

Two Repentances

May 21, 2011

A reader of “Eleison Comments” asked me several months ago what made the difference between the repentance of Judas Iscariot flinging his 30 pieces of silver at the feet of the Temple authorities (Mt. XXVII,3), and that of Peter weeping bitterly at the crowing of the cock (Mt. XXVI,75). His question is a good excuse to quote pages from *The Poem of the Man-God* by Maria Valtorta (1897–1961). Our Lord (if it is indeed him – “In things uncertain, liberty”) here comments on the vision he has just granted her of the last hours of Judas Iscariot. The Italian text is slightly adapted:–

“Yes, the vision is horrendous, but not useless. Too many people think that what Judas did was not all that grave. Some even go so far as to say that it was meritorious, because without him the Redemption would not have happened and so he was justified in the eyes of God. In truth I tell you that if Hell had not already been in existence, perfectly equipped with torments, it would have been created even more horrendous in eternity for Judas, because amongst damned sinners he is the damnedest of them all, nor will his sentence ever be eased through all eternity.

“It is true that he did show remorse for his betrayal, and it could have saved him, had he turned his remorse into repentance. But he did not want to repent, and so in addition to his first crime of betrayal, on which – such is my loving weakness – I could have had mercy, he went on to blaspheme and to resist every impulse of grace which was pleading with him through each trace and memory of me that in his last desperate chase around Jerusalem he ran into, including the encounter with my Mother and her gentle words. He resisted everything. He wanted to resist. Just as he had wanted to betray me. As he wanted to curse me. As he wanted to kill himself. Where a man’s will is set – that is what counts. For good or ill.

“When somebody falls without really wanting to, I forgive him. Take Peter. He denied me. Why? He could not himself tell exactly why. Was he a coward? No. My Peter was no coward. In the Garden of Gethsemane he defied the whole pack of Temple guards to cut off Malchus’ ear in defence of me, at the risk of being killed himself for doing so. Then he fled. With no set will to do so. Then he denied me three times, but again, with no set will to do so. For the rest of his life he succeeded in staying on the blood-stained way of the Cross, my way, until he died on the cross himself. He succeeded in witnessing to me in grand style until he was killed for his unflinching faith. I defend my Peter. His running away and his denials were the last moments of his human weakness. But the set will of his higher nature was not behind those actions. Weighed down by his human weakness, it was asleep. As soon as it awoke, it did not want to remain in sin, it wanted to be perfect. I immediately forgave him. Judas’ will was set in the opposite direction . . .”

At the end of the *Poem of the Man-God* Our Lord (if it is him – I myself believe it is) dictates to Maria Valtorta the seven reasons for his granting this long series of visions of his life to the modern world. The first reason was to make real again in people’s minds the Church’s basic doctrines, ravaged by modernism. Sounds about right? The seventh reason was – “to make known the mystery of Judas,” how a soul so highly gifted by God could so fall.

Kyrie eleison.