

A Note on the Incarnation and Grace: For the Sake of Fidelity

--Epigraphs--

"Incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine et Homo Factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis: sub Pontio Pilato passus et sepultus est." (".... And [He] was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and was made man....")....This oft-recited, clearly indispensable part of the Nicene Creed was for some forty years, however, misleadingly translated into English in the recited official liturgy of the *Novus Ordo Missae* as "He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, **born of the Virgin Mary and became man.**" Let it be said again, hesitatingly: "He was **born of the Virgin Mary and became man.**"

But, then, some of the reflective and attentive, and more traditional Catholics dared to ask: "Did the Incarnation thus happen at the Nativity? When was the moment of the Incarnation? At the Birth of Our Lord?" (my emphasis added)

"[As it then appeared to Cardinal Ratzinger himself, both in 1982 and still in 1987:] Is anything left but the heaped-up ruins of unsuccessful experimentations [both during, and in the aftermath of, Vatican II]? Has *Gaudium et Spes* ["*Joy and Hope*"] been **definitively translated into** *luctus et angor* ["grief and anguish," in the Encyclical's *own paragraph 903*]? Was the Council a **wrong road** that we must now retrace **if we are to save the Church**? The voices of those who say that it was so [*i.e.*, "a wrong road"] are becoming **louder** and their followers **more numerous**. Among the more obvious **phenomena** of the last years must be counted **the increasing number of integralist groups** [sic] in which the **desire** for piety, for the **sense** of the mystery, is finding **satisfaction**. **We must be on our guard against minimizing these movements. Without a doubt, they represent a sectarian zealotry that is the antithesis of Catholicity. We cannot resist them too firmly. [Sic!]**

But we must likewise ask ourselves, in all earnestness, why **such contractions and distortions of faith and piety** have **such an effect** and are **able to attract** those who, by the **basic** conviction of their faith as well as by personal inclination, are in no way attracted by **sectarianism**. What **drives** them into a **milieu** in which they do **not** belong? Why have they lost the **feeling** of being at home in **the larger Church** [of the *Novus Ordo*?]? Are **all** their reproaches unfounded? Is it not, for example, really strange that we have never heard bishops react as strongly against **the distortions in the heart of the** [*Novus*

Ordo] liturgy as they react today against the use of a Missal of the Church that, after all, has been **in existence** since the time of Pius V? **Let it be said again: we should not adopt a sectarian attitude, but neither should we omit the examination of conscience to which these facts compel us.**" (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), pp. 389-390—my emphasis added; and the book itself is some 400 pages in length, with an Index. (The text of the original 1982 German book was entitled *Theologische Prinzipienlehre*.)

"The greatest of tragedies occurs when a lesser good tramples out a greater good without ever knowing—until it is too late—that it is a greater good. As in Sophocles' *Antigone*, or in the Death of Socrates " (Romano Guardini—my emphasis added)

"The true nature of tragedy...lies in the fact that good is ruined, not by what is evil and senseless, but by another good [though a lesser good] which also has its rights [*i.e.*, "its own claims in justice"]; and that this hostile [lesser] good is **too narrow and selfish to see the superior right [and the higher good]...of the other, **but has power enough to trample down** the other's claim [and often his life]." (Romano Guardini, *The Death of Socrates* (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Company—a Meridan book, **1962**), p. 44—my emphasis added; an original translation from the German and the original copyright by Sheed & Ward, in **1948**)**

In 1980, just after I had met him for the first time, Father John Hardon, S.J. said something to me privately that also became more and more important in my own later life, especially in my growing understanding of our Catholic Faith. He simply said: **"We must live the Parable of the Sower."**

As Father Hardon then proceeded to shed a little more light on these words, he noted that in the Parable of the Sower—where Our Lord also gave His Own exegesis to that Parable, His longest Parable—there is an especially intimate analogous relation between "the soil" and "the soul." That is to say, between the attentive "Cultivation of the Soil" and the attentive "Cultivation of the Soul." He then added: **"If we do not continue to grow in the disciplined and cultivated and more fertile understanding of our Catholic Faith, we shall lose it."** Father's words were to me also a deep and fresh way of understanding the incisive Latin formulation, *"Fides quaerens intellectum."* **Faith seeking understanding—and continually!** We must not (by our allowing them to remain unexercised) let our faculties **atrophy**. And we must keep an increasingly fertile field "well-weeded"! For—as Beatrice taught the negligent and all-too-slack Dante the Pilgrim in Purgatory—**weeds grow faster in a very fertile soil**, in a soil such as loam. We must, God willing, thus come to exercise the full range of our

faculties along lines of excellence. Hence more and more to live a life of virtue: the fuller range of the virtues, both in nature and in grace.

It was soon after this first meeting with Father Hardon that I asked him why the Feast of the Annunciation was not more widely and more fully honored in the Church—not even now as a Holy Day of Obligation—for Our Lady's Feast Day (with her "*Fiat*") was also, momentously, the Feast of the Incarnation, when Our Lord was first in her womb. (Father then solemnly said to me—as he often did in such awkward situations concerning the modern Church—"Robert, we are touching here upon a mystery!" For, he gave me the same sly and impish reply, after I also once asked him: "What now, and specifically, is the '*Mysterium Fidei*' in the *Novus Ordo Missae*?")

After Father Hardon had once said to me (and also later openly so in his Graduate Class!) that his "greatest intellectual mortification is to teach Catholic Theology in the English language," I asked him about the official English language of the Nicene Creed to be found in the promulgated *Novus Ordo Missae*. I pointed to the part of the Creed about Our Lord's Incarnation as a Divine Person who had freely assumed His Sacred Humanity (His Passible Human Nature with a Free Human Will). Father Hardon had already discerningly known of that disturbing English translation wherein Our Lord was reputedly "**born** of the Virgin Mary **and became man.**"

Was this just an accident? Was this just an inattentive sloppiness? For, I then reminded Father of the example he himself had earlier illustratively given in class of **the awkwardness of teaching Catholic Theology in English**, namely the confusing and distracting associations of defining "Grace" as "a Supernatural ACCIDENT"! "Students then thought of crashes and such. Or they were thus unworthily frivolous," Father added. (Father thus preferred to teach Catholic Theology in Latin.)

In that same conversation with Father Hardon, I hesitantly suggested that, whatever the true causes, it seemed to me to be a grave error **not** to emphasize today "Christ in the Womb" when so many children are now being killed in the womb. The deliberate killing of the innocent is indeed the definition of murder. And we are not just speaking of the Natural Life, but of the Supernatural Life, of those culpably involved (also by way of complicity, or as an accessory).

Father Hardon knew well of the problems both with the ecumenical "Englising of the Liturgy" and also with the larger institute for "the Englising of TEXTS," which was not at all a

Catholic operation, but which was so sufficiently scandalous that even Paul VI came to sever it (that secular, inherently non-Catholic organization) entirely from any involvement in the Catholic "Englishing" of the new ("Bugnini") **Catholic** Liturgy (which had its own grave errors and tendentious subtleties and equivocations). Father Hardon also knew the importance of conveying the mystery of the Hypostatic Union—whereby Christ had only **one** of the three infused theological virtues: **charity**. (Christ did not have the infused supernatural virtue of Faith nor the infused supernatural virtue of Hope, which is what the heretical ancient Nestorians had thought, and what the modern Nestorians do still also think, since they have considered Our Lord to be only a "Human Person." Hence we sometimes see an inordinate stress being placed on "the Dignity of the Human Person"—almost as if we were also considering Christ's own purported dignity as a Human Person—and even as a component part of our own limited *Imitatio Christi*." But, we must remember that we cannot imitate the subjective infused Faith of Christ, nor the subjective infused Hope of Christ, for they both were (are) non-existent.

Most importantly, notwithstanding "translation errors," the Incarnation happened at the Annunciation. Such was the Humility of God. And the Incarnation is now continued in the Sacraments.

As Father Hardon often said the "New Commandments of the New Testament" are "the Eight Beatitudes of the New Testament" and they are a good argument for Divine Grace, for they cannot be loyally and enduringly lived out without divine Grace! Natural Man cannot live the Beatitudes; for him, it is a moral impossibility; he needs Grace. Moreover, Father Hardon often said that "Beatitude" itself means "being made happy by God."

Does one not have a deep sense that Father John Hardon himself speaks (and lives out) the Catholic Faith so **much more fully and wholeheartedly** than the nuanced and subtle and delicate Joseph Ratzinger (not only as an academician, but even his words as a bishop, as a cardinal, and as pope)? For me that is sincerely so, in any case. For, I believe that Joseph Ratzinger is too subtle for his own good—too subtle for our own good too. For the natural and supernatural "Common Good," as well.

But, I probably should be more attentive around him, even in his retirement. For, as he so emphatically (and yet so condescendingly) wrote still also in 1982—shortly after he became (in 1981), under Pope John Paul II himself, the honored Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome. After one year in his new Office in Rome, Cardinal Ratzinger, with much unspecificity and

theological reductionism, had also quite intransigently written:

Among the more obvious phenomena of the last [post-Conciliar] years [1965-1982?] must be counted the increasing number of integralist groups in which the desire for piety, for the sense of the mystery, is finding satisfaction. We must be on our guard against minimizing these [more traditionalist] movements. Without a doubt, **they represent a sectarian zealotry that is the antithesis of Catholicity. We cannot resist them too firmly.** (Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (1987), pp. 389-390—my emphasis added)

These unexpectedly and aggressively candid words sound like the words of an enemy—certainly like the words of an enemy of Divinely Revealed Sacred Tradition and of the irreformable and cumulative Doctrinal and Dogmatic Tradition of the Church—similar to the contempt once expressed in my presence by then-Father (later Cardinal) **Georges Cottier, O.P.**, the personal theologian of John Paul II (and perhaps also of Prefect Joseph Ratzinger). While visiting inside Saint Peter's with two of my Swiss friends—a visit to Cottier's private quarters inside the Vatican—I asked him for his considered opinion of his fellow Swiss compatriot, the lay Catholic scholar, **Romano Amerio**, the author of *Iota Unum* and *Stat Veritas*. Father Cottier, unexpectedly, only hissed and hissed, and then, in stentorian tones, contemptuously shouted: "**Integrist! Integrist!**" Nothing more. Father Cottier, by way of disengaging, then politely accepted a gift we had brought to him. It was not Swiss chocolate, however, for Father Cottier was a diabetic.

Even if Father (or, after October 2003, Cardinal) Cottier had not later and finally done so, one still wonders whether or not Joseph Ratzinger would now honorably retract his own above-cited passage in his more leisured retirement. Would he even retract his imprudent characterization of the Integralists-Ideological Traditionalists as part of his own fitting *Retractationes*, in imitation of the great and humble Saint Augustine of Hippo himself. For, we hear reliably that former Pope Benedict XVI is now re-editing and carefully composing his *Opera Omnia* (with the warmly compliant assistance of his German friend, Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, who is the current Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith). For, it appears that both men—Ratzinger and Müller—are effectively proposing some "*tertium quid*," some more civilized "third way" in the moderate middle; and they thus both place themselves, honorifically, somewhere "**between the Integrist and the Modernists.**"¹

¹ This should remind us also of how Ratzinger himself especially helped to found **in 1972** the more moderate progressivist Journal, *Communio*, so as to be **an alternative** to the much more radical modernist-progressivist Journal, *Concilium*, **first founded in 1965—seven years earlier**. One may think of the seemingly more moderate Girondins or Mensheviks.

It also appears to some of us still that a Self-Deception as well as the Higher "Dialectical Process" (as if the Principle of Non-Contradiction does not any longer apply) still continues its Progressive "Development," or, in its own words, its ecumenical "*Integra Humana Progressio* (**Integral** Human Progress)." One exception might insert itself, inasmuch as Joseph Ratzinger is inclined to conserve and preserve some of the Liturgical Traditions, at least in the Mass, and especially its dignified aesthetic portions. He is unlikely, however, to agree with Arnaud de Lassus (R.I.P.) that, in the *Novus Ordo Missae*, there is "an **attenuation** of *Sacrificium, Sacerdotium, and Sacramentum*."

It is also unlikely that retired Pope Benedict will now change his apparently convinced mind that Father Edouard Dhanis, S.J. is **not** a sly subverter of truth, but, rather, an "eminent scholar" who has been a sound authority with his **twofold categorical hermeneutic** and differentiated analysis of the Fatima Apparitions, to include what Dhanis considers to be some purportedly dubious and finally unreliable additions cumulatively made (by Sister Lucia, in part) to the original 1917 Fatima Message. For, it is so that the moderate-sounding (tendentiously Modernist) Flemish-Belgian Jesuit has been inclined to distinguish sharply his proposed "Fatima I" from the putatively less reliable messages in the subsequent imaginative medley of "Fatima II," as it were. Since Joseph Ratzinger still seems to endorse the findings and theories of the learned Father Dhanis, it is probable that the more mysterious meanings and matters of Fatima will not henceforth be openly and thoroughly and dispassionately discussed.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn often said that the Mensheviks always prepare the way for the Bolsheviks, just as the Girondins have also shown themselves always to have gradually prepared the way for the more radical Jacobins in the French Revolution. For, Mensheviks and Girondins always "soften things up," even though they are usually squeamish about the use of violence or even the sterner and seemingly coarser methods of intimidation or threats of force. So, too, is it the case, it seems, with the Liberal and Later-Modernist Revolutions in the the Catholic Church. There are also, in effect, Catholic Girondins and Catholic Mensheviks, who characteristically "soften things up" and sincerely try to be kind (and kindly) tranquilizers, and gentle and tolerant "balancers."

Giving Joseph Ratzinger in this context the benefit of the doubt—lest he be intemperately or rashly called "an irenicist" or "a sheep in shepherd's clothing" or "a man who effectively threw in the towel and thereby threw us to the wolves"—I have long considered Joseph Ratzinger to be a Menshevik, a "Progressive Catholic Menshevik," and certainly not a Romano Amerio or an Integrist-Traditionalist

(in Cardinal Georges Cottier's own comparably condescending sense). My considered and (I believe) well-grounded bias should, therefore, be taken into account in all of my presentations and comments and attempts at fairness on Joseph Ratzinger's behalf—even in his subtle interpretation of *Don Quixote*. If Joseph Ratzinger were himself honestly to come out into public now with his own *Retractationes* (in imitation of one of his heroes, Saint Augustine), he may also even come to call himself a Conciliar and Post-Conciliar "Menshevik" who is still quite kindly disposed toward an "emerging" and "maturing" development, and thus a humanely ecumenical convergence: indeed, an "*Integra Humana Progressio*."

We thus propose now to present a few other acute and representative passages from the Epilogue of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's *Principles of Catholic Theology*, to include his concluding **Parable**: an unexpected and quite sensitive interpretation of *Don Quixote*, with its vivid humaneness (if not its valid analogous application to the contemporary Church); and it is, in part, worthy of his own mentor, Monsignor Romano Guardini (1885-1968), a gracious man who also cherished all the manifestations of various literatures from different cultures and from different times, such as the literature of Russia and of Ancient Greece and Rome.

Ratzinger's Epilogue of almost thirty pages is entitled "On the Status of Church and Theology Today"²—as of 1982 and even as of 1987 (thus after the 1986 developments, especially the scandalous ecumenical, and arguably syncretistic, prayer meeting in Assisi, along with its larger intercommunal religious activities, as resolutely and ardently promoted by Pope John Paul II himself). We recall here the long-standing revolutionary principle: "*Solve et coagula*." (That's part of "the Dialectic.")

Although I earnestly recommend that the reader read and savor the entire Epilogue (367-393), I hope now to give only a few selected passages for us to ponder before our concluding with a deepened sense of the true tragedy—a lesser good unknowingly trampling out a much greater good.

A good place to start may be Joseph Ratzinger's own presented understanding in his Epilogue of the proper relation between Vatican Council II's *Gaudium et Spes* (the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) and Pope Pius IX's Syllabus of Errors (the *Syllabus Errorum*, promulgated on 8 December 1864):

2 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987—first published edition was in 1982, in German, and entitled *Theologische Prinzipienlehre*). The book's Epilogue will be found on pages 367-393 in the Ignatius Press' 1987 English edition; and all future references to this revealing Epilogue will henceforth be to that edition and placed above in parentheses in the main body of this essay.

Of all the texts of Vatican Council II, the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*) was **undoubtedly the most difficult and**, with the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" and the "Decree on Ecumenism," **also the most successful** [sic]....

If it is desirable **to offer a diagnosis of the text [of *Gaudium et Spes*] as a whole**, we might say that (in conjunction with the texts on religious liberty and world religions) **it is a revision of the *Syllabus* of Pius IX, a kind of countersyllabus**. This is correct **insofar as** the *Syllabus* established a **line** of demarcation against the **determining forces** of the nineteenth century: against the scientific and political world view **of liberalism**. In the [later] struggle against modernism this twofold delimitation was ratified and strengthened. **Since then many things [?] have changed** [Does this now imply an historical and cultural relativism?]....As a result, **the one-sidedness** of the position adopted by the Church under Pius IX and [Leo XIII?] and Pius X [was] in response to **the new phase of history** inaugurated by the French Revolution....

Let us be content to say here that the text [*Gaudium et Spes*] serves as a countersyllabus and, as such, represents on the part of the Church, **an attempt at an official reconciliation with the new era inaugurated in 1789**. (378, 381, 382—my emphasis added)

Joseph Ratzinger thus openly, as well as subtly, proposes that we should now embrace another "Ralliement"—beyond Pope Leo XIII's somewhat equivocal, often revolutionary, "Ralliement to Democracy," especially in 19th-century France! Ratzinger himself also now effectively says **"Rally to the Countersyllabus!"** which is also, unmistakably, a form of **"Ralliement to the Revolution."**

In any event, Ratzinger—by resorting to his own unexamined "categorical dichotomy" and to his own updated "theology of history"—later, quite emphatically and condescendingly, adds:

That means that **there can be no return to the *Syllabus***, which **may have** marked the **first** stage in the confrontation with liberalism and a newly conceived Marxism but cannot be the last stage [in that purported confrontation]. In the long run, **neither embrace nor ghetto** [*i.e.*, the Church's earlier stance, with "its ghetto-mentality" (382)] can **solve** for Christians **the problem of the modern world** [?]. **The fact is**, as Hans Urs von Balthasar pointed out as early as 1952, that **the "demolition of the bastions" is a long-overdue task** [for the modern Church]. (391—my emphasis added)

After asking "How did the postconciliar development [sic] arise?" Ratzinger abstractly writes:

To explain what happened, I shall limit myself to just a few points. First, we must be aware that **the postconciliar crisis in the Catholic Church coincided with a global spiritual crisis of humanity or, at least of the Western world;**

not everything that distressed the Church [?] in those years can be attributed to the Council ["Vatican Council II"]. (370)

Offering then "just one example from our own [European?] history," (371) he says:

The **collapse** of the old Europe during the First World War **directly and fundamentally altered the spiritual landscape** and, in particular, **the panorama** of theology. **Liberalism**, which had previously flourished as a **product** of a sated and self-assured [presumptuous?] world, **suddenly** became **meaningless**....The return of the old prosperity **in the sixties** [1960s] brought with it a **similar change in thinking**. The new wealth and the bad conscience [?] that accompanied it **fostered that remarkable** [Leftist Revolutionary?] **mixture of liberalism and Marxist dogmatism** that we have all experienced. We should not, therefore, exaggerate the part played by Vatican Council II in the most recent developments. (372—my emphasis added)

But the optimistic and progressive (if not largely also a neo-Pelagian) Vatican II did not at all deal with Marxism nor with later forms of Communism (*e.g.*, Gramscian or Cultural), not even as momentous theoretical and pressing pastoral issues.

Nor did it thoroughly and critically deal with the actuality of modern Judaism in its own varied and more ideological forms and manifestly aggressive developments (*e.g.*, Doctrinal and Political Zionism, Judeo-Masonry, and Cabalism), but the Council was to treat the phenomenon of Judaism without any such differentiations and only with sympathy, and as a victim always. In view of the earlier-promised "censorship" of certain sensitive topics **before** the 1962 Council—and causing an actual silence about these topics **during** the professedly Pastoral Council (1962-1965) with respect to these large political and pastoral issues—we may well wonder why this was so, and why most of the Council Fathers were never told of these earlier meetings in France or of their momentous decisions and "promised deals;" why the later-revealed, pre-Council progressive (and self-censoring) meetings (concerning both Communism and Judaism and Jewish Bolshevism)—in Nancy, France and in Strasbourg, France—even took place at all, in honor. Where was the promised Pastoral Openness here? Moreover, the Council's own **silence** about "liberalism and Marxist dogmatism" (372) was to constitute "**a provocative weakness**" (in Fritz Kraemer's refreshingly incisive words), thereby further fostering the spread of those aggressive ideologies. That is to say, the silence was so weak (and progressively Menshevik) that it was provocative to others—and gave them (our enemies) many exploitable advantages. Indeed, we may ask: who is the enemy and what are we trying to protect, and why?

Ratzinger, however, does not mention or face any of these matters, but he now only swiftly moves on, and thus says:

Nevertheless, the Council [itself] was one of the factors [with its weakened "cultural immune system"?] that shared **in the development of world history** [with its maturing developments of Dialectical Hegelianism, too?]. When an **institution as deeply rooted in souls** [and nourished by Grace and Divinely Revealed Sacred **Tradition?**] as is the Catholic Church is **shaken to its very roots**, the earthquake extends to all mankind [as in the Revolutions of May 1968 in France, and in the U.S. and in Japan, not only in France?]....

The Council **understood itself as a great examination of conscience** by the Catholic Church; it wanted ultimately to be an act of penance, of conversion [to what? to whom?]. This is apparent in the confessions of guilt, in the intensity of the self-accusations that...were also **heightened into the concept of a Church that was sinful** in a general and fundamental way and that feared as triumphalism [sic] whatever might be interpreted as satisfaction **with what she had become or what she still was**. Linked with **this excruciating plumbing of her own depths** was an almost [?] painful willingness to take seriously the whole arsenal of complaints against the Church, to omit none of them....**Such a radical interpretation** of the fundamental call for conversion and love of neighbor [and "to learn from him wherever possible and to seek and to see **only the good** that was in him" (372)] led **not only to uncertainty about the Church's own identity**, which is **always** being questioned [?], **but especially to a deep rift in her relationship to her own history** [and doctrinal and moral Tradition!], **which seemed to be everywhere sullied**. In consequence, a **radically new beginning** was considered a pressing obligation [and not an irrationality nor an utopian delusion?]. (371-372—my emphasis added)

Although Ratzinger does not here explicitly criticize such a seemingly morose and deformed "one-sided" examination of conscience—as if there were no real revolutionary enemy—he nonetheless admits the paralyzing scrupulosity of that tainting psychological presence; and now he will thus consider the euphoric Liberalism of the temporary John F. Kennedy "era" and how its ethos and optimistic progressive spirit were even to permeate the dreams and conduct of the Vatican Council—as if the near-imminent threat of nuclear war with the Soviet Union in 1962 were not real, nor was the earlier 1961 emplacement of the Berlin Wall (and the other bastions of Communist east Germany):

The **second point** to which I referred [after the examination of conscience, the first of three points] stems from **this fact: something** of the Kennedy era **pervaded** the Council, something of **this naive optimism** of the great society [also that of Kennedy's successor, LBJ]. **We can do everything we want to do if only we employ the right means**. It was precisely [?] **the break in historical consciousness, the self-tormenting rejection of the past** [hence of

Catholic Tradition], that produced the concept of a zero hour [or "year zero"] in which everything would begin again and all those things that had formerly been done badly would now be done well. **The dream of liberation**, the dream of something **totally** different, which, a little later, had **an increasingly potent impact on the student revolts** [*e.g.*, Paris in May of 1968], was, in a certain sense [?], also **attributable to the Council; it was the Council that first urged man on and then disappointed him, just as the public examination of conscience at first enlightened and then alienated him.** (372—my emphasis added)

Nonetheless, Ratzinger says—after inserting his nuanced psychological comments about the "mutation of the conciliar spirit" and about how "exaggeration turns virtues into their opposites" (372)—that:

It was both **necessary and good** for the Council to **put an end to the false forms of the Church's glorification of self on earth** [sic] and, **by suppressing her compulsive tendency to defend her past history**, to eliminate her false justification of self. (373—my emphasis added)

Ratzinger's essential approval of this articulated aspiration and project—and its already partially attained fruitfulness—shows himself, once more, to be an opponent (or even, sometimes, an actual enemy). Do we agree? As history shows, sentimental Liberalism often even hands the weapons over to its own assassins.

CODA

It is fitting to conclude our essay first with a brief consideration of Joseph Ratzinger's own concluding **Parable** at the end of his lengthy book, *Principles of Catholic Theology*—especially his growing understanding of *Don Quixote*—both of which, taken together, will then further prompt our own reflections upon **Vatican Council II as a True Tragedy** (in Romano Guardini's profound sense).

We shall then mention two additional things about Joseph Ratzinger's later writing: (1) his own later 2007 Encyclical on Hope as Pope Benedict XVI, entitled *Spe Salvi* (30 November 2007); and (2) his own recent (2016) and additionally retrospective comments **on the good and on the historic need for Vatican Council II, after all**. For, as we shall see, as Pope Emeritus now, Ratzinger still largely concurs with what he had earlier written in his 1982 book (continued in his 1987 edition) while he was then the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, namely:

Does this mean that the Council itself must be revoked? Certainly not. It

means **only** that the **real** reception of the Council has **not yet begun**. **What devastated the Church** in the decade after the Council [1965-1975] was **not** the Council **but the refusal to accept it**. This becomes clear **precisely** [sic] in **the history of the influence** of *Gaudium et spes*. (390-391—my emphasis added)

Therefore, in his final brief section of his 1982-1987 book, entitled "The Prospect—a Parable," he somewhat reluctantly dares to say, as follows:

With **some** hesitation, I shall attempt, by way of conclusion, **to portray the drama** of the first post-conciliar decade [1965-1975] with its **opening scene** and **its climax** [?] in a parable.... (391—my emphasis added).

Moreover, he then somewhat self-protectively and very kindly says, it is "a parable that, in view of the **harshness** of **our** experiences, **may seem** to be a **highly inappropriate flight** [from reality?] into the realm of fancy." (391—my emphasis added) But he continues:

Nevertheless,...this parable does **not** seem to me to be **so very far from our own experiences**. I refer now to what was, **perhaps**, the most perfect **literary** expression of **the drama** of the **end** [sic] of the Middle Ages and the **beginning** of the modern age—written by an author [Miguel de Cervantes, d. April 1616] who **knew himself to be** more **experienced** in suffering than in song [also as a combatant at the momentous 7 October 1571 Battle of Lepanto]. (392—my emphasis added)

Ratzinger's immediately following words are, in my view, disproportionate and entirely erroneous, and even a caricature of Cervantes which is altogether blind to Cervantes' own truly abiding generosity and his warm comic humor, rather than a crude and trivializing lampoon full of sardonic mockery. Nonetheless I shall cite in full Ratzinger's own condescending words, in part because he later gratefully quotes **from the novel itself** two or so brilliant insights of truth:

His [Cervantes'] Don Quixote **begins as a farce** [sic], **a crude mockery** [sic] that is far from being a work of imagination or a piece of light literature. The humorous *auto-da-fé* ["act of faith" in Portuguese] in the sixth chapter, in which the pastor and the barber [poignantly] burn the [*i.e.*, the incongruous and inordinate pile of reviled] books of the unfortunate knight, is a **very authentic** gesture [?]: **the world** of the Middle Ages is cast out [the Catholic Faith, too?], the door is **barred** against reentry; it belongs now **irrevocably** to the past. In the person of Don Quixote, a new age [and a new Church?] **mocks** the old one. The knight becomes a fool [for Christ?]; awakened from the dreams [sic—the spirit of Christian Chivalry, too?] of yesteryear, a new generation [or cynical mockers and materialists?] faces reality [sic] without disguise and without

adornment. (392–my emphasis added)

Ratzinger then extends his inordinately reductive portrayal and inconsistent analysis—while altogether ignoring the sometimes **ironic persona** of the book's **narrator** (who is distinct from Miguel Cervantes himself):

In the [now] **lighthearted ridicule** of first chapter, there is **reflected** something of the change, [something] of **the self-assurance** [the smug presumption, the hubris?], of **a new age that has forgotten** [or rejected?] its dreams [or its higher standards and rooted ideals?], has discovered reality [sic] and is **proud** of having done so. **But**, as the novel progresses [like the Church?], something strange [?] happens to **the author** [sic]. **He begins gradually to love his foolish knight....** [Something] first made him ["the author"] fully aware that **his fool had a noble heart**; that the foolishness of **consecrating his life to the protection of the weak and the defense of truth and right** had its own greatness. (392–my emphasis added)

Ratzinger even claims something more about the change somehow in the author himself, and says that: "Behind the foolishness, **Cervantes discovers the simplicity** [sic]." (392–my emphasis added)

Quoting first a trenchant and eloquent passage from the Narrator of the novel itself, he then says: "**He [Don Quixote] can do evil to no one but rather does good to everyone, and there is no guile in him.**" (392–my emphasis added) And then Ratzinger adds a passage on Don Quixote's deepest chivalric Code of Honor:

What a **noble foolishness** Don Quixote **chooses** as his [secular, but vowed and chivalrous] **vocation**: "**To be pure in his thoughts, modest in his words, sincere in his actions, patient in adversity, merciful to those in need and, finally, a crusader for truth even if the defense of it should cost him his life.**" (392–my emphasis)

After honoring the moral beauty of this passage, Ratzinger once more declines a little in his attempted insights, once again, although Ratzinger still acknowledges in Don Quixote "**the purity of his heart**" (392–my emphasis added): "Indeed, the **center** of his foolishness...is **identical with the strangeness [sic] of the good** in a [truly tragic?] world **whose** [cynical] **realism has nothing but scorn for one who accepts truth as reality and risks his life for it.**" (392–my emphasis added)

Ratzinger then somewhat condescendingly (and quite frigidly) makes a qualification of what he had just said, as he notes that Cervantes has now come to have "**a nostalgia for what was lost**"

(such as a generous chivalric tradition and a culture in the spirit of G.K. Chesterton, for example?):

This is **not** [however] a return to the world of the romances of chivalry, but a **consciousness** of what **must** not be lost and a realization of man's peril, which increases **whenever, in the burning of the past, he loses the totality of himself** [whatever that means]. (392-393—my emphasis)

And this man was elected as a Conservative Pope? Conservative of what, we may ask? And is his reference and deference to the enriching past also given with intimate and warm-hearted gratitude?

After Ratzinger then finally starts to compare "**the metamorphosis of Don Quixote**" (393) with some aspects of Vatican II and its initial aftermath, he says:

We [We Modernists? Progressivists and Innovators?] started out boldly and full of confidence in ourselves; there may have been, in thought and, perhaps, also in reality, many an *auto-da-fé* of scholarly books [of Mediaeval Scholasticism and Neo-Scholasticism?] that seemed to us to be foolish novels of chivalry that led us only into the land of dreams [*i.e.*, illusions?] and made us see dangerous giants in the beneficial effects of technology, in the vanes of its windmills. Boldly and certain of victory, we barricaded the door of a time that was past and proclaimed the abrogation and annihilation of all that lay behind it. In conciliar and postconciliar literature, there is abundant evidence of the ridicule with which, like pupils ready for graduation, **we bade farewell** to our **outmoded** schoolbooks. **In the meantime, however**, our ears and our souls have been pierced by a different kind of ridicule that **mocks more than we [?] had wanted or wished**. **Gradually** we have stopped laughing; **gradually** we have become aware that behind **closed** doors are **concealed** those things that we **must not lose if we do not want to lose our souls as well**. Certainly we **cannot** return to the past, **nor** have we any desire to do so. **But** we must be ready to **reflect anew** [belatedly? too late?] on that which [we have destroyed?], in the lapse of time, has remained **the one constant** [sic]. **To seek without distraction and to dare to accept**, with a joyful heart and without dissimulation [or self-deception?], **the foolishness of truth—this**, I think, is **the task** for today and for tomorrow: the **true** nucleus of **the Church's service to the world** [sic], *her* answer to "the joy and hope, the grief and anguish [the "*gaudium et spes, luctus et angor*"] of the men of our time" (*Gaudium et spes*, 903). (393—my emphasis added; italics in the original)

There is no mention here of actual Grace and of the indispensability of Sanctifying (and Sacramental) Grace "if we do not want to lose our souls as well" (393).

Has not a lesser good here trampled out, or stifled, a much greater good—and still without knowing it fully, or only belatedly so, and also now probably too late, but for moral miracles? This is True Tragedy. And that True Tragedy is still going on in 2013-2017. As may be seen also in Joseph

Ratzinger's recent tepid words and pallid qualms.³

When Pope Benedict XVI promulgated *Spe Salvi* on 30 November 2007, many conservative and more traditionalist writers and others were very glad, and even considerably effusive, in their enthusiasm. For example, two well-known Catholic writers from one prominent Catholic publication were ardently supportive of this Encyclical on Hope, saying that it is an eloquent exposition and defense of "the theological virtue of hope." I wrote both of these writers—first both of them together and then each one separately—and said politely and lightly that I must have read another text of the Encyclical, although I consulted the official Latin from the Vatican as well as the English and German translations. For, I had read no word about virtue—neither about any natural cardinal virtue (nor even any use of the very word "virtue"), much less anything about an infused theological virtue in the order of Grace. Hope, moreover, is only a virtue as a theological virtue; there is no natural virtue of hope. The two sins against hope—presumption and despair—were not mentioned (much less considered) in the papal text, either, or at least I had not in any way detected them—not even the word sin. However, after mentioning all these facts, to include what is not there concerning the doctrine on hope (not even from the classic Penny Catechism), I asked the two writers: "What am I missing here? What is the Papal Magisterium up to here? Where am I wrong? Am I in serious error here?" But I never heard back from either writer—neither the scholar nor the journalist.

When I made the same observations and posed the same polite questions in a colloquium specifically on the *Spe Salvi* Encyclical at a local Catholic parish, I was told by the directing priest: "Mr. Hickson, you do not have a Catholic mind; you are not thinking like a Catholic. **If something is putatively missing from a Papal Encyclical, you as a loyal Catholic should then supply what is missing, what is not there.**" I then ironically replied: "So, in addition to the generous doctrine of '*Ecclesia supplet*' as part the Communion of Saints (*Communio Sanctorum*), we now also have the novel hermeneutic principle of '*Hickson supplet.*' God help us! I think we are sinking.

In Mariae Corde, the *Mater Gratiae*—and earnestly invoking the help of Our Lady of Fatima.

--Finis--

© 2017 Robert D. Hickson

3 See Benedict XVI's new interview-book—first released on 9 September 2016 by his German publisher Droemer Verlag—and entitled *Benedikt XVI: Letzte Gespräche* (*Benedict XVI—Last Conversations*). Dr. Maïke Hickson—when the book was still only available in the original German language—wrote a 7-page exposition and general review of the book's specific Chapter on the Second Vatican Council. This important review—with many quoted passages—may now be found at *Onepeterfive.com*, under the title "Benedict XVI Admits Qualms of Conscience about Vatican II" (26 September 2016): <http://www.onepeterfive.com/benedict-xvi-admits-qualms-of-conscience-about-vatican-ii/>