’ and ‘ruling.’ This semantic range is shown both in the traditional role of shepherd who both feeds and guides his flock, as well as the New Testament and Septuagint usage of the word in various contexts. The verbal form *poimanao* is used 11 times in the New Testament in which only one reference, perhaps two, refer exclusively to ‘feeding’ (Jude 12, possibly 1 Cor. 9:7). The other nine references show either an exclusive meaning of ‘ruling’ (Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15) or a combination of both nourishing and ruling (Matt. 2:6; Luke 17:7; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2; Rev. 7:17). . .

In addition, the Hebrew word *raah*, from which the translation *poimanao* is used by the LXX[Septuagint] in Psalm 2:9, is a simple Qal imperfect tense. The use of the Qal tense shows that the word normally means ‘to rule’ since Hebrew could use other verbal forms such as the Hif’il, or Hitpa’el to make the same word more intensive. Hence, *raah* does not need to be intensified to connote ‘ruling’ or ‘breaking’ since that is its normal Qal meaning. . .

This widens the possible meaning of *poimanao* to include not only a ‘ruling’ but a total subjugation with harsh punishment. . .

Another usage occurs in Micah 7:14 in the rendering: ‘Pasture (*poimanao*) your people with your rod.’ Some translations replace the word ‘rod’ with ‘scepter’ (although it is the same Hebrew word for ‘rod’ used in Psalm 2:9 seen above). In either case the meaning is plain. ‘Pasturing’ or ‘shepherding,’ (the Greek *poimanao* or Hebrew *raah*) of necessity, includes the concept of ‘ruling.’

In conclusion, Jesus’ use of the word *poimanao* in regards to the future, sole responsibilities of Peter in the New Testament church cannot be denied in John 21:16. According to the general meaning of *poimanao*, Peter was to rule over all the church with the authority vesting in him by Jesus, as well as be the primary source of spiritual nourishment (truth) for the church with the guidance promised by the Holy Spirit.”⁵³

⁵³ Sungenis, Robert A, “John 21:15-17”, as quoted in *Jesus, Peter & The Keys*, pgs 124-127, Butler, Scott, et al., Queenship Publishing Company, 1996; From this same invaluable

Although not explicitly connected in his analysis, Dr. Sungenis presents convincing exegesis from which one can conclude that the sceptre of Christ's kingship has been shared with Peter. Like those beatified rulers from Revelations 2:26-28, Peter is unified with the ruling power given to Christ from God. In some mysterious fashion, echoing of the Mother of God and her immaculate conception, somehow before beatification and on this broken earth a human can be brought to the heights of heaven to share in the unity of Christ. That first human was Peter, and the line of this rule was blessed with Christ's prayer⁵⁴ and promise to remain with the Church until the end of time⁵⁵.

III. Scope and Succession of the Apostolic Scepter

Just as the power of the sceptre is transferred to Christ, to the beatified in Christ and to Peter, so does the power flow throughout the entirety of the hierarchal Church on earth. The Church Militant foot-soldier standing at the interface of this world and His Kingdom, is guided, protected and empowered by this power radiating down from Christ into the Church. In unison with the Church, the layman can evangelize with the power of the sceptre.⁵⁶

compendium of support for the papacy, others have commented on this special verb usage, "After each response the Risen Christ commissions Peter to feed (*boskein*) and tend (*poimainein*) his, i.e., Christ's flock. Clearly, after the resurrection, Peter is reestablished and given the role of shepherd. The verb *poimainein* conveys more than *boskein*. In a figurative sense, *poimainein* points to the duties and responsibilities of church leaders – protecting, governing, leading, and caring for the people under their charge." Id., pg. 127. Also a very clear quote from Philo from sometime near Christ's birth, "Those who feed [*boiskein*] supply nourishment . . . but those who tend [*poimainein*] have the powers of rulers and governors." Id., pg. 128, (quoting Brown, Raymond E., et al, *Peter in the New Testament*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg; New York: Paulist: 1973), 142-143)).

⁵⁴ Lk 22:31-32; Jn 17:1-9.

⁵⁵ Mt 28:20.

⁵⁶ This is not to confuse the power of the ordained with the layman's benefits of the power emanating from Christ through the Church. St. Thomas distinguishes these levels of power: "That which has to do with singular matters is not equally in the power of all. Thus, even as besides the general principles of medicine, it is necessary to have physicians, who adapt those general principles to individual patients or diseases, according to their various requirements, so in every kingdom, besides that one who proclaims the universal precepts of law, there is need for others to adapt those precepts to individual cases, according as each case demands. For this reason, in the heavenly hierarchy also, under the Powers who rule indiscriminately, a place is given to the Principalities, who are appointed to individual kingdoms, and to the Angels who are given charge over individual men, as we have explained above (I, 113, 1,2). Consequently there should be a like order of authority in the Church Militant, so that an indiscriminate authority over all should be vested in one individual, and that there should be others under him, having distinct authority over various people. Now the use of the keys implies a certain power to exercise authority, whereby the one on whom the keys are used,

The early Church clearly evidences the power of succession flowing throughout the Church:

2. I am surprised that the reverend bishop in whose diocese he is said to be a presbyter acquiesces in this his mad preaching, and that he does not rather with apostolic rod, nay with a rod of iron, shatter this useless vessel and deliver him for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved.⁵⁷

In this statement St. Jerome is unequivocal in his description of the source of the bishop's power- from a direct line of apostolic succession. The power described is a direct reference to the rod, or scepter, wielded by Christ on earth and given to Peter. There is no "apostolic rod" except that which derived from Christ. While St. Jerome was speaking from the later part of the fourth century, the early apostolic fathers clearly held to the same truth of succession in the hierarchy of the Church:

Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; [we do this, I say,] by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its pre- eminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere.⁵⁸

This hierarchy was also always understood as beginning with Christ and passing to Peter. Although I have not found it explicitly expressed, the fathers

becomes the proper matter of that act. Therefore he that has power over all indiscriminately, can use the keys on all, whereas those who have received authority over distinct persons, cannot use the keys on everyone, but only on those over whom they are appointed, except in cases of necessity, when the sacraments should be refused to no one. " ST Supp. Q. 20, part 1.

⁵⁷ St. Jerome, *Letter 109 To Riparius* Translated by W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 6.* Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001109.htm>>.

⁵⁸ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3:3:2 (A.D. 180).

held an understanding that the first and supreme “apostolic rod”, or sceptre, was handed to Peter in John 21:16 and has transferred in succession throughout time:

And he says to him again after the resurrection, 'Feed my sheep.' It is on him that he builds the Church, and to him that he entrusts the sheep to feed. And although he assigns a like power to all the apostles, yet he founded a single Chair, thus establishing by his own authority the source and hallmark of the (Church's) oneness. No doubt the others were all that Peter was, but a primacy is given to Peter, and it is (thus) made clear that there is but one flock which is to be fed by all the apostles in common accord. If a man does not hold fast to this oneness of Peter, does he imagine that he still holds the faith? If he deserts the Chair of Peter upon whom the Church was built, has he still confidence that he is in the Church? This unity firmly should we hold and maintain, especially we bishops, presiding in the Church, in order that we may approve the episcopate itself to be the one and undivided.⁵⁹

The wielding of the sceptre evidences the power it possesses. Pope Victor's actions in the late second century show a presumption of executive and judicial authority that could only derive from a presumed divinely assigned authority:

A question of no small importance arose at that time. For the parishes of all Asia, as from an older tradition, held that the fourteenth day of the moon, on which day the Jews were commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should be observed as the feast of the Saviour's Passover. It was therefore necessary to end their fast on that day, whatever day of the week it should happen to be. But it was not the custom of the churches in the rest of the world to end it at this time, as they observed the practice which, from apostolic tradition, has prevailed to the present time, of terminating the fast on no other day than on that of the resurrection of our Saviour...Thereupon Victor, who presided over the church at Rome, immediately attempted to cut off from the common unity the parishes of all Asia, with the churches that agreed with them, as heterodox; and he wrote letters and declared all the brethren there wholly excommunicated.⁶⁰

The shepherding by Pope Victor expresses the ultimate power of binding and loosing held by the See of Peter in Rome. Just as the epistles of St. Paul are examples

⁵⁹ Cyprian, *The Unity of the Church*, 4-5 (A.D. 251-256) (emphasis added).

⁶⁰ Pope Victor & Easter (c. A.D. 195). This quote also evidences the importance of complete obedience to the Church, including Church Tradition.

of this shepherding against defection and infection of false teaching, this is an example of the unified intentional analogy of the shepherd and his crook and the power of the sceptre. It is the loving rule of Christ which flows through the sceptre and John 21 makes clear that the authority held emanates from Christ through Peter.

These examples are consistent with the scriptural accounts of succession. These divine offices, as St. Paul confirms in Colossians 1:25, are literal offices that exist beyond the current holder. The Acts of the Apostles describes an example of the succession of a divine office when Peter declares that office held by Judas must be filled with another.⁶¹ The election of Matthias to the chair held by Judas has been repeated for all subsequent bishops uninterrupted under the authority of the Sceptre of Christ the King.

IV. Conclusion

It is a test of obedience to submit to papal authority. Not of obedience to the man Joseph Ratzinger, but to Christ the man and the chair of authority He created and left behind from which the Pope rules and from which he wields his scepter. Our spiritual unity under this authority, like the incarnation, is intertwined with societal wellbeing:

If, therefore, the rulers of nations wish to preserve their authority, to promote and increase the prosperity of their countries, they will not neglect the public duty of reverence and obedience to the rule of Christ. What we said at the beginning of Our Pontificate concerning the decline of public authority, and the lack of respect for the same, is equally true at the present day. “With God and Jesus Christ,” we said, “excluded from political life, with authority derived not from God but from man, the very basis of that authority has been taken away, because the chief reason of the distinction between ruler and subject has been eliminated. The result is that human society is tottering to its fall, because it has no longer a secure and solid foundation.”⁶²

This submission to the King, here on earth begins as a matter of conscience, which opens the door to obedience to objective truth. In what I find to be a very theologically novel statement, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger stated “conscience in its true sense is the bedrock of Papal authority.” Our conscience is a call to unity, to concordance with a Ruler and His kingdom in heaven and here on earth. The

⁶¹ Acts 1:15-26. It should not be overlooked that it was Peter orchestrating this process of succession.

⁶² *Quas Primas*, para. 18

splintered rebellious Protestant groups have rejected the call to unity from their conscience, rebelling against the rule on earth faltering into discordance. The longing preexistent in mans' soul cries for fulfillment and for direction:

Just as our Lord, being one with the Father, did nothing on his own or by means of the Apostles without the Father, so neither should you do anything without the bishop and the presbyters. Do not try to persuade yourselves that you can do anything good on your own; on the contrary, do all in common: one prayer, one petition, one mind, one hope in the unity of love and in innocent joy – this is Jesus Christ than whom there is nothing higher. Make hast, all of you, and gather in the same temple of God at the one altar, the one Jesus Christ who came forth from the one Father and, remaining one with the Father, went back to the unity of the Father.⁶³

Christ draped in a robe of scarlet ruled the earth with a reed as a sceptre and a crown of thorns, earning the appeasement of God to unite each of us into a brotherhood of love. The sceptre of pasturing, tending and ruling continues now with the successor of Peter, that secure foundation of the Church, until the end of time forever uniting men with Christ's mission.

Almighty and everlasting God, Who in Thy beloved Son, the King of the whole world, hast willed to restore all things, mercifully grant that all the kindreds of the nations that are divided by the wound of sin, may be brought under the sweet yoke of His rule. Who liveth and reigneth with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

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⁶³ St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to Magnesians*, Ch. 7