

Introduction (Fr. Federico Lombardi, SJ)

On April 16th 2017 Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI turns 90. To mark this occasion, the “*Joseph Ratzinger– Benedict XVI Vatican Foundation*” has chosen to present its illustrious Founder and source of inspiration with a gift – one it hopes will both please him and allow us to express our commitment to the ends he himself has given us to pursue: promoting study and research in the field of theology and related sciences, in the same spirit with which he has dedicated a great part of his long life to this mission.

This Volume is that gift: a “*Festschrift*”, to use the classical German academic term. The idea behind this Volume was to produce a publication that would bring together a certain number of contributing reflections in coherence with the aims described above.

Undoubtedly, an “open” invitation to theologians and scholars would have elicited countless responses. The task would have taken on immense proportions and been beyond our ability to manage. That is why we adopted a very clear and simple criterion for the collection of contributions: we invited each of the thirteen scholars who have been recipients so far of the “Ratzinger Prize”, which is awarded by our Foundation.

It is worthwhile remembering that the Statutes of the Foundation indicate specifically that, among the initiatives it is meant to promote, there is that of: “awarding scholars who have distinguished themselves for their special merits in the fields of publication and/or scientific research”. This is the basis of the annual awarding of the Ratzinger Prize to eminent scholars in the field of theological research or related sciences. Responsibility for proposing the names of such scholars is entrusted to the Scientific Committee of the Foundation, which is composed of five members appointed by the Holy Father. The Prize has been awarded six times so far, starting in 2011. In the first edition it was awarded to three distinguished scholars, while in subsequent years the Prize has been awarded to two personalities. So, to date we have thirteen “Ratzinger Prize Laureates”, most of whom are Catholic, although the Prize has also been awarded to one Anglican and one Orthodox theologian. These are the scholars who were invited to participate in this initiative. All of them responded promptly and enthusiastically - and these are the Authors of the contributions published in this Volume.

Invitations were sent to the Authors at the beginning of last December, a few days after the conclusion of the International Symposium on eschatology promoted by the Foundation and the 2016 Ratzinger Prize award ceremony. It is important to mention this insofar as it highlights the brevity of the timeframe in which the Authors had to work, and allows us to express our gratitude to them for agreeing to contribute to the project nonetheless. No specific topic was proposed to the Authors, nor was any length determined for their contributions. The idea was to offer each of them an opportunity to express their esteem and affection for the Pope Emeritus in the form of an essay reflecting their ideas and cultural research. Furthermore, the Authors were not asked to take the ideas or works of Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI necessarily as their subject. This is not a requirement for the selection of Ratzinger Prize Laureates by the Scientific Committee, nor for the activities of the Foundation – which, according to the intention of the Founder, was created to promote broad theological study, and not primarily the theology of Joseph Ratzinger. The Authors

exercised great freedom and while their contributions often refer to his ideas in different and more or less direct ways, sometimes this doesn't happen at all.

The 13 Authors come from 11 different countries and have sent their contributions in six different languages (French, English, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and German). Given the cultural importance of the idiom used, we thought it fitting to publish the essays in their original languages¹, with the Authors' own Notes left intact and unmodified. This procedure respects both an operational simplicity and avoids untoward interference with the Authors' contributions, guaranteeing a faithful publication of the same with due regard for the characteristics of each. The Volume is intended primarily for a qualified readership, but it also offers an original way of providing contact with an international group of authoritative scholars who have engaged with the ideas of Joseph Ratzinger and have many interesting and important things to say.

Given the variety of topics and approaches chosen by the Authors, each contribution can and must be considered individually. The Volume does not pretend to have any systematic or organic quality: it is indeed a "collection" of contributions, each one independent of the others. Still, since they had to be published in some sort of succession, I would like to present them briefly in the light of the choices made for their order.

The title of the Volume, "*Cooperatores Veritatis*", is the episcopal motto that Joseph Ratzinger chose when he became Archbishop of Munich. It signified the continuity between his work as a theologian and his magisterial responsibility, both of which were at the service of Truth. That same motto is now attributed by the Foundation to our Prize-winning scholars. So what better title for this Volume that spiritually unites the Person to whom it is dedicated with the Authors who have composed it?

The collection opens with two contributions that refer explicitly to Joseph Ratzinger's great trilogy on Jesus of Nazareth. The first is a wide-ranging essay by Anglican Professor, Richard A. Burrige, titled: "Biographies of Jesus: Joseph Ratzinger and the Gospels." The Author presents a summary of his thirty years of research on the "biographical genre" of the Gospels and effectively demonstrates how this research has led to the conclusions that have many points of contact, both with the perspective that Joseph Ratzinger adopts towards the historical-critical method of exegesis in his *Jesus of Nazareth*, and with his Christological hermeneutic, which sees Jesus Christ as the "key to everything", in line with the constitution *Dei Verbum* of the II Vatican Council.

Prof. Waldemar Chrostowski, writing on the basis of his great expertise on the enormously important documents found in the Judean Desert, about "Qumran in the theology of Benedict XVI", studies in depth and in detail the references to them contained in the work of Benedict XVI on Jesus, setting in relief their novelty and importance. In fact, they need to be read against the background of the valuable contribution that Joseph Ratzinger gives on the subject of relations between the Church and Israel and of the similarities that connect believers in Jesus Christ with Judaism.

¹ The Portuguese contribution of Prof. Mario De França Miranda excepted. The aforementioned essay has been translated into Italian and revised by the Author. The Foundation has made the text available in the original Portuguese on its website.

With Prof. **Manlio Simonetti**'s study, "Exegesis and erudition in late antiquity", we immerse ourselves in the world of ancient Christian literature and of the Church Fathers. Moving with a master's ease, the Author begins from the lessons imparted at school in the Hellenistic age in order to explain how classical texts and mythical tales were then read and interpreted. He introduces us to the theme of "allegory" and then proceeds to its employment in Christian literary environs and the exegesis of Scripture. He expounds on the allegorical and typological exegesis of the Old Testament, and relativises their opposition. He elaborates on the commentaries on the books of Sacred Scripture, which are derived from the Greek literary environment, and of the homilies, which stem rather from the homiletic tradition of the Jewish synagogue. The itinerary concludes with a "bird's-eye view" of exegetical literature in the Greek language at the beginning of the V century.

Prof. **Brian E. Daley** uses his deep knowledge of the Fathers of the Church to carry out a broad-ranging reflection on a very pertinent topic and one which has always been at the heart of the theologian, Joseph Ratzinger's, attention. Prof. Daley's contribution is titled, "Faith of Our Fathers: patristic perspectives on faith, reason and the life of the Church". The Author offers numerous, ample and fascinating citations, while recalling how Origen, Augustine, Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nazianzus, responded to their Pagan contemporaries, who accused the faith of being an abdication before the exigencies of critical reason. In this way they developed profound ideas regarding the relationship between faith and the knowledge of human and divine truth, the relationship between faith, love, and action and between faith and theology. All of which still retains great value in terms of understanding the role of faith "as the origin, the conscious source of our relationship to God, as thinking and willing creatures".

The theme to which Prof. **Olegario González de Cardedal** addresses himself in his article, "God and the question of foundation", presents us with the crucial questions of the believer in the context of contemporary culture, in which it seems that the foundations of religion and morals are collapsing because the "anthropological, social and economic project that has directed us is in crisis". After analyzing the causes of this epochal shockwave, of the culture of post-modernity and the crisis of faith in God, he provides a deep and positive reflection on the "ways" towards God and how they are always relevant. He reflects too on the persistence of questions regarding ultimate meaning, even in crises and in the open prospectives of the XXI century. The cultural and spiritual history of the world is ongoing, and believers must not subtract themselves either from the task of opposing the destruction of the foundations, or from that of cooperating in their renewal.

Prof. **Mario de França Miranda**, with his essay, "Faith, Reason and Theology", offers us a dense and concise reflection on the relations between faith and theology, theology and philosophy, and theology and science of religion in the current cultural landscape, characterized by closure to transcendence and insistence upon a formal-empirical rationality. Rich in references to the thought of Joseph Ratzinger, the Author takes us from the option of faith and proposes the vision of theology as the intelligence of the faith, of God's salvific action in history through the incarnation of the Eternal Son of the Father. He then stresses the importance of philosophy for theology and insists that "a reason that absolutely excludes the contribution of faith will not be able to respond to the vital questions raised by human beings regarding our own existence." Finally, after clarifying that the sciences of religion look at religion from a perspective that is different from that of

theology, which considers God as the ultimate meaning of human existence, he concludes by insisting on the importance of faith lived as a real experience of meaning and of salvation.

Two contributions are centered very specifically on two of the most famous discourses of Benedict XVI's pontificate, discourses in which the theologian Joseph Ratzinger personally commits himself to making a substantial contribution to dialogue with present-day culture, and European culture in particular. Prof. **Ioannis Kourempeles** studies the speech at Regensburg University. The Author is Greek Orthodox, so it is no wonder he shows such vivid interest in the way Benedict XVI deepens the relationship between Greek culture and Christianity, and critically analyzes in three different stages the tendency toward the "de-Hellenisation" of Christianity. The Author's personal reflections and specific contribution, owing not only to the context of contemporary Greek theology, but also for the enrichment of the cultural dialogue between East and West, are reflected in the keywords of his essay's title, all of unmistakable Greek origin: "Theological Ana-Logia and Theo-Logo-Philia". The inseparable relationship between reason and the Christian faith, so crucial to Joseph Ratzinger's view of things, in a sense, assumes a new nuance.

Prof. **Remi Brague** instead focuses on the great discourse of Benedict XVI in Paris, at the Cultural Center in the old *Collège des Bernardins*. Many will recall how the Pope developed a lengthy and erudite meditation on monastic life in the Middle Ages, centered on the search for God, *Quaerere Deum*, and its determinative role in the genesis of European culture. The profound and learned reflection of Prof. Brague illustrates the deep, "mutual but not symmetrical", connection between Christianity and culture, in the sense that Christianity has need of culture as its "content", but a content that is produced "indirectly", while culture has need of Christianity as its foundation. The monks prayed, that is, they praised God, and praise is the environment in which art and culture nourish themselves: what becomes of culture without Him who is worthy of praise? It is not enough to produce "cultural goods". Culture becomes possible "by asserting the goodness of what is, by confessing something like our faith in Being". This is the sense in which we are to understand the original and "provocative" title of this essay: "Culture as a 'by-product'".

Prof. **Maximilian Heim** is abbot of the famous Cistercian Abbey of Heiligenkreuz, visited by Benedict XVI during his trip to Austria in 2007. It is therefore not surprising that he chose a theme of purely spiritual significance: "Put off the shoes from thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. (Acts 7:33)", nor that he should have treated his chosen theme with an abundance of references to texts and writings of Pope Benedict, whose attention to the monastic life, spirituality and liturgy is more than merely well-known and amply evidenced. The author evokes the "spiritual desertification" of the world today and critiques the manifestations of "auto-secularization" in the Church, before delving into the positive response, given in three steps, through "un-worldliness" and sanctification, to reach "the mystery of the burning bush". Here we follow a strain of thought of Benedict XVI, which has always shown a critical vein and exercised a considerable ecclesial impact, particularly in Germany, from the early writing on "New Pagans and the Church" (1958) to the famous and much-discussed speech at Freiburg "To Catholics active in the Church and in society" (2011). At the same time it illustrates well the inseparability of the reflective dimension from that of prayer and adoration in the theology of Joseph Ratzinger.

Prof. **Christian Schaller** titles his paper, "The grace of God is a task and mission," and adds that it consists in "comments on the ecclesiological and anthropological aspects of Mary in the Dogmatic

Constitution *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican Council II". The Author notes that, according to Joseph Ratzinger, the principal question of the Council in relation to Mariology regarded the problem of the correct collocation of the figure of Mary in the overall context of faith and theology. The solution was found by inserting Mariology at once into the contexts of ecclesiology, anthropology and Christology. Mary, the fully saved human person, the image of the Church as community of saints, Virgin and Mother, she who receives the grace of conceiving and the grace of giving: the richness of the final chapter of *Lumen Gentium* is then analyzed and presented with great depth.

The contribution of Prof. **Anne Marie Pelletier** is different from the others, insofar as it presents a lively report her reflections on the occasion of the XV edition of the *Assumption Readings* in Kiev in September 2016. Her theme is essentially that of Europe and its foundations in the context of the contemporary situation of conflict that involves Ukraine, and therefore also of Europe's relationship with its eastern part. The Author refers to the philosophical thought and commitment of Constantin Sigov, his reflections on the *ethos* of Europe and on the need to listen again to the voices of Eastern Europe. The text is delicately interwoven with frequent references to the reflections of Cardinal Ratzinger on Europe, its culture and its Christian future, up to the encyclical letter *Caritas in veritate*, in which the mutual connection between truth and love is affirmed, and therefore that which exists between intellectual enquiry and commitment to dialogue and solidarity with populations who suffer. It is no coincidence that the piece is titled, "Cardinal Ratzinger in Kiev ... *Caritas in veritate*".

Prof. **Nabil el-Khoury** clearly explains the subject of his contribution in the title: "Benedict XVI and Christian-Islamic dialogue in light of Vatican II". The Author is Lebanese and therefore knows his subject in depth and through first-hand experience. His treatment relies not only on the well-known text of the Conciliar Declaration, *Nostra Aetate*, but also on extensive quotations from Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*, published in 2012, following the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops dedicated precisely to the Middle East. Particularly valuable are the insights on Muslims' understanding of the Qur'an and the mission of Mohammad, as well as on the juridical sources of Islam on which the *Shari'a* rests. The Author guides us to acknowledge that approaching dialogue and coexistence requires a true understanding of the religious depth of both Islam and Christianity, as well as a real commitment to the development of the poorest countries, so that relations among peoples may place themselves on the basis of their equal dignity.

The series of articles closes with a brief but substantial essay by Prof. **Inos Biffi**, titled, "The levels of the Eucharistic mystery. Notes for a journey". True to his title, rather than developing the theme, the Author offers us an ordered series of insights. It is clear this is a theme to which he has devoted a great deal of study during his long life of theological research, study that is certainly an example of that "kneeling theology – *theologia orans*" to which Joseph Ratzinger has repeatedly invited us. The itinerary unfolds under the light of the Trinity, the principle of the Christian mystery, but moves concretely from "appearances" of bread and wine, in order to reach the gift and the "reality" of the Body and Blood of Jesus, and thence to the Father as original and absolute Principle: in the Eucharist are manifest the Love that gives itself and the Charity of the Father who gives his Son. Gratuitous Love attracts people to the Eucharistic Table, it neither conditions nor coerces them, but restores them and liberates them in their deepest sense of themselves.

In a way, Prof. Biffi's reflection brings the entire itinerary of the reading of our thirteen Authors' essays to completion, insofar as it leads us to a point at which the believer experiences the coincidence of Truth and Love. Despite the fact they are born independently of one another, at the end the contributions we present appear like so many arrows loosed from different vantage points but all aimed at a single target. Joseph Ratzinger–Benedict XVI gave the Foundation that bears his name the purpose of contributing to the promotion of theology starting from within. We hope this Volume truly corresponds to his desire, and to the spirit with which, throughout his long life, he has dedicated himself to the service of the Truth in Love.