

## Vatican by Maria Cristina Fiocchi

### Ratzinger scores false ecologists

*A challenge to return to real science comes from the Church's highest authority on the Doctrine of the Faith.*

The theme of relations between man and nature which has been so much abused today by the ecologists, who have already condemned man as the principal polluting agent of the Earth and dream of exterminating the human race in order to save the forests, the swamps, and rare species of green frogs, has been the target of frequent reflections in recent years by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

In 1987 the German cardinal, during an interview with the weekly *Il Sabato*, defined the ecology movement as follows: "a combination of as yet poorly defined romanticism, which takes elements from the Marxist tendency, but is above all linked to features of liberalism, which demonstrates a certain hatred against humanity, claiming that it is responsible for destroying nature."

Later, during a lecture to the youth of Seregno, Italy, in commenting on some of the problems that emerged during the encounter of the American bishops with the Roman Curia in March 1989, Ratzinger took up the question of extreme feminism. He said, "We have here a radical phenomenon which has developed especially in the United States as opposition to God the Father because supposedly that [idea] is an instrument of masculine domination, whereas one should be returning to the Earth Goddess, thus combining with some of the ideas of ecologism. . . . This aspect confirms tendencies toward the paganizing religions, where the femi-

nine presences are considered to be truer."

In early May another cardinal, Pietro Palazzini, in a message to the Schiller Institute's conference on the Council of Florence in Rome, corrected the errors of the "animal rights" branch of the ecology movement. Cardinal Palazzini started from the fundamental premise, "According to Christian thinking, the world, which is the work of God the Creator, is good. At the summit of creation is Man."

Palazzini pointed out, "Things are subordinated to Man, who uses and transforms them . . . by his labor; he bends them and transforms them, in such a way that the entire environment is transformed."

In May 1989, on the occasion of a meeting of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith with the presidents of the European Doctrinal Commissions in Vienna, Cardinal Ratzinger came back to this subject, this time with greater theological and doctrinal profundity. The topic of his presentation was "Difficulties Facing the Faith Today in Europe."

Starting out with a frank and timely analysis of the current protest movements against the Church's teachings, Cardinal Ratzinger spoke of a growing philosophical flattening-out which has taken place in the recent decades, which has provoked an actual change in cultural paradigms.

"In the first place," Ratzinger said, "we have to call attention again to an almost total disappearance of the doctrine of the creation in theology," and for this reason, "a moral and ethical

approach to nature has been lost.

"A reaction," he emphasized, "marked by an irrational fear in the face of technology, continues to co-exist with the incapacity to recognize a spiritual message in the corporeal world. Nature continues to appear as a reality which is irrational in itself, but which on the other hand presents mathematical structures which can be technically evaluated."

He explained, "The fact that nature has a mathematical rationality has, so to speak, become tangible; the fact that a moral rationality is also announced within it, is rejected as metaphysical fantasizing."

Cardinal Ratzinger went on, "Nature, which in this way would become the teacher, is, however, a blind nature, which unconsciously combines, in a casual manner, that which man must now consciously imitate. His relations with nature (which therefore is now no longer creation) remain those of manipulation and do not become those of listening."

This separation between "blind" nature and corporeal man on the one hand, and the creative wisdom of God on the other, not only impedes the development of all metaphysics, but it forms the basis of a real degradation of the image of man. What remedies are proposed by Cardinal Ratzinger?

"We have to again make manifest what it means that the world has been created *with wisdom* and that the creative act of God is something fundamentally different from the provoking of a primeval explosion," said Ratzinger, taking aim at the irrational "Big Bang" theories of the generation of the universe. "Then it becomes recognizable again that the greatness of man does not consist on the wretched autonomy of a dwarf who proclaims himself the only sovereign, but in the fact that his essence allows the highest wisdom to shine through: truth itself."