

# 1. Truth and Diversity in Roman Catholic Perspective

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## *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*

### **Definitions**

- Ecumenism: Dialogue among Christians that aims at full and visible communion
- Interreligious Dialogue: Dialogue between Christians and those of other religions that aims at mutual respect, knowledge, and peaceful relations

### **Why do we care?**

- The Christian message
- John 17 et al.
- To be servants of God

### **The Problem of a Fractured Christianity**

- The bond of Baptism
- Oekumene
- The relationship of the Church to humanity
- Christianity among other religions
- The Christian understanding of the difference between faith and belief

### **The Modern Problem: Truth and Diversity**

- Stating the issue

#### *Background: God in modernity*

- God as lawgiver
  - God as anti-individual – God's law is inscrutable
  - Confidence in Reason / Lack of Confidence in Human Self-Definition
  - The wager
- Options
  - Deism – the positing of an inoffensive god
  - Theodespotism – the external god
    - his inscrutable oracles
    - his mysterious commands
    - rewarding those who play by the rules (Santa Claus god)
- Miracles and faith
  - Faith as an effort of the will
  - Faith as either/or
  - Belief as hobby

#### *Diversity and the Problem of Truth*

- Is one religion better than another?
  - It must be so
  - Building truth without God
    - ways of being human are not equal
    - criteria of real human existence are difficult to attain
  - If there is no universal actuality of humanity, there is no common concept of humanity
- The truth of humanity
  - must by its nature provide a way out of ideology
  - understand itself as open to radical critique of from other cultures
  - ground itself in real human existence, not as an abstract idea
  - locate ultimate reality at the level of the human
  - human expressions and desires must have some grounding in truth
  - the divine must be defined vis-à-vis the human
  - the truth of all abstraction must be critiqued by human reality
- Why do we need to refer to God?
  - there is no moral action that is not a theological action
  - all action proceeds from an understanding of human reality

- all action aims at producing the best human reality
- if your God is not my God, then we are not both human
- How far does a difference in religion matter? — How far does a difference of church matter?
  - actions (judged good by Christians) are often sufficient for friendship
  - actions are always theological – therefore a (Christian conceived) continuity of action can only be sustained by a (Christian compatible) theology
  - friendship leads to shared visions of the meaning of life
  - there may be a very high agreement concerning the meaning of life before a theological disagreement arises
  - nonetheless, where disagreement in social arrangement arises, it will always have a theological background
  - the discussion cannot be abandoned when it reaches this ultimate criteria

### **The Old Testament**

- Creation & Sin
- History of God's Intervention
- Calling of a People: Abraham
- Training of a People: Exodus
- Rehabilitation of Humanity

### **The New Testament**

- Resurrection: The Beginning of the New Creation
- New Society: Effecting the Resurrection: Acts 2
- Love as the Center of Human Existence: 1 Corinthians
- Love as possible only in the truth of Christ: 1 John
- The Church is the Realization of God's Promise and the Completion of Creation: Ephesians

### **Christianity as the Completion and Fulfillment of Humanity**

*See Benedict XVI, Faith, Reason, and the University, Lecture of the Holy Father Meeting with Representatives of Science, 12 September 2006, University of Regensburg*

- Christianity is always compatible with reason
  - There can be no authentic product of human reason that is contrary to the Church
  - There is no authentic aspiration of human reason that is not welcomed by the Church
- Christianity's entry into human rational systems is a proper development of the Church
  - Christianity seeks to find the good in all human aspirations and culture
  - The Church provides the criteria whereby all good is discerned

### **The Church and Christianity**

*See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Responses to Some Questions regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church, June 2007*

- Christianity states a claim about human existence
- This claim is essentially social (see 1 Cor 12-15, 1 John, etc.)
- The specifics of the social arrangement are a doctrinal issue that effects the stance of the person before God and thus the full development of the human person
- The Church is one

### **Extra ecclesia nulla salus**

- Traditional understandings
- Doctrinal meaning
- Mediation of grace