

**Objection 1:** The Gates of Hell cannot prevail against the Church, as Christ said (Matthew 16). He said He would be with His Church all the days until the end of the world (Matthew 28). What you are saying is contrary to the promises of Christ.

Extract taken with the author's permission from:

[The Sedevacantist Delusion: Why Vatican II's Clash with Sedevacantism Supports Eastern Orthodoxy](#)

- by John C. Pontrello (August 2015)

<https://youtu.be/fNtbeX1MRQM>

## On Indefectibility:

### Part III: Defection of Rome: Summary

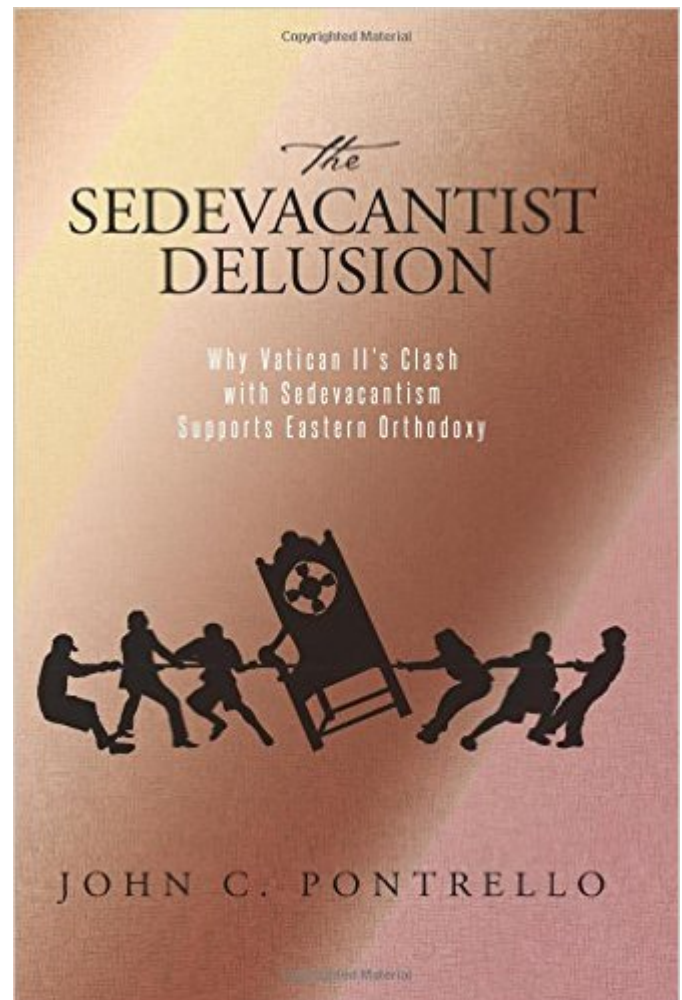
(Pages 53-58)

**Note:** The use of "Dimond" in the following text refers to Frederick "Michael" and Robert "Peter" Dimond, the Dimond brothers running the MHFM today.

Non-Sedevacantists object to Sedevacantism because *"The Gates of Hell cannot prevail against the Church, as Christ said (Matthew 16). He said He would be with His Church all the days until the end of the world (Matthew 28). What you are saying is contrary to the promises of Christ."* <sup>(120)</sup>

My position is agreement with this objection; the Sedevacantists contradict the Church's indefectibility in numerous ways. The first principal heresy of the Sedevacantists is that a defection of the Roman See occurred in fact. Dimond responds by contending that the Sedevacantist thesis does not involve a defection of the Church, and he relies on an abbreviated definition of indefectibility for support. I compared three definitions of the doctrine of indefectibility with Dimond's definition in order to demonstrate the Sedevacantists' shortcomings.

*The Creed Explained* by Rev. Arthur Devine describes indefectibility as pertaining to the Church's being or existence; its authority, perpetuity, visibility and immutability; the Apostolic See specifically; the Church's essential constitutional properties and attributes; and that indefectibility precludes deception. Devine also identified heresies pertaining to indefectibility, such as: the whole Church can fail entirely for a time;



**Objection 1: The Gates of Hell cannot prevail against the Church, as Christ said (Matthew 16). He said He would be with His Church all the days until the end of the world (Matthew 28). What you are saying is contrary to the promises of Christ.**

the visible Church can fail but not the invisible Church; and the Church can fail in part, at least for a time and even always, by losing this or that attribute or perfection or retaining it but maimed and vitiated. <sup>(121)</sup>

*Christian Apologetics* by Rev. W. Devivier defines the Church's indefectibility in the perpetuation of its interior constitution and exterior form and in the preservation of all its properties and prerogatives. Devivier says the Church will never be deprived of its constituent elements, including its members, chiefs, and organization. The Church's essential properties and divine prerogatives are also indefectible, and they include its unity, sanctity, catholicity, authority, and infallibility. Devivier points out that indefectibility applies to the Church as a whole, not to each of its parts or particular churches. Lastly, Devivier identifies the following heresy: the invisible Church cannot fail, but the visible Church can fail even for short durations. <sup>(122)</sup>

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* describes the Church's indefectibility as its ability to preserve its essential characteristics unimpaired, the impossibility of constitutional change, its incorruptibility in faith or morals, its inability to lose its apostolic hierarchy or sacraments, its incapacity to suffer substantial change, and that the Church cannot err in defining the truths of revelation. Additionally *The Catholic Encyclopedia* states that indefectibility does not guarantee each part of the Church against heresy or apostasy, only the corporate body. Only to one particular Church's indefectibility assured – *the Roman See*. <sup>(123)</sup>

Dimond's definition of indefectibility is incomplete and leaves out numerous distinctions that would reveal deficiencies of Sedevacantism. Indefectibility is more than a continuance of believers sharing the same faith until the end of time. Indefectibility tells us that for any Church to be considered Roman Catholic, it must be identifiable by all of her essential components, attributes, and properties, even if she were reduced to a remnant of faithful. The "remnant Church" theory that the Sedevacantists promote is false and misleading because it teaches that a diminished Church in one or more essential areas is all that has survived the Second Vatican Council. By definition a diminished Church in any of its essential areas constitutes a defection.

Essence has been defined as a set of attributes that make an entity or substance what it is, that it has by necessity, and without which it would lose its identity. <sup>(124)</sup> In the analogy of the Church to the Barque of Peter; *Barque* signifies *Church* and *of Peter* signifies *of Rome* so that if her crew and passengers left the ship, they could no longer be identified as members of the Roman Catholic Church. Sedevacantists err in considering the barque itself as inessential to the existence and perpetuation of the Church and in believing its passengers can sever connection to it without losing their own identities. All Sedevacantists lost their Roman Catholic identities when they severed connection with the foundation of the Catholic Church.

The papacy is the foundation of Roman Catholicism; remove it or divide it and the whole institution crumbles to the earth. If the Church's foundation were articles of faith, such as are found in the Creeds

**Objection 1: The Gates of Hell cannot prevail against the Church, as Christ said (Matthew 16). He said He would be with His Church all the days until the end of the world (Matthew 28). What you are saying is contrary to the promises of Christ.**

of Catholic Faith, Sedevacantism would carry weight. Like the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Sedevacantists would then be able to condemn the Roman Catholic Church for falling into heresy or apostasy without contravening indefectibility of the entire Catholic Church.

The papacy consists of the following constituent components: the Apostle Peter, the sacred primacy (authority), Rome (the Holy See), and the Roman Pontiff. These constituent parts are mutually dependent; they cannot be divided without frustrating the end for which they exist—unity in the Church. The Sedevacantists do not have each of these components and must divide and redefine the papacy in order to make Sedevacantism *appear* to work.

According to the doctrine of indefectibility, individual parts of the Catholic Church as a whole can defect or apostatize but never the main stem, which is essentially comprised in the Roman Church. Because the Church founded by Christ is essentially juridical, the Roman Church is comprised of not only the Roman Pontiff but also the whole ensemble of departments or ministries that assist him with the government of the Church. These include the Roman congregations, tribunals, and the offices of Curia. <sup>(125)</sup>

Two prevailing Sedevacantist theories attempt to explain the Roman Church's defection.

- 1) The Roman Church, Vicar of Christ, central government, and episcopal body defected from the Catholic faith and formally espoused heresy at some arbitrary point in time.
- 2) Non-Catholic infiltrators overthrew the Roman Church and replaced her visible head, central government, episcopal body, and seven sacraments with counterfeits at some arbitrary point in time.

For Sedevacantism to be true by either theory, a defection of the Church had to come first. Any defection of the Church, whether active or passive, is still a defection.

Indefectibility guarantees that the Church will never lose her apostolic hierarchy or sacraments. The Church is comprised of a visible head and an adjoined body comprised of the episcopacy; together they form the Church's essential hierarchical structure. The body of the Church militant is comprised of two parts, the *ecclesia docens* and the *ecclesia audiens*. Many Sedevacantists err in believing that the *ecclesia audiens* can perpetuate the Roman Catholic Church, but only the *ecclesia docens* belongs to the Church's indefectible constitution.

Concerning the indefectibility of the apostolic hierarchy and sacraments, two schools of Sedevacantism exist and are at odds with each other. The first school believes the apostolic hierarchy and sacraments are perpetuated after Vatican II by way of self-constituted individuals. The first school contradicts indefectibility because self-constituted apostolic hierarchy does not exist in the Church founded by Jesus Christ, nor could the Church ever experience a crisis that could warrant such a thing unless the Church first defected according to its own terms. All Sedevacantist clergy, along with all heretics and schismatics

**Objection 1: The Gates of Hell cannot prevail against the Church, as Christ said (Matthew 16). He said He would be with His Church all the days until the end of the world (Matthew 28). What you are saying is contrary to the promises of Christ.**

throughout the history of the Church, lost a valid claim to apostolicity and the unity of the church when they severed communion with Rome.

The second school of Sedevacantism consists of those who believe the apostolic hierarchy and sacraments have been lost indefinitely. Both schools contradict indefectibility by proposing that the Roman Catholic Church exists without Rome and the visible Church exists wherever faithful are found (similar to Protestantism's invisible Church ecclesiology).

All Sedevacantists deny the *possibility* of a defection of the Church while simultaneously proposing that a defection has occurred *in fact*. Their confusion is a consequence of recognizing a defection in reality while knowing it could never happen. The Sedevacantists have assumed the Church's contradictions in an attempt to save its infallibility.

The Sedevacantists err in believing they can have both a great apostasy involving the Roman Church and the doctrine of indefectibility. The truth is that either the Roman Church is in a period of *sede vacante* because of a defection or else the present Roman Church headed by Pope Francis is still the Roman Catholic Church because indefectibility guarantees it.

## End Notes

[120](#): Dimond, the truth, 298.

[121](#): Devine, The Creed Explained, 298-292

[122](#): Devivier, Christian Apologetics, 393

[123](#): Joyce, The Catholic Encyclopedia, 756

[124](#): Essence

[125](#): Ojetti, The Catholic Encyclopedia, 147.