

SILENT MAJOR

December 7, 2024

In all things modern, Luther led the way?

Then heeding modern man must lead astray.

What on earth is a silent Major? Is it an army officer who does not talk much? Actually, no. It is a way of naming perhaps the most interesting feature of the book written by Archbishop Georg Gänswein, published last year, entitled *“Who believes is not alone. My life beside Benedict XVI.”* Gänswein was Pope Benedict’s choice to be his private secretary from 2003 to the Pope’s death on the last day of 2022. As secretary to the Pope for all those years, Gänswein was closely involved in affairs of the Catholic Church at the very top, and his book naturally relates interesting details of many of these affairs. However, from the standpoint of Catholic Tradition, what is of greatest interest is the Silent Major.

In logic, “Silent Major” names that essential part of a syllogism when it goes unmentioned, as one way of abbreviating a syllogism expressed in full, because the content of the Silent Major is supposedly too obvious to need mentioning. A syllogism is an argument consisting of three connected propositions, two Premises, Major and Minor, and the Conclusion which can be deduced from the two Premises when linked together. The Major might be compared to an expectant mother, the Minor to a mid-wife, and the Conclusion to the baby. Thus the Major implicitly includes the Conclusion, but the Minor is needed to make that Conclusion explicit by showing that is included in the Major.

Thus the most famous syllogism of all runs – Major: “All men are rational,” Minor: “Socrates is a man,” Conclusion: “Therefore Socrates is rational.” With the Silent Major the syllogism might be abbreviated as, “Socrates is a man, so he

is bound to be rational,” or shorter still, “Being a man, Socrates is rational.” In daily life we are all the time syllogising, or deducing one thing from another two things, but it is rare for us to lay out the syllogisms in full. Frequently we leave out the Major or the Minor, but more frequently the Major, and then we have a case of the Silent Major. Here are two more examples – “Football is a sport, so it’s a waste of good time.” And “Catholic Tradition does not get through to modern man, it’s a waste of time.” The Silent Majors here are that “All sport is a waste of time,” and “Any religion is useless which does not get through to modern man.”

Thus in his book *Gänswein* paints a basically sympathetic portrait of life inside the Vatican and especially of Pope Ratzinger himself as a brilliant but humble man, basically an academic who never had any desire to be Pope because he would have preferred to retire somewhere calm where he could read and write books. In fact he wrote 66 of them, and they are no doubt full of many wise and traditional insights, as was his daily life, as *Gänswein* relates. This why many Traditionalists at that time put their hope and trust in him. Yet ultimately the Pope disappointed them. Why? Because of the Silent Major.

For indeed Ratzinger, like all modernists, was obsessed with getting through to modern man. Therefore for him the unchanging Truth of Catholic Tradition which he knew, always had to be at least expressed anew in a way that would fit modern man. But Luther, said a famous German “philosopher,” Johann Fichte (1762–1814) was “the first modern man.” And read “*Three Reformers*” of Jacques Maritain to see how today’s world is marinated in the revolt of Luther against the Catholic Church, in fact against God. So how is any modernist going to adapt godly Truth to godless modern man without resorting to ambiguity, on the way to outright heresy, which can also be found in the writings of Joseph Ratzinger?

And what weight can there be behind the best insights of Archbishop, Cardinal or Pope Ratzinger? If he believes in the

Silent Major – “Catholicism must get through to modern man” – then at best he can only half believe in Catholic Truth. But Catholic Truth is all or nothing. If I believe in just one heresy, I have lost the Catholic Faith. Archbishop Lefebvre was not exaggerating when he said in 1990 that Rome had lost the Faith. Yet Gänswain portrays apostate Rome and Romans as though they are quite normal. He can only be himself a victim of the Silent Major.

Kyrie eleison.