

“I Know Not the Man”

Pope Francis: The Natural Child of Pope Benedict XVI

(This article by **James Larson** first appeared on his website, www.waragainstbeing.com It has been posted on the *Apropos* website www.apropos.org.uk with the kind permission of the author.)

For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice. (John 18:37)

There has come into existence a very erroneous opinion which, ironically, is shared by both liberal Catholics and most Traditionalists. They believe that there is a radical bifurcation separating the Pontificates of Benedict XVI and Francis I. It will be my purpose here to prove this is a profoundly superficial view, and that the Papacy of Pope Francis is simply the logical and fully “natural” development of the philosophical and theological positions of Pope Benedict.

I will begin by discussing certain changes that have been made to the Mass. My purpose is to offer a kind of spiritual icon as a foundation for discussing the subject indicated by the title of this article. This might at first seem befuddling to the reader. Traditionalists would consider the Mass to be the premier subject about which there definitely is **not** continuity between Benedict and Francis. After all, Pope Benedict was the author of *Summorum Pontificum* and the “liberation” of the Traditional Mass, while Pope Francis has clearly said and done things which tend to reverse this policy. But both Popes firmly believe that the Novus Ordo is the “Ordinary Form” for the whole Church, while the Traditional Form is “Extraordinary” (not ordinary – outside the usual order). For those who would entertain any delusion that Pope Benedict intended a perpetual right to the Tridentine Mass, I would suggest that they read my article *A Living Host: Liturgy, and the Dynamics of Cosmic Evolution In the Thought of Pope Benedict XVI and Teilhard de Chardin*. Benedict’s intentions towards the Traditional Mass were clearly dialectical and evolutionary.

I also wish to make clear from the beginning that I do not think that any of the changes to the Mass, including the changes which constitute the multiplicity of new Eucharistic prayers, invalidate the New Mass, or alter one iota the reality of Christ’s sacrifice and presence in the Mass. However, the efficacy of Christ’s invisible Sacrifice upon our individual and communal lives is largely dependent upon what we are able to incorporate into our hearts through what we see, read, and hear, and this in turn is profoundly affected by the particular form under which the Mass is offered.

Much has been written and discussed about the deficiencies of the New Order of the Mass relative to the Traditional Latin Mass – focusing on such things as the Eucharistic prayers themselves, the use of what appears to be a table rather than an altar, the orientation of the priest towards the people rather than *ad orientem*, the abandonment of Latin and its replacement by the vernacular, the banality of music, architecture, etc. All of these things are very disturbing to me personally, and, I believe, should be equally disturbing to all Catholics who have a real sense of what it means to worship God in spirit, truth, and adoration.

But there are two other changes which, over the years, I have recognized as reaching into my own heart with a debilitating effect possibly more profound than any of the above. Both of these changes are unique because they involve not just alterations, but total elimination. It is revealing that they comprise the first and last “acts” or prayers of the Mass. I have for some time thought of these as two arms that cradled and protected the beauty and integrity of the Mass, just as Mary protected her Divine Child. As I hope to demonstrate, these two great prayers, or meditations, reveal what is essential to protect and sustain the Catholic Heart in faith. Both of these having been totally eliminated, the Mass, and our worship, has been exposed to all the vagaries of the world.

The first prayer, integral to all Tridentine Masses except those Masses offered for the Dead and those offered from Passion Sunday until Holy Saturday, is Psalm 42. Before ascending to the Altar of God, the priest stands at the foot of the altar, invokes the Trinity, and then says the antiphon: “I will go unto the altar of God.” The servers respond: “To God who giveth joy to my youth”. This phrase – “To God who giveth joy to my youth” – is repeated two more times, once as part of the psalm itself, and again at the conclusion of the psalm and the Glory be.... There is something hauntingly insistent about this repetition, speaking as it does of that which has been lost and which cries out to be restored. The youth of any human being is, of course, a time of relative innocence. This is largely why our youth haunts us with nostalgia. The youth of **man**, however, is the friendship with God present before original sin. This is what we seek to possess **before** we dare ascend to the altar of God.

The Psalm begins with a plea to be judged, distinguished and delivered “from the unjust and deceitful man” (which includes of course the deceitfulness of all men, but especially of our own hearts). It is a prayer for liberation. The absolute foundation of return and restoration is thus established: First must come our confession of sin and poverty, which recognizes that the light and strength to triumph over ignorance and sin can only come from God.

The heart of Psalm 42 is therefore to be found in the following passage: “Send forth Thy light and Thy truth; they have conducted me and brought me unto Thy holy mount, and into Thy tabernacles.” It is the light of God’s Truth which liberates us from sin, draws us into the love of God, and allows us to ascend to the altar of God and be drawn into the “secret place” (Psalm 26) of the tabernacle of God. God’s Revelation, as the fountainhead of all truth and as found in

sacred doctrine, therefore holds absolute primacy of place in the economy of man's salvation. St. Thomas (quoting St. Augustine - De Trin. xiv, 1) writes, "to this science [sacred doctrine] *alone* belongs that whereby saving faith is begotten, nourished, protected, and strengthened." Truth is the absolute foundation of liberation in Christ. Jesus said simply, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." It is only truth that can lead us to a true self-knowledge, and therefore to a true confession of our sins. Psalm 42 is therefore appropriately followed by our personal confession – the key that opens the path upwards to the altar of God.

The second prayer (meditation) which has suffered total elimination from the New Mass is the Last Gospel. It is singularly appropriate that at the conclusion of the Mass we should be led into the deepest contemplation of this Truth – this Divine Life and Light of Christ which we have just fully received in the Person of Christ. This is achieved through recitation and meditation upon what certainly must be the most profound and beautiful passage of mystical literature which the world possesses. Here, reaching to the extremity of language's ability to express the ineffable, is captured the intimate structure of the relationship between the Life of Christ and the light of man's soul.

The key to understanding this relationship lies in the identification of Christ as the *Word (Logos)*: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

There would have never have existed the Arian heresy if the protagonists had read this one line of the Gospel of John with even a modest degree of intelligence. Christ is Eternal, He was generated from all Eternity from the Father, and this generation in no way takes away anything from His being *homoousious* with the Father. It is all here in one verse, one sentence, of Holy Scripture.

The question yet presents itself as to why God, and St. John, chose "Word" to identify Christ. We know that the distinctions within the Trinity deal not with any differences in Divine Nature, but with relationships between Persons, Who are distinguished from one another by certain Names. What is it therefore that makes it proper to identify Christ as "Word"?

St. Thomas teaches, "Now word ["Word"] is taken strictly in God, as signifying the concept of the intellect." (ST, I, Q.34, a.1). The proper object of the intellect is truth. Thomas therefore concludes: "the Word is conceived [generated] by the gaze of the divine thought." The Word is therefore the Only Begotten Son generated by the Father as the perfect contemplation of the Truth that is His own Being.

The very Life of Christ, therefore, is Truth, and the deepest meaning and purpose of the Incarnation is that this Truth – this Word – is made manifest to man. Christ said to Pilate:

"For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. **Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice.**"

This is a constant theme of the Gospel of St. John. Man possesses an innate intellectual nature which is a created participation in the very Life of Christ, and which is constituted as being a “light” which naturally is drawn towards Christ and His Truth. Again, from the Last Gospel:

“In him [Christ, the Word] was life, and the life was the light of men....This was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world....But as many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name.”

Every human mind, in other words, is in possession of an innate “light” which should naturally and “intuitively” respond to the Truths of God’s Revelation of Himself as contained in Catholic doctrine. The reason why individual men do not respond to (“hear”) this voice is that man has clouded his own mind through his commitment to sin and evil:

“For every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved. But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God.” (John 3:20-21).

.And also:

“Jesus answered them, and said: My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do the will of him, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” (John 7: 16-17).

This then becomes the absolutely primary mission of the Church which Christ founded – to preach and teach the Truth in regard to both God and man:

“Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Mt. 28:20).

And lest this teaching be wrongly construed as being restricted to some nebulous concept of loving God and man, rather than the specifics of dogmatic and doctrinal truth, St. Paul writes:

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to God unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels, and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ.” 2 Cor. 10: 5-6.”

It is, in other words, the **mind** that must be conquered for Christ if love of sin and evil is to be vanquished. This, of course, does not entail that only great intellects, or educated persons, have access to salvation, or to the grace and truth of Christ. The great truths of our Faith are encapsulated in the simplest, good grade-school catechism; and the mind that is open to the truth of Christ, even though it be uneducated, implicitly and willingly subjects itself in all things to the

teachings and will of the Church which Christ founded. It therefore only remains that the Church's hierarchy faithfully fulfill this mission of teaching the Truth, a solemn duty which has been massively betrayed in recent decades.

There is a reason for this betrayal, and it is in examination of this reason that we shall discover the deep, binding kinship between Popes Benedict XVI and Francis I.

To Not Know the Word, is to Know Not the Man

All of which I have explored above relates to the absolutely pivotal branch of philosophy which is called Epistemology. The word Epistemology is composed of two root – the first denoting knowledge (epistēmē), the second “study of” (logos). Epistemology is therefore the philosophical discipline concerned with the fundamental structure of the mind and how it comes to know. This in turn determines the reliability of our knowledge. When we consider the subject of knowledge of God and the things of God, true epistemology has been with us since Christ, and has been given to us as gift in the teaching of the Gospel of St. John which I have delineated above.

Catholic epistemology obviously entails an equation – between God, on the one hand, Who has revealed the fullness of His Truth; and on the other, the human mind that naturally should respond to this Light. It would seem evident that Satan's primary goal is to destroy this relationship between man's mind and the Truth of God's Revelation. An in-depth study of Christian history suggests that Satan's frontal attack upon God's Revelation has undergone a fundamental transformation over the centuries. Satan's knowledge is not omniscient. St. Thomas tells us that he likely did not initially understand the full nature of the Church founded by Christ. His primary attack in earlier centuries seems therefore to have been focused upon trying to corrupt the Infallible Magisterium itself. The plethora of Christological heresies in the earliest centuries of the Church represents ample testimony to this *blitzkrieg*.

Having discovered that such a frontal attack upon Catholic doctrine could not reap success, Satan seems to have come more and more to focus on the fundamental structure of human intelligence itself – employing every artful deceit in order to worm his way into human culture and individual consciences in order to pervert and invert the very structure of man's heart and mind in such a way as to make it impossible for him to respond to the truth. And this he has done in a collective manner, employing all the various facets of human culture – science, economics, art, entertainment, and philosophy, and especially that branch of philosophy which is called epistemology, and which we have here been exploring.

The fundamental principle of this new, Satan-inspired epistemology is that we can know nothing with certainty in regard to anything that has to do with either God or the reality of man's spiritual

nature. This is in full accord with Pope Pius X's analysis of Modernism in *Pascendi dominici gregis* which establishes *agnosticism* as the very first principle of Modernism – the erroneous principle that the mind of man is only capable of actually *knowing* perceptible and measurable phenomena (empiricism, phenomenalism). This is the fundamental axiom of reductive science which I have explored in a number of articles. It also accords to the second, fundamental principal of Modernist thinking which Pius X describes as the subjection of faith to science. This is the essence of the new epistemology which has thoroughly penetrated the Church.

In other words, the Life of Christ, the Word, is no longer seen as the light of man. And because of the effects of this epistemology upon the thinking of recent Popes, the Church has largely been stripped of its mission to preach the Truth. There is, in other words, no longer a belief in the **power** of supernatural Truth over the human soul. And, since God created man in His own Image, this implicitly denies the Truth and Goodness of Christ Himself. The new epistemology, in other words, is a preparation for the coming of Antichrist. Having profoundly undermined, or destroyed, the human mind's access to the light which comes from above, it requires our descent into the Darkness of the world, of which, as Scripture informs us, Satan is the prince.

Joseph Ratzinger: The Architect of the New Epistemology

I have examined in detail Joseph Ratzinger's philosophy and theology in quite a number of articles, the most extensive treatment being found in *The Quintessential Evolutionist*. I don't intend to repeat all of that here, but only offer a summary of what is relevant to our subject: the new epistemology. I refer the reader to the above-mentioned articles for thorough documentation.

The entire structure of the new epistemology is predicated upon the denial of the concept of substance. The motivation for this, as described by Pius X in *Pascendi*, is the alleged necessity of subjecting the Faith to science. Specifically, this involves a surrender to the view of physical reality as postulated by reductive atomic and quantum physics. Joseph Ratzinger explicitly rejects the validity of the traditional concept of "substance", even going so far as to apply this rejection specifically to the doctrine of Transubstantiation:

“...the medieval concept of substance has long since become inaccessible to us. In so far as we use the concept of substance at all today we understand thereby the ultimate particles of matter, and the chemically complex mixture that is bread certainly does not fall into that category.” (Joseph Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, p. 14).

We must note here that since the “ultimate particles of matter” are constantly in movement, dissolution, and radical change, then the concept of “evolution” becomes the fundamental

characteristic of all physical being. There is no such thing as substantial physical being. Everything is reduced to evolving “relationships.

This rejection of the concept of substance is applied by Joseph Ratzinger not only to physical objects such as bread, but also to God:

“In this connection I should like to mention briefly two other aids to thought provided by physics. E. Schrödinger has defined the structure of matter as 'parcels of waves' and thereby hit upon the idea of a being that has no substance but is purely actual, whose apparent 'substantiality' really results only from the pattern of movement of superimposed waves. In the realm of matter such a suggestion may well be physically, and in any case philosophically, highly contestable. But it remains an exciting simile for the *actualitas divina*, for the idea that God is absolutely 'in act' (and not 'in potency'), and for the idea that the densest being – God – can subsist only in a multitude of relations, which are not substances but simply 'waves', and therein form a perfect unity and also the fullness of being....” (*Introduction to Christianity*, p. 175).

To assert that God “can subsist only in a multitude of relations” amounts to a complete inversion of Thomistic metaphysics. The “pure act” of God’s Being is not in any way to be identified with the category of “relations” but with “*subsistens esse*” – the absolutely necessary truth of our Faith that God is the only substance (the term is used here analogically) Who exists absolutely of Himself and within Himself (and therefore with a specific Nature which He has communicated to us through the Truths of Revelation and the Deposit of Faith). This is the meaning of God’s Name which He reveals to Moses – “I AM WHO AM. It needs also to be strongly asserted that the Relations within the Trinity between Father, Son, and Holy Ghost do not in any way fall into the category of accidental relations that inhere to created substances, but are rather integral to that *subsistens esse* (and therefore integral to His Revelation of Who HE IS).

It only remains for us, finally, to examine Joseph Ratzinger’s denial of substantial nature to the human soul. In his book *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, He writes:

“‘The soul’ is our term for that in us which offers a foothold for this relation [with the eternal]. Soul is **nothing other** than man’s capacity for relatedness with truth, with love eternal.” (p. 259).

And further:

“The challenge to traditional theology today lies in the negation of an autonomous, ‘substantial’ soul with a built-in immortality in favor of that positive view which regards God’s decision and activity as the real foundation of a continuing human existence.” (p. 150).

This reduction of God, man, and all created things to the category of ongoing relationships necessitates the enshrinement of Evolution as the fundamental concept of all of philosophy and theology. This is the third principle with which Pius X pinholes the mind of the Modernist. Joseph Ratzinger's subjection of all things, both divine and human, to the principle of evolution has been examined carefully in my article *A Living Host....*” As a consequence of this surrender, out the window has gone virtually everything that necessitates any concept of substantial nature: the state of Original Innocence, Original Sin, Sanctifying Grace, the traditional truth concerning Baptism, the doctrine of Transubstantiation, etc.

Most relevant to our topic here, however, is what all this necessarily entails in regard to how man comes to **know** God. It is here that the Church's present prostitution to the world finds its genesis and constant nourishment.

Immanentism: The Fourth Pillar of Modernism

It must be re-emphasized that the retreat away from traditional Epistemology – this retreat entailing an at least implicit denial that the Life of Christ is the intellectual light of the human soul – necessitates a descent into the interior of man. As pointed out very clearly by Pope Pius X in *Pascendi*, the *agnosticism* of the Catholic Modernist does not terminate in a denial of the idea of personal *faith*, but rather perverts and inverts its origin. And in doing so, it necessarily also denies the absoluteness of objective Revelation.

Having denied man's natural ability to know or respond to the Truth which comes down from Heaven (dogma and doctrine), the Modernist is forced to retreat to that which is in a process of becoming, and which evolves from below. Pius X aptly designates what Modernists conceive to be the true source of revelation as lying in the “religious sense.” The religious sense has its origin in a “spark of the divine” (Henri de Lubac calls it an “Ikon” of the divine) within all human beings which is seeking full expression and knowledge of truth through the evolutionary process. In other words, the true source of knowledge, sanctification, deification lies within man. This explanation which places the interior of man as the origin of our knowledge of the divine is designated by Pius X with the term *Immanentism*.

The “pure” Modernist is of course a pure *Immanentist*, and therefore a pure Pantheist, identifying divinity entirely with this process of evolutionary development and manifestation. But all forms of Modernism, to one degree or another, are pantheistic in that they place some element of the divine within human nature itself. These “less pure” forms are designated by Pius X as “moderate Modernism.” We must not conclude that because such Modernism is not “pure” it constitutes less of a threat to the Catholic Faith. Pure Pantheism is relatively easy to detect. Moderate Modernism, on the other hand, works by way of what the Pope call “arts entirely new”

in order to penetrate into and destroy true Catholicity with a subtlety and deceptiveness that is often very difficult to detect or unravel.

At the core of this destructive activity is what Modernism does to the concept of Catholic Revelation. Succinctly stated, if man does not possess a fixed substantive nature which is in possession of the same intellectual light at all stages of human history, but rather must be seen as living in various stages of physical, intellectual, and spiritual evolution, then Revelation also must be seen as an evolving phenomena. For the moderate Catholic Modernist who still believes in a transcendent God this entails that God necessarily also must become involved in this evolutionary process. Thus we have the concept of ongoing and developing Revelation. God's primary way of working with man lies within the "religious sense" – this "Ikon" of the divine ever seeking new truth and revelation. The whole concept of immutable, absolute truth is thus severely weakened or destroyed.

The Immanentization of the Deposit of Faith

As a self-proclaimed Catholic, the moderate Modernist is faced with a most daunting challenge; the existence of what Catholics call the Deposit of Faith. The first line of Pius X's great encyclical on Modernism reads: "One of the primary obligations assigned by Christ to the office divinely committed to Us of feeding the Lord's flock is that of guarding with the greatest vigilance the deposit of the faith delivered to the saints..." The Catholic Church possesses two-thousand years of history intimately entwined with this "guarding": Church Councils, condemnation of heresies, excommunications, schisms, the incredible amassing of theological and dogmatic treatises, encyclicals, etc. To altogether deny the concept of the Deposit of Faith would therefore be equivalent to denying the Church's own history, and thus its own unique being. And it would necessitate the absolute abandonment of the subterfuge by which the Modernist can still credibly call himself Catholic.

The solution for the Modernist must therefore lie in "arts entirely new" which, while retaining the Deposit of Faith, and even claiming submission to the entirety of the Deposit of Faith (as do both Popes Francis and Benedict), profoundly vitiate its centrality in the act of faith itself so as to "free up" the concept of doctrine from any notion of "static" absoluteness, and thus permit Revelation to become part of the evolutionary process. The following analysis will explore this "art" in the thought and writings of Benedict XVI, and thus prepare us for understanding the young Pontificate of Francis I:

Joseph Ratzinger's view of the nature of doctrine (and consequently the Deposit of Faith) is amply laid out in his book *Introduction to Christianity*:

“Our consideration of the history of the Apostles' Creed has led us to the recognition that here, in the baptismal formulary, Christian doctrine stands before us in its original shape and, thus, also in its primitive form, what we today call “dogma.” Originally there was no such thing as a series of doctrinal propositions that could be enumerated one after another and entered in a book as a well-defined body of dogmas. Such a notion, which today may be difficult to resist, would have to be described as a misconception of the nature of the Christian assent to the God revealed in Christ [out the window goes the Baltimore Catechism, not to mention the Dogmatic Decrees of the Council of Trent]. The content of the Christian faith has its inalienable place in the context of the profession of faith, which is, as we saw, in the form of assent and renunciation, a conversion, an about-turn of human existence into a new direction of life. In other words, **Christian doctrine does not exist in the form of discrete propositions** but in the unity of the *symbolum*, as the ancient Church called the baptismal profession of faith. This is probably the moment to look rather more closely at the meaning of this word. *Symbolum* comes from *symballein*, meaning in English: to come together, to throw together. The background to the word's etymology is an ancient usage: two corresponding halves of a ring, a staff, or a tablet were used as tokens of identity for guests, messengers, or partners to a treaty. Possession of the corresponding piece entitled the holder to receive a thing or simply to hospitality. A *symbolum* is something that points to its complementary other half and thus creates mutual recognition and unity. It is the expression and means of unity.

Thus in the description of the creed or profession of faith as the *symbolum* we have at the same time a profound interpretation of its true nature. For in fact this is just what the original meaning or aim of dogmatic formulations in the Church was: to facilitate a common profession of faith in God, common worship of him. As *sym-bolum*, it points to the other person, the unity of spirit in the one Word. To this extent, dogma (or symbol, respectively) is also always, as Rahner has rightly pointed out, **an arrangement of words that from a purely intellectual point of view could have been quite different** yet, precisely as a form of words, has its own significance – that of uniting people in the community of the confessing word. It is not a piece of doctrine standing isolated in and for itself but is the form of our worship of God...” (p. 96-98).

One and one-half paragraphs later, he draws the astounding conclusion:

“This discovery also points, it is true, in another direction: even the Church herself, as a whole, still holds the faith only as a *symbolum*, as a broken half, **which signifies truth only in its endless reference to something beyond itself**, to the entirely Other. It is only through the infinitely broken nature of the symbol that faith presses forward as man's continual effort to go beyond himself and reach up to God.” [all bold emphasis in the above quotes is mine – italics are Joseph Ratzinger's].

Individual Catholic doctrines, in other words, are not statements of absolute truth, and their “arrangement of words” could have been “quite different”; the Catholic Church is not in full possession of the God’s Revelation but is only a “broken” half, ever in movement towards the fullness of truth. The real purpose of a confession of doctrine, therefore, is not the achievement of union of our minds and hearts with objective truth, but rather to effect a unity with other believers in our common evolutionary assent towards God.

All of this is also in total accord with Cardinal Ratzinger’s position expressed in his autobiographical work *Milestones (Memoirs 1927-1977)* in which, while discussing his preparation for his thesis on Bonaventure, he wrote:

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

Thus, by “arts entirely new”, the Deposit of Faith has at the same time been both retained and dethroned. It has been retained as a confession of faith necessary in order to effect union among the faithful, while having been rejected as containing immutable Truth. And since it is no longer seen as containing the Life of Christ which is the light of men, then it need not be taught or preached. It can be affirmed on occasions when one’s Catholicity is challenged, while being relegated to the background at all other times. It can be affirmed in principle (in “confession”) while at the same time being denied in practice. It justifies silence towards Catholic Truth while claiming that this is an act of prudence, and of mercy to the poor. Such are the “arts entirely new” which constitute the Pharisaism of our time.

To know not the Word, is to know not the Man Jesus Christ. To engage in a purported “missionary discipleship” or New Evangelization that omits or de-emphasizes the Sacred Deposit of Faith knows neither man nor woman.

Pope Francis: The Natural Child of the New Epistemology

It was possible from the beginning of his Pontificate to know well the mind of Benedict XVI. One can look at virtually the entire intellectual output of Joseph Ratzinger over the past 60 years as an attempt by a divided heart to justify infidelity to Catholic Tradition. This necessitated voluminous (and indeed his writings are “voluminous”) efforts on his part to “essentialize” the Deposit of Faith in order to be able to embrace a love affair with the modern world, especially the world of reductive science. He was always a man with one lung in the past, the other avidly breathing in the poisonous fumes of modernity – a man divided within.

On the other hand, after his election, those who attempted to get to “know” Francis through things that he might have written were stymied. There simply seemed nothing out there, at least not in English. Reading biographies and interviews that appeared shortly after his election also yielded virtually nothing. I remember reading Sergio Rubin and Francesca Ambrogetti’s book titled *Pope Francis: Conversations with Jorge Bergoglio* (conducted over a two-year period while he was Cardinal of Buenos Aires). The book can aptly be described as “doctrine-free.”

There is, however, one piece of his pre-Papacy writing available in English, and it basically “says it all.” Jorge Mario Bergoglio has long been an admirer of the founder of Communion and Liberation, Luigi Giussani (as had been all the Popes since Vatican II – John Paul II sent Cardinal Ratzinger to give his funeral oration, and Paul VI repeatedly and enthusiastically embraced Giussani’s movement as being the way out of the present crisis). The book titled *A Generative Thought: An Introduction to the Works of Luigi Giussani* (edited by Elisa Buzzzi) contains a chapter written by Cardinal Bergoglio titled *For Man*, based on a lecture given for the appearance of the Spanish edition of Giussani’s book *The Religious Sense*.

Pope Francis’ epistemology, as to where we are to meet God, is profoundly encapsulated in one sentence of his chapter in Buzzzi’s work:

“I dare say that today the primary question we must face is not so much the problem of God – the existence, the knowledge of God – but the problem of the human, of human knowledge and finding in humans themselves the mark that God has made, so as to be able to meet with Him.”

No man who believes that the Word (the Life and Truth of Christ) is the light of man – who believes in a “vertical”, as opposed to evolutionary (from the bottom-up), view of Revelation – could propose such a thing as this. The “primacy” which Pope Francis establishes of meeting God in man, rather than through the Revelation of God which is received through the Deposit of Faith, is therefore in profound accord with the evolutionary view of Revelation as proposed by Joseph Ratzinger.

This “encounter with man” then becomes the entire content of Francis’ concept of “missionary discipleship”. In his August 7 video message to the Church in Argentina on the Feast of St. Cajetan, he said,

“He [St. Cajetan] only asks one thing of you: that you come together! That you go out and seek and find one in greater need! But not alone – with Jesus, with St. Cajetan! Am I going to go out to convince someone to become a Catholic? No, no, no. You are going to meet with him, he is your brother! **That’s enough!** And you are going to help him, the rest Jesus does, the Holy Spirit does it.”

To “convince someone to become a Catholic” is, of course, to convince someone to accept all the truths of the Catholic Faith. Pope Francis’ response to such missionary activity is “No, no, no.

For Pope Francis, truth is purely a matter of relationship. In his letter to Eugenio Scalfari, he writes the following:

“In the second place, you ask me if the thought, according to which no absolute exists and therefore, not even an absolute truth but only a series of relative or subjective truths, is an error or a sin. [Note that in what follows the Pope never answers the question as to whether this is an error or a sin] To begin with, I will not speak, not even to one who believes, of ‘absolute’ truth, in the sense that absolute is what is inconsistent, what is deprived of any relationship. Now truth, according to the Christian faith, is the love of God for us in Jesus Christ. Therefore, truth is a relationship!”

This is, of course, absurd. The notion that defining absolute truths about God or man deprives them of “relationship” is only true if “relationship” is a euphemism for evolution. Anything in the “process” of evolution of course cannot possess any “absoluteness”. The employment of the term *relationship* here is therefore a subterfuge masking an evolutionary agenda for Catholic Truth and Revelation.

The primary consequence of this evolutionary view of God, Truth, and man is that everything must be set in motion if it is to reflect the Love of Christ. The following is from Francis’ interview with Antonio Spadaro:

“God manifests himself in historical revelation, in history. Time initiates processes, and space [which apparently is to be identified with “rigid” doctrine and morality] crystallizes them. God is in history, in the processes. We must initiate processes, rather than occupy spaces [another euphemism, apparently employed here for such things as the Deposit of Faith].”

And since everything else has been dissolved of substantiality, there remains only one absolute: the Love of Jesus Christ:

“But the saving Love of God comes before moral and religious imperatives.” (Ibid.).

This is equivalent to saying that Love comes before Truth. This explains why Pope Francis could proclaim the “saving Love of God” to Brazilian youth while **purposefully** being silent about the fact that 82% of them apparently believe that God smiles on “morning after” abortions. (see my article *Descent Into Darkness*). The fact is that love without truth simply confirms sin.

Pope Francis’ epistemology would thus seem to be in full accord with Giussani’s position in *The Religious Sense* that the only way of bringing a person to faith in God is through *encounter* (an often repeated word during the fledgling Papacy of Francis) which seeks to uncover an *original* or *elementary* experience – a *spark of the divine*, an *original need* (all of these italicized terms are from *The Religious Sense*) – which constitutes the source from which faith is to be generated.

The reader will hopefully notice the extent to which all of this corresponds to Pope Pius X’s analysis of the Modernist mentality in *Pascendi*. The “Religious Sense” is of course precisely the

term he uses to designate the “place” where Modernists retreat from the consequences of their agnosticism. The notion that this religious sense originates in a “spark” or “original experience” which expresses itself in an *original need*, as well as the consequences which this entails for our understanding of God’s Revelation, is brilliantly examined in the following passage from *Pascendi*:

“However, this Agnosticism is only the negative part of the system of the Modernists: the positive part consists in what they call vital immanence. Thus they advance from one to the other. Religion, whether natural or supernatural, must, like every other fact, admit of some explanation. But when natural theology has been destroyed, and the road to revelation closed by the rejection of the arguments of credibility, and all external revelation absolutely denied, it is clear that this explanation will be sought in vain outside of man himself. **It must, therefore, be looked for in man**; and since religion is a form of life, the explanation must certainly be found in the life of man. In this way is formulated the principle of religious immanence. Moreover, the first actuation, so to speak, of every vital phenomenon -- and religion, as noted above, belongs to this category -- is due to a certain need or impulsion; but speaking more particularly of life, it has its origin in a movement of the heart, which movement is called a sense. Therefore, as God is the object of religion, we must conclude that faith, which is the basis and foundation of all religion, must consist in a certain interior sense, originating in a need of the divine.”

Thus, the entire definition of faith of Vatican Council I is inverted. Faith is no longer to be seen by such men as Benedict XVI, Pope Francis, and Giussani as an act, “whereby inspired and assisted by the grace of God”, we “*yield* to God, by faith in His revelation, the full obedience of our intelligence and will” – “not because the intrinsic truth of the things is plainly perceived by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God Himself, Who reveals them, and Who can neither be deceived or deceive.” Rather, faith, like any other phenomenon, is something which, as Giussani writes, must come forth from human experience and from “understanding the meaning of things.” (*The Religious Sense*, p.6-7). It is no wonder then that Jorge Mario Bergoglio (with approbation) rightly concludes that, in *The Religious Sense*, “Little is said about God and much is said about human beings.”

It has not escaped the notice of many commentators, both on the right and the left, that, other than the rich who defraud the poor, and the “careerism” of the curia and other clergy (both categories certainly deserving condemnation), Pope Francis’ vehement condemnations are clearly reserved for those who would consider themselves Traditional Catholics. I believe there is an explanation for this phenomenon:

I have employed the image of Pope Francis as being the “natural child” of Benedict XVI. The word “natural” is here used to indicate the theological and philosophical (especially epistemological) continuity between the two men. From a Catholic perspective, of course, there

is nothing natural about this epistemology or its consequent view of human psychology. It is not “natural” for any Catholic, explicitly or implicitly, to deny that the Life of Christ is the light of the human mind, and that the human intelligence is therefore created “by Him and in Him” with the natural disposition to respond to Revealed Truth. Pope Francis’ obvious hostility towards the Traditional Catholic position is therefore almost surely generated by his own self-betrayal of this Light. His “naturalness” is therefore of the world, and not of God.

The commonly held view that there is a radical difference between Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis is symptomatic of the general failure to understand the immensity and depth of the problem with which we are faced. Such superficiality prevents Traditional Catholics from understanding that the present crisis (including such diverse things as false ecumenism, the New Mass, the New Theology and Philosophy, and even right down to music, art, and architecture) has been generated from the epistemological **agnosticism** which Pius X recognizes as the foundation of Modernism, and that this agnosticism is generated from one source: the subjection of the faith to the epistemological errors of reductive science. This materialistic reductionism is something that has been increasingly penetrating the Church for centuries, and it has dominated the thinking of recent Popes. The anti-Traditionalism of Pope Francis is therefore the fully logical and “natural” development of the scientific reductionism, and consequent evolutionary view of truth and revelation, which is the foundation of the philosophy and theology of Pope Benedict VI.

On the intellectual level, therefore, the single thing most necessary for the survival of the Church is that war be conducted against reductive science, something easily “done and won” with the aid of Thomistic metaphysics. The epistemological “gut” of reductive atomic and quantum physics is only waiting for the sword of truth to expose its absurdities.

This enemy has never been comprehensively engaged by any Pope. I know of no encyclical ever dedicated to fully exploring and condemning the metaphysical, cosmological, and epistemological errors of modern science. Nor will the enemy be recognized, or effectively engaged, by Traditional Catholics while they continue to suffer the delusion that Pope Benedict was somehow a different species from Pope Francis, or as long as they pursue an agenda which effectively views “having the Old Mass” as possessing a primacy of place over defending the Sacred Deposit of Faith. It is not the New Mass which has produced the “new faith”, but rather the opposite. It is their myopic love-affair with *Summorum Pontificum* which has blinded them to the truth about Benedict XVI, and this in turn has prevented them from “seeing” the real depths of evil now threatening to completely darken the visage of the Bride of Christ.

Conclusion: A Note of Mercy

Recently, a friend sent me the following quote from *St. Therese of Lisieux: Her Last Conversations*:

“If they only knew what terrible thoughts obsess me! Pray for me that I may not hear the demon who wants to convince me of so many lies. The arguments of the worst materialists are forcing themselves on my mind: science is progressing all the time and will end by giving us natural explanations for everything; we shall have mastered everything and solved all problems we have today, for many discoveries still lie ahead....” (8/1897).

If the simple and profoundly holy soul of St. Therese could be “obsessed” with thoughts generated by reductive science (in the 19th Century!), and the threat which such science represented to her faith, then it is no wonder that virtually every intellectual in the world has now fallen victim to this engine of Satan’s war against both God and man. It could be looked upon as a miracle of God’s grace that intellectuals such as Joseph Ratzinger or Jorge Mario Bergoglio possess any faith whatsoever.

I have little doubt that all of this is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Our Lady of Fatima that the Holy Father “will have much to suffer.” The truth most difficult for us to absorb and accept, however, is that this “suffering” of recent Popes is the punishment for our not having lived the requests of Our Lady which require amendment of our lives, prayer, penance, and reparation. In other words, the darkness which has descended upon the Papacy is of such a nature as to make these Popes the victims of our infidelities, as much, or more, as we are of theirs.

