

Doctrinal Feelings

May 21, 2016

Last week's "Comments" (EC 461) will not have been to everyone's taste. Readers may have guessed that the unnamed author of the long quote was of the same sex as the also quoted St Theresa of Avila ("suffer, or die") and St Mary Magdalene de Pazzi ("suffer and not die"), and the anonymous quote may have seemed excessively emotional. But the contrast with Pope Benedict's feelings quoted the week before (EC 460) was deliberate. Whereas the man's text showed feelings governing doctrine, the woman's text showed doctrine governing feelings. Better, obviously, the woman putting God first, like Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane ("*Father, let this chalice pass me by, but not my will . . .*"), than the man putting feelings first, and changing the Catholic doctrine and religion into the Conciliar religion.

The surprising contrast highlights that the primacy of God means that doctrine comes first, whereas the primacy of feelings means that man comes first. But life is not about avoiding suffering, it is about getting to Heaven. If then I disbelieve in God and worship Mammon instead (Mt. VI, 24), I will disbelieve in any after-life and I will pay for more and more expensive drugs to avoid suffering in this life, because there is no other life. And so the Western "democracies" create one ruinous welfare State after another, because the surest way for a "democratic" politician to get elected or not is to take a stand for or against free medicine. Care for the body is all that is left in the life of many a man who has no God. Thus godlessness ruins the State: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Ps. CXXVI, 1), whereas "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord" (Ps. CXLIII, 15). Religion governs politics and economics alike, any false religion for their ill, the true religion for their true good.

On the basis of his October interview (EC 460), Benedict might reply: "Yes, but what use is a religion that fewer and fewer people believe in? On modern man the Catholic religion of all time has lost its grip. Yesterday's doctrine may be as true as true can be, but of what use is it if it no longer speaks to man as he is today, where he is today? Doctrine is for souls, but how can I speak to contemporary man of redemptive suffering or of the Redemption, when suffering makes no sense to him at all? The Council was absolutely necessary to recast doctrine in a form intelligible to men as they are today."

And to this position implicit in Benedict's interview, here might be an answer: "Your Holiness, doctrine is for souls, yes, but to save them from eternal punishment and not to prepare them for it. Doctrine consists of words, words express concepts, concepts are ultimately of things real being conceived. Your Holiness, are God, man's immortal soul, death, Judgment, and the inevitability of eternal salvation or damnation realities outside my mind? If they are realities independent of myself, have any of them changed since modern times? And if they have not changed at all, then do not the doctrines expressing them express also, together with the doctrine of original sin, a real danger for every man alive of falling into Hell? In which case however unpleasant the realities may feel, what possible service do I do for my fellow-men by making the doctrines feel nicer, so as to disguise the eternal danger instead of warning him about it? Of what importance are his feelings compared with the importance of his grasping, and assimilating, the true doctrines, so as to be blissfully happy and not utterly tormented for all eternity – for all eternity?

But in our apostate world the mass of men want only to be told fables (II Tim. IV, 4) to put a cushion under their sins. The result is that to keep the moral world in balance, there must be a number of mystic souls, known to God alone, who are taking upon themselves acute suffering, for Christ and for

their fellow-men, and it is a fair bet that most of them are women.

Kyrie eleison.