

The pseudo-anti-liberal illusion

For some time now, certain persons have been publishing the most grievous accusations against the superiors of the SSPX to an almost obsessive degree without realising that they themselves have lost contact with reality; they have fallen into errors which I will call “pseudo-anti-liberal”, because they pretend to be anti-liberal, though they themselves fall into the very defect they condemn, as wrote St Paul: “Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou dost the same things which thou judgest” (Rom. 2:1).

A CANONICAL REGULARISATION – SOMETHING GOOD IN ITSELF

After having defined the notion of a liberal – someone who rejects the authority of God and of His Law – in order to conclude that the authorities of the SSPX are liberal, they logically need to prove that these authorities have rejected God and His Law. Now, not only have they failed to prove that Bishop Fellay and the authorities of the SSPX reject God and His Law, they have also failed to recognise that is precisely in order to obey the Law of God that – following the example of Archbishop Lefebvre (who always rejected sedevacantism) – these authorities are attached to the Catholic Church, as it is concretely today (sadly disfigured by modernism and liberalism as Christ was disfigured on the Cross), but remaining nonetheless the Catholic Church founded by Christ on Peter and against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail. St Thomas Aquinas explains that all law is essentially an *order, ordo rationis*: this submission to the Law of God therefore implies necessarily the love of order, and thus the desire to *be in order* within the Church of God; a canonical regularisation has no other purpose. There is therefore nothing liberal in this, on the contrary.

DISTINCTION: SUBMISSION TO THE SUCCESSOR OF PETER

Where is the problem then? It comes from the fact that many of those who possess authority in the Church today are infected by liberalism to diverse degrees. This neither Bishop Fellay nor any priest of the SSPX denies. But, while Bishop Fellay and the faithful priests of the SSPX, following the example of Archbishop Lefebvre, make the distinction between being subject to the successor of Peter as successor of Peter and not as liberal, nay, while resisting his liberalism, those who oppose Bishop Fellay seems to be viscerally unable to make such distinction and persevere in their ignorance of the teaching of St Augustine against the Donatists: in the Catholic Church communion with the bad ones does not harm the good ones so long as they do not consent to their evilness. The words *bad ones* translate the Latin *mali*. Put *liberals* in place of *bad ones*, since liberalism is bad, and the principle of St Augustine is exactly the position of Bishop Fellay and the refutation of those who oppose him: in the Catholic Church, communion with the *liberals* does not harm the good ones so long as they do not consent with their *liberalism*.

To understand the principle of St Augustine, one must remember the great truth which Father Calmel often recalled: the head of the Church is Christ; the Pope is only his vicar. It is because the communion with the members of the Church is first of all communion with Christ that it does not harm the goods, so long as they do not consent to the evil. And it is because they forget Christ at the head of the Church that certain persons are so afraid of this communion, paying attention only to the human side of the Church and forgetting the Sacred Heart who is in control of everything in His Church. Their zeal so bitter – so opposed to the spirit of Archbishop Lefebvre – manifests this neglect of the Sacred Heart. Let us pray for them.

DEGREES OF LIBERALISM

Archbishop Lefebvre often pointed out that there are many degrees of liberalism. Some reject systematically the very principle of any law and any obligation: such liberals have clearly not the true Faith. Others, while recognising God and His Law, and all the truths of the Catholic Faith, do not

apply them sufficiently to concrete situations or don't have the courage to recognise their consequences in modern society; and among these liberals there are also many degrees. These still have the Faith, though they deserve this reproach of Our Lord to His Apostles: "Oh ye of little faith!" (Mt. 8:26, 17:16, etc.) One must not therefore indifferently condemn all those infected by liberalism, as if they were all equally guilty of the most horrible crime, viz. to be at war with God. Moreover one ought not systematically to interpret every action of a liberal as evil; in the 19th century, some great anti-liberal Catholics such as Pope Pius IX or Cardinal Pie did not fear to praise the good done by some liberals such as Mgr Dupanloup or the Count Montalembert, while vigorously denouncing their liberalism.

THE VISIBLE CHURCH

Moreover there is a surprising dearth of logic in the Bishop Fellay's accusers. I quote: "They say we must rejoin the visible Church because that is the Catholic Church. But the Anglican 'church' is still visible, all over England. Does that make it Catholic?" This argument would stand only if the leaders of the SSPX would have said: "because it is visible, it is Catholic," or "all visible churches are Catholic." But they evidently have not said anything like this; thus the pretended rebuttal ("But the Anglican...") is a mere sophism.

The truth upon which Bishop Fellay and the authorities of the SSPX insist is that the Catholic Church is visible, not only yesterday but also today. It was this visible, concrete, Roman, Catholic Church which yesterday was acknowledged by Archbishop Lefebvre and which today is recognised by Bishop Fellay and the SSPX (of which we have been living members from its beginning in 1970, and in which our duty is to be "in order"). There is nothing liberal in all that.

If those who oppose Bishop Fellay today reject this visible, concrete, Roman Catholic Church, which church is theirs? Where is it? Is it visible? Or is it like their "loose association", without authority nor obligations? Such a concept has nothing Catholic about it! Not that I think that this is their idea of the Church. But it seems to me that their error consists in considering the unity of the Church as secondary and accessory with regards to the Faith, as if having the Faith would dispense them from ecclesiastical communion with other members of the Church if these be liberals. Indubitably, one ought to hold fast to the Faith in all its purity, because "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6); but faith without charity does not profit anything (1 Cor. 13:2). It is charity, "the bond of perfection" (Col. 3:14), which obliges us to keep that bond of communion, as St Augustine often explained (Archbishop di Noia has given some beautiful passages on this matter, and one could easily find a great number of similar ones). Here is a real and odd danger: to save the traditional faith, they lean towards the *sola fide*?

Three months ago, I wrote in a text entitled *Various churches?*: "One can read [in one of their articles]: 'That part alone of the visible Church is Catholic which is one, holy, universal and apostolic. The rest is various sorts of rot.' Immediately the question is raised: is the Catholic Church merely 'a part of the visible Church'? And this leads to another more fundamental question: is it legitimate to distinguish between the Catholic Church, Christ's Church and the visible Church? On the contrary, does not the Catholic Faith oblige us to profess the identity between Christ's Church, the Catholic Church and the visible Church? Yes! Christ's Church is the Catholic Church, and this Church is visible!" Such was the faith of Archbishop Lefebvre.

THE FIGHT AGAINST 'CONCILIAR ROME'

It seems to me that those who "never understood the faith of Archbishop Lefebvre" are truly those who reject this visible, concrete, Roman Catholic Church, in which Archbishop Lefebvre believed and to which he devoted his whole life, his last years included.

Another accusation against Bishop Fellay is that he “uses his authority to oblige his inferiors to follow a direction contrary to that which they had when they joined the SSPX, i.e. the refusal of the fight against the Conciliar Rome.” From the start, one must clarify the expression *conciliar Rome*: if by that they mean the conciliar *spirit*, the errors of Vatican II and their multiple applications, such an accusation is a calumny, i.e. it is false and grievously offending to the reputation of Bishop Fellay. The very choice of the SSPX members for the theological discussions with Rome shows that bishop Fellay wanted no weakness in the defence of the Catholic truth against the conciliar novelties, and at the very beginning of last year he clearly set as his *first principle*: no compromise on the Faith! And the following months only proved that he was faithful to this principle, in spite of the false prophecies announcing that he would compromise the SSPX. If on the contrary one means by *conciliar Rome* another ecclesial structure than that of the Catholic Church, then one must say that such persons had a wrong conception of the crisis of the Church, a conception other than that of Archbishop Lefebvre! No, Bishop Fellay is not a “depraved father”, but rather a faithful father (with a small number of rebel children!)

FOR CATHOLIC ROME

Let us add, and this is a fundamental argument, that the essential position of Archbishop Lefebvre is not primarily a position *against* but rather a position *for*. It was because he was *for* a total fidelity to the Catholic Faith of all times, that Archbishop Lefebvre was *against* the conciliar novelties. Such an attitude first of all *for* and then *against* is very clear in his famous *Declaration*: “We adhere with our whole heart, and with our whole soul to Catholic Rome, the Guardian of the Catholic Faith and of those traditions necessary for the maintenance of that Faith, to eternal Rome, Mistress of Wisdom and Truth. On the contrary we refuse and have always refused to follow the Rome of neo Modernist and neo Protestant tendencies, such as were clearly manifested during the Second Vatican Council, and after the Council in all the resulting reforms.” But those who set themselves primarily *against* a situation of triumphant modernism as that of the 70s and 80s, can no longer position themselves in a different situation, as under Benedict XVI where there was an effort (incomplete but real) to correct some evident deviations and to return to a more traditional approach to liturgy and the life of the Church. They do not know how to position themselves because they did not have (or forgot) the superior positive principle, which itself remains valid in every situation.

INEPT RESISTANCE

There is another all too frequent illusion among these critics: they compare their resistance to Bishop Fellay with the resistance of Archbishop Lefebvre to the conciliar novelties; we hear them put in parallel “the conciliar revolution and the accordist revolution.” But this comparison rather shows the inanity of their position. Nay, this comparison turns out to be rather a striking contrast. We can consider three aspects. First, Archbishop Lefebvre resisted the conciliar novelties after they were introduced: it was after the Council and after the New Mass that he started his work at Ecône; it was after Assisi that he did the Consecrations. On the contrary, it was before any compromise, in the fear of a future compromise which never came that these critics attack bishop Fellay. Secondly, let us consider the magnitude of the cause: on one hand, the Council, the New Mass (and the whole liturgical reform, since no sacrament was spared), and Assisi: these are huge scandals, causing immense damages to millions of souls. On the other side, they put forth a few words in an impromptu interview and on a few other occasions that one can count on one’s hand. There is here such a contrast that one can but wonder at the blindness of those who do not see it. Thirdly Archbishop Lefebvre never requested the resignation of Paul VI in spite of the gravity of the conciliar and liturgical reforms, nor of John Paul II in spite of the gravity of Assisi; but these critics request the resignation of Bishop Fellay. St Augustine teaches that it is not suffering and death that makes the martyr, but first and foremost his cause: Archbishop Lefebvre had a just and proportionate cause for his resistance to the conciliar and liturgical novelties, but Bishop Fellay’s critics have no proportion for their resistance which is bare rebellion.

LIBERAL ANTI-LIBERALS

I wrote at the beginning that “they pretend to be anti-liberal, though they themselves fall into the very defect they condemn.” Indeed, the characteristic of liberals is the refusal of authority, be it the authority of dogmatic truth, of divine law or ecclesiastical authority. “The liberal is a fanatic of independence, he promotes it even to the point of absurdity, in all domains”, this is how Canon Roussel defined him, quoted by Archbishop Lefebvre (*They have uncrowned Him*, p.14). And now, behold our great anti-liberals are proposing “independent cells”, i.e. a loose association among them... without authority! Because they have not known how to obey, now they know not how to command. And since authority comes from above, having cut themselves from their legitimate superiors, they have lost all authority. On the contrary, Archbishop Lefebvre founded his Society, as a living branch well rooted in the trunk of the Church by the canonical approval of Mgr Charrière, and thus with a legitimate line of authority, as any truly Catholic work... not so among our critics. Archbishop Lefebvre himself knew how to exercise this authority (among other examples, by expelling the sedevacantists). Here again one sees the contrast between the legitimate resistance of Archbishop Lefebvre and the rebellion of our critics, who, by their refusal of authority, have fallen in the very fault that they criticised.

There is a great illusion in pretending to “rely on a model of paternity (which includes authority) and not on an authoritative structure as such”, because precisely by rejecting that *authoritative structure* they fall back willy-nilly on a paternity without authority, typical of liberalism. They say: “if it weren’t contradictory, I would envisage a structure without authority, but with paternity, yes, with paternity! This is indispensable!” Unfortunately for them, it is contradictory! The very word *authority* comes from the word *author*; a father who would not be the *author* of his children would not really be father! A father who would refuse to have a true authority on his children would be... a liberal father! There is no true paternity without authority.

They do well to denounce liberalism as “a religion with no rules except their own will.” But why then are they making a free association of priests, association with no rules except their own will?

Let us pray that they correct themselves and humbly ask to be readmitted in the Society of St Pius X. May St Joseph obtain this grace for them!

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