

GALLICANISM

Gallicanism is the collective name for various theories maintaining that the church and king of France had ecclesiastical rights of their own, independent and exclusive of the jurisdiction of the Pope. Gallicanism had two distinct sides, a constitutional and a dogmatic, though both were generally held together, the second serving as the logical basis of the first. And neither is intelligible, except in relation to the rival theory of Ultramontanism.

Dogmatic Gallicanism was concerned with the question of ecclesiastical government. It maintained that the church's infallible authority was committed to pope and bishops jointly expressed in an Ecumenical Council of the whole Church. The Pope decided in the first instance, but his judgments must be tacitly or expressly confirmed by the bishops before they had the force of law. This ancient theory survived much longer in France than in other Catholic countries. Hence the name of Gallican is loosely given to all its modern upholders, whether of French nationality or not.

Constitutional Gallicanism dealt with the relation of church and state in France. It began in the 13th century, as a protest against the theocratic pretensions of the medieval popes. They claimed that they, as vicars of Christ, had the right to interfere in the temporal concerns of princes, and even to depose sovereigns of whom they disapproved. Gallicanism answered that kings held their power directly of God; hence their temporal concerns lay altogether outside the jurisdiction of the pope.

During the troubles of the Protestant Reformation era, when the papal deposing power threatened to become a reality, the Gallican theory became of great importance. It was elaborated, and connected with dogmatic Gallicanism, by the famous theologian, Edmond Richer (1559-1631), and finally incorporated by Bossuet in a solemn Declaration of the French Clergy, made in 1682. This document lays down:

- (1) that the temporal sovereignty of kings is independent of the pope;
- (2) that an ecumenical council is above the pope;
- (3) that the ancient liberties of the Gallican Church are sacred;
- (4) that the infallible teaching authority of the church belongs to pope and bishops jointly.

This declaration led to a violent quarrel with Rome, and was officially withdrawn in 1693, though its doctrines continued to be largely held. They were asserted in

an extreme form in the Civil Constitution of the Clergy which almost severed connection between France and the Papacy. In 1802 Napoleon contented himself by embodying Bossuet's declaration textually in a statute. Long before his time, however, the issue had been narrowed down to determining exactly how far the Pope should be allowed to interfere in French ecclesiastical affairs.

Down to the repeal of the Concordat in 1905 all French governments continued to uphold two of the ancient "Gallican Liberties." The secular courts took cognizance of ecclesiastical affairs whenever the law of the land was alleged to have been broken; and papal bulls were not allowed to be published without the permission of the state.