

VITTORIO POSSENTI*

FAITH AND REASON: WHAT RELATIONSHIP?

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between faith and reason has been intrinsic to Christianity since its beginnings and runs through the history of theology, of the Church and Christian thought. There are various ways in which the main theme can be introduced: one of them is to consult the foremost theologians and Christian thinkers who have thought and written on this subject. In this paper it appears more opportune to refer to two documents: the Encyclical *Faith and Reason* (*FR*, 1998) of Pope John Paul II, and the speech given at the University of Regensburg by Benedict XVI (2006). The different aim of the carefully worked out encyclical letter (it is more than one hundred pages long), addressed to the Catholic Bishops by John Paul II, and the brief academic speech given by Pope Benedict XVI makes their basic convergence all the more significant. Furthermore, the Regensburg speech is less easily understood without the foundation laid by the encyclical *FR*.¹

THE FRAMEWORK OF FAITH AND REASON

The *FR* is perhaps the most important document of the modern Church on the subject expressed in the title and on philosophy, which is understood as “the mirror which reflects the culture of a people.” (n. 103). The heart of the document is

* VITTORIO POSSENTI – University of Venice, Pontifical Academy of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

¹ The titles of the chapters of *FR* are: Introduction: “Know yourself;” Chap. I: “The Revelation of God’s Wisdom;” Chap. II: “Credo ut intellegam;” Chap. III: “Intellego ut credam;” Chap. IV: “The

to be found in the correct relationship to be established between revealed truth and the truth reached by philosophy. The 1998 document, promulgated 124 years after the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* of Pope Leo XIII (1879) which is substantially concerned with the same subject, considers and develops the teaching of both the First (1869–1870) and the Second (1962–1965) Vatican Councils.

The sense of *FR* is given at the very beginning: “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth. God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth –in a word to know himself.” The search for truth is therefore at the centre of the document and the proposed alliance between faith and reason turns toward the attainment of greater wisdom. The encyclical observes that, beyond the search for single truths, there is not a single human culture which has not considered the problem of truth itself, as it is possible to see in both East and West in the timeless questions, “*Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life?*” (n. 1). In relation to this theme is supported the thesis that every human culture is capable of receiving divine revelation (n. 71 ff).

In spite of all the difficulties that their relationship encounters, faith and reason are not in opposition, for revelation, to which faith turns, and reason both come in the last resort from God, who “neither deceives nor wishes to deceive” (n. 8). Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, is presented as the completion of revelation (n. 10; in this sense the presentation of Christianity as a religion of the Book is improper and inaccurate). It is necessary to maintain the distinctions and the agreements, and not the separating oppositions, between faith and reason (*et fides et ratio*, not *aut fides aut ratio*). We must, however, travel the way of philosophy and of the Bible aware that it is not wise to free Christian faith from philosophy. An objective understanding such as that of faith which involves the whole person, cannot but align itself with forms of thinking which do not deny the possibility of attaining truth. For this reason “a radically phenomenalist or relativist philosophy would be ill-adapted to help in the deeper exploration of the riches found in the word of God.” (n. 82).

The encyclical does not hide the difficulties that faith, reason and the relationship between them, have met with in contemporary times: “But this does not mean that the link between faith and reason as it now stands does not need to be carefully examined, because each without the other is impoverished and enfeebled.” Reason, deprived of what Revelation offers, risks losing sight of its final goal; faith, deprived of reason, has stressed feeling and experience, and so runs the risk of no longer being a universal proposition (n. 48). There is, therefore, a recovery to be made on both sides. It is a fundamental and traditional part of the Catholic position to manifest moderate but significant faith in the *lumen* of natural reason

relationship between faith and reason;” Chap. V: “The Magisterium’s interventions in philosophical matters;” Chap. VI: “The interaction between faith and philosophy;” Chap. VII: “Current requirements and tasks;” “Conclusion”.

and its cognitive capacity, against fundamentally sceptical positions which deny human reason every cognitive power beyond the sphere of scientific knowledge. In effect, western rationalism, which is supported by a restricted use of reason, and educated solely by sciences, remains disoriented in the face of reality and knowledge which goes beyond scientific knowledge. Besides, *lumen naturale* of reason is in possession of every human being: thus the elitism which had characterised the ancients' search for truth has been overcome (n. 38), and a universal right of access to the truth affirmed.

The spiritual attitude which in modern times has rarely allowed a fertile relationship between philosophy and the Word of God, is identified by John Paul II in the growing separation between reason and faith, and between philosophy and theology: "the legitimate distinction between the two forms of learning [theology and philosophy] became more and more a fateful separation." (n. 45). This situation is identified as a negative element also in *Aeterni Patris*, according to which "the best philosophers are those who link the study of philosophy with the respect for the Christian faith." The harmony between reason and faith reached in patristic and medieval thinking has been compromised by those philosophies which place rational knowledge as separate from and alternate to faith, often arriving at an explicit opposition. Programmatically they disregard the light of truth which the God's message to man contains. This movement, which began in the 17th and 18th centuries, reached its peak in the 19th century with the expression of idealism, atheism, positivism, and the passage from metaphysical reason to instrumental reason. One can say that these aspects together led to a loss of wisdom's dimension in the search for meaning. Those positions, considered weak and insufficient by the encyclical, are frequently expressions of an anti-realism which denies objective ontological knowledge and loses itself in phenomenism, relativism and a refusal of the metaphysics, without which access to the transcendent becomes a wishful thinking.

FR maintains that the right relationship between faith and reason is under the banner of their *circularity*. Theology turned to an understanding of the Word of God, avails itself of the support of human knowledge and especially of philosophical knowledge: "Instead, reason is stirred to explore paths which of itself it would not even have suspected it could take" (n. 14 and n. 73). Studying philosophy in vital union with faith is considered a method which has led to philosophical developments which "would not have happened without the direct or indirect contribution of the Christian faith" (n. 76). One might mention the origin of the concept of the person, which arose from the discussions surrounding the Christological and Trinitarian debates of the 4th and 5th centuries.

Circularity means that the energy of reason is able to enter into the understanding of faith without adulterating it, while the energy of faith which comes from Revelation is able to reside in reason without putting it at risk. Indeed, one can disclose new horizons and give them more meaning. A passage from the book of

Tobias helps here (see Chap. 6). Faith can be for philosophy something analogous to what the Archangel Raphael does during Tobias's journey: he guides him on the right road, neutralizes the monstrous fish, and prepares an eyewash that will protect eyes from maladies and enable a better sight. Meeting philosophy, Revelation stimulates it to be itself and to reach its fullness. In order to achieve this outcome, it is necessary to overcome the principle of immanence, a major heritage of rationalism. Among the many formulations of this principle, we will look at two of them: the assumption that the Whole/Entire is a finite system of physical causes, that is to say, that the subject of philosophy is only the world; the idea that man does not depend on anything and must draw ethical values by himself in an absolute process of self-determination. In various phases of modern times the principle of immanence was the cornerstone around which the main objections to the very possibility of Revelation were placed. This criterion nips any dialogue between reason and Revelation in the bud: it suppresses the latter, and it weaves a eulogy for a powerful but solitary reason.

The esteem nourished by the Church towards philosophy is confirmed by John Paul II invitation to the circularity of philosophy and theology. The Church "sees in philosophy the way to come to know fundamental truths about human life [...], and an indispensable help for a deeper understanding of faith and for communicating the truth of the Gospel to those who do not yet know it." (n. 5) J. Ratzinger several times emphasised that the Christian faith more often faced philosophy than other religions.

One of the aims of *FR* consists in re-launching the study of philosophy in Catholic thinking and corresponding institutions, which entered into difficulties at the time of the Second Vatican Council. Philosophy is described "as one of the noblest of human tasks" and at its base are the always-valid principles of non-contradiction, causality and finality, which are the reference points for different schools of philosophy (nos. 3 and 4); the conception of the person as a free and intelligent being capable of knowing God, truth and good; and some basic moral norms which are commonly shared. All this makes a sort of spiritual heritage for humanity.

FR suggests the necessity that metaphysics be understood as rational argument which, starting from the data provided by the senses, can reach the cause which lies at the origin of all perceptible reality (n. 22). The speech made by the apostle Paul in Athens (*Acts of the Apostles*, c. 17, to which we will return) is presented as an attempt to identify a common basis and to raise a natural understanding of God, which manifested Himself more in the thinking of philosophers respectful of divine transcendence than in the polytheism of the popular religion (nos. 24 and 36).

The Christianity interest in philosophy is something which stimulates reflection, as in this field arose the most intense and enduring confrontation between modern Western thinking and the Church: the most decisive dialectics and the fiercest disagreements have taken place, and the most important intellectual difficulties, arising from the pages of books, have become flesh and blood and have entered with force into historical existence. The idea which maintains that modern

history has come in good measure from the minds of philosophers is not unfounded. From the period of the Enlightenment and the French revolution the disagreements already latent in the 16th and 17th centuries broke out forcefully, touching their peak in the 19th and 20th centuries.

At the end of this dialectics appears the most disquieting phenomenon: nihilism, presented by *FR* as deriving from the oblivion/neglect of being, “leads to losing touch with objective truth and therefore with the very ground of human dignity. This in turn makes it possible to erase from the countenance of man and woman the marks of their likeness to God, and thus to lead them little by little either to a destructive will to power or to a solitude without hope.” (n. 90) With this reference to *nihilism*, its concept central in modernity and intensely debated during the past 150 years enters at last the Church teaching, as the Second Vatican Council did not consider it.

THE REGENSBURG SPEECH: TRUTH AND VIOLENCE

We approach now the Regensburg paper whose title ‘Faith, reason and university’ is an extension of that of the encyclical. Many people noted that the keyword of the speech was reason, which recurs 46 times in the text. We all know about the circumstances of the first reactions, greatly exaggerated by the world media, to a passage in the speech which quoted a dialogue between the Byzantine emperor Emmanuel II Paleologos (14th century) and a Persian scholar. The media, in fact, dealt almost solely with this quotation, even though the speech itself was dedicated to the connection between the Christian faith and reason. It is worth noting that the words of Regensburg have left their mark and stimulated philosophers, theologians and intellectuals to reflect on the problem of truth.

Benedict XVI evoked a moment of encounter between the Biblical message and Greek philosophy and that of the succeeding “de-Hellenisation” which occurred during the Second Millennium. Let’s concentrate on the time when Christianity was born, when Biblical revelation and philosophic reason sought mutual recognition, and their dialogue was punctuated by founding events.

The dialogue which then took place, was not an abstract project, but a vital need in which both parties struggled for the truth. Agreement was reached on the assumptions that it was possible to reply to questions about man himself, about good, and about God, that this search was not doomed to failure, and that biblical thought was not extraneous to the ambit of truth. The agreement was difficult and only partial, but nevertheless exciting, and was the outcome of events and decisions. A real and genuine “providential” turn of events is recorded in the journeys of St Paul when he reaches Troas, intending to continue into the East. The *Acts*

of the Apostles (16, 6–10) tells the story of his dream and of the call to him to go to Macedonia, which he duly did. This change of direction in evangelisation from going east towards going west could not have been more clear-cut, and was to have major consequences. After he arrived in Macedonia, Paul delivered a speech in the Areopagus in Athens, and then travelled to Corinth and, finally, Rome. Thus, in these strategic places, nascent Christianity encountered Greek and Roman culture and began the relationship with them and their philosophies which has never been interrupted.

In his Regensburg paper Benedict XVI referred to Paul's voyage to Macedonia and Athens: "The encounter between the Biblical message and Greek thought did not happen by chance. The vision of Saint Paul, who saw the roads to Asia barred and in a dream saw a Macedonian man plead with him: 'Come over to Macedonia and help us!'" (cf. *Acts of the Apostles*, 16:6–10) – this vision can be interpreted as a "distillation" of the intrinsic necessity of a rapprochement between Biblical faith and Greek inquiry." An approach begun some time before, as Ratzinger observes recalling the decisive revelation of the divine name of God to Moses ("I Am who I am," *Ex* 3,14), the detachment from myth, the new understanding of God revealed in the Psalms and in the Wisdom literature, and the Greek translation of the Septuagint, to which the Regensburg paper attributes particular value: "Today we know that the Greek translation of the Old Testament produced at Alexandria – the Septuagint – is more than a simple (and in that sense really less than satisfactory) translation of the Hebrew text: it is an independent textual witness and a distinct and important step in the history of revelation, one which brought about this encounter in a way that was decisive for the birth and spread of Christianity"

It is notable that God's revelation of His divine name to Moses ("I am") is understood by the Pope as a censure of the polytheist myth which had many names for the gods, similar to the censure of the myth made in Athens by Socrates. The approach motivated by Moses and Socrates can legitimately allow us to speak of a "Socrates-Moses alliance" between philosophy and Revelation, if we assume that Socrates represents the former and Moses the latter. This alliance has led to a wide series of developments.²

St Paul's address in Athens is referred to in both *FR* and the Regensburg speech as an example of nexus between reason and faith which took place by means of announcement, dialogue, witness, and "poor" and non-violent means. The fabric of the text (*Acts of the Apostles*, 17,22 ff) looks at God the Creator, who has made heaven and earth, and who is Lord of it, who does not live in temples made by human hands, and who gives life and breath to every living thing, and it concludes with the celebrated words "in Him we live and move and have our being, as indeed some of your own writers have said: We are all His children." Exegetical studies

² On this fundamental subject see: V. PosSENTI, *L'alleanza socratico-mosaica. Postmetafisica, deellenizzazione, terza navigazione*, "Aquinas" 2009, nn. 1–2, pp. 175–206.

have pointed out that what Paul presented was “natural theology,” as supported by the Stoics; he used it there in order to make the idea of God he was proposing acceptable to his listeners, among whom were Stoic and Epicu(kiu)rean philosophers (“even a few Stoic and Epicurean philosophers argued with him,” *Acts of the Apostles*). The apostle, proceeding to a criticism of ancient polytheism according to a method proper to Hellenistic Judaism, used some relevant quotations from Greek thinkers and poets to expand understanding of monotheism against the polytheism of the popular religion. From this point of view the Pauline address was a success because he stimulated the mutual understanding between philosophy and Bible; another positive element was that some of his listeners were converted to Christianity. Unsuccessful, however, was his reference to the Resurrection, which most of them refused to accept. The event marks the context in which the encounter between Greek thought and the Bible would be fulfilled in the light of Revelation.³

The first “Christian philosophers” such as Justin and Clement of Alexandria related this nascent Christian culture with Greek-Roman culture, beginning a method followed until the 20th century. Clement saw Greek philosophy as *praeparatio evangelica*, or roads and paths to be taken in order to be prepared to receive the Gospel, raising a theme which one finds again in Augustine in relation to Platonic philosophy. For Clement, the “Testament” used by the Gentiles was philosophy: this justified the Greeks who, according to the author, caught sight of the two fundamental truths of God, Creator and Rewarder. This thesis was then opposed by that of the Gnostics and Marcionites who thought of philosophy as diabolic wisdom given by the fallen angels to mankind: philosophy as the knowledge of the fruit of the serpent.⁴

³ The Athens address shows the greatness and the limits of the encounter between Christianity and Greek culture, on which Christianity conferred an opening that it did not previously possess, opening it to the theme of *creatio ex nihilo*, Incarnation and Resurrection. God as Creator has perhaps been guessed by Greek philosophers, but they remained ignorant of the full truth of Creation. In His capacity as Creator, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses is not the God of the Greek writers, for whom God is the Demiurge (*Timaeus*, 28c). Only with biblical faith and the revelation of the divine name of God in the OT (I am who I am, *Ego sum qui est*, Ex 3,14) could philosophy come to understand the truth of Creation. Since to create signifies to make something from nothing, only a God who is the Being itself (*esse ipsum*) can be creator. God cannot, therefore, be just the prime cause of becoming earthly, even if thought of as *Thought of thought* (*noesis noeseos*), as is the God of Aristotle, who reached monotheism, but not creation. A fundamental difference runs between creation and production or transformation: the insuperable difference between creation (*creatio*) and becoming (*mutatio*): in Creation the prime Cause is the total cause which sets the whole being of the created things, while in becoming only an efficient cause of transformation is required. For this reason the Aristotelian God counts as unmoving cause of becoming, not as the prime and sole cause which put down the finite *extra nihil*.

⁴ “Before the Lord’s coming, philosophy was necessary for the justification of the Greeks; now, it is useful because it leads souls to God, since it is a preparation for those who arrive at faith through demonstration [...]. God in fact is the cause of all good things, but of some things, such as the Old and New Testaments, He is the principal cause, and of other things, such as philosophy,

According to Ratzinger, primitive Christianity, in opting for the God of the philosophers and for their natural theology rather than for the gods of popular religion,⁵ was directed along this path by biblical discourse and particularly by the Prologue to the Gospel of St John: *In the beginning was the Word* (and the Word was God). This means that the source of rationality and human reason is God, in whom intellect and will coincide: therefore his will is reason, and that which God has established is not abolished by his will. One must not say, therefore, that the principle of non-contradiction is not valid for God, as if He were subject to some external law or destiny, but that God as Absolute Reason is Himself non-contradictory.

From this point, the Regensburg address demonstrates that to act against reason is contrary to the nature of God and that this is not only a Greek paradigm, but accords with the Bible: "I believe that here we can see the profound harmony between what is Greek in the best sense of the word and the biblical understanding of faith in God." Beginning the *Prologue* to his Gospel with the words "In the beginning was the Word", John concludes a path which began many ages before with the Old Testament and which followed with the research of the Wisdom books and their anti-idolatry "enlightenment." "John thus spoke the final word on the biblical concept of God, and in this word all the often toilsome and tortuous threads of biblical faith find their culmination and synthesis. [...] In the beginning was the *logos*, and the *logos* is God, says the Evangelist." The Biblical message and Greek thought "came together recognising each other," and this constitutes "a fact of decisive importance," a turn in universal history.

In the beginning was the Word (Jn 1,1). Translating the Greek word *Logos* with the Latin *Verbum* (Word), St Jerome exploits one of the two meanings of *logos*, leaving in the background the other meaning of *ratio*/reason. Adopting the latter, one could say "*In the beginning was the Reason.*" Whichever meaning one chooses

He is the secondary cause. And perhaps this is why philosophy was given to the Greeks before the Lord called them: since it led the Greeks towards the Christ in the same way as the Law served the Jews. Now philosophy remains a preparation which puts anyone who is being improved by Christ Himself on the right road" (Clement, *Stromata*, 1,5,28). It should be added that for Clement the Greeks had taken several doctrines from the Jewish prophets.

⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, Brescia 2003, pp. 128 ff. "When people began to ask to which God the Christian God corresponded – whether to Zeus or Hermes or Dionysius or any other god – the reply was as follows: to none of them. Christianity does not worship any of the gods you pray to, but the One and Only God to whom you do not pray: that Most High, of whom your own philosophers also speak. In doing this, the early church put itself decisively apart from the whole cosmos of the ancient religions, considering them to be altogether fraudulent and mistaken, and explained their faith saying: when we say God, we do not mean or venerate any of these, but uniquely the Being itself, the one the philosophers have placed as the foundation of all being, as the God above all powers: only this is our God."

The author's position is expressed in a section under the title: "The early church's option for philosophy." The importance of this recourse to philosophy is constantly present in all Ratzinger's writings on the subject, and recalls the intention to re-launch its study, according to the explicit indication in *Fides et ratio*.

to use, the first verse of the Gospel of John must be always be read with verse 14: "And the Word became flesh [...]" in order to understand the novelty of Christianity.

John's text represents a watershed for the problem of truth, because it says that at the beginning of all things is the light and the creative energy of Reason. Two major implications follow from this: to act contrary to reason is contrary to the nature of God; at the beginning there is a rationality, a meaning, a measure. This aspect takes account of the eternal miracle and the eternal surprise of the world, i.e. that the world is at least partly understandable and "legible." That at the beginning there was the Logos is not an exclusively religious assertion, but an intuition endowed with meaning: intellect does not project rationality in things *a priori*, but finds it there. This criterion has played a crucial role in modern physics from Galileo and Newton to Einstein and Planck, and at least implicitly remains still vital to scientific research today.

The Regensburg address then touches upon the three waves of "de-Hellenisation," which in various ways intended to free the Christian faith from its heritage of Greek philosophy, and especially from metaphysics: the Reformation, then Kant and Protestant liberal theology as represented by Adolf von Harnack, and finally, the third wave which involves inculturation of faith in which some currents would change the fundamental decisions assumed on faith-reason link. Pope Benedict noted that the Late Medieval period theology was developing tendencies "which would sunder this synthesis between the Greek spirit and the Christian spirit," separating in God *reason and will*. It is the position held by theological voluntarism which, distancing itself from the intellectualism of Augustine and Aquinas, leads to consider only the freedom of God, "in virtue of which he could have done the opposite of everything he has actually done." This leads to the idea of God as mere will. Benedict XVI's critical evocation on the theologies of voluntarism and nominalism, which think of God as an inscrutable and ultimately irrational will, could be extended to aspects of the Cartesian God. Descartes in fact thought of God as an infinite Efficiency which could make square circles and mountains without valleys. Even in the 20th century some thinkers have understood God as mere inscrutable freedom. In contrast to this position, Benedict XVI recalls the great theme of the analogy to which the thinking of the Church has constantly stuck, and according to which a real analogy exists between the divine Spirit-Logos and limited human reason which is not cancelled out by the affirmation that the dissimilarities between God and man are much greater than the similarities (Lateran Council IV, 1215).

One last crucial point, also referred to in Regensburg, concerns the invitation to overcome the limitations which reason decrees for itself, holding itself to be capable only of that which can be verified by experiment. This *self-limitation* of reason is presently diffused in many fields and claims that the only knowledge possible is that which can be scientifically proved. Moreover, from Kant onwards, it has become for many a commonplace that theoretical reason does not have access to God and that religion is extraneous to the ambit of truth.

One notable aspect of the “Principle-Logos” concerns *violence* and its terrible use in the name of religion or even of God Himself. Reason must be freed by pride, and religion must be separated from violence: the heavy bond with violence, which in various ways involves all religions, calls for a making clear that God and a divine religion cannot invite to employ violence (and killing) against the others. If it is true that to act against reason is contrary to the nature of God, also to act with violence is likewise contrary to the nature of religion as relationship between God and men. There is no basis for the use of violence in the name of God. He is Logos and Love, a peaceful God who calls for respect for the other, and even for sacrificing oneself for the other, but never for hating the other. There is in violence something satanic and terrible; and religion becomes corrupted when it indicates the enemy to be eliminated, and incites to violence against human life.

Today it is more than ever necessary to loosen the tie between religion and violence, pointing towards the transcendent character of meekness, of peace, of non-violence, and not forgetting that the roots of violence reside within man himself, not specifically within religious men or within religions, even if these can nourish violent tendencies inherent in man. But violence must be laicised, and attributed to man, not to God.

Whether accidental or innate, the tie between religion and violence cannot be vanquished without prayer. The importance of this was seen at the World Interreligious Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi (27 October 1986) where the nexus between prayer, peace, and refusal of violence was very positive. The meeting pointed to the incompatibility of the Gospel with violence: He who died on the cross is a victim, not an executioner. The passion of Jesus constitutes the unmasking of the violence around which pagan religions circled: it provokes a revolution which cannot now be stopped. It proposes the icon of the Servant suffering for love, the symbol of a non-violent, donated love. Violence deals a blow at the stubborn optimism of a humanity which, notwithstanding the evidence of its fragility and wickedness, has not ceased believing in the incorruptible goodness of man.

GOD IS “PRACTICAL:” CREATION

The relationship between faith and reason can be better understood if we do not limit ourselves to the gnoseological moment in which two sources of knowledge meet and have dialogue with one another, but if we seek to understand the whole of God’s action, *starting from the creation*. Biblical revelation came to pass not only in words but at least as much in historical events. This fundamentally signifies that God is “practical” and that, though He transcends the world, He acts in history.

God is close to us, He is not an absent God, but a God who bends down to man. God acting in history means that his presence is realised in the paradox of

“immanent transcendence,” in which the greatest distance and the closest proximity shake hands. Immanent transcendence means that the Eternal is introduced into time and space of the world. Every “immanent transcendence” was barred to polytheistic deities and to the Platonic One. The former were too immanent to truly influence history, and the latter too transcendent to act in a world from which it was totally separated and towards which it had no inclination.

Creation begins a relationship between God and the world we can name “participation,” in the radical sense of the term: to participate is to take part (*partem capere*) in something, receiving something from the other. There is a first passive meaning of participation, to which is added a second, active meaning, that of the giving or communicating part (*partem dare vel communicare*), and this is what takes on the greatest importance in the doctrine of creation.

The Platonic metaphysical heritage of participation is valued by Christian teaching on the creation since with creation God communicates something of Himself to the world and especially to men. *Creation is not primarily production, but participation and communication: a communication of being, life and light.* This central nucleus escapes those positions where God is reduced to being simply a technician, or a mathematician or a watchmaker. In creation God communicates and does not produce, since production belongs to the sphere of transformation and change, and not to creation from nothing. God is practical, not technical.

In creation, just within the communication of being that constituted it, there is an illumination which came from God and which is shed everywhere, and of which the Psalms speak: “Let the light of your face shine on us, o Lord” (4,7); and: “In your light we see the light” (36/35,10). According to Thomas Aquinas illumination is a mark of the divine light in us.⁶ In this sense creation is the condition for the “legibility of the world,” for God has left signs of rationality in the cosmos. This legibility goes back in its roots to an Intelligence which communicates something of itself in a twilight: for this reason a full legibility of the world is not possible.

The profundity brought by the metaphysics of participation is revealed by two among many examples. In the first, St Peter in his Second Letter speaks of the great and precious gifts given to the believers so that they will be able to *participate in the divine nature* (2 Pt 1,4). In the second, theology teaches that natural moral law is the *sharing of eternal law in the rational creature*, that is a communication from God to man.

⁶ See S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae*, cura et studio P. Caramello, Taurini 1952, I-II, q. 91, art. 2.

CONCLUSION

We need to recover a passion for a reason capable to question on totality and open to otherness; a reason rediscovering its multiformity which goes beyond its present-day use, so severely limited to the sciences and the visible. This is a mandatory task for an integral humanism and for the dignity of the university. Moreover we must not forget to include wisdom: "Our era needs such wisdom more than bygone ages if the discoveries made by man are to be further humanized." (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 15).

Faith and reason are not separate cognitive tools: they work in man and in life, and they walk through history. That is especially true of the Christian faith which is tied less to abstract principles than to *founding events* which are capable of creating not only knowledge but new interpersonal relationships. The revelation of truth in history as dialectic of unveiling (*revelatio*) and veiling (*re-velatio*) says that Biblical revelation is progressive. The progressiveness of revelation takes place in the circle of the Whole and the Absolute which proceeds from the going out of all things from God and which aims at returning to God, "so that God be all in all."⁷ In this path of going out from the Source and returning to it (*exitus a Deo et reditus ad Deum*) man is called by divine grace to imitate God and finally to become part of the divine nature. According to the Cappadocian and Alexandrian Fathers "God became man in order that we can become God."⁸

A fundamental core of *FR* and perhaps its most important message is an invitation to open the immanent frame diffused in our secular age, which still burdens the modern and contemporary thought, even beyond its most clearly materialistic expression⁹. Speaking of faith, Revelation, God, *FR* points towards a recovery of the triad God-man-world and aims at overcoming the frequent intramundane closure which reduces the scope of philosophizing only to the couple man-world. Whoever considers the contemporary philosophical situation perceives the reduced importance given to God-problem and to metaphysics. According to *FR* there is a "need for a philosophy of *genuinely metaphysical* range, capable, that is, of transcending empirical data in order to attain something absolute, ultimate and foundational in its search for truth [...]. Therefore, a philosophy which shuns metaphysics would be radically unsuited to the task of mediation in the understanding of Revelation." (n. 83).

This quotation addresses toward the crucial question concerning the metaphysics of being. On this matter *FR* has spoken clearly: "If the *intellectus fidei* wishes to integrate all the wealth of the theological tradition, it must turn to the philosophy of being [...] the philosophy of being is a dynamic philosophy which views reality

⁷ *First Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians*, 15,28.

⁸ Athanasius, *De incarnatione Verbi*, 54, MG 25, 192 B.

⁹ See Ch. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, London 2007.

in its ontological, causal and communicative structures. It is strong and enduring because it is based upon the very act of being itself, which allows a full and comprehensive openness to reality as a whole, surpassing every limit in order to reach the One who brings all things to fulfilment” (n. 97). This high praise of philosophy of being represents for philosophers a task assigned to their responsibility.¹⁰

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Leo XIII, *L' enciclica Aeterni patris*, Napoli 1979.
Faith and reason : encyclical letter of Pope John Paul 2, London 1998.
 Leo XIII, *L' enciclica Aeterni patris*, Napoli 1979.
 Possenti V., *L'alleanza socratico-mosaica. Postmetafisica, deellenizzazione, terza navigazione, "Aquinas"* 2009, nn. 1–2, pp. 175–206.
 Possenti V., *Nihilism and Metaphysics. The Third Voyage*, Albany 2014.
 Ratzinger J., *Introduction to Christianity*, Brescia 2003.
 Taylor Ch., *A Secular Age*, London 2007.
 S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae*, cura et studio P. Caramello, t. 1, Taurini 1952.

Summary

The article shows that the relationship between faith and reason has been intrinsic to Christianity since its beginnings and runs through the history of theology, of the Church and Christian thought. There are various ways in which the main theme can be introduced: one of them is to consult the foremost theologians and Christian thinkers who have thought and written on this subject. In this paper it appears more opportune to refer to two documents: the Encyclical Faith and Reason (FR, 1998) of St. Pope John Paul II, and the speech given at the University of Regensburg by Benedict XVI (2006). The different aim of the carefully worked out encyclical letter (it is more than one hundred pages long), addressed to the Catholic Bishops by St. John Paul II, and the brief academic speech given by Pope Benedict XVI makes their basic convergence all the more significant. Furthermore, the Regensburg speech is less easily understood without the foundation laid by the encyclical FR.

Keywords: faith, reason, christianity, encyclical, philosophy

¹⁰ On the crucial task assigned to philosophy of being see: V. Possenti, *Nihilism and Metaphysics. The Third Voyage*, Albany 2014.

WIARA I ROZUM: JAKA RELACJA?

Streszczenie

Autor w artykule pokazuje, że relacja między wiarą a rozumem jest wewnętrznym rysem chrześcijaństwa od jego początków i biegnie przez całą historię teologii, Kościoła i myśli chrześcijańskiej. Problem ten można ująć w rozmaity sposób. Jednym z nich jest zestawienie poglądów czołowych teologów i myślicieli chrześcijańskich, którzy podejmują te zagadnienia. W niniejszym artykule Autor wybiera inne rozwiązanie, które wydaje mu się lepszym. A mianowicie przywołuje dwa dokumenty: encyklikę *Wiara i rozum* (FR 1998) św. Jana Pawła II, oraz przemówienie Benedykta XVI, wygłoszone na uniwersytecie w Ratyzbonie (2006). Dodatkowo Autor przywołuje list św. Jana Pawła II (liczący ponad sto stron), skierowany do Biskupów, a także krótką mowę akademicką wygłoszoną przez Papieża Benedykta XVI, co pozwala ukazać zasadniczą zbieżność tych wypowiedzi. Wykład wygłoszony w Regensburgu staje się bardziej zrozumiały, gdy osadzimy go na fundamencie encykliki *Wiara i rozum*.

Słowa kluczowe: wiara, rozum, chrześcijaństwo, encyklika, filozofia