Is this progress? Are not the empathetic moderns, who are so outraged by slavery and religious persecution, the same ones who accept the murder of unborn children in abortion? Noonan is quick to lay the charge of "moral blindness" on previous ages but fails to recognize it in his own. One can even find plenty of churchmen and theologians who are willing to defend legal abortion and the Catholic politicians who promote it. Pope John Paul II has spoken of the "surprising contradiction" of those who "solemnly proclaim the inviolable rights of the person" and yet deny "the very right to life" itself (*Gospel of Life*, n. 18).

This would suggest that, far from a smooth development from moral darkness to moral enlightenment, people of the last century have embraced some virtues at the expense of others. One could even ask whether our empathy has come at the price of other virtues. How many of those who trumpet religious liberty are really indifferent to religious truth? How many of those who celebrate emancipating the slaves are sympathetic to oppressive left-wing regimes?

Pope John Paul II provided a more likely model for moral development than Noonan when he wrote, "history is not simply a fixed progression toward what is better, but rather an event of freedom, and even a struggle between freedoms that are in mutual conflict … a conflict between two loves: the love of God to the point of disregarding self, and the love of self to the point of disregarding God" (*On the Family*, n. 6). Moral development, for Christians, is measured principally by the love of God, not by the rights of man. In that respect, one wonders if the words of our Lord, that the "love of many shall grow cold" apply especially to our own age, even if our so-called empathy is great.

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Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004 (284 pages)

The problem that Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) addresses in *Truth and Tolerance* is both theological and political. It concerns the polemics surrounding the encounter of Christian belief and other religions and the call to all religions to promote peace. Since Karl Rahner first began exploring the theme in 1961, Christian theologians have focused their discussion of the relationship of Christianity and world religions almost exclusively on the possibility of salvation for the non-Christian. As a result, they have treated it under a rubric in which distinctions between the religions have been considered irrelevant (17). Ratzinger proposes that prior to and perhaps instead of trying to decide the value of religions for eternity, the more basic questions of the meaning of religion, of faith, of culture, and of the possibility for their fruitful interaction need to be addressed (see 18, 207).

This book is a "modest contribution" (10) to this larger project. Ratzinger has set the project on its proper footing by, with his usual skill, diagnosing the disease that is producing the symptom. The problem currently facing Christianity is the problem of postmodern Western culture: It is the crisis of truth. Christianity's understanding of itself as true is met today by a culture that holds the spheres of faith and knowledge to be entirely distinct; by a relativism whose twin "virtues," tolerance and freedom, oppose any claim to truth; and by a general skepticism about whether man can know truth at all.

Truth and Tolerance examines and addresses various aspects of these assumptions from a number of perspectives. The book consists of a collection of talks dating back to 1992, introduced by a piece written in 1963 in the middle of the Second Vatican Council and supplemented by some remarks composed particularly for this work. Part 1 takes up basic questions concerning religion, culture, and faith; part 2 explores the question of truth. The approach is largely phenomenological, a testament, ultimately, to Ratzinger's confidence that man is made for the truth and to his belief in the complementarity of faith and reason. The fruit of his phenomenological investigations is a number of key distinctions, distinctions that are reason's aid to faith.

Perhaps the most salient of the book's distinctions occurs in the opening chapter. In this essay, Ratzinger explores the basis of religious "pluralism," the position of the "man of today" regarding the world's religions. The pluralist's view of religion, Ratzinger notes, is essentially static and symbolic. The man of today "does not foresee any development from one religion to another; rather he expects each person to remain in his own and to experience it within an awareness that it is, in its basic spiritual core, identical with all the others" (23). The layman's religious pluralism is now gaining currency among some Christian theologians (see 119, 121–22). Modern philosophy of religion contributes to the position by identifying the "basic spiritual core" that provides unity to the plurality. The ineffable religious experience of the mystic is seen to be the original, common form of religious experience—firsthand religion. All other religion is secondhand knowledge, "'passed on' from the mystic … as faith" (26). India's Radhakrishnan, in proclaiming a future "religion of the spirit" (characterized by Ratzinger as "vague"), has formulated this position in a manner that is highly appealing to the man of today (25).

Against this view, Ratzinger proposes a dynamic historical account of religion and religions in which mysticism emerges as one of three possible transitions beyond the stage of mythical religions. Alongside pluralistic mysticism, then, are two other possible religious forms: "monotheistic revolution" and "enlightenment" (which is not, in Ratzinger's account, identical with the historical period commonly so-called). Within each of the three forms an absolute value is asserted; this is no less true in the pluralist form than in the other two, for it sets its ineffable "imageless spiritual experience" (31) against the "divine call" of the monotheist and the "scientific knowledge" of the enlightened thinker. Ratzinger leaves the enlightenment position aside to focus on the distinctions between the mystical and monotheist positions, but his subsequent discussions of

the relationship of early Christianity to the enlightenment thinking of the time, of the relationship of the pluralist position to postmodern enlightenment thinking, and of the "religious" elements of an enlightenment that seeks nonetheless to exclude religion (an enlightenment that "did not gain full force until modern times … and [that] still seems to have its real future before it" [29]), are some of the gems of this book.

At the heart of the distinction between the mystical and monotheistic forms lies a difference of trajectory and activity. In the former, man ascends to a fusional union with the All-One. In the latter, "man is the passive element upon whom God acts … we have here a call from God, and man opens himself to salvation through obedience in response to the call" (36). From this distinction, a number of subsequent distinctions can be made. The mystical attitude is unhistorical and symbolic, its way experiential; the monotheistic attitude is historical and event based, its way relational. The mystic sees a passive divinity; the monotheist is sought out by an active one and becomes part of an event. Revelation is thus excluded from the mystical attitude, while it is central to the monotheistic one. The mystic seeks an identity with the divine that overcomes any distinctions: He seeks an impersonal "nothingness" or "everything." The monotheist, on the other hand, enters into a relationship with a personal God, a relationship that maintains a distinction of persons—an I-Thou. In the terms of this last distinction, Ratzinger expresses the choice facing man: Faith must decide between a "mysticism of identity" and a "personal understanding of God." If there is to be dialogue between the two ways, these distinctions must be grasped, and the two ways must be true to themselves if the duality of the two forms is to be surpassed.

Ratzinger does not pursue the question of how the two forms might be reconciled in some higher unity. He also does not shy away (in his "Interlude," [45–54]) from presenting some of the "difficulties for human living" in the mysticism-of-universal-identity position. The questions posed by the opposition between the two ways remain present throughout the book (45), as do the questions raised in the dispute among Christian exclusivists (there is no salvation for the non-Christian), Christian inclusivists (all other religions are provisional stages on the way to Christianity [p. 21]), and pluralists (53).

Ratzinger opens the second part of his book, on truth, by distinguishing a certain relativism that is true in the sphere of politics from an unlimited relativism operative in religion and ethics (118). Then, in part 2, chapter 2, he turns to address the problem of the current crisis of truth and its particular challenge to the truth claim of the Christian faith. A series of three complementary essays begins with an historical attempt to "disentangle … the inner rationale of Christianity" (145). It is followed by an exploration of the synthesis of reason, faith, and life that made Christianity the "religio vera" (and likewise the true philosophy, if philosophy is understood as a way of life) and a world religion, and it concludes with a reflection on the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. The essays in this second part exhibit the "circularity" that Ratzinger prescribes: Theology must relate the word of God to man's search for the truth. It must begin and remain in dialogue with philosophy; philosophy, on the other hand, must be open to questions of faith. In the book's final section, Ratzinger distinguishes a tolerance and a freedom that

are hostile to any claim to truth from a tolerance and a freedom that have their basis in truth and are thus compatible with the reality of human nature. The tolerance Ratzinger describes is one he himself displays throughout the book in his examination of adversarial positions and other, non-Christian, religions: It allows their truth to emerge in the light of a more fulfilled, purified version of that same truth (see 227–31).

Those who are accustomed to Cardinal Ratzinger's prophetic voice will not be disappointed by *Truth and Tolerance*. Christianity is in crisis, as are philosophy and theology in general, and the crisis is only becoming more acute. Relativism, which in certain respects has become the real religion of modernity (84), is a real and present danger to human life (see, e.g., 72, 117, 120, 129, 131–32, 35, 141, 162, 214). Those who are looking for signs of hope will not be disappointed either. Ratzinger holds that it is in the nature of man to seek the truth about God and about himself; men cannot rest content for long with simply putting the questions on the shelf (see 137, 164–65; see also 225). "The farewell to truth can never be final" (165).

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