

Authentic Thomism

July 30, 2016

The way in which modernism can combine apparent sincerity and good faith with dissolution of the truth is so dangerous for the real faith of Catholics that it can hardly be described or analysed too often. The recent question of a Traditional layman provides another opportunity to do so. He asks whether a priest of the Society of St Pius X is wise who reads regularly a Conciliar Thomist review, on the grounds that the SSPX has not provided as of yet any such regular reading matter on the thought and doctrine of the Church's great philosopher and theologian, St Thomas Aquinas. The answer is that this priest had better, at the least, be very careful, because Conciliar Thomism is a contradiction in real terms which can, in modernist terms, easily be made to seem – and here is the problem – non-contradictory.

Conciliar Thomism is a contradiction in real terms because the teaching of St Thomas strives, and in huge measure succeeds, to conform to the one and only order planted in real things outside our minds by the one and only real God. On the contrary, Vatican II proceeded from the supposition that modern man has destabilised this God-centred and static order in things (see the opening section of "Gaudium et Spes"), and therefore for God's religion to make any sense to modern man, it must be re-cast in man-centred and dynamic terms which make Thomism no longer uniquely faithful to reality, but somewhat out of date.

In modernist terms Thomism may remain a historic monument of human thinking, a superb intellectual system, whose logic and consistency are wholly admirable. Thus SSPX seminarians, for instance, can learn it like a telephone directory, but if SSPX seminaries are being brought under the spell of Vatican II, the seminarians will no longer see Thomism as the one and only way to combat modern errors, and they will easily be charmed

and seduced by many other more “up-to-date” ways of thinking about the world. In brief, modernists will not challenge Thomism on its own ground, indeed they can claim to agree with it entirely on its own ground. They will merely claim that in modern times the ground has shifted, and so Thomism is no longer uniquely valid, or is no longer the one and only way of getting at truth. Thus followers of Vatican II can really think that they agree with Thomism, but they do not agree with it at all.

Let elementary arithmetic once more illustrate the point. Two and two are four, and in real life, in reality, they can be nothing else, neither three nor five. But a modern arithmetician might say, “To say that two and two are uniquely or exclusively four, is too narrow-minded. It is much more creative and progressive to say that they can also be five or six or – let us be open-minded – Six Million!” And because this modern arithmetician does not exclude two and two being four, but gladly includes it in his broad-mindedness, he can sincerely believe that his arithmetic does not contradict the old arithmetic. But who cannot see that in reality he is totally undermining the “old” and true arithmetic? That arithmetic which corresponds to the one reality outside our minds not only includes two and two being four, but also absolutely excludes their being anything else. And this arithmetic alone corresponds to that one reality, or, is true. Thus the believing and thinking which alone correspond to God’s one order of natural and supernatural reality existed of course for many centuries before St Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). He merely put it all together in an incomparable system. But it is not the system that makes it true. What makes it uniquely true as a system is its unique correspondence as a system to reality.

Therefore if the writers in this Thomistic review are also professed followers of Vatican II, they will surely not believe that Thomism is, in the sense presented here, unique.

In which case they might be called telephone-book "Thomists," but they are certainly not true Thomists. Will the priest mentioned above always be able to distinguish? Not if he is letting himself right now be led towards Vatican II.

Kyrie eleison.