

# EUROPE IN CRISIS: A QUESTION OF BELIEF OR UNBELIEF? PERSPECTIVES FROM THE VATICAN<sup>1</sup>

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LIEVEN BOEVE

## *Introduction*

For Benedict XVI and his predecessor John Paul II, Europe is a continent in crisis. Both pontiffs see a connection between the socio-cultural crisis confronting modern society and the crisis facing the Christian faith in Europe.<sup>2</sup> Modernity has left the continent of Europe bereft of God and plunged it into a hitherto unknown crisis. Only a Europe that rediscovers its Christian roots can survive this crisis. For this reason, Joseph Ratzinger argues—in one of his most recent books, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, for example—that Christians should contribute as a creative minority so that “Europe can reclaim the best of its inheritance in order thereby to be of service to humanity as a whole”.<sup>3</sup>

In the present contribution, we will focus our attention on Joseph Ratzinger’s analysis of, and proposed remedy for, the relations that at present obtain between Christianity and Europe.<sup>4</sup> Before doing so, we will first present the evolution in the way in which Ratzinger assesses opportunities for dialogue between Christian faith and the world, in particular in relation to his evaluation (of the reception) of *Gaudium et spes*. To conclude we offer some evaluative observations with respect to the analysis and the proposed remedy and formulate some questions for further deliberation.

The primary intuition that the present pope takes as his point of departure is that the crisis of Europe and the crisis of Christianity in Europe are inherently related. Modernity’s understanding of the subject and the self-declared autonomy of human reason have brought about the emer-

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Lieven Boeve

Faculteit Godgeleerdheid, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Sint-Michielsstraat 6, B-3000, Leuven, BELGIUM

gence of an image of the human person that does not square with the structures of Christian anthropology. Moreover, such conceptual frameworks have found their way into the Church and into theology and extended their influence into the very fibre thereof. The result is a Europe that does not understand itself and a Christian faith and Catholic Church that are in danger of cutting themselves off from their own roots. This harmful twofold lack of understanding has inspired Joseph Ratzinger to write many an article throughout the various stages of his theological and ecclesial career. The material in question not only provides access to the evolution and major themes of the present pope's thought, it also offers an exciting glimpse into the recent history of the Church and theology, seen through the eyes of one of its privileged actors and observers.<sup>5</sup>

### *1. Joseph Ratzinger's Growing Discomfort with Dialogue with the (Too) Modern World*

As (conciliar) theologian and as Church leader, Joseph Ratzinger has never been able to muster a great deal of enthusiasm for the notion of dialogue with modernity as it is formulated, for example, in *Gaudium et spes*, and certainly not for the way in which this document—and Vatican II as a whole in its wake—was received after the Council.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Ratzinger already played an active role in the discussion surrounding what has come to be known as *Schema XIII*, the preparatory text of *Gaudium et spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. During these discussions, Ratzinger was indeed among the first to point out the potential dangers of making exaggerated overtures towards the modern world.<sup>7</sup> One of the major problems in the discussions consisted in the evaluation of modern technological development and its promises for humankind. Inspired by the work of Teilhard de Chardin, a number of the conciliar fathers too hastily identified Christian hope with modern belief in the progress of humanity: for such individuals, there was no longer any difference between the process of “hominisation” and the process of “Christification” towards the “omega” point; the reconciliation of Christianity and modernity was complete—or so the prevailing view at the time seemed to suggest. In *Schema XIII*, Ratzinger noticed a version of the same naive optimism with respect to technological development and a dangerous confusion of technological progress and Christian hope. In specifying the relationship between Christ and the technical world, the *Schema* tended to consider Christology as a “sacralisation” of technological evolution, instead of applying it at the level of the passion of human life and of human love. In the final text, the recognition of the fruits of technology was accompanied—to Ratzinger's relief—by a warning not to untie the bonds between technology and the primacy of the human person and the broader horizon of meaning opened up in Christian revelation.

In general terms, Ratzinger was afraid that the turn towards the modern world and the positive assessment of modern hopes would, theologically speaking, place too much emphasis on the dynamics of incarnation (God becomes flesh in this world), forgetting the mystery of the cross (Christian faith is not of this world). *Aggiornamento*, as Ratzinger wrote in *Angesichts der Welt von heute*, does not consist in a simple adjustment of Christian faith to the modern world. The Christian individual's "yes to the world" is always a critical "yes": the modern world cannot only be identified with progress toward more humanity. It is also and always characterised by an illegitimate "will to absolute autonomy", the will to live without God, which is modern *hubris*. Dialogue with the world can therefore only proceed when (through this dialogue) the world is purified,<sup>8</sup> or as Ratzinger wrote in an extended version of aforementioned article published in 1973, when the world is "exorcised".<sup>9</sup> In the same later version of the article, Ratzinger added some sections designed to relativise the optimism engendered by the Council and the Pastoral Constitution, the following statement being among them: "The tragic one-sidedness of the final conciliar debates consisted in the fact that they were dominated by the trauma of backwardness and a pathos to catch up with modernity, a pathos which remained blind to the inherent ambiguity of today's world. [. . .] Now, in the post-conciliar Church, we are forced to endure problems that are arising on account of that which did not find expression in the conciliar debates."<sup>10</sup>

On several occasions since the Council, Ratzinger has offered further reflection on the post-conciliar reception of the openness to the modern world proposed by *Gaudium et spes* in an exemplary manner.<sup>11</sup> In the course of the years, his evaluation of this openness has become more and more negative, especially when he observes that progressive theologians (such as Edward Schillebeeckx and in particular Johann Baptist Metz and his political theology) claim to follow the spirit of Vatican II when they introduce neo-Marxist schemes into their theological reflection. In Ratzinger's opinion, it is wrong to understand *Gaudium et spes* as a plea for ongoing progressivism, as a never ending process of adjustment to modernity. On the contrary, the Pastoral Constitution was not meant as a starting point for unrestricted dialogue, it was intended rather to set the boundaries of such a dialogue.

The divide between the conciliar theologians was formally sealed in 1972 when Joseph Ratzinger, together with Hans Urs von Balthasar (both being theologians who were convinced that the Church was in serious danger<sup>12</sup>), Karl Lehmann, Henri de Lubac and other theologians, published a new journal: *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift/Communio* (with translations in several languages), as a corrective to *Concilium*, which according to them had gone astray. At a later date, Ratzinger insisted that *Concilium* wished to constitute a second Magisterium, and thus had become sectarian. Moreover, he could no longer detect the presence of the authentic spirit of the

Council in *Concilium*, which he considered to represent rather the illusion of an imaginary Vatican III: "Not I, but they have changed."<sup>13</sup> From this point on, *Communio* was to become his favoured journal and one in which he still regularly publishes.

Ratzinger's critique has culminated in the so-called *Ratzinger Report* of 1985, an interview with V. Messori<sup>14</sup> published immediately prior to the extraordinary synod on the reception of Vatican II thirty years after its closure. In the second chapter—on the necessity of rediscovering the Second Vatican Council—Ratzinger explicitly criticises the openness exercised by the Council with regard to the modern world. The inherent ambiguities of the modern world, which have become more and more apparent at the end of the twentieth century, in fact prevent the Church from entering into dialogue with the modern world. According to Ratzinger, the modern world stands in direct opposition to the Church when it proclaims the truth about God, Christ, the world, sin and grace. In the last analysis, the real Christian is a non-conformist. The time has come, in Ratzinger's opinion, for Christians to rediscover the awareness that they belong to a minority that is often opposed to "the spirit of the world". They must rediscover the courage of non-conformism, the capacity to reject the euphoric post-conciliar solidarity with the world.

While Ratzinger has maintained this position in his later writings, there is evidence of change in the fact that his analysis of the opposition between Christian faith and modern world has become progressively focused on Europe since 1989. In 1991, for instance, he published a collection of articles entitled *Wendezeit für Europa? Diagnosen und Prognosen zur Lage von Kirche und Welt* dealing with the situation of Europe after 1989 and the potential role that faith and the Church can play in Europe.<sup>15</sup> According to Ratzinger, Europe has been deeply affected by the master narratives of progress and emancipation. The old continent has forgotten what it is to be really human—i.e., what real truth and real freedom are. Truth is not something that is self-made, created, discussed in terms of majority and minority. Freedom, at the same time, is not something empty, i.e., the freedom to do whatever one wants, arbitrary freedom. The result of the modern abolition of "humanity" has been the contemporary civilisation of death,<sup>16</sup> which has become significantly apparent in the major fatal ills of our time: AIDS, drugs, terrorism, abortion, suicide, collective violence, ecological disasters, rising nationalism, and also some new forms of religiosity and esoterica (New Age), all of which have come forth from a fundamental misunderstanding of the foundation and roots of real humanity, real truth, real freedom.<sup>17</sup> A civilisation in which truth is something one creates and decides upon, in which freedom is something empty, ultimately leads to irrationalism and amorality, to nihilism and relativism. For Ratzinger, truth and freedom are not self-made but given, they are not empty, but bound to an instance independent of human activity: God and God's revelation. The

truth about humanity is revealed in an anthropological and ethical vision of Christianity, which, Ratzinger contends, can be considered a synthesis of the major ethical intuitions of humankind.<sup>18</sup> God revealed the salvific and liberating truth in the Scriptures and the tradition to the Church, which has to guard and proclaim it. Insofar as the Church is able to remind the contemporary world of this liberating truth, it can offer a way out of the modern civilisation of death.

Likewise, in a biographical interview with Peter Seewald, published in book form under the title *Salz der Erde* in 1996,<sup>19</sup> Ratzinger once again expressed his already stated evaluation of modernity in crisis and the remedy that the Christian faith has to offer in response thereto. He made reference, for example, to the erroneous understanding of the concept “renewal” that many had read in the Second Vatican Council.<sup>20</sup> The book deals in more specific detail with the situation of the Church and theology in a number of different European countries and indicates the concrete problems that he argues are the result of “too much” modernity.

Given his experience as *peritus* during the Council, as theologian in the years that followed and twenty-five years as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Ratzinger’s position with respect to *Gaudium et spes* is ambiguous to say the least. While his rejection of its post-conciliar reception has become more and more resolute, it is not always clear whether he considers the text of the document to have been incorrectly *understood* or to have been incorrectly *written*. His argument that the Pastoral Constitution should be read within the framework established by the dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium* serves as a useful illustration of the said lack of clarity.<sup>21</sup> The latter argument appears to focus primarily on the reception of the document, allowing the reader to presume that the document as such is not the problem. One is nevertheless left with the impression, on occasion, that the opposite is true. What is certain, however, is that in Ratzinger’s judgment *Gaudium et spes* must not be considered as a point of departure for ongoing, favourable dialogue with the world but rather as the boundary of such dialogue and as a warning.

## 2. *The Crisis of Europe: A Matter of Belief and Unbelief*

### 2.1 A Pope for Europe

The name chosen by Joseph Ratzinger as successor to Peter came as something of a surprise, although his clarification of that choice during his first general audience revealed its appropriateness. The name not only referred to Benedict XV, who had endeavoured to prevent the First World War and had worked for peace and reconciliation, but also to Benedict of Norcia, founder of the Benedictine order and one of the patron saints of Europe who—according to the pope—had exercised an enormous influence on Europe’s Christian heritage. Benedict of Norcia represents “a funda-

mental reference point for European unity and a powerful reminder of the indispensable Christian roots of its culture and civilization".<sup>22</sup>

Benedict is thus a name with an explicitly European programme. The pope's choice becomes even less surprising when one reviews Joseph Ratzinger's speaking engagements and publications in the last few years. Reference should not only be made to the aforementioned *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, which deals explicitly—and in a nuanced manner—with Europe and its Christian heritage (and contains, among other things, the text of a speech addressed to the Italian senate on 13 May 2004), but also, for example, to a—much less diplomatic—lecture given on 1 April 2005 in Subiaco (Italy) on the cultural crisis in Europe on the occasion of being awarded the Saint Benedict Prize for the promotion of life and the Christian family in Europe.<sup>23</sup> A little earlier, on 19 January 2004, he entered into a dialogue with the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, the introductory statements of both thinkers having recently appeared in *Dialektik der Säkularisierung*.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the (original) German version of Ratzinger's Subiaco lecture has also appeared in a collection of essays together with a text written by the chair of the Italian senate, Marcello Pera, which was followed by a letter from the latter addressed to Ratzinger in which he offers a clear and highly readable response. The title of the collection is nevertheless significant: *Ohne Wurzeln: Der Relativismus und die Krise der Europäischen Kultur*.<sup>25</sup>

With the help of a few quotations from *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, we can endeavour to determine the tenor of Ratzinger's analysis and the remedy he is inclined to favour. In the first instance, he argues, Europe's fundamental spiritual strengths are disappearing: "the dissolution of the primal certainties of man about God, about himself and about the universe—the dissolution of the consciousness of those moral values that are never subject to our own judgment—all this is still our problem. In a new form, it could lead to the self-destruction of European consciousness."<sup>26</sup> Europe is facing a crisis with respect to the very values that ultimately formed it and is caught up in a dynamic that is still eroding the values in question. Worse still: "There is an obvious parallel here to the Roman Empire in the days of its decline: it continued to function as a huge historical framework, but its own existential vigour was dead, and it already lived thanks only to those who in fact wanted to destroy it."<sup>27</sup> With whom should we identify those who promote decline? Where should we turn for the energy to reverse this decline? In response to the latter Ratzinger states: "Today, at this precise hour in history, Europe and the world need the presence of God. . . . As Christians, we are responsible for maintaining the presence of God in our world, for it is only this presence that has the power to keep man from destroying himself."<sup>28</sup>

There is little room for misunderstanding: Ratzinger has a clear understanding of the self-destruction of Europe and the future that the Christian

faith and heritage has to offer. Put bluntly, it is a question of Christ or chaos—black and white and surprisingly nuanced at one and the same time. Is Ratzinger a pessimist? Can one describe him as a reactionary? We will begin with a presentation of the primary features of his vision together with some reflection on its content. We will endeavour to determine his priorities and the solutions he would propose for the problems he encounters. It will become evident that this exercise consists of something more than a simple reflection on Ratzinger's vision of Europe; it touches rather on his fundamental theological intuitions.

## **2.2 Europe in Crisis**

Ratzinger's vision of late modern Europe has been profoundly influenced by recent European history. Early in his career he gave vent to an almost visceral aversion for communism (which was to have a significant influence on the later condemnation of liberation theology), an unremitting critique of liberalism (especially the notion of absolute self-determination) and a considerable mistrust of the dynamics of science and technology with its reduction of reason as a whole to functionalist-instrumentalist rationality. Modern phenomena as they are, they played a significant role in the disintegration of moral values and the loss of the awareness of God. The fundamental ambiguity of late modern Europe lies in the fact that an imbalance has evolved between technological possibilities and the moral energy to deal with such possibilities. Europe is enormously successful at the levels of technology and economics, but inside it is empty. It is for this reason that other societies have expressed their rejection of "European modernity" in more explicit terms than ever before. The resurgence of Islam, for example, should be understood in this regard as a particular response to the crisis in Europe and not simply interpreted as a question of restoration.<sup>29</sup>

At a more fundamental level, the crisis in Europe has to do with the formalisation of basic categories of life and society. Freedom has been reduced to the self-determination of the individual (negative, empty freedom). Democracy has come to be defined as the protection of this freedom by the will of the majority. (Scientific) rationality has focused itself on functionality and effectiveness. Freedom, democracy and rationality are no longer substantial categories. They have become formal categories, empty of content. They are no longer bound to a content-based vision of—and social consensus concerning—the good and the true. Such formalisation ultimately leads to relativism, nihilism, cynicism, naivety, culture of death, drugs, and so on—a Europe without a future, afraid of the future. A significant example of this situation is the fact that many consider the having of children to be a threat to life in the present rather than an opening up to the future. For this reason, starting a family is often postponed if not excluded altogether.<sup>30</sup>

According to Ratzinger, Europe has clearly not learned a lesson from the bankruptcy of communism: real communism did not only run aground because of its maintenance of a “faulty economic dogmatism”, but rather—and more importantly (although frequently left unsaid)—because of its “contempt for man and because they [communist regimes] subordinated morality to the needs of the system [...] The real catastrophe that the communist regimes left behind is not economic. It consists in the devastation of souls, in the destruction of moral consciousness.”<sup>31</sup> The moral and religious issues underlying this collapse are all too often suppressed in the course of analysis. The cynicism of ideologies and their totalising claims are to be found in the fact that they leave behind broken people. While this is clearly the case with respect to communism it also applies to the liberal notion of self-determination, which establishes the individual as the norm for what is good and true, and the radical relativism of democratic majorities that support such a right to self-determination.

In Ratzinger’s view, Europe suffers the most from a confused ideology of freedom that has become extremely dogmatic. The right to self-determination in combination with technocracy insists that what is possible at the level of technology should be morally permissible—particularly with respect to issues surrounding the beginning and end of life, forms of social existence, ecology, etc. The right to self-determination has been given an open field because of the loss of moral consensus, the loss of an inclusive morality that provides human existence and society with meaning and moral foundations. From the cultural-historical perspective, the said loss of values has to do in its turn with Europe’s rejection of Christianity and its loss of the awareness of God.

### 2.3 A Clash of Cultures

If one takes further Ratzinger’s comparison of present day Europe with the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, however, one might be inclined to ask: who or what is leading Europe into decline? In his Subiaco lecture, Ratzinger distinguishes an opposition between two cultures in Europe. The world, and Europe in particular, is not the arena of a “clash of civilisations”, alluding to the major religious cultures, but rather of a struggle between these major cultures—Christianity in Europe—and a particular sort of Enlightenment thinking. “Although, on the one hand, Christianity has found its most influential form in Europe, we must also say, on the other hand, that Europe has developed a culture that most radically contradicts not only Christianity, but the religious and moral traditions of humanity as well.”<sup>32</sup>

A culture has developed in Europe—without precedent—in which God has disappeared from public awareness, either by way of denial or doubt with respect to God’s existence, or as a result of the privatisation of the religious and the irrelevance of God for the public domain. For Ratzinger,



this specific Enlightenment culture clearly came to the fore in the debate surrounding the preamble to the European Constitution and the presence or absence of references to God and Europe's Christian roots.<sup>33</sup> In his opinion, reference to Europe's Christian roots is not damaging to non-Christians since it merely represents an allusion to an historical fact. On the contrary, non-Christians—such as the Muslim community frequently referred to in this regard—are not offended by the reference to Christian moral foundations or to God but rather by the secularist denial of such foundations. The latter is represented by a radical sort of Enlightenment culture that is currently determined to uphold a one-sided definition of the identity of Europe. This culture takes an absolute understanding of individual freedom as its point of departure, a freedom that ought to be safeguarded by society. The internal contradictions that undermine such a point of departure in the right to freedom, however, often go unnoticed. Anti-discrimination politics, for example, has led to the dissolution of religious freedom and freedom of expression. At the same time, freedom of expression has placed religious freedom under threat (since it is possible to say anything one wants about Christianity in the public forum but not about other religions). The women's right to self-determination, for example, has come to represent a threat to the rights of unborn life. A culture of individual freedom has ultimately led to freedom's self-destruction and to a unique dogmatism with universalistic pretensions. This is accompanied by a radical relativism that in its turn has resulted in a dogmatic intolerance—currently being presented in the form of “political correctness”.<sup>34</sup>

The same is to be found at the level of (scientific) rationality that can lead, without boundaries, to determinism and empty rationalism. Such rationality claims to be independent and without the need for any roots or sources other than itself. “It consciously severs its own cultural roots, thus depriving itself of the original energies from which it sprung, the fundamental memory of humanity, as it were, without which reason loses its compass.”<sup>35</sup>

Human thought and existence, however, require more than empty, functionalistic reason and negative, absolute freedom, and tend to mutate—when they are separated from their roots—into the opposite of themselves. It is for this reason, Ratzinger maintains, that the banning of Christian roots from Europe has not achieved greater tolerance with respect to other cultures (in order to avoid ascribing a privileged position to one single culture). On the contrary, we are confronted by the “absolute expression of a mind-set and lifestyle that are radically opposite to humanity's other historical cultures”.<sup>36</sup> “The true antithesis that characterises today's world is not that between different religious cultures, but that between the radical emancipation of man from God, from the roots of life, on the one hand, and the great religious cultures, on the other. [. . .] In this sense, the refusal to

mention God is not the expression of a tolerance that would protect the non-theistic religions and the dignity of atheists and agnostics. It is rather the expression of a mind-set that would like to see God erased once and for all from the public life of humanity, and relegated to the subjective sphere maintained by residual cultures of the past."<sup>37</sup>

## **2.4 Illustration: Democracy Calls for a "Non-Democratic Foundation"**

For Joseph Ratzinger, the situation with respect to democracy in Europe clearly reveals that rationality, freedom and society require moral foundations that they cannot generate or create for themselves.<sup>38</sup> As a matter of fact, democracy is not a value in itself or even an ideal, although in practice it represents the best system with which to shape human society. Majority decisions are not good or just per se. In a representative democracy, a parliamentary majority has the capacity to make unjust decisions and resolve, for example, to oppress minorities. Let it be clear: "The state is not itself the source of truth and morality. It cannot produce truth from its own self, by means of an ideology based on people or race or class or some other identity. Nor can it produce truth via majority."<sup>39</sup>

Power (to make decisions) must never lose its connection to justice. What, then, should we identify as the ethical foundations of justice: what makes justice just? Can something become just that is in itself unjust? Modernity itself was the first to recognise this problem, leading it to remove certain matters from the hands of majority decision making: human rights appear to possess an inherent obviousness (although not with respect to every culture!—here also we encounter a determination of freedom in terms of a specific content). Apparently, every form of political relativism contains a non-relativistic core determined by human rights. Human rights "are not subject to any demand for pluralism and tolerance: on the contrary, they *are* the very substance of tolerance and freedom".<sup>40</sup> In other words, power is connected to justice and justice is connected to the good, i.e., to moral truth.

Where then should we locate the foundations of such moral truth? For a considerable period of time, the truth in question was taken for granted, accessible to reason, a sort "evident morality" (although perhaps limited to historical-practical truth). The altered cultural and intercultural horizon, however, appears to have called these foundations into question. Indeed, "what seemed a compelling, God-given insight of reason retained its evidential character only for as long as the entire culture, the entire existential context, bore the imprint of Christian tradition. The moral dimension lost its evidential quality with the crumbling of the fundamental Christian consensus. All that remained was a naked reason that refused to learn from any historical reality but was willing to listen only to itself. Reason, by cutting off its roots in the faith of a historical and religious culture and wishing now to be nothing more than empirical reason, became

blind. [...] The real problem that confronts us today is reason's blindness to the entire non-material dimension of reality."<sup>41</sup>

Institutions cannot survive without common convictions. This is precisely Europe's problem, especially where the European Union is concerned. The EU refuses to address the question of its spiritual foundations in an honest way and is preoccupied with economic and technocratic objectives.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless—and Ratzinger repeats it time and again—the initiative to form the European Union was motivated from a Christian inspiration, a fact to which the fathers of European unification—Adenauer, Schumann, de Gaspari—ultimately bear witness.<sup>43</sup>

## **2.5 The Truth Concerning the Human Person and Europe's Christian Heritage**

Good politics does not forget that ethics has priority over politics and remembers that it has a non-relativistic core, namely that freedom and democracy are linked to the truth concerning the human person. As he continues to reflect on this truth and its sources, Ratzinger follows two, not immediately complementary, trajectories. Furthermore, he hobbles in each trajectory between two ideas, each of which underlines the importance of the Christian heritage in (arriving at) this truth concerning the human person.

In the context of multiculturalism—and in complete contrast to radical Enlightenment culture—Ratzinger points out in the first instance that the said truth is located in the great religious and cultural traditions of humanity.<sup>44</sup> With an allusion to the global ethic project (of Hans Küng), he states his awareness of the need for more multicultural dialogue with respect to the direction the world is taking and its governance (although he already has his doubts about the feasibility of such a dialogue). At the same time, however, he alerts us to the fact that multiculturalism should not be used as an excuse to avoid one's own particularity and alludes to what he calls the West's "pathological self-hatred" that no longer recognises its own admirable heritage and roots.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, multiculturalism should not be used as an excuse to remain silent with respect to the God to whom the Christian faith bears witness.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, contact with other religions makes it clear that the radical Enlightenment's "world without God" is an exception without a future. At the same time, such contact ultimately calls Europeans back to themselves.

On the other hand, Ratzinger is clearly aware of the fact that the "truth concerning the human person" upon which the human rights tradition is based is not present to the same extent in every culture and tradition, and that human rights cannot easily be universalised. We are becoming more and more aware that they are related to the European moral heritage, determined by Christianity and the Enlightenment. "Both Christianity and the Western rational tradition do in fact understand themselves to be

universal, and it is certainly possible that this view is correct *de jure*—but *de facto* they are obliged to acknowledge that they are accepted by only a part of mankind."<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, on the global scale, secular Enlightenment and Christian faith tend to be in charge. For this reason, dialogue between the two giants must enjoy pride of place in seeking to understand the human person and providing an answer, for example, to the pathologies of religion and reason. Ratzinger immediately adds, however, that one also has an obligation to listen to other cultures.<sup>48</sup>

The conclusion Ratzinger draws on the basis of both these observations makes it clear once again that his first concern remains the relation between Christianity and the Enlightenment. Indeed, Europe's spiritual heritage in Ratzinger's view fundamentally stems from "a basic compatibility between the moral heritage of Christianity and the moral heritage of the European Enlightenment"—an Enlightenment, of course, that makes room for God.<sup>49</sup> Although the latter enjoys a universalising power, its actual "non-universality" reveals its historical-contextual attachment: the evident character of secular rationality is in fact bound to cultural contexts<sup>50</sup>—which ultimately means to Christian faith. In *Dialektik der Säkularisierung*, Ratzinger speaks in this regard of a necessary "correlationality" and "complementarity" between faith and reason, Christianity and secular rationality.<sup>51</sup> The pathologies of both reason (technocracy, ideological cynicism, freedom without content) and religion (fanaticism, fundamentalism, etc.) can thereby be set to rights.

As far as the latter is concerned, Ratzinger argues, the Christian faith "has proven to be the most universal and rational religious culture through which also today the basic structure of moral awareness is made available to reason. This leads either to a certain evident character or, at the very least, to the establishment of a basis for rational moral faith."<sup>52</sup>

## 2.6 The Contribution of Christianity—*si Deus daretur*

What Christianity has to offer to present-day European society is the moral awareness that springs from a "world with God". Christians must challenge Europe with respect to its identity by presenting it with the Christian understanding of God when it comes to the truth of the human person.<sup>53</sup>

In the first instance, God is the "logos" of creation, the source of rationality and morality. The human person, created by God, shares in God's inviolability. Creation is the point of association *par excellence* for the foundation of human rights. Creation establishes a moral awareness in which life is a gift and is not simply placed at the disposal of human arbitrariness.

Added to this, however, God is also love, a love that has found its most noble expression in the incarnation, suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Presenting God as love implies that love is recognised as the core of every

form of ethics, as the nucleus of existence itself. This God of the intellect (logos) and love, however, is also a judge: all of us will be held responsible for our deeds.

Finally, the Christian understanding of God offers the opportunity to establish a worthy concept of the state and of human social existence.<sup>54</sup> The distinction between the kingdom of God and the state has abandoned the notion of political theocracy and has installed the notion of the “secular”. At the same time, the eschatological character of the kingdom of God brings with it the relativisation of the state’s absolutist pretensions and the de-mythologisation of ideologies, rejecting every form of inner-worldly claim to totality.

The best service Christians can offer their contemporaries, therefore, is to hold up the example of a world and an ethics in which God is present. The radical Enlightenment paradigm that conceived of a world without God must thereby be turned on its head, for a world without God leads to a world without human persons. Just as Pascal challenged his non-believing friends to base their thought on the possibility that God existed, Christians today must do the same.<sup>55</sup> “In the Enlightenment, people sought justifications for morality that would be valid *etsi deus non daretur*. Today, we must invite our agnostic friends to be receptive to a morality *si Deus daretur*.”<sup>56</sup> Just as the notion *etsi Deus non daretur* functioned at a time of religious conflict to create an ethical basis for a potential social existence above and beyond this conflict, it is possible for contemporary moral thinking *si Deus daretur* to realise the same thing today in a society without God that has lost track of its own traditions.

Christians have the task as a creative minority (even within their own majority church<sup>57</sup>), “to help Europe regain the best elements of its inheritance. This will allow Europe to serve the whole of mankind.”<sup>58</sup> Based on these primary Christian insights, Christians must ensure the creation—together with others—of a moral foundation, no matter how the individual is inclined to justify it and integrate it in his or her own life. To this end, as Christians we must “live our inheritance vigorously and purely. This will make its inherent power of persuasion visible and effective in society as a whole.”<sup>59</sup> The degree to which Christianity is rational can only be made visible in the lives of Christians as a viable alternative for the emptiness of modern existence. Ratzinger also calls for a sort of “Christian civil religion”, nourished by creative minorities within the Church. In their turn—as with Jews in the diaspora of antiquity—such minorities will be able to attract and gather others with varying backgrounds around them.<sup>60</sup>

### 3. Some Concluding Considerations

In spite of his growing awareness of multiculturalism, Ratzinger still maintains that Europe’s problem has to do with the godlessness of the Enlight-

enment. The crisis in Europe is to be located in the conflict between belief and unbelief. It would appear that the only role attributed to multiculturalism is to attest to the fact that the secularisation of thought and life in the West is an exception in the context of global intellectual history—an exception that ought to be called into question. In spite of the fact that Ratzinger appears to be open to consider the growth of a new moral consensus in cooperation with agnostics and atheists who are willing to think “as if God exists”, he nevertheless offers an extremely negative evaluation of the European situation as profoundly infected by radical Enlightenment. As a result, this forces him to understand the Christian faith *de facto* as countercultural. The crisis of Europe is indeed a matter of belief or unbelief, a rationality and morality grafted to Christian revelation or radical Enlightenment thinking. Only reason that can be reconciled with Christian revelation really has the right to claim itself to be rational. Given the very fact that Christians are assisted by revelation in gaining insight into metaphysical and moral values that, in principle, are also accessible to reason alone, it is their duty to introduce these values into the discussion concerning the meaning of reason and rationality in contrast to the “sleeping reason” or “sick reason” of modern Europe.<sup>61</sup>

In what follows we offer a number of concluding observations concerning Joseph Ratzinger’s analysis of the European situation and the remedies he proposes. We must bear in mind in this regard that his ideas do not stand on their own; they fit rather within the framework of fundamental options that characterise Ratzinger’s theology as a whole. We will briefly explore the said fundamental theological options and examine how they affect Ratzinger’s perception of *Gaudium et spes* and the relationship between faith and the modern world (*in casu* Europe). We will conclude by examining—from a fundamental theological perspective—the possibility of conceiving of this relationship differently, thereby producing a different set of results with respect to both the analysis of the European situation and its relationship of the Christian faith.

### 3.1 Joseph Ratzinger’s Neo-Augustinian Fundamental Theological Option

In an article published on the occasion of the election of Benedict XVI, Joseph Komonchak pointed out that Joseph Ratzinger was to be described as an exponent of the neo-Augustinian approach that had developed after the Second Vatican Council at the same time as and in opposition to an approach that would be more inspired by Aquinas.<sup>62</sup> This in itself is hardly surprising if one bears in mind that the topic of Ratzinger’s doctoral dissertation concerned Augustine and his *Habilitation* Bonaventure, the latter continuing the Augustinian tradition that resisted the theological approach developed by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. It is at this precise juncture that an important and fundamental distinction

becomes clear, a distinction with far reaching theological consequences. In response to the challenges of the then recently rediscovered Aristotelianism, Thomas Aquinas started to make a distinction between theology and philosophy, granting the latter a degree of autonomy—an autonomy as a thought which was not subject to the regulation of revelation. Theological dialogue with such thought enabled Thomas to elaborate a new synthesis. Bonaventure, on the other hand, resisted this distinction and underlined the unity of all wisdom, with Christ as the centre of all knowledge. “In the last stages of his intellectual journey, and in the face of the cultural challenge of his day, the great Franciscan [Bonaventure] responded with a religious concentration on holiness and an eschatological interpretation of contemporary intellectual development that led him to an ‘apocalyptic anti-Aristotelianism’, which was anti-philosophical, anti-intellectual, and indiscriminate enough to include in its condemnations the effort of Aquinas to engage critically the Aristotelian challenge”.<sup>63</sup> For Komonchak, the analogy with Ratzinger’s present day response to the challenges of modernity is evident. Given the extent to which the modern world is alienated from the Christian faith and every form of dialogue with this world is damaging to the Christian faith itself, Christianity is thus obliged to present itself as an alternative to the world.

This has far reaching consequences for Joseph Ratzinger’s theological thinking as a whole.<sup>64</sup> For him, revelation, faith and Church are, in essence, independent entities that can be conceived of in principle as distinct from the world and can be related to the latter in a one-to-one relationship. The rationality of the faith, after all, is the fruit of the providential marriage between Jewish-Christian faith and Greek (Platonic) rationality—a marriage that, according to Augustine’s proposition that the Christian faith is the *vera philosophia*, has become complete. This marriage, however, conveys a profoundly dual understanding of reality, characterised by a hierarchical and asymmetrical view of the relationship between the eternal and the temporal, the heavenly and the worldly, faith and reason, grace and sin, Church and world, and tends to underline a clear distinction between both. Even although God reveals Godself in the specificity of history, the concrete historical-cultural situation in which this takes place only adds to this revelation, but does not qualify the latter in essence. The truth of revelation remains substantially the same. The historical determines the form but not the content. The surplus of interpretation of this revelation that is contained in the Scriptures represents the origin of the tradition, borne by and entrusted to the Church and within the latter to its approved teaching authority. It is theology’s task to explain this revealed truth in new circumstances under the guidance of the Church’s teaching authority. The image that best illustrates this concept of the truth is that of a treasure, cherished by the treasurers, upon which one can draw in times of necessity, but which at the same time should be protected against threats both from

the inside and the outside. It will come as little surprise, then, that such an asymmetric way of thinking runs the risk of “black and white thinking”, whereby anything that is different is considered by definition lesser, sinful and unredeemed. The dual reading of the European situation as an almost apocalyptic struggle between a culture informed by God-infused Christianity and an anti-Christian, radical Enlightenment culture, is merely one—albeit a highly pertinent—example of such thinking. The mercury of modernity is threatening to corrupt the golden treasure of Christian faith in its very essence.

This fundamental theological option explains why Joseph Ratzinger has a problem with (the reception of) *Gaudium et spes*, and why he favours a reading of the Pastoral Constitution from the perspective of the dogmatic constitutions. In the first instance, the Council recognises that the Christian faith is involved from within itself in the world, the latter enjoying a legitimate degree of independence expressed, for example, in the developments of science, etc. In the second instance, however, and this is more difficult for Ratzinger, the Pastoral Constitution states that the truth of the Christian faith can be given new form precisely in dialogue with the world, in the interpretation of the signs of the times in the light of the gospel. On both these points, and in particular the latter, a neo-Augustinian approach would differ from what Komonchak considers an approach inspired by Aquinas.

The same neo-Augustinian paradigm is responsible for the fact that every form of inner-Church debate is quickly dismissed as a problem imported from the world into the Church. Ratzinger speaks in this regard of an inner-Church “canon of opposition” or “canon of critique”<sup>65</sup> related to the prerequisites for ordination to the priesthood (celibacy) homosexuality, ordination of women, more democracy in the Church, contraception, sexual and bio-ethical morality, second marriage and communion for the divorced, etc. Opponent arguments in relation to each of these points tend to take an incorrect image of the Church, the ministry, the sacramental order, human persons and ethics as their point of departure, influenced as they are by modernity and its understanding of freedom as absolute. It is for this reason that the resolution of such inner-Church problems cannot and must not be seen as a genuine solution for the crisis facing Christianity in the modern world of today. The real problem has its roots in the world and not in the Church. The crisis in the Church was ultimately provoked by the world.

### **3.2 A Twofold Discussion on the Relationship between Faith and the World**

As we noted above, Komonchak distinguishes between what he calls a neo-Augustinian position and an “Aquinas-inspired” position. By analogy with the situation in the thirteenth century, the latter represents



a fundamental theological position that is able to recognise the relative autonomy of the world and to affirm the rationality that governs it. Moreover, achieving an actualised Christian self-understanding can only be fruitful when one enters into dialogue with the world and when one learns to understand oneself on the basis of this dialogue. The truth of the Christian faith does not only make itself comprehensible to the world, it learns to comprehend itself from within its dialogue with the world. It is in this sense that such theologians read *Gaudium et spes* and saw it as programmatic for the theology of the post-Conciliar future. Edward Schillebeeckx, for instance, considered the pastoral constitution as that upon which “the global meaning of the Second Vatican Council” would stand or fall. He likewise considered the Pastoral Constitution to be the expression of his own cultural-theological project, which aimed at integrating human experience into the Church and the faith.<sup>66</sup>

There can be little doubt that the modern context since Vatican II has changed considerably and that the optimism of the 1960s—an optimism that *Gaudium et spes* nevertheless already regarded with enormous realism—did not take long to evaporate. From the theological perspective it is important in the first instance to distinguish between those who reject the theological *necessity* of such dialogue because the truth of revelation cannot in essence be touched by it, and those who maintain the necessity of the said dialogue but want to reconsider its *nature* because of the altered situation. While Ratzinger occasionally gives the impression that the altered situation has made such dialogue impossible in his opinion, his position nevertheless—based on his neo-Augustinian fundamental option—is such that dialogue of this kind cannot affect the Christian faith in itself.

As a matter of fact, however, discussion concerning the *nature* of the theologically necessary dialogue with the actual context already presupposes the basic theological premise that it actually makes a difference for the Christian faith to be involved with the context, and indeed that there is an *intrinsic link* between the significance of revelation, faith, Church and tradition, and the context in which they are given form. Faith and Church are not in opposition to the world, they participate in constituting the world and, furthermore, they are in part constituted by the world.<sup>67</sup> Given the fact that God reveals Godself in history and that it is precisely in history that God can be known by us, it follows that history ultimately becomes co-constitutive of the truth of faith. Discussion of this sort with respect to the relationship between faith and the world is not the sort of discussion in which Ratzinger is inclined to engage. Nevertheless, it is this sort of discussion that has the capacity to bring us a step further in our reflection on the place and role of the Christian faith in Europe today.

### 3.3 The Relationship between Faith and the World Caught between Discontinuity and Continuity

Ratzinger's analysis of Europe is characterised by a rejection of modernity and in particular of the secularisation that modernity introduced. While his critique of radical Enlightenment thinking is likely to disturb some observers, it is not likely to convince the majority on account of its massive oppositional character. Very few Christians will be inclined to turn their backs on many of modernity's achievements, even if they are conscious of its ambivalence to some degree. The socio-cultural evolutions that have taken place in the West would seem to be too complex to be captured by a simple opposition: "belief-unbelief". A different analysis is called for in this regard. This is also apparent, for example, in the ambivalent attitude Ratzinger displays with respect to multiculturalism and the plurality of religions: they serve as an ally in the struggle against Enlightenment atheism, but in essence they do not have a part to play in the redefinition of the role of the Christian faith in the European context.

We have already noted that Ratzinger reduces the problem of European identity to the ancient debate between Christianity and Enlightenment atheism, and immediately decides to reject the modern secularisation that led to that atheism. The relationship between the modern world and the Christian faith is one of discontinuity and mutual exclusion. In his theological critique, Ratzinger not infrequently targets modern theological ideas which call for a profound dialogue with modernity on the basis of an overly facile understanding of continuity between the world and the Christian faith: the one-against-one relationship is thus transformed into a relationship between partners, one Christian the other secular, working towards the same goals.

It remains a question, however, whether either of the one-to-one patterns we have described represents the most useful way of examining the present day situation. Both take a secularisation paradigm as their point of departure, which they each evaluate in a different way. While it is true that Europe is no longer understood in its totality from the perspective of the Christian conceptual horizon, the "process of secularisation" did not simply lead to a primarily secular society with which Christianity is thus obliged to interact. Europe, rather, is undergoing a process of "detraditionalisation", whereby no single given tradition (including—but not only—the religious) is capable of continuing unquestioned (including secular atheism). At the level of description, it is important to insist in this regard that there is a distinction to be made between individualisation (a necessary dimension of identity construction on account of detraditionalisation) and individualism (absolute self-determination). The rejection of the latter does not discharge the Christian faith of its duty to come to terms with the former. Individualisation can also have an effect on the Christian understanding of faith today without automatically leading to individualism. In

addition, and increasingly so, European society is also to be characterised as pluralistic at the level of both culture and individual fundamental life options, brought about in part by the detraditionalisation of which we have spoken and in part by the processes of increased mental and physical mobility. Once again, it is important to bear in mind the distinction between pluralisation as a descriptive category and (formal) pluralism and relativism as ways of dealing with pluralisation. Even when the Christian faith rejects the latter, it is nevertheless obliged to locate itself differently in the present context because of pluralisation. More than before, the Christian awareness of tradition calls for a degree of reflexivity and a recognition of the specific fundamental life option to which Christians adhere in relation not only to atheists, agnostics, “somethingists” and the indifferent, but also Muslims, Buddhists, and members of new religious movements, etc.

For this reason, one can conclude, it is not the presupposed discontinuity or continuity between the Christian and the secular that determines today’s spectrum of fundamental life options but rather the multiplicity of images of humanity and the world, the plurality of religions and convictions, of which the Christian faith and radical Enlightenment thinking (in its own variety) have evolved into but two positions among many. It is on the basis of such an analysis that the Christian faith—as part of the pluralised context—is invited to reconsider its place and the role it should play in the further evolution of the European project. Such an exercise will have consequences for one’s self-understanding,<sup>68</sup> for the evaluation of the situation in Europe and for the way in which Christians actively participate in European society. The latter demands, at the very least, a reflection on the way Christians should exhibit respect and openness towards the convictions of others while remaining rooted in their own convictions and truth claims, and at the same time reacting in a critical manner against what they consider to run counter to their convictions without merely imposing their claim to the truth on society as a whole and everyone in it (and develop the capacity to present this truth in a nuanced way that is not simply inspired by political realism). Such critique also applies to other religions or fundamental life options that threaten to become totalitarian and refuse to respect plurality, including the ideology of absolute self-determination, nationalism and religious fundamentalism. If Christians—dixit Ratzinger—ultimately find themselves to be a minority in Europe, then they will best serve the old continent by entering into dialogue on the European project from their being rooted in their own convictions. In this regard, it is certainly the task of Christians—perhaps indeed as a creative minority, but hopefully one that has the capacity to attract others on account of their “exemplary” lives—to remind Europe of its Christian heritage. At the same time, however, Christians are called to give shape to the future of Europe together with many other convictions and traditions. They are thus obliged to develop creative social models that appeal to the

elements of these traditions that make social existence possible, respecting their own uniqueness and the difference of the other. In this way, Christians also have the capacity to be “salt to the earth”.

## NOTES

- 1 This article was kindly translated by Brian Doyle. This text is a partial result of a research project sponsored by the Flemish Fund for Scientific Research (FWO) and the Research Fund of the Catholic University Leuven. A rather different version of this text has been published in Dutch in *Bijdragen: Tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie*, Vol. 67 (2006), pp. 152–179.
- 2 See, for example, the post-synodal exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, written by John Paul II after the extraordinary Synod on Europe which took place in Rome in October 1999, entitled: “Jesus Christ Alive in His Church—a Source of Hope for Europe”. The document was made public on 28 June 28 2003 and can be consulted via <http://www.vatican.va>. It is no doubt significant that the previous pope offers his analysis of the situation in Europe against the background of the book of *Revelation* and the warning against “the recurring temptation to construct the city of man apart from God or even in opposition to him” (*Ecclesia in Europa*, p. 5). A world without God leads to despair and destruction.
- 3 Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), *Values in a Time of Upheaval* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 2006), pp. 115, 165. Modified English translation of *Werte in Zeiten des Umbruchs: die Herausforderungen der Zukunft bestehen* (Freiburg: Herder, 2005).
- 4 It will be apparent that the present contribution intends to focus on Ratzinger’s theological perspectives on the question at hand rather than the positions he maintained as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and now as pope. It is for this reason that we will refer in the present article to texts written and published under personal title. It should be clear that such a distinction is not always easy to make. For a primary bibliography (up to 1 February 2002), see Stephen O. Horn, Vinzenz Pfnür and Johannes Hanselmann, *Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger: Weggemeinschaft des Glaubens. Kirche als Communio: Festgabe zum 75. Geburtstag* (Augsburg: Sankt-Ulrich-Verlag, 2002/2005), pp. 261–324.
- 5 Joseph Ratzinger was born on 16 April 1927 in Marktl am Inn in Bavaria. He was ordained priest on 29 June 1951 after which he continued his theological studies. He obtained a doctorate in theology in 1953 with a dissertation on the concept of the house of God in Augustine. A few years later (1957) he also received his *habilitation* based on a study of the theology of history in Bonaventure. From 1959 onwards he served as professor of fundamental theology, dogmatics and the history of dogma at the universities of Freising, Bonn, Münster, Tübingen and Regensburg. He was also a theological advisor at the Second Vatican Council. In 1977, he was appointed archbishop of Munich-Freising by Paul VI and shortly thereafter created cardinal. On 25 November 1981 he was appointed prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith by John Paul II. On 19 April 2005 he was elected pope during the fourth ballot in the Sistine Chapel.
- 6 For these paragraphs on Joseph Ratzinger’s attitude to (the reception of) *Gaudium et spes*, see the present author’s article, “*Gaudium et spes* and the Crisis of Modernity: The End of the Dialogue with the World?” in Mathijs Lamberigts and Leo Kenis (eds.), *Vatican II and its Legacy* (BETL, CLXVI) (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2002), pp. 83–94. For an analogous presentation, see H.-J. Sander, “Theologischer Kommentar zur Pastoralkonstitution über die Kirche in der Welt von heute *Gaudium et spes*” in Peter Hünermann and Bernd Jochen Hilberath (eds.), *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, Band 4 (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 2005), pp. 581–886; pp. 838–844.
- 7 Joseph Ratzinger, “*Sentire ecclesiam*”, *Geist und Leben* Vol. 36 (1963), pp. 321–326; *Ergebnisse und Probleme der dritten Konzilsperiode* (Cologne: Bachem, 1965), pp. 38–39; *Die letzte Sitzungsperiode des Konzils* (Cologne: Bachem, 1966), pp. 25–58; “Angesichts der Welt von heute. Überlegungen zur Konfrontation mit der Kirche im Schema XIII”, *Wort und Wahrheit* Vol. 20 (1965), pp. 493–504 (enlarged and revised as *Dogma und Verkündigung* [München: Wewel, 1973], pp. 183–204). He has also written a commentary accompanying

- the first chapter of Part 1 of *Gaudium et spes* in the edition of *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche. Das zweite Vatikanische Konzil. Konstitutionen, Dekrete und Erklärungen. Kommentare*, Teil 3 (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1957), pp. 313–354.
- 8 Joseph Ratzinger, “Angesichts der Welt von heute”, *Wort und Wahrheit*, pp. 502–503.
  - 9 Joseph Ratzinger, “Angesichts der Welt von heute”, in *Dogma und Verkündigung*, p. 201.
  - 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 199–200 (translation mine).
  - 11 Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, “Der Katholizismus nach dem Konzil—Katholische Sicht”, in *Auf Dein Wort hin. 81. Deutscher Katholikentag* (Paderborn: Bonifacius, 1966), pp. 245–266 (enlarged edition: *Das neue Volk Gottes. Entwürfe zur Ekklesiologie* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1969), pp. 302–321); “Weltoffene Kirche? Überlegungen zur Struktur des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils”, in Theodor Filthaut (ed.), *Umkehr und Erneuerung. Kirche nach dem Konzil* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald Verlag, 1966), pp. 273–291 (= *Das neue Volk Gottes*, pp. 281–301); *Glaube und Zukunft* (München: Kösel, 1970), pp. 93–106; “Zehn Jahre nach Konzilsbeginn—Wo stehen wir?”, in *Dogma und Verkündigung*, (München, 1973), pp. 439–447; “Der Weltendienst der Kirche. Auswirkungen von *Gaudium et spes* im letzten Jahrzehnt”, in *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift* Vol. 4 (1975), pp. 439–454 (= *Theologische Prinzipienlehre. Bausteine zur Fundamentaltheologie* [München: Kösel, 1982], pp. 395–411); “Bilanz de Nachkonzilszeit—Misserfolge, Aufgaben, Hoffnungen”, in *Theologische Prinzipienlehre*, (1982), pp. 383–395. At the end of this last article, Ratzinger even goes so far as to warn the reader that, from a historical perspective, not all valid councils were also fruitful councils. For an English translation of *Theologische Prinzipienlehre*, see *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1987).
  - 12 Joseph Ratzinger and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Zwei Plädoyers. Warum ich noch ein Christ bin. Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin* (Munich: Kösel, 1971).
  - 13 “Nicht ich habe mich geändert, sondern die Andern”, in Joseph Ratzinger, *Zur Lage des Glaubens: Ein Gespräch mit Vittorio Messori* (Munich/Zurich/Vienna: Neue Stadt, 1985), p. 16.
  - 14 Joseph Ratzinger and Vittorio Messori, *Rapporto sulla fede* (Torino: Edizioni Paoline, 1985). This work is translated as *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986); for the German translation, see previous note.
  - 15 Joseph Ratzinger, *Wendezeit für Europa? Diagnosen und Prognosen zur Lage von Kirche und Welt* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1991, <sup>2</sup>1992). An English translation is *Turning Point for Europe* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1994).
  - 16 Ratzinger, *Wendezeit für Europa?*, p. 92.
  - 17 See also, for example, his “Jesus Christus heute”, *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift Communio*, Vol. 19 (1990), pp. 56–70; “Die Bedeutung religiöser und sittlicher Werte in der pluralistischen Gesellschaft”, *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift Communio*, Vol. 21 (1992), pp. 500–512.
  - 18 Ratzinger, *Wendezeit für Europa?*, pp. 26–27.
  - 19 Joseph Ratzinger, *Salz der Erde. Christentum und katholische Kirche an der Jahrtausendwende. Ein Gespräch mit Peter Seewald* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1996). The English translation is *Salt of the Earth* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, reprint 1997).
  - 20 Ratzinger, *Salz der Erde*, pp. 74–76.
  - 21 Ratzinger, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre*, p. 408: “Wo der Geist des Konzils gegen sein Wort gewendet und lediglich vage aus der auf die Pastoralkonstitution zum laufende Entwicklung destilliert wird, gerät dieser Geist zum Gespenst und führt ins Sinnlose. [. . .] [W]enn sie die Erkenntnis freilegt daß man das Zweite Vaticanum ganz lesen muß, und zwar orientiert auf die zentralen theologischen Texte zu und nicht umgekehrt, dann könnte solche Besinnung für die ganze Kirche fruchtbar werden [. . .]. Nicht die Pastoralkonstitution misst die Kirchenkonstitution [. . .], sondern umgekehrt: Nur das Ganze in der richtigen Zentrierung ist wirklich Geist des Konzils.”
  - 22 See full text of this audience: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/audiences/2005/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20050427\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20050427_en.html).
  - 23 Published in English as: Joseph Ratzinger, “Europe in the Crisis of Cultures”, *Communio: International Catholic Review*, Vol. 32 (2005), pp. 345–356.
  - 24 Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *Dialektik der Säkularisierung: Über Vernunft und*

- Religion* (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 2005). A considerable portion of Ratzinger's text is made up of material from the various contributions collected in *Values in a Time of Upheaval*.
- 25 Marcella Pella and Joseph Ratzinger, *Ohne Wurzeln: Der Relativismus und die Krise der Europäischen Kultur* (Augsburg: Sankt Ulrich Verlag, 2004). The English version is *Without Roots: The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2006).
  - 26 Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, p. 145.
  - 27 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
  - 28 *Ibid.*, p. 165.
  - 29 *Ibid.*, pp. 138–139.
  - 30 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
  - 31 *Ibid.*, p. 145.
  - 32 Ratzinger, *Europe in the Crisis of Cultures*, p. 348.
  - 33 Article 52 of the proposed European Constitution does not offer Ratzinger much in terms of comfort. While the European Union recognises the right of institutional religions to a hearing in the determination of policy, there would appear to be no room for God and religion in the determination of Europe's fundamental identity (*ibid.*).
  - 34 Joseph Ratzinger, "Eine nichtkonfessionelle christliche Religion? Reflexionen im Anschluss an den Vorschlag von Senatspräsident Pera" in Marcella Pera and Joseph Ratzinger, *Ohne Wurzeln*, pp. 115–145; p. 137.
  - 35 Ratzinger, *Europe in the Crisis of Cultures*, p. 351.
  - 36 *Ibid.*, p. 352.
  - 37 *Ibid.*, p. 353.
  - 38 Ratzinger likewise refers in this regard to the so-called Böckenförde paradox.
  - 39 Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, p. 67.
  - 40 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
  - 41 *Ibid.*, p. 65.
  - 42 *Ibid.*, p. 150.
  - 43 *Ibid.*, pp. 145, 102, 115.
  - 44 *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 158, see also pp. 138–139.
  - 45 *Ibid.*, p. 149: "There is a praiseworthy openness that tries to understand foreign values, but all that one sees in one's own history is cruelty and destruction. We must also learn to see that which was great and pure."
  - 46 On the question of multicultural dialogue with other major religions and cultures Ratzinger writes: "Certainly we can and must learn from that which is holy to others, but it is our obligation both in relation to them and to our own selves to nourish our own reference to the Holy One and to show the face of God who has appeared to us, the God who cares for the poor and the weak, the widows and the orphans and strangers, the God who is so human that he himself became one of us, a suffering man whose compassion with our suffering gives us dignity and hope. If we fail to do this, we are not only denying the identity of Europe; we are also depriving others of a service to which they are entitled" (*Ibid.*, pp. 149–150).
  - 47 *Ibid.*, p. 45. He immediately notes, however, that the number of "competing cultures" is probably not so extensive.
  - 48 *Ibid.*, p. 44.
  - 49 *Ibid.*, p. 156.
  - 50 *Ibid.*, p. 42.
  - 51 Habermas and Ratzinger, *Dialektik der Säkularisierung*, p. 57.
  - 52 *Ibid.*, p. 68 (translation mine). For more of Ratzinger's texts on the relationship between Christianity and the other religions, together with texts that specifically refer to the relationship between faith and reason fulfilled in the Christian faith, see his *Glaube, Wahrheit, Toleranz: Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen* (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 2003, 42005). English translation: *Truth and Tolerance. Christian Belief and World Religions* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2004).
  - 53 For this and the following paragraph, see Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, pp. 142–143.
  - 54 See also *ibid.*, pp. 18 ff.
  - 55 Ratzinger, *Europe in the Crisis of Cultures*, pp. 354–355.

- 56 Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, p. 111.
- 57 Ratzinger, *Eine nichtkonfessionelle christliche Religion?*, pp. 129–130.
- 58 Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, p. 150.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 115.
- 60 Ratzinger, *Eine nichtkonfessionelle christliche Religion?*, pp. 130–135.
- 61 *Ibid.*, p. 139–140.
- 62 Joseph A. Komonchak, “The Church in Crisis: Pope Benedict’s Theological Vision”, *Commonweal*, Vol. 132 no. 11 (June 3, 2005), pp. 11–14; p. 11.
- 63 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 64 For a more penetrating exploration and evaluation of Ratzinger’s theological position see Lieven Boeve, “Kerk, theologie en heilswaarheid. De klare visie van Joseph Ratzinger”, *Tijdschrift voor theologie*, Vol. 33 (1993), pp. 139–165.
- 65 E.g. Ratzinger, *Salz der Erde*, pp. 193–227.
- 66 Cf. Erik Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx. A Theologian in his History*, trans. J. Bowden, (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 346; cf. p. 358: “According to Schillebeeckx’s reading, the final message of the Council documents was that the Catholic Church was really itself only if it succeeded in giving credible form to God’s salvation for the world in its structure, its speech and action. [...] He thought that the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* above all marked off an area. It bore witness to what for an official document was a new ‘worldly’ spirit, supported by faith in the Creator God who at the same time is our unmerited salvation, so that the whole of the concrete reality in which we live comes to us as grace in the ordinary things of every day, in the face of our fellow human beings and in the great aspirations of present-day humanity” (with reference to Edward Schillebeeckx, *Eindresultaat*, in *id.*, *Het Tweede Vaticaanse Concilie*, Band II, [Tielt/The Hague: Lannoo, 1966], p. 69).
- 67 See in this regard, the present author’s study of the development of tradition and the notion of recontextualisation in Lieven Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition. An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context*, trans. Brian Doyle, Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs, Vol. 30, (Leuven: Peeters/Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), chapter 1.
- 68 This exercise forms the basis of my new monograph to be published by Continuum in June 2007: *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval*.