

No Authority Without Truth, Says Pontiff

Affirms That Faith and Reason Must Agree

VATICAN CITY, JUNE 10, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Since faith and reason come from the same source -- divine wisdom -- authority should never contradict truth, according to Benedict XVI.

The Pope spoke of the perfect coincidence of faith and reason and its consequences for authority today during the general audience in St. Peter's Square, which was decorated with colorful flowers in anticipation of Thursday's feast of Corpus Christi. The Holy Father focused his address to the some 15,000 pilgrims on John Scotus Erigena.

He said the writings of the 9th century thinker "could bring about interesting developments even for contemporary theologians."

The Pontiff particularly considered Erigena's teaching on authority. He explained that "we cannot speak of God starting from our inventions, but rather from what God himself says about himself in sacred Scripture. Given that God only speaks the truth, Scotus Erigena is convinced that authority and reason should never be in contraposition one against the other. He is convinced that true religion and true philosophy coincide."

According to this author, the Pope continued, not even Scripture is exempt from this discernment.

He explained: "In fact Scripture, affirms the Irish theologian [...] would not have been necessary if man had not sinned. Therefore, it must be deduced that Scripture was given by God with a pedagogical intention and lowering himself so that man could recall all that had been stamped on his heart from the moment of his creation 'in the image and likeness of God' and that the original fall had made him forget."

Thus, "sacred Scripture purifies our rather blind reason and helps us to return to the memory of what we, as image of God, carry in our hearts, unfortunately violated by sin," Benedict XVI said.

Speechless

Noting how Erigena spoke of the "divinization" of man through the "adoring and silent recognition" of the mystery of God, the Pope illustrated how the author's works are "the clearest demonstration of the attempt to express the explainable of the inexplicableness of God."

"The numerous metaphors used by him to indicate this ineffable reality show up to what point he is aware of the absolute incapacity of the terms with which we speak of these things," the Holy Father said, "And, nevertheless, there remains this enchantment and this atmosphere of authentic mystical experience in his texts that sometimes can almost be tangibly felt."

He offered by way of example one of Erigena's writings: "The only thing that must be desired," he wrote, "is the joy of the truth, which is Christ, and the only thing that must be avoided is the

absence of him. It should be considered that this [absence] is the only cause of total and eternal sadness. Take Christ from me and no good whatsoever remains for me; there is nothing that terrifies me as much as his absence. The worst torment of a rational creature is the privation and the absence of him."

"These are words that we can make our own," the Bishop of Rome concluded, "converting them into a prayer to him who also is the longing of our hearts."

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