

Truth and Authority – I

June 12, 2021

A reader of these “Comments” was puzzled recently by what seemed to her the relatively unsatisfactory explanation given by a prestigious Traditionalist leader of his return under the authority of the official Church after he had for several years followed the lead of Archbishop Lefebvre (1905–1991), and then taken his little Congregation, in effect, back under the authority of the official local diocese and Rome. These “Comments” habitually explain the unsatisfactory nature of reasoning like his in terms of the Church’s Truth and Authority, made to be partners, but split by Vatican II (1962–1965) from one another. Our reader says she was greatly helped by this explanation, so let it be offered again to all readers

The Truth is essential to the Catholic Church as it is to no other institution on the face of the earth. If it claims, as it does, to represent the one true God who calls Himself “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn. XIV, 6), then if it were to pronounce and cling to one single untruth, it would be essentially discredited. No other human institution to remain creditable is so dependent on avoiding the least untruth. However, original sin is a tremendous reality, denied by modern man in general, but it is why truth does not naturally flourish when exposed in the market-place, as Thomas Jefferson so optimistically thought. But men’s salvation depends on God’s truth (Jn. XVIII, 37), which is why God gives His divine Authority to His divine Church to impose His divine Truths on wayward and wilful men until they submit to them.

Given then men’s sinfulness, the Church’s Authority is the essential protector and support of its Truth. For instance, Lk. XXII, 31: “Simon (Peter), I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail” = *Truth* – “ and when you have turned again” = *to the Truth*, “ strengthen your brethren” = *exercise*

your Authority. Notice here how Truth is the purpose and base of Church Authority (as Archbishop Lefebvre so uniquely understood) and precedes it, but at the same time has, for sinful men, such a need of Church Authority. For God's purposes, Truth (doctrine) and Authority (the hierarchy) are meant to be inseparable partners.

But here's the rub. At Vatican II, Catholic Authority (Pope and Conciliar Fathers) separated itself from Catholic Truth, by pretending that modernist doctrine is Catholic when it is nothing of the kind, but it can be, and was, made to look like it.

And from then on, as the Archbishop said, all Catholics were necessarily torn in two. Either they followed Catholic Authority (Pope and Bishops) and abandoned more or less of Catholic Truth (which Authority had abandoned) or they followed Catholic Truth and had to abandon more or less of Catholic Authority. Since Pope and Bishops refused resolutely to return to Catholic Truth and Tradition, then Catholics clinging to Catholic Truth had to more or less get themselves, in effect, out from under lawful Catholic Authority, or that Authority which appeared lawful. And so, the Shepherd being struck doctrinally (especially Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, because Paul VI was leading the modernist dance), then the sheep were necessarily scattered. Many were 100% Authority and no percent Doctrine. Some were, say, 85% Authority, 15% Doctrine. Others were 60% Authority, 40% Doctrine. And so on. Archbishop Lefebvre was 100% Doctrine but still 15% Authority, so to speak. He did always insist on recognising, respecting and obeying the Pope as Pope whenever the Truth (Faith) would allow him to do so.

But from the accursed Council onwards, as long as Authority went on divorcing itself from Truth, there was inside every Catholic (taking his Faith seriously) a tug-of-war going on between Catholic Truth and Catholic Authority. Now the leader whose behaviour so puzzled our reader at the outset, was and

is a serious and devout Catholic, so he is a torn man who may be assumed to have acted in three stages: firstly, he followed and devoutly obeyed with his Congregation what looked like normal Catholic Authority. Secondly, he realised that the Archbishop was right to be putting Truth before Authority, and he followed his example of “disobeying” Rome, to be faithful to Catholic Tradition. And thirdly when the Archbishop died in 1991 and his personal charisma disappeared from the scene, then the powerful magnetism of Catholic Rome reasserted itself and the tug of Authority pulled him to follow the New society back under the apparent Authority of the red buttons and mahogany desks of “Rome.”

Kyrie eleison.