THE ATHANASIAN

A publication of Traditional Catholics of America † Editor: Fr. Francis E. Fenton, STL † Volume XII, No. 6 † September 1, 1991

An Update On The Open Letter To Bishop Richard Williamson

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Nine months have passed since my open letter on the subject of sedevacantism appeared in the December 1, 1990 issue of this newsletter. The object of the letter was to defend the sedevacantist position against attacks made by Bishop Richard Williamson of the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) in his own newsletter of July, 1990.

Since December ongoing reader interest has prompted the present update. A question I've been asked several times concerns the response — if any — from Bishop Williamson. While such a response would be welcome, to elicit one was not the primary aim of my study, which was both to show readers that a strong case can be made challenging the validity of recent claimants to the Chair of Saint Peter and, in light of the heresy of these false Popes, to show those readers as well that such a challenge is, in fact, a manifestation of profound reverence for and loyalty to the office and dignity of the papacy.

Still, I did have an interest in hearing from the Bishop and finding out what sort of rebuttal might be forthcoming. Several people who have read the open letter (including more than one priest) suggested to me that he would not respond, some even maintaining that he could not do so in any meaningful way to such strong arguments. While I take such compliments with a large grain of salt, I nevertheless believed, and still do believe (my slight talents as a writer aside), that the proof is so manifest to those of us who refuse to wear blinders that any point-by-point refutation of the letter would be a formidable task. In any case, I didn't hold my breath while awaiting a reply.

Good News . . . Bad News

I was pleasantly surprised, then, to receive a brief note from Bishop Williamson dated January 8, 1991. He wrote that he had read the open letter "with much interest, not without sympathy." However encouraging these words seemed, I did not allow myself too much in the way of hope as I read on. (As one who has written for the past ten years on the ever-worsening situation in the Conciliar "Catholic" Church, I've found skepticism an increasingly frequent visitor at my office!)

The Bishop went on to say that he "firmly believes the Pope is Pope," although he adds that his "mind is not wholly settled on the July Newsletter argument." At this point we have to be thankful for small and mixed blessings, I suppose, and that is what this must be considered. Bishop Williamson obviously still publicly proclaims John Paul II as a valid Pontiff ("the Pope is Pope"), but now expresses what sounds remarkably close to doubt as to the method by which he has defended that position.

This admission is significant, for the Bishop indicates that he has done some reconsidering, something that would have seemed highly improbable to anyone who read his July newsletter to which he refers. Let me take a moment to refresh readers of my open letter (and inform those who haven't seen it yet) of the gist of Bishop Williamson's argument. He maintained that John Paul II is having a "Liberal dream" that causes him to be "destroying the Church" unconsciously and he underscored his confidence in this "dream" theory by averring that it *must* be "the true solution." How is it, then, that he is having second thoughts about such an "ironclad" argument?

How indeed? Your guess is as good as mine because this note is, as far as I know, the only thing of the sort that the Bishop has written. He mentions in the course of the note the possibility of a reply on his part but indicates that it will require "a bit of luck." Whether he means a more in-depth private reply to me or another examination of the subject in his "friends and benefactors" newsletter is unclear; what

is clear is that, as of the second week of July, 1991, no reply of either kind has been forthcoming. I am willing to believe that part of the reason for such a delay in responding centers around the death of Archbishop Lefebvre — SSPX founder and the prelate who consecrated Bishop Williamson in 1988 — as the Bishop's schedule has undoubtedly been changed and expanded in the months that have followed. Nevertheless, I hope and pray that such a reply does come about because the issue is one that desperately needs to be addressed.

There You Go Again, Bishop!

This article could well have ended with the above material, but then Bishop Williamson's "friends and benefactors" newsletter for June 10, 1991, crossed my desk. It is worth bringing into discussion even though the matter of sedevacantism isn't raised. What *is* raised (for the first time since my open letter) is the Bishop's insistence that John Paul II is a well-meaning, if addleheaded, successor of Saint Peter. Now, where have we heard *that* before?

The letter deals with SSPX policies and how "Rome" will use the Archbishop's death to lure Society members to it (more on this momentarily). In the course of his remarks on the need for a Pope to unify the Church, Bishop Williamson states that "the present Pope has such uncatholic notions in half of his head (like the curate's egg, it is good in parts) that he has no idea how to pull the Church together in the Faith, even if he wished to, so that for the moment the Church cannot be united."

A singularly remarkable statement in more ways than one. How on earth does one speak of a man whose views are only "good (that is Catholic) in parts" as possessing the true Faith, much less deserving our filial obedience and devotion? The Bishop readily concedes that John Paul II's mind is made up of fifty percent "uncatholic notions." Obviously we aren't to take this figure as anything but a *general* indication of the mental makeup of the would-be Pontiff. (Ought not heaven be showered with our perpetual lamentations for the Church in these dark days, days so dark that a Bishop can declare that the man he perceives to be Pope is largely heretical in his thinking?) The second part of Bishop Williamson's sentence, while not directly relevant to the question at hand, needs to be noted for a moment because of its dubious nature. It is incredible to read that "for the moment the Church cannot be united" since one of the indelible marks of the *true* Roman Catholic Church is its unity of morals, dogma and discipline. To suggest that it *isn't* united is akin to the "ecumenical" error that the Catholic Church cannot truly be one until it is joined to the Orthodox, Protestants and Anglicans.

Returning to the mind of John Paul II and the Bishop's assessment of it, I wonder precisely how much of it needs to deviate from the Faith before he would begin to question the legitimacy of the "Pope." (Sixty percent? Seventy-five percent? Ninety-nine and forty-four one hundredths percent?) Actually, the method by which we can calculate one's Catholicity is much simpler than that and we needn't worry about factoring in percentages in order to determine if one fails to meet the necessary criterion.

The litmus test for making such an assessment is to be found in Pope Leo XIII's 1896 encyclical on Church unity, *Satis cognitum*. There His Holiness writes:

> The Church... has regarded as rebels and expelled from the ranks of its children *all who held beliefs on any point of doctrine different from its own*... There can be nothing more dangerous that those heretics who admit nearly the whole series of doctrines and yet, *by one word*, as with a drop of poison, taint the real and simple faith taught by Our Lord and handed down by apostolic tradition. *The practice of the Church has always been the same*, as is shown by the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, who were wont to consider as outside Catholic communion and alien to the Church *whosoever would withdraw in the least degree from any point of doctrine proposed by its authoritative Magisterium*. (This passage appears as cited in the English translation of Father Noel Barbara's *Fortes in Fide*, Vol. 1, No. 6, pp. 48-49. The emphasis is also from the magazine. In the same issue, Father Barbara reminds us that the possiblity of a Pope falling into heresy is presupposed by the Church when she prays in the Great Litany that God "preserve our Pope... in holy religion, we beseech Thee, hear us." By mentioning this, I do not mean to suggest

that it is even certain John Paul II was *ever* a valid Pope for, if his heresy can be shown to precede his 1978 election, then, according to the 1559 bull of Pope Paul IV, *Cum ex apostolatus officio* (the proclamations therein declared by that Pontiff to be binding "in perpetuity"), he could never have legitimately risen to the Holy See *even*, declares Paul IV, *if he was elected by the unanimous consent of all the Cardinals.*)

So pardon me if I wonder aloud how Bishop Williamson justifies a *half-Catholic* Pontiff. As long as John Paul II is asleep in his "Liberal dream" (13 years next month!) the Bishop will continue to make excuses for him, I'm afraid.

Before turning to other topics in his newsletter, Bishop Williamson concludes his brief mention of John Paul II by writing that he is "the Pope who is so bitterly attacked by the radicals that he must be doing something right." In fact, this is brought up as a reason for urging his readers to "keep praying for the Pope." Imagine, John Paul II portrayed as a leader sharply at odds with his wayward underlings.

This same sort of John Paul-as-the-new-Pius X theme is also to be found in the June 27 issue of *The Wanderer*. In fact, this disinformation is found in *two separate columns* in the same issue. "Catholic Replies" informs — or, rather, misinforms (whether deliberately so in this and the next piece can only be answered by the columnists who wrote them) — its readers that John Paul II "has battled Modernists day in and day out" in his efforts to "promote and defend the teachings of the Church" and it urges prayers so that he'll have "the strength and courage to continue this valiant effort." This is part of the absurd reply to a California reader's query: "Why doesn't the Pope do more to stop the spread of the Modernist heresy in the Catholic Church, especially in the United States?" (The question can be answered succinctly: Because he *isn't* Pope and to stop the Modernists would be to hinder *his brethren*.)

The "From the Mail" column continues the theme. Commenting on a recently released book from the Conciliar Church's "progressive" wing, it states that "the Modernists are still complaining about Pope John Paul II and the Vatican." Again and again, would-be traditionalists are contributing (unwittingly, no doubt, in many cases) to the confusion of the times by their insistence that John Paul II is really on our side and is locked in a battle royal with the enemies of the Church. (I should note, however, that, despite the similar viewpoints expressed, *The Wanderer* does not acknowledge Bishop Williamson. In fact, in response to another question in the same issue, "Catholic Replies" accepts John Paul II's worthless "excommunication" of him, Archbishop Lefebvre and others in the SSPX.)

The suggestion that John Paul II is an anti-Modernist crusader is certain to elicit a collection of raised eyebrows, disgruntled sighs, half-hearted chuckles and other signs of disbelief from the majority of *Athanasian* readers (everyone in this category should give thanks to the Lord for having received the grace to see the truth when so many blindly accept appearances). I won't take up space to repeat the numerous examples cited from time to time in this newsletter but, for those few readers who may be new to the subject, may I suggest "To Prove That John Paul II Is Not A True Pope — How Many Examples Are Required?" by Father Fenton in the July 15, 1990 issue of *The Athanasian*, as well as my own open letter mentioned above. (These two studies do not take an exhaustive look at his sordid career but certainly give ample proof to the open-minded.)

It's interesting to examine the evidence that John Paul's conservative defenders use to build their case for his anti-Modernist reputation. "Surely you're aware," they ask us, "that he has silenced many of the radical theologians?" And of course the list flows freely from their lips: Kung, Boff, Fox, Curran and Schillebeeckx. "Didn't the Pope take them all to task for their errors?" Ah, yes, and Kung, they're quick to remind us, was even denied the title of "Catholic theologian." So, you see," they triumphantly conclude, "he is on our side!"

If one ignores John Paul II's *own* horrendous record, then this argument has a certain superficial weight. Given a closer examination, however, even that falls away. If anyone cares to see how a *real* Pope handles such a crisis, Saint Pius X provides an unexcelled model. Against the Modernists (John Paul's alleged adversaries), whom he called "the worst enemies of the Church," Pope Pius X, after his paternal pleas that they return to orthodoxy were rebuffed, did the only thing that a true shepherd would do to safeguard the eternal salvation of his flock — and that

was to remove the danger by excommunicating the heretics. The threat of Modernism was (and *is*) as formidable as any in Church history, so much so that our sainted Pontiff made a point of identifying it as *the synthesis of all heresies*. But John Paul II, far from excommunicating (were it, in fact, possible for him to do so), only placed a period of silence on the offenders. What he actually accomplished was to silence the conservative critics of these men as well, (since the scandal was temporarily removed from the public eye) and to give himself a measure of "protective coloring" to distract the faithful while he went about with *his own attacks against the Church*. And never mind that, for every *one Kung* that makes the controversial headlines, there are countless *hundreds* of "Catholic" college and seminary professors who are daily teaching the same errors with complete freedom! For John Paul II, being a Modernist theologian is an option that is permissible; such a one may still teach in Conciliar schools and seminaries, provided he do so discreetly, knowing that the doctrines he espouses are merely one acceptable system of thought and that not even the most notorious heretic suffers excommunication.

It is only when we look behind the traditional-sounding pronouncements that John Paul II has sometimes made — and see such men remaining in his Church, see the sacrilege over which he presided at Assisi, see the uncatholic doings of the Conciliar bishops (many of whom he created), etc. — that we realize that he is unwavering in his commitment to the *destruction* of Catholic tradition that is the legacy of the Second Vatican Council. (In his deviousness, he is a worthy successor to Paul VI who, after it was revealed that Archbishop Annibale Bugnini — architect of the new "mass" — was a Freemason, did not pronounce him infamous and excommunicate him, but removed him from the glare of public scrutiny by appointing him Nuncio to Iran.) Father Noel Barbara, in the journal mentioned above, well sums up the mentality with which we are dealing when he writes:

> Now what deceives simple people more than language? It is quite obvious that, if heretical bishops or a heretical Pope uttered only Masonic declarations and discourses which were openly heretical, they would deceive no one. In order to be mistaken for a pastor, in order to deceive the faithful, the Modernist wolf must conceal his wolf's identity under orthodox appearances and declarations, and Catholic discourses. That is why Jesus took care to add: "by their fruits you shall know them." He did not say, and we emphasize it, "you will recognize them by the orthodoxy of their words, of the profession of faith or of their Credo," but "you shall know them by their fruits." (*"a fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos,"* Matthew VII, 16, pp. 19-20)

Seen in this light, John Paul II's "disciplinary" moves are only part of a "fine tuning" of the Vatican II "reforms," a process begun by his predecessors. Mary Martinez, a traditional Catholic writer who for years lived in Rome, has explained this as follows:

> Already during the 1977 Synod (on "catechesis") there were indications that certain of the most influential bishops were aware of the fact that the rhythm of Conciliar change would have to slow down. In addition to the visible laceration that traditionalists represented, there was the alarming increase in defectors, people who were simply bored with the new rites and were quietly walking away. If, as several major Synod interventions indicated, there was an awareness that things had gone too far too fast, then conservative gestures on the part of whoever would become Pope could have been expected. (Cited, Dr. Rama A. Coomaraswamy, *The Destruction of Christian Tradition*, Perennial Books, 1981, pp. 102-103)

In other words, for the Conciliar Church to have the *appearance* of continuity with the true Catholic Church, a certain amount of accommodation with the last generation of Catholics raised *prior* to Vatican II must be allowed; hence, a simulated rebuke of Kung and others whose open heresy frightens them (and, if not checked, could frighten them all the way to *real* Roman Catholic churches.) The Modernists are confident in their conspiracy since they are in almost complete control of the education of those raised *after* the Council. But the mask of piety must only be removed in slow stages.

How, though, can we explain a Bishop Williamson? Kung is still a member of John Paul II's Church but the Bishop and other SSPX members, whose only "crime" appears to

be adherence to tradition, are excommunicated. (This can only mean excommunication from the Conciliar Church, a body that Bishop Williamson should wish to be no part of, and yet he inexplicably claims the pronouncement null and void and SSPX members are still part of that Church.) Bishop Williamson desperately clings to any slightest motion by John Paul II in the direction of orthodoxy — and thereby most dangerously sees a friend where in actuality stands an enemy. Although certainly not one of the "simple people" mentioned by Father Barbara, Bishop Williamson is nonetheless being taken in by deceptive language, which explains why he is so puzzled by the Jekyll and Hyde behavior of the "Pope" and his "uncatholic notions." The seeming contradiction is perfectly in keeping with the practice of Modernists who, writes Pope Saint Pius X in his encyclical *Pascendi*, "seem not unfrequently to advocate doctrines which are contrary one to another," which they do "deliberately and advisedly," so that "in their books one finds some things which might well be approved by a Catholic but, on turning over the page, one is confronted by other things which might well have been dictated by a rationalist." Or, as Bishop Williamson describes John Paul II's thinking... "it is good in parts."

The Faith Must Be Defended... Now!!!

The time has come for Bishop Williamson and other prelates and priests to come forth and courageously stand up for the Faith they love. The hour has already grown late in this conflict and the enemy becomes more emboldened every day. *Why?* In good part because many of the leaders of "traditional" Catholicism have become timid shepherds whose shots into the wolf pack are carefully aimed to *miss the leader of the pack*. His disguise is so convincing to many of them that they simply refuse to believe that he *is* a wolf and continue to wonder why this "sheep" is able to mingle with the pack without being torn to shreds.

To insist that sedevacantism is not an issue of vital importance to every Catholic is self-defeating. Either the Conciliar Church *is* the Catholic Church or it *isn't*. It cannot be *both*. If it is *not* the Catholic Church, then its leader *cannot be* Pope. The logic is straightforward; the conclusion inescapable. It simply cannot be both ways.

And yet that is precisely what Bishop Williamson and the SSPX would have us believe. In his June newsletter he quotes an unidentified Society source as stating: "Rome will make full use of the occasion of the Archbishop's death to try to entice the sheep out of the fold." And the Archbishop himself writes in a letter enclosed with the newsletter that "we (are) in union with Catholic Rome and not Modernist Rome." But which is the Rome over which John Paul II presides? Both?!? Although the SSPX may not know where he stands, John Paul II has told us in an unguarded moment during a visit to Mexico: "Those who remain attached to incidental aspects of the Church which were valid in the past, but which have been superseded, *cannot be considered the faithful.*" (Emphasis added) The significance of this quote is that John Paul II makes it clear that for someone to adhere to traditional Catholic teachings is sufficient to make him an outcast in the Conciliar Church or, as he puts it, such people "cannot be considered the faithful."

It is abundantly clear to those who will but open their eyes that the entire Conciliar hierarchy, from the "Pope" down, has lost (if they ever had it to begin with — individual cases may vary) any claim to being legitimate successors to Saint Peter and the Apostles. The time has come for the faithful to expose this imposture for what it is and to declare in each and every case what was said of Judas: "Let their habitation become desolate, and let there be none to dwell therein. And his bishopric let another take." (Acts 1:20) †

As the sellout of the USA by its traitorous leaders becomes ever more manifest, the subject of guns becomes an ever more critical one. Mr. Weiskittel will discuss it in his article in the next issue of *The Athanasian* (October 15, 1991)

To live in our great cities without the loss of faith and purity requires no less heroism than was needed in the days of bloody persecution.

— Pope Pius XII

The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who, in a period of moral crisis, maintain their neutrality.

— Dante