THE ATHANASIAN

A publication of Traditional Catholics of America † Editor: Fr. Francis E. Fenton, STL † Volume XIV, No. 2 † March 1, 1993

CAPSULE COMMENTS

Fr. Francis E. Fenton

One of the many awesome powers which accompany the position of the presidency of the United States is that of commander in chief of the nation's armed forces. How exceedingly ironic it is, then, that the man who now occupies the White House was himself a draft dodger during the Vietnam War. And, if Mr. Clinton has his way, homosexuals will be admitted into the military with no questions asked. While he has numerous subversive plans and projects to be implemented in the days and weeks ahead, the open acceptance of sodomites in America's armed forces would be one of the most damaging actions being taken, ever more brazenly, by our nation's enemies to destroy it. (Although we continue to speak of America's military, it may now be more accurate to refer to it as the United Nation's military force stationed in America, or some such similar description.)

† †

Have you ever heard of a female character by the name of Vassula Ryden? I didn't until I read about her some weeks ago in *The Wanderer* (a moderately conservative publication affiliated with the Conciliar Church). Described as a "female Jesus," on January 18 she addressed a very enthusiastic audience of some 1,800 people at the Blessed Sacrament Cathedral in Sacramento, California. Apparently a fluent speaker in several languages, she asserted, among other things, that Christ communicates to her in His own handwriting; that she is a "bride of Christ" not only spiritually but also physically; and that Christ wants Christians to be united by way of the World Council of Churches [pro-Communist — Ed.]. Among her followers are members of the Conciliar Church clergy, including Bishops.

Vassula may well be one of the diabolically keenest and most persuasive individuals yet to appear on the scene in the ever more decadent Conciliar Church. Indeed, so powerful an impression does she make that there are allegedly a number of "Catholics" who consider her to be their "new Catholic leader." Is she actually a devil incarnate, albeit a female one? Whatever, she should prove to be in the weeks and months ahead an invaluable asset to the Conciliar Church in the furthering of its subversive activities.

† †

Time-Warner, Inc., (the publishers of *Time*, *People*, and *Sports Illustrated* magazines), is among the principal corporations contributing to the spiritual and moral deterioration of America. Aside from its being a major part of the mass media of *dis*information over the years, the publication of the pornographic Madonna book, *Sex*, and the promotion of the Ice-T song, "Cop-Killer," are among its "accomplishments" in recent months.

† †

Since the dawn of Christianity, the forces aligned on the side of Christ and the satanic forces of evil have been in continual conflict. From all appearances, however, we may safely conclude that that perennial conflict is approaching a climax in this our day. It becomes increasingly imperative, then, that we traditional Roman Catholics not only intensify our personal lives spiritually and morally but that we be ready to defend and to profess our Faith publicly as well whenever an occasion arises which calls for our doing so. The very name of Roman Catholic we bear identifies us as followers of Christ the King and, because we are, our being but nominally such does not suffice (nor did it ever suffice). The time has come when we must profess and proclaim our Faith "from the housetops" in word and in deed in every morally permissible manner. The battle lines are now clearly drawn and there is no middle ground. If Christ is, in fact, our King, the time is at hand to prove it. In the words of Cardinal Mindszenty, may each one of us be able to say in all truth: "My enemies can take from me no more than my life and that has already been given to God."

Still No Pope In Rome: Answering Our Critics

John Kenneth Weiskittel

For nearly a decade *The Athanasian* has gone on record to oppose and expose the occupants of the Holy See (Paul VI, John Paul I and John Paul II) since the end of the Second Vatican Council as *false* claimants to the Chair of Peter. (Some argue that Pope John XXIII also should be included in this list, but the evidence, while surely incriminating, has not yet been shown sufficient to make a conclusive case against him — Paul VI's official approval of the Council's errors, however, signifies a *distinct* break with Catholic Tradition, as do his successors' official reaffirmations.) Far from a fleeting issue, the question of the papacy has been a *central* subject of this newsletter for all these years. And, far from a casual assumption, this stance has been a *conviction* that has grown ever *stronger* with the passage of time.

Indeed, we have steadfastly maintained that it is *impossible* for traditional Catholics to fully comprehend what has transpired during this period without first grasping that the post-Conciliar apostasy not only *includes* these false Pontiffs, but *emanates* from them. The basis for our argument may be summed up as follows: If, as most traditionalists agree, the Conciliar "Catholic" Church constitutes a *false* church (Catholic in name only), it logically follows that the leader of that church *cannot* be a true Pope, since Christ's commission to Saint Peter and his successors is the governance over *only* the Roman Catholic Church, not over a counterfeit sect. This, in our view, is the only position consistent with the facts. John Paul II either is head of the Catholic Church as its Pope or he is ruler of an apostate body, and, hence, a non-Pope. This is a matter that simply refuses to allow any middle ground — it must be considered *either/or*, **not** *both/and*.

This position is popularly known as *sedevacantism*, a term coined after the Latin ecclesiastical expression *sede vacante* ("vacant chair" or "vacant see"). Although a logically consistent view, sedevacantism has met with a great deal of criticism, which is understandable since its explanation of events amounts to a "hard saying" for many. It is, in fact, the ultimate hard-line stand — the litmus test that separates the strong from the weak in traditional circles.

Because ours is a position that generates great controversy, we sedevacantists are constantly being challenged to defend it. Often it turns out that the critic will make a point that the sedevacantist is at a loss to answer. Perhaps he has not done his homework, or is confronted with a theological argument he has not heard. Whatever the case, a good opportunity to bring someone around to the truth is lost. It is with this in mind that the following collection of commonly heard objections and their answers has been assembled. While in no way do we pretend to exhaust such protests in a few short pages, we hope that our readers will be given sufficient means to hold their own or even prevail in such disputes. And those readers who find the following answers familiar are encouraged (as are *all* readers) to pass copies of them on to others for a quick summary of our views. They have been numbered for handy reference.

1. ***These accusations against John Paul II amount to disobedience to the Holy Father***. *Correction*: They constitute *resistance* against *a false pope*; disobedience to John Paul II is *obedience* to *Catholic tradition*.

2. ***Sedevacantism is a schismatic position***. The critics who make this charge are, of course, those who accept the legitimacy of the Conciliar "Popes." From their standpoint it is an obvious one to raise but, even so, it is based on a weak premise, for it supposes that sedevacantists consciously refuse to obey a Pope. Anyone at all familiar with what we believe knows that, far from seeking to break from lawful Catholic authority, we believe that those occupying episcopal sees (including the supreme Roman See) have willfully defected from the Catholic Faith they were sworn to uphold and, therefore, have forfeited any claim to authority they may at one time have possessed. Ironically, but wholly in keeping with the confusion of the times, the *real* schismatic acts of today involve following the dictates of this Conciliar hierarchy. (The degree of culpability in such instances naturally involves the corresponding degree of awarenes on the part of the individual as to the illegal Modernist occupation of Church structures.)

3. ***It is ridiculous for you sedevacantists to call yourselves Catholics when you attack the very center of Catholic unity: the papacy***. This, of all denunciations, is most to the very heart of the issue. And it is thus one that, properly refuted, has particularly great potential for clarifying matters. For the very essence of sedevacantism is hardly an attack on the papacy, but a most ardent *defense* of it. The attack against the Holy See has been (and continues to be) mounted by the champions at all levels of this new Conciliar religion, up to and including those who have themselves defiled the Chair of Peter. Catholic restoration will take a major step forward when more of those who are

marginally traditional wake up to see that those they count as friends (such as "Pope" John Paul II, "Cardinals" Ratzinger and O'Connor, "Bishop" Vaughn, etc.) are, in reality, enemies of the Church every bit as much as those who more readily come to mind (like Hans Kung or Matthew Fox), and even, in a sense more so, as they are better able to feign orthodoxy than the more overtly radical clerics. So the bottom line remains: *To oppose John Paul II (and other Conciliar "Popes") is to* ***uphold*** *the Chair of Peter,* ***not*** *attack it.*

4. ***The Church must have a Pope at all times, but sedevacantists say she has no Pope.*** This argument is based — however erroneously — on a fundamental truth of the Faith, namely: Christ established His Church to have a *visible* head in the person of Saint Peter (and his successors), and that that office would be universal through all the world and for all times. The problem with this argument (which, it should be noted, is one of the central fallacies of anti-sedevacantists, and one that they carry over into more crucial questions as well) is that it fails to make any distinction whatsoever between *sedes* (the seat) and *sedens* (he who sits upon it), for the Holy See has regularly been vacant between the death of one Pope and the election of another. The Church, therefore, has *not*, strictly speaking, had a Pope *at* all times, but she has had the papacy *for* all times. Although the rule has always been for a more or less immediate selection of a successor, such has not invariably been the case. Looking at Church history reveals some unusually long gaps between the demise of one Pontiff and the choosing of the next one. In 308 Saint Marcellus I became Pope, an election that, due to Emperor Diocletian's persecution of the Church, did not occur until some *four years* after the death of Marcellus' predecessor (Pope Saint Marcellinus) in 304. Although Pope Saint Gregory VII died on May 25, 1085, it was not until almost two years later — May 9, 1087 — that his successor, Pope Victor III, was elected. On June 25, 1243, Pope Innocent IV became the 179th successor to Saint Peter; his immediate predecessor, Pope Celestine IV, however, had died over a year and a half before — November 10, 1241. Later in the same century, Catholics would be forced to wait *nearly three years* as the Church, upon the death of Pope Clement IV on November 29, 1268, delayed naming a new Pope until Saint Gregory X was picked on September 1, 1271. Other examples of a year or more space between Popes can be cited, the point here being that, while the swift transfer of papal power has been the norm, exceptions are to be found. Today's crisis, then, certainly is *not* the first instance in which the Church has suffered for a significant period of time without a Pope. It is the *longest and most severe* such interval, to be sure, but it certainly has its precedents (and several, at that!).

5. ***The examples cited here all involve either persecution from without or ecclesial politicking from within, whereas the sedevacantist position speaks of an impossiblity — a Pope who has lost the Faith!*** The purpose of the previous answer was simply to demonstrate that historically the Church has had to labor on occasion for a time without a Pope. In each case, no doubt, a unique set of circumstances surrounded the delay. We believe the same holds true today. As for the "impossibility" mentioned, that will be covered below.

6. ***But to say the Holy See has failed makes a liar of Our Lord, since He promised Saint Peter that "the gates of hell" would not prevail against the Church.*** The premise of this charge is that the very nature of the pontifical office is such that at no time in the life of the Church could a Pope ever defect from the Faith and thus lose his office, because such would mean that the forces of evil had overcome the Church. Again, our critics are confusing *sedes* and *sedens*, for we do not believe that the Holy See has failed, but rather that it has been betrayed by men who had been sworn to uphold it. The difference between the two is quite significant and needs to be emphasized: The institution of the papacy *cannot fail* in the mission for which it is fitted by Christ, but it is no contradiction to say that it is at least *conceivable* (and in no way contrary to Catholic teaching) that *a holder* of that supreme seat *could* fail — and, by so doing, *lose* the seat, thus preserving its sanctity from *his* defection). The position that Our Lord instituted is *much greater* than any man who occupies it. Although the great majority of men raised to the papacy have been devout, and many even saintly, a very few Popes in history have been scandalously immoral.

The problem with John Paul II, however, is entirely different and much worse — he *officially* teaches error. But this in no way affects Christ's promise, since John Paul II, by his defection cannot be Pope. How do we know this? Simply by the fact that it is impossible for a Pontiff to teach error from the chair of Peter; John Paul II (like his Conciliar predecessors) *has* taught error; therefore, he cannot be Pope.

7. ***This response of yours suggests that a Pope who "departs from sound Church doctrine in his official teaching from the Chair of Peter" cannot remain Pope, yet the point about "official teaching" is irrelevant, because nothing that has been defined or promulgated by John Paul II and his two predecessors involves the little used power of infallibility. Therefore, it is quite possible to find error in their writings without categorizing them as non-Popes.*** This is in keeping with the argument that, although Vatican II plainly taught error intermingled with truth, it nevertheless remained Catholic,

because it was a "pastoral" — not "doctrinal" — Council, and thus (supposedly), no infallibility is involved. Like this distortion, the defense of Conciliar "papal" teaching is founded upon a false conception of infallibility that only considers the familiar examples of the *primary* function of infallibility (such as the solemn papal declarations on the Assumption and Immaculate Conception of Our Lady), while acting as though there is no such thing as a *secondary* role. Unlike our critics, however, the Church has acknowledged such an indirect function. And what are examples of this secondary capacity of infallibility? Turning to an article entitled "The Church," by Father George H. Joyce, S.J., in the 1913 edition of *The Catholic Encyclopedia* [the same edition will be cited throughout this article], we read that beyond these commonly considered (and irreformable) declarations on Faith and morals:

> [T]heologians are agreed that the gift of infallibility in regard to the Deposit (of Faith) must, by necessary consequence, carry with it infallibility as to certain matters intimately related to the Faith. There are questions bearing so nearly on the preservation of the Faith that, could the Church err in these, her infallibility would not suffice to guard the flock from false doctrine. Such, for instance, is the decision whether a given book does or does not contain teaching condemned as heretical. (Vol. III, p. 754)

This, then, relates to the ordinary (as well as the solemn) magisterium of the Church. And implicit in what Father Joyce writes is the understanding that this secondary infallibility, since it applies when the Pope (with or without the bishops) authoritatively condemns certain literature as heretical, necessarily relates as well to those papal judgments that censure movements as heretical. Can anyone seriously believe, for example, that Pope Saint Pius X was not exercising the plenitude of his authority when he condemned Modernism? Yet this is precisely what sedevacantism's semitraditional critics seem to say. But to deny the infallibility of Pius X's encyclical on Modernism would mean: 1) that a Pope could err in judgment on matters vital to both the preservation of the Church and the salvation of souls by *unjustly* anathematizing a movement that *might*, in the end, be *orthodox* and, therefore, 2) that opposition to Vatican II, its "reforms," and post-Conciliar "Popes" becomes merely a matter of opinion. For it can be maintained: "Even if it can be shown that Conciliar changes are Modernistic, who can say that with absolute assurance that Modernism is wrong? After all, the condemnation of it by Pius X wasn't infallible. He might have been wrong about it." In order that the absolute falseness of such a severely limited view of infallibility be further torn down, let us examine another *Catholic Encyclopedia* article. An Irish professor, Father Patrick J. Toner, S.T.D., in his study "Infallibility," while noting that the direct object of infallibility, as already mentioned, pertains to revealed doctrines of Faith and morals, adds:

> But if this primary function is to be adequately and effectively discharged, it is clear that there must be *indirect* and *secondary* objects to which infallibility extends, viz. [*namely* — JKW], doctrines and facts which, although they cannot strictly be said to be revealed, are nevertheless so intimately connected with revealed truths that, were one free to deny the former, he would logically deny the latter, and thus defeat the primary purpose for which infallibility was promised by Christ to His Church... (Vol. VII, p. 799)

He goes on to write that these indirect objects of infallibility include: 1) *theological conclusions* — those drawn from two principles, one revealed and another based on reason; 2) *dogmatic facts* — those in which certainty is necessary for such determinations as the orthodoxy of a given book or the legitimacy of a given Pope or Council; 3) *canonizations* — certitude is needed regarding those individuals venerated, petitioned and honored by the Church in her liturgy, especially in her universal calendar. Canonizations performed by Vatican II Popes are, therefore, invalid. (Father Toner unfortunately makes an unwarranted distinction, suggesting infallibiliy only in those canonizations from the ninth century on. This, however, throws into question all of those prior to that time — an artificial division that, in theory, could even adversely affect those of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, the Apostles, the numerous martyred Popes of the first four centuries, etc.); and 4) *universal Church laws* — such disciplinary laws, by the Church's divine charter, cannot be immoral or of a nature that would put the eternal salvation of the faithful at jeopardy. (See *ibid.*) So these critics actually *aid* the enemies of the Church by minimizing the scope of infallibility to pronouncements that literally occur with less frequency than sightings of Halley's Comet! But it is vital to their defense — either fully committed or halfhearted — of John Paul II that they adhere to this false version; otherwise, they would be forced to alter their perception of him. We must not give them an inch of ground on this question — they are simply wrong about it, and must be shown to be wrong.

8. *John Paul II is the Pope and, therefore, he cannot be a heretic, but only seems to be one.* Here is an argument that should be used in logic classes to illustrate circular reasoning. On the one hand, as stated, his orthodoxy is claimed to be protected by his office; on the other, when this is challenged, the order is reversed, so that John Paul II's office becomes guaranteed by his orthodoxy.

Put together, it goes something like this: "Since John Paul II is the Pope, he cannot be a heretic, and since he is not a heretic, he must be Pope!" This is plainly one of the most illogical and sophomoric arguments advanced by the anti-sedevacantists. If the logic used to construct it is bad, the theology behind it is even worse, for it suggests that somehow a man once raised to the Chair of Peter is no longer capable of exercising his free will, but is transformed into a divinely programmed clerical robot. The Church has not held this view, however, recognizing that, although certain graces are given each Pope to aid in his governing of the Church, the possibility still remains that he could lose the Faith, and hence *lose his office*. Father J. Wilhelm, S.T.D., considering the question, "Can a Council Depose the Pope?", writes that it may depose him — actually *declare* him deposed — for heresy: "For a heretical Pope has ceased to be a member of the Church, and cannot, therefore, be its head." ("Councils," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, p. 435) How, then, can a Pope who promulgates or otherwise officially advances teachings or laws that are contrary to sound Catholic dogma *remain the Sovereign Pontiff*, since he who, like Saint Peter, is *commanded* by Our Savior to "strengthen thy brethren" in the Faith, has *rejected* that very Faith, and is no longer a Catholic, much less a Pope? The answer is: *he cannot*.

9. *The real answer to the sedevacantists' question is quite simple: He (John Paul II) remains Pope because he never has done what they claim; that is, promulgate or otherwise officially advance teachings contrary to Catholic dogma. True, the documents of Vatican II, which he upholds, often are written in language that is vague and ambiguous, but they can all be safely interpreted in the light of tradition.* This has already been dealt with somewhat regarding the scope of infallibility (see argument 7 above), but there is another angle to it as well. Long has been the position of these critics (and a view more or less accepted by even some traditional Catholics) that what makes Vatican II so deplorable is the "vague and ambiguous" language that the Modernist "reformers" were able to foist on the Church. While this is true in large part, there are also certain propositions of the Council that *cannot* reasonably be construed as Catholic, no matter how one tries to fit them into a traditional mold.

Among the heresies, which Paul VI attempted to force on Catholics on December 7, 1965, are two particularly glaring ones — errors so outrageous that it defies explanation how they ever gained Conciliar acceptance. In the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) the following enormity appeared, regarding Christian denominations outside the Church: "[T]he Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as a means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church." (*The Documents of Vatican II*, Abbott edition, p. 346) It is of the Faith that Christ instituted only *one* Church — the Roman Catholic Church — and that it is the *only* means of salvation. Vatican II's proclamation is one in spirit with that *condemned as contrary to Catholic truth* by Pope Pius IX in his Syllabus of Errors: 188. "Protestantism is simply another form of the same true Christian religion, and it is possible to please God as much in it as in the Catholic Church." (*The Church Teaches*, p. 86) But the Council went even further along these lines in its Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. (*Nostra Aetate*) There one reads the startling claim that Hindus seek, in the practice of their idolatrous religion, "a loving, trusting flight toward God." (*Op. cit.*, p. 662) It is fair to ask Paul VI and the Council Fathers: A flight to *which* god? Krishna? Vishnu? Shiva? Or, perhaps, another of the more than *300 million* deities accorded veneration by Hindus? And why — since the Hindus supposedly worshiped God — did not someone spare Saint Francis Xavier of his arduous — but also, according to the Council, ultimately *meaningless* — missionary activities in India?)

Since, however, the main focus of this article is John Paul II, it is of the greatest importance to see that he not only supports these errors, but actually surpasses them in unchristian scandal. Within a year of his false election to the Holy See, John Paul II established what was to be expected from his "papacy." In October, 1979, he published an "Apostolic Exhortation," *Catechesi Tradendae*, which carried the rather ponderous cover legend: *"Of His Holiness Pope John Paul II To The Episcopate, The Clergy And The Faithful Of The Entire Catholic Church On The Catechesis In Our Time."* [Italics added.] (Note the unmistakable suggestion of the magisterium being used here.) There he gives a clear nod to one of the Council's chief errors: "it is extremely important to give a correct and fair presentation of the other Churches and ecclesial communities that the Spirit of Christ does not refrain from using as *means of salvation*." (Vatican Polyglot edition, p. 45) [Italics added.] An even more outrageous statement had already appeared some seven months before on March 4th, when he issued his first "encyclical," *Redemptor Hominis*. In that letter, the pseudo Pope calls "the firm belief of the followers of non-Christian religions — a belief that is also an effect of the Spirit of truth operating outside the visible confines of the Mystical Body..." This passage surely smacks of blasphemy of the Holy Ghost, ascribing to Him the *false beliefs of non-Christians*. (United States Catholic Conference edition, p. 18) John Paul II also uses the letter as an attempt to bind Catholics to Vatican II with

the same caricature of the Holy Ghost. This time, however, true to form, he does his impersonation of a traditional Catholic, writing of "our Lord's grace as revealed recently through what the Holy Spirit said and we heard during the Council..." (p. 17. Note that this is only one page before he is claiming that the "firm belief" of non-Christians is the "effect" of the same Holy Ghost!) In other words, John Paul II is most certainly endorsing Vatican II's errors, adding some of his own, and doing all with the the claim of *ex cathedra* authority — that is, with the full power of Saint Peter's Keys.

10. ***Even if what you say is true, all you can do is express it as your opinion. It may be the probable theological opinion but that is all it is — an opinion.*** While we would argue that there exists more here than mere opinion (since the non-papacies of Paul VI and the two John Pauls can be shown by reason and Faith), let us accept this hypothesis for the sake of argument. Those who make this claim, however, are far from consistent. If, for example, disputing the validity of John Paul II's reign is but a legitimate *opinion*, is not an affirmation of its validity likewise permissible? It *is* for those who champion the "theological opinion" school of thought. Yet, there are other areas of the crisis in which they absolutely (if arbitrarily) brook *no* differences of opinion. For example, they inconsistently make public and categorical declarations about the Conciliar Church being non-Catholic and the "new Mass" being sacrilegious. The point here is that there is no essential difference, ecclesiastically speaking, from such declarations on the one hand and, on the other, from declaring that certain teachings promulgated at the Second Vatican Council are *not in harmony with Church doctrine*; that the post-Vatican II religion is *not Catholicism*; that the "new Mass" is *not the true Mass*; that other "reformed" sacraments are *not pleasing to God*; that Conciliar marriage annulments are *not to be honored*; that the "new Code of Canon Law" is *not legitimate ecclesial legislation*; that the Conciliar hierarchy does *not have authority over Catholics*; or that John Paul II is *not a true Pope*. In each instance (and other similar ones), the break from Catholic tradition has been so manifest that it has been necessary for the faithful to denounce the un-Catholic invasion/innovation.

11. ***Again, there is truth in what you state but you make the mistake of trying to make a dogma out of this.*** No, we do not; no more than those who forbid attendance at the "new Mass." The only official and definitive ruling on it, *as well as on all other questions pertaining to the Vatican II apostasy*, rests ultimately with some future *Catholic* Council. In the meanwhile, though, it is of no help to the Church's restoration to pretend that reasonable convictions — based on Faith and reason — cannot be made as to current ecclesial realities. Not only *can* they be made, but they *must* be, if the faithful are to maintain anything resembling theological sanity.

12. ***Stop right there! The Church has already had such a situation in the past. During the Great Western Schism (1378-1415), there was not only a doubtful Pope, but three doubtful Popes claiming legitimacy at the same time. Despite the obvious problems caused (even saints disagreed about the identity of the real Pontiff), the most that people living then (including saints) could advance were only opinions about who was the real Pope. The current situation is much the same. Although there is only one such doubtful claimant today, our response must follow theirs.*** It is only natural that Catholics look for some historical comparison for today's dilemma, and the Great Western Schism does indeed have certain parallels. But it should be noted that the differences are just as important, and perhaps more so. The theological truth, "Papa dubius; nullus Papa" ("A doubtful Pope is no Pope"), which was wisely utilized as a guiding principle during the Schism, is today sometimes used — not so wisely — by those who favor reducing the "Pope question" to the category of opinion. Here, with a moment's reflection, the distinction becomes obvious. At the time of the Schism there were, simultaneously, different claimants whose conflicting appeals created no small confustion over who deserved obeisance. This much no Catholic can reasonably deny. But there is a very striking distinction between the anti-Popes of 600 years ago and the Conciliar "Popes," and that is that *none* of the former (as far as history records) were *heretics*. This is no minor point, for their legitimacy (or lack thereof) was restricted solely to the matter of their elections. Now, however, the question goes far beyond electoral procedure, to the very *essence* of the office. We challenge those who raise this issue to debate: Can any well-informed Catholic in good conscience reasonably maintain that John Paul II should be acknowledged as Pope? *Of course not!* And that is precisely the point. Having frequently demonstrated himself an apostate, both in word and deed (documented here and elsewhere far too many times to mention), and acting in complete accord with his *non-Catholic* Conciliar predecessors (and thus *not* in harmony with the legitimate successors of Saint Peter), there is little reason to presume that John Paul II is entitled to anything but *a spot in the unemployment line!*

13. ***Whatever his problems, John Paul II is the Pope and no one can depose a Pope.*** This mentality can be described as the "Like him or not, John Paul II is all that we've got, and (even if we wanted to) there is nothing we can do to remove him from office, so we had better get used

to him" line. The idea is that we are stuck with "Pope" John Paul II, and would even be stuck with him if tomorrow, say, a thoroughly Catholic Council is convened to oppose him. Although this notion is quite popular in some quasi-traditional circles, it is, nevertheless, based on a flawed conception of Church teaching. The basic premise — no one can depose a Pope — is correct. A Pope *can*, however, depose himself. According to Saint Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) — eminent as Cardinal, Jesuit theologian and Doctor of the Church — in his treatise *De Romano Pontifice* (On the Roman Pontiff), *the correct teaching* regarding a Pope who is a manifest (public) heretic is that he *ipso facto* (that is, by the very act) loses his office. Saint Robert writes: "...a Pope who is a manifest heretic ceases, in consequence of his own actions, to be the Pope and the Head of the Church, in the same way as he ceases to be a Christian and a member of the Body of Christ. All the early Fathers are unanimous in teaching that all manifest heretics immediately lose all power of jurisdiction..." (Quotations from *De Romano Pontifice* are taken from the translation that appeared in the English language edition of *Fortes in Fide*, No. 5, Vol. I., p. 41) [Boldface appearing there has been removed.] The saint emphasizes this by adding: "those separated from the Church retain not one single vestige of spiritual power over those who remain in the Church." (*Ibid.*) As for the declaration of deposition, this could be done by a Council, since the man involved is *no longer the Pope*. Since there *is* historical precedent as well as the teaching of one of the Church's greatest theologians (and whose writings, the Church — in giving him the title "Doctor" — assures us, are *free from error*), the premise of John Paul II's deposition is quite plausible and quite orthodox.

14. ***Perhaps the idea is plausible and orthodox but, in practical terms, it serves no purpose. For if, as you claim, the entire hierarchy has defected along with John Paul II, there is no one left to form the Council needed to depose him. What you're telling us, in so many words, is that the Church is dead! And there is simply no way to reconcile such a belief with the dogma dealing with the Church's indefectibility.*** Undoubtedly, this is one of the stickier problems concerning the sedevacantist stand, but it is by no means unanswerable. As with every aspect of the modern crisis there is an element of mystery involved here. What most Catholics would have called *impossible* 50 years ago has now become *reality*. The Church does seem to have died. There is nothing heretical in stating such an opinion, for Saint Thomas Aquinas (among others) has likened the life of the Church to the life of Christ. If the parallel holds true throughout, she must succumb in a manner that, humanly speaking, appears utterly hopeless but, like the Savior, she will also rise miraculously, even as her enemies gloat over their apparent success. Somehow, in a truly wondrous way, God will bring about the full and glorious restoration of His Mystical Body. Of this outcome, Catholics must be faithfully confident, no matter how black the gloom that now prevails, and they must work tirelessly to help bring about the Church's triumphant resurrection that the Almighty will accomplish in His good time. "Thou wilt turn, O God, and bring us to life, and Thy people shall rejoice in Thee; show us, O Lord, Thy mercy, and grant us Thy salvation." (Psalm 84:7-8) †

Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. (Psalm 126, 1)

What does not correspond to the truth and to the moral law does not objectively have any right to existence, or to propaganda, or to action. (Pope Pius XII, December 6, 1953)

There is no true civilization without a moral civilization, and there is no true moral civilization without the true religion. It is a proven truth, a historical fact. (Excerpt from Pope Saint Pius X's "Our Apostolic Mandate")

Pray the Rosary Daily

The enclosed white envelope is for the convenience of those who may wish to send a donation to the TCA. If a blue envelope is also enclosed, that is to be used for subscription renewal.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

The date on the envelope address label indicates the month and year in which the recipient's subscription is due for renewal. At the proper time, a subscription envelope will be enclosed with the newsletter. One may enter a new subscription at any time, of course, and will then receive the eight following newsletter issues.

Questions And Answers

Fr. Oswald Baker (England)

Question:

Saint Paul praises the single life as superior to marriage because, he says, the unmarried have more concern for the things of the Lord. Does it follow that 'Miss' really is a more honourable title than 'Mrs.'?

Answer:

Saint Paul does (I Cor.) quite simply praise the single state as better than that of marriage, because concern for a spouse is apt to distract from concern for God. Even so, he cannot mean that the single state is more praiseworthy irrespective of the attitude of mind in which it is chosen, or accepted. The choice of celibacy or virginity for a selfish reason, or a grudging acceptance of it at the hand of fate, would denote rather a frame of mind likely to prove an obstacle to holiness. To remain single out of some weird contempt for marriage as a despicable institution would be even worse, a veritably ungodly attitude. Simple resignation to the unmarried state because opportunity for marriage has not arisen has of itself neither merit nor demerit before God. The essential factor elevating the single state above that of marriage is the correctness and purity of motive in choosing it. Virginity becomes superior to marriage when, in the quest for holiness, it is deliberately embraced as a way of self-dedication to God in loving continence.

Question:

If a person commits a mortal sin, but then says a prayer of perfect contrition and goes to Holy Communion without going to confession, is he committing a further sin?

Answer:

Prayer of perfect contrition means sorrow for sin which is motivated by love for God, without self-interest. In saying this prayer it is sufficient that one have the intention of going to confession the next time he is obliged to do so but, preferably, as soon as possible and certainly before Holy Communion. Consquently, although perfect contrition restores the sinner's state of grace even before absolution, he may not dispense himself from the obligation of prior confession before going to Holy Communion. If he does not realize the need for confession beforehand, mistakenly but sincerely believing that he is straightway entitled to Holy Communion, he incurs no guilt before God, being unaware of the wrong he is doing. If he is, however, aware of the need for confession first, yet goes to Holy Communion without confession, he does indeed commit a further sin, of sacrilege. One who has committed mortal sin is required by the law of God, not only to recover his state of grace before going to Holy Communion, but to recover it in the surest of ways, confession and absolution.

Question:

Is it possible for a Catholic to abandon the Church and speak against it in absolute sincerity?

Answer:

The *fact* of the sincerity of any individual, in any action, is not a matter for religious judgement. It is a purely psychological question. At the time of abandoning the Faith a Catholic can be sincere, and honestly believe that he is acting correctly. But he cannot be innocent. Somewhere along the line there has been some sin, weakening his judgement. A soul can never be justified in leaving the Catholic Church. Given the divine truth of Catholicism, it is obvious that anyone who remains completely loyal to God will retain God's truth and live in accordance with it. Sincerity at the time of defection is possible. Subsequent sincerity sometimes becomes suspect, when persistent attacks on the Church may be signs of an insatiable need for self-justification, and of a painful conscience demanding to be salved. Albeit, one's possible insincerity is not our business. Our business is to pray that grace be infused into that person's soul. The Church is his or her home and the way back can be very hard.

THE ATHANASIAN

Published by Traditional Catholics of America

Eight issues a year: (Jan. 15, Mar. 1, Apr. 15, June 1, July 15, Sept. 1, Oct. 15, Dec. 1)

Subscriptions: $12 per year (via First Class Mail) for the USA, Canada and Mexico; $16 per year (via Air Mail) for all other countries.

Additional Copies: Single copy - $1.50; 10 copies - $12.00; 40 or more to same address - $1.00 each

Mailing Address: P. O. Box 38335, Colorado Springs, CO 80937 **Telephone:** (719) 636-1575

Articles appearing in this newsletter may be reproduced providing no changes of any kind are made in those articles and adequate credit is given to *The Athanasian* for them. The adequate credit preferred would be the inclusion with the articles reproduced of the information contained in this box.