

# Benedict's Ecumenism I

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A valuable study of conciliar ecumenism appeared in Germany a few years ago, written by a certain Dr. Wolfgang Schüler. In "Benedict XVI and How the Church Views Itself," he argues that the ecumenism let loose by Vatican II transformed the Church's understanding of itself, and he proves by a series of textual quotations that Joseph Ratzinger as priest, Cardinal and Pope has consistently promoted this transformation, from the time of the Council down to today. Nor can he be ashamed of having done so.

In logical order – it will take more than one "Eleison Comments" – let us look at the true Church's view of itself, and then with the help of Dr Schüler, at how that view was changed by the Council and how Benedict XVI has consistently promoted that change. Finally let us draw the conclusions that emerge for Catholics wishing to keep the true Faith.

The true Catholic Church has always seen itself as an organic whole, a society one, holy, catholic and apostolic, consisting of human beings united by the Faith, the sacraments and the Roman hierarchy. This Church is so much one, that no piece can be broken off or taken away without its ceasing to be Catholic (cf. Jn. XV, 4–6). For instance, that Faith which is the prime constituent of the Catholic believer cannot be held piecemeal, but must be held either altogether (at least implicitly) or not at all. This is because it is on the authority of God revealing the dogmas of Catholic Faith that I believe them, so that if I disbelieve only one amongst many dogmas, I am rejecting his authority behind them all, in which case even if I believe all the other dogmas, my belief is resting no longer on God's authority but only on my own choice.

In fact the word "heretic" comes from the Greek word for "to choose" (hairein), so because a heretic's belief is henceforth

merely his own choice, he has lost the supernatural virtue of faith, so that even if he rejects only one dogma of Faith, he is no longer Catholic. A famous quote of Augustine runs: "In much you are with me, in little you are not with me, but because of that little in which you are not with me, the much in which you are with me is of no use to you."

For instance a Protestant may believe in God, he may even believe in the divinity of the man Jesus of Nazareth, but if he does not believe in the Real Presence of God, body, blood, soul and divinity, beneath the appearances of bread and wine after their consecration at Mass, then he has a profoundly different and deficient concept of the love of Jesus Christ and of the God in whom he believes. Can one then say that the true Protestant and the true Catholic believe in the same God? Vatican II says one can, and on the basis of supposedly more or less shared beliefs between Catholics and all non-Catholics, it builds its ecumenism. On the contrary Dr Schüler illustrates by a series of comparisons that what may look like the same belief, when it forms part of two different creeds, is not really the same at all. Here is one illustration: oxygen molecules mixed with nitrogen are the selfsame molecules as when compounded with hydrogen, but they are as different in the two cases as the air we breathe ( $O + 4N$ ) from the water we drink ( $H_2O$ )! Stay tuned.

Kyrie eleison.