

Benedict's Ecumenism – II

April 7, 2012

As in any dispute involving the dreadful ambiguities of Vatican II, it might take long and scholarly articles to prove, or attempt to disprove, what Dr Wolfgang Schüler puts forward in his book of 2008 on “Benedict XVI and How the Church views Itself.” However, his main line of argument is clear enough, and it is well worth presenting to readers of “Eleison Comments,” to help them to see clear amidst much confusion. In this respect, comparisons have their limits, but they do help.

A whole can be composed of parts in two different ways, like a living tree, or like a pile of coins. Either the whole is primary and the parts are secondary, as with a tree, or the parts are primary and the whole is secondary, as with a pile of coins. The tree as a whole is primary because parts like branches may be cut off, but the tree continues to live its life as a tree and grows new branches, while the branches cut off lose their life and become something quite different, like a log or a chair. On the contrary each coin separated from its pile of coins remains exactly what it was in the pile, and if only enough coins are taken from the pile, it is the pile that perishes.

Now, is the Catholic Church, taken as a whole, more like the tree or the pile of coins? The Catholic Church is that special society of human beings who are united in that society by three things: the Faith, the sacraments and the hierarchy. To all three life is given by God himself. Faith is a supernatural virtue of the mind which God alone can give. The sacraments use material elements like water and oil, but what makes them sacraments is the supernatural grace they carry, that can only come from God. Likewise the hierarchy consists of natural human beings, but if these had no guidance from God, they could never succeed by themselves in leading souls

towards Heaven.

Therefore the Catholic Church is much more like a living tree than like a pile of coins, even golden coins. For just as every living organism has within it a principle of life that gives it its existence and unity, so the Catholic Church has within it primarily God himself, secondarily his hierarchy, giving to it existence and unity. When what was a part of the Church cuts itself off from the hierarchy by schism, or from the Faith by heresy, it ceases to be Catholic and becomes something else, like the schismatic Orthodox or heretical Protestants. True, Orthodox believers may have kept valid sacraments, but since they are no longer united with Christ's Vicar in Rome, nobody in his right mind calls them Catholic.

But now comes Vatican II. It changed the view of the Church, as it were, from that of a living tree or vine-plant (Our Lord's own comparison: Jn. XV, 1-6), to that of a pile of golden coins. From the desire to open the Church to the modern world, the Conciliar churchmen began by blurring the frontiers of the Church (L.G.8). That enabled them to pretend that there are elements of the Church outside the visible bounds of the Catholic Church (U.R.3), like gold coins separated from the heap. And since a gold coin remains a gold coin, then they could further pretend (U.R.3) that what were elements of salvation inside the Catholic Church remain such outside also. From which the natural conclusion drawn by countless souls is that I no longer need to be a Catholic in order to get to Heaven. This is the disaster of Conciliar ecumenism.

We must present these texts of Vatican II in a little more detail before we pass on to Pope Benedict's efforts to combine the ecumenism which divides the Church with the Catholic doctrine that unifies it.

Kyrie eleison.