

Europe's Crisis of Culture

Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, 1 April 2005

A translation of the lecture given in Italian by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XIV, in the convent of Saint Scholastica in Subiaco, Italy, the day before Pope John Paul II died. This lecture took place April 1, when he received the St. Benedict Award for the promotion of life and the family in Europe.

We are living in a time of great dangers and great opportunities for man and the world; a time which is also of great responsibility for us all. During the past century man's possibilities and his dominion over matter grew by truly unthinkable measures. However, his power to dispose of the world has been such as to allow his capacity for destruction to reach dimensions which at times horrify us. In this connection, the threat of terrorism comes spontaneously to mind, this new war without boundaries or fronts.

The fear that it might soon get a hold of nuclear or biological weapons is not unfounded, and has made it necessary for lawful states to adopt internal security systems similar to those that previously existed only in dictatorships. The feeling remains, nevertheless, that, in reality, all these precautions are not enough, as a global control is neither possible nor desirable.

Less visible, but no less disquieting, are the possibilities of self-manipulation that man has acquired. He has plumbed the depths of being, has deciphered the components of the human being, and is now capable, so to speak, of constructing man himself, who thus no longer comes into the world as a gift of the Creator, but as a product of our action, a product that, therefore, can also be selected according to the exigencies established by ourselves.

Thus, the splendor of being an image of God no longer shines over man, which is what confers on him his dignity and inviolability, and he is left only to the power of his own human capacities. He is no more than the image of man—of what man?

To this are added the great global problems: inequality in the distribution of the goods of the earth, growing poverty, and the more threatening impoverishment and exhaustion of the earth and its resources, hunger, sicknesses that threaten the whole world and the clash of cultures.

All this shows that the growth of our possibilities has not been matched by a comparable development of our moral energy. Moral strength has not grown together with the development of science; rather, it has diminished, because the technical mentality relegates morality to the subjective realm, while we have need, precisely, of a public morality, a morality that is able to respond to the threats that weigh down on the existence of us all. The real and gravest danger in these times lies, precisely, in this imbalance between technical possibilities and moral energy.

The security we need as a precondition of our freedom and our dignity cannot come, in the last analysis, from technical systems of control, but can,

specifically, spring only from man's moral strength: Whenever the latter is lacking or is insufficient, the power man has will be transformed increasingly into a power of destruction.

A new moralism

It is true that a new moralism exists today whose key words are justice, peace and conservation of creation—words that call for essential moral values of which we are in real need. But this moralism remains vague and thus slides, almost inevitably, into the political-party sphere. It is above all a dictum addressed to others, and too little a personal duty of our daily life. In fact, what does justice mean? Who defines it? What serves towards peace?

Over the last decades we have amply seen in our streets and squares how pacifism can deviate toward a destructive anarchism and terrorism. The political moralism of the 70s, the roots of which are anything but dead, was a moralism that succeeded in attracting even young people full of ideals. But it was a moralism with a mistaken direction, in as much as it was deprived of serene rationality and because, in the last analysis, it placed the political utopia above the dignity of the individual man, showing itself even capable of arriving at contempt for man in the name of great objectives.

Political moralism, as we have lived it and are still living it, does not open the way to regeneration, and even more, also blocks it. The same is true, consequently, also for a Christianity and a theology that reduces the heart of Jesus' message, the "kingdom of God," to the "values of the kingdom," identifying these values with the great key words of political moralism, and proclaiming them, at the same time, as a synthesis of the religions.

Nonetheless, God is neglected in this way, notwithstanding the fact that it is precisely he who is the subject and cause of the kingdom of God. In his stead, great words (and values) remain, which lend themselves to all kinds of abuse.

This brief look at the situation of the world leads us to reflect on today's situation of Christianity and, therefore, on the foundations of Europe; that Europe which at one time, we can say, was the Christian continent, but which was also the starting point of that new scientific rationality which has given us great possibilities, as well as great threats. Christianity, it is true, did not start in Europe, and therefore it cannot even be classified as a European religion, the religion of the European cultural realm. But it received precisely in Europe its most effective cultural and intellectual imprint and remains, therefore, identified in a special way with Europe.

Furthermore, it is also true that this Europe, since the time of the Renaissance, and in a fuller sense since the time of the Enlightenment, has developed precisely that scientific rationality which not only in the era of the discoveries led to the geographic unity of the world, to the meeting of continents and cultures, but which today, much more profoundly, thanks to the technical culture made possible by science, imprints itself on the whole world, and even more than that, in a certain sense, gives it uniformity.

Godless society

And in the wake of this form of rationality, Europe has developed a culture that, in a manner unknown before now to humanity, excludes God from the public conscience, either by denying him altogether, or by judging that his existence is not demonstrable, uncertain and, therefore, belonging to the realm of subjective choices, something, in any case, irrelevant to public life.

This purely functional rationality, so to speak, has implied a disorder of the moral conscience altogether new for cultures existing up to now, as it deems rational only that which can be proved with experiments. As morality belongs to an altogether different sphere, it disappears as a category unto itself and must be identified in another way, in as much as it must be admitted, in any case, that morality is essential.

In a world based on calculation, it is the calculation of consequences that determines what must or must not be considered moral. And thus the category of the good, as was clearly pointed out by Kant, disappears. Nothing is good or bad in itself, everything depends on the consequences that an action allows one to foresee.

If Christianity, on one hand, has found its most effective form in Europe, it is necessary, on the other hand, to say that in Europe a culture has developed that constitutes the absolutely most radical contradiction not only of Christianity, but of the religious and moral traditions of humanity.

From this, one understands that Europe is experiencing a true and proper “test of tension”; from this, one also understands the radicalism of the tensions that our continent must face. However from this emerges also, and above all, the responsibility that we Europeans must assume at this historical moment—in the debate on the definition of Europe, on its new political shape. It is not a question of a nostalgic rearguard battle of history being played out, but rather a great responsibility for today’s humanity.

Let us take a closer look at this opposition between the two cultures that have characterized Europe. In the debate on the Preamble of the European Constitution, this opposition was seen in two controversial points: the question of the reference to God in the Constitution and the mention of the Christian roots of Europe. Given that in article 52 of the Constitution the institutional rights of Churches are guaranteed, we can be at peace, it is said.

But this means that in the life of Europe, the Churches find a place in the realm of the political commitment, while, in the realm of the foundations of Europe, the imprint of their content has no place. The reasons that are given in the public debate for this clear “no” are superficial, and it is obvious that more than indicating the real motivation, they conceal it. The affirmation that the mention of the Christian roots of Europe injures the sentiments of many non-Christians who are in Europe, is not very convincing, given that it relates, first of all, to an historical fact that no one can seriously deny.

Naturally, this historical mention has a reference to the present. To mention the roots implies indicating as well the residual sources of moral orientation, which is a factor of Europe's identity. Who would be offended? Whose identity is threatened?

The Muslims, who in this respect are often and willingly brought in, do not feel threatened by our Christian moral foundations, but by the cynicism of a secularized culture that denies its own foundations. Neither are our Jewish fellow citizens offended by the reference to the Christian roots of Europe, in as much as these roots go back to Mount Sinai: They bear the sign of the voice that made itself heard on the mountain of God and unite with us in the great fundamental orientations that the Decalogue has given humanity. The same is true for the reference to God: It is not the mention of God that offends those who belong to other religions, but rather the attempt to build the human community absolutely without God.

The motivations of this twofold "no" are more profound than one would think from the reasons offered. They presuppose the idea that only the radical Enlightenment culture, which has reached its full development in our time, could be constitutive for European identity. Next to this culture, then, different religious cultures can coexist with their respective rights, on the condition and to the degree in which they respect the criteria of the Enlightenment culture, and are subordinated to it.

Culture of rights

This Enlightenment culture is essentially defined by the rights of freedom; it stems from freedom as a fundamental value that measures everything: the freedom of religious choice, which includes the religious neutrality of the state; freedom to express one's own opinion, as long as it does not cast doubt specifically on this canon; the democratic ordering of the state, that is, parliamentary control on state organisms; the free formation of parties; the independence of the judiciary; and, finally, the safeguarding of the rights of man and the prohibition of discriminations. Here the canon is still in the process of formation, given that there are also rights of man that are in opposition, as for example, in the case of the conflict between a woman's desire for freedom and the right of the unborn to live.

The concept of discrimination is ever more extended, and so the prohibition of discrimination can be increasingly transformed into a limitation of the freedom of opinion and religious liberty. Very soon it will not be possible to state that homosexuality, as the Catholic Church teaches, is an objective disorder in the structuring of human existence. And the fact that the Church is convinced of not having the right to confer priestly ordination on women is considered by some up to now as something irreconcilable with the spirit of the European Constitution.

It is evident that this canon of the Enlightenment culture, less than definitive, contains important values which we, precisely as Christians, do not want and cannot renounce; however, it is also obvious that the ill-defined or undefined

concept of freedom, which is at the base of this culture, inevitably entails contradictions; and it is obvious that precisely because of its use (a use that seems radical) it has implied limitations of freedom that a generation ago we could not even imagine. A confused ideology of freedom leads to dogmatism, which is showing itself increasingly hostile to freedom.

We must, without a doubt, focus again on the question of the internal contradictions of the present form of the Enlightenment culture. But we must first finish describing it. It is part of its nature, in so far as culture of a reason that, finally, has complete awareness of itself, to boast a universal pretense and conceive itself as complete in itself, not in need of some completion through other cultural factors.

Both these characteristics are clearly seen when the question is posed about who can become a member of the European community and, above all, in the debate about Turkey's entry into this community. It is a question of a state, or perhaps better, of a cultural realm, which does not have Christian roots, but which was influenced by the Islamic culture. Then, Ataturk tried to transform Turkey into a secular state, attempting to implant in Muslim terrain the secularism that had matured in the Christian world of Europe.

Universal culture?

We can ask ourselves if that is possible. According to the thesis of the Enlightenment and secular culture of Europe, only the norms and contents of the Enlightenment culture will be able to determine Europe's identity and, consequently, every state that makes these criteria its own, will be able to belong to Europe. It does not matter, in the end, on what plot of roots this culture of freedom and democracy is implanted.

And, precisely because of this, it is affirmed, that the roots cannot enter into the definition of the foundations of Europe, it being a question of dead roots that are not part of the present identity. As a consequence, this new identity, determined exclusively by the Enlightenment culture, also implies that God does not come in at all into public life and the foundations of the state.

Thus everything becomes logical and also, in some sense, plausible. In fact, what could we desire as being more beautiful than knowing that everywhere democracy and human rights are respected? Nevertheless, the question must be asked, if this secular Enlightenment culture is really the culture, finally proposed as universal, that can give a common cause to all men; a culture that should have access from everywhere, even though it is on a humus that is historically and culturally differentiated. And we also ask ourselves if it is really complete in itself, to the degree that it has no need of a root outside itself.

Let us address these last two questions. To the first, that is, to the question as to whether a universally valid philosophy has been reached which is finally wholly scientifically rational, which expresses the cause common to all men, we must respond that undoubtedly we have arrived at important acquisitions

which can pretend to a universal validity. These include: the acquisition that religion cannot be imposed by the state, but that it can only be accepted in freedom; respect of the fundamental rights of man equal for all; the separation of powers and control of power.

It cannot be thought, however, that these fundamental values, recognized by us as generally valid, can be realized in the same way in every historical context. Not all societies have the sociological assumptions for a democracy based on parties, as occurs in the West; therefore, the total religious neutrality of the state, in the majority of historical contexts, has to be considered an illusion.

And so we come to the problems raised by the second question. But let us clarify first if the modern Enlightenment philosophies, considered as a whole, can contain the last word of the cause common to all men. These philosophies are characterized by the fact that they are positivist and, therefore, anti-metaphysical, so much so that, in the end, God cannot have any place in them. They are based on the self-limitation of rational positivism, which can be applied in the technical realm, but which when it is generalized, entails instead a mutilation of man. It succeeds in having man no longer admit any moral claim beyond his calculations and, as we saw, the concept of freedom, which at first glance would seem to extend in an unlimited manner, in the end leads to the self-destruction of freedom.

It is true that the positivist philosophies contain important elements of truth. However, these are based on imposed limitations of reason, characteristic of a specific cultural situation—that of the modern West—and therefore not the last word of reason. Nevertheless though they might seem totally rational, they are not the voice of reason itself, but are also identified culturally with the present situation in the West.

For this reason they are in no way that philosophy which one day could be valid throughout the world. But, above all, it must be said that this Enlightenment philosophy, and its respective culture, is incomplete. It consciously severs its own historical roots depriving itself of the regenerating forces from which it sprang, from that fundamental memory of humanity, so to speak, without which reason loses its orientation.

Knowing is doing

In fact, the principle is now valid, according to which, man's capacity is measured by his action. What one knows how to do, may also be done. There no longer exists a knowing how to do separated from a being able to do, because it would be against freedom, which is the absolute supreme value. But man knows how to do many things, and knows increasingly how to do more things; and if this knowing how to do does not find its measure in a moral norm, it becomes, as we can already see, a power of destruction.

Man knows how to clone men, and so he does it. Man knows how to use men as a store of organs for other men, and so he does it; he does it because this

seems to be an exigency of his freedom. Man knows how to construct atomic bombs and so he makes them, being, in line of principle, also disposed to use them. In the end, terrorism is also based on this modality of man's self-authorization, and not on the teachings of the Koran.

The radical detachment of the Enlightenment philosophy from its roots becomes, in the last analysis, contempt for man. Man, deep down, has no freedom, we are told by the spokesmen of the natural sciences, in total contradiction with the starting point of the whole question. Man must not think that he is something more than all other living beings and, therefore, should also be treated like them, we are told by even the most advanced spokesmen of a philosophy clearly separated from the roots of humanity's historical memory.

We asked ourselves two questions: if rationalist (positivist) philosophy is strictly rational and, consequently, if it is universally valid, and if it is complete. Is it self-sufficient? Can it, or more directly must it, relegate its historical roots to the realm of the pure past and, therefore, to the realm of what can only be valid subjectively?

We must respond to both questions with a definitive "no." This philosophy does not express man's complete reason, but only a part of it, and because of this mutilation of reason it cannot be considered entirely rational. For this reason it is incomplete, and can only be fulfilled by re-establishing contact with its roots. A tree without roots dries up.

Removing God

By stating this, one does not deny all that is positive and important of this philosophy, but one affirms rather its need to complete itself, its profound deficiency. And so we must again address the two controversial points of the Preamble of the European Constitution. The banishment of Christian roots does not reveal itself as the expression of a higher tolerance, which respects all cultures in the same way, not wishing to privilege any, but rather as the absolutizing of a pattern of thought and of life that are radically opposed, among other things, to the other historical cultures of humanity.

The real opposition that characterizes today's world is not that between various religious cultures, but that between the radical emancipation of man from God, from the roots of life, on one hand, and from the great religious cultures on the other. If there were to be a clash of cultures, it would not be because of a clash of the great religions—which have always struggled against one another, but which, in the end, have also always known how to live with one another—but it will be because of the clash between this radical emancipation of man and the great historical cultures.

Thus, even the rejection of the reference to God, is not the expression of a tolerance that desires to protect the non-theistic religions and the dignity of atheists and agnostics, but rather the expression of a conscience that would like to see God cancelled definitively from the public life of humanity, and

relegated to the subjective realm of residual cultures of the past.

Relativism, which is the starting point of all this, thus becomes a dogmatism which believes itself to be in possession of the definitive scope of reason, and with the right to regard all the rest only as a stage of humanity, in the end surmounted, and that can be appropriately relativized. In reality, this means that we have need of roots to survive, and that we must not lose sight of God, if we do not want human dignity to disappear.

The Permanent Significance of the Christian Faith

Is this a simple rejection of the Enlightenment and of modernity? Absolutely not. From the beginning, Christianity has understood itself as the religion of the “Logos,” as the religion according to reason. In the first place, it has not identified its precursors in the other religions, but in that philosophical enlightenment which has cleared the path of traditions to turn to the search of the truth and towards the good, toward the one God who is above all gods.

In so far as religion of the persecuted, in so far as universal religion, beyond the different states and peoples, it has denied the state the right to regard religion as a part of state ordering, thus postulating the freedom of faith. It has always defined men, all men without distinction, as creatures and images of God, proclaiming for them, in terms of principle, although within the imperative limits of social ordering, the same dignity.

In this connection, the Enlightenment is of Christian origin and it is no accident that it was born precisely and exclusively in the realm of the Christian faith, whenever Christianity, against its nature and unfortunately, had become tradition and religion of the state. Notwithstanding the philosophy, in so far as search for rationality—also of our faith—was always a prerogative of Christianity, the voice of reason had been too domesticated.

It was and is the merit of the Enlightenment to have again proposed these original values of Christianity and of having given back to reason its own voice. In the pastoral constitution, *On the Church in the Modern World*, Vatican Council II underlined again this profound correspondence between Christianity and the Enlightenment, seeking to come to a true conciliation between the Church and modernity, which is the great heritage that both sides must defend.

Given all this, it is necessary that both sides engage in self-reflection and be willing to correct themselves. Christianity must always remember that it is the religion of the “Logos.” It is faith in the “Creator Spiritus,” in the Creator Spirit, from which proceeds everything that exists. Today, this should be precisely its philosophical strength, in so far as the problem is whether the world comes from the irrational, and reason is not, therefore, other than a “sub-product,” on occasion even harmful of its development—or whether the world comes from reason, and is, as a consequence, its criterion and goal.

The Christian faith inclines toward this second thesis, thus having, from the

purely philosophical point of view, really good cards to play, despite the fact that many today consider only the first thesis as the only modern and rational one par excellence. However, a reason that springs from the irrational, and that is, in the final analysis, itself irrational, does not constitute a solution for our problems. Only creative reason, which in the crucified God is manifested as love, can really show us the way. In the so necessary dialogue between secularists and Catholics, we Christians must be very careful to remain faithful to this fundamental line: to live a faith that comes from the “Logos,” from creative reason, and that, because of this, is also open to all that is truly rational.

“As if God existed”

But at this point, in my capacity as believer, I would like to make a proposal to the secularists. At the time of the Enlightenment there was an attempt to understand and define the essential moral norms, saying that they would be valid “etsi Deus non daretur,” even in the case that God did not exist. In the opposition of the confessions and in the pending crisis of the image of God, an attempt was made to keep the essential values of morality outside the contradictions and to seek for them an evidence that would render them independent of the many divisions and uncertainties of the different philosophies and confessions. In this way, they wanted to ensure the basis of coexistence and, in general, the foundations of humanity. At that time, it was thought to be possible, as the great deep convictions created by Christianity to a large extent remained. But this is no longer the case.

The search for such a reassuring certainty, which could remain uncontested beyond all differences, failed. Not even the truly grandiose effort of Kant was able to create the necessary shared certainty. Kant had denied that God could be known in the realm of pure reason, but at the same time he had represented God, freedom and immortality as postulates of practical reason, without which, coherently, for him no moral behavior was possible.

Does not today’s situation of the world make us think perhaps that he might have been right? I would like to express it in a different way: The attempt, carried to the extreme, to manage human affairs disdaining God completely leads us increasingly to the edge of the abyss, to man’s ever greater isolation from reality. We must reverse the axiom of the Enlightenment and say: Even one who does not succeed in finding the way of accepting God, should, nevertheless, seek to live and to direct his life “veluti si Deus daretur,” as if God existed. This is the advice Pascal gave to his friends who did not believe. In this way, no one is limited in his freedom, but all our affairs find the support and criterion of which they are in urgent need.

Above all, that of which we are in need at this moment in history are men who, through an enlightened and lived faith, render God credible in this world. The negative testimony of Christians who speak about God and live against him, has darkened God’s image and opened the door to disbelief. We need men who have their gaze directed to God, to understand true humanity. We need men whose intellects are enlightened by the light of God, and whose hearts

God opens, so that their intellects can speak to the intellects of others, and so that their hearts are able to open up to the hearts of others.

Only through men who have been touched by God, can God come near to men. We need men like Benedict of Norcia, who at a time of dissipation and decadence, plunged into the most profound solitude, succeeding, after all the purifications he had to suffer, to ascend again to the light, to return and to found Montecassino, the city on the mountain that, with so many ruins, gathered together the forces from which a new world was formed.

In this way Benedict, like Abraham, became the father of many nations. The recommendations to his monks presented at the end of his "Rule" are guidelines that show us also the way that leads on high, beyond the crisis and the ruins.

"Just as there is a bitter zeal that removes one from God and leads to hell, so there is a good zeal that removes one from vices and leads to God and to eternal life. It is in this zeal that monks must exercise themselves with most ardent love: May they outdo one another in rendering each other honor, may they support, in turn, with utmost patience their physical and moral infirmities . . . May they love one another with fraternal affection . . . Fear God in love . . . Put absolutely nothing before Christ who will be able to lead all to eternal life" (Chapter 72).

Papal Address at University of Regensburg

“Three Stages in the Program of De-Hellenization”

Aula Magna of the University of Regensburg, Tuesday, 12 September 2006

Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections

Your Eminences, Your Magnificences, Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a moving experience for me to be back again in the university and to be able once again to give a lecture at this podium. I think back to those years when, after a pleasant period at the Freisinger Hochschule, I began teaching at the University of Bonn. That was in 1959, in the days of the old university made up of ordinary professors. The various chairs had neither assistants nor secretaries, but in recompense there was much direct contact with students and in particular among the professors themselves. We would meet before and after lessons in the rooms of the teaching staff. There was a lively exchange with historians, philosophers, philologists and, naturally, between the two theological faculties. Once a semester there was a *dies academicus*, when professors from every faculty appeared before the students of the entire university, making possible a genuine experience of *universitas* - something that you too, Magnificent Rector, just mentioned - the experience, in other words, of the fact that despite our specializations which at times make it difficult to communicate with each other, we made up a whole, working in everything on the basis of a single rationality with its various aspects and sharing responsibility for the right use of reason - this reality became a lived experience. The university was also very proud of its two theological faculties. It was clear that, by inquiring about the reasonableness of faith, they too carried out a work which is necessarily part of the “whole” of the *universitas scientiarum*, even if not everyone could share the faith which theologians seek to correlate with reason as a whole. This profound sense of coherence within the universe of reason was not troubled, even when it was once reported that a colleague had said there was something odd about our university: it had two faculties devoted to something that did not exist: God. That even in the face of such radical scepticism it is still necessary and reasonable to raise the question of God through the use of reason, and to do so in the context of the tradition of the Christian faith: this, within the university as a whole, was accepted without question.

I was reminded of all this recently, when I read the edition by Professor Theodore Khoury (Münster) of part of the dialogue carried on - perhaps in 1391 in the winter barracks near Ankara - by the erudite Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus and an educated Persian on the subject of Christianity and Islam, and the truth of both.[1] It was presumably the emperor himself who set down this dialogue, during the siege of Constantinople between 1394 and 1402; and this would explain why his arguments are given in greater detail than those of his Persian interlocutor.[2] The dialogue ranges widely over the structures of faith contained in the Bible and in the Qur'an, and deals especially with the image of God and of man, while necessarily returning repeatedly to the relationship between - as they were called - three “Laws” or “rules of life”: the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Qur'an. It is not my intention to discuss this question in the present lecture; here I would like to discuss only one point - itself rather marginal to the dialogue as a whole - which, in the context of the

issue of “faith and reason”, I found interesting and which can serve as the starting-point for my reflections on this issue.

In the seventh conversation (διάλεξις - controversy) edited by Professor Khoury, the emperor touches on the theme of the holy war. The emperor must have known that surah 2, 256 reads: “There is no compulsion in religion”. According to some of the experts, this is probably one of the suras of the early period, when Mohammed was still powerless and under threat. But naturally the emperor also knew the instructions, developed later and recorded in the Qur’an, concerning holy war. Without descending to details, such as the difference in treatment accorded to those who have the “Book” and the “infidels”, he addresses his interlocutor with a startling brusqueness, a brusqueness that we find unacceptable, on the central question about the relationship between religion and violence in general, saying: “Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.”[3] The emperor, after having expressed himself so forcefully, goes on to explain in detail the reasons why spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable. Violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul. “God”, he says, “is not pleased by blood - and not acting reasonably (σὺν λόγῳ) is contrary to God’s nature. Faith is born of the soul, not the body. Whoever would lead someone to faith needs the ability to speak well and to reason properly, without violence and threats... To convince a reasonable soul, one does not need a strong arm, or weapons of any kind, or any other means of threatening a person with death...”.[4]

The decisive statement in this argument against violent conversion is this: not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God’s nature.[5] The editor, Theodore Khoury, observes: For the emperor, as a Byzantine shaped by Greek philosophy, this statement is self-evident. But for Muslim teaching, God is absolutely transcendent. His will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality.[6] Here Khoury quotes a work of the noted French Islamist R. Arnaldez, who points out that Ibn Hazm went so far as to state that God is not bound even by his own word, and that nothing would oblige him to reveal the truth to us. Were it God’s will, we would even have to practise idolatry.[7]

At this point, as far as understanding of God and thus the concrete practice of religion is concerned, we are faced with an unavoidable dilemma. Is the conviction that acting unreasonably contradicts God’s nature merely a Greek idea, or is it always and intrinsically true? I believe that here we can see the profound harmony between what is Greek in the best sense of the word and the biblical understanding of faith in God. Modifying the first verse of the Book of Genesis, the first verse of the whole Bible, John began the prologue of his Gospel with the words: “In the beginning was the λόγος”. This is the very word used by the emperor: God acts, σὺν λόγῳ, with logos. Logos means both reason and word - a reason which is creative and capable of self-communication, precisely as reason. John thus spoke the final word on the biblical concept of God, and in this word all the often toilsome and tortuous threads of biblical faith find their culmination and synthesis. In the beginning was the logos, and the logos is God, says the Evangelist. The encounter between the Biblical message and Greek thought did not happen by chance. The vision of Saint Paul, who saw the roads to Asia barred and in a dream saw a Macedonian man plead with him: “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” (cf. Acts 16:6-10) - this vision can be interpreted as a

“distillation” of the intrinsic necessity of a rapprochement between Biblical faith and Greek inquiry.

In point of fact, this rapprochement had been going on for some time. The mysterious name of God, revealed from the burning bush, a name which separates this God from all other divinities with their many names and simply asserts being, “I am”, already presents a challenge to the notion of myth, to which Socrates’ attempt to vanquish and transcend myth stands in close analogy.[8] Within the Old Testament, the process which started at the burning bush came to new maturity at the time of the Exile, when the God of Israel, an Israel now deprived of its land and worship, was proclaimed as the God of heaven and earth and described in a simple formula which echoes the words uttered at the burning bush: “I am”. This new understanding of God is accompanied by a kind of enlightenment, which finds stark expression in the mockery of gods who are merely the work of human hands (cf. Ps 115). Thus, despite the bitter conflict with those Hellenistic rulers who sought to accommodate it forcibly to the customs and idolatrous cult of the Greeks, biblical faith, in the Hellenistic period, encountered the best of Greek thought at a deep level, resulting in a mutual enrichment evident especially in the later wisdom literature. Today we know that the Greek translation of the Old Testament produced at Alexandria - the Septuagint - is more than a simple (and in that sense really less than satisfactory) translation of the Hebrew text: it is an independent textual witness and a distinct and important step in the history of revelation, one which brought about this encounter in a way that was decisive for the birth and spread of Christianity.[9] A profound encounter of faith and reason is taking place here, an encounter between genuine enlightenment and religion. From the very heart of Christian faith and, at the same time, the heart of Greek thought now joined to faith, Manuel II was able to say: Not to act “with logos” is contrary to God’s nature.

In all honesty, one must observe that in the late Middle Ages we find trends in theology which would sunder this synthesis between the Greek spirit and the Christian spirit. In contrast with the so-called intellectualism of Augustine and Thomas, there arose with Duns Scotus a voluntarism which, in its later developments, led to the claim that we can only know God’s voluntas ordinata. Beyond this is the realm of God’s freedom, in virtue of which he could have done the opposite of everything he has actually done. This gives rise to positions which clearly approach those of Ibn Hazm and might even lead to the image of a capricious God, who is not even bound to truth and goodness. God’s transcendence and otherness are so exalted that our reason, our sense of the true and good, are no longer an authentic mirror of God, whose deepest possibilities remain eternally unattainable and hidden behind his actual decisions. As opposed to this, the faith of the Church has always insisted that between God and us, between his eternal Creator Spirit and our created reason there exists a real analogy, in which - as the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 stated - unlikeness remains infinitely greater than likeness, yet not to the point of abolishing analogy and its language. God does not become more divine when we push him away from us in a sheer, impenetrable voluntarism; rather, the truly divine God is the God who has revealed himself as logos and, as logos, has acted and continues to act lovingly on our behalf. Certainly, love, as Saint Paul says, “transcends” knowledge and is thereby capable of perceiving more than thought alone (cf. Eph 3:19); nonetheless it continues to be love of the God who is Logos. Consequently, Christian worship is, again to quote Paul - “λογικη λατρεία”, worship in harmony with the eternal Word and with

our reason (cf. Rom 12:1).[10]

This inner rapprochement between Biblical faith and Greek philosophical inquiry was an event of decisive importance not only from the standpoint of the history of religions, but also from that of world history - it is an event which concerns us even today. Given this convergence, it is not surprising that Christianity, despite its origins and some significant developments in the East, finally took on its historically decisive character in Europe. We can also express this the other way around: this convergence, with the subsequent addition of the Roman heritage, created Europe and remains the foundation of what can rightly be called Europe.

The thesis that the critically purified Greek heritage forms an integral part of Christian faith has been countered by the call for a dehellenization of Christianity - a call which has more and more dominated theological discussions since the beginning of the modern age. Viewed more closely, three stages can be observed in the programme of dehellenization: although interconnected, they are clearly distinct from one another in their motivations and objectives.[11]

Dehellenization first emerges in connection with the postulates of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. Looking at the tradition of scholastic theology, the Reformers thought they were confronted with a faith system totally conditioned by philosophy, that is to say an articulation of the faith based on an alien system of thought. As a result, faith no longer appeared as a living historical Word but as one element of an overarching philosophical system. The principle of sola scriptura, on the other hand, sought faith in its pure, primordial form, as originally found in the biblical Word. Metaphysics appeared as a premise derived from another source, from which faith had to be liberated in order to become once more fully itself. When Kant stated that he needed to set thinking aside in order to make room for faith, he carried this programme forward with a radicalism that the Reformers could never have foreseen. He thus anchored faith exclusively in practical reason, denying it access to reality as a whole.

The liberal theology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries ushered in a second stage in the process of dehellenization, with Adolf von Harnack as its outstanding representative. When I was a student, and in the early years of my teaching, this programme was highly influential in Catholic theology too. It took as its point of departure Pascal's distinction between the God of the philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In my inaugural lecture at Bonn in 1959, I tried to address the issue,[12] and I do not intend to repeat here what I said on that occasion, but I would like to describe at least briefly what was new about this second stage of dehellenization. Harnack's central idea was to return simply to the man Jesus and to his simple message, underneath the accretions of theology and indeed of hellenization: this simple message was seen as the culmination of the religious development of humanity. Jesus was said to have put an end to worship in favour of morality. In the end he was presented as the father of a humanitarian moral message. Fundamentally, Harnack's goal was to bring Christianity back into harmony with modern reason, liberating it, that is to say, from seemingly philosophical and theological elements, such as faith in Christ's divinity and the triune God. In this sense, historical-critical exegesis of the New Testament, as he saw it, restored to theology its place within the university: theology, for Harnack, is something

essentially historical and therefore strictly scientific. What it is able to say critically about Jesus is, so to speak, an expression of practical reason and consequently it can take its rightful place within the university. Behind this thinking lies the modern self-limitation of reason, classically expressed in Kant's "Critiques", but in the meantime further radicalized by the impact of the natural sciences. This modern concept of reason is based, to put it briefly, on a synthesis between Platonism (Cartesianism) and empiricism, a synthesis confirmed by the success of technology. On the one hand it presupposes the mathematical structure of matter, its intrinsic rationality, which makes it possible to understand how matter works and use it efficiently: this basic premise is, so to speak, the Platonic element in the modern understanding of nature. On the other hand, there is nature's capacity to be exploited for our purposes, and here only the possibility of verification or falsification through experimentation can yield decisive certainty. The weight between the two poles can, depending on the circumstances, shift from one side to the other. As strongly positivistic a thinker as J. Monod has declared himself a convinced Platonist/Cartesian.

This gives rise to two principles which are crucial for the issue we have raised. First, only the kind of certainty resulting from the interplay of mathematical and empirical elements can be considered scientific. Anything that would claim to be science must be measured against this criterion. Hence the human sciences, such as history, psychology, sociology and philosophy, attempt to conform themselves to this canon of scientificity. A second point, which is important for our reflections, is that by its very nature this method excludes the question of God, making it appear an unscientific or pre-scientific question. Consequently, we are faced with a reduction of the radius of science and reason, one which needs to be questioned.

I will return to this problem later. In the meantime, it must be observed that from this standpoint any attempt to maintain theology's claim to be "scientific" would end up reducing Christianity to a mere fragment of its former self. But we must say more: if science as a whole is this and this alone, then it is man himself who ends up being reduced, for the specifically human questions about our origin and destiny, the questions raised by religion and ethics, then have no place within the purview of collective reason as defined by "science", so understood, and must thus be relegated to the realm of the subjective. The subject then decides, on the basis of his experiences, what he considers tenable in matters of religion, and the subjective "conscience" becomes the sole arbiter of what is ethical. In this way, though, ethics and religion lose their power to create a community and become a completely personal matter. This is a dangerous state of affairs for humanity, as we see from the disturbing pathologies of religion and reason which necessarily erupt when reason is so reduced that questions of religion and ethics no longer concern it. Attempts to construct an ethic from the rules of evolution or from psychology and sociology, end up being simply inadequate.

Before I draw the conclusions to which all this has been leading, I must briefly refer to the third stage of deHellenization, which is now in progress. In the light of our experience with cultural pluralism, it is often said nowadays that the synthesis with Hellenism achieved in the early Church was an initial inculturation which ought not to be binding on other cultures. The latter are said to have the right to return to the simple message of the New Testament prior to that inculturation, in order to inculturate it anew in their own particular milieu. This thesis is not simply false, but

it is coarse and lacking in precision. The New Testament was written in Greek and bears the imprint of the Greek spirit, which had already come to maturity as the Old Testament developed. True, there are elements in the evolution of the early Church which do not have to be integrated into all cultures. Nonetheless, the fundamental decisions made about the relationship between faith and the use of human reason are part of the faith itself; they are developments consonant with the nature of faith itself.

And so I come to my conclusion. This attempt, painted with broad strokes, at a critique of modern reason from within has nothing to do with putting the clock back to the time before the Enlightenment and rejecting the insights of the modern age. The positive aspects of modernity are to be acknowledged unreservedly: we are all grateful for the marvellous possibilities that it has opened up for mankind and for the progress in humanity that has been granted to us. The scientific ethos, moreover, is - as you yourself mentioned, Magnificent Rector - the will to be obedient to the truth, and, as such, it embodies an attitude which belongs to the essential decisions of the Christian spirit. The intention here is not one of retrenchment or negative criticism, but of broadening our concept of reason and its application. While we rejoice in the new possibilities open to humanity, we also see the dangers arising from these possibilities and we must ask ourselves how we can overcome them. We will succeed in doing so only if reason and faith come together in a new way, if we overcome the self-imposed limitation of reason to the empirically falsifiable, and if we once more disclose its vast horizons. In this sense theology rightly belongs in the university and within the wide-ranging dialogue of sciences, not merely as a historical discipline and one of the human sciences, but precisely as theology, as inquiry into the rationality of faith.

Only thus do we become capable of that genuine dialogue of cultures and religions so urgently needed today. In the Western world it is widely held that only positivistic reason and the forms of philosophy based on it are universally valid. Yet the world's profoundly religious cultures see this exclusion of the divine from the universality of reason as an attack on their most profound convictions. A reason which is deaf to the divine and which relegates religion into the realm of subcultures is incapable of entering into the dialogue of cultures. At the same time, as I have attempted to show, modern scientific reason with its intrinsically Platonic element bears within itself a question which points beyond itself and beyond the possibilities of its methodology. Modern scientific reason quite simply has to accept the rational structure of matter and the correspondence between our spirit and the prevailing rational structures of nature as a given, on which its methodology has to be based. Yet the question why this has to be so is a real question, and one which has to be remanded by the natural sciences to other modes and planes of thought - to philosophy and theology. For philosophy and, albeit in a different way, for theology, listening to the great experiences and insights of the religious traditions of humanity, and those of the Christian faith in particular, is a source of knowledge, and to ignore it would be an unacceptable restriction of our listening and responding. Here I am reminded of something Socrates said to Phaedo. In their earlier conversations, many false philosophical opinions had been raised, and so Socrates says: "It would be easily understandable if someone became so annoyed at all these false notions that for the rest of his life he despised and mocked all talk about being - but in this way he would be deprived of the truth of existence and would suffer a great loss".[13] The West has long been endangered by this aversion to the questions which underlie its rationality,

and can only suffer great harm thereby. The courage to engage the whole breadth of reason, and not the denial of its grandeur - this is the programme with which a theology grounded in Biblical faith enters into the debates of our time. "Not to act reasonably, not to act with logos, is contrary to the nature of God", said Manuel II, according to his Christian understanding of God, in response to his Persian interlocutor. It is to this great logos, to this breadth of reason, that we invite our partners in the dialogue of cultures. To rediscover it constantly is the great task of the university.

* * *

[1] Of the total number of 26 conversations (διάλεξις – Khoury translates this as "controversy") in the dialogue ("Entretien"), T. Khoury published the 7th "controversy" with footnotes and an extensive introduction on the origin of the text, on the manuscript tradition and on the structure of the dialogue, together with brief summaries of the "controversies" not included in the edition; the Greek text is accompanied by a French translation: "Manuel II Paléologue, Entretiens avec un Musulman. 7e Controverse", Sources Chrétiennes n. 115, Paris 1966. In the meantime, Karl Förstel published in *Corpus Islamico-Christianum* (Series Graeca ed. A. T. Khoury and R. Gleis) an edition of the text in Greek and German with commentary: "Manuel II. Palaiologus, Dialoge mit einem Muslim", 3 vols., Würzburg-Altenberge 1993-1996. As early as 1966, E. Trapp had published the Greek text with an introduction as vol. II of *Wiener byzantinische Studien*. I shall be quoting from Khoury's edition.

[2] On the origin and redaction of the dialogue, cf. Khoury, pp. 22-29; extensive comments in this regard can also be found in the editions of Förstel and Trapp.

[3] Controversy VII, 2 c: Khoury, pp. 142-143; Förstel, vol. I, VII. Dialog 1.5, pp. 240-241. In the Muslim world, this quotation has unfortunately been taken as an expression of my personal position, thus arousing understandable indignation. I hope that the reader of my text can see immediately that this sentence does not express my personal view of the Qur'an, for which I have the respect due to the holy book of a great religion. In quoting the text of the Emperor Manuel II, I intended solely to draw out the essential relationship between faith and reason. On this point I am in agreement with Manuel II, but without endorsing his polemic.

[4] Controversy VII, 3 b-c: Khoury, pp. 144-145; Förstel vol. I, VII. Dialog 1.6, pp. 240-243.

[5] It was purely for the sake of this statement that I quoted the dialogue between Manuel and his Persian interlocutor. In this statement the theme of my subsequent reflections emerges.

[6] Cf. Khoury, p. 144, n. 1.

[7] R. Arnaldez, *Grammaire et théologie chez Ibn Hazm de Cordoue*, Paris 1956, p. 13; cf. Khoury, p. 144. The fact that comparable positions exist in the theology of the late Middle Ages will appear later in my discourse.

[8] Regarding the widely discussed interpretation of the episode of the burning bush, I refer to my book *Introduction to Christianity*, London 1969, pp. 77-93 (originally published in German as *Einführung in das Christentum*, Munich 1968; N.B. the pages quoted refer to the entire chapter entitled "The Biblical Belief in God"). I think that my statements in that book, despite later developments in the discussion, remain valid today.

[9] Cf. A. Schenker, "L'Écriture sainte subsiste en plusieurs formes canoniques simultanées", in *L'Interpretazione della Bibbia nella Chiesa. Atti del Simposio promosso dalla Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede*, Vatican City 2001, pp. 178-186.

[10] On this matter I expressed myself in greater detail in my book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, San Francisco 2000, pp. 44-50.

[11] Of the vast literature on the theme of dehellénization, I would like to mention above all: A. Grillmeier, "Hellenisierung-Judaisierung des Christentums als Deuteprozesse der Geschichte des kirchlichen Dogmas", in idem, *Mit ihm und in ihm. Christologische Forschungen und Perspektiven*, Freiburg 1975, pp. 423-488.

[12] Newly published with commentary by Heino Sonnemans (ed.): *Joseph Ratzinger-Benedikt XVI, Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der theologia naturalis*, Johannes-Verlag Leutesdorf, 2nd revised edition, 2005.

[13] Cf. 90 c-d. For this text, cf. also R. Guardini, *Der Tod des Sokrates*, 5th edition, Mainz-Paderborn 1987, pp. 218-221.

Benedict XVI's Planned Lecture at La Sapienza

"The Truth Makes Us Good and Goodness Is True", January 2008

Magnificent Rector, Political and Civil Authorities, Illustrious Professors and Administrative Staff, Dear Young Students!

It is a source of great joy for me this encounter with the community of La Sapienza -- University of Rome -- on the occasion of the inauguration of the academic year. For centuries now this university marks the journey and the life of the city of Rome, bringing the best intellectual energies to bear fruit in every field of knowledge.

Whether in the period when, after its foundation at the behest of Pope Boniface VIII, it depended directly on ecclesiastical authority, or whether when the "Studium Urbis" later developed as an institute of the Italian state, your academic community has maintained a high scientific and cultural level, which places it among the most prestigious universities of the world.

The Church of Rome has always looked upon this university center with affection and admiration, recognizing the commitment -- sometimes arduous and demanding -- to research and to the formation of new generations. Significant moments of collaboration and dialogue have not been lacking in recent years. I would like to recall, in particular, the International Meeting of Rectors on the occasion of the Jubilee of Universities that saw your community take charge, not only of welcoming and organizing, but above all of the prophetic and complex task of elaborating a "new humanism for the third millennium."

It is a pleasure, in this circumstance, to express my gratitude for the invitation you have offered to me to come to your university to give a lecture. In this regard I asked myself first of all the question: What can, and must, a Pope say on an occasion like this? In my lecture at Regensburg I spoke, indeed, as Pope, but above all I spoke as a former professor of that university of mine, trying to bring together memories and current events. At La Sapienza, the ancient university of Rome, however, I am invited precisely as Bishop of Rome, and because of this I must speak as such. Certainly, La Sapienza was once the Pope's university, but today it is a secular university with that autonomy that, on the basis of its foundational concept itself, has always been part of the university, which must be bound exclusively to the authority of the truth. In its freedom from political and ecclesiastical authorities, the university finds its particular function, precisely for modern society as well, which needs an institution of this type.

I return to my initial question: What can and must the Pope say in meeting with the university of his city? Reflecting on this question, it seemed to me that it included two others, whose clarification must lead by itself to the answer. It must, in fact, be asked: What is the nature and the mission of the Papacy? And still further: What is the nature and the mission of the university? In this place I do not wish to detain you and me with long disquisitions on the nature of the Papacy. A brief remark will suffice.

The Pope is first of all Bishop of Rome and as such, in virtue of succession to the Apostle Peter, has an episcopal responsibility in regard to the whole Catholic Church. The word "bishop" -- "episkopos" in Greek, which primarily means "overseer" -- has already in the New Testament been fused together with the biblical concept of shepherd: He is the one who, from a higher vantage point, considers the whole,

concerning himself with the right path and of the cohesion of the whole. In this sense, such a designation of his task orientates him first of all to the entirety of the believing community. The bishop -- the shepherd -- is the man who takes care of this community; he who maintains its unity and keeps it on the way toward God, indicated, according to the faith, by Jesus -- and not only indicated by Jesus: Jesus himself is the way for us.

But this community with which the bishop concerns himself -- large or small as it may be -- lives in the world; its state, its example and its word inevitably influence all the rest of the human community in its entirety. The bigger it is, the more that its good state or its possible degradation have repercussions for the whole of humanity. Today we see with great clarity how the conditions of the religions and how the situation of the Church -- her crises and her renewals -- affect the whole of humanity. Thus the Pope, precisely as shepherd of his community, has also become more and more a voice of the ethical reason of humanity.

Here, however, there immediately surfaces the objection, according to which, the Pope would not truly speak on the basis of ethical reason, but would take his judgments from the faith, and because of this he could not pretend that they are valid for those who do not share this faith. We must return to this issue later because here the absolutely fundamental question is posed: What is reason? How can a claim -- above all a moral norm -- show itself to be "reasonable"?

At this moment I would like to only briefly note that John Rawls, although denying to comprehensive religious doctrines the character of "public" reason, nevertheless sees at least in their "nonpublic" reason a reason that cannot, in the name of a secularly hardened rationality, simply be disregarded by those who support it.

He sees a criterion for this reasonableness in, among other things, the fact that similar doctrines derive from a responsible and validly grounded tradition in which, over a long period of time, sufficiently good argumentation has developed to support the respective doctrine. What seems important to me in this affirmation is the recognition that experience and demonstration over the course of generations, the historical background of human wisdom, are also a sign of its reasonableness and its enduring significance. In the face of an a-historical reason that tries to construct itself through a-historical rationality, the wisdom of humanity as such -- the wisdom of the great religious traditions -- is to be valued as a reality that cannot be with impunity thrown into the dustbin of the history of ideas.

Let us return to the initial question. The Pope speaks as a representative of a believing community in which, over the centuries of its existence, a determinate wisdom of life has matured; he speaks as the representative of a community that bears within itself a treasury of ethical knowledge and experience that turns out to be important for the whole of humanity: in this sense he speaks as a representative of ethical reason.

But now we must ask ourselves: And what is the university? What is its task? It is a huge question to which, once again, I can try to respond only in an almost telegraphic way with some observations. I think that it can be said that the true, interior origin of the university is in the desire for knowledge that is native to man. He wants to know what it is that surrounds him. He wants truth. In this sense we can see that Socrates' self-questioning as the impulse from which the Western university was born.

I think, for example -- to mention only one text -- of the debate with Euthyphro, who defends mythical religion and his piety before Socrates. Against this Socrates poses the question: "Do you really believe that the gods fight with one another, and have awful quarrels and battles? ... Must we in fact say, Euthyphro, that all that is true?" ("Euthyphro," 6b-c). In this apparently impious question -- which in Socrates derived from a more profound and more pure religiosity, from the search for the truly divine God -- the Christians of the first centuries recognized themselves and their path. They did not understand their faith in a positivistic way, or as an escape from frustrated desires; they understood it as the dispersal of the fog of mythological religion to give room for the discovery of that God who is creative Reason and at the same time Reason-Love.

On account of this, reason's asking itself about the greater God, as its asking about the true nature and the true meaning of the human being, was not a problematic form of a lack of religiosity for those early Christians, but was part of the essence of their way of being religious. They did not need, then, to throw off or put aside Socratic self-questioning, but were able -- or rather, had to -- accept as part of their own identity reason's difficult search to reach knowledge of the whole truth. In this way, in the domain of Christian faith, in the Christian world, the university was able to -- or rather, had to -- be born.

It is necessary to take a further step. Man wants to know -- he wants truth. Truth is first of all a thing of seeing, of understanding, of "theoria," as it is called by the Greek tradition. But the truth is never only theoretic. Augustine, in making a correlation between the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount and the gifts of the Spirit mentioned in Isaiah 11, affirmed a reciprocity between "scientia" and "tristitia": mere knowing, he says, makes one sad. And, in fact, those who only see and apprehend everything that happens in the world ends up becoming sad. But truth means more than knowing: Knowledge of the truth has knowledge of the good as its scope. This is also the meaning of Socratic self-questioning: What is that good that makes us true? The truth makes us good and goodness is true: This is the optimism that lives in Christian faith, because to it has been conceded the vision of the Logos, of creative Reason that, in the incarnation of God, has revealed himself as the Good, as Goodness Itself.

In medieval theology there was a substantial debate about the relationship between theory and practice, about the right relation between knowing and acting -- a debate that we cannot develop here. In fact, the medieval university, with its four faculties, presents this correlation. Let us start with the faculty that, according to the understanding of the time, was the fourth, namely, medicine. Even if it was considered more of an "art" than a science, nevertheless, its insertion in the cosmos of the "universitas" clearly signified that it was placed in the context of rationality, that the art of healing was under the guidance of reason, and was removed from the context of magic. Healing is a task that demands more and more from simple reason, but precisely because of this it needs the connection between knowing and power, it needs to belong to the sphere of "ratio."

In the faculty of jurisprudence the question of the relationship between practice and theory, between knowing and acting, inevitably appears. It is a matter of giving the right form to human freedom, which is always a freedom in reciprocal communion: Law is the presupposition of freedom, not its antagonist. Be here the question

immediately arises: How can we identify the criteria of justice that make a freedom lived together possible and serve man's well-being. At this point a leap into the present imposes itself: It is the question of how a juridical norm that constitutes an ordering of freedom, of human dignity and of the rights of man can be found. It is the question that concerns us today in the democratic processes of the formation of opinion and that at the same time makes us anxious as a question for the future of humanity.

Jürgen Habermas expresses, in my view, a vast consensus of current thought when he says that the legitimacy of a constitutional charter, as a presupposition of legality, would be derived from two sources: from the egalitarian political participation of all citizens and from the reasonable form in which political conflicts get resolved. In regard to this "reasonable form" he notes that it cannot only be a struggle for arithmetic majorities, but it must be characterized by a "process of argumentation that is sensitive to the truth" ("wahrheitssensibles Argumentationsverfahren"). This is well said, but it is a difficult thing to transform into a political practice.

The representatives of that public "process of argumentation" are -- we know -- predominantly the parties as those in charge of the formation of the political will. In fact, they will unfailingly have as their aim above all the obtaining of majorities and so will almost inevitably be preoccupied with the interests that they promise to satisfy; such interests, however, are often particular and do not truly serve the whole. The sensitivity to truth is again and again defeated by the sensitivity to interests. I find it significant that Habermas speaks about the sensitivity to the truth as a necessary element of the process of political argumentation, reinserting thus the concept of truth into the philosophical debate and into the political debate.

But then Pilate's question becomes inevitable: What is truth? How is it recognized? If in answer to these questions one refers to "public reason," as Rawls does, once more there necessarily follows the question: What is reasonable? How does a reason show itself to be true reason? In any case, on this basis it is made evident that, in the search for the law of freedom, for the truth of just communal life, voices besides those of parties and interest groups must be heard, but without thereby contesting the importance of the parties and interest groups. Let us return to the structure of the medieval university.

Alongside the faculty of jurisprudence were the faculties of philosophy and theology, to whom was entrusted the study of man's being in its totality and, along with this, the task of keeping the sensitivity to truth alive. It could even be said that this is the permanent and true meaning of both faculties: being guardians of the sensitivity to truth, not allowing man to be deterred from the search for truth. But how can they live up to this task? This is a question for which it is necessary again and again to labor, and which is never definitively posed or resolved. Thus, at this point, neither can I properly offer an answer, but an invitation to stay on the road with this question -- the road along which the great ones have struggled and searched throughout the whole of history, with their answers and their restlessness for the truth, which continually refers beyond any single answer.

Theology and philosophy form, because of this, a peculiar pair of twins, neither of which can be totally separated from the other and, nevertheless, each must preserve its proper task and proper identity. It is the historical merit of St. Thomas Aquinas -- vis-

à-vis the various responses of the Fathers due to their historical context -- to have illuminated the autonomy of philosophy, and with it the proper right and the responsibility of reason that questions itself on the basis of its powers. Differentiating themselves from the Neoplatonic philosophies, in which religion and philosophy were inseparably intertwined, the Fathers presented the Christian faith as the true philosophy, underscoring also that this faith corresponds to the exigencies of reason in search of the truth; that faith is the “yes” to the truth, compared with the mythic religions that had become mere custom.

But then, with the birth of the university, those religions no longer existed in the West, but just Christianity alone, and thus it was necessary to emphasize in a new way the proper responsibility of reason, that must not be absorbed by faith. Thomas found himself acting in a privileged moment: For the first time the whole corpus of Aristotle’s philosophical writings were available; Jewish and Arab philosophies were present as specific appropriations and continuations of Greek philosophy. In this way Christianity, in a new dialogue with the reason of others, with which it came into contact, had to struggle for its own reasonableness.

The faculty of philosophy, which, as the so-called “faculty of arts,” until that moment had only been a propedeutic to theology, now became a true and proper faculty, an autonomous partner of theology and of faith in this reaction. We cannot pause here over the absorbing confrontation that resulted. I would say that St. Thomas’ idea of the relationship between philosophy and theology could be expressed in the Council of Chalcedon’s formula for Christology: Philosophy and theology must relate to each other “without confusion and without separation.” “Without confusion” means that both of them preserve their proper identity. Philosophy must truly remain an undertaking of reason in its proper freedom and proper responsibility; it must recognize its limits, and precisely in this way also its grandeur and vastness. Theology must continue to draw from the treasury of knowledge that it did not invent itself, that always surpasses it and that, never being totally exhaustible through reflection, and precisely because of this, launches thinking.

Together with the “without confusion,” the “without separation” is also in force: Philosophy does not begin again from zero with the subject thinking in isolation, but rather stands in the great dialogue of historical wisdom, that again and again it both critically and docilely receives and develops; but it must not close itself off from that which the religions, and the Christian faith in particular, have received and bequeathed on humanity as an indication of the way. Various things said by theologians in the course of history and also things handed down in the practice of ecclesial authorities, have been shown to be false by history and today they confuse us. But at the same time it is true that the history of the saints, the history of the humanism that grew up on the basis of the Christian faith, demonstrates the truth of this faith in its essential nucleus, thereby making it an example for public reason. Certainly, much of what theology and faith say can only be accepted within faith and therefore it cannot present itself as an exigency to those for whom this faith still remains inaccessible. At the same time it is true, however, that the message of the Christian faith is never only a “comprehensive religious doctrine” in the sense of Rawls, but a purifying force for reason itself, that helps reason to be more itself. The Christian message, on the basis of its origin, must always be an encouragement toward the truth and thus a force against the pressure of power and interests.

Well, I have only been talking about the medieval university, trying nevertheless to make transparent the permanent nature of the university and its task. In modern times new dimensions of knowledge have been disclosed that in the university have been valued above all in two great fields: first of all in the natural sciences, which have developed on the basis of the connection of experimentation and the presupposed rationality of matter; in the second place in the historical and humanistic sciences, in which man, scrutinizing the mirror of his history and clarifying the dimensions of his nature, attempts to understand himself better. In this development there has opened to humanity not only an immense measure of knowledge and power; the knowledge and recognition of the rights and dignity of man have also grown, and we can only be grateful for this.

But man's journey can never suppose itself to be at an end and the danger of falling into inhumanity is never simply overcome -- as we see in the panorama of contemporary history! Today the danger of the Western world -- to speak only of this context -- is that man, precisely in the consideration of the grandeur of his knowledge and power, might give up before the question of truth. And that means at the same time that reason, in the end, bows to the pressure of interests and the charm of utility, constrained to recognize it as the ultimate criterion. To put this in terms of the point of view of the structure of the university: The danger exists that philosophy, no longer feeling itself capable of its true task, might degenerate into positivism; that theology, with its message addressed to reason, might become confined to the private sphere of a group more or less sizable. If, however, reason -- solicitous of its presumed purity -- becomes deaf to the great message that comes from the Christian faith and its wisdom, it will wither like a tree whose roots no longer reach the waters that give it life. It will lose courage for the truth and thus it will not become greater but less. Applied to our European culture this means: If it wants only to construct itself on the basis of the circle of its own arguments and that which convinces it at the moment -- worried about its secularity -- it will cut itself off from the roots by which it lives; then it will not become more reasonable and more pure, but it will break apart and disintegrate.

With this I return to the point of departure. What does the Pope have to do with, or have to say to the university? Surely he must not attempt to impose the faith on others in an authoritarian way since it can only be bestowed in freedom. Beyond his office as Shepherd of the Church, and on the basis of the intrinsic nature of this pastoral office, there is his duty to keep the sensitivity to truth alive; to continually invite reason to seek out the true, the good, God, and on this path, to urge it to glimpse the helpful lights that shine forth in the history of the Christian faith, and in this way to perceive Jesus Christ as the Light that illuminates history and helps us to find the way to the future.

From the Vatican, January 17, 2008

BENEDICTUS XV

Relativism, Truth, and Faith

Mgr. Ángel Rodríguez Luño, Pontifical University of the Holy Cross
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1. Christian faith and the challenge of relativism

These reflections take as their starting point teachings of Benedict XVI, but make no attempt to offer a complete explanation of his thought on this question.¹ On various occasions and in different words, Benedict XVI has expressed his conviction that relativism has become the central problem confronting the Christian faith today.² Some people in the media have interpreted these words as referring almost exclusively to the area of morality, as though intended to vilify anyone who refuses to accept specific points of the Catholic Church's moral teaching. But this interpretation is erroneous, since relativism is a much broader and deeper problem, manifested primarily in the philosophical and religious domains. It refers to the deep-seated attitude that contemporary men and women, both believers and non-believers, easily assume in relation to the truth.

The reference to a deep-seated attitude towards the truth distinguishes relativism from error. Error is compatible with a sound attitude towards the truth. A person who affirms, for example, that the Church was not founded by Jesus Christ, may say this because he thinks (mistakenly) that it is the truth and that the opposite thesis is false. The one making an affirmation of this type thinks that it is possible to attain the truth. Those who attain it, and in the degree to which they attain it, are right, and those who sustain the contrary affirmation are mistaken.

Relativistic philosophy, in contrast, claims that we have to resign ourselves to the fact that divine realities and those touching on the deepest meaning of human life, both personal and social, are substantially inaccessible, and that no single approach to them exists. Every epoch, every culture and every religion have used different concepts, images, symbols, metaphors, visions, etc. to express them. These cultural expressions may be opposed to one another, but in relation to the realities to which they refer they are all of equal value. They are all diverse paths, defined by specific cultures and historical periods, for alluding in a very imperfect way to realities that are essentially unknowable. Thus no conceptual or religious system possesses an absolute truth value. All are relative to their historical moment and cultural context; hence their diversity and even mutual opposition. But within the ambit of this relativity, all are equally valid, insofar as they are different and complementary ways of approaching the same reality that substantially remains hidden.

In a book published before his election, Benedict XVI refers to a Buddhist parable.³ A king in northern India once gathered together a number of blind men who did not know what an elephant was. He had some of the blind men touch the head of the elephant and told them: "This is an elephant." He said the same thing to the others as he told them to touch the trunk, or the ears, or the feet, or the hairs at the end of the elephant's tail. Then the king asked the blind men what an elephant was, and each gave a different explanation depending on the part he had been permitted to touch. The blind men began to argue, and the argument became violent, until a fist fight broke out among them, which provided the entertainment the king was seeking.

This story is a good illustration of relativism. Mankind is blind and runs the danger of absolutizing partial and inadequate knowledge, unaware of its intrinsic limitation (the theoretical foundation of relativism). When we fall into this temptation, we are prone to violent and disrespectful behavior, incompatible with human dignity (ethical foundation of relativism). The logical approach would be to accept the relativism of our ideas, not only because this corresponds to the nature of our limited knowledge, but also in virtue of the ethical imperative of tolerance, dialogue and mutual respect. The relativist philosophy presents itself as the necessary requirement for democracy, mutual respect and coexistence. But it fails to take into account that relativism makes possible mockery and abuse by those in power: in the parable, the king who wants to amuse himself at the expense of the poor blind men. In present day society, we can find the same abuse in those who promote their own interests, whether economic, ideological, political, etc., at the cost of others, through skillful and unscrupulous management of public opinion and the other sources of power.

What does all this have to do with the Christian faith? Quite a lot. For it is essential to Christianity to present itself as *religio vera*, as the true religion.⁴ The Christian faith moves on the plane of truth, which is its “minimal vital space.” The Christian religion is not a myth, nor a conjunction of rites useful for social and political life, nor a principle that inspires sound private sentiments, nor an ethical agency for international cooperation. The Christian faith, first of all, communicates the truth about God, although not exhaustively, and the truth about man and the meaning of his life.⁵ The Christian faith is incompatible with the logic of the “as if.” It cannot be reduced to telling ourselves that we have to behave “as if” God had created us, and therefore “as if” all men were brothers. Rather it affirms, as a true claim, that God created heaven and earth and that we are all equally children of God. It also tells us that Christ is the full and definitive revelation of God, “the glory of God and...the very stamp of his nature,”⁶ the only mediator between God and mankind.⁷ Therefore it cannot accept the view that Christ is simply the form under which God has chosen to reveal himself to Europeans.⁸

We should stress here that coexistence and peaceful dialogue with those who do not have faith, or who sustain other doctrines, is not opposed to Christianity; rather just the opposite is true. What is incompatible with Christian faith is the claim that Christianity, the other monotheistic or non-monotheistic religions, the monistic oriental mysticisms, atheism, etc. are equally true, since they are diverse ways, each limited by specific cultural and historical circumstances, of referring to the same reality, which none manages to truly capture. That is to say, the Christian faith would dissolve if on the theoretical plane one were to lose the perspective of truth according to which those who affirm and deny the same thing cannot be equally right, or be considered as complementary visions of the same reality.

2. Religious relativism

The strength of Christianity, and its power to guide and heal personal and collective life, consists in a close synthesis between faith, reason, and life.⁹ Religious faith reveals to each person that true reason is love and that love is true reason.¹⁰ This synthesis is broken if reason is viewed as relativistic. Thus relativism has become the central problem that evangelization has to confront in our day and age. For relativism brings with it a deeply disordered stance with regard to truth, manifested in all facets of life.

In the first place we find today a relativist interpretation of religion. It is what is known as “the theology of religious pluralism,” which affirms that religious pluralism is not only a *de facto* reality, but a *de jure* one. God is seen as positively wanting non-Christian religions as different paths by which men and women can unite with him and receive salvation, independent of Christ. Christ at most has a position of special importance, but he is only one of many possible paths, and therefore neither exclusive nor inclusive of the rest. All religions are partial ways to God; all can learn from the others something of the truth about God, and in all (or in many of them) one finds a true divine revelation.

This position rests upon the presupposition of the historical and cultural relativity of God’s salvific action in Jesus Christ. The universal salvific action of God is realized through various limited forms, according to the diversity of peoples and cultures, without identifying itself fully with any of them. The absolute truth about God cannot have an adequate and sufficient expression in history and in human language, always limited and relative. Christ’s actions and words are subject to that relativity, in a way analogous to the actions and words of other great religious figures. Christ does not have an absolute and universal value, since nothing that happens in history can have such value.¹¹ Many different ways exist for trying to explain this view of God’s salvific action.¹²

The encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*¹³ of Pope John Paul II and the declaration *Dominus Iesus*¹⁴ confront these complex theories. It is easy to see that such theological positions dissolve Christology and relativize Christ’s revelation, which is viewed as limited, incomplete and imperfect,¹⁵ thus opening the way for other independent and autonomous revelations.¹⁶ What holds pride of place in these theories is the ethical imperative of dialogue with the representatives of the great Asian religions, which would not be possible if one did not accept, as a point of departure, that these religions have an autonomous salvific value, not derived from or directed towards Christ. Also in this case a theoretical (dogmatic) relativism is to a great extent dictated by a practical imperative (that of dialogue).

We should clarify here that what we have just said in no way prejudices the salvation of those without faith in Christ. Non-Christians who live an upright life in accord with their conscience are also saved by Christ and in Christ, although they do not know him here on earth. Christ is the universal Redeemer

and Savior of the human race. He is the salvation of all who are saved.

3. Ethical-Social Relativism

We will now go on to consider ethical-social relativism. By this expression we want to point out not only that today's relativism has many evident manifestations in the ethical-social order, but also, and principally, that it presents itself as justified by ethical-social reasons. This explains both the ease with which it has spread and the ineffectiveness of certain attempts to combat it.

Habermas formulates an ethical-social justification for relativism in the following way. In present-day society we find a pluralism of conceptions of and ways of living the human good. This puts us before a clear alternative: either we renounce the classical pretension of pronouncing value judgments on the various lifestyles that experience offers us, or we renounce defending the ideal of tolerance, according to which every philosophy of life has the same worth as any other, or, at least, all have the same right to exist.¹⁷ The force of this kind of reasoning lies in the fact that historically men have often violently "sacrificed freedom on the altar of truth." Thus it is easy to seem to be defending freedom, while actually falling into the opposite extreme of violently "sacrificing truth on the altar of freedom."

This can be clearly seen in the way a relativistic mentality attacks its adversaries. To those who affirm, for example, that heterosexuality is of the essence of marriage, the claim is not made that this thesis is false. Rather those who hold it are accused of religious fundamentalism, intolerance, or an anti-modern spirit. Much less is there any attempt to defend the contrary thesis. The characteristic of the relativist mentality is to say that this thesis is one that happens to exist in society, together with its contrary, and perhaps with others, and that all of them in the end are of equal value and have the same right to be socially recognized. Those defending relativism don't oblige anyone to get married to a person of the same sex, but anyone who wants to do this should be free to do so. This is the same reasoning used to justify the legalization of abortion and other attacks against the human life of persons who, because of their situation, cannot actively vindicate their rights and whose collaboration is not necessary to us. No one is obliged to have an abortion, but those who want to should be able to attain one.

The relativist mentality is open to many different criticisms. But what one should never do is to reinforce, with one's words or attitudes, what is most persuasive in that mentality. That is to say, whoever attacks relativism should never give the impression that he is disposed to sacrifice freedom on the altar of truth. Rather one should make clear that one is very aware that the move from the theoretical perspective to the ethical-political perspective has to be done with great care. It is one thing to refuse to accept that those who affirm and deny the same thing can be equally correct; quite other is the thesis that only those who think in a particular way should enjoy all the rights of civil freedom under the law. All confusion between the theoretical plane and the ethical-political plane should be avoided. The relationship of conscience with truth is one thing, while justice among people is something quite different. Following this logic one can then show, in a credible way, that in regard to an affirmation that tries to say how the world is, that is, in regard to a speculative thesis, one can only say that it is true or false. Speculative theses are neither strong nor weak, neither private nor public, neither cold nor hot, neither violent nor peaceful, neither authoritarian nor democratic, neither progressive nor conservative, neither good nor bad. They are simply true or false.

What would we think of someone who, when explaining a mathematical proof or giving a medical explanation, would begin by saying that this scientific knowledge only has a private validity, or that it represents a deeply democratic theory? If there is complete certainty that a particular medicine will stop a tumor from growing, one is dealing with a medical truth, and there is nothing more to say. In contrast one can view a way of conceiving civil rights or the structure of the state as authoritarian or democratic, as just or unjust, as conservative or reformist. At the same time, there are realities such as marriage which are both an object of true knowledge and of practical regulation in accord with justice. In case of conflict, one has to find a way of saving both truth and justice among persons, for which one has to take into account, among other things, the "expressive" or educational value of civil laws.¹⁸

In his address on December 22, 2005, Benedict XVI distinguished very clearly between the need to defend the truth and the need to seek justice among men and women. Here is a very significant paragraph: "If religious freedom were to be considered an expression of the human inability to discover the truth and thus become a canonization of relativism, then this social and historical necessity is raised inappropriately to the metaphysical level and thus stripped of its true meaning. Consequently, it cannot

be accepted by those who believe that the human person is capable of knowing the truth about God and, on the basis of the inner dignity of the truth, is bound to this knowledge. It is quite different, on the other hand, to perceive religious freedom as a need that derives from human coexistence, or indeed, as an intrinsic consequence of the truth that cannot be externally imposed but that the person must adopt only through the process of conviction. The Second Vatican Council, recognizing and making its own an essential principle of the modern state with the Decree on Religious Freedom, has recovered the deepest patrimony of the Church.”¹⁹

Benedict XVI goes on to say that “those who expected that with this fundamental ‘yes’ to the modern era all tensions would be dispelled and that the ‘openness towards the world’ accordingly achieved would transform everything into pure harmony, had underestimated the inner tensions as well as the contradictions inherent in the modern epoch. They had underestimated the perilous frailty of human nature which has been a threat to human progress in all the periods of history.” And while affirming that “the Council could not have intended to abolish the Gospel’s opposition to human dangers and errors,”²⁰ he also said that one needs to strive to do everything possible to overcome “erroneous or superfluous contradictions in order to present to our world the requirement of the Gospel in its full greatness and purity.”²¹ And he stressed that “the steps the Council took towards the modern era which had rather vaguely been presented as ‘openness to the world,’ belong in short to the perennial problem of the relationship between faith and reason that is re-emerging in ever-new forms.”²²

4. Anthropological problems of relativism

We have said that relativism in the ethical-social terrain stems from a practical motive: permitting people to do whatever they desire, as long as it doesn’t harm others, which is seen as an expansion of freedom. But the relativistic mentality brings with it a deep anthropological disorder, with steep personal and social costs. Here I will mention only two aspects of this complex problem.

The first is that the relativist mentality is united to an excessive accentuation of the technical dimension of the human intellect and of the impulses connected to the expansion of the ego with which this dimension of the intellect is related, with the corresponding suppression of the intellect’s sapiential dimension.

What is here referred to as “the technical dimension of the human intellect,” which other authors call by different names,²³ is the activity of the intellect that permits us to orientate ourselves in our surroundings, guarantying the satisfaction of our basic necessities. The intellect forms concepts, discovers relationships, recognizes the order of things, etc. for the purpose of controlling and exploiting nature, making tools and obtaining the resources that we need. Thanks to this function of the intellect the objects and forces of nature become objects that we can control and manipulate for our own benefit. From this perspective, to know is power: power to control, power to manipulate, power to live better.

The sapiential function of the intellect, in contrast, seeks to understand the meaning of the world and human life. It develops concepts not for the purpose of controlling but to attain truths about the world that can give a sound answer to the question of the meaning of our existence, an answer that in the long run is as necessary to us as bread and water.

The systematic flight from the plane of truth, which we have termed the relativist mentality, brings with it an imbalance between these two functions of the intellect. The predominance of the technical functions means the predominance at the personal and cultural level of impulses towards the values of pleasure, well-being, possession, absence of sacrifice, etc., by means of which the individual ego is affirmed and expanded. The suppression of the sapiential function of the intellect brings with it the inhibition of the social and altruistic tendencies, and above all a diminishing of the capacity for self-transcendence, as a result of which the person becomes enclosed within the limits of egoistic individualism. Thus the thirst to accumulate, to triumph, to relax and amuse oneself, to live easily and pleasantly, easily prevails over the desire to know, to reflect, to give meaning to what one does, to help others by means of one’s work, to transcend the narrow limits of our immediate interests.

The second problem is closely linked with the first. The lack of sensitivity towards the truth and towards questions related to the meaning of human life leads to the deformation, if not the corruption, of freedom—of one’s own freedom first of all. It is no surprise that social and legal expressions of lifestyles congruent with this anthropological disorder are always based on a call for freedom, a reality

which is certainly sacrosanct, but which has to be understood in its true meaning. People invoke freedom as freedom to abort, freedom to be misinformed, freedom to be vile, freedom to refuse to give any reason for one's own positions, freedom to annoy others and, above all, freedom to impose on others a relativist philosophy. Anyone who refuses to accept this philosophy is subjected to a process of social and cultural "lynching"—the "dictatorship of relativism" pointed to by Benedict XVI

All this also has many negative implications for the Christian faith. Anyone who thinks that truth exists, and can be attained with certainty even in the midst of many difficulties; anyone who thinks that our capacity to culturally model love, marriage, life, the order of coexistence in the state, etc., is subject to limits that can't be violated, holds that there exists an intellect beyond the human intellect. It is the Creator's intellect that determines the purposes of natural beings and limits our power to change them. The relativist thinks the contrary. Relativism is like agnosticism. Anyone who follows it to the end will find himself much closer to practical atheism. It seems to me that the conviction that God created man and woman is incompatible with the idea that marriage between persons of the same sex is possible.²⁴ It would only be possible if marriage were simply a cultural creation structured centuries ago in one way, which we are free to restructure now in another way.

Relativism responds to a radical conception of life which it tries to impose on everyone. The dogma of relativism affirms that the way to attain the greatest possible happiness in this conflicted world of ours, which is always a limited and fragmentary happiness, is to evade the problem of truth, viewed as a useless complication and the cause of many headaches.²⁵ Relativism is a dogmatic philosophy of happiness. As such it comes up against the problem that men and women possess an intellect, and that we cannot be happy without knowing the meaning of our life. Aristotle began his *Metaphysics* by saying that every person, by nature, desires to know.²⁶ And Christ taught that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."²⁷

No coercive force can eliminate from human life the desire to know, or hunger for the word that proceeds from God's mouth. Therefore I am convinced that ours is a time of hope, and that the future is much more promising than it might appear, provided that those who seek the truth can show others a life that is richer and more human than the life offered by relativism. And this undoubtedly is also a challenge for those who want to help spread the Christian faith in today's world.

1) We will focus on the following texts: Joseph Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2004; homily at the *Missa pro eligendo Romano Pontifice* celebrated in the Vatican Basilica on April 18, 2005; and the important Christmas Address of Benedict XVI to the Roman Curia, December 22, 2005.

2) Cf. for example Joseph Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, p. 117. See also the homily mentioned above, given on April 18, 2005.

3) Cf. *Truth and Tolerance*, p. 162.

4) Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-183.

5) The knowledge of God that faith gives us is not exhaustive because in heaven we will know God much better. Nevertheless, what Revelation tells us is true, and it is all that God wanted to tell us about himself. There is no other source to know more truths about God nor are there other revelations.

6) *Heb* 1:3.

7) Cf. *1 Tim* 2:5

8) This thesis was defended at the beginning of the twentieth century by Ernst Troeltsch Cf. *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte*, Mohr, Tübingen, 1929.

9) This idea is found throughout *Truth and Tolerance*.

10) *Truth and Tolerance*, p. 175.

11) A defense of the pluralist thesis can be found in: Paul Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes towards the World Religions*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll (NY) 1985; John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion Human Responses to the Transcendent*, Yale University press, London 1989; Michael Amaladoss, *The Pluralism of Religions and the Significance of Christ*, in *Making All Things New: Dialogue, Pluralism and Evangelization in Asia*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand, 1990, pp. 243-268; *Mission and Servanthood*, "Third Millennium" 2 (1999) 59-66; *Jésus Christ, le seul sauveur; et la mission*, "Spiritus" 159 (2000) 148-157; "Do Not Judge..." (*Mt* 7:1), "Jeevadhara" 31/183 (2001) 179-182; Felix Wilfred, *Beyond Settled Foundations. The Journey of Indian Theology*, Madras, 1993.

- 12) Some claim that the Word not incarnated, *Lógos ásarkos* or *Lógos cosmico*, carries out a much broader salvific action than that of the Word Incarnate, the *Logos ensarkos* (cf. for example Jacques Dupuis, *Verso una teologia del pluralism religioso*, Queriniana, Brescia 2997, p. 404). Others claim that the Holy Spirit carries out a salvific action that is separate from that of Christ, attributing the autonomous salvific value of the non-Christian religions and the true revelation contained in them to the Holy Spirit.
- 13) Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, on the permanent validity of the missionary mandate, December 7, 1990.
- 14) Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration “*Dominus Iesus*” on the unicity and the salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church, August 6, 2000.
- 15) Cf. Dupuis, *Verso una teologia del pluralismo religioso*, cit., p. 367 and 403.
- 16) Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 332 and 342.
- 17) Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Aclaraciones a la ética del discurso*, Trotta, Madrid, 2000, pp. 93-94 (original: *Erläuterungen zur Diskursethik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1991).
- 18) The “expressive” aspect of civil laws refers to the undeniable fact that the law, in addition to permitting or forbidding something, expresses a conception of human life and marriage, and thus has an educational impact of either a positive or negative character.
- 19) Benedict XVI, Christmas Address to the Roman Curia, December 22, 2005.
- 20) *Ibid.*
- 21) *Ibid.*
- 22) *Ibid.*
- 23) Philipp Lersch calls it the *intellectual function* of the intellect, and terms what we call the “sapiential dimension” the *spiritual function* of the intellect. Cf. Lersch, Philipp, Ph., *La estructura de la personalidad*, 4th ed., Scientia, Barcelona 1963, pp. 399-404.
- 24) *Gen* 1:27-28 and 2:24.
- 25) The ethical thesis of Greek skepticism is once again resurfacing today: “Whoever holds that something is by nature good or evil, or in general obligatory or prohibited, is subject to many anxieties...If the conviction that some things by nature are either good or bad produces anxiety, then it is also bad to assume and hold firmly that something is objectively bad or good.” (Sexto Empírico, *Esbozos pirrónicos*, Biblioteca Clasica Gredos, Madrid 1993, III, pp. 237-238). For a critique of this position, cf. Antonio Rodríguez Luño, *Ética General*, 5th ed., Eunsa, Pamplona 2004, pp. 134-138.
- 26) Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 1:980 a 1.
- 27) *Mt* 4:4.