

# Benedict's Thinking – III

July 23, 2011

After studying the roots of Pope Benedict's thinking (EC 209), Bishop Tissier in his *Faith Imperilled by Reason* proceeds to study its fruits. If that thinking is rooted above all in the systematic subjectivism of Kant (1724–1804), those fruits cannot be good. How can the objective truths of the Faith be made in any way intrinsically dependent on the participation or reactions of the subjective believer? The Gospel, dogma, the Church, society, Christ the King and the Last Ends will be, one after another, mortally stricken.

Let us start with the Gospel. Its value lies no longer in telling the historical facts of the life and death of Our Lord, but rather in the power of its narrative to evoke existential problems of our own time. For instance whether Our Lord's very own body sprang re-united with his human soul out of the tomb on Easter morning is not important. What matters is the modern meaning behind the narrative: love is stronger than death, Christ lives on by the force of love, and guarantees that we too will survive by love. Forget the reality or the facts. "All you need is love."

Dogma needs likewise to be purified of the past and enriched by the present. Now the present-day philosopher Heidegger teaches that the person is a "self-surpassing." Then Christ was the man so totally self-surpassing, so completely striving for the infinite beyond himself, that he fulfilled himself to the point of becoming divine. So the dogma of the Incarnation no longer means that God became man, but that man became God! Similarly the Redemption must mean no longer that Jesus paid to his Father by his terrible Passion the debt for all men's sins, but that by his Cross he loved God in our stead as God should be loved, and he attracts us to do the same. Sin has ceased to be a mortal offence against God, it is merely a selfishness, a lack of love. So Mass no longer needs to be a

sacrifice, and the priest becomes merely the animator of the communal celebration. No wonder Benedict believes in the Novus Ordo Mass.

As for the Church, since the existent person is the supreme value (cf. EC 209) and all persons are equally existent, then away with a Church of hierarchical inequalities, and away with the Catholic Church as the one and only Ark of Salvation, because the followers of every religion are existent persons. Let ecumenism replace all Catholic missionary efforts. Also, making the person into the supreme value will dissolve society by subordinating the common good to the individual's rights, and it will undermine both marriage and society by putting the mutual company of the male and female persons in front of children. As for Christ the King, he will be dethroned by the bestowing upon every person such dignity that the State must protect that person's right to choose his own religion.

Finally death, from a penalty, becomes a remedy for our ills. The particular judgment means only a reward. Hell is no more than an irrevocably selfish state of soul. Heaven will be "an ever new immersion in the infinity of being" – what being? – and so on. Here is a new religion, comments Bishop Tissier, rather more comfortable – at least where below – than the Catholic religion.

Kyrie eleison.