

Truth First

March 1, 2014

There must be many objections to the argument of recent issues of these “Comments” that, divine truth being prior to human teachers, then the fallibility of Popes need not concern us all that much because the true Faith is behind, beyond and above them. But here is a classic objection: the Truth in itself may be above them, but to us human beings it only comes through them – “faith is by hearing” (Rom.X, 17). Thus Our Lord entrusted to Peter (i.e. the Popes) the task of confirming his brethren in the faith (Lk.XXII, 31–32). So to us Catholics the teachers are prior to the Truth which we cannot receive without them. Moreover the Holy Ghost guides them (Jn.XVI, 13), so how can I possibly tell if or when he is not doing so?

Also in Scripture lies the answer. St. Paul writes to a flock which he has instructed in the Faith: “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema.” And the point is so important that St Paul immediately repeats it: “As we said before, so now I say again: If anyone preach to you a gospel, besides that which you have received, let him be anathema” (Gal.I, 8–9)

But, a Galatian might have objected, why should we believe your gospel on your first visit to Galatia and not an eventually different one on your second? St. Paul immediately gives a first reason: “ The gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For neither did I receive it of man, nor did I learn it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal.I, 11–12). And St Paul confirms this by narrating how little contact he had with those who might have taught him, the other Apostles, before he began preaching (I, 15–19), a fact obviously verifiable by them, and he swears to the Galatians that he is not lying (I, 20). A second reason he gives a

little later, which is the miracles and experience of the Holy Spirit (III, 2–5) that the Galatians themselves had witnessed as the direct result of the preaching of Paul's first visit.

Thus Paul proves that God both taught him, and confirmed for the Galatians, the gospel of that first visit, and the contradiction between it and any different gospel the Galatians would be not only able but also obliged to discern for themselves, if they wished to save their souls. And no matter if (I,8) the preacher of the different gospel were an angel or Paul himself – or a Pope! – the Galatians would still have the absolute duty to stay with Paul's first gospel. The truth that had been set before them (III,1) the Galatians had recognized and accepted it (III, 3), just as one recognizes that 2 and 2 are 4, so it would have priority over any teacher eventually contradicting it, whatever authority to teach he might appear to have (I,9).

Thus Archbishop Lefebvre used to say that for the 19 centuries between St Paul and Vatican II the Church had preached exactly the same gospel, coming from God and ever and again confirmed by him. That gospel is, as revealed by God, Revelation; as handed down by churchmen, Tradition; as taught with authority by the Church, its Ordinary and Extraordinary Magisterium. Between that gospel and Vatican II the contradiction is obvious, so we must accept and believe Tradition, if we wish to save our souls, whatever the apparent authorities of the Church may say to the contrary. So help us God. How then can the Archbishop's own Society of St Pius X be officially seeking reconciliation with the authorities of Vatican II?

Kyrie eleison.