

The Gates of Hell and the Gates of the Church

The Best Defense for Sedevacantism

By Steven Speray

In perhaps the greatest document ever written by a pope, Leo XIII declared in *Satis Cognitum* on June 29, 1896:

The words - *and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it* proclaim and establish the authority of which we speak. "What is the *it*?" (writes Origen). "Is it the rock upon which Christ builds the Church or the Church? The expression indeed is ambiguous, as if the rock and the Church were one and the same. I indeed think that this is so, and that neither against the rock upon which Christ builds His Church nor against the Church shall the gates of Hell prevail" (Origenes, *Comment. in Matt.*, tom. xii., n. ii). The meaning of this divine utterance is, that, notwithstanding the wiles and intrigues which they bring to bear against the Church, it can never be that the church committed to the care of Peter shall succumb or in any wise fail. "For the Church, as the edifice of Christ who has wisely built 'His house upon a rock,' cannot be conquered by the gates of Hell, which may prevail over any man who shall be off the rock and outside the Church, but shall be powerless against it" (*Ibid.*). **Therefore God confided His Church to Peter so that he might safely guard it with his unconquerable power.**

Pope Vigilius at the Second Council of Constantinople, in 553 called "*the tongues of heretics*" the "*gates of hell.*" Pope St. Leo IX, *In terra pax hominibus*, Sept. 2, 1053, declared to Michael Cerularius that "*the gates of Hell*" are the "*disputations of heretics.*"

Pope Leo XIII called the Roman Pontiffs "*the Gates of the Church*" in his 1894 encyclical letter *Praeclara Gratulationis Publicae*.

Therefore, Roman Pontiffs can't be heretics or else the gates of the Church and the gates of hell would be one and the same thing implying the Church and Hell are identical.

However, on August 27, 2015, Robert Siscoe confessed on my website, *“There is a difference between a private judgment and a public judgment. I personally think John Paul II, Ratzinger and Pope Francis have all been heretics.”*

This means Robert Siscoe personally thinks that the gates of hell and the Gates of the Church are one and the same thing.

The phrase *“private judgment”* can have four meanings with a possible combination of the following:

A personal judgment... (a) opposing official Church law or teaching, (b) not made publicly, (c) in accepting Church law and teaching, (d) made without an official declaration.

Siscoe's meaning is the fourth. He personally believes his popes have been heretics. Until a public judgment is made by his bishops, his popes must be considered popes and not heretics until an official judgment is made by the bishops. However, before his bishops can make that public judgment against the pope, they must first make a private one in the same sense as Siscoe. In doing so, they would believe the gates of hell and the Gates of the Church are one and the same thing, which is impossible.

Therefore, the entire scenario of needing warnings, declarations, etc. to make an official determination that a true pope is not a true pope is impossible. No one can even suspect the pope of heresy without the consequence of suspecting that the Head of the Church forms the gates of hell. There can be no doubt about the pope for as Rev. Francis X Doyle, S.J. so elegantly explained in 1927, *“The Church is a visible society with a visible Ruler. If there can be any doubt about who that visible Ruler is, he is not visible...Blessed Bellarmine, S.J., says: ‘A doubtful Pope must be considered as not Pope.’”*

This fact refutes every argument or proposition ever put forth by any and all theologians, canonists, etc., that a pope can be heretical, or else Peter and his successors who've been handed the Church by God for safekeeping from the gates of hell can themselves be the gates of hell.

Only a pope can cease to be pope by himself, and every individual Catholic must recognize that fact by his personal judgment in the third sense, which is to believe and accept the laws and teachings of the Church and the Divine laws of God.

Siscoe personally believes his popes are heretics because they profess heresies. He and John Salza have published "*True or False Pope Refuting Sedevacantism and other Modern Errors*" in an attempt to show how this profane falsehood can be true. While it's one thing to say that a pope can be heretical in a homily, personal letter, or in some other unofficial way, it's quite another to say the pope can be heretical when issuing laws and decrees making the Church heretical. These gentlemen refer to a few theologians supporting an idea of a heretical pope, such as John of St. Thomas, Cajetan, and Suarez. However, none of them taught the Church can be heretical.

The foundation of the Salza/Siscoe book, endorsed by Bishop Bernard Fellay, head of the SSPX, *The Remnant*, Christopher Ferrara, Rev. Brian Harrison, John Vennari, Tim Staples of *Catholic Answers*, and others, is the heresy that the Catholic Church can promulgate heretical laws and decrees. Many of the endorsers of the book make a living promoting as heretical the teachings of Vatican 2 and/or other laws and decrees of the Church. In conclusion, they profess that some of the teachings and laws of the Church are the gates of hell, meaning the teachings and laws of the Church will not prevail against the Church.

See the absurdity?

Catholics are not permitted to *personally* believe such blasphemies against Christ and His Church. Siscoe, Salza, and company, not only believe in their blasphemous heresy, they promote it as true, righteous, and the only position to hold. They hypocritically use their "*private judgment*" against what they believe are official laws and teachings of their own popes.

The Catholic Church is the pillar and foundation of truth. It condemns heretics and their heresies. False churches are false because they are heretical.

Siscoe, Salza, SSPX, *Tradition in Action*, *The Remnant*, etc. believe the Catholic Church is heretical by law and decree, which means that it would have to condemn itself because it would be another false church. Oh, really?

What we conclude is that Salza/Siscoe and company reject the Catholic Faith by claiming the Church is or can be tainted with error and heresy by law and decree. Note the following papal declarations.

Holy Scripture confirms the truth that the Church is perfect in faith. *“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”* (Eph 5:25-27).

Holiness is the Second Mark of the Church and an article of Faith. A Church that promotes heretical teachings by law and decree would not be holy. Popes have repeatedly taught the Catholic Faith is without error in all things.

Pope St. Zosimus made it clear that canons, rules, and disciplines are holy:

Although the tradition of the Fathers has attributed such great authority to the Apostolic See that no one would dare to disagree wholly with its judgment, and it has always preserved this [judgment] by canons and rules, and current ecclesiastical discipline up to this time by its laws pays the reverence which is due to the name of PETER, from whom it has itself descended . . . ; since therefore PETER the head is of such great authority and he has confirmed the subsequent endeavors of all our ancestors, so that the Roman Church is fortified ... by human as well as by divine laws, and it does not escape you that we rule its place and also hold power of the name itself, nevertheless you know, dearest

brethren, and as priests you ought to know, although we have such great authority that no one can dare to retract from our decision, yet we have done nothing which we have not voluntarily referred to your notice by letters ... not because we did not know what ought to be done, or would do anything which by going against the advantage of the Church, would be displeasing. (*Quamvis Patrum traditio* to the African bishops, March 21, 418) D109.

Pope St. Hormisdas declared:

[Our] first safety is to guard the rule of the right faith and to deviate in no wise from the ordinances of the Fathers; because we cannot pass over the statement of our Lord Jesus Christ who said: "*Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church*" ... [Matt. 16:18]. These [words] which were spoken, are proved by the effects of the deeds, **because in the Apostolic See the Catholic religion has always been preserved without stain. ...**

Moreover, we accept and approve all the letters of blessed LEO the Pope, which he wrote regarding the Christian religion, just as we said before, **following the Apostolic See in all things, and extolling all its ordinances.** And, therefore, I hope that I may merit to be in the one communion with you, which the Apostolic See proclaims, **in which there is the whole and the true and the perfect solidity of the Christian religion,** promising that in the future the names of those separated from the communion of the Catholic Church, that is, those not agreeing with the Apostolic See, shall not be read during the sacred mysteries. But if I shall attempt in any way to deviate from my profession, I confess that I am a confederate in my opinion with those whom I have condemned. However, I have with my own hand signed this profession of mine, and to you, HORMISDAS, the holy and venerable Pope of the City of Rome, I have directed it. (*Libellus professionis fidei* added to the epistle "*Inter ea quae*" to the bishops of Spain, April 2, 517) D171, 172

Pope Pius IX declared in *QUANTA CURA* in 1864:

For, they are not at all ashamed to affirm that "the laws of the Church do not bind in conscience, except when promulgated by the civil power; that the acts and decrees of the Roman Pontiffs relating to

religion and the Church, need the sanction and approval, or at least the assent, of the civil power;...

And, we cannot pass over in silence the boldness of those who "not enduring sound doctrine" [II Tim. 4:3], contend that "without sin and with no loss of Catholic profession, one can withhold assent and obedience to those judgments and decrees of the Apostolic See, whose object is declared to relate to the general good of the Church and its rights and discipline, provided it does not touch dogmas of faith or morals." There is no one who does not see and understand clearly and openly how opposed this is to the Catholic dogma of the plenary power divinely bestowed on the Roman Pontiff by Christ the Lord Himself of feeding, ruling, and governing the universal Church.

In such great perversity of evil opinions, therefore, We, truly mindful of Our Apostolic duty, and especially solicitous about our most holy religion, about sound doctrine and the salvation of souls divinely entrusted to Us, and about the good of human society itself, have decided to lift Our Apostolic voice again. And so all and each evil opinion and doctrine individually mentioned in this letter, by Our Apostolic authority *We reject, proscribe, and condemn;* and We wish and command that they be considered as absolutely rejected, proscribed, and condemned by all the sons of the Catholic Church.

THE FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL and Pope Pius IX declared:

And since the sentiment of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be passed over when He says: 'Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church' [Matt. 16: 18], these words which were spoken are proven true by actual results, since in the Apostolic See the Catholic religion has always been preserved untainted, and holy doctrine celebrated. Desiring, then, least of all to be separated from the faith and teaching of this [Apostolic See], We hope that We may deserve to be in the one communion which the Apostolic See proclaims, in which the solidarity of the Christian religion is whole and true.

Pope Leo XIII declared in *Aeterni Patris* on August 4, 1879:

A wise man, therefore, would not accuse faith and look upon it as opposed to reason and natural truths, but would rather offer heartfelt thanks to God, and sincerely rejoice that, in the density of ignorance and in the flood-tide of error, holy faith, like a friendly star, shines down upon his path and points out to him the fair gate of truth beyond all danger of wandering.

In his apostolic letter *Praeclara Gratulationis Publicae*, Pope Leo XIII declared on June 20, 1894:

May you thus return to that one Holy Faith which has been handed down both to Us and to you from time immemorial; which your forefathers preserved untainted, and which was enhanced by the rival splendor of the Virtues, the great genius, and the sublime learning of St. Athanasius and St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzum and St. John Chrysostom, the two Saints who bore the name of Cyril, and so many other great men whose glory belongs as a common inheritance to the East and to the West.

Pope Leo XIII declared in *Satis Cognitum* on June 29, 1896:

There can be nothing more dangerous than those heretics who admit nearly the whole cycle of doctrine, and yet by one word, as with a drop of poison, infect the real and simple faith taught by our Lord and handed down by Apostolic tradition" (Auctor *Tract. de Fide Orthodoxa contra Arianos*)....

The practice of the Church has always been the same, as is shown by the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, who were wont to hold as outside Catholic communion, and alien to the Church, whoever would recede in the least degree from any point of doctrine proposed by her authoritative Magisterium....

St. Augustine notes that other heresies may spring up, to a single one of which, should any one give his assent, he is by the very fact cut off from Catholic unity. "No one who merely disbelieves in all (these

heresies) can for that reason regard himself as a Catholic or call himself one. For there may be or may arise some other heresies, which are not set out in this work of ours, and, if any one holds to one single one of these he is not a Catholic" (S. Augustinus, *De Haeresibus*, n. 88)...

And as souls cannot be perfectly united in charity unless minds agree in faith, he wishes all to hold the same faith: "One Lord, one faith," and this so perfectly one as to prevent all danger of error: "that henceforth we be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. iv., 14): and this he teaches is to be observed, not for a time only - "but until we all meet in the unity of faith...unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ" (13). But, in what has Christ placed the primary principle, and the means of preserving this unity? In that - "He gave some Apostles - and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (11-12).
...

In this wise, all cause for doubting being removed, can it be lawful for anyone to reject any one of those truths without by the very fact falling into heresy? without separating himself from the Church? - without repudiating in one sweeping act the whole of Christian teaching? For such is the nature of faith that nothing can be more absurd than to accept some things and reject others...

But he who dissents even in one point from divinely revealed truth absolutely rejects all faith, since he thereby refuses to honour God as the supreme truth and the *formal motive of faith*.

Pope Pius XI declared in *Quas Primas* n. 22 on Dec. 11, 1925:

Not least among the blessings which have resulted from the public and legitimate honor paid to the Blessed Virgin and the saints is the perfect and perpetual immunity of the Church from error and heresy.

In *Iniquis Afflictisque* Pope Pius XI declared on Nov. 18, 1926:

28. No one, surely, Venerable Brothers, can hazard a prediction or foresee in imagination the hour when the good God will bring to an end such calamities. We do know this much: The day will come when the Church of Mexico will have respite from this veritable tempest of hatred, for the reason that, according to the words of God "there is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord" (Prov. xxi, 30) and "the gates of hell shall not prevail" (Matt. xvi, 18) against the Spotless Bride of Christ.

Pope Pius XI also declared in *Rappresentanti in Terra* on Dec. 31, 1929:

17. The second title is the supernatural motherhood, in virtue of which the Church, spotless spouse of Christ, generates, nurtures and educates souls in the divine life of grace, with her Sacraments and her doctrine. With good reason then does St. Augustine maintain: "He has not God for father who refuses to have the Church as mother." [9]

18. Hence it is that in this proper object of her mission, that is, "in faith and morals, God Himself has made the Church sharer in the divine magisterium and, by a special privilege, granted her immunity from error; hence she is the mistress of men, supreme and absolutely sure, and she has inherent in herself an inviolable right to freedom in teaching.'

Pope Pius XII twice called the Church the Spotless Spouse and once the Spotless Bride of Christ in *Mystici Corporis Christi*.

In *Haurietis Aquas*, Pope Pius XII declared on May 15, 1956:

100. From what We have so far explained, venerable brethren, it is clear that the faithful must seek from Scripture, tradition and the sacred liturgy as from a deep untainted source, the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus if they desire to penetrate its inner nature and by piously meditating on it, receive the nourishment for the fostering and development of their religious fervor.

These Catholic teachings confirm the position of sedevacantism. The Catholic Faith is holy in all things and it cannot go astray with a heretical pope decreeing chaos and error by law and decree. In other words, the Catholic Church cannot go through a *Passion* instigated by popes as Salza and Siscoe imply in their articles, interviews, and heretical book.

This blasphemous attack from pseudo-traditionalists may be the greatest diabolical form of modernism yet.