

SEDEVACANTISM'S

most influential era
(The Great Western Schism)

The purpose of our looking at history is at least two fold: 1) to understand tradition, and 2) to better understand our times. Since tradition would likely be the historical position of the Church, it is imperative that a traditionalist understand history in order to truly be a traditionalist. If we are to apply the traditional teaching of the Church to our times, we must understand history and whether or not sedevacantism is in conformity to the teaching of the Church or rather a departure from the teaching of the Church.

One has to look at history with some understanding of how history arrived at the point one wishes to study. If one doesn't understand the background of that point in history, then one can't understand why the events took place or actually even what did take place. So that the target point in history can be understood, some background information is necessary.

During the Great Western Schism, the Church was the world power in that the Church controlled, more than anyone else, the countries of the world. As a result, anyone who was very ambitious knew that the place of power was in the Church as a member of the hierarchy. So we see in the times of the Great Western Schism very bad churchmen in high places who very much scandalized the Church then and who are scandalous to us poor souls today who try to read the historical accounts. It is not my intent to scandalize anyone, let alone the Church. But it is important to understand how corrupt things were so that one can understand why such things could happen and so better understand that things today aren't necessarily quite as they appear.

During the Great Western Schism there were many times when the different factions believed the pope to be a heretic who should be deposed, but, in every case, history has proven that those judging the pope were not only wrong in their conclusion but were also wrong in their belief that they had a right to judge the pope as the turn of events proved; for by judging the pope, they only caused confusion and schism with as many as three claimants to the papacy at one time. These churchmen had other than the Church's interest at heart; instead, it was usually their own personal gain or nationalism.

By 1294 the Church had had a number of popes who were poor churchmen and some who had been scandalously corrupt. But the good Cardinals upon the death of the reigning pope elected Peter Morone, a pious, saintly hermit, to the papacy as Pope Celestine V. The hermit had no experience in such matters and in a short time had made quite a mess of things. He had protested upon being elected. He hadn't wanted to leave his hermitage and wanted only to return to it. After a short time, Celestine V resigned so that another pope could be elected.

Boniface VIII was the replacing pope. Since Boniface's enemies were saying that Celestine hadn't or couldn't resign, Boniface had Celestine apprehended so that there wouldn't be a schism.¹ Celestine died while in custody and was later canonized. These events clouded the beginning of Boniface's pontificate. When additional events are added the people of the time, who where so inclined, had reason to question the papacy of Boniface.

During the reign of Boniface VIII, Philip the Fair, the king of France, wanted to take possession of some of the Church's properties and ruling rights so as to increase his power and ability to tax. Philip used some arguments based on what the Church had allowed in France, discussed later under the title Gallacanism. Boniface countered with the idea that the pope had the right to rule the states because the kings had come to the pope to be crowned. Boniface prepared to excommunicate Philip.

Anticipating these developments, Philip had made plans to capture the pope and bring him before a council to be judged and deposed.² As a result of Gallicanism, Philip had rationalized that he had the right to commit these atrocities against the Church. Philip sent two thousand mercenaries who captured Pope Boniface VIII and held him captive for three days. After having been freed, the pope lived only ten days. The next pope also opposed Philip the Fair and died suddenly, it is believed by poisoning. He was later canonized. These episodes much weakened respect for the papacy and brought about Gallicanism and sedevacantism which can only survive in an atmosphere of disrespect for the pope and the papacy.

During the reign of the next couple of popes, Philip tried to force the popes to condemn the dead Boniface, which they would not do. After the death of Boniface's personal enemies, even the French accepted the legitimacy of the reign of Boniface.³ We often see in history how men or groups of men will paint a distorted picture of someone or some event which then affects history for some time.

Rome had been a world center for many centuries and with the coming and going of so many people, it was a hotbed of disease. Since it was also a center of power, a convergence of factions almost like separate nations within the city caused free movement and dissemination of information to be a problem. Because of the heat and humidity of summer, the hierarchy liked to leave the city.⁴ This along with the extreme nationalism (particularly French), led to the establishment of a papal palace at Avignon which was on the border of France.

Pope Clement V took up residence in Avignon beginning what was termed "the Babylonian Captivity" because the reign from Avignon lasted about as long as the Babylonian Captivity and was under the influence of the French court. France had been controlling the papal elections, electing Frenchmen to the office. This is one of the reasons the papal palace had been set up in Avignon.

After Clement V died, there was a two year, three and a half month period during which there was no pope. John XXII was finally elected to the papacy but damage to the respect for the papacy resulted from such a long vacancy.

Pope John XXII took the same position as Boniface in that he insisted that kings had no right to rule until the pope had given the Bestowal of Imperial Dignity. King Louis of Bavaria would not submit to Pope John so the Pope excommunicated him. The King then went to Italy and had one of the pope's enemies proclaim John XXII a heretic, usurper, and oppressor of the Church and deprived John XXII of all his papal dignities, supposedly. The King then proclaimed an enemy of the pope, anti-pope Nicholas V. Through his position on papal right to rule nations had, John XXII caused quite a stir but it wasn't anything compared to what was to come.

Pope John XXII had stated before his election that he believed the soul didn't possess the Beatific Vision upon death. He also gave a series of five sermons stating his belief.

At the University of Paris a group of theologians gave the opinion that the pope was seriously wrong, but that he had not made an ex cathedra statement. As a result, it was not binding and was simply a private belief of the pope. John stated that he had not intended to teach contrary to Holy Scripture or the rule of Faith and before his death declared his belief that souls separated from their bodies enjoyed the Beatific Vision.⁵ Clearly the Pope was not imposing his views or teaching ex cathedra.⁶ Here we have an example from history of a pope taking positions contrary to the traditions of the Church, but history shows that the man was still Catholic and indeed the Pope. We all error, but to be obstinate in our errors after being shown our error or after being obstinate after being shown by the Church that one is in error is when one rejects the Church's teaching. Even though John XXII corrected his wrong, much disrespect for the papacy resulted from his actions.

The next four popes lived in Avignon which, along with their extreme French Nationalism, reduced the papacy to a very low level of respect.⁷ St. Bridget of Sweden spent the last thirty years of her life in Rome. She wrote to the popes at Avignon and told them that she feared that if they didn't soon return to Rome they would lose their temporal and spiritual authority.⁸ St. Catherine of Siena persuaded Pope Gregory XI to return to Rome in 1377.⁹ This ended a forty-one year absence from Rome by the popes. But the loss of respect for the papacy was to continue for Gregory XI continued to practice extreme French Nationalism by imposing Frenchmen over the Italians and this caused many riots.

The events which brought about the Great Western Schism had been established by: 1) Loss of respect for the papacy, 2) Concern of churchmen for other than the Church, and 3) Establishment of the non Catholic philosophy of Gallacanism and its ideals (sedevacantism).

Upon Gregory XI's death, Pope Urban VI was elected in Rome while mobs outside, and some inside, were demanding the selection of a Roman or at least Italian pope. The cardinals did elect Urban VI, an Italian, but before he could get to Rome to accept the position, the mobs became violent. For fear of their lives (note this was after the new pope had been elected), they dressed an Italian cardinal in the robes of the pope and presented him to the crowd as the new pope. The fake pope protested such deception, but to no avail. Once Urban VI arrived he was announced as the pope and was accepted by all.

Urban appeared to be a very easy going fellow before being elected to the papacy but once he was elected he became extremely aggressive in attacking those improperly using the Church. Cardinal Robert told the pope that, as he (the pope) was diminishing their power and respect, they (the cardinals) would diminish the pope's power.¹⁰ The French cardinals, who comprised most of the Sacred College, were tired of deadly Roman fevers and the dilapidated Rome and wanted to return to Avignon where it was more comfortable.¹¹ Soon the cardinals, mostly French, met outside of Rome and decided that, even though they had elected, accepted and announced Urban to the world as the Pope, they would now take the position that the election had been forced and that they now regarded the Holy See to be vacant.¹² They proceeded to elect Cardinal Robert as the anti-pope to rule from Avignon.

St. Catherine of Siena's letter to these cardinals stated: "You clearly know the truth, that Pope Urban VI is truly pope, the highest pontiff, chosen in orderly election, not influenced by fear, truly rather by divine inspiration than by your human industry. And so you announced it to us, which was the truth. Now you have turned your backs, like poor, mean knights; your shadow has made you afraid. You have divided yourselves from the truth which strengthens us, and drawn close to falsehood, which weakens soul and body, depriving you of temporal and spiritual grace. What made you do this? The poison of self-love, which has infected the world. This is what has made you pillars lighter than straw-flowers which shed no perfume, but stench that makes the whole world reek!....This is not the kind of blindness that springs from ignorance. It has not happened to you because people have reported one thing to you while another is so. No, for you know what the truth is; it was you who announced it to us, and not we to you. Oh, how mad you are! For you told us the truth, and you want yourselves to taste a lie! Now you want to corrupt this truth, and make us see the opposite saying that you chose Pope Urban from fear, which is not so; but anyone who says it - speaking to you without reverence, because you have deprived yourselves of reverence - lies up to his eyes...."¹³ There is a saying: "The ultimate punishment of a liar is that he believes his own lies." Once a liar believes his own lies, he has no way to correct his errors because he can't recognize them. So the Great Western Schism began as the different nations decided which of the popes to accept.

The world soon realized the Church was in turmoil and wanted the schism ended. When pope or anti-pope died, the new popes were required to agree to do what they could, even resign, if the counter part would do the same so a new pope could then be elected to resolve the question of who was the real pope.

"In their embarrassment and anger, the French theologians dealing with the issue began to take positions contrary to the immemorial traditions and teaching of the Church, which in time became the full-fledged heresy of conciliarism."¹⁴ This philosophy had evolved from Gallacanism. The solution was said to be that of a council to depose the popes and elect a new pope who would then be unquestionably received as the true pope by all thereby uniting the Church again. Note: This was not a Catholic ideal but a solution they came up with to try and correct the problem without condemning those who started the schism.

It was said that pope and anti-pope were in heresy because they were a party to the schism, but there were those who sounded the warning that "no mere human being has any right to judge him (the reigning Pope)nor has an assembly of bishops, and still less, one of the cardinals....They are trying to force the hand of the Holy Ghost!"¹⁵ In spite of tradition and other warnings, a council was called at Pisa. The two popes were invited but neither attended. Their hierarchy did attend, but, without a pope to convene the council, they were obviously working in opposition to the true pope.

At the Council of Pisa, "All were stirred when the Patriarch of Alexandria, Simon de Cramaud, addressed the august meeting: 'Benedict XII and Gregory XII', [the two popes at the time] said Simon, 'are recognized as schismatics, the approvers and makers of schism, notorious heretics, guilty of perjury and violation of solemn promises, and openly scandalizing the universal Church. In consequence, they are declared unworthy of the Sovereign Pontificate, and are ipso facto deposed from their functions and dignities and ever driven out of the Church. It is forbidden to them henceforward to consider themselves to be Sovereign Pontiffs, and all proceedings and promotions made by them are annulled. The Holy See is declared vacant and the faithful are set free from the promise of obedience."¹⁶ Sounds like some sedevacantists of today. In June of 1409, Cardinal Philarghi was unanimously chosen to fill the presumably vacant papal chair. "His legitimacy was soon questioned and the world was chagrined to find that instead of two Popes it now had three."¹⁷ "There were now three Popes, and three Colleges of Cardinals, in some dioceses three rival bishops, and in some religious orders three rival superiors."¹⁸

In spite of previous lessons, the world still looked toward another council to correct the problem. In 1413 Sigismund (King of Germany) invited all three popes to a council. He had an agreement from John XXIII (the replacement Pope after the death of the Pesian pope, an anti-pope) that he would issue the Convocation Bull to open the Council of Constance. John had the largest support and at first dominated the council.¹⁹ John resigned and then changed his mind and fled. He latter was captured and brought back to the council and submitted to the council.

The legitimate pope, Gregory XII, even though his obedience had practically vanished, then resigned with the dignity expected from a true pope.²⁰ Before he resigned Gregory convoked the Council and authorized its succeeding acts. Two years later, before the election of a new pope, Gregory XII died in the odor of sanctity.²¹ Even though the true pope had resigned and the council was in place to elect the new pope, it appears that the Holy Ghost's hand was not to be forced as the new pope wasn't elected until the chair was truly vacant, due to Gregory's death.

The Council of Constance agreed to establish an assembly divided into six nations, each speaking a different language, who then elected six representatives from each nation to vote for a new pope along with the twenty-three cardinals.²² So the Church, still divided by a schism, was to be reunited by a council started by nationalism and convoked by a schismatic. Moreover, the council was under the guidance of a civil authority and consisted of an electorate made up of thirty out of fifty-three electors who had been selected by their respective nations. Often we find in history that the way problems are resolved are the reverse of how they came about. Cardinal Odo Colonna of the famous (and sometimes infamous) Colonna family, which was party to starting the schism by undermining the true pope, was elected Pope Martin V by the Council of Constance. The Colonna family went to

work to restore the Church. The Church was relieved to be rid of the Great Western Schism, but the problems caused by Gallacanism and sedevacantism had not been solved.

In 1904 the Gerarchia Catholica reaffirmed that the popes of Rome were the legitimate popes and that the anti-popes of Avignon were not the true popes. Future legitimate popes took the names of the anti-popes of Avignon.²³ We see that through declining respect for the papacy and confusion on the issues relevant to the papacy the Great Western Schism was brought about. Future councils addressed the relevant issues and condemned many of the supporting errors that brought about this confusion.

"A temporal kingdom would have succumbed thereto; but the organization of the spiritual kingdom was so wonderful, the ideal of the papacy so indestructible that this, the most serious of schisms, served only to demonstrate its indivisibility."²⁴

GALLICANISM

"Gallicanism - This term is used to designate a certain group of religious opinions for some time peculiar to the Church of France, or Gallican Church, and the theological schools of that country. These opinions, in opposition to the ideas which were called in France 'Ultramontane,' tended chiefly to a restraint of the pope's authority in the Church in favor of that of the bishop and the temporal ruler."²⁵ These ideas stemmed from times when the popes made concessions to Pepin and Charles the Great in the ruling of the Church in their countries which were to be exercised only under papal control.²⁶ These ideals were brought forward and promoted more to promote an argument than as a "deliberate opinion maturely conceived and conscious of its own meaning".²⁷

The first glimmerings of the Gallican ideas surfaced during the conflict between Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII in the thirteen hundreds.²⁸ In 1681 a General Assembly of the French clergy summoned by Louis XIV, King of France, obtained the "Declaration of the Four Articles," known as the Four Gallican Propositions, namely that:

1. The Pope may not interfere directly or indirectly with the temporal concerns of princes.
2. In spiritual matters a General Council is superior to the pope.
3. The rights and customs of the Gallican church are inviolable.
4. The Pope is not infallible, even in matters of Faith, unless his decision is confirmed by the consent of the Church."²⁹

From the second proposition or ideal came the idea that a pope can be judged by a council and of course if a council can judge the pope then so can individuals because individuals make up the councils. This Gallican proposition is the tap root of sedevacantism.

"Stricken to death, as a free opinion, by the Council of the Vatican (I), Gallicanism could survive only as a heresy; the Old Catholics have endeavored to keep it alive under this form."³⁰ It is from the roots of the Old Catholics that some of today's sedevacantist bishops come.

INFALLIBILITY

In considering sedevacantism, one of the key issues is that of infallibility, not just of the Pope, but also of councils and of the Church as a whole.

The issue isn't so much rather or not the pope is infallible but rather whether the Church will always have a pope that remains infallible. Some of the authorities say such things as: "to be taught to all men in all ages,...to every generation"³¹ and, "Hence, St. Peter is here promised the authority necessary to keep the Church together

and to make it endure. Unless this is so, Christ's words are meaningless,"³² and, "...the Church was not made for a single generation alone. She was to continue according to Christ's promise, 'until the consummation of the world'. What had been instituted by Christ, in Peter, must necessarily, when St. Peter died he left heirs to his power. It is an undeniable historical fact that these heirs were the bishops of the City of Rome,...."³³ and "...the headship must also endure until the end of time. The divinely established constitution of the Church cannot be changed; otherwise the Church would cease to be Christ's Church.....If a visible authority was needed so close to Christ's own lifetime, it was surely necessary when the Church had grown with the passage of time,"³⁴ and on the practical plane, "As a nation has its responsible ruler, a judiciary its supreme court, an army its commander-in-chief, and a ship its captain so must the Catholic hierarchy have a responsible, recognized head, who shall give a final decision in matters of faith and morals. And this has always been the case."³⁵ It seems there should be no question but that there is to be a pope in all ages. The longest period of time in the history of the Church (even in times of extreme persecution) for the seat of Peter to be vacant was a little over two years.

Once one agrees that there will always be a pope, the question may remain: "When is the Pope infallible?" A quotation from the dogmatic Vatican Council I follows: "That is why, by attaching ourselves faithfully to the tradition which comes down to us from the origins of the Christian faith, for the glory of God our Savior, the Exaltation of the Catholic religion and the salvation of the peoples, with the approval of the sacred Council, we teach and define that it is a divinely revealed dogma that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks ex cathedra - that is, when exercising his office as Shepherd and Teacher of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals which is to be held by the universal Church - thanks to the divine assistance promised to blessed Peter, he enjoys that infallibility which the divine redeemer wished to confer on his Church for the definition of doctrines of faith or morals; and therefore the definitions of the same Roman Pontiff are, by themselves and not by virtue of the consent of the Church, irreformable."³⁶

"This does not mean that the Pope cannot make a mistake or commit a sin or that he can teach on any subject which strikes his fancy or that he is inspired by God.

"It does mean that under certain conditions the Pope is preserved from error, namely:

"1. When he speaks ex cathedra, as supreme shepherd and teacher of all Christians, and successor of St. Peter;

"2. When he defines a doctrine, i.e. when he makes it clear that the doctrine must be believed with a firm, interior assent of faith;

"3. When the doctrine defined concerns faith or morals, i.e. when it belongs to the doctrinal teachings or the moral principles of the Catholic religion as found in Scripture or Tradition;

"4. When he speaks thus to the whole Church, intending to bind all its members throughout the world.

"The pope does not claim to speak infallibly unless all of these conditions are simultaneously present."³⁷

As we saw in a study of the times of the Great Western Schism, popes in the past have taken positions contrary to the teaching of the Church but never has there been a pope who has spoken ex cathedra (with authority) against the teaching of the Church.³⁸ To drive home the point possibly another quote on the subject of the conditions of infallibility: "...the conditions required for ex cathedra teaching are mentioned in the Vatican [I Council] decree: (a) The pontiff must teach in his public and official capacity as pastor and doctor of all Christians, not merely in his private capacity as a theologian, preacher or elocutionist, nor in his capacity as a temporal prince or as a mere ordinary of the Diocese of Rome. It must be clear that he speaks as spiritual head of the Church universal. (b) Then it is only when, in this capacity, he teaches some doctrine of faith or morals that he is infallible.... (c) Further it must be sufficiently evident that he intends to teach with all the fullness and finality of his supreme Apostolic authority, in other words that he wishes to determine some point of doctrine in an absolutely final and irrevocable way, or to define it in the technical sense.... (d) Finally for an ex cathedra decision it must be clear that the pope intends to bind the whole Church, to demand internal assent from all the faithful to his teaching under pain of incurring spiritual shipwreck...."³⁹ The teachers of sedevacantism tell us that if the pope errors and takes a position contrary to the teaching of the Church then he is no longer a Catholic and therefore is not the

pope, therefore the Chair of Peter would be vacant. Not true, as the history of Pope John XXII,^{40,41} Pope St. Liberius, Pope Honorius, and Pope Vigilius⁴² has shown us and the above imprimatured statements truthfully show.

But the teachers of sedevacantism say that the Church is infallible and cannot err and that the Novus Ordo Church teaches error therefore it is not Catholic and that any man who claims to be the pope of such a church is not Catholic therefore the Chair of Peter is vacant. They base their ideas on some truth but it is twisted and distorted. The following quotation contains some of the basis for their ideas.

"We said already that the Pope uses his infallibility when the conditions requisite for its exercise are present. He is personally infallible; no other bishop is. But, as a body, united to their head, the Pope, the bishops are infallible when they teach peremptorily. This they can do in two ways:

"(a) by their ordinary day-to-day **united** teaching by means of catechisms, ceremonies, **traditional liturgical rites**, pastoral letters, general condemnations, provincial or plenary councils, the tacit approval of the **unanimous teachings of theologians**. When the **bishops are morally unanimous in teaching a doctrine as a of faith or morals**, or in reprobating one as a heretic they are infallible in their ordinary teaching; [My emphasis.]

"(b) by assembling in General or Ecumenical Councils. A general Council is a gathering of the bishops of the whole world, or of so many of them that they represent the whole world.

"To be Ecumenical a council must be

Convoked by the Pope;

Presided over by the Pope, either in person or through his Legates;

Ratified by the Pope.

"An assembly of bishops without the Pope would not be Ecumenical or infallible."⁴³

This means that the unanimous teaching of the Church is important in order for the ordinary magisterium to be an important factor in determining infallibility. The Second Vatican Council does not fit the criteria of unanimous teaching along with the "Novus Ordo Church" because of such actions as the Ottaviani Intervention, which was an attempt by the non-modernists of the Church to assert the traditional Catholic teachings. The Arian heresy proved that most of the Church could accept error with even the pope failing to condemn it.^{44,45,46} The Church, like the pope, may establish infallible dogma in a dogmatic council, but neither are impeccable.

Since the pope has the potential of being infallible and that infallibility comes from God and not from any action of man, it is a function of infallibility that man can not judge the pope. The Eighth General Synod put it quite well: "If a universal synod be assembled and any ambiguity or controversy arise concerning the Holy Church of the Romans, the question should be examined and solved with due reverence and veneration, in a spirit of mutual helpfulness; no sentence should be audaciously pronounced against the supreme pontiff of the elder Rome."⁴⁷

I have heard it said that if the pope says that he does not believe a proclaimed dogma of the Church then we would know that he is a heretic and therefore he would no longer be the pope. This is not true. For one thing we do not know what is in the heart or mind of the pope and have no right to judge. Even if the pope is one hundred percent a heretic, it doesn't prove that he is not the pope. Just because some have said that if the pope becomes a heretic he then loses the authority of the papacy, this doesn't make it so. The Church has never taught this for to do so would undermine the papacy. Such a thing has never happened in all the history of the Church though, as we saw in the times of the Great Western Schism, men have made themselves believe this did happen, but I am sure the pope will never be a manifest heretic because it stands against the purpose of the papacy.

In the case of John XXII, as we saw in the times preceding the Great Western Schism, he took a view which was contrary to the tradition of the Church, and it was a heretical position, but a heretic may not understand the malice of his position until the Church officially corrects the heretic, as the University of Paris did John XXII. Upon receiving notice of the Churches teaching, John XXII had a study made of the issue and corrected his error. As a

result, he never was a manifest heretic. To make a mistake is expected of humans but to hold to that mistake when shown one's mistaken belief is where guilt of heresy is established.⁴⁸

The Church teaches that, when the pope speaks *ex cathedra* (infallibly), we are required to follow his teaching or lose the Faith. The personal opinions of a pope may stray from defined dogma but the Church remains the same and we are obliged to follow the dogmas and traditions of the Church.

If sedevacantism was simply a misunderstanding about whether or not the present pope is pope, there wouldn't be much reason to spend time or energy in exposing and opposing it, for men make wrong choices all the time. However, sedevacantism doesn't simply stand by itself but has supporting ideals which oppose the Faith. Sedevacantism must be exposed and opposed, as we saw with Gallicanism, because of its disrespect for the pope and the desire for the right to judge the pope. Sedevacantism also opposes the infallibility of the pope because only God can judge the pope since infallibility comes from the Holy Ghost.

VISIBILITY

The strongest reason for opposing sedevacantism is that it stands against the visible Church. If it is said that a pope can be an imposter leading men to a false religion, then the duty of the Church to be visible would be violated to an extreme. We have had popes who have been anti-popes but this occurred while there were true popes. The confusion was with men not the Church.

"... it is clear that the Church founded by Christ is a visible church not a purely spiritual association. The Church of Christ is a public society consisting of rulers and subjects. This society **had to be public and visible** in order that those desirous of salvation might be able to find it and join it.⁴⁹ [My emphasis]

"...Christ established a society ruled by a single supreme head. We have seen also that that society was to endure until the end of time. Therefore, the headship **must also endure until the end of time**. [My emphasis] The divinely established constitution of the Church cannot be changed; otherwise the Church would cease to be Christ's Church."⁵⁰

Sedevacantism says that the chair can, in a way that would be misleadingly, be vacant. This violates the first quotation which reminds us that one of the main purposes of the Church is to be visible so those seeking the Faith can find it. In the second quotation, we are reminded that the Church is to endure to the end of time and thus the papacy. True we have seen that the papacy was vacant for some time but all knew it was vacant and anxiously awaited a new pontiff. So the position being vacant didn't serve to confuse as to where the one true Church was. There had been imposter popes who caused confusion as to which pope was the true pope, but there was no confusion as to what was the one true Faith. The belief of sedevacantism that the accepted pope could no longer be the pope while the faithful still believed he was would lead men not to the Faith but to a false religion which opposes the purpose of the Church.

Some other similar sources state the importance of the visibility of the papacy: "Moreover, it is entirely necessary that there should be a supreme head, visible to all,...."⁵¹; ".... him who is the visible foundation of the Church's indefectibility."⁵²; from the Council of Trent, "....the visible one, the Pope, who as legitimate successor of Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, fills the Apostolic chair. It is the unanimous teaching of the Fathers that this visible head is necessary to establish and preserve unity in the Church."⁵³; from the I Vatican Council's Dogmatic

Constitution, "He made Peter a perpetual Principle of this twofold unity and a visible foundation...." ⁵⁴; "....the Church, besides an invisible Head in heaven, must have a visible head on earth. The body and members of the Church are visible; why not also the Head? The Church without a supreme Ruler would be like an army without a general, a navy without an admiral, a sheepfold without a shepherd, or like a human body without a head." ⁵⁵; again from the Council of Trent, "A visible Church requires a visible head;...." ⁵⁶; and finally, "As St. John Chrysostom so truly said: ""It is easier for the sun to be quenched than for the Church to be made invisible."" ⁵⁷

SCHISM

To consider sedevacantism without considering the seriousness of schism would be like studying a rattle-snake without considering how deadly it can be.

"Schism - Formal separation from the unity of the Church, a separation from communion with the Church; separation from the head of the Church or from the jurisdiction of the Supreme Pontiff. The movement of any person or group of persons of the Church who refuse to recognize the central authority of the Church; and denial of the authority of the Pope of Rome." ⁵⁸

Here are some quotations about the seriousness of schism: "Anyone becomes a schismatic who, though desiring to remain a Christian, rebels against legitimate authority,...." ⁵⁹; St. Cyprian said, "Know that the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop and that if anyone is not with the bishop he is not in the Church.what rascal, what traitor, what madman would be so misled by the spirit of discord as to believe that it is permitted to rend, or who would dare rend the Divine unity, the garment of the Lord, the Church of Jesus Christ?" ⁶⁰; St. Jerome says, "....there is no schism which does not trump up a heresy to justify its departure from the church.," "But as St. Jerome remarks, practically and historically, heresy and schism nearly always go hand in hand; schism leads almost invariably to denial of the papal primacy." ⁶¹; from the Catechism of the Council of Trent, a quote of St. Jerome, "...., I as united in communion with your holiness, that is, with the chair of Peter. I know that on that rock is built the Church. Whoever will eat the lamb outside this house is profane: whoever is not in the ark of Noah shall perish in the flood." ⁶²; and "To communicate in *sactis* with schismatics, e.g., to receive the sacraments at the hands of their ministers, to assist at Divine Offices in their temples, is strictly forbidden to the faithful." ⁶³; St. Catherine of Siena, "That is what has made you pillars lighter than straw - flowers which shed no perfume, but stench that makes the whole world reek!" ⁶⁴

"Candid reader do you not profess to be a member of Christ's flock? Yes, you answer. Do you take your spiritual food from Peter and his successor, and do you hear the voice of Peter, or have you wandered into the fold of strangers who spurn Peter's voice? Ponder well this momentous question. For as Peter is authorized to feed the lambs of Christ's flock, the lambs should hear Peters' voice." ⁶⁵

"However, not every disobedience is a schism; in order to possess this character it must include besides the transgression of the commands of superiors, denial of their Divine right to command." ⁶⁶

To this point we have looked at schism in a sane or at least semi-sane world. What is schismatic in a world where tradition is condemned? Where councils support heresy? Where the pope will not condemn heresy and condemns those who continue to uphold tradition? Where better can we find a good example to answer the above questions than to examine the life and times of St. Athanasius?

St. Athanasius stood up against the Arian heresy which was a heresy that stated that Jesus was not God. "For almost all of the astonishing forty-five years of his episcopate, it was 'Athanasius against the world and for the Faith.'" ⁶⁷ The Council of Ares in 353, except one bishop, including even the two Papal legates condemned

Athanasius.⁶⁸ At the Council of Milan, 355, "All present but the three staunch bishops and the two Papal legates signed the condemnation of Athanasius."⁶⁹ Athanasius was not condemned because he was a heretic but rather because he stood against everyone else including the councils of the times. He was condemned because of the disunity he was causing in the Church and because of false charges brought against him by his enemies. The popes though stood beside Athanasius until Pope Liberius was sent into exile by the emperor. "...Liberius began to sink under the hardships of his exile,that he yielded to the snare laid for him, to the great scandal of the church. He subscribed the condemnation of St. Athanasius, and a confession or creed, which had been framed by the Aryans at Sirmium, though their heresy was not expressed in it...."⁷⁰

"Pope Liberius upon his cross at Sirmium, used and scorned by his enemies, pitied and abandoned by his friends, alone, fearfully alone, 'a worm and no man', strong bulls of Bashan all around him, bones like water, heart like wax, laid in the dust of death. Did he cry, with the Psalmist and with his Lord: 'be not far from me, for trouble is near and there is none to help'?"

"Undoubtedly he did - in spirit, if not in spoken word. For he did not sign the Second Formulary of Sirmium. At the final step, at the eleventh hour, the Arians were balked. As was to happen again to their like on several similar occasions later in the history of the Papacy, they simply could not understand how and why and by Whom they had been frustrated. For a whole year they held Liberius at Sirmium, doubtless confident that any day the final break would come. It never did.

"Christendom paused. The prayers of the suffering Pope, of Athanasius the hunted fugitive and his loyal monks in the desert and among the tombs of Egypt, of the simple faithful....- rose silently to Heaven. Slowly, at first wholly imperceptibly, the tide began to turn - but in strange ways, that no man could have predicted."⁷¹ The emperor died relieving the political pressure and Pope Liberius who had been released went to work with St. Athanasius to reestablish the faith and to reconcile the schismatics. One bishop by the name of Lucifer would not have anything to do with the reconciled schismatics or any of the faithful that would have anything to do with the reconciled schismatics. Which established a schism of its own.⁷²

Our look at St. Athanasius gave us a very interesting view of schism. Here was a man who was in opposition to most of the hierarchy of the Church, at one time, even to the point of being condemned by the Church, but yet, as we saw, he was the strength of the Church.

By what right did he come back to his See after being condemned by a council? By what right did he continue to function as a bishop after the pope had joined in the condemnation of him? The basic answer lies in the fact that St. Athanasius knew who was in control (and it was not the pope). St. Athanasius knew the pope was controlled by the emperor and wasn't free to rule as he saw fit. So the laws, passed by them, which stood against tradition held no real weight. As a result St. Athanasius' duty was to do that which he knew the pope would want him to do if the pope were free to instruct him. A word to fit this type of situation is Epikeia.

Epikeia as defined by the Concise Catholic Dictionary is: "An interpretation of a law whereby it is considered not to bind in a particular case because of some special circumstances; an interpretation of the law in a particular instance against the letter of the law but in keeping with its spirit; an interpretation of the mind of the lawmaker which reasons that he, knowing the conditions, would not wish his law to bind in this particular case."

Scary territory this land of Epikeia. It is so easy for one's pride to cloud one's thoughts. But in the case of St. Athanasius he knew what tradition had taught. He knew better than any of the hierarchy the reasoning against the Arian heresy.

It is very important to note that St. Athanasius did not condemn all those opposed to him and true doctrine. Although he did oppose and repel all formal Arians in his diocese, he didn't set up a parallel Church. He knew that God, in His own good time, would straighten out the Church and that it was his duty to uphold the one true Church.

He simply practiced his faith as it was given to him by the teachings of his apostolic predecessors, the upholders of tradition.

St. Athanasius must have appeared to be a schismatic in his time by a good percentage of the people of his day. In reality he was not a schismatic because he not only recognized the pope and the papacy but he constantly applied to Rome for solutions, for he knew that in God's good time the solution would come from Rome. Meanwhile St. Athanasius continued to practice his faith as tradition had given it to him.

The use of Epikeia in a situation is like being "between the devil and the deep blue sea" as the saying goes. If St. Athanasius would have gone along with the norm and stood against the traditional teaching of the Church he would have been an "all right fellow" in the eyes of his world. But in the eyes of God he, no doubt, would have been severely judged if he had gone along with the world and against the traditional teachings of the Church.

So we see today that in standing against the modernists who are in control of the Church one may be required to look like a schismatic in order to practice the one true Faith. The line is very thin and hard to define. The hard-core sedevacantists are way over the line even though they may not be able to see it. The hard-core sedevacantists reject the Church in the same manner that Lucifer (bishop) did during the time of Athanasius. They reject the pope and everyone but themselves. They reject the papacy by claiming it is vacant while misquoting infallibility and ignoring the visibility of the Church and they lean on the teachings of Gallicanism to obtain bishoprics whose roots come from Old Catholic bishops and their seminaries.

Indeed, may we **all** pray for the Pope.

¹The Glory of Christendom, Warren H. Carroll, Christendom Press, 1993, page 335.

²Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. II, Boniface VIII, 1913, page 668.

³Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. IV, Clement V, page 21.

⁴Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. IV, Clement V; page 20.

⁵Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VIII, page 433.

⁶The Glory of Christendom, page 372.

⁷The Glory of Christendom, page 390.

⁸Church History, Fr. John Laux, Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1989, originally 1930, page 401.

⁹Church History, page 401.

¹⁰The Glory of Christendom, page 431.

¹¹Church History, page 404.

¹²The Glory of Christendom, page 433.

¹³ibid, page 425.

¹⁴ibid, page 460.

¹⁵ibid page 471.

¹⁶Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XII, Pisa, Council of, page 113.

¹⁷Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. I, Alexander V, page 288.

¹⁸Church History, page 407.

¹⁹Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VIII, John XXIII, page 435.

²⁰Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. IV, Constance, Council of, page 289.

²¹Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VII, Gregory XII, page 1.

²²Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. IV, Constance, Council of, page 290.

²³Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XIII, Schism page 541.

²⁴ibid, page 541.

²⁵Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VI, Gallicanism, page 351.

- ²⁶ibid, Gallicanism, page 352.
- ²⁷ibid, Gallicanism, page 353.
- ²⁸ibid, Gallicanism, page 353.
- ²⁹Church History, page 508.
- ³⁰Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VI, Gallicanism page 355.
- ³¹Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VII, Infallibility, page 791.
- ³²This is the Faith, Rev. Francis J. Ripley, Guild Press, Inc., 1960, first published in 1951, page 147.
- ³³The Papacy, Vladimir D'Ormesson, Hawthorn Books-publisheers,1958, as volumn 81 of the Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, page 113.
- ³⁴This is the Faith, page 160.
- ³⁵Rebuilding a Lost Faith, Stoddard, page 144. Quoted in A Course in Religion, Rev. John Laux, M.A., Benzinger Brothers, Inc., 1934, page 118.
- ³⁶The Papacy, pages 114 and 115.
- ³⁷This is the Faith, page 170.
- ³⁸Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VII, Infallibility, page 799.
- ³⁹ibid, page 796.
- ⁴⁰Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VIII, John XXII, page 433.
- ⁴¹The Glory of Christendom, pages 371-373.
- ⁴²Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VII, Infallibility, page 798.
- ⁴³This is the Faith, pages 172-173.
- ⁴⁴The Building of Christendom, by Warren H. Carroll, Christendom College Press, 1987, pages 15-53.
- ⁴⁵Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. I, Arianism, pages 708-710.
- ⁴⁶Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. II, St. Athanasius, pages 37-40.
- ⁴⁷Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. IV, Councils, page 435.
- ⁴⁸Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XIII, Schism, pages 540 & 541.
- ⁴⁹A Course in Religion, Part IV, Rev. John Laux M.A., Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1934, page 96.
- ⁵⁰This is the Faith, page 160.
- ⁵¹The Catholic Church and Salvation, Msgr. Joseph Clifford Fenton, The Newman Press, 1958, page 82.
- ⁵²Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VII, Infallibility, page 797.
- ⁵³Catechism of the Council of Trent, Issued by Order of Pope Pius V, Marian Publications, 1972, page 102.
- ⁵⁴The Church Teaches, the Jesuit Fathers of St. Mary's College, St. Mary's, Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1973, originally published, 1955, page 95.
- ⁵⁵The Faith of Our Fathers, James Cardinal Gibbons, Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1980, orriginally 1876, page 80.
- ⁵⁶Catechism of the Council of Trent, page 104.
- ⁵⁷This is the Faith, page 126.
- ⁵⁸Concise Catholic Dictionary The cover was missing so I don't know who published it or if there was an imprimatur.
- ⁵⁹Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol XIII, Schism page 529.
- ⁶⁰Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XIII, Schism page 531.
- ⁶¹Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XIII, Schism page 529.
- ⁶²Catechism of the Council of Trent, Order of Pope Pius V, page 102-103.
- ⁶³Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XIII, Schism, page 529.
- ⁶⁴The Glory of Christendom, page 425.
- ⁶⁵The Faith of Our Fathers, page 83.
- ⁶⁶Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XIII, Schism, pagae 529.
- ⁶⁷The Building of Christendom, page 15.
- ⁶⁸ibid, page 27.
- ⁶⁹ibid, page 28.

70Butlers Lives of the Saints, Rev. Alban Butler; St. Athanasius; Sarto Books, 1982; originally published 1844, page 150.

71The Building of Christendom, page 32.

72ibid, page 53.

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