

# Popes Fallible

September 13, 2014

Neither liberals nor sedevacantists appreciate being told that they are like heads and tails of the same coin, but it is true. For instance, neither of them can conceive of a third alternative. See for instance in his *Letter to Three Bishops* of April 14, 2012 , how Bishop Fellay could see no alternative to his liberalism except sedevacantism. Conversely, for many a sedevacantist if one accepts that any of the Conciliar Popes has really been Pope, then one can only be a liberal, and if one criticises sedevacantism, then one is promoting liberalism. But not at all!

Why not? Because both of them are making the same error of exaggerating the Pope's infallibility. Why? Might it be because both of them are modern men who believe more in persons than in institutions? And why should that be a feature of modern men? Because from more or less Protestantism onwards, fewer and fewer institutions have truly sought the common good, while more and more seek some private interest such as money (my claim on you), which of course diminishes our respect for them. For instance, good men saved for a while the rotten institution of modern banking from having immediately all its evil effects, but the rotten bankers are at last showing what the institutions of fractional reserve banking and central banks were, in themselves, from the beginning. The Devil is in modern structures, thanks to the enemies of God and man.

So it is understandable if modern Catholics have tended to put too much faith in the Pope and too little in the Church, and here is the answer to that reader who asked me why I do not write about infallibility in the same way that the classic Catholic theology manuals do. Those manuals are marvellous in their way, but they were all written before Vatican II, and they tended to attach to the Pope an infallibility which

belongs to the Church. For instance, the summit of infallibility is liable to be presented in the manuals as a solemn definition by the Pope, or by Pope with Council, but in any case by the Pope. The liberal-sedevacantist dilemma has been the consequence and, as it were, a punishment of this tendency to overrate the person and underrate the institution, because the Church is no merely human institution.

For, firstly, the Solemn Magisterium's snow-cap on the Ordinary Magisterium's mountain is its summit only in a very limited way – it is completely supported by the rock summit beneath the snow. And secondly, by the Church's most authoritative text on infallibility, the Definition of the truly Catholic Council of Vatican I (1870), we know that the Pope's infallibility comes from the Church, and not the other way round. When the Pope engages all four conditions necessary for *ex cathedra* teaching, then, says the Definition, he possesses **“that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his Church to enjoy in defining doctrine.”** But of course! Where else can infallibility come from, except from God? The best of human beings, and some Popes have been very good human beings, may be inerrant, i.e. make no mistakes, but as long as they have original sin they cannot be infallible as God alone can be. If they are infallible, the infallibility must come through, but from outside, their humanity, from God, who chooses to bestow it through the Catholic Church, and that infallibility need only be a momentary gift, for the duration of the Definition.

Therefore outside of a Pope's *ex cathedra* moments, nothing stops him from talking nonsense such as the new religion of Vatican II. Therefore neither liberals nor sedevacantists need or should heed that nonsense, because, as Archbishop Lefebvre said, they have 2000 years' worth of Ordinarily infallible Church teaching by which to judge that it is nonsense.

Kyrie eleison.