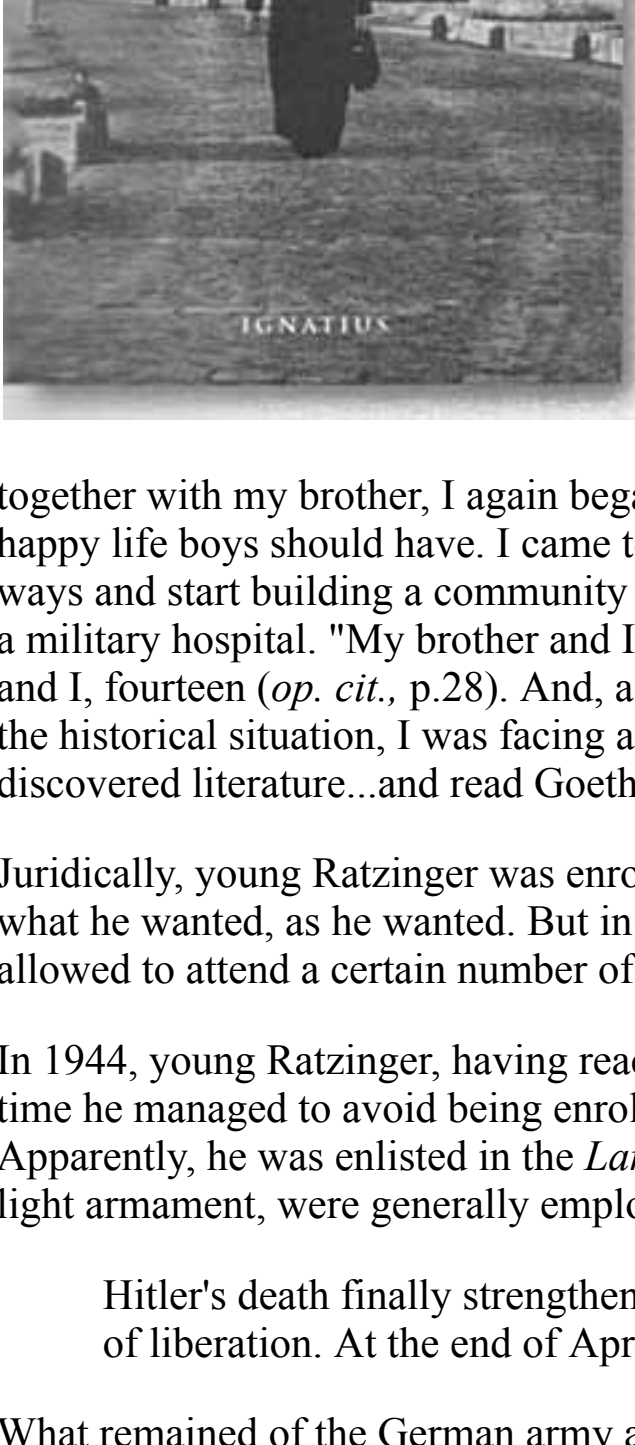




The Memories of a Destructive Mind

PART I

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's *Milestones*



In 1996, Cardinal Ratzinger published an in-depth interview of himself titled *Salt of the Earth*¹ and in 1997 an autobiography called *Milestones: Memoirs 1927-1977*.² These books are important if we consider the high post the Cardinal holds in the Vatican. In this article, which will be printed in two parts (*Part II* to appear in *The Angelus*, May, 1999), we will review *Milestones* to better understand the current crisis in the Catholic Church.

Joseph Ratzinger was born into a very Catholic family April 16, 1927 at Markt am Inn in Bavaria. He was the third of three children, two boys and a girl. His father was a policeman and staunchly anti-Nazi. When he was about 11, his pastor "urged him to enter the minor seminary [at Traunstein in Bavaria] in order to be initiated systematically into the spiritual life" (*ibid.* p.25). After some hesitations due to the family finances,...

....the decision was made, and at Easter of 1939, I entered the seminary. I did so with joy and great expectations because my brother had told me many exciting things about the place and because I developed good friendships with the seminarians in my class. However, I am one of those people who are not made for living in a boarding school. While at home I had lived and studied with great freedom, as I wished, and had built a childhood world of my own. Now I had to sit in a study hall with about sixty other boys, and this was such a torture to me...(*ibid.*).

When he entered the minor seminary, Ratzinger was about 12 years old. It seems that his entry into the seminary was chiefly urged by the village pastor and by his brother and a few friends. But he was disappointed, and he candidly admits that he was bored by seminary life. And he declares, with a touch of pride, that he considers himself to be "one of those people who are not made for living in a boarding school."

The outbreak of the World War II (1939) brought about the transformation of the minor seminary into "a military hospital, so now, together with my brother, I again began to live at home and walk to school. But the director found alternate quarters for the seminary..." (*op. cit.*, p.26)... "It was the kind of happy life boys should have. I came to terms, then, with being in the seminary and experienced a wonderful time in my life. I had to learn how to...come out of my solitary ways and start building a community with others..." (*op. cit.*, p.27). After the attack against Russia (June 22, 1941) the minor seminary's temporary quarters were confiscated for a military hospital. "My brother and I now came home for good. It was also clear, moreover, that the war would last for a long time yet... My brother was seventeen years old, and I, fourteen" (*op. cit.*, p.28). And, as it happened, his brother was drafted into the army as a radio operator, and in 1944 was sent to the Italian front. "Despite the grimness of the historical situation, I was facing a good year at home and at the *gymnasium* in Traunstein. The Greek and Latin classics filled me with enthusiasm.... Above all, I now discovered literature.... and read Goethe with delight..." (*ibid.*, p.29).

Juridically, young Ratzinger was enrolled in the boarding school or minor seminary, the property of which had been confiscated, and was thus able to stay at home and study what he wanted, as he wanted. But in 1943, at age 16, he was drafted into one of the anti-aircraft defense batteries along with other seminarians, while at the same time being allowed to attend a certain number of classes at the renowned Maximilians-Gymnasium in Munich (*op. cit.*, p.35).

In 1944, young Ratzinger, having reached military age, was released from the anti-aircraft defense battery. After a period of service in the Reich's labor detail, during which time he managed to avoid being enrolled into the SS by publicly declaring his intention of becoming a priest, he was at last called to arms at the end of that year (*op. cit.*, p.33). Apparently, he was enlisted in the *Landsturm*, troops of the last hour comprising the young and the less young, and fathers of families who, after a summary training and with light armament, were generally employed in the defense of fixed points (*i.e.*, streams, bridges, *etc.*). Nevertheless, Joseph Ratzinger never had to engage in combat:

Hitler's death finally strengthened our hope that things would soon end. The unhurried manner of the American advance, however, deferred more and more the day of liberation. At the end of April or the beginning of May - I do not remember precisely - I decided to go home (*op. cit.*, pp.35-36).

What remained of the German army at the end of the war (May 7, 1945) was in disarray. Despite the fact that he had been at home for several days wearing civilian clothing, he was identified by the Americans as a soldier, and was taken prisoner. He was liberated June 19, 1945 and was able to return home for good (*op. cit.*, p.45).

As a result of the war years, Ratzinger's education was irregular and full of holes, since much had been left unavoidably to his own personal initiative. It was thus that he imbibed much of profane culture, not at all suited to someone destined for the priesthood. In the account of these events, the thing that strikes the reader is the noticeable absence of any aspiration towards the supernatural, towards God. He writes, for example, that right after the war "we who had returned home were all the more grateful for the gift of life and for the hope that again rose high above all destruction" (*op. cit.*, p.40), and that at the seminary of Freising, where he continued his studies, "we were all bound together by a great sense of gratitude for having been allowed to return home from the abyss of those difficult years" (*op. cit.*, pp.41-42). But the Cardinal never mentions to whom the gratitude was owed - to God? It would appear to be a generic gratitude, an ecumenical gratitude, of a kind that can be shared by believers and unbelievers alike.

A CURIOUS COURSE OF STUDY; PROFANATION OF SEMINARY STUDIES

At the end of 1945, at 18 years old, Ratzinger finally entered the major seminary at Freising, located in buildings still partly requisitioned as a field hospital for foreign prisoners of war (*ibid.*). "This was a very mixed group indeed, the 120 or so seminarians who now came together in Freising to set out on the road to the priesthood" (*op. cit.*, p. 41). The situation was still difficult, but they managed.

Gratitude and a will to make a new start, to be active in the Church and for the sake of the world: these were the feelings that characterized the seminary community. Together with this came a hunger for knowledge that had grown in the years of famine, in the years when we had been delivered up to the Moloch of power, so far from the realm of the spirit. Books were, I repeat, a rarity in a Germany that was destroyed and cut off from the rest of the world. Nevertheless, despite the bomb damage that had taken place here too, a rather good reference library had been preserved that could, so to speak, take the edge off our hunger. Our interests were varied. We wanted not only to do theology in the narrower sense but to listen to the voices of man today. We devoured the novels of Gertrude von Le Fort, Elisabeth Langgässer, and Ernst Wiechert. Dostoyevsky was one of the authors everyone read, and likewise the great Frenchmen: Claudel, Bernanos, Mauriac. We also followed closely the recent developments in the natural sciences. We thought that, with the breakthroughs made by Planck, Heisenberg, and Einstein, the sciences were once again on their way to God.... In the domain of theology and philosophy, the voices that moved us most directly were those of Romano Guardini, Josef Pieper, Theodor Häcker, and Peter Wüst (*op. cit.*, pp.42-43).

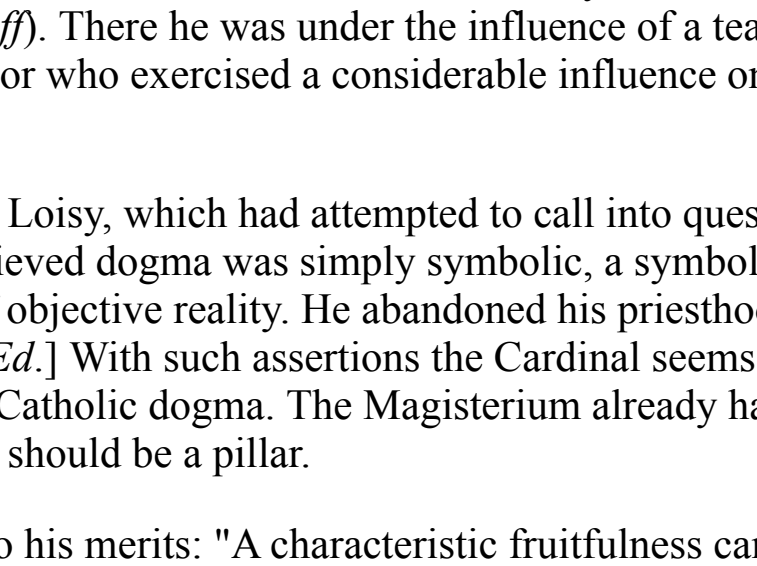
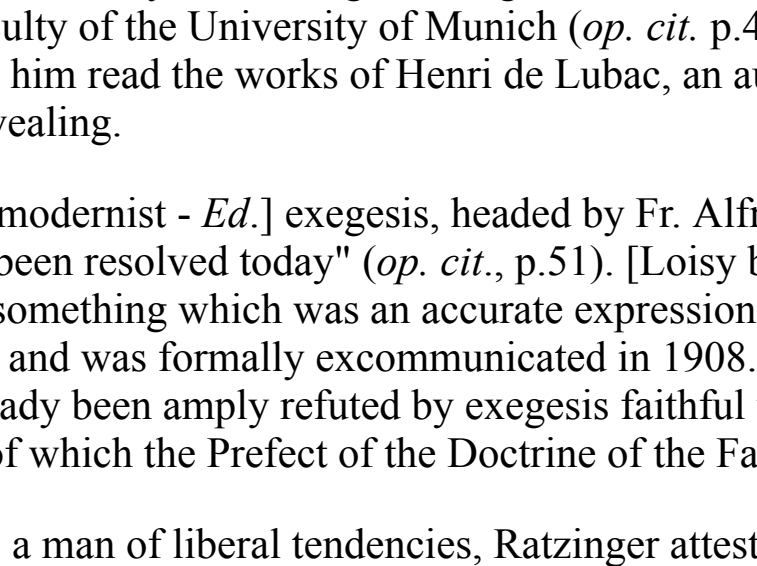
They experienced, then, "a hunger for knowledge," which is quite normal in young people who had undergone the tragic experience of war and defeat, but, note well, "We wanted not only to do theology in the narrower sense." Moreover, this "hunger for knowledge" seemed to be directed towards the profane. Where was the inspiration to serve God and to save souls by leaving everything else? On the contrary, a large place was accorded to literature and to contemporary philosophico-scientific thought, erroneously qualified as research "on the way to God." Since when has modern science been "on the way to God"? Moreover, which "God"? In the case of Einstein it consisted in a gross imitation of the pantheism of Spinoza:

It is the sense of mystery, mingled with fear, which begot religion...I cannot conceive of a God who rewards and punishes his creatures and who exercises a will like that which we exert over ourselves. I can neither conceive nor desire that an individual might survive his physical death. Let weak souls, whether from fear or self-centeredness, fortify themselves by such ideas. For me, the mystery of the eternity of life, the consciousness of and insight into the admirable structure of the world in which we live are enough, as is the unceasing effort needed to comprehend even the slightest particle of the Reason which is manifest in nature.³

The cultural interests pursued at the seminary of Freising were joined to the study of a theology infected by existentialism, beginning with the writings of Romano Guardini. Among the authors preferred by Ratzinger was the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. Ratzinger loved St. Augustine, but never St. Thomas Aquinas: "By contrast, I had difficulties in penetrating the thought of Thomas Aquinas, whose crystal-clear logic seemed to be too closed in on itself, too impersonal and ready-made" (*op. cit.*, p.44). This aversion was mainly due to the professor of philosophy at the seminary, who "presented us with a rigid, neo-scholastic Thomism that was simply too far afield from my own questions" (*ibid.*). According to Cardinal Ratzinger, whose current opinions appear unchanged from those he held as a seminarian, the thought of Aquinas was "too closed in on itself, too impersonal and ready-made," and was unable to respond to the personal questions of the faithful. This opinion is enunciated by a prince of the Church whose function it is to safeguard the purity of the doctrine of the Faith! Why, then, should anyone be surprised at the current disastrous crisis of Catholicism, or seek to attribute it to the world, when those who should be the defenders of the Faith, and hence of genuine Catholic thought, are like sewers drinking in the filth, or like gardeners who cut down a tree they are supposed to be nurturing? What can it mean to stigmatize St. Thomas as having a "too impersonal and ready-made" logic? Is logic "personal"? These assertions reveal, in the person who makes them, a typically Protestant, pietist attitude, like that found in those who seek the rule of faith in personal interior sentiment.

In the two years Ratzinger spent at the diocesan seminary of Freising, he studied literature, music, modern philosophy, and he felt drawn towards the new existentialist and modernist theologies. He did not like St. Thomas Aquinas. The formation described does not correspond to the exclusively Catholic formation that is necessary to one called to be a priest, even taking into account the extenuating circumstances of the time, that is, anti-Christian Nazism, the war and defeat, and the secularization of studies within seminaries. It seems that His Eminence, with all due respect, gave too much place to profane culture, with its "openness" to everything, and its critical attitude...Joseph Ratzinger loved the professors who asked many questions, but disliked those who defended dogma with the crystal-clear logic of St. Thomas. This attitude would seem to us to match his manner of understanding Catholic liturgy. He tells us that from childhood he was always attracted to the liturgical movement and was sympathetic towards it. One can see that for him, the liturgy was a matter of feeling, a lived experience, an aesthetically pleasing "*Erlebnis*," but fundamentally irrational (*op. cit. passim.*).

Now, what do we mean when we speak about the secularization of the seminaries [*i.e.*, the corruption of seminary studies by the inclusion of a worldly curriculum]? We mean that there was a reigning spirit of heterodoxy, clearly manifested by the availability of literary and philosophical works not at all suitable for the religious formation of future priests. Did the seminarians enter in order to be instructed in modern contemporary literature? Often improper reading was done with the complicity and even the encouragement of superiors. If there is any doubt on this score, it suffices to read the testimony of the Jesuit Peter Henrici, nephew of Balhaus and now bishop: "In the seminary exercises, Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, and Blondel were read; Kant and Heidegger especially were the omnipresent guideposts." At Louvain, "the Prefect of Studies advised the seminarians to begin by reading the first two chapters of De Lubac's *The Supernatural*, the most banned book of the Index" (*Communio*, no.114, Nov.-Dec. 1990).



(From left to right) Martin Heidegger, Maurice Blondel, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Alfred Loisy, Martin Baber, Albert Einstein, Henri de Lubac, Immanuel Kant.

MORE THEOLOGIAN THAN PRIEST

After spending two years at the diocesan seminary of Freising, Ratzinger, who had avoided the "strict Tridentine" seminary of Eichstatt, asked and obtained from his bishop approval to enroll at the Theological Faculty of the University of Munich (*op. cit.* p.47 ff). There he was under the influence of a teaching body clearly liberal and modernist in outlook. One of Ratzinger's teachers had him read the works of Henri de Lubac, an author who exercised a considerable influence on him (*op. cit.*, pp.98 ff). Some of the passages of *Milestones* are especially revealing.

1.) The Cardinal writes that liberal [*i.e.*, modernist - *Ed.*] exegesis, headed by Fr. Alfred Loisy, which had attempted to call into question the credibility of the Gospels, had set forth "a problem that is far from having been resolved today" (*op. cit.*, p.51). [Loisy believed dogma was simply symbolic, a symbol of what Catholics believe, and by faith he meant something purely subjective, not something which was an accurate expression of objective reality. He abandoned his priesthood in 1906, broke with the Church after Pope Pius X published *Pascendi Gregis*, and was formally excommunicated in 1908. - *Ed.*] With such assertions the Cardinal seems to grant a certain merit to the heresies of Loisy and the modernists [which he had himself been amply refuted by exegesis faithful to Catholic dogma. The Magisterium already had resolved the "problems" posed by liberal-modernist exegesis [e.g., *Lamentabili*], of which the Prefect of the Doctrine of the Faith should be a pillar.

2.) In recalling his professor of exegesis, a man of liberal tendencies, Ratzinger attests to his merits: "A characteristic fruitfulness came from the balance between liberalism and dogma" (*op. cit.*, p.52). Note well his point: the balance is not found in the defense of dogma against liberalism, but by finding an equilibrium between liberalism, which seeks to subject dogma to the critique of natural reason, and dogma itself. How such an unnatural balance could be struck, the Cardinal does not say. He tells us, though, that he was heavily influenced by the idea of the search for this balance (*ibid.*). We take him at his word, because up to the present such an "impossible" balance has characterized his actions as Prefect for the Doctrine of the Faith. In order to justify this balance between liberalism and dogma, Ratzinger also refers to the concept of Tradition as a "living process" of the work of the Holy Ghost, a concept to which we shall return later.

3.) Speaking about the way we are to understand the link between the Old Testament and the New, as taught at the Theological Faculty of Munich, the Cardinal states:

For the most part, only after World War II did we begin to understand that the Jewish interpretation [of Scripture - *Ed.*], too, in the time "after Christ," of course possesses a theological mission of its own (*op. cit.*, p.54).

While it is not clear what exactly "theological mission" signifies, it is sufficiently clear for us to be able to state that, by the light of the Catholic Faith, it is totally unacceptable. For in fact, if the interpretation given to the Scriptures by the Jews - who denied and still deny the divinity of the Lord - is true, then the interpretation which the Church has always given is false. Yet, according to Cardinal Ratzinger, at Munich "theology was done both critically and with faith" (*op. cit.*, p.59).

In the summer of 1950, after passing the final examination in his theological studies at the University of Munich, young Ratzinger entered the seminary of Freising [which today no longer exists - *Ed.*]. At the end of October he was ordained to the sub-diaconate and the diaconate, and he had to ready himself to be ordained to the priesthood. He writes: "The seriousness of this preparation demanded the whole person, without any reservation, and yet I had to try to combine it with the writing of my theme" (*op. cit.*, p.99). He is referring to a theological essay competition he was working on. The theological work that received the prize would be accepted as a dissertation with mention *summa cum laude*. A professor from the Theological Faculty of Munich had encouraged him to submit a work on the chosen theme, "The People and the House of God in Augustine's Doctrine of the Church." Ratzinger found himself in a difficult situation because he had to find the time to work both on his dissertation and his preparation for priestly ordination. In other words, he was torn between his ambition to become a theologian and his obligation to be ordained. He sought a compromise:

My brother, who was with me on the road to the priesthood, did everything possible to relieve me of all practical tasks relating to our preparation for priestly ordination and our first Mass. My sister...used her free time to produce in exemplary fashion a clean copy of the manuscript, and so I was able to hand in my work by the required deadline. I was very happy when I was finally free of such an engaging and yet burdensome task, and I could now dedicate myself completely for at least the last two months to preparing for the big step: ordination to the priesthood, which Cardinal Faulhaber would confer on us (*ibid.*, p.99).

Ratzinger was able to devote himself completely to this preparation for only two months, instead of the year he should have had at his disposition preparing for his ordination.

Be that as it may, Ratzinger the priest served in this capacity at Munich for only one year, as associate pastor of the parish of the Most Precious Blood. On October 1, 1952, he was summoned to the seminary of Freising:

On the one hand, this was the solution I had desired, the one that would enable me to return to my theological work, which I loved so much. On the other hand, I suffered a great deal, especially in the first year, from the loss of all the human contacts and experiences afforded me by the pastoral ministry...I now had to give a series of lectures to the last-year students on the pastoral aspects of the sacraments, and although the experience I could draw on was rather limited, at least it was recent and fresh in my mind....Above all I had to complete my doctorate, which at that time was no mean proposition (*ibid.* p.102).

The doctoral examination took place in July 1953, with good results.

AN ERRONEOUS CONCEPT OF REVELATION

At 26, the future cardinal was a doctor of theology. His next step was to work towards obtaining the *habilitation*, the degree that qualifies a person to hold a chair at a German university. [It is obtained by writing a weighty scholarly book that proposes and defends a thesis and then receiving approval for it from an academic committee. - *Ed.*] This degree he obtained Feb. 21, 1957, at nearly 30 years of age, but not without controversy. The "critical" part of his thesis was, in fact, rejected, in such a way that he was obliged to truncate and edit it, and present to the committee just the "historical" part of the original, centered on the analysis of the relation between St. Bonaventure and Joachim of Flora, a monk of very doubtful orthodoxy, whom Ratzinger describes as a "pious and cultivated monk."

What especially interests us is the reason for the opposition he encountered from the competent professor, Professor Michael Schmaus. The work by Ratzinger on the concept of revelation as it occurs in the works of St. Bonaventure and the interpretation of this concept were accused of being unfaithful to the texts as well as manifesting "a dangerous modernism that had led to the subjectivization of the concept of revelation" (*ibid.* p.109). The charge was serious: the subjectivist concept of revelation was typical of modernists. Effectively, Joseph Ratzinger was being accused of having heretical tendencies.

Cardinal Ratzinger still denies the validity of Professor Schmaus's criticisms, but his defense is not convincing. He maintains that in the writings of the medieval authors, including St. Bonaventure the concept of revelation did not mean what it does for us today, that is, "all the revealed contents of the faith." In his opinion, in medieval times, "revelation" always connotes the idea of action, that is, the word denotes the act by which God reveals Himself, and not the objectified result of this act.

Because this is so, the concept of "revelation" always implies a receiving subject: where there is no one to perceive "revelation," no re-vel-ation has occurred, because no *veil* has been removed. By definition, **revelation requires a someone who apprehends it** [emphasis added]. These insights, gained through my reading of Bonaventure, were later on very important for me at the time of the conciliar discussion on revelation, Scripture, and tradition. Because, if Bonaventure is right, then revelation precedes Scripture and becomes deposited in Scripture but is not simply identical with it. This in turn means that revelation is always something greater than what is merely written down. And this again means that there can be no such thing as pure *sola scriptura* ["by Scripture alone"], because an essential element of Scripture is the Church as understanding subject, and with this the fundamental sense of tradition is already given. (*ibid.*, pp.108,109)

We leave to Cardinal Ratzinger the responsibility for the assertion that "in the language of the High Middle Ages" the word *revelation* was understood to convey the idea of action, in other words, that it only signified the act by which God shows Himself and not the "objective result." It is clear, though, that by such a distinction, he wants to separate the act from its objective "result." This is clearly absurd. It would be like separating the act of *speaking* from *what is said*. What is said in fact is nothing other than what was spoken in its "objectified result," to use the terminology of His Eminence. By arbitrarily separating the act of revelation (which comes from God) from its "result" Ratzinger can then affirm that "the receiving subject is always also a part of the concept of 'revelation.'" Note that he does not say that revelation is for the receiving subject (which is true: revelation certainly is not for plants and animals!), because God reveals what we are able to understand about Him and what He demands of us, for our salvation, in His mercy towards us. Rather, he says that "the receiving subject is always also a part of the concept of 'revelation.' Where there is no one to perceive 'revelation,' no re-vel-ation has occurred, because no *veil* has been removed."

This is something quite different. It is one thing to say that revelation, which neither adds nor removes anything from God and which He mercifully desires for our salvation, undoubtedly exists as an objective fact by the act of God, regardless of our perception of it or our opinion about it. It is quite something else to say, on the contrary, that without the participation of the "receiving" subject, there is no revelation, and that hence **revelation exists as an objective fact thanks to the participation of the knowing subject of man**. Conceived in this way, revelation becomes a fact of the consciousness of the subject, it is subjectivized, and, as Professor Schmaus pointed out, without the participation of an understanding subject, it is not what it is, it is not revelation.

Let's think a minute! None of the enemies of Christ believe that He is the Son of God and thus they do not believe in revelation. If they fail to receive revelation, then, if we apply Ratzinger's logic, there is no revelation! In the case of pagans, there is no "receiving subject." Many men do not know or have refused or do refuse revelation. They either cannot or do not want to "enter into possession" of this revelation. Are we to conclude that, because of this negative response, revelation ceases to be what it is and that it loses its intrinsic worth? Ratzinger's logic results in a conclusion which is absurd. It would be like saying that a fountain did not exist because there was no one to drink from it! Anyone with common sense can understand to what absurdities the subjectivist concept of revelation must lead.

Revelation comes from the Triune God, and it is contained in Sacred Scripture and in Tradition, as the Magisterium of the Church has kept them. It is the "deposit of the Faith" immutable throughout the centuries. Ever since the Apostles, the Church has simply recognized and guarded revelation, while testifying that it is a supernatural source, that is, an ensemble of acts and significations which are valid for us, precisely, as objective results of the supernaturally manifested goodness of God (cf. Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 1785). And these acts and significations have already been fixed and established once and for all (Jude, chap.3) by the preaching of Christ and the Apostles, preaching which comes down to us directly from Sacred Scripture and Tradition, or indirectly from documents bearing witness to a continuous belief vowed for in an uninterrupted line since the first age of Christianity. Such is the case, for example, for belief in the existence of Purgatory from the earliest age of Christianity, a proof that Purgatory was preached from the beginning by the Apostles.

AN HISTORICIST NOTION OF TRUTH

Revelation is for men, but its intrinsic worth does not depend upon its being grasped by man, because human reason has nothing to do with its coming. As truth, which, moreover is absolute because supernatural, revelation has its own existence and meaning *in itself*, in a way that is entirely independent of "receiving subjects," that is, the men for whom God destined it. But Cardinal Ratzinger obviously does not believe in the existence of truth *per se*, that is, he does not believe in the principle of right reason as taught by St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Thomas teaches that supernatural truth is independent of the subject seeking to know it. Truth has an objective, intrinsic value completely independent of any external circumstance or knowing subject.

To acquire truth, strictly speaking, means to recognize it in the thing, as it is in itself and not, on the contrary, to create it in the thing by the very act in which we know it. And this applies all the more when the "thing" being known is the revelation that comes from God! By writing that there is no revelation if no one perceives it, for which reason the perceiving subject is always a constitutive element of the concept of revelation, Cardinal Ratzinger showed that he is using the concept of truth promoted by the insane modern philosophy that does not conceive of truth as independent of the thinking subject. According to this perverted philosophy, *our concept* constitutes the truth of what is thought, as if the mind created it by the very act of thinking! To them, our intellect does not recognize the truth which is already in the thing, but creates its own truth!

Similarly, for Cardinal Ratzinger, the "perceiving subject" must be considered as a constitutive element of the concept of revelation. This is to affirm that revelation is not true in itself, but exists only in the "perceiving subject" "takes possession" of it. This contradicts the perennial philosophy of the Catholic Church. This is while it is true that whether a man "takes possession" of revelation or not (*i.e.*, whether he believes or not) can affect the *effectiveness* of revelation at a particular period in time, it certainly cannot affect the revelation itself, which remains unchanged and independent as absolute truth of divine origin.

The subjectivist conception of truth erroneously maintains that man's thought, by its own act, constitutes the very truth of what is known and believed. Since the "perceiving subject" is historically determined (*i.e.*, influenced by historical changes), the door is opened to the assertion that the content of revelation cannot be tied to the initial act in which it appeared, but it must depend necessarily on the historically changing self-awareness which the "perceiving subject" possesses. [This "perceiving subject" can be individuals, groups, or the entire Church! - *Ed.*] Clearly, there can be no to the variations, since at any point in time one must take into account the awareness of the "perceiving subject," which progresses *ad infinitum*. The door, then, is open to the false conviction, widespread today, that revealed truth is still open to subsequent understandings and hence subsequent and new developments on the side of the "perceiving subject," which is the Church. To these supposed developments within the "perceiving subject" must correspond developments in revealed truth, as it is assumed that **it is not what it is** without the participation of the subject.

THE PROTESTANT ROOT

This subjectivist misconception reflects the idea, of Protestant origin, of "salvation history," which is founded upon the subjectivism of modern thought which we have been explaining. To reiterate, the modern idea holds that truth, constituted by the (changing) thought of the perceiving subject, becomes itself by degrees, in relation to the advance of history or to the subject's own awareness, and thus this becoming of truth is an unending process, ever open to novelty, that is, to new determinations of what is considered to be true, according to the spirit of the age.

This is the understanding of truth that was at the basis of the *aggiornamento* willed by Pope John XXIII and effected by Vatican II. This is the same notion Joseph Ratzinger explicitly declares he held when he was preparing his controversial thesis:

At this time the idea of salvation history had moved to the focus of inquiry posed by Catholic theology, and this had cast new light on the notion of revelation, which neo-scholasticism had kept too confined to the intellectual realm. Revelation now appeared no longer simply as a communication of truths to the intellect but as a historical action of God in which truth becomes gradually unveiled. (*op. cit.*, p.104).

It should be remarked that this gradualist notion of salvation in which "truth becomes gradually unveiled" contradicts the specific characteristic of the orthodox conception of revelation summarized correctly by Cardinal Ratzinger in the phrase, "a communication of truths to the intellect." Obviously, he finds this expression inadequate because it is too objective. Contrary to his subjectivist theology, the Church's definition leaves nothing to the *feelings* of the "receiving subject."

Cardinal Ratzinger's objection that neo-scholasticism had kept [revelation] too confined to the intellectual realm is false. There is no question of "intellectualism." Revelation is, after all, just this: truths of **supernatural** origin (an adjective which the Cardinal forgets to employ), having been communicated and revealed to man, to which the reason, with the help of God's grace, must give assent by accepting them and putting them into practice, that is, according to the meaning which has been given to them, not by us, but by God Himself, and which is guaranteed by the Magisterium of the Church assisted by the Holy Ghost.

By nature, these truths are not adaptable to the world; rather, it is the world that must be conformed to them. It is in this that the work confided by the Lord to the Church consists.

Aegidius

(Part II of this article is to appear in *The Angelus*, May 1999.)

(Translated from *Courrier de Rome*, Dec. 1998)

¹ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth; The Church at the End of the Millennium, an interview with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997). Cited passages are taken from this English language version.

² Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927-1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998). Passages cited refer to this English language version.

³ Albert Einstein, *Anthologie*, in S. Bergia, *Einstein e la relativita*, Bari, 1980, p.164.